

Fanwood Council Trimming Tax Hike By \$23,000 to \$5.9 Million

By LANCE TUPPER Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD — At a special public hearing held prior to its agenda meeting on June 4, the borough council discussed a municipal budget amendment to trim the local tax increase by about \$23,000, from \$5,943,139 to \$5,920,217, resulting in a 2.8-percent tax hike in 2014.

Based on the municipal budget amendment published May 29 in The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times on page 19, total spending would increase by \$163,779 to \$9,624,959, up 4.5 percent from 2013.

Borough Chief Financial Officer

Frederick Tomkins said grant monies were added and reductions were made to "various line items" in the budget. "There was a minimal impact on reducing the amount to be raised by taxation slightly in this amendment," he said.

Council President Russell Huegel said the council, collectively, had decided to review the budget, seeking to make further cuts. "It's a small cut but every dollar counts. That's our motto; that's our goal," Mr. Huegel said.

Mr. Tomkins said other taxes, including the local school board and county government assessments, will remain the same. Taxes paid to the

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education account for slightly more than 60 percent of the borough's total property-tax bill, a percentage which has held steady for a while and is "not going to change," Mr. Tomkins said. He noted that the municipal tax is slightly less than 20 percent, with the borough's library and county government taxes representing the balance.

The Times was told that the total tax bill information for the average Fanwood household will be available by the next regular borough council meeting on Tuesday, June 17, when the budget is expected to be adopted.

During the scheduled agenda meeting, Recreation Director Bob Budiansky updated the council on the skateboard park in Forest Road Park. Mr. Budiansky said the total projected cost will be around \$241,000, including approximately \$131,000 for construction and installation, \$89,288 for purchase of the materials, and a \$21,000 fee paid to engineering firm Adams, Rehmann & Heggan (ARH) for managing the project.

Mr. Budiansky said the design plans are ready to go out to bid. He said the \$89,288 cost is fixed because the materials are being provided by a state-approved contractor, Spohn Ranch Skateparks. The project's construction and installation costs, however, could vary depending on the bids received from other contractors, Mr. Budiansky told the council.

Replying to a question from Councilman Tom Kranz about regular maintenance of the skatepark, Mr. Budiansky said the borough's public works department will perform routine maintenance, such as leaf blowing. Mr. Budiansky said the Spohn contract includes a 15-year warranty on the skatepark's concrete slab and ramps. The advantage to this type of construction is its durability, Mr. Budiansky said.

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Photo courtesy of Tom Kranz

COMMUNITY CARES...A check presentation was made last week from the Fanwood Presbyterian Church to the Fanwood and Scotch Plains Rescue Squads (FRS and SPRS), with each receiving \$1,428, proceeds from free-will donations received during the Choir Festival on May 18. Presenting the check, front center in white shirt, is Tom Berdos, director of the church's Music Ministry. He is handing checks to SPRS Captain Dan Sullivan, left, and FRS President Steve Siegal. Behind them are members of the Fanwood and Scotch Plains squads and members of the church chorus.

Scotch Plains Zoning Board Rejects Swimming Pool Application

By FRED T. ROSSI Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Yielding to concerns from neighbors, the zoning board of adjustment last week unanimously rejected an application from a homeowner seeking to install a swimming pool in his yard.

Geoff Dickstein's home is located at the corner of Sky Top Drive and Crest Lane, with the front of his house facing Sky Top Drive. At the board's meeting last Thursday, he sought permission to install an in-ground pool in his backyard, which abuts the front

yard of his next-door neighbor's house that faces Crest Lane. The pool would be 10 feet from the property line separating the two lots, and Board Vice-Chairman Chris Abeel admitted at the start of the hearing that the Dickstein property "has some handicaps due to how it's situated" vis-a-

vis the neighbor's property. An attorney speaking on behalf of Mr. Dickstein's neighbors said there were other places that the planned 15-foot by 30-foot swimming pool could be situated. While Mr. Dickstein agreed with this sentiment, he said

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Photo courtesy of Brian Horton

FLAG DAY...Jake Rigney of North Avenue in Fanwood secures the family's American flag on their front porch recently. Flag Day will be celebrated Saturday, June 14, marking the date in 1777 when the design of the flag was adopted. Flag Day was first observed in 1916.

SP Rec Comm. Waits For Advice On Defibrillators

By FRED T. ROSSI Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township recreation commission is waiting to hear from attorneys and insurers about whether township recreation organizations will be required to comply with a new state law that mandates portable heart defibrillators be on hand at all youth sporting events.

Recreation Supervisor Stephen Dahl told the commission at its monthly meeting on Monday that "Janet's Law"—named after Janet Zilinski, an 11-year-old who died of sudden cardiac arrest following a cheerleading squad practice — requires public schools to have automated external defibrillators (AEDs), and someone trained in how to operate them, at all youth athletic events that take place at board of education facilities. He said the question for township recreation officials is whether the requirement extends to non-school organizations that use board of education fields and facilities.

Among the questions to be addressed before the law takes effect on Monday, September 1, is who will have possession of the AEDs when games are not being played, how many of them will be required and where they will be stored.

In other business, the summer concert series will get underway on Thursday, July 10, at Alan Augustine Park, and will run every Thursday evening through August 14, except for the first week of August when the annual National Night Out in conjunction with the police department is held. For several years, when the township government was unable to fund the concert series due to budget constraints, local businesses donated money to ensure the annual concert series would take place. With the 2014 municipal budget again providing full funding for this summer's series, Mr. Dahl told the commission that all local businesses in Scotch Plains and Fanwood are being offered the opportunity to set up a table, free of charge, at the Thursday night concerts as a way of promoting their services and "as a thanks for their support" in past years.

The water at Ponderosa Park will be turned off this week as workers install

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Photo courtesy of Tom Kranz

FUN IN THE SUN...Crowds hit the streets on Sunday during the annual Fanwood Street Fair held on Martine Avenue from South Avenue in downtown Fanwood.

Freeholders to Vote Tonight On Parks, Dam Projects

By PAUL J. PEYTON Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

COUNTY — The Union County Freeholders are set to vote tonight on a number of professional services contracts, ranging from construction of new turf soccer fields to rehabilitation of Lake Surprise Dam in the Watchung Reservation.

At its agenda meeting last Thursday, the freeholder board considered a resolution for a \$94,200 professional services contract to Maser Consulting, P.A., of Red Bank, for design, engineering and consulting services for installation of a synthetic turf system to accommodate two multi-purpose soccer fields with lights and two adjacent baseball fields at Cedar Brook Park in Plainfield.

Another \$28,900 contract is set to be awarded to Harbor Consultants of Cranford for engineering, land surveying and construction management services for a new parking lot at the Nomahegan Park baseball field in Cranford.

Harbor is also set to be awarded a \$26,700 contract for design and construction management for the rehabilitation of the clay tennis courts at Warninanco Park in Roselle. William Reyes, director of economic development, said the courts are in disrepair and will be resurfaced to "bring them back to usefulness."

As the county begins work on the Lake Surprise dam, the freeholders are to vote tonight to add \$44,379 to the engineering services contract to T&M Associates of Middletown to provide construction support services for the project, bringing the total contract to \$281,191.

Tom Mineo, county engineer, said additional money was necessary for "having the design engineer on board to check shop drawings during the

construction phase." He said while changes are not expected in the design, as "the nature of the project is driving pilings and relying on the borings and everything to work," some changes may be necessary as this type of project is "not as black and white as a road project," Mr. Mineo said.

Ritacco Construction Company Inc. of Belleville was awarded a \$3,608,000 contract earlier this year for the Lake Surprise dam rehabilitation.

The board is also set to approve a nearly \$3-million contract with Old Bridge-based Black Rock Enterprises, LLC for the first phase of the county's 2014 road resurfacing project. Mr. Reyes said the county will resurface 14 miles of roadway, which is more than last year. The project is being funded through the New Jersey Department of Transportation's 2013 Annual Transportation Program. A separate contract will be issued for the second phase of the work in the fall.

The board also considered a \$30,000 contract with the Clark Board of Education for a summer youth program for developmentally disabled youth. Antonio Rivera, director of the Workforce Investment Board, said the youth are put through a series of leadership training courses and entrepreneurship training and employment opportunities to gain the skills they need to work within the school system during the summer.

He said additional funding has been approved for summer youth employment programs for the Borough of Roselle, Rahway Community Action Organization, Urban League of Union County, Workforce Advantage, Plainfield Board of Education and the City of Elizabeth.

Also on the agenda was a \$143,400 incentive fee payment to Illinois-based

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WF BOE OKs Three-Year 6-Percent Pay Hike for WEA

By DELL SIMEONE Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

WESTFIELD — The board of education ratified a three-year contract with the Westfield Education Association (WEA) Tuesday night, giving teachers a 2-percent raise per year, plus an extra professional development day. The vote was 4 to 2 with board members Mitch Slater and Brendan Galligan voting against the contract.

The contract begins on July 1, 2014 and runs through June 30, 2017. The WEA represents 570 teachers, nurses, librarians, guidance counselors, social workers, school psychologists and educational specialists. The

teachers will be required, under New Jersey Chapter 78 legislation, to contribute more to their health insurance each year of the contract and/or to waive the district insurance if they have additional sources of coverage.

An additional professional development day was added for a total of two annual professional days. The extra day was added for what Board Vice-President Rosanne Kurstedt said was to give teachers time to think and time to prepare for their classes.

Members of the BOE negotiating team included Human Resource Specialist Barbara Ball, Business Administrator Dana Sullivan and board

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Photo courtesy of Tom Kranz

FANWOOD FAIR...Business owners gather at the Fanwood Business and Professional Association (FBPA) table at the Fanwood Street Fair on Sunday. Pictured, left to right, are: Peter Chemidlin, president of Family Investors Company; Fanwood Council President Russ Huegel, Marci Semel, Mara's Franchise Owner; Amy Boroff, owner, Be Craftful; Rick Lisojo, owner, SKY Yoga; an employee from Nick's Pizza; Stephanie Allgeier, Little Hearts, Big World CPR Instruction; Andrea Helender, Andrea Helender Designs, and Jeni DiVirgilio, president, FBPA and realtor with ERA Suburb Realty.

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