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Laberge Reports On Construction Progress At Park Junior High

Occupancy Date Set For New Elementary School

Fred J. Laberge, Superintendent of Schools in Scotch Plains-Fanwood, reported on construction progress at Park Junior High School during the past two weeks, indicating that commitments made by Laberge at meetings with Park Junior parents had been made. Two weeks ago, the PTA at Park as well as the PTA Executive Council, representing PTA's from all the schools, had registered complaints over conditions at the schools and Laberge had detailed difficulties faced by the Board of Education in getting contractors to meet commitments for completion of various facets of the renovation work at the school.

As of Monday, October 15, the science labs which had heretofore been unusable were completed and science instruction and actual laboratory experience was started. The floors of all gymnasiums were cleared of stored equipment and/or building materials and were safe for physical education activities, the Superintendent said.

An electronics laboratory had been installed, and the wiring of machines in the industrial arts areas of the junior high school had been completed, also in compliance with deadlines promised by the Superintendent.

Laberge pointed out that the only area still not fully useable was the art instructional rooms. He had promised that sinks would be hooked up by last Friday. The sinks were in by that date, but were not hooked up. However, hookup of the plumbing facilities in all art areas has now been completed, permitting full arts programs such as paper mache, ceramics, etc.

During their regular monthly meeting last Thursday, the Board of Education approved the hiring of an additional home economics teacher at Park, which will permit students who have missed home economics experience this

semester because of building conditions to make up that area of educational experience during next semester.

With these arrangements, Laberge said he does not find that the educational program at Park is suffering.

Problems still remain, however. The Superintendent noted that lockers and cabinets for the home economics rooms have not been delivered, and the teachers' room and media center completion are extremely important priorities, which are getting the full attention of the Central Office staff.

He said that because of difficulties with contractor commitments, he could not yet give any exact deadline dates for completion of these remaining areas of improvement, but as soon as he was able to corroborate dates, they would be announced.

"As far as the new elementary school goes, we expect completion in late November and are making definite plans for a move during the Christmas holidays," the Superintendent said. "Perhaps once again it is going to be necessary to move the children in order to move the contractors out," Laberge concluded.

Fanwood Rescue Squad Award Is On Display

Buttons were popping among the justly proud members of the Fanwood Rescue Squad as they returned from the 45th Annual Convention of the N.J. State First Aid Council in Atlantic City last weekend.

The highly coveted Don Luther Memorial Award Honorable Mention, presented for the "Outstanding Rescue of the Year," will be displayed in Fanwood Borough Hall, having been awarded to the Fanwood Squad after competition with their sister squads from across the state.

The cited rescue occurred last Memorial Day. The local parade had been underway for some time when a spectator, a visitor from Lake Hopatcong, collapsed near the intersection of Martine and Midway Avenues. She was the victim of an apparent yeast attack. Patrolman Mitchell Arnold, on traffic duty at the intersection and also a squadman, was summoned to help. He removed the victim from her automobile, placed her on hard ground, and began cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. The squad ambulance was alerted by radio as it approached the parade reviewing stand. By prearranged, routine signal, the "Alert Crew" board-

ed the ambulance and arrived at the victim's side in less than three minutes.

The Alert Crew, Squadmen William Winey and Robert Scala assisted by John Pasko and Jim Sherman, relieved Arnold and moved the victim to Muhlenberg Hospital while continuing life-sustaining functions. After assisting with an orderly transfer to the hospital staff, they retired.

The perfect coordination of training, planning, communications, speed of response and dedication to service had saved a life.

Of equal significance to the Award last weekend is the fact that the Fanwood Rescue Squad received the Don Luther Memorial Award for a different exemplary rescue two years ago in tribute to the Squad's service at an accident on December 8, 1970.

The Award will be formally received by the Mayor and Council during the November 14 public meeting.

School Board Reverses Lunch Policy Decision

More Aides To Be Hired For Adequate Supervision

The proponents of in-school lunching at the elementary level scored a victory last Thursday, as the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education reversed their earlier decision on school lunch, rescinding the policy they set in August on a 5-4 split vote.

The policy was suspended for a 90-day period. As adopted in August, it had stated that the only children who could remain in the elementary schools to eat bag lunches were those in grades one through three who live over a half mile, and those in grades four through six who live over a mile. With the 90-day abandonment of the policy, the district would return to the conditions which existed last year, wherein there are no specific rules governing which children may or may not remain for lunch on any given day. However, Board President Joseph Parry issued a request for cooperation in utilizing the privilege only when truly necessary.

Board member John McCormick, who heads the Policy Committee, stepped aside, allowing Meyer Freiman to introduce the motion to rescind. McCormick had approved the restrictions initiated in August, and he voted in opposition to abandoning the policy this month.

The other opponents of rescinding the policy last Thursday were Charles Ferguson, Joseph Parry, and Henry Schwiering. These three had opposed introduction of the policy in August.

Freiman said the Board had spent long hours in examination and soul searching, in light of the extensive reaction and the claims of hardship. Many alternatives had been considered, including suggestions from board members, community, PTAs and staff, each with positive and negative aspects. The suspension will become effective November 1, Freiman said, and at that

time the superintendent will provide additional supervision in the schools to insure adequate supervision. During the 90-day period, the situation will be evaluated by principals in regard to supervision, control, and safety, conditions which the Board had cited in August when it introduced the legislation limiting the number of children who could eat each day.

McCormick said the change in attitude was a direct response to pressure. He pointed out that some complained of discrimination and/or empty houses without supervision at lunch. We are all discriminated against in ways every day, and the empty house situation is caused by a decision made by those who live in such homes. The choice is theirs, not the Board's, and the reversal will affect the credibility of future Boards, McCormick said. He feels a Board must be more than responsive to outside pressures. "Sometimes we should lead the community on a course which may be unpopular but would produce positive results in the schools," he concluded.

Britton said he had felt the policy to be discriminatory last August, and hence did not support it then, and therefore favored suspension of it. Ferguson indicated that he opposed the policy as instituted last August because he favored an all-stay or all-go home approach rather than limitations for some children. He doesn't go along with suspension and the accompanying hiring of 16 additional aides, he said.

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Court Denies & Appeal Of Botter Decision

The Appeals Court action last Tuesday, in dismissing the New Jersey Legislature appeal of the Botter decision necessitates local action to influence future sources of school funding, in the view of Fanwood Borough Councilman Van Dyke J. Pollitt. Pollitt served on Governor William Cahill's blue ribbon Tax Policy Committee and has followed taxation and school funding issues intensely in recent years.

The Botter decision said, in effect, that locally imposed property taxes were unconstitutional as a means of funding public elementary and secondary schools. The State Supreme Court sustained the Botter decision and the Legislature appealed it to no avail.

The New Jersey Legislature now has one year, until December 31, 1974, to create a brand new funding system for public schools and a new plan for the use and the administration of those funds.

Among the possibilities are either a statewide income tax (recommended by the tax committee), a uniform property tax,

or both. Whatever the new broad-based source, it must yield nearly \$2 billion dollars annually for school funding.

"The legislature now has a confirmed mandate for state funding of public schools, and it should use the opportunity to create a meaningful tax reform in our state," Pollitt said. "It is imperative that local government, local Boards of Education, PTA groups and professional groups bear an influence on the legislative decision making process so that the concept of home rule in education will be preserved," the local councilman continued.

Could It Be "The" Cannonball?

Ed Dingler is only eight years old, but he's already a confirmed history buff. Especially since his latest discovery - a five-pound cannonball which came from his neighborhood, 1819 Front Street. Eddie lives in a pretty historic neighborhood, as a matter of fact. The Cannonball House, a Revolutionary period home which recently was converted to a museum by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Historical Society, is but a stone's throw (or even a cannonball's throw) from his house. He recently came upon an authentic cannonball, and ran right to the Cannonball House with his find.

On duty when he arrived was Mrs. Vincent Lindner, head of the guides who serve at the museum when it is open to the public. Betty Lindner reports that she could barely contain her excitement. She realized that the cannonball found by young Mr. Dingler just across the street from the museum could possibly be the exact one that once lodged in the wall of the old museum, giving the Cannonball House its name. Of course, nobody could ever know for sure, but Mrs. Lindner says we'd like to think it might be possible.

Mr. Dingler was very professional in deciding what to do with the cannonball. He has presented it to the Historical Society on loan - just as adults lend their important and impressive collections for display in various museums throughout the nation. It is on display in the Memorabilia Room.

His mom, Mrs. H. W. Dingler, says the cannonball is but one of his historical interests. Eddie spends his days digging in his yard, hoping to uncover other examples of earlier days in Scotch Plains. He's found bottles, glass, etc., and the minute he has a new "find" he's all excited, and anxious to find out if it could be classified as antique and of interest to the Historical Society.

On Leaf Removal

The Department of Public Property has completed one pick-up of leaves on every street in town. They are now starting their second pick-up. Residents are reminded to keep foreign materials from mixing in with the leaves. Foreign materials have slowed down considerably the leaf picking operation and could cause damage to the machinery.