

Scotch Plains Council Okays Downtown Redevelopment Plan

By FRED T. ROSSI

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – The township council on Tuesday endorsed a redevelopment plan for the public properties in the central business district, formally launching an effort that will result in about 48,000 square feet of new retail and office space, more than 1,400 new parking spots and 177 new housing units, 35 of which will be set aside as affordable-housing units as part of the township's court settlement with builders.

A round of applause from the handful of residents, property owners and members of the downtown redevelopment committee in atten-

dance greeted the council's 3-to-0 vote, a far cry from the reaction 10 years ago when the council enacted an ordinance establishing a Special Improvement District (SID) in the downtown. At that time, there was vocal opposition from business and property owners, and the SID struggled to get off the ground for years.

Mayor Alexander Smith called the plan "bipartisan" and "well thought out."

"This is the furthest we have ever come," redevelopment committee member Paulette Coronato said. Fellow committee member Steve Goldberg said he looked forward to "a more exciting and vibrant down-

town" and praised the "nonpartisan fashion" in which the plan was drafted over the past 15 months.

Planner Michael Mistretta of Cranford-based Harbor Consultants gave a brief presentation of the plan, which he said was "one concept, one idea that we came up with." The plan centers on the township-owned properties where the municipal building, the firehouse and the library are located as well as the parking lots adjacent to the municipal building and library, behind the stores that front Park Avenue and the parking lot behind the row of businesses on East Second Street adjacent to the CVS drug store.

It calls for several new multi-story buildings that will contain commercial and retail space, living units and parking facilities. The parking facilities will have public green space on their rooftops. A row of townhomes is proposed along Forest Road, and there is a possibility that the first block of Bartle Avenue could be a one-way street or be turned into a pedestrian corridor. A number of public open plazas are envisioned that could be used for community events. Public art — colored lighting, murals, statues and fountains — also will be a component of the plan. The municipal building will be kept in place and continue to house township administrative offices, while a new three-story library will be built behind it. The township's first responders will be relocated out of the downtown.

Mr. Mistretta said he expects that if 20 different developers evaluate the plan and submit their own proposals, "you're going to get 20 different" ideas.

Both Mr. Mistretta and Mayor Smith called parking "key" to the success of the redevelopment ef-

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Garwood Council Voices Concerns Over Ice Rink

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

GARWOOD — Councilwomen Sara Todisco and Stephanie Bianco addressed the Gumbert Park temporary ice rink construction and its impact on the surrounding Garwood neighborhood at Tuesday's borough council meeting.

Ms. Bianco stated that an official letter signed by Mayor Charles Lombardo and every council member should be sent to Westfield addressing the residents and borough council's dissatisfaction with the ice rink. She said the letter must declare the rink should not be located permanently or at the sight for even next winter.

"Garwood does not want to see this rink for more than one year," Ms. Bianco said.

Ms. Bianco said the four months the rink is operating between November 1 to March 1 is "really six months," when including the month required to install the rink and another month to take it down.

Mayor Lombardo, Councilwoman Jennifer Blumenstock and Councilwoman Todisco attended a Gumbert Park ice rink official walkthrough several weeks ago, stated Ms. Todisco. "Some issues have already arisen, such as the contractor beginning work before the ordinance permitted 8 a.m. start time," Ms. Todisco said.

Ms. Todisco said Westfield's Mayor Shelley Brindle wants to "alleviate" the Pointe residents concerns regarding the ice rink. As the project progresses, Mayor Brindle mentioned to Ms. Todisco she is supportive of Ms. Todisco acting as a liaison to Westfield's leadership on the Pointe residents behalf, stated Ms. Todisco. Ms. Todisco said she was using the opportunity to reduce other concerns



Susan M. Dougherty for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE...Sunday's Friends of Fanwood Library Book generated a constant flow of people of all ages. Last weekend's event took weeks of volunteer effort to separate and categorize the donations.

Scotch Plains Day Heads Up Busy October for Rec. Dept.

By MICHAEL BONACCORSO

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – The recreation department has begun preparing for a busy month of community activities, including Scotch Plains Day, Play For P.L.N.K. Scotch Plains Walk (benefiting breast cancer research), and Trunk or Treat, stated Recreation Director DJ Salvante, addressing the recreation commission at Monday's meeting.

Scotch Plains Day will be held on Sunday, October 7, on the Alan M. Augustine Village Green and Park

Avenue from noon to 5 p.m. Nine food trucks and 27 community organizations will participate, said Mr. Salvante. Featured food trucks will be Tony's Sausage, Big John's Gourmet Burgers, The Little Sicilian, The Empanada Guy, Jerkin Chicken Truck and Dellano's Food Service.

Live performances will include The Moonglowers, North Ave, Brother John Brown Band, and Theatrical Artist's Prep, stated Mr. Salvante. Scotch Plains Day will include featured events such as an electric vehicle show, the annual ravioli-eating contest, and kid-friendly activities.

A "human-sized" Connect Four will be one of six inflatable games, stated Mr. Salvante. The fire department will organize a Jr. Firefighter obstacle course.

Trunk or Treat will be held on Saturday, October 27, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., on the Alan M. Augustine Village Green on Park Avenue. The rain date is Sunday, October 28. The day will include vehicle-decorating contests, spooky crafts and hay rides. Duke's Pet Den will sponsor the "Howl-O-Ween Pet Parade" costume contest.

Trunk or Treat is an event where residents can participate by decorating their car to be displayed on Park Avenue. Each car becomes a stop for the participating trick-or-treaters, stated Mr. Salvante. Parents can bring their children to trick-or-treat with-

out bringing a car for participation.

For more information or to participate in the event, call the Department of Parks and Recreation at (908) 322-6700, extension no. 223.

Mr. Salvante said individuals interested in decorating a car can still do so and should contact the recreation department.

Recreation Commissioner Shawn Johnson said the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Police Athletic League donated more than \$1,000 worth of candy for the decorated cars to distribute. Mr. Salvante stated that the recreation department is "hoping and currently finalizing" whether small-business donations and other sponsor donations will provide enough candy to subsidize participating cars.

This Sunday, September 30, between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., a non-recreation department-sponsored car show, "Cruising on Park Avenue," will be held between Front Street and Westfield Avenue, stated Mr. Salvante.

On Saturday, October 13, Play for P.L.N.K. will present the third annual Scotch Plains Walk to support the Breast Cancer Research Foundation. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m., with the opening ceremony for the two-mile walk commencing at 9 a.m., stated Mr. Salvante. Interested participants can register at playforpink.org/scotchplainswalk.

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Fred T. Rossi for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
BAND COMPETITION...The Cranford High School marching band was among 15 high school marching bands taking part in Saturday's 20th Annual Marching Band Festival at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

New Scotch Plains LED Ordinance Expected Soon

By FRED T. ROSSI

Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – It is expected that a new ordinance regulating the use of LED signs will be in place by year's end, after the township council holds a public hearing and votes on it. At Monday night's planning board meeting, Township Zoning Officer Robert LaCosta mentioned the proposed ordinance as part of brief comments on his department's completion of revisions to the township's so-called Green Book, the thick, green-covered book that contains the township's ordinances.

He said he had attended an emergency-management meeting during the previous weekend, and stated that LED signs, which are typically found outside schools and houses of worship, could be useful during weather emergencies and in alerting the public to children who have been abducted or elderly people who are being sought by family mem-

bers. Mr. LaCosta said many LED signs are equipped with back-up generators so they can remain operable in a power outage.

At its next meeting on Wednesday, October 10, the planning board will hear a presentation on how the township is complying with the affordable-housing court settlement that was finalized earlier this year. At Monday's brief meeting, the planning board formally ratified resolutions to include the Amberg garden center property on Lamberts Mill Road and the North Avenue property next to the Charlie Brown's restaurant in the township's master plan, a formality that was necessitated by the township's affordable-housing settlement.

The Amberg property is slated to be developed into a 125-unit complex with 19 affordable-housing units, while the North Avenue property will be turned into a five-townhome, seven-apartment com-

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Susan M. Dougherty for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
SELECTION COMPLETED...At the Friends of Fanwood Library sale last weekend, little Isabelle of Scotch Plains shows her mother the special book she selected on horses. Readers of all ages walked away with treasures.



Fred T. Rossi for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times
OUCH!..If a cat could say, Ouch, this feline might have while getting inoculated at a rabies clinic in Scotch Plains last week.

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