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The Old Municipal Building-- Should It Go Or Stay?

A large new brick Scotch Plains municipal building rises on Park Avenue in Scotch Plains. Just next door to the new edifice sits the old Municipal Building which has served Scotch Plains for approximately a half-century. Does the old building have a future? Opinion is divided.

The bid for construction of the new municipal building includes a price for demolition of the old building. If razed, it would become a black-topped parking lot. However, although the construction (and accompanying demolition) bids have been awarded, the possibility of saving the old building is being studied.

Mayor Albert Theurer said the question has been referred to the Buildings Committee - a standing committee with personnel specified by state mandates. The members include architects, builders and engineers and the committee serves as an advisory to the local building inspector.

There is no deadline for making the decision, the Mayor said. The new building is expected to be completed in May. Theurer said he would like to see sufficient time taken in arriving at a decision so that the decision would be a good one.

Committeeman Alan Augustine pointed out that the question has been referred to the Planning Board for a recommendation, but no recommendation has yet been received. More criteria is needed by the Committee before a judgement can be made, Augustine feels.

Committeeman William Kitz said other recommendations are needed. For instance, an estimate from the architect of the new building on the cost of refurbishing, and estimates of the ultimate use versus the cost. The old building needs electrical work, heating improvements, and especially repairs to the roof, which has been leaking.

Repairs have already been undertaken, but the roof still leaks, as evidenced by peeling paint

and water marks on the ceiling of the main Council chambers.

Theurer said the question to be determined is how safe and serviceable the building would be after repairs. The roof leaks are elusive, and there are some who feel the building may be leaking in the cement between the concrete blocks. Theurer said the heating system produces overheating requiring air conditioning on one side of the building while the other side is cold.

Kitz noted that, at the time the decision was made to go ahead with construction of the new building, the architect recommended that the old buildings not be refurbished, since costs would run too high. The architect expressed the opinion that the building maintenance costs are high, and the building is inefficient, since the main core is a large central staircase which takes up a good portion of the building.

The architect was selected back when the Township Committee was made up of representatives from both political parties, Kitz said. Committeeman B. Lawrence Newcomb said the Committee might also think of the feasibility of moving the building to another location.

And what about public opinion? Indications of a public reaction in opposition to demolition of the building are beginning to appear. For example, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Arts Association has voted, at a recent Executive Board session, to unanimously oppose the razing of the building. According to Barbara Adams of the Association, "it would be absolutely silly to throw away a good building, and every one of us is opposed."

Anti Loitering Bill Voted By Committee

Listening Post

The regular monthly Listening Post session conducted by Scotch Plains Committeemen Alan Augustine, Walter Groce and B. Lawrence Newcomb has been set for Saturday, from 10 to 12 noon. The sessions have been planned by the committeemen in order to provide for Scotch Plains residents an opportunity to present their views, seek information, and inform themselves on questions of concern. The public is invited to the informal meeting, which is held on the first Saturday morning of each month in the Committee Chambers, Municipal Building, Park Avenue, Scotch Plains.

Interested In Serving Scotch Plains?

Any residents interested in serving on the Scotch Plains Planning Board, Recreation Commission, or Board of Health are asked to contact Shirley Capone at the Municipal Building, 322-6700, and their names will be considered for possible appointment to these bodies which now have openings.

Miss Adams questioned whether the \$10,500 which would be required to demolish the building could not, instead, be put to constructive use for repairs and whatever updating might be necessary.

The artistic group naturally leans toward potential aesthetic and cultural uses for the building, including perhaps using the present Council chamber for

Continued On Page 7

Public Hearing Date Set For December 5

Hot on the heels of similar legislation recently passed in Fanwood comes a new anti-loitering ordinance for the township of Scotch Plains. The ordinance was passed on first reading last week and will have a December 5 public hearing.

Under terms of the new law,

no person would be permitted to loiter in a public place if that loitering would: create or cause a danger of a breach of the peace, create or cause to be created any disturbance or annoyance to the comfort and repose of any person, obstruct the free passage of pedestrians or vehicles, and/or obstruct, molest, or interfere with any person lawfully in a public place. The law would prohibit the making of unsolicited remarks of an offensive, disgusting or insulting nature or which are calculated to annoy or disturb the person to, or in whose hearing, they are made.

What is loitering? According to the ordinance, it is remaining idle in one location, including spending time idly, loafing or walking about aimlessly, and "hanging around."

Parents or guardians of minors under 18 years old shall not knowingly permit the minor to loiter in violation of the ordinance, and whenever such a minor is charged with a violation, the parent or guardian would be notified by the police.

The law provides the police with discretionary powers, and whenever a police officer, in the exercise of reasonable judgment, decides that the presence of a person in a public place is causing or is likely to cause any of the conditions listed, he has authority to order such a person to leave.

The ordinance carries a fine

of \$200 or imprisonment not exceeding 30 days.

In other action, the Committee awarded a contract for \$35,060 to Paving Materials and Construction Company of Roselle for construction of four tennis courts in Kramer Manor Park.

The Committee tabled action to an ordinance which would have banned parking, stopping, or standing of automobiles during specified hours on Maple Hill Road and Maple View Court, after hearing lengthy objections from a number of residents. They opposed not only the proposed ordinance, but also the accourements of a temporary ban of a similar nature. They objected to the many signs notifying of No Parking, Stopping or Standing, and they also voiced opposition to white guide lines which, in the view of one resident, "look like the parking lot of Big Buy."

At issue is traffic created by parents dropping off and picking up children at McGinn School. According to the residents, they had counted only 16 cars on a day of extremely heavy rains, and they felt that denying them parking in front of their homes from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily just to cover the situation was unnecessary.

"School traffic is not enough of a problem to ban parking on both sides of the street all day," one man said. Among the sug-

Continued On Page 3

Were You In This Picture?



The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Historical Society has acquired the above picture of School #1 recently. The school is located on Park Ave. across from Park Junior School. If any of the older residents could date the picture or give any information concerning the class or instructor, please call Jean Quinn, 233-7634, evenings.

OK Garden Apartment Complex For Park Ave.

The Township Committee of Scotch Plains adopted a resolution last week approving a recommendation of the Board of Adjustment that Scotch Arc Realty Company, Inc. be granted approval to construct a 39-unit garden apartment at 520 Park Avenue.

The address is between the Post Office and a commercial building now housing Alfonso's Pizza, and is now occupied by a private home. The property features a narrow frontage on Park Avenue, with considerable depth. It is zoned both commercial and residential.

The property includes 1.9 acres of land. The buildings will cover 29 percent of the land, and according to the applicant, the apartments will be of a luxury nature. Originally, Scotch Arc had requested permission to build 44 units, but after denial by the Board of Adjustment, the 30-unit group was approved.

The Township will proceed with construction of a storm drain in

Raritan Road, and authorized advertisement of bids for the project.

The Committee had adopted resolutions requesting the state to approve funds for the storm drains, which will consist of approximately 1400 feet of drainage pipe installed in Raritan Road in a southwesterly direction from the Rahway Road intersection. Township officials feel that this drain, which has been extended in length from the original plans, will enable the whole area to be relieved of flooding conditions which now exist there.

State requirements call for a road width considerably wider than the residents desire, since they fear a wider roadway would create additional traffic through Scotch Plains. Therefore, the township has decided to proceed with the construction of the vitally needed storm drain now, but to install pavement at a later date and at a width acceptable to both the township and residents of the area.