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FUN NIGHT OUT...Artist Evie Klotz of Fanwood works on the details on a face painting for 7-year-old Hailey Flood of Fanwood, as her sister, Julia, looks on at right, at the National Night Out observance in Fanwood's LaGrande Park Tuesday night.

CF, GW BOE Candidates

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that must involve both parents and community members.

"I am a parent and member of the community, and I have a core belief that giving back to your community, whether it is the schools, church or town, is imperative," said Ms. Boyle, who has lived in Cranford for 19 years and works as a health insurance broker.

Ms. Boyle emphasized the focus on personalized learning as a long-range endeavor that will customize students' education to fit their strengths and weaknesses. She believes the district has established effective programs even with funding concerns.

"I think even if we're doing well, we need to keep it up because there are always new challenges thrown at you," she said. "What I've learned in the business world is that you have to have the right leadership to lead people through that."

In addition to receiving high rankings, she is proud that the school district has expanded performing-arts opportunities for students.

Trevor Shaw has spent 20 years working in education and said he believes those experiences bring different views to the board. Serving for the past three years, he is a former English teacher who is currently the director of technology at Dwight-Englewood School in Bergen County.

"I feel like I still have a lot to contribute," Mr. Shaw said. "I think the biggest thing I bring is the ability to challenge long-standing ideas."

Mr. Shaw said board members and residents should question and challenge issues including unfunded mandates, the operation of public schools and the role of standardized tests.

"We have different challenges and the solutions are not always the same," he said. "I would like to see us communicate a little better as a district with parents and families."

Mr. Shaw has lived in Cranford since 2001 with his wife and two children, who are both in the school system.

Lisa Carbone, Daniel DeMarco and Jacqueline Carr are also seeking seats on the Cranford board. Serving on the Garwood board

since 1991, Linda Koenig said four generations of her family have lived in Garwood. She has no children, but other members of her family are currently in the school district.

"The school district here has done well for us, so it is my turn to give back," she said.

Ms. Koenig explained that due to cuts in funding, Garwood schools had to limit some of their local programs, including less language and AP courses. She said the school also has to charge for student participation in sports and other activities.

"The students are getting less and the taxpayers are paying more," she said. "We're trying to make things better here and cutting expenses without cutting programs."

Ms. Koenig is also involved in education on a county and state level, serving on the Delegate Assembly of the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA). She said she handles issues including teacher evaluations and superintendent salary caps.

After attending enough educational programs, she said she became a master board member this past year.

Aaron Watkins said he has served on the board for the last three years because he loves Garwood and its residents. A resident for the past 18 years, he said he enjoys serving his community.

"Garwood is a beautiful town, and I know a lot of good people," said Mr. Watkins, who currently teaches social studies and religion in Elizabeth. "That's why I'm a school teacher and love education."

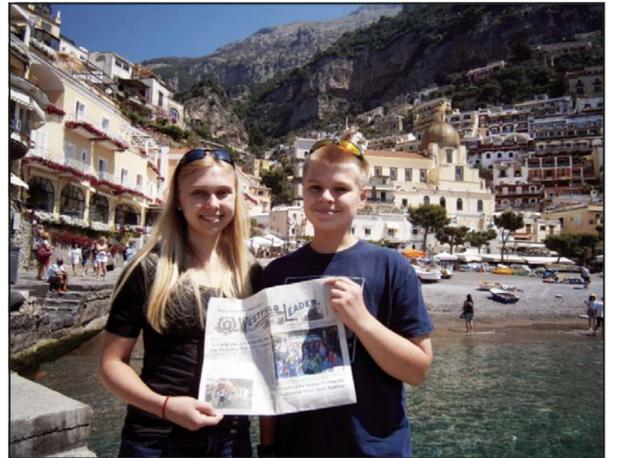
Mr. Watkins emphasized communicating with the students and continuing to improve education and making the schools more "pro-child" as his reasons for running for another term.

Aside from serving on the board, he volunteers at soup kitchens with his church and is an officer at Knights of Columbus.

Also running are incumbents Christine Guerriero and Kimberly Ficarra. Mountainside Board of Education incumbent Dante Gioia is the only borough candidate to file his candidacy as Cathy Jakositz did not file for re-election.



JoAnn Boyle — Cranford



HOMETOWN NEWS...Kristie and Justin Elbert of Westfield enjoy The Westfield Leader while on a recent vacation in Positano, Italy in June.

CF Mayor Discusses Flood Project, Road Repairs

By PAUL J. PEYTON

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

CRANFORD — Cranford Mayor Andis Kalnins discussed issues ranging from the Rahway River flood control project and the Union County College (UCC) athletic facility to the Riverfront and Birchwood development projects during a recent interview with *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*.

"Flooding has always been an issue in Cranford, (so) we are definitely looking to see what we can do to resolve that," the mayor said. "One of the ways to fight some of this over-development that is going on in our area and particularly also upstream."

He said Cranford has been working through the Mayors' Council on Rahway River Watershed Flood Control to get other towns to pass ordinances to put stormwater management plans in place that contain "more stricter controls."

He said the township "continues to fight" for federal and state funding for the Army Corps of Engineers' feasibility study of flood abatement projects under consideration. A total of \$1.2 million is needed to finish the study, officials have said. The township is looking to get the funding within three years.

"We are trying to get it as quickly as possible while it is fresh on people's minds to keep the momentum going," he said.

The state Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and the Army Corps have endorsed Alternative No. 4, which involves channel improvements with modifications to outlet pipes in the Orange Reservoir, and Alternative No. 7A, which involves raising homes in Cranford.

"Both the federal government and the state have said they are committed to getting us the money (for the study). We just have to make sure that happens," the mayor said.

He said the next step would be to have Congress fund the project. In that regard, the Rahway Mayors Council has hired a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. "to keep this on the front burners."

"They (Rahway Mayors Council) have limited funds and Cranford has agreed to continue that (funding lobbyist) until at least the rest of this year once they run out of money," Mayor Kalnins said.

When asked about the status of the proposed 360-apartment development at 215-235 Birchwood Avenue, 60 of which would be "affordable" housing units, the mayor said he assumes a court date on the township's appeal "is still months away." Cranford Development Associates (CDA) had sued the township via a Builder's Remedy Lawsuit, and in December of 2011, Judge Lisa Chrystal decided in favor of the developer. Cranford is appealing the court ruling as well as permits issued to CDA by the DEP.

"We think we have some really good issues (in the township's appeal of the Birchwood development) as opposed to some of the other development that is occurring downtown," he said, citing the Riverfront development on South Avenue across from the train station and 555 South Avenue, located within a half-mile of the train station. "You know that's where development belongs — in the downtown, where people can walk to the train, walk to the restaurants, walk to the stores. Birchwood doesn't make sense to put four stories, 360 units in the middle of a single-family, residential neighborhood secondary, tertiary streets (with) no real stores."

The mayor said the Birchwood development would result in its residents having to take their cars to go into town, thus utilizing what he

called "ill equipped" streets "and on top of that it is in a flood zone."

"You couldn't have picked a worse spot," he said.

Speaking of the Riverfront development, he said the township's new engineer, Maser Consulting of Red Bank, is looking at plans associated with the development, following recent flooding there after heavy rain deluged the area in June.

"That area has always been a chronic flooding issue. So they are going back, making sure the development was built to the specs and, assuming it is, come up with some recommendations on how we can improve on that situation as well as several other locations where we've had much more severe chronic flooding," he said, citing intense thunderstorms that have occurred over the past few months.

The township has asked Maser and Cranford's Department of Public Works to see if the flooding is because of a maintenance issue such as clogged storm sewers or if it is caused by design issues, which would require "a longer-term fix."

Also, PSE&G will elevate its equipment at its South Avenue substation above flood levels that resulted during Hurricane Irene in 2011, a storm that caused severe flooding in Cranford. The mayor said he also hopes that some of the substation's infrastructure will be upgraded.

The township has allocated \$4 million in its capital budget this year to focus on deteriorating roads in the township that have not been worked on in a number of years. He said the money will be used for both resurfacing as well as drainage improvements. Mayor Kalnins said road improvement projects approved over the past few years are being worked on this summer, with the 2014 roads projects expected to begin in September.

Speaking on the UCC athletic complex, he said Cranford "fully supports" the college in its efforts to build the athletic complex for its soccer, lacrosse and track programs at Oak Ridge Park in Clark after the college opted not to construct the complex at its Cranford campus following heavy opposition from the township and neighbors. He said details of UCC's plans at Oak Ridge still have to be worked out.

"I have not heard anything that would lead me to believe that they (UCC) are coming back to Cranford," he said.

The mayor said Cranford has settled contracts with all six of its employee unions, which include police, firefighters, public works and white-collar unions. He said all the contracts were settled within the state's 2-percent cap on salary increases.

"I think it was fair. We made some headway on some of the insurance issues," he said. He said the township was able to get some concessions on the cashing in of sick days and duplicative coverage.

He said he hopes with a new chief financial officer in place that Cranford can begin to do some longer-term financial and debt planning, "where we can look ahead and continue some of these capital programs so that this (the 2014 \$4-million capital budget) is not a one-time shot that we spend [a lot of] money and fix the streets and don't do anything for 10 years and end up in a worse spot than we are today."

Mayor Kalnins said the goal is to "maintain a decent capital program without driving taxes up."

On Cranford's downtown, he noted that the township's vacancy rate "remains extremely low" at below 3 percent, noting that storefronts at the Riverfront have been leased including to a new Italian grocery store, Starbucks and Subway, which moved from North Avenue.

Berkeley Heights BOE

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coordinator meetings.

Board member Doug Reinstein asked why there is a surge in incidents in the upper grades. Ms. McAdam said, "That's when the students, for the first time, have their own phones and a lot of the HIB incidents are done on the Internet."

"A lot of this is beyond our control; it's difficult to explain. There are new websites out there. Many things happen on social media. At the high school, we had a problem with texting. We met with small groups. The kids have to know what their legal responsibilities are," she added. She said, "last year was our first year for self-assessment."

District Superintendent of Schools Judith Ratner said, "The results this year are 50 percent lower." She added, "There were fewer cases in the lower grades and in the high school; they were tied to social media. We're responsible to investigate what takes place on the weekends, even if the kids are on vacation. The good news is it hasn't gotten worse."

When asked by Mr. Reinstein how the district can judge the effectiveness of the programs, Ms. McAdam replied, "We do it on a monthly basis, piece by piece. It's impossible to know everything that's going on."

The next PowerPoint presentation was given by Anne Corley-Hand, the principal of the district's Early Childhood Center (preschool through first grade). The presentation was based on field and informed position statements by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the

Children's Defense Fund, the NJDOE Division of Early Childhood research review and observational data.

Ms. Corley-Hand said the NJDOE is asking the district to be in a pilot program and to consider what students need for first-grade success. The state pilot program is asking districts to consider a full-day kindergarten, transitional primary programs, and putting k-1 back in elementary schools.

The state now expects kindergarten students to be able to solve addition and subtraction word problems, and to add and subtract within 10 numbers. Ms. Corley-Hand said the expectation used to be within five numbers. The state also wants the children to be able to analyze and compare two- to three-dimensional shapes in different sizes and orientations.

A half-day program starts at 8:45 a.m. and goes until 11:45 a.m. A full-day program begins at 8:45 a.m. and goes until 3:10 p.m., with a 30-minute lunch break.

A survey of parents shows that most feel that children would be better prepared for first grade if they attended a full-day kindergarten. The Children's Defense Fund in 2013 stated that a full-day kindergarten is a necessary component of a comprehensive early learning continuum to boost children's cognitive learning, creative problem-solving and social competence.

Included in the presentation was a quote from Dr. Ellen Wolack of the NJDOE, "A half-day program is inadequate to teach the common core, let alone master it."

Ms. Corley-Hand, however, disagreed with that statement and said, "Common Core is changing what we expect from a child. I feel that the demands of the Common Core Curriculum are too much for the kindergarten students. They need time to play together, to get to know one another and learn to interact with one another. That is very important. It's not for the children at risk. They show signs of stress by acting out. I am thrilled that we are part of the pilot program, but there are a lot of things to talk about and consider."

Ms. Ratner said, "This is the first time the community is seeing this. I don't know if we have all the answers this evening." It was suggested by board members that there should be a committee within the district to do in-depth research about enhanced readiness for first grade.

Regarding the full-day kindergarten idea, the board felt there are many considerations, such as space, personnel and costs.

The state suggests that the district form a committee of board members, administrators, staff and parents, look at space and costs, possibly restructure school configuration (k-2, 3-5) and develop a plan by June of 2015 regarding full-day kindergarten.

The Berkeley Heights Board of Education will meet next on Wednesday, August 27, with an executive meeting at 7 p.m. and combined conference and regular meeting at 8 p.m., in the Columbia Middle School music room, located at 345 Plainfield Avenue.

Fanwood Council

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our police that patrol it and our DPW (Department of Public Works) that cleans it," Mr. Huegel added.

Mr. Molenaar noted that a daily parking permit costs \$5 and that the current non-resident annual rate of \$648 equates to about \$2.70 per day. If the yearly fee were hiked to \$800, the daily cost of parking would still amount to less than \$5 per day, Mr. Molenaar said.

"When people drive to our train station, they create traffic, they create pedestrian hazards, so I think people that are coming from out of town should be paying more, and should be paying substantially more," Mr. Molenaar said.

Mr. Kranz said he believes charging non-residents \$800 is "a money grab" and contradicts what the borough has been promoting recently. "I think it's crazy. On the one hand we're telling people we want them to use mass transit. We have the one-seat ride. On the other hand you want to penalize them to park their car? So you can come in and use the one-seat ride. Go ahead, Scotch Plains people, but you've got to pay 800 bucks to park here. That's a lot of money, man," Mr. Kranz said.

Given the excess demand for parking, Mr. Molenaar suggested eliminating the wait list for permits. Mayor Mahr said this could add approximately \$19,000 in additional revenue and that vehicles can be diverted to park on neighboring streets such as LaGrande Avenue. Mayor Mahr said, however, she would defer to Police Chief Richard Trigo regarding ve-

hicle overflow in the lots.

After other members offered their viewpoints, the council decided to support increasing the annual fee for non-residents to \$700, maintaining the \$360 yearly rate for Fanwood residents and eliminating the permit waiting list for at least a year.

During the recreation portion of the meeting, Borough Chief Financial Officer Fred Tomkins said the total bids for the skateboard park totaled \$310,000, or \$60,000 above the \$250,000 budgeted for the project. Citing the reasons for the higher-than-expected total bid, Mayor Mahr said Adams, Rehmann & Heggan (ARH), the engineering and consulting firm managing the project, "underestimated certain line items," and that the bid from the skate park designer, Spohn Ranch Skateparks, also came in higher than expected.

As reported in the June 12 edition of *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, Recreation Commission Executive Director Bob Budiansky told the council that the design plans would be a fixed cost because the materials for the ramps were being provided by Spohn, a state-approved contractor.

The council rejected the two bids and authorized to re-bid the project. Mr. Tomkins said that if a second round of bids is rejected, the borough can then enter into negotiations with a contractor.

In other reports, Borough Engineer Peter Bondar provided an update on several road projects, including Hunter Avenue/Phase 2 and the additional cleaning and paving of Tillotson Road, from Westfield Avenue to Midway Avenue, which should be completed by Labor Day.

Mayor Mahr, exasperated over the slow pace of various road projects in the borough, including two being handled by Fischer Contracting Inc. of Scotch Plains, urged Mr. Bondar to help expedite the process. She also expressed her displeasure to Mr. Bondar over off-duty police patrol or flagman expenses on certain roads being charged to the borough's budget when they should be an "all-encompassing" part of a contractor's bid.

SP BOE Candidates

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have all completed their master's degrees. Mr. McFall said he is satisfied with the job on completing the turf fields and the expansion of the high school's Mandarin-language program.

Although he had an unsuccessful candidacy last year, Evan Murray said he is excited to run again and committed to serving the community he has lived in for the past three-and-a-half years.

"This time around coming back again, I am committed to try to get on board and make change," said Mr. Murray, who works at Prudential in Newark. "I've been very vocal at the board of education last year, and I'm really excited trying to get involved in as much as I can."

The father of two children, Mr. Murray said his motives to run remain the same — focusing on fiscal responsibility, full-day kindergarten, athletic programs and relationship management.

"Full-day kindergarten programs, I believe, really prepare children for future education and socialization," he said. "I am a true believer in youth athletic programs as the foundation for successful high-school programs."

During the time leading up to the election, Mr. Murray hopes residents take the time to get to know the candidates and understand their positions.

"Ultimately, what I want is to make sure people are voting for the right candidate for the right reasons," he said.

Michelle and Richard Polhams are the other two candidates seeking the Scotch Plains seats. Jeanne Cleary is unopposed in her reelection bid for her Fanwood seat on the board.



Fanwood Night Out by Christina M. Hinkle