

## Mayor Smith Sets Out His ‘Complete Agenda’ for 2020

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

SCOTCH PLAINS – At the township council’s reorganization meeting last week, Mayor Alexander Smith, in his message to residents, put forth what he called “a complete agenda” for 2020 that included not only the immediate issues of downtown redevelopment and building court-ordered affordable housing, but also an array of other priorities.

The mayor said he is looking to complete negotiations for a 29,000-square-foot Lidl grocery store — Scotch Plains’ first supermarket in decades — and a 51-space commuter park-and-ride lot on the 5.5-acre property where the Snuffy’s/Pantagis building currently is

situated. A 6,000-square-foot retail-type building will be located closer to Route 22 and could house up to three tenants, according to the plans.

One aspect of the downtown redevelopment effort is to have large trucks rerouted from Park Avenue, which slices through the central business district, onto Terrill Road, and the mayor said last week that township officials will soon meet with state transportation officials who have to sign off on the new truck route.

The mayor said talks on a shared Public Works Department with Fanwood and Westfield are ongoing and he estimated the annual savings to the township at around \$600,000. He said he is continuing to back efforts to

establish a permanent one-seat ride into Manhattan’s Penn Station for train commuters along the Raritan Valley Line.

With the 2020 national census set to be conducted in April, the township has established a committee to ensure an accurate and complete count of residents. The importance of having a complete count, the mayor said, “cannot be overstated,” noting that it will play a significant role in allotting federal funding for a variety of programs and needs. He noted that the local response rate for the 2010 census was 87 percent, and said that the 13 percent who did not take part spelled the difference in federal dollars allocated for Scotch Plains.

The township will continue to lobby state lawmakers to reform the affordable-housing program, something an advisory committee has been working on since it was established a year ago. And the mayor said he will press for some type of property tax relief at the state level.

In other business at the council’s first meeting of the year, Josh Losardo was named deputy mayor for a second year. The council also reappointed the law firm of Rainone Coughlin and Minchello of Iselin to serve as township attorney. Mr. Losardo was reappointed to the planning board, and Ray Szpond and Joseph Policay were named to that board. Anthony Flagg was reappointed to the zoning board of adjustment and Suman Dahiya-Shah was also named to that board.

The firm of Suplee Clooney of Westfield was reappointed as township auditor, Rogut McCarthy of Cranford was reappointed as bond counsel, and Eric Bernstein and Associates of Warren was appointed as township prosecutor. Harbor Consultants of Cranford was reappointed as township planner and David Littman was again named public defender.



**BEGINNING HER FIFTH TERM...**Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr is sworn in for a fifth term by Governor Phil Murphy at the borough council’s reorganization meeting as her son holds the Holy Bible.



**GEARING UP FOR 2020...**Governor Phil Murphy poses with the Fanwood governing body at its reorganization meeting January 5, where he swore in Mayor Colleen Mahr for a fifth term. Pictured, from left to right, are: Councilman Jeffrey Banks, Councilwoman Katherine Mitchell, Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-12th, Trenton), Gov. Murphy, Councilman Anthony Carter, Mayor Mahr, Councilwoman Patricia Walsh, Council President Erin McElroy Barker and Councilwoman Francine Glaser.

## Downtown Committee Embarks On Busy Year

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

SCOTCH PLAINS – Members of the downtown redevelopment committee kicked off what’s expected to be a busy and significant year last Wednesday by discussing new overlay-zone ordinances that need to be adopted by the township council by mid-year.

Planner Michael Mistretta briefed the committee on the proposed ordinances that will put into place overlay

zones on properties in the seven phases slated for development. An overlay zone, he explained, is “a zone on top of a zone,” essentially adding a second zone to an existing one that will allow a developer to build on a property that may not be designated for, say, multi-unit housing.

It was emphasized that private property owners will make any decisions on what they want to do with their properties. They will not be obligated in any way to redevelop their properties or to sell to a developer.

A court order a year ago mandated that the township enact the overlay zones by June 30 for properties along two segments of Terrill Road, two

segments of East Second Street, Park Avenue from East Second Street to the Fanwood border, the central business district where four township-owned properties are the initial focus of the committee’s redevelopment efforts and the Snuffy’s property that is being redeveloped into a supermarket and a commuter park-and-ride lot. Similar overlay zones have already been put into place on properties near the Scotch Hills Country Club that are targeted for housing developments.

Mr. Mistretta showed the committee photographs and artist renderings of developments in neighboring towns like Westfield, Garwood and Cran-

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## Land Use Boards Set For Busy Year in Scotch Plains

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The two land-use boards each retained their leadership for this year at reorganization meetings in the past week, and the planning board in particular is gearing up for a busy year as the pace of downtown redevelopment accelerates.

Last Thursday, the zoning board of adjustment re-elected long-time chairman Ken Anderson to serve in the top position for 2020 and again chose Rich Duthie to serve as vice-chairman.

On Monday, the planning board chose Joseph Doyle, with more than 40 years of planning board experience, in Belleville and in Scotch Plains, to again serve as chairman for 2020 and also re-elected Jeffrey Strauss, the former councilman, as vice-chairman.

The planning board will be very involved in the downtown redevelopment efforts that are sure to pick up speed as the year goes on. A proposal for the first phase of redevelopment

— centered on four municipal-owned properties in the central business district — is set to be revealed in February or March, and the board will hold a number of hearings on those plans before any actual work gets underway. Final action will also be taken on plans to build a supermarket and commuter park-and-ride lot on the 5.5-acre Snuffy’s Pantagis property.

The board will also weigh in on proposed overlays zone ordinances that have to be put into place by June 30 for all of the seven phases of downtown slated for redevelopment, including Park Avenue, East Second Street and Terrill Road. And any other significant housing developments being considered will also need to pass muster with the planning board before proceeding.

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**NEW MAYORAL TERM...**Mountainside Mayor Paul Mirabelli is sworn in for a third full, four-year term by State Assembly Republican Minority Leader Jon Bramnick (R-21st, Westfield) at last Tuesday’s borough council reorganization meeting. Mayor Mirabelli was named mayor following the death of six-term Mayor Robert Viglianti in 2009, and was elected to finish Mr. Viglianti’s term.

## Radio Freq. Expert Provides Testimony on Cell Tower

By JENNIFER GLACKIN  
Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

CRANFORD — Glenn Pierson, a radio frequency expert, testified for the third time in front of Cranford’s Board of Adjustment Monday night, answering questions from Cranford and Westfield residents as well as Robert Simon, an attorney for Union County Residents United, a group of citizens who oppose the building of a cell tower at the Cranford campus of Union County College.

As previously reported in *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, the proposed tower is a 140-foot monopole, which will reach 148 feet with concealment branches to give the illusion of a tree, where the town ordinance allows structures to be 70 feet. The currently proposed site for the tower is 229 feet from the nearest residence, which is approximately 215 feet closer than allowed by Cranford

zoning regulations.

Mr. Pierson said this pole is the culmination of a 20-year project of Verizon to enhance cellular coverage in this area. He also said approximately 3,350 local residents will have better coverage, taking his information from the 2010 U.S. census. Other site options were determined unusable, said Mr. Pierson. Properties such as Dreyer Farms and the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church denied a building proposal from Verizon, according to Mr. Simon. Mr. Pierson said the process of determining sites starts with individual carriers researching “site acquisition” in the area of need.

In order for the signal to be received, the monopole or “macro site,” as Mr. Pierson referred to it, must be a certain height above sea level. If the site of the monopole was moved to another location on campus, one farther away from residences, the pole itself would have to be made larger to accommodate the difference. Mr. Pierson said if there are other options in the area where the monopole could be placed, they are willing to look into it.

When questioned by residents about their own lack of dropped call experiences in and around the campus, Mr. Pierson said phones will latch on to whatever frequency is around them, whether it is low or high, but that towers in the area are becoming overloaded because “the growth rate of usage (of cellular data) is astronomical.” Each of the other cell towers in the area, such as on Route 22 or in Garwood, have a “power budget,” according to Mr. Pierson, and if the usage rate continues at this pace, those current poles would max out their power budgets and residents will begin to have problems.

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## Fanwood Police Probe Armed Robbery

FANWOOD — The Fanwood Police Department currently is investigating an armed robbery which occurred last Thursday evening on Second Street near Burns Way at approximately 8:52 p.m.

The victim stated that he was followed home from the local Wells Fargo ATM by a white Jeep Cherokee and was approached by a man who asked for directions. A struggle ensued and the victim was struck with the end of a handgun by a second man.

The victim described one of the suspects as being a black male, 25 to 30 years old, 5 feet, 9 inches to 5 feet, 10 inches in height, with facial hair.

Anyone with any information regarding this incident is asked to contact Lieutenant Chin at (908) 322-5000, extension no. 506.

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**STANDING ROOM ONLY...**The Fanwood Borough Council’s reorganization meeting attracted a standing-room-only crowd January 5. Among those attending were Governor Phil Murphy, the mayors of Cranford, Garwood, Roselle, Scotch Plains, Springfield and Westfield, council members from surrounding towns, as well as Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-12th, Trenton).

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