



GRAND MARSHAL MURANO...Scotch Plains-Fanwood Memorial Day Parade Grand Marshal Joe Murano, a Fanwood resident and World War II veteran, receives a traditional print of the historic Fanwood Train Station at his home at the Chelsea independent living residence from Mayor Colleen Mahr, left, and Councilwoman Kathy Mitchell.

Bramnick Hosts Town Hall On High-Density Housing

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

MOUNTAINSIDE – Assembly Republican Minority Leader Jon Bramnick (R-21st, Westfield) hosted a town hall meeting in Mountainside Monday night on alternative affordable-housing solutions mitigating high-density housing’s impact on public infrastructure, schools and taxes.

Assemblyman Bramnick said suburban towns not along a transit line should not be responsible for current affordable-housing quotas. Mr. Bramnick said the affordable-housing discussion can continue, while informing residents by reaching out, constituent by constituent, through petition and town hall meetings.

He said many residents are unaware why traffic is becoming worse, how high-density housing came about, or who voted for the current legislation. “Garwood and Cranford are becoming townships with more renters than homeowners,” said one resident in describing affordable housing’s impact on suburban demographics.

Mr. Bramnick said bipartisan regional housing committees could be established to assess state affordable-housing needs on a regional basis. He said urban areas are exempt from affordable-housing quotas, while suburbs are being held accountable.

Legislation (A-3928) “allows housing to be built where there is present need, such as urban areas which are closer to jobs and transportation,” Assemblyman Bramnick said.

Attorney Jolanta Maziarz, who has defended municipalities against builder’s remedy lawsuits, said the legislative standard creates an urban area “gentrification,” forcing poor individuals into the suburbs. She said the suburbs become overcrowded, lacking resources, funding and infrastructure.

Assemblyman Bramnick said suspending court-imposed housing agreements for one year would allow state lawmakers to receive feedback from municipal leaders “to enact real reform” versus forcing towns into

“onerous settlements.” “Garwood is a Democratic majority township with Democratic leaders. So is Cranford. Why do these leaders not press Democratic legislators?” Mountainside resident J.D. Bryden asked.

Mr. Bramnick responded that the reason these local officials do not press state leaders in their party is because of the threat of having one’s political career limited for going against senior Democratic leaders.

Mr. Bramnick discussed 10 pieces of legislation limiting high-density housing that the “Democratic Trenton majority” has not supported, making the bills “Dracula bills.”

“Dracula bills never see the light of day,” the Assemblyman said, referring to the Democratic majority or committees not letting the alternative affordable-housing bills be discussed, voted upon or approved.

Mr. Bramnick has proposed legislation, A-1648, that he said “forces the state and courts to give primary consideration to a municipality’s current population size, infrastructure, water and sewer capacities, school class sizes and school services, impact on municipal services such as ambulance services, fire departments, police departments, public transportation and traffic.”

Mr. Bramnick said many proposed “bills, discussions and committee work” reframing affordable-housing obligations have “never seen the light of day.”

The assemblyman also said A-1650/AC-R79 would eliminate builder’s remedy lawsuits that allow developers to sue a municipality, paving the way for them to build numerous units on a small parcel of land.

“Builder’s remedy lawsuits have prompted numerous municipalities to agree to high-density builds,” Mr. Bramnick said.

He also said that the “Ensure municipal zoning sovereignty” bill, A-1646, “provides municipalities with a defense against the unfunded housing mandates to stop additional development by focusing on redevelopment of existing properties.”

Scotch Plains Council

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Ted Spera agreed, saying “we don’t like this, we would like to have more home rule.”

In other business, Mr. Losardo outlined four pieces of legislation currently pending in the State Legislature that the township’s affordable-housing advisory committee plans to make an effort to support. The first, A-4471, would end the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) and establish a legislative subcommittee on affordable-housing needs that would evaluate and determine present and prospective needs for affordable housing at the state and regional levels. The second bill, A-1648, would establish additional factors — such as impacts on infrastructure, local schools, first-responders — when calculating a town’s affordable-housing obligations and also provides a population-based cap for those obligations.

The third bill, A-1649, would prohibit affordable-housing obligation exemptions for urban aid municipalities and allow for such housing requirements in those cities. Prior regulations excluded such municipalities — which include Elizabeth, Plainfield, Linden and Rahway — from providing any contribution toward a region’s affordable-housing needs. Those exemptions have led to a greater housing burden being imposed on other, primarily suburban towns. The fourth piece of legislation, A-1644, would allow municipalities to establish an affordable-housing preference for their own residents so that long-time residents who may be

downsizing in retirement or can’t afford to live in their homes any longer can remain in their town.

At the start of the meeting, Mayor Smith read a proclamation declaring Friday, June 7 as National Gun Violence Awareness Day.

Police Investigate Man’s Death In SP

SCOTCH PLAINS — Police with assistance from the Union County Prosecutor Office’s Homicide Task Force are investigating the death of a man in the 500 block of Park Avenue.

Police on Tuesday received a call just after 11 a.m. to check on the welfare of a resident. News reports indicate the body was found in the Forest Park Village apartments on Park Avenue.

“Scotch Plains officers entered the location and found an adult male, deceased. Due to the fact that the cause of death was not immediately known, the Union County Prosecutor’s Office was called in to assist in the investigation,” according to an alert sent out Wednesday morning by police via the Union County Alert System. “We ask that the public be patient until we have further information that we can report.”

According to news reports, the victim was missing for several days when someone called police for a wellness check.

If anyone has any information that may assist police in this investigation by contacting Detective Al Sellinger at (908) 322-7100, extension 117.



FUTURE LEADERS...Declan, R.J., Aiden and Christopher, pictured, left to right, hold The Westfield Leader on Point Pleasant Beach after touring Jenkinson’s Aquarium last Wednesday with their Brookside Place Elementary School, Cranford, kindergarten classmates. They learned about sharks, seals, and other aquatic creatures and had a chance to touch a live horseshoe crab, sea urchin, and sea star.

Garwood Hears Review Of School District Goals

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

GARWOOD – New Jersey School Boards Association representative Gwen Thornton presented the Garwood school district’s four broad strategic goals, derived over three strategic planning meetings on September 24, October 9 and December 12, 2018, at Tuesday’s Garwood Board of Education meeting. The strategic categories include providing 21st-century curriculum instruction, protecting school climate and culture, and enhancing community engagement, while considering district financial costs and facilities.

“Dreams become a goal when written down. Goals broken down become a plan. Action makes dreams a reality,” Ms. Thornton said.

Garwood residents, board of education members and Lincoln School educators developed the categories, discussing the district’s “strengths and weaknesses,” Ms. Thornton stated.

“You did everything you needed to be done to begin making your dream a reality,” said Ms. Thornton, addressing district representatives and strategic planning participants.

Garwood Superintendent of Schools Teresa Quigley, Ed.D., said providing curriculum at 21st-century standards refers to providing educational standards through effective technological mediums. At a previous Garwood Board of Education meeting, she said Google Chromebooks are used by Lincoln School students as an educational tool and effective medium.

Over the next five years the “broad strategic goal categories” will guide the district leaders’ policy, financial considerations, student activity and curriculum decisions, Ms. Thornton stated.

“Unanticipated events can happen,” she added.

Ms. Thornton said the board of education may have to make an abrupt decision regarding a facility given the district’s finances.

She said the categories will allow district leaders to prioritize issues based on short-term circumstances, but not permanently disregard the long-term

objectives. “You will address the problem, then return back to the plan,” Ms. Thornton said.

She said outlining goals creates priority focuses for the board of education and Lincoln School leadership to return their focus, too, after an unexpected short-term issue is addressed.

Superintendent Quigley said the goal of addressing school climate and culture protects the students’ social and emotional learning environment.

“We’re always looking to engage more parents, and encourage more volunteers and parent participation,” the superintendent said in addressing the community outreach and engagement goal category.

She said the district’s finance and facilities goals will include board of education consideration for capital projects, school programs and curriculum funding.

“District leaders will always have to switch back and forth between goal categories to attain specific category objectives,” Ms. Thornton said.

Board of Education member Maureen Scepkowski inquired about whether the district should put its goals on the district’s website along with updates over time.

Ms. Thornton said the district should display its goals on the website to educate the public on the overarching focuses influencing policy and action. She said the board, annually or over several years, will want to check to make sure action is being taken to achieve specific category objectives.

An “action plan step or specific objective” within a goal category can be evaluated based on a simple determination process, Ms. Thornton explained.

“Who is involved? Was a proposed event held? Was it successful? Did an action step serve its initial purpose?” said Ms. Thornton in detailing areas the board will want to address.

Superintendent Quigley honored numerous volunteers who participated in the strategic planning meetings, providing input at the beginning with Tuesday’s meeting.



NEW FIREFIGHTER...This youngster poses for a picture, while sitting on the front of a Scotch Plains fire engine during Sunday’s Jewish Community Center’s Touch-A-Truck event. The annual event saw over 2,500 attendees.

Opioid Crisis Addressed by Public Safety Committee

By ROBYN ORR-GIOFFRE
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

LINDEN — A town hall meeting was held this past Tuesday night at McManus Middle School in Linden, addressing the Opioid Crisis in Union County.

The Union County Public Safety Committee hosted the town meeting, called “The Opioid Epidemic: Silently Affecting Our Community.”

Opioids, which Union County Freeholder Christopher Hudak, described as “a silent killer in our community,” are drugs that work with opioid receptors in a person’s brain cells to block pain and increase feelings of pleasure.

Made from a poppy plant, like morphine, or produced in a laboratory, like Fentanyl, other types of opioids include heroin and prescription drugs like oxycodone, hydrocodone and codeine.

Last year, there were 133 deaths in Union County connected to opioid use, more than double than what was reported before 2015, according to Mr. Hudak.

Union County Assistant Prosecutor Julie Peterman spoke about programs established in Union County to combat this epidemic, like Operation Helping Hand.

This program makes recovery coaches available for individuals who have just been arrested for drug use, “with the goal of getting them treatment,” according to Ms. Peterman.

This May, in Union County, there were 148 contacts made with people struggling with drugs through Operation Helping Hands. Of those 148 individuals, 29 went into medically assisted treatment and 43 took part in intensive outpatient treatment or a became involved with some other community-based support system.

Union County Department of Public Safety Director Andrew Moran spoke about increased emphasis on public safety and community wellness through various changes made in Union County,

including public access to Narcan.

Narcan is an opioid antagonist that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. Increased public access means more victims could have the opportunity to survive an opioid overdose.

Additionally, Mr. Moran mentioned a new protocol used for 911 calls related to a drug overdose that involves giving the caller instruction on how to administer Narcan.

“The goal is to administer Narcan before the police even arrive,” Mr. Moran commented.

Executive Director of Prevention Links, Morgan Thompson said an opioid addiction is something that can happen to anyone and does not discriminate by age, gender or race spoke about prevention, treatment and recovery for opioid abuse.

Describing herself a recovering opioid addict, she explained that addiction is a “chronic” condition and stressed the importance of a recovery oriented system of care to meet the needs of those struggling.

“We want to get the experts there with those struggling “at the right place, at the right time,” Ms. Thompson explained.

She spoke specifically about Recovery High School, which utilizes a peer recovery support system.

According to Ms. Thompson, the school is important because most addicts report their first experience with drugs in high school, therefore an opportunity for early intervention is possible.

With so much attention recently being drawn to the opioid crisis, all involved are hoping available resources will be utilized and the situation will improve.

According to Mr. Hudak, there have been less deaths in 2019 caused by opioid abuse than in 2018.

There have been 23 deaths reported as of March of 2019, but “one night can change that statistic,” said Mr. Hudak.

County Freeholders

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ity for everyone else,” said Mr. Hurley.

“The rest of the county and the state get a free ride as those of us who are impacted pay the cost,” Mr. Hurley said. “This board needs to do anything it can within its power to make sure the cost is spread fairly among all our constituents.”

David Krieger, a Westfield resident, also took the opportunity to speak to the Freeholders.

“PSE&G’s initial and now scrapped 69kV route was set to run past my house. That route, which zig-zagged through a wholly residential neighborhood, made no sense,” said Mr. Krieger. “It went directly past Edison Middle School, our town pool and our football stadium.”

“An impassioned group of concerned citizens formed No Monster Power Lines Westfield,” he added. “We did everything we could in opposition, including gathering 2,500 signatures in an online petition and encouraging everyone to speak out at the Westfield

Town Council (meeting),” said Mr. Krieger.

“While I’m grateful the initial route in Westfield has been put to rest, I believe, like our friends in No High Voltage Cranford, the most harm these projects cause are in residential neighborhoods,” Mr. Krieger said.

Commissioner Mary O’Connor, a member of the Cranford Township Committee, also spoke to the Freeholders, joining many Cranford residents she represents on her township’s five-person governing body.

“I believe there is strength in numbers, and I think the municipalities joining with the Freeholder Board increases our chances of cautiously optimistic change in the route and process with PSE&G,” said Commissioner O’Connor. “When people come together and make their voices heard, they have a larger chance of affecting change than by staying quiet. This is a really good example of the government process at work.”

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GRAND MARSHAL SCHOTT...Scotch Plains-Fanwood Memorial Day Parade Grand Marshal Joe Schott, a Fanwood resident and World War II veteran, received a historic Fanwood Train Station print at Monday’s council meeting from Mayor Colleen Mahr in recognition of being named grand marshal.



LEADER IN ALGERIA...Robert and Carole Peyton of Westfield took The Westfield Leader with them during their visit to the Roman ruins on the Mediterranean in Tipasa, Algeria.