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15 CENTS A COPY

School Board Hires New Varsity Coach

Leonard Mechalavage, who has been coaching the Roosevelt, Long Island football team for the past eight years, was hired by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education as a physical education teacher and varsity football coach.

The new teacher-coach was welcomed by the football team, other coaches, Athletic Director Ray Schnitzer and high school staff last Friday night. The welcome festivities, originally scheduled in the form of an outdoor cookout, were driven to the lobby of the high school by rainy weather. However, the "indoor picnic" was overwhelmingly successful according to the chefs of the evening, high school principal Terry Riegel and the assistant principals.

Riegel said over 100 candidates for the position were interviewed by mail, followed by 30 personal interviews of four hours each. Following the personal interviews, several candidates were observed at their schools. Mr. Mechalavage has over 20 years of experience in football, as a player and coach. Before his years at Roosevelt, he also coached at Amityville, Long Island. He holds a Master's degree from Hofstra University and has been named Coach of the Year by the prestigious Long Island daily newspaper, Newsday.

In addition to his teaching and coaching qualifications, Mechalavage is a specialist in Driver Education. He is the father of three children, two girls and one boy.

Mechalavage replaces Harold Mercer as coach. Mercer was denied tenure by the Board in a controversial situation last spring, when several sports supporters confronted the board time and time again, seeking justification for the dismissal, both from a coaching and teaching standpoint. Repeatedly, it was emphasized that Mercer was evaluated principally for his teaching abilities, and it was upon that basis that the decision to deny tenure was made. Mercer has registered an appeal with the state Commissioner of Education, with decision still pending. He seeks board reasons for his dismissal, in line with a new state ruling.

Walter Boright, a Board member, asked Dr. Perry Tyson, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, whether it had been made clear to Mechalavage that he would be evaluated for his teaching and was assured by Tyson that it has been stressed that his first and primary responsibility would be the teaching assignment.

Thomas Fallon of Chip Lou Lane, Scotch Plains, who has been an outspoken supporter of Mercer during the past Board meetings, took issue with the designation assigned to Mechalavage. "I have no objection to the hiring of a Physical Education teacher or a coach, but I object to hiring him for \$18,300 as a physical education teacher," Fallon said. Fallon urged repeatedly that the job title and salary be listed for the combined teacher-coach roles. Otherwise, he said, if the man should fail to measure up as a coach but was a good teacher, the district would be paying an \$18,000 Physical Education teacher.

"We are in a financial crisis now, and we shouldn't be paying \$18,000 for a teacher, but we should be paying that for a football coach and teacher," he said.

Fallon urged reconsideration of the designation, which would give Mechalavage due reason for why he was being hired.

Board President Charles Ferguson said anybody coming in with a Master's and that experience would receive the same salary. Board member Darrell Brownwell said it is district policy to hire teachers, and from among them, to hire coaches.

Fallon challenged the board's honesty on the issue. "Forget this petty stuff . . . call a spade a spade . . . improve the community relations," he urged.

Another resident, who said he was a newcomer and unfamiliar with past arguments on the issue, said he would think when there is a specific need to be filled, it would be done as economically as possible. He then compared salaries for Mechalavage and another new Physical Education teacher, Pamela Schulte, hired for \$9,200. Upon questioning, Tyson told him the work load, assignment, duties, etc. would be identical for the two. The local district has a policy of placing people at the appropriate spot on the guide commensurate with past experience, Tyson said, and decisions on hiring are made by considering the best person for the job.

Other coaches at the senior and junior highs were named. Ferguson said no change in male coaching salaries had been made over last year during negotiations. Male coaches forewent a salary increase other than their regular increment, in behalf of female coaches who seek a par with the men. The male coaches want a greater number of participants involved in coaching, he said, and want aides rather than assistant coaches in some areas.

The following were named to coaching slots at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School: Football: Coach - Len Mechalavage; Assistants Joe Ascolese, Len Zanowicz, John Gayewski. Basketball: Coach Joe Coleman; Assistant John Patterson. Wrestling: Coach Len Zanowicz; As-

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When You Need Help

Do you want your house spruced up? Some painting done? That attic, garage or basement cleaned? Then call 322-9400 - Youth Employment Service, 1790 Front St., Scotch Plains open from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon Monday through Friday.

YES has served this area for the past ten years, helping young people get the jobs they need. YES wants to continue to serve Scotch Plains and Fanwood. If you have the job they have the boy or girl to do it well.

Council OK's Fanwood Zoning Ordinance

Freeholder Candidates Oppose Tax

The lack of public confidence in government spending, the absence of controls against future spending and the challenge to local control of education were among the reasons cited by the Republican candidates for the Union County Board of Freeholders in a joint statement rejecting Govern Byren's school funding and tax reform proposals today.

Incumbent Freeholders Matthew H. Nilsen and Rosemarie Sinnott and their running mate, Westfield attorney Robert C. Doherty cited earlier government promises of property tax relief "that never materialized" in rejecting the plan.

"The citizens of our State recall that the sales tax which began at 3% but soon climbed to 5% was heralded as the savior of the property taxpayer when it was introduced in 1966," Freeholder Nilsen said. "Despite those promises, our property tax bills have continued to climb giving us the highest effective property tax rate in the nation." He said that lottery funds were also understood to be a means of reducing property taxes, "but, of course, this did not happen either. Now the Governor is asking for an income tax to reduce property taxes" but his program lacks the controls to assure that local property taxes will go down and stay down."

Mrs. Sinnott challenged the Governor's program as "too broad and non-responsive" to the court mandate by including capital and debt service costs, court and welfare costs, and funds required to close an anticipated budget gap. "I believe the public is conditioned to accept a new broad-based tax for the purpose of increasing State support of elementary and secondary education, but it is unfair to the taxpayers to include \$400 million of other costs under the umbrella of a schools funding program."

Mrs. Sinnott said funding programs for other government services besides education "should rise or fall on their own merit."

Doherty said he is "convinced" that the public will accept true tax reform but resents the income tax proposal as "another raid on the middle income taxpayer and the creation of a massive new source of State revenues for present and future spending programs. If the Governor anticipates a budget gap, he should have the courage to propose a separate and distinct tax program to the Legislature for this purpose alone or have his fiscal experts and agency heads "draw in their belts another notch" and save tax dollars instead of always asking for new tax dollars."

Amendment To Rezone Portion Of South Avenue For Residential Use Defeated In Unusual Vote

After several public hearings and considerable debate, Fanwood's zoning ordinance became a reality last Wednesday. However, an amendment which would have changed the Planning Board recommendation for commercial zoning in a portion of South Avenue was defeated in an unusual voting situation.

The zoning ordinance, as initially conceived by the planners, included a change from residential to commercial zoning on the south side of South Avenue, from First Street to LaGrande School. The Borough Council had under consideration an amendment which would have reverted that area back to residential - a move urged by several Councilmen and by numerous residents of First Street, LaGrande Avenue, and adjacent neighborhoods. However, five property owners who own the five residences which would have been affected by the change had petitioned the Council to leave the area as a commercially zoned one. Then, law mandates that when 20 percent or more of the affected property owners so petition, a zoning change required at least 2/3 vote of a governing body to be effective.

Therefore, although the actual vote found more Council members favoring residential zoning than commercial, commercial remained because a full 2/3 of the Council was not aligned in favor of change. Councilmen Charles Coronella, Robert McCarthy, John Coulter and Mayor Ted Trumpp tried to restore the residential zoning. The y and citizens felt Fanwood does not need any further commercial development to compound traffic

problems, safety hazards for LaGrande school children, etc. However, Councilmen Van Dyke Pollitt and John Swindlehurst and Councilwoman Carol Whittington approved the commercial.

Pollitt and Mrs. Whittington did not comment on their reasons. Swindlehurst said Fanwood needs long-range planning instead of a "crackerbarrel" approach. The Planning Board held hearings on the Master Plan a while back, which document is reflected in the new zoning, he felt, and said he feels the town should legislate through its boards which are designed to advise. Although other Councilmen forecast traffic hazards through commercial development of banks, restaurants, etc., Swindlehurst said he didn't consider drive-in banks as hazardous.

Mayor Trumpp said that he does not feel every board or commission is correct 100 percent of the time, and he would have voted against the Master Plan if he had been on the Planning Board at the time of formulation.

In other actions, the Council will apply to the freeholders for state approval for a 35-mile an hour speed limit throughout North and Martine Avenues. At

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Board Of Ed. Adopts New Meeting Format

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education will add a new half hour comment session to its regular monthly meetings, and will restrict the post-meeting public discussion to one hour or until 11 p.m., whichever is longest. Henceforth, the public will be permitted to comment to the board, but not to question the board, in any area during the comment time from 7:30 to 8:00 p.m. Questioning will be possible after the meeting, as has been the custom to date.

There will not be any provision for public comment and/or questioning during the regular agenda session.

Board President Charles Ferguson said the Board has received numerous letters requesting modification of the public meetings. The Executive Council of Park Junior High School PTA has been among the petitioners. The Board has also received a request with the threat of litigation from the Education Law Center of Newark, a firm engaged by Alert Parents, Ferguson said a letter had also been received on the subject from McGinn PTA President Ruth Gastel.

The Board of Education has also received a communication from the legal firm on the sub-

ject of SAT scores, which communication has been referred to the Board Attorney.

In other matters, the Board voted to approve a salary of \$39,500 for Superintendent of Schools Fred Laberge. In a discussion surrounding the approval, it was agreed that the Board will pursue the finalization of management objectives by which the Board will be able to evaluate the performance of the Superintendent in the future. This year, the Board evaluated the goals set by the Superintendent.

Of the nine-man Board, seven were present last week. Mrs. Leonia Reilly and Mrs. Robbie Mason were absent. Philip La-

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