

Voters Approve SP-F School Budget and \$2-Mil. Bond

By NORDETTE N. ADAMS
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Voters in Scotch Plains and Fanwood on Tuesday approved the school budget, nar-

rowly passed the bond to turf the athletic fields, re-elected Rob O'Connor, who was unopposed for the Fanwood seat, and elected Nancy Bauer and Jane Costello to open seats

representing Scotch Plains on the board of education.

Slightly more than 20 percent of the approximately 19,600 registered voters in Fanwood and Scotch Plains turned out. Polls remained open from 2 to 9 p.m.

The \$64.5-million school budget passed by a vote of 2,513 ballots in favor and 1,651 ballots against it. Voters approved the \$2-million turf-bond referendum with 2,114 "yes" versus 2,052 "no" tallies.

Unchallenged Fanwood candidate Rob O'Connor returned to the school board by receiving 823 votes.

In Scotch Plains, four candidates ran for two vacant seats. Ms. Bauer received 1,217 votes and Ms. Costello garnered 1,335 votes. Unsuccessful candidates John Kube and David Gorbunoff received 1,043 and 875 votes, respectively.

Officials and candidates gathered to hear the tallies at the administration offices in Evergreen Elementary School.

"We're thrilled with the support we've received for the budget," said BOE Vice President Trip Whitehouse. "I think less people may feel affected by the turf; whereas, a lot of people will correlate the school budget..."

Outgoing board member and former BOE president Thomas Russo commented on the large margin of votes in favor of the school budget. "I've been involved, as you know, on the school board for 10 years and before that involved in PTA activities for years, and I don't ever remember a margin that large. I hope that's a trend," Mr. Russo said.

Business Administrator Anthony DeSordi, said, "The budget passed in almost every district by the widest margin I've ever seen since I've been here [eight years]."

Regarding the bond vote, Mr. Russo said, "It's good. I understand that the bond referendum was a controversial subject, but it did apparently pass, and I think it will ultimately be good for the community. I think when the (turf) facility is completed, opponents will be won over by the kinds of opportunities that it will be able to provide for our kids."

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BOE OK's Technology Plan; Russo, Nowlin Leave Board

By NORDETTE N. ADAMS
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education at its Thursday night meeting approved the district's technology plan for 2007 to 2010 as presented by Joanne Arvay, the district's network administrator and technology coordinator, and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Madeline Meyer.

"Technology is an expensive project. ... We want to use our money wisely, and so we're focusing on the network infrastructure," Mrs. Meyer said.

Mrs. Arvay projected a PowerPoint slide onto the wall that showed part of that infrastructure, a closet containing a morass of network cables leading to a tall switch panel. She told board members that the district's computer systems are outdated.

After she finished her presentation in which she gave an overview of the district's technology services and equipment, she said, "All of what we've shown you is being supported by local funds." However, the district has received a small number of technology grants, she said.

She told listeners that the district has student computers that still run Apple's OS 9, an operating system that is "three generations" behind Apple's current products. Many of the computers are "seven years old," said Mrs. Arvay. "Generally obsolete (is) six years, but if we can use them, we use them."

She also said later that she's sometimes asked, "Do you have any computers you want to get rid of?" and she laughs. "When we're ready to get rid of them, they're useless."

Answering a question from board member Betty Ann Woerner about the use of educational software, Mrs. Meyer said school computers cannot run some of the latest educational software because they are not powerful enough. Furthermore, she said she hears from teachers who complain that the computers can't load certain websites because the computers and



WATERS ROAR...The stream at Bookside Park in Scotch Plains turns into a raging river and floods the area from the huge storm of Sunday and Monday.

Courtesy of Jim Naugle

Nor'easter Causes Widespread Flooding Throughout Region

By PAUL J. PEYTON
 Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

AREA — A nor'easter that dumped up to nine inches of rain Sunday through Monday caused widespread street and residential flooding locally.

Sporadic shutdowns were reported on Route 22 between Springfield and Scotch Plains. In addition, a major stormwater pipe break occurred in Rahway and Routes 1 and 9, shutting down Hazelwood Avenue and Main Street, according to Union County spokesman Sebastian D'Elia.

He said there was widespread flooding throughout the county but no reported deaths. Some 80 Union County department of public works employees were on the job along with emergency services and the county department of emergency management.

Mr. D'Elia said Cranford was hit hard, with evacuations of homes oc-

curing near a flood plain of the Rahway River. Three residents had to be rescued by boat, including a mother and daughter who were stranded during a flash flood on Central Avenue in the township.

Westfield Fire Chief Dan Kelly said the department responded to more than 157 storm-related calls. Most were for flooding conditions, natural gas leaks, electrical conditions and downed power lines.

He said firefighters were helping homeowners and businesses by pump-

ing water out of flooded basements. "With (Hurricane) Floyd we had widespread street flooding," he said, noting that this weekend's nor'easter caused more flooding to homes.

Hurricane Floyd, in September 1999, resulted in four deaths and was the costliest natural disaster in state history, with damages between \$500 million and \$1 billion.

Chief Kelly said off-duty firefighters were called into service to handle the huge volume of calls. In

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Leaf And Gumball Pick-Up Delayed Due to Nor'easter

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — The township hopes to start its leaf and gumball pick-up program later this week, several days behind schedule, after the heavy rains from the nor'easter of Sunday and Monday forced public works and fire department personnel to assist residents in pumping out flooded basements and, in some cases, evacuating in the face of rising flood water.

Township Manager Thomas Atkins told the council at its conference meeting on Tuesday that he hopes to complete the leaf and gumball pick-up in about 10 days.

Township workers, he said, "were very, very busy" as a result of the heavy rains earlier this week, when he estimated that more than six inches of rain fell in some 30 hours. He said some residents of an apartment complex on Rivervale Court off Martine Avenue were evacuated on Sunday night and given the option of spending the night at Union Catholic High School, although only a handful did so, with most choosing to stay with family or friends.

"It could have been a lot worse," he

said, noting the storm was more of a steady, heavy rain instead of a constant downpour.

In other business, the council will move forward to purchase a new communications center for the police department as part of the \$3.8-million renovation underway at the municipal building on Park Avenue. Police Chief Brian Mahoney had requested the new system, first during the council's budget hearings in February and again in a March 7 memorandum, in which he detailed the costs of such a system.

When the police department's operations were moved from the building to a trailer two months ago, the police department was told its communication and dispatch equipment was obsolete and would need to be replaced when the building is ready to be reoccupied.

Chief Mahoney provided the council with cost breakdowns for the purchase and installation of a new system, including \$6,475 for the replacement of old furnishings and equipment, \$37,508 for new consoles, racks and storage units and \$93,590 for the ac-

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PLAY BALL...Beating the storm that hit the region Sunday, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Youth Baseball Association begins their season last Saturday on a beautiful spring day at Booth Field.

Fred Rossi for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

Fanwood Planning Board Expresses TDR Prog. Doubts

By TED RITTER
 Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD — The borough's planning board held a special meeting Monday night to discuss the proposed Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program.

While no formal action was taken, the meeting touched on several TDR issues. With a goal of preserving Fanwood's historic district while also promoting the revitalization of the South Avenue corridor beyond downtown, the TDR program would allow South Avenue property owners to purchase development rights from historic district residents who agree to preserve their properties indefinitely.

During Tuesday night's discussion, planning board Chairman Greg Cummings raised several questions. Pointing to one of four possible TDR build-out "scenarios," calling for 242 new South Avenue residential housing units, Mr. Cummings asked, "As a community, how much residential development do you want to encourage?"

Mr. Cummings also expressed other reservations. He said preserving historic properties "can be done without the complexities of TDR."

Saying "it's very onerous on the borough once we sign a TDR contract," Mr. Cummings added that Fanwood "would have very little control" over how South Avenue is developed.

"A lot of [TDR] information is missing; hopefully, as we go down the path, we'll get more answers. The goals [of the program] are good, but I haven't found a real benefit to the entire community," he said.

Other planning board members also participated in the discussion:

John Deitch pointed to the importance of "filling-in" the properties that are part of the borough's downtown redevelopment "before encouraging development elsewhere."

Matthew Glennon said the borough would make "a lot of compromises" in adopting a TDR program, adding he is "not sure if the supposed benefits will be realized."

Mr. Glennon also said TDR is "not a sustaining process." He questioned whether historic-district property owners selling their development rights in "a one-shot deal" would get enough money to finance long-term preservation or whether they would actually spend the money on their properties.

Peter Sayles spoke about possible economic development benefits to the community. He said TDR's goal of fostering retail businesses on a property's first floor and residential units upstairs "creates street life" that could improve the area along South Avenue between Terrill Road and downtown.

The planning board plans to discuss other TDR issues — including a market analysis, historic preservation, capital improvement and utilities plans, and a real estate analysis — at its meetings on May 16 and 23.

The board also plans to encourage Mayor Colleen Mahr and the borough council to update the South Avenue visioning plan committee on the latest TDR developments.

Also, Monday night, the planning board held its regular agenda meeting which included a "concept hearing" for a proposed subdivision on Midway Avenue.

Applicant Donald Close has proposed "a minor subdivision" of two properties with existing, similarly-sized houses — at 227 and 243 Midway — to create a third property with a new and much larger house set slightly farther back from the road than the other two.

Issues discussed included front and side setbacks and the requirement of a "conditional permit" aimed at addressing flooding concerns.

Mr. Close explained that he has proposed a farther setback for the third proposed house to "open up the back" of the long and narrow property and prevent what he called a "bowling-alley effect."

Mr. Cummings pointed to the issue of how the new proposed house "fits in," adding "long, narrow lots are

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CATCH ME IF YOU CAN...Fred Bercau, left, president of the Newark Bait and Fly Casting Club, stands alongside Bruce Rooney of Bayonne with two Rainbow trout he caught at Echo Lake Park at the 26th Annual Fishing Derby on Saturday, April 14. The lake was stocked more than 1,222 trout by the club, and more will be replenished by the state. See story on page 22.

Linda B. Condrillo for The Westfield Leader and The Times



ABANDONED...A vehicle is abandoned and disabled in rising flood waters Sunday night on Tussel Lane at Riverside Village in Scotch Plains. County emergency officials offered to evacuate those in the apartment complex and one resident accepted the aid.

Maria Woehr for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

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