



A JOB WELL DONE...Fanwood Police Officer Elliot Bernard, center, was awarded for his service in Puerto Rico with a New Jersey State Police Task Force that helped recovery efforts last fall after Hurricane Maria. The award was presented last month at the Shield Awards by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Knights of Columbus, Father John Nelligan Council, at St. Bartholomew the Apostle Church in Scotch Plains. Also pictured are: Grand Knight Seth McQuillan, left, and Fanwood Police Chief Richard Trigo, right.

Freeholders OK Cranford To Join 9-1-1 Dispatch

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

COUNTY — The Union County Freeholders last Thursday approved the Township of Cranford as the 13th Union County town to join the county's 9-1-1 dispatch center.

Cranford will pay \$9,804, which will increase 2 percent beginning January 1 of each subsequent year during the duration of the five-year contract.

"Cranford had a situation where their 9-1-1 system collapsed so they were faced with the decision of whether to replace it at a significant cost of a couple hundred thousand dollars," Public Safety Director Andrew Moran said. He said the county dispatch center handled the 9-1-1 calls in Cranford to "fill the gap." Mr. Moran said Cranford officials "felt comfortable" with the county service and decided to contract with the county rather than purchase a new 9-1-1 system.

"So we will be their primary answering point for all 9-1-1 calls," Mr. Moran said.

The dispatch center also handles 9-1-1 calls for Clark, Winfield Park, Roselle, Roselle Park, Springfield, Fanwood, Scotch Plains, Plainfield, Garwood, Mountainside, Kenilworth and Hillside, according to Mr. Moran. He said the dispatch center services 23 agencies.

He said the county handles dispatch calls for fire, police and EMS for Scotch Plains, Fanwood and Winfield Park. The county began expanding its center to fill the coverage gap left when the dispatch center at Overlook Hospital in Summit, known as CenCom, went out of business in 2012.

The freeholders also approved a \$12,700 agreement with Netta Architects, LLC, of Mountainside for architectural design and planning for the expansion of the regional dispatch center. Mr. Moran said the county is looking to create an additional nine dispatch positions for a total of 18 at its center on North Avenue in Westfield.

"Over the last five years we've seen a significant increase in the number of calls coming through the dispatch center. Last year we did just over 120,000 calls, including non-emergency calls," Mr. Moran said.

"We're finding that we are using most of those dispatch positions," he added.

He said Netta will design a conceptual drawing for the additional nine dispatch stations.

"We do have other towns that we are speaking to that are interested in the service," Mr. Moran said.

He said the county dispatch center is close to capacity.

"I think it is a tremendous shared service (for towns)," Freeholder Chris Hudak said.

The last expansion of the system, when it went from two to nine dispatchers, cost \$1.1 million, Mr. Moran said. He said he believes adding nine more dispatchers would give the center another six years before it again reaches capacity.

In other business, the freeholders approved an agreement with Scotch Plains for management of the municipality-owned Scotch Hills Golf Course. Armando Sanchez, director of recreational facilities for the county, said the county will pay Illinois-based KemperSports Management, Inc. directly for the added service. He said Scotch Plains will reimburse the county at a cost of \$3,000 per month. The agreement began May 1, 2018 and extends through November 16, 2019, when the Kemper contract with the county expires. Kemper has managed the county's Galloping Hill, Kenilworth, and Ash Brook, Scotch Plains, golf courses since 2009.

Freeholder Angel Estrada said while he does not support subsidizing golf, he is comfortable with the agreement in that it will not result in a cost to the county and that Scotch Hills' revenues will be improved under Kemper's management.

The freeholders also approved six resolutions to sponsor events around the county at a total of \$22,000. Each sponsorship ranges from \$1,000 to \$4,000. Among them is Scotch Plains' Independence Day Celebration on Saturday, June 30, whereby the township will receive \$4,000 from the county.

The board also approved the 2018 Infrastructure and Municipal Aid Grant Program of \$1.5 million combined for all 21 towns in the county. The check presentation for the program will be held at the next freeholder meeting on Thursday, May 10.

Freeholder Hudak said since 2015 the county has awarded \$6 million (including this year's program) to the towns, which provide matching funds for a total of \$12 million. Most of the funding this year will be for road improvements, said Amy Wagner, department of economic development director. The county portion is funded from proceeds from the sale of Runnells Specialized Hospital in 2014.

During the public comment part of the meeting, John Bury of Kenilworth and Bruce Paterson of Garwood both commented on the county budget, which was introduced on April 19. Mr. Bury said freeholders' comments that they follow state law in awarding professional contracts are "disingenuous."

Freeholder Chairman Sergio Granados said the board is made up of nine individuals who have their own mindsets, opinions and beliefs.

Mr. Paterson questioned why the county did not come in with a flat budget, noting that the county surplus at the end of 2017 was \$90 million, an amount that has increased \$60 million since 2011.

Freeholder Hudak said by "building up those healthy financial reserves we're able to make sure the tax burden is level in Union County, we're able to maintain a Aaa bond rating but, furthermore and very important, in the event of another economic downturn we will have the opportunity to weather the storm better."

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DEDICATED FIREFIGHTER...Firefighter Robert Villegas of the Scotch Plains Fire Department (SPFD), was honored for his dedicated volunteer service to his community as both a firefighter and an EMT at last month's Shield Awards presented by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Knights of Columbus, Father John Nelligan Council, at St. Bartholomew the Apostle Church. Pictured, from left to right, are: Firefighter Villegas with SPFD Chief John Lestarchick, Grand Knight Seth McQuillan and Battalion Chief Joe Rodrigues.

HPC Favors Applications On Kimball, Lawrence

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

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) on Monday night gave its approval to proposed minor site plan and major site plan applications. The major site plan application is subject to planning board review. In addition, HPC members discussed "appropriate policy initiatives" to safeguard historic buildings and homes. HPC Chairwoman Kelly Kessler said active communication with residents is vital to achieve the commission's historic preservation goals.

Architect Gregory Blasi presented the garage re-envisioning for a major site plan application proposed at 249 Kimball Avenue. Mr. Blasi said the pre-existing garage was added in the property's rear yard as a stand-alone building. The home was built in the 1890s with the garage constructed in the 1920s, Mr. Blasi stated.

Mr. Blasi said the existing garage was built at a time when people first started purchasing cars and so garages were not developed into the existing home structure, but as a separate building on the property.

The proposed garage is designed into the home, allowing increased garage space as requested by the applicant, Mr. Blasi said. He said the new garage is "more fitting with the neighborhood" in terms of height and architectural detail.

Mr. Blasi said he achieved architectural complements utilizing dormers and windows, noting that the homeowners will have easier access to their home.

The HPC favored a minor site-plan application at 322 Lawrence Avenue. The applicant is seeking to replace existing roof shingles with a new "patriot slate" color design, Ms. Kessler said. The existing shingles are "reddish" with the proposed roofing a "more grayish, blackish tinge," Ms. Kessler explained. "It is an improvement," said Ms. Kessler in describing the impact the new roof will have on the

neighborhood's aesthetics.

The HPC is finalizing a 100 additional property lists as per its community outreach goals and historic preservation goals, HPC Commissioner Neil Acito said. The list does not include every property, but allows the commission to address many homeowners in a reasonable time frame.

The HPC will review town ordinances "to foster the best policy initiatives governing historic preservation," Ms. Kessler said. New Jersey state standards or legislative guidelines "may guide" the commission towards an autonomous designation process when designating historic districts, Ms. Kessler said. She added that the current governing ordinance allows 75 percent of residents to agree or propose their neighborhood be designated as a historic district.

Ms. Kessler said any finalized ordinance changes have not been made or officially proposed.

"I almost lost my breakfast when I heard the scratch of the bulldozer," said resident Deborah Burslem, describing her feelings towards historic property demolition.

The HPC will begin engaging refreshed community outreach branding methods and communication, stated HPC Commissioner Maria Boyes. A Facebook page promoting historic events and community feedback "is being worked on," Ms. Kessler said.

HPC commissioners welcomed four Westfield High School students as official HPC interns. Gen Howell, Annie Cerria, Chelsea Frisch and Katie Clark will assist the historic property outreach program, explained Ms. Kessler. The outreach will educate homeowners on their property's historical relevance and how historical preservation benefits the community.

Cell Tower

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directly behind the site spoke out against the application at last week's hearing, with an initial complaint being the perceived short notice with which homeowners were notified of the April 26 hearing. Last year, residents mobilized for several weeks in advance of the September 2017 hearing, hired an attorney to argue their case and packed the hearing room by the dozens.

Last week, only about a half dozen residents were in attendance, with their primary concerns being the unsightly view of the antennas from their properties, possible health risks from the antennas, increased flood risk and the potential for ice falling off the pole during the winter and possibly injuring someone. Questions also were raised about the safety and security of the propane tank that will be located on the site.

As the hour approached 11 p.m., the traditional time for board hearings to end, there were no objections from T-Mobile representatives about the timetable for a second hearing, which will be held on Wednesday, May 9.

Frazer

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The council also is considering an ordinance setting out rules and fees for those seeking to use public property such as parks for filming and public relations photography. Township Manager Al Mirabella said he is contacted several times a year by companies interested in filming in Scotch Plains, and said on Tuesday that in exchange for some inconvenience to residents during any filming, a fee system might "generate some revenue" for the township. Township Attorney William Robertson will draft an ordinance for the council to review before its possible introduction later this month.

Several proclamations were issued on Tuesday, including one designating May as Rescue Squad Month, and the week of May 6 to 12 as Nurses Week, Municipal Clerks Week and Public Service Recognition Week. Councilwoman Checchio also read a resolution posthumously honoring police officer Thomas Culp, who served the department from 1962 to 1988 before retiring as a lieutenant.

BOE Budget

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\$19,030,432 to 19,873,146.

The final total budget was reported as \$104,317,943 with the General Fund Budget coming in at \$100,214,008. The total tax levy is \$90,818,517, which includes \$1,409,450 for debt service, an increase of \$2,725,110 over the 2017-2018 budget.

School taxes will be \$70,556,943 in Scotch Plains, with the average assessed home of \$122,628 paying \$247.84, an increase of 2.96 percent. School taxes in Fanwood will be \$20,261,574, with the average assessed home of \$87,759 paying \$214.30, an increase of 2.84 percent.

In other business, the new mascot and logo for the district was unanimously approved. Last week, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) Principal David Heisey, Ed.D., unveiled the new mascot and gave a short presentation on how the district arrived at it.

He said much thought went into the design of the new mascot and that there was a committee that picked the new design. After many submissions from students in the district, Mr. Heisey said the committee met and after much discussion voted and chose the new mascot.

The new mascot, which depicts a strong-looking, close up white, black and gray picture of a knight's head, was shown to members of the audience.

It was reported that the new logo, which has the words Raiders, Scotch Plains Fanwood under the picture, will be on all SPFHS apparel and will be put on flags to be hung in the school's parking lot.

In other business, Michael Walsh spoke during the public portion of the meeting, reminding board members of the importance of the community counseling service Resolve. He noted that many years ago, Resolve was contracted to talk to students in some of the schools and that it was a valuable resource for students during difficult times. Fanwood resident Carol Kraus, who has served on the Resolve board and also the district's past PTA boards, echoed Mr. Walsh's thoughts as did Scotch Plains resident and past school board member Judy Dillon.

The next board of education meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 10, at 7:30 p.m. It will be held at the Administrative Building at 512 Cedar Street in Scotch Plains.

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