

## Hearings Set for Ordinances Rezoning Props. For Housing

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

SCOTCH PLAINS – In advance of a public hearing on ordinances that will rezone two properties slated for housing developments, the township will hold a meeting next month to give property owners and residents an extra opportunity to understand the ordinances and their impact.

At last week's township council meeting, two ordinances were introduced that will rezone the Amberg garden center on Lamberts Mill Road as well as a tract of land on North Avenue adjacent to the Charlie Brown's restaurant to allow multi-family housing to be built.

These two projects are part of the township's court-ordered affordable-housing settlement with developers reached last year. Plans call for 12 housing units being built at the North Avenue site, with two of them being labeled as affordable while the Amberg property is slated for 125 units, 19 of them affordable.

The Tuesday, July 9 town hall meeting will also allow property owners and residents to speak with members of the township's affordable housing advisory committee that is working to reform the court-ordered affordable housing process. A week later, on Tuesday, July 16, the council will hold public hearings on the two rezoning ordinances.

Also at last week's meeting, the council introduced a third ordinance designating a slice of land adjacent to the planned North Avenue development as a C-Conservation zone that will be off limits to any development and also serve as a buffer between the new housing and the single-family homes to the west. A public hearing on that ordinance will also be held on July 16.

In other business last week, the council approved an ordinance appropriating \$110,000 for the preparation of an approved tax map by Suburban Consulting Engineers Inc. of Flanders. This is being done, according to Township Manager Al Mirabella, to prepare for the property revaluation process expected in 2021. He added that the actual expected cost of preparing the tax map is actually \$82,600 but that, on the advice of the township's bond counsel, an additional \$17,400 is being appropriated for any contingencies that may arise.

The council also renewed for a year liquor licenses for eight restaurants, three clubs and three retail outlets. The governing body also awarded a contract not to exceed \$473,294 to New Prince Concrete Construction Co. of Hackensack for repaving a section of Westfield Road and a contract for up to \$673,333 to Denbar Construction Company of Kenilworth for this summer's road resurfacing program that includes five streets of the north side of town and six on the south side.

A contract not to exceed \$214,841 was also awarded to Timmerman Equipment Co. of Whitehouse for a new street sweeper.

The Stage House Tavern's Founder's Day celebration will take place on Saturday afternoon, June 29 at the Alan Augustine Village Green and will include a beer truck, pony rides and other activities for children, a crawfish boil and live music. All proceeds will go to the restoration efforts at the Frazee House.

## Better Enforcement Vowed On Property Maintenance

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

SCOTCH PLAINS – Township officials vowed on Tuesday to strengthen efforts to cut down on illegal dumping in downtown recycling bins and also to ensure that property owners in the commercial district are properly maintaining their properties.

At a business roundtable attended by a dozen downtown business and property owners, Police Chief Ted Conley said his department's newly-constituted code enforcement staff will begin issuing written warnings to downtown property owners in July for any violations of township ordinances pertaining to property maintenance, which could include excessive weeds, unshoveled snow and damaged sidewalks. And beginning in August, the police department will start issuing summonses for code violations, Chief Conley said. He said the department is not looking to raise revenues but only to ensure that downtown properties are properly maintained.

Zoning Officer Robert LaCosta said that, "it's not rocket science to keep your property clean." He said that ordinances regarding property maintenance have "been on the books for years," but that property owners in the downtown are not always aware of their responsibilities. Mr. LaCosta clarified that owners are responsible for maintaining the exterior of their properties from the outside of their building to the curb — essentially all the way to the property line.

He said a letter is sent annually to business and property owners outlining their responsibilities, and Mayor



SURROUNDED BY SUPPORT...At the 2019 commencement exercises held on June 20, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School graduates are applauded by their teachers, administrators and board members. The tradition of the president of the class (Michael Dieu) and other officers leading the class through the rows of support was upheld this year. Michael also was valedictorian of the class.

## SPFHS Graduates 389 During Commencement Exercises

By JILL BURKE  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS – Three hundred and eighty-nine graduates walked across the stage on Perry Tyson Field at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) to receive their diplomas Thursday night.

After on-and-off rain throughout the day, administrators made the decision to hold the graduation outside only an hour before the ceremony began. Although a risky call, holding the ceremony outside with the risk of more rain seemed to be the lesser of two evils, compared to the alternative of moving the graduation indoors to the high school auditorium, where only a fraction of the spectators would be able to fit.

Students and faculty processed into the stadium to the tune of Pomp and Circumstance, while family and friends cheered on from the bleachers surrounding the field.

It was a sea of school spirit on Tyson Field, with graduates sporting head-to-toe blue in their caps and gowns, while bouncing blue balloons and beach balls throughout their seating area. Even some teachers joined in on the fun.

Salutatorian Melanie Litwin gave the first speech of the evening. "Right now is the time to look back and reflect, to remember how far we've come, without forgetting how much we have ahead of us," she said.

Acknowledging that life is about to change for all graduates of the Class of 2019, no matter where they are headed next, Ms. Litwin told her class-

mates to remember that they are not strangers to change. "Our whole lives have been based on change," she said. "Embrace the change as it comes. You can live in the moment, while still being excited about the future," she continued.

After senior chorus members performed "Go the Distance" from  *Hercules*, Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education President Karen Kulikowski addressed the graduating class. She asked that in the next chapter of their lives, the graduates call home sometimes. "Please let your loved ones know that you are still there and you are happy. Scotch Plains and Fanwood will only be a phone call away," she said.

Superintendent of Schools Margaret W. Hayes, Ed.D., is retiring with this

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SPFHS GRADUATE...A graduate is all smiles after receiving her diploma during last Thursday's 2019 Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School commencement exercises at Perry Tyson Field.

## Wilkie Formerly Charged At Detention Hearing

By JESSE WINTER  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

ELIZABETH — Thomas J. Wilkie, the suspect arrested by the Westfield Police Department on June 13 in the parking lot of Tamaques Elementary School in Westfield, entered a not guilty plea in front of State Superior Court Judge William Daniel during a detention hearing in Elizabeth on June 19. Wilkie was arrested after police found he had a .45-caliber handgun and numerous rounds of hollow-point ammunition inside his Mitsubishi SUV while parked in the Tamaques School parking lot.

The detention hearing came almost a week after Westfield police arrested Wilkie after a report was relayed from the New Castle County Police Department in Delaware to the Westfield Police Department that "Wilkie was en route to the school and may be armed," according to the Union County Prosecutor's Office and based on a preliminary investigation.

Aside from an additional two rounds of ammunition recovered on Wilkie himself, 130 additional rounds of ammunition were found in the

suspect's trunk, according to the prosecutor's office. Wilkie has been charged with second-degree unlawful possession of a weapon, third-degree possession of a firearm in or upon the grounds of an educational institution, fourth-degree possession of hollow-point bullets, and fourth-degree trespassing on school grounds.

The charges leveled against him varied based on the degree of the crime, with second-degree crimes carrying sentences from five to 10 years in prison, third-degree crimes ranging from three to five years and fourth-degree crimes up to 18 months. Wilkie will remain in custody pending a medical evaluation, the details and specifics of which were not made clear during the hearing. Judge Daniel read out the charges and the potential sentencing to Wilkie as he sat handcuffed in the jurors box flanked by two sheriff's officers.

Wilkie, dressed in Union County orange jail attire, responded with a low audible "yes" as the judge laid out the charges. Wilkie claimed to be born in Camden, N.J. His mother and

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FIRST APPEARANCE...Thomas J. Wilkie makes his first court appearance before State Superior Court Judge William Daniel at the Union County Court-house last Wednesday on charges of having a loaded gun and ammunition in his car while parked at Tamaques Elementary School in Westfield on June 13.

### Online Bonus at goleader.com Index

Community/Education -- Westfield High School, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, Cranford High School and Union County Magnet High School graduation photos.

Sports -- Cranford/Westfield 13U Babe Ruth District Game; Mountainside/Millburn 12U Cal Ripken District 12 Championship; Cranford Gold/Summit 10U Ripken District 12 Championship.



GOV. MURPHY IN WESTFIELD...Governor Phil Murphy last Wednesday publicized his gun safety initiative proposals during a press conference in the Community Room of the Westfield Municipal Building. The press conference followed the arrest of a man June 13 on charges of possession of a loaded gun and ammunition in his car while parked at Tamaques Elementary School in Westfield. Pictured, from left to right, are: Plainfield Mayor Adrian O. Mapp, Freeholder Chair Bette Jane Kowalski of Cranford, Gov. Murphy, Westfield Mayor Shelley Brindle and Bill Castner, senior advisor to the governor on gun safety. See story on Page 2.

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## Congratulations to the Top Teams for the Month of May!



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**The Sherrie Natko Team**  
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