

Rec. Commission Discusses Forest Road Master Plan

By LAUREN A. SILVA
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD — Recreation Director Bob Budiansky discussed the Forest Road Park master plan at Tuesday night's recreation commission meeting. Mr. Budiansky spoke about the status of the project and the next steps for the plan.

Mr. Budiansky spoke about the Forest Road Master Plan, specifically about CME Associates' contractors. CME Associates was approved by the borough council last month for this project. At February's meeting, Mr. Budiansky mentioned that he asked CME Associates for a more comprehensive proposal that includes

the total amount for all the improvements plus the cost of supervision. At Tuesday night's meeting he said, "CME is reluctant to expand on the proposal because the project is in the early stages. They don't know how big the project will be, (so) it's hard for them to give a total cost."

In a recent letter to Mr. Budiansky, CME gave an estimated total quote for the project of between \$45,000 and \$55,000. Council liaison member Erin McElroy-Barker said, "There is a question of cost with the [borough] council." Mr. Budiansky also mentioned getting a new design plan from CME Associates and possibly preserving trees in Forest Road Park

so as not to expand the basketball court as much. Mr. Budiansky said, "I have to verify with Chief Financial Officer Fred Tomkins that we can go forward with this."

There was discussion about the skate park fence replacement at Forest Road Park. Mr. Budiansky spoke about the current condition of the fence. Precision Fence Company wants to add two extra posts between every 10 feet. Clint Dickson, the borough's public works director, obtained a more recent quote from Precision Fence that is approximately \$2,800 more than the amount Mr. Budiansky presented at February's meeting from the company. He said he is waiting for quotes from two other competing companies.

Mr. Budiansky spoke about a new policy that the commission be responsible for the Department of Public Works (DPW) overtime pay for borough events. These events include the Easter Egg Hunt, Party in the Park, summer movies, the Halloween parade and contest, and the Holiday Celebration. This overtime equals \$4,500 in the commission's budget. Ms. McElroy-Barker said, "I will check with the borough council about this, specifically how they decided that the recreation commission be responsible for the DPW costs."

There also was mention of a recent \$15,000 grant from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders to install playground equipment in the borough's parks for special-needs children called Leveling The Playing Field. Mr. Budiansky suggested asking CME Associates for ideas on how to use the grant money. Commission Chairman Joe Valente advised obtaining a copy of the grant from the borough council.

Ms. McElroy-Barker spoke to the commission about the new sound system at Forest Road Park. As per the

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GOOD MORNING...Gayle of Troop 104 and Lance Booth serve ham at the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary breakfast held Sunday at the Scotch Hills Country Club. Proceeds benefited The Frazee House.

Writing Of Downtown Plans to Start Next Week

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The drafting of redevelopment plans for the downtown business district is expected to get underway in the next week, and the hope is that, in about two months from now, the township council will be in a position to approve the plans and then vote on the first actual projects by the fall.

Last week, the council gave its unanimous approval to a plan to declare 45 properties in the downtown business district as being "in need of redevelopment," a designation that

will give the municipal government greater control over how those parcels are redeveloped. The initial focus will be on the municipal-owned properties that house the library and adjacent parking lot as well as the municipal building, fire house and adjacent parking lot. Two or three new parking structures will be needed in the downtown to accommodate the new development, which will include not only retail and commercial space, a new library and possibly a new community center but also several hundred new housing units. It is likely the new parking facilities will be situated on each side of Park Avenue — on the block where the library now stands, in the present municipal parking lot next to town hall and possibly elsewhere such as behind the stores on Park Avenue between Bartle Avenue and Westfield Avenue.

Thomas Strowe, the township's coordinator for the revitalization efforts, said the redevelopment plans

will include a variety of items including land use, building design, infrastructure needs, design standards, density, building heights, parking, etc.

"We'll then ask developers to submit proposals that fit into what's laid out in the plans," he told *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* this week. "We'll get as specific as we need to but we don't want to be too specific," he said, adding that, "we want the free market to work" and encourage developers to be creative and come up with their own ideas as well.

While the main focus initially will be on the library and town hall properties, Mr. Strowe said the entire area encompassed in the Phase 1 section — 19.2 acres of public and private properties bounded roughly by Park Avenue, East Second Street and Westfield Avenue, Grand Street, Forest Road and Front Street — will be included in the redevelopment plans that will be written. He said the downtown may be divided into several redevelopment zones and that developers may choose to submit proposals for a single zone, two zones or for the entire neighborhood, depending on their preferences. And if private property owners, after evaluating the plans and developer proposals, want to participate, they will be encouraged to do so, Mr. Strowe said.

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READING IS GOOD FOR YOU...Friends of Scotch Plains Public Library volunteers Daisy and Sambahvi look over stacks of books for the Scotch Plains Library book sale on Thursday night.

Garwood, Fanwood Mayors To Review Shared Services

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

GARWOOD — Mayor Charles Lombardo on Tuesday night stated he would meet with Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr sometime this week to discuss the shared-service agreement moving forward. Mayor Lombardo said he values the relationship Garwood has with Fanwood regarding shared services and expects the relationship to continue in the future.

Councilman Joseph Sarno proposed at the last borough council meeting that the borough should investigate what other "deals" can be arranged with other municipalities regarding shared services. Mr. Sarno stated that "it would not hurt" the borough's working relationship with Fanwood "to see" if there is a "better deal out there" for Garwood.

Mr. Sarno said a closed-session discussion could be used to weigh the pros and cons of each service agreement to find the best terms for Garwood. The councilman stated that he did not want to end the shared-service relationship with Fanwood unless there are "better" alternatives.

Councilwoman Ileen Cuccaro, who chairs the Laws and License Committee, said an amendment is being proposed to charge a fee for abandoned homes.

"It is a good way to keep an eye on them, make the banks liable for their upkeep. Fees will assure this will happen," said Ms. Cuccaro.

Ms. Cuccaro stated that a \$500 fee will be enacted to register the home for the first year. The fee on the second anniversary will be \$1,500. A second annual renewal fee will be \$3,000. The fee for any renewal past the second year will be \$5,000, stated Ms. Cuccaro.

"This will encourage the banks or owners of abandoned or vacant properties to move in a reasonable manner," said Ms. Cuccaro.

The planning board will review any existing fence ordinances regard-

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JAZZ FEST...Student musicians from 10 area high schools took part in last Friday's 21st annual Moonglowers Jazz Festival at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

Freeholders OK Architect For New Pool In Rahway

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

COUNTY — The Union County Freeholder Board last Thursday approved a professional services contract as well as additional funding on an existing contract for improvements at Rahway River Park.

Netta Architects of Mountaintop was given a \$298,600 contract for design services, construction administration and inspection services for improvements to the Walter E. Ulrich Memorial Pool that is located in the park. Ulrich Pool was included in the 2017 capital budget in the amount of \$3 million, \$2,935,000 of which is to be bonded.

Ron Zuber, director of parks and recreation, said all existing buildings for the current pool will be demolished except one which has historical significance. He said work is to begin as soon as the pool shuts for the summer after Labor Day with construction being completed over the fall, winter and spring months. He said the project will include a new pool, concession stands and locker rooms.

Mr. Zuber said if necessary temporary trailers will be used during the summer of 2019, saying the pool itself will be open that season.

In addition, Neglia Engineering Associates of Clark was given a \$12,750 increase in its contract for a new amount of \$292,752 for additional engineering services for improvements at Rahway River Park. A new sports facility, now the home football field for Rahway High School, opened in the fall of 2017, funded by the City of Rahway and the county despite opposition from

residents.

The county's other pool, Wheeler in Linden, is being converted to a spray park.

Garwood resident Bruce Paterson said the amount of the Netta contract caused him "serious concern" as he was worried the project will go over budget.

In other business, the board approved an ordinance on second reading for changes and/or additional fees for recreational facilities. Mr. Zuber explained new fees are being added for the Watchung Sports Center in Roselle as an artificial field has been added as the building is now a year-round facility. The turf field is available for rentals for time slots of a half hour, one or two hours, with fees ranging from \$100 for a half hour to \$200 for two hours for county residents. Batting cage rentals are \$40 an hour or \$25 for a half hour for county residents. Fees are \$25 higher in each category for out-of-county residents.

Golf fees for Galloping Hill and Ash Brook Golf courses are being lowered per the ordinance for veterans per a discount program offered on Mondays and Tuesdays.

The ordinance was approved by an 8-to-1 vote with Freeholder Angel Estrada the lone dissenting vote. He said he was concerned that fees were not taking into account the cost of financing the bonds that the county incurred for improvements made to the golf facilities, including the new clubhouse currently under construction at Ash Brook. He said the county still needs to see what can be done so "as not to

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END OF AN ERA...It's the final curtain for the shuttered Sears Roebuck store on Route 22 in Watchung, which closed its doors last fall. The site will be converted into a retail shopping center.

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