

THE TIMES

ONLY NEWSPAPER WITH COMPLETE SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD NEWS

VOLUME 15,

SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD, N.J.

THURSDAY, MAY 2, 1974

15 CENTS A COPY

Town Councils Meet With School Board In Budget Hassle

A conference between the governing bodies of Scotch Plains and Fanwood and Board of Education members - with county Superintendent of Schools Dr. West as mediator - represented the first (and fruitless) formal effort in an attempt at settlement of the impasse surrounding the 1974-75 school budget. The three bodies had earlier cut \$969,000 from the defeated 1974-75 school budget, and the Board of Education has refused to accept the cut. The Board sought appeal at the state level in Trenton, with the discussion between the bodies with the county superintendent in attendance as the first step recommended by the state in attempting solution. Apparently, Trenton is the next rung on the ladder, according to both Board and government representatives.

Apparently, the question of rationale continues to loom over the discussions. The Board of Education representatives have indicated that it had been their intention to cooperate and to act in accordance with the directive of F.H. Combs, Jr., Assistant Commissioner of Education for the state of New Jersey. Combs had written to the governing bodies early in April, stating that they were to provide two copies of the rationale which governed their decision to cut the \$969,000.

During the Monday morning session with West, the governing bodies did not provide the rationale. Mayor Walter Grote of Scotch Plains said that on advice of attorneys the governing bodies did not provide their ra-

tionale at this time. Grote said the rationale would not be binding upon the school board.

Grote said there is a legal difference of opinion on whether the school board had to prove that the dollars mandated by the governing bodies for operation of the schools would, in fact, represent too little money for a "thorough and efficient" education here. The governing bodies must not cut deeply enough into a budget to affect the thoroughness and efficiency of education.

Charles Ferguson, president of the Board of Education, noted that until such time as the governing bodies spell out and itemize exactly where the proposed budget should be cut, it

Continued on Page 18

Fanwooders Express Views At Zoning Ordinance Hearing

Approximately 50 Fanwood citizens turned out last Wednesday night to express their views and register their objections to a proposed zoning ordinance now before the Fanwood Borough Council for consideration. The Council did not take any action following the special meeting, but continued the hearing until the next regular meeting of the Council on the second Wednesday of May.

Three issues concerned the gathering in attendance - the possibility of commercial "creep" into First Street residential areas; general increase in commercially rated properties in the borough; and the potential development which PATH might bring to the borough of Fanwood.

James O'Brien, a homeowner from LaGrande Avenue, was the first to raise the question of First Street. He claimed that he had heard talk of general commercial development on First. However, the revised zoning map still shows that block-long street, running behind the stores on the

east side of Martine Avenue, as residential.

However, Robert Neumuller of 56 First Street, pointed out that United National Bank has bought residential property on First Street. Neumuller said this and the Master Plan which increased the business area along South Avenue, has had the effect of "blockbusting" First Street.

"Fanwood is a bedroom community. If you want a commercial community, you should go to Plainfield," Neumuller said. "You are destroying Fanwood inch by inch, just to cut everybody's taxes by \$1 a year," he said.

After several other First Street homeowners registered objections to any possibility of commercial development there, Louis Baumann, manager of United National, spoke. He acknowledged that the bank has purchased two properties on First Street. He noted the tremendous traffic problems created by bank customers at peak times, and said it was hoped by the bank that they could expand their parking lot behind the bank into the First Street commercial properties, for the convenience of the borough as a whole. He noted that 85 percent of bank business comes from Fanwood, so the bank would hesitate to take any action not desired by

Citizens Rise In Defense Of Mercer After Tenure Denial

DEMS Name Three Council Candidates

Mrs. Helen Galica, Fanwood Municipal Chairman, announced the names of the three Democratic candidates for the Borough Council in November. The two men are running for a three-year term, and a woman is running for the one-year term. All will oppose three G.O.P. incumbents.

Aaron M. Arnold of 7 Saville Row has resided in Fanwood for 14 years. A graduate of the City of New York, Arnold has been employed by the Courier-News for the past 20 years. He is active in local politics having served as Fanwood Municipal Chairman for the Democratic Party for three years, was president of the Fanwood Democratic Club, and presently is serving as committee man. Also he is Fanwood's representative to the Greater Plainfield Fourth of July Parade Committee. Arnold is affiliated with Temple Israel of Scotch Plains-Fanwood having served as a member of the Board of Trustees and president of the Men's Club. He and his wife Eleanor have two grown children, both of whom are graduates of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

A resident of Fanwood for four years, Robert D. Buckwald is a management consultant at Bell Laboratories in Whippany. He holds a B.S. in economics and an MBA from the University of Arizona. Buckwald teaches in the Graduate School of Business at Fairleigh Dickinson University and is a coach for the Fanwood Youth Organization. He and his wife Michelle live at 210 Coriell Avenue with their son David and attend the Fanwood Presbyterian Church.

Theresa ("Terry") Ryan is a 1969 graduate of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. She was a member of the National Honor Society, Editor-in-Chief of the Yearbook, and a recipient of a four-year scholarship from the College Club of Fanwood-Scotch Plains. Miss Ryan attended Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania. She is presently employed by Web Associates in East Orange. Terry lives with her parents at 10 Glenwood Road and attends St. Bartholomew the Apostle Church.

In announcing Miss Ryan's candidacy, Mrs. Galica remarked, "This bright, energetic and innovative young woman is exactly what Fanwood needs." She added that all three candidates will bring diverse interests and backgrounds to the Council.

the general population.

Council members reiterated several times that the area, as zoned in the new ordinance, would definitely not allow for parking

Continued on Page 18

Everybody Gets Into The Act During Long, Noisy Meeting

Several citizens approached the Board of Education during a special meeting last week, to speak in behalf of Hal Mercer, football coach and physical education teacher, who was denied tenure a week earlier. The citizens have promised to continue a push to correct what they have termed were grave injustices surrounding Mercer's dismissal. The auditorium at Terrill Junior High School was crowded for the session last Thursday, with students forming a considerable representation.

During the discussion of the tenure denial a week earlier, board members had stated that Mercer was judged on his teaching abilities. His football coaching was praised.

Thomas Fallon of Chip Lou Lane was the first to speak on the issue during the special session. Mercer's professional reputation is at stake, Fallon said, and the citizens are coming to his defense because they feel he is a man who fits into the educational system.

Claiming there had been inferences Mercer had changed schools frequently, Fallon cited Mercer's entire professional career, listing detailed reasons for each change of position, most of them made because of better opportunities. His most recent post, as teacher-coach at Jonathan Dayton Regional High in Springfield, had brought citations as an outstanding teacher during the two years preceeding 1971, when he was engaged here. Fallon stated that he had been offered a contract which would have represented tenure had he not left to come to Scotch Plains-Fanwood.

"How was he hired, as teacher or coach? I don't see the difference," Fallon said. He claimed Mercer is outstanding as coach, more than acceptable as teacher. Had it been necessary to fill the head coach position, it could have been done from within the system, Fallon claimed. However, "We wanted a head coach, and they are not cheap," he said. Fallon further claimed that Mercer was asked by administration and board whether he would take the teaching post if the coaching were not an accompaniment, and he had answered in the negative.

Eugene Gatens also spoke at length on the issue. There is no allegation against the honesty or integrity of board or administration, Gatens said. "I believe honest men can differ," Gatens said that Mercer had "rocked the boat," over availability of trainers, athletic equipment, and scheduling of games, and had been "called on the carpet and told to lay off." Gatens further claimed that when an \$8 fee for sports participation had been imposed, Mercer refused to impose it and eventually the board had retracted the fee. "This, I believe, was the beginning of the end. Mercer was bucking the system and his evaluations began to fall off," Gatens charged. He said Mercer's in-class evaluations had occurred on difficult days, such as the day back after

a long vacation. "Judge the whole man. Performance and total effectiveness are not limited to the classroom," Gatens said.

Alec Molten claimed the board is trying to evaluate a problem using two sets of rules. The old board discussed and hired Mercer as a "teacher with many talents," Molten said, emphasizing his total teaching, "wherever we lead our young." Now he fits the mold of 1971, but not of 1974, Molten said, and isn't evaluated on how he does the whole job. There has been a prejudicial setting aside of 90 percent of his talent. "Go back, use the template of 1971," he urged.

George Holzner submitted a petition signed by 1000 students and adults asking for his reinstatement.

Al Shaines of Crest Lane, Fanwood spoke in behalf of the board, stating that he considered them dedicated, honest, political and wise, and he questioned that they would take such a controversial and important step lightly, without considering the whole man.

Mrs. Ann Winfield, a representative of NJEA (New Jersey Education Association), stating that the public outcry surrounding the Mercer situation would never have arisen here if the teacher contract had included a clause promising fair-dismissal procedures for non-tenured teachers. This would have provided a closed

Continued on Page 18

Police Warn Citizens On Alarm Systems

On April 5, 1973 the Township of Scotch Plains adopted an Ordinance to provide for "Police, Fire and Other Emergency Alarm Systems In The Township."

One of the requirements of this Ordinance is that ALL ALARMS which require a response from the Police Department, Fire Department or other Municipal Agency shall be Registered with the Police Department. Failure to comply with the terms of the Ordinance is subject to a Fine of not more than \$200.00 or imprisonment for a period of not exceeding 90 days, or both.

We are pleased to report that most of our Residents have complied with the Terms of the Ordinance however those who may not be aware of it are asked to please call The Office of the Police Chief at 322-7100 for further information.