



SCOTCH PLAINS

# THE TIMES

of

## Scotch Plains – Fanwood



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Cheri Rogovsky for The Times

**DO YOU REMEMBER THIS ONE?...Who's Johnny performs as the opening act for Shirley Alston Reeves, the original lead singer of The Shirelles, during the July 21 "Oldies Night" concert at Echo Lake Park. The concert was part of the Summer Arts Festival sponsored in part by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders. The next concert will be Wednesday, August 11, with "An Evening of Motown" featuring the Sensational Soul Cruisers. The concert will begin at 7:30 p.m. For more Arts and Entertainment, please see Pages 15 and 16.**

### Expert Witnesses Provide Testimony At Ongoing Dean Oil Site Hearing

By LILLIAN M. DUGGAN  
Specially Written for The Times

The second in a series of hearings involving a request by LaGrande Realty Associates, LLC to develop a two-story apartment complex on the Deal Oil site in Fanwood took place on July 28.

The building, which is being eyed for the long-vacant lot at LaGrande Avenue and Second Street, would contain 23 two-bedroom and two one-bedroom units. Four of the apartments are earmarked for affordable housing.

At the hearing, held once again in the auditorium of Park Middle School in Scotch Plains, two expert wit-

nesses for LaGrande Realty Associates came before the Fanwood Planning Board to give testimony and answer questions from the board and the public.

Andrew Birtok, an engineer with Harbor Consultants of Cranford, testified on behalf of the developer regarding the proposed dumpster area, vegetation surrounding the development, parking, and entrances and exits.

At last month's hearing, concerns were raised over the lack of a recycling bin in the dumpster area. According to Mr. Birtok, recycling containers that can hold a total of 20 to 30 gallons of materials have been

added to the plan.

He also stated that trash and recyclables would be collected by a private party rather than by the borough, to avoid placing a burden on Fanwood's trash collection system.

In their original plan, the applicants chose red maple trees to line the front of the apartment complex. Due to Planning Board concerns that there is already an excess of these trees in Fanwood, the engineer mentioned that green ash trees have been selected in place of the red maples.

Mr. Birtok agreed to make one of the proposed handicapped parking stalls van accessible, as suggested by Planning Board Chairman Gregory Cummings. The engineer also stated that the sidewalk along LaGrande Avenue could be extended to an adjacent municipal lot near Frank's Auto Repair.

According to Mr. Cummings, the width of the one-way driveway off LaGrande needs to be increased so that large vehicles such as garbage trucks can enter. A method suggested by the board involves using radii, whereby the curb of the road would curve at the driveway entrance.

Mr. Birtok plans to contact Union County regarding the use of radii to amplify the width of the driveway. He said that in his experience, the county does not permit the use of radii. Under the current plan, the driveway measures 18 feet wide.

While Mr. Birtok responded to questions from members of the public, a controversy arose over discussions taking place between him and John D. Molozzi, an attorney who is serving as legal counsel for the development company.

During his questioning of Mr. Birtok, local attorney Joseph DiRienzo complained to the board that such discussions constituted

"coaching" of the witness by Mr. Molozzi. Board member Robert J. Mega supported Mr. DiRienzo in his complaint and requested that conversations between Mr. Molozzi and Mr. Birtok cease.

Mr. DiRienzo was given enthusiastic applause from other residents in attendance following his complaint and upon completing his questioning.

William Denzler, an urban planner, was the second expert witness to testify on behalf of the developer. Mr. Denzler relayed his opinion that the proposed use of the Dean Oil site would have less of a negative impact on the surrounding area with respect to such things as parking and aesthetics than would the uses which are currently allowed.

The site is part of the borough's general commercial zone, in which retail and service establishments are permitted.

Mr. Denzler stated that the proposed apartment building would of-

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### Scotch Plains Property Taxpayers Spending \$174 Over 1998; Municipal Portion Up 5 Percent

By FRED ROSSI  
Specially Written for The Times

**Editor's Note: The following is the first in a three-part series addressing 1999 property taxes in Scotch Plains.**

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Partisan squabbling and an outcry from the public over a proposed six percent property tax increase forced the Scotch Plains Township Council to redraft its 1999 municipal budget, a spending and tax plan for this year was finally adopted in May that raised property taxes by 5 percent — the largest percentage increase in several years.

As a result, Scotch Plains residents will pay an average of \$5,597 in property taxes over the coming year on an average assessed home of \$116,000, or \$174 more than last year, to support municipal services, schools in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school district, and Union County services.

Of that \$5,597, nearly two-thirds, or \$3,816, will go towards educational purposes and about 18 percent, or \$1,056, will be earmarked for the county, with the remaining 19 percent, or \$1,125, paying for services provided by the township government.

An assessed value of a home in Scotch Plains, according to Township Manager Thomas E. Atkins, is currently about 50 percent of the estimated market value. He admitted the difficulty of keeping the ratio of assessed value to market value as close to 100 percent as possible, noting that the last revaluation in the township was conducted in 1984.

He said the township may consider addressing the ratio on its own in the next year or two and pointed out that the county or the state can also order that revaluation be done.

While the tax rate for local government purposes increased just over 5 percent this year, taxes for the county remained flat while the school tax rate rose slightly more than 3 percent.

As is the case with most local budgets, most of this year's \$16.7 million municipal budget in Scotch Plains is purely discretionary and thus cannot be cut by the Mayor and Township Council.

In fact, according to Mr. Atkins, more than 70 percent of this year's municipal budget is allocated to areas with little or no spending flexibility, such as the police and fire departments, health and other insurance payments, state and federal mandates, sewerage treatment, public works, debt service and a fund for uncollected taxes.

Mr. Atkins told *The Times* that just over half of the budget is funded from local property taxes (\$9.2 million), with the remaining \$7.5 million coming from state aid (about \$3 million), the township's (much-argued-over by the Council) \$2.3 million surplus, and anticipated revenues from construction fees, court revenue and interest.

The biggest slice of the 1999 budget pie, representing about \$235 of

the average \$1,125 in taxes for municipal services, will be allocated to the Scotch Plains Police Department, whose \$3.5 million in funding will go towards salaries (\$3.2 million), the department's operating expenses (\$266,000), traffic bureau (\$146,000), and maintenance of the township's traffic lights (\$30,000).

The department's budget also includes funding for the D.A.R.E. (Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education) drug prevention program in local schools, the bicycle policeman program, new patrol cars and the maintenance and upkeep of those vehicles.

One area of the budget that Mr. Atkins said would "surprise people" is the \$1.4 million placed in a reserve for uncollected taxes. He noted that this amount represents about 8 percent of taxes paid by the average Scotch

Plains resident.

Another significant area of the 1999 budget is \$1,275 million for debt service payments and the capital improvement fund. The former involves principle and interest payments made for debt incurred, while the latter is used for such things as roads and sewers.

Health insurance coverage for the township's 120 full-time employees will cost Scotch Plains \$890,000 this year. The coverage includes hospital, medical, major medical and dental. The expense would be even greater, Mr. Atkins said, except that the township has a policy stating that employees with less than eight years of service contribute 25 percent of their health coverage costs.

Another \$415,000 is for general insurance coverage, including worker's

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### Governor Issues Drought Warning as Rainfall Hits 33-Yr. Low In Local Area; Water Restrictions Could Come by September

By DEBORAH MADISON  
Specially Written for The Times

"I have seen heat waves and I have seen droughts, but in 38 years, I have never seen anything like this before," said Ray Manfra, Director of Public

Works for the Borough of Fanwood. Mr. Manfra is of course referring to the excessively long hot and dry spell that has gripped New Jersey as well as much of the Eastern Seaboard and the Ohio Valley for the past month.



William A. Burke for The Times

**ON THIRSTY GROUND...A lawn in Westfield is parched and thirsty for a heavy sprinkling of water. Governor Christine Todd Whitman declared a statewide drought warning on Monday due to the continued lack of rainfall and high temperatures that have resulted in record low streamflows and below normal groundwater and reservoir levels.**

Due to the continued lack of rainfall and high temperatures that have resulted in record low streamflows and below normal groundwater and reservoir levels, Governor Christine Todd Whitman announced a statewide drought warning Monday.

The Governor's Office issues drought warnings based on information received from the Department of Environmental Protection, (DEP), which oversees the state's water supplies.

DEP Public Relations Officer Loretta O'Donnell said that the issuance of a drought warning gives the DEP the authority to divert water from adequately supplied reservoirs to those that are below normal capacity. The DEP will hold public hearings later this month, which are required to allow the DEP to order transfers of water, if necessary, between systems.

Currently, New Jersey's four major reservoir systems are at 73.5 percent capacity, when they should be at 83 percent, said Amy Collings, spokeswoman for the DEP.

Elizabethtown Water Company, which serves 54 municipalities in the local area, draws its water supply from a variety of sources including

the Raritan River, Delaware River, Milstone River, Spruce Run and Round Valley Reservoirs. Ms. Collings stated that Round Valley and Spruce Run are currently at 84 percent capacity, which is normal for this time of year, while the northern New Jersey reservoirs are below average at 64 percent capacity. Many of New Jersey's rivers are at all-time record lows.

Ray Daly, Professor of Biology and Director of the Cooperative Recording Center at Union County College in Cranford, which is an official weather-recording center for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), reported that normal rainfall for June and July is four to five inches for each month.

According to Mr. Daly, the station recorded only 1.4 inches of rain in June, and only .44 inches of rain in July, making it the driest July on record in 33 years.

"This drought really began in September of 1998," Mr. Daly related. "And there is no telling how long a drought is going to last, until it's over."

New Jersey would need to get many days of torrential downpours in order to bring its reservoirs back up to normal levels and to save many of the trees and crops being damaged by this drought, according to meteorologists at the National Weather Service.

"Even a few good downpours will not be sufficient to reverse the damaging effects that this drought is having on our forests and crops," Mr. Daly remarked.

Although thundershowers are expected for Wednesday and Thursday, it may not be enough to reverse the drought's toll on our dwindling water supplies or on our trees.

Ms. Collings said that if weather conditions do not improve, the next step will be the declaration of a water emergency by Labor Day, which would impose mandatory water restrictions disallowing watering of lawns, washing cars or filling pools. Additionally, restaurants would only serve water upon request and professional car washes would be required to use recycled water.

The particular restrictions would be determined by the DEP and the police would be authorized to issue warnings or summons.

Residents are currently being asked to use good water conservation practices, and to refrain from watering lawns and washing cars during this drought-warning period.

Other conservation practices are to run dishwashers and washing machines only when full, water gardens in the evening, and not use the hose as a broom for cleaning side-

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### Ordinance Unveiled to Let Township Voters Elect Mayor; GOP Motion for Charter Commission Fails

By DEBORAH MADISON  
Specially Written for The Times

An ordinance that would enable Scotch Plains voters to change the office of Mayor to an elected term of four years through a binding referendum this November was introduced on first reading at a special meeting of the Scotch Plains Township Council Tuesday night. Currently, the Mayor is chosen each year by the governing body.

The ordinance was introduced by a vote of 3 to 1, with one abstention.

The proposed ordinance would not change the current form of government in Scotch Plains, a Council-Manager form of government, nor

would it affect the five council seats, elected-at-large.

The Mayor would still sit on the Township Council as one of the five seats.

Suspending the usual rules of order, Mayor Geri Samuel, a Democrat, permitted an alternative ordinance to be introduced by Republican Council members, calling for a charter study commission to research other forms of government, as well as the issue of electing the office of Mayor. That ordinance, however, failed.

Prior to the Council votes, Mayor Samuel then opened the floor for discussion of the two opposing ordinances.

According to a written statement, read into the record by veteran Republican Councilman William F. McClintock, Jr., Mayor Samuel appointed an Advisory Committee in April to study the issue of electing the Mayor to a four-year term.

Township Attorney Andrew Baron completed some of the research, along with Township Manager Thomas E. Atkins, with both officials reporting back to Mayor Samuel. Mr. Atkins contacted seven towns that have gone through the procedure being proposed.

Township Council members were also interviewed by the Advisory Committee. The Committee generated a report outlining the basic issues, a framework for the Committee's deliberations, the prior charter study conducted in 1971 and included correspondence between Mr. Atkins and the seven towns that had

gone through the process.

The Township Council members received this report in early July, according to Mr. McClintock.

Councilman McClintock purported, in his written and oral statements, that the process by which Mayor Samuel went about appointing a committee had been secretive and unprecedented. He criticized the Mayor for excluding Township Council members from this process and accused the Mayor of doing this for personal gain.

He contended that the Council was not informed in a timely manner or given the opportunity to have input into the formation of this Advisory Committee. He stated that the Council would have made somewhat different recommendations regarding the members on the Advisory Com-

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Cheri Rogovsky for The Times

**CHILLIN' WITH COUNTRY MUSIC...Thunder Rose, a Country Western band, took the stage on July 29 on the Village Green in Scotch Plains. Pictured, left to right, are: Bassist Mike Plotino, guitarist Mark McCarron, lead vocalist Jan Slow, drummer Jack Pedler, fiddler Jason Berman and guitarist Rob Stein. The concert was arranged by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Division of Parks and Recreation.**

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CYAN YELLOW MAGENTA BLACK

## Ordinance Unveiled to Let Residents Choose Mayor

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mittee, had they been given the opportunity to do so.

Councilman McClintock also claimed that the process was being intentionally rushed through during the summer months when most people were away and not paying much attention to local government issues.

And, he accused the Mayor of hand-picking the Advisory Committee members, which included her husband, Dick Samuel, in order to preordain that the process would result in a favorable conclusion.

Other criticisms of the process cited by Councilman McClintock included the Advisory Committee's report, which he termed "slipshod and inadequate;" the many alternative forms of government not being researched and many technical questions going unanswered.

The Councilman stated that he and other Council members were not necessarily against changing government in Scotch Plains, but rather opposed to what they felt was the rushed and clandestine process being carried out by the Mayor.

In his statement, Councilman McClintock remarked, "This is too important a decision to be under the total control of one person, and her spouse, especially when that person may try to take personal advantage of the change."

He outlined the formal process by which a government charter could be changed, either by direct petition of 20 percent of the voters (approximately 2,800 signatures) or by recommendations from a charter study commission.

Councilman McClintock stated that the Mayor's informal Advisory Committee did not represent a real charter commission, not having been chosen by the Council members or voted on by the public.

The other Republican on the Council, Martin Marks, reiterated many of the points made by Mr. McClintock in opposition to how the Mayor handled the process. Mr. Marks stated, "This is not open government; it is not good government. This issue is about her (Mayor Samuel's) ambitions and her husband's ambitions."

Councilman Marks stated that he would be willing to withdraw the charter commission ordinance, if the Mayor would withdraw the first ordinance. He said the Council could then proceed to discuss these issues in a more rational and timely manner at another time.

Mr. Marks emphatically stated that he was not against the ordinance being proposed by the Mayor, but rather objected to the "rushed and inappropriate" way in which it was handled.

Councilman Tarquin Bromley, a Democrat who serves as Deputy Mayor, spoke on the matter in support of the Mayor's position.

Mr. Bromley said that the voters should be permitted to decide this issue on the ballot in November. He stated that the comments made by Councilmen Marks and McClintock were "undignified" and "unfortunately a symptom of bickering" which took place among Council members earlier this year.

He said that the proposed ordinance would invest accountability and responsibility into the office of Mayor.

Mr. Baron stated that Councilman McClintock's statements were damaging to his reputation, and that at no time did he work secretly on the matter. He said that he has always made himself available to all members of the Council.

Councilman McClintock apologized and stated that he was not in any way attempting to damage Mr. Baron's reputation.

Mayor Samuel pointed out to Council Republicans that the proposed ordinance would not give the office of Mayor any

more salary or say, but would permit the Mayor to set long-term goals and establish relationships that would benefit the community.

Former Republican Mayor Joan Papan, who retired from the Council at the end of last year, was the only member of the public who addressed the governing body on these issues before the ordinances were read.

Mrs. Papan accused the Mayor of trying to create "a dynastic reign for herself." She stated that shorter terms avoid corruption and that a charter commission elected by the voters would permit the public to consider the many other forms of government from which to choose.

Mayor Samuel announced that no other comments from the audience would be permitted regarding these issues, after the ordinances were read.

Several members of the public, including former Mayor and township GOP Chairman Gabe Spera, protested that the Council and the Mayor should welcome public comment on these issues, and that disallowing public comments was not a part of "open government" as promised.

Mayor Samuel explained that public comments were not usually heard at first readings of ordinances.

Mr. Marks was the only council member to vote in favor of the charter study commission ordinance.

On the ordinance providing for a directly elected Mayor, Councilman Marks abstained and Councilman McClintock voted against the ordinance, while Councilman Bromley, Democratic Councilwoman Lorraine Donatelli and Mayor Samuel voted in favor, passing the ordinance onto the agenda for a second reading at the governing body's Tuesday, August 17 meeting. At that time it will be considered for placement on the ballot to be voted on in the Tuesday, November 2 election.

According to Mr. Atkins, if passed, the first elected Mayor race would be held in 2000, when the two Republican council seats are up for reelection. One of those seats, thus, would be for Mayor.

Mr. Marks stated that Mayor Samuel's ruling to not allow the public to address the Council was "ludicrous" and that such an action should warrant her "being voted out of office." He stated to the Council that he wanted to go on record in protest of the Mayor's decision not to allow public comment after the Council votes.

In other business, the Council approved an ordinance authorizing the township to establish an open space trust fund to be used for the acquisition, development and maintenance of open space and to impose a dedicated tax on the real property of the township.

The public will vote this November on establishing a "Municipal Open Space Recreation Trust Fund" at a rate not to exceed two cents per \$100 of real property valuation through a binding referendum. Based on this rate, a person with a home assessed at \$100,000 would pay \$20 annually to the Trust Fund.

The Council will be launching a media advertising campaign, which will include cable television spots, as well as meeting with many local area newspapers in order to apprise the public on the open-space referendum, along with plans to develop and upgrade existing parks and fields.

These upgrades will be funded, in part, by the Union County Pocket Park grant program that requires matching funds from the township in the amount of \$100,000.

A resolution was approved which calls upon the Federal Aviation Administration to reinstate the night noise abatement program, used prior to April 1996, which directed airplanes to take off over the ocean, thereby reducing night noise over Scotch Plains.

## Governor Whitman Issues Serious Drought Warning

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walks and driveways.

In Westfield, the Department of Public Works has been making extra efforts of additional waterings to save the 120 new trees planted this past spring. DPW Superintendent Dan Kelly stated that they could lose half of those new plantings if the drought continues.

"It's a very critical situation for trees that are newly planted, especially near sidewalks, where the water supply to those roots is already compromised," Mr. Kelly explained. "We are even beginning to see the tops of mature trees showing signs of stress from the drought."

Scotch Plains Director of Parks and Recreation Laura Botto has noticed many of their park's shrubs and trees wilting and turning brown.

"We are concentrating our watering efforts on the new plantings, but it may not be enough to save them all," Ms. Botto noted.

"Because the ground is so dry and hard, it's becoming increasingly difficult for our crew to do underground work," said Mr. Manfra. "As far as five feet down, the ground is hard, dry and dusty."

Like many townships, Fanwood's DPW is making extra rounds to water their township's trees and shrubs.

Mike Vodak, Forester with the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Natural Sciences at Kean University explained that some species of trees are able to tolerate the dry conditions better than other species.

Other factors that affect a tree's survival are its age and root structure, the very young trees and very old trees being the most vulnerable to drought-stress. The type of ground structure also plays a role in determining the stamina of a tree.

"One or two years from now, you will see 'die-back' where the tops of trees that were affected by the drought, die and break off," Mr. Vodak said.

It is difficult to determine which trees or how many will be affected, he added.

"If the drought continues, we may be looking at 20 to 30 percent of our trees experiencing significant die-back. And once a tree begins to die-back, you may not be able to save that tree," Mr. Vodak explained.

With no foreseeable relief in sight, the dry conditions are becoming a potentially dangerous situation for our state's forests, said Steve Maurer, Assistant Chief of the New Jersey Forest Fire Service.

"The slopes are turning yellow and brown, which is something you usually don't see until the fall," Mr. Maurer observed. "Our crews are on heightened alert and all of our fire detection towers are operational, which is also unusual for this time of year," he noted. "One slight mistake, such as a cigarette butt or an ignition spark, could set off a blaze," he added.

The DEP issued campfire restrictions on July 21st that prohibit campfires on the ground. For the area north of the Raritan River, only elevated grills may be used with gas, propane or electricity. In the central and northern parts of the state, where conditions are not as dry,

campers may still use wood and charcoal in elevated grills at this time, according to the Governor's Office.

Area residents are also seeing the effects of the hot and dry weather on their lawns and gardens. Terrill Road, Scotch Plains, resident Bernadette Lopez reported that many of her trees and plants are losing leaves.

"Our apple tree has no fruit this year, and the leaves are drooping," she said.

Mrs. Lopez also reported that many of her flowering plants have lost their petals or haven't bloomed at all due to the severe conditions.

Martine Avenue resident and gardener, Elizabeth Murad, has noticed the leaves of her tulip tree turning yellow, which is not typical for this time of year.

"My vegetable garden is surviving well, with just the usual amount of watering, but many plants and trees are turning brown," Mrs. Murad reported.

Most local gardeners have found that by watering more often, they have been able to save their vegetable gardens.

New Jersey farms are sufficiently irrigated to save most of the state's produce, according to Mike Garguilo, owner of Frank Garguilo and Son Produce in Mountainside.

"Most of our produce comes from the South Jersey/Vineland area, where farms are sufficiently irrigated," Mr. Garguilo said. "The peach crop and the corn will be affected by the drought because they are difficult to keep irrigated. In a few weeks, you will see smaller peaches and less corn on the local stands."

As temperatures topped triple digits over the past weekend, area hospitals reported a substantial increase in the number of heat stroke and heat exhaustion patients coming into the emergency room, Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center spokesperson Brad Millaway said.

"We expect those numbers to drop as the temperatures do, later this week," Mr. Millaway commented.

When asked for the cause of these unusual weather patterns, Professor Daly remarked that many theories abound. A global-warming trend due to increased air pollution has been blamed as the cause for southern-type weather conditions moving north, by some meteorologists.

"But," Professor Daly said, "you cannot prove or disprove what amount air pollution is playing in this overall global warming trend."

No matter the cause, most meteorologists agree that southern-type weather conditions are moving northward, and we may see this affect our flora in years to come. However, don't go planting those palm trees in your yard just yet. The trend will be so gradual and slow, that this area of the country will only see the weather change by very small increments over many decades, according to the National Weather Service Web site.

The more popular theory is that this hot and dry spell is just a normal part of weather patterns, which New Jersey has hopefully seen the last of for awhile.

## SP Property Taxpayers Spending \$174 Over 1998

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compensation, liability, insurance on township vehicles and equipment, and professional liability insurance for the police.

Scotch Plains participates in the Suburban Joint Insurance Fund, along with, among others, Westfield, Summit and Mountainside, that provides these coverages.

Despite having an all-volunteer fire department, the 1999 budget provides slightly more than \$500,000 for fire protection and management, including \$200,000 to actually keep the department operating and \$315,000 for maintenance of the fire hydrants in the town.

One of the largest parts of the \$16.7 million municipal budget is the \$2.2 million slated for the Public Works, which entails the maintenance of the township's streets and roads and the provision of services for those roads.

The budget includes all operating expenses. Mr. Atkins said, including salaries, street lighting costs, recycling, the spring clean-up and the leaf pick-up programs, and vehicle maintenance.

Another \$890,000 in the budget will be used for Scotch Plains' contribution to two sewerage authorities for treatment and processing. The Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority will receive \$495,000 from the township this year and the Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority will get \$355,000.

Statutory expenses — those payments mandated by law — account for \$750,000 in the 1999 budget. Mr. Atkins said these include contributions

to Social Security, the police and firemen's pension funds as well as other public employees' pension systems.

Currently, Scotch Plains has two bargaining units — the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association and the Scotch Plains Public Works and Recreation Association, which represents blue-collar skilled workers.

Other budgetary expenses include \$724,000 for the public library and encompasses all projects, books, maintenance, salaries and operating expenses. Parks and Recreation and the Scotch Hills Country Club receive about \$650,000 combined for their programs, which include celebration of public events, such as parades, as well as cultural arts activities such as the Village Green summer concert series.

Mr. Atkins said the township is anticipating collecting about \$320,000 this year from enforcement of the township's construction code. He noted that construction activity covered by the code in Scotch Plains, which includes building, plumbing, electrical work and zoning, is still very high these days, so while enforcement costs are high, so are the revenues realized from that enforcement.

Other, lesser aspects of the Scotch Plains municipal budget, according to Mr. Atkins, include such items as tax assessment and collection, election administration, legal services, engineering, court operating expenses, senior citizens services, emergency management and health and welfare.

## SCOTCH PLAINS POLICE BLOTTER

MONDAY, JULY 26

• An employee of a convenience store on Westfield Avenue reported the theft of a wallet from her purse, which was left unattended for a couple of hours. The wallet contained cash and miscellaneous identification.

• Police received a report that a window was broken out of a maintenance building to the rear of Park Middle School. The incident occurred over the weekend.

• A glass door was smashed to the rear of Brunner Elementary School on Westfield Road overnight, according to police.

• A woman was seen shoplifting miscellaneous items from a store on Park Avenue in the morning. She dropped toiletry items while fleeing out the store exit.

• Police received a report of a stolen 1993 Saturn from the parking lot of a recreational facility on Martine Avenue. The incident occurred during the afternoon.

• A 1982 Yamaha motorcycle was reported stolen from the parking lot of an apartment complex on Country Club Lane. The incident occurred during the day.

• A cellular telephone was reported stolen from an unlocked vehicle parked in a driveway on Fieldcrest Drive.

TUESDAY, JULY 27

• A 14-year-old female from Scotch Plains was arrested and charged with aggravated assault and placed in juvenile detention after allegedly attacking a 16-year-old female from her neighborhood and stabbing her with a pocket knife in the neck and back. The victim was treated at an area hospital and released.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 28

• Police reported that the rear door to the Scotch Plains Department of Public Works building on Plainfield Avenue was jimmied. Change was stolen from the soda machine. The incident occurred overnight.

• A tennis ball was thrown through an upper floor window of Terrill Middle

School.

• A rear window at a business on Route 22 was discovered broken shortly after police responded to an alarm at the premises. There was no sign of attempted entry.

THURSDAY, JULY 29

• A dozen doors were reported stolen from a house under construction on Hamlette Place. The incident occurred overnight.

• A Green Hickory Hill resident reported finding a rear window smashed on his 1992 Chevrolet that was parked in the driveway. The incident occurred overnight.

• A bicycle which had been left unlocked was reported stolen from a Park Avenue parking lot.

FRIDAY, JULY 30

• Police received a report that someone broke the locks of two soda machines and removed cash from an amusement park on Route 22. The incident occurred overnight.

• Employees at a golf course in Scotch Plains reported that money was removed from a soda machine during servicing earlier that morning.

• A night employee at a Scotch Plains golf course reported being harassed and that mischief was done by unknown juveniles.

SATURDAY, JULY 31

• Two 10-year-old Scotch Plains residents were found in possession of bicycles stolen from a Carol Place residence. Complaints are pending.

• Scrap metal was reported removed from a contractor's property in the 2500 block of Plainfield Avenue.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 1

• A 14-year-old Scotch Plains resident and another from Fanwood, both male, were taken into custody and charged with robbery for allegedly assaulting a 15-year-old Fanwood resident at Green Forest Park and taking cash from the victim.

Both suspects were remanded to the Union County Juvenile Detention Center in Elizabeth.

## Expert Witnesses Testify During Dean Oil Hearing

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for a transition between the downtown commercial area on one side and an area of single-family homes on the other. In addition, he believes residents of the building would provide patronage of local businesses.

Mr. Denzler cited several reasons why the building would not be a detriment to the borough, saying it would have little environmental impact, be aesthetically pleasing, have an insubstantial effect on traffic and afford adequate off-street parking.

According to Mr. Denzler, a traffic report concluded that the building would create less traffic than would a commercial or retail locale. The parking issue was not further explored, however, as the board suggested that the topic be discussed at the next hearing, when a traffic expert is expected to testify.

In response to questions from Richard Preiss, the planner representing the Planning Board, Mr. Denzler explained that the site would not be appropriate for commercial development primarily because it "hasn't happened" for the last 10 years — the duration for which the lot has been vacant.

Mr. Denzler also said he feels that the site lacks exposure to the public because it is not near any major through streets. He also claimed there is a need for rental properties in Fanwood due to a shortage of such units in the borough and nearby towns.

He admitted that his ideas about such a need are not based on statistical findings, but rather on a lack of apartments in Fanwood.

A recurrent issue at the hearing concerned the density, or units per acre, of the proposed development. Mr. Denzler agreed with Mr. Preiss that a smaller project would have even less impact on the area than the one proposed.

He argued, however, that the project's density, 21 units per acre, is consistent with that of other apartment buildings in the region, and that a smaller development would underutilize the available space.

During his testimony, Mr. Denzler cited a previous study of the potential for a senior housing project on the site as evidence that a multiple-dwelling complex is not a new idea in Fanwood. He acquiesced to Mr. Preiss, however, that no such project was ever adopted by the borough.

According to Mr. Denzler, activity outside of the building will be limited to the coming and going of residents, as no congregating space has been incorporated into the plan.

Another overall theme of the meeting was the application of zoning standards to the project. The developers have con-

sulted a variety of zoning standards in their planning efforts. This stems in part from the nature of the development: although the building will be part of the general commercial zone, its use will be residential.

According to Mr. Birtok, the applicants used the Terrill Affordable Housing, or TAH, zone as a "rough basis" for planning the apartment project. Mr. Denzler was unaware, however, that this zone applies only to a single lot that is part of a 12-lot affordable housing development in Fanwood, as was explained by Mr. Preiss.

LaGrande Realty Associate's proposal has been surrounded by controversy since it was initiated at the beginning of the year. Hearings have been held in the auditorium at Park Middle School in order to accommodate the large numbers of residents in attendance — near 100 at the first hearing and about 80 at the second.

Many residents expressed their opposition to the proposed complex in their questioning of LaGrande Realty witnesses, although they are not allowed to make comments for or against the proposal until all witnesses have been heard.

After the meeting, Fanwood Republican candidate for Borough Council Thomas P. Ryan, Jr. approached attendees to sign a petition addressed to the Mayor, council, and the United States Postal Service.

The petition asks that the parties "investigate the feasibility of relocating the Fanwood Post Office to the core commercial area of Fanwood."

According to Mr. Ryan, the petitioners have in mind the area encompassing the Dean Oil site as the possible future home of the post office.

The petition gives the following reasons for the move: the existing post office "has outgrown its current facility and lacks adequate parking;" the core commercial area of the borough "is in need of revitalization;" and moving the post office "to the core commercial area has the potential of revitalizing the downtown by acting as an 'anchor store,'" thereby attracting patrons and other businesses to the area.

At the next hearing, which will be held on Wednesday, August 25, at 7:30 p.m., the public will have the opportunity to question Mr. Denzler, and expert witnesses in the areas of traffic and real estate are expected to speak on behalf of LaGrande Realty Associates.

Public comment will likely be reserved for the September hearing. The Planning Board has until Friday, October 1, 120 days from the date the current application was made, to vote on the project.

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### Fanwood's TV-35

#### Weekly Schedule

Thursday, August 5, 8:00 P.M.

Fallen Flags - a history of the Central RR in Union County

Saturday, August 7, 8:00 P.M.

Contact We Care Race of '97

Monday, August 9, 7:30 P.M.

Planning Board Meeting of July 28 (Dean Oil Site)

Wednesday, August 11, 8:00 P.M.

Interviews on the aircraft carrier WASP by Bill Shepard

Wednesday, August 11, 9:00 P.M.

Freeholder's Forum

Thursday, August 12, 8:00 P.M.

Live Telecast of Fanwood Council Meeting