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When and Where Is The Magical \$714,260?

There is a magical number which gets bandied about quite a bit these days, and is arousing considerable concern. The number is \$714,260. Recently, the New Jersey Commissioner of Education restored that amount to the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school district, following a Board of Education appeal of the \$969,000 cut from the budget by the governments of the two communities.

The restoration was a go-ahead to begin spending at a rate to include the restored funds, according to school authorities, who indicated last week that spending from now on would include the restored monies. One snag. The governing bodies of Scotch Plains and Fanwood never collected those funds. They cut the budget, and then certified to the county Board of Taxation a tax rate at the reduced figure. Therefore, the monies now sit in the pockets of the taxpayers.

The schools are acting correctly in now spending to include the restoration, in the view of Van Dyke Pollitt, a Fanwood Councilman. Pollitt said legally, the decision of the Commissioner was the most recent legal decision on the amount of the total budget.

However, the governing bodies of the two communities have indicated intent to file a further appeal. In fact, they say, they will pursue the issue two steps further. First to the New Jersey State Board of Education, then if necessary to the Supreme Court. A court would have to file a stay permitting the towns to refrain from collection of monies - a move which hasn't yet been made.

The move which has been made was one by N.J. Commissioner Fred Burke. After studying the local budget and making a determination to restore the bulk of the funds, he ordered the county tax board to begin collecting at a higher rate. Immediately, the two community governments sent the county a letter asking that they refrain from taking such action pending appeals.

Wider Recruitment Of Teachers Is Goal Of Budget Increase

Gaps in the teaching ranks in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school district will hopefully be filled with teachers from a more diversified background and a wider geographical scope than ever before. That is the goal behind a \$3,500 increase in the teacher recruitment program for the 1975-76 school year.

Better representation of minority groups on the teaching staff is another aim. To accomplish the two, Philip Geiger, Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools, plans to travel further away from Scotch Plains to recruit teachers. Why such action now, when teachers are having trouble finding teaching positions and applicants line up for every opening? Because Geiger is convinced of the necessity to recruit teachers from all over the country. Without such an effort, the district ends up with a homogenized, middle-class central Jersey staff. Most will have received the same training from the same professors, Geiger feels, and such a situation results in a sterile education.

Although pupil reductions necessitate a reduction of eight elementary teachers next year,

Certainly staff salaries offer a clue. In providing a rationale for their \$969,000 cut, the combined Councils sought reduction of a total of 34 professional classroom teaching positions, in addition to some administrative posts. The deflated budget had provided for a reduction of six class teachers to reflect reduced enrollments, offset by eight additional positions in special education and four in vocational-occupational areas. The Commissioner upheld the Board of Education in all but the six teaching slots no longer required due to reduced enrollments. Apparently, these teachers are still on the payroll.

If approximately 70 percent of the total budget is salaries, one concludes that approximately \$500,000, or 70 percent, of the restored monies which nobody yet has, is required to meet payrolls between now and June.

Where would the Councils put their hands on the monies, if they are directed by the courts to supply them between now and June? Are there avenues open for acquisition of the funds, other than by a door-to-door hat passing among the residents? An emergency appropriation by Councils would be the likely step.

What if, instead, the appeal procedure were to work quickly, and courts would find in favor of the Councils? How, then, would the teaching positions be eliminated? This would have to be done by seniority, in the view of John Feldman, President of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association.

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Pollitt Resigns From Fanwood Boro Council

Cites Varied Reasons For Leaving After Ten Years Of Service To Borough

In one of the major political surprises in recent years, Fanwood Councilman Van Dyke Pollitt submitted his resignation from the Fanwood Borough Council last Wednesday night. Pollitt, a ten-year veteran in Fanwood political circles, sprung the announcement just before the close of the monthly Council meeting.

Pollitt is a Republican, and has served on the Council since 1964. He cited three reasons for his resignation, which will be effective at the Mayor's earliest opportunity but not later than March 1. Pollitt indicated that the community has a vast reservoir of talent, and he is confident that there are others, "perhaps more innovative, perhaps more spontaneous," and he is confident that a competent replacement can readily be made. Pollitt's replacement would be named by the majority vote of Council.

As a second reason, Councilman Pollitt cited a business interest that he has held down on in terms of growth, due to the press of time. He said there are within the private concern two potential areas of conflict of interest. Borough Attorney Edward Beglin has confirmed Pollitt's claim of potential conflict in one of the two cases, he noted. While he said he would not publicly discuss the areas of conflict, he offered to discuss the issues privately with any other Council members.

Finally, Pollitt indicated that a personal and pressing family responsibility now demands his attention.

He has served with three Mayors and 17 Councilmen, "and I

have loved every minute except this one," the Councilman said, in what was obviously an emotional experience. His service on the Council has been a major experience of his life, he claimed, and while hackneyed, the phrase, "It has been an honor and privilege to serve," is appropriate.

The resigning Councilman leaves the governing body with three charges: 1) to complete the restructuring within the Police Department, 2) to follow up on the citizens committee evaluation and recommendations on the Slocum property and to create a competent government facility, and 3) to try to rekindle, "if not a rapport, at least an understanding with Board of Education to cause us to pull together as we once did rather than pulling separately."

Mayor Trumpp said a formal Council response to the resignation would be forthcoming at a later time.

Mrs. Lee Reilly, a Board of Education member who was in the audience, praised the time and effort Pollitt has given to Council service and his talents as a gifted speaker. James Russell, chairman of the Slocum Property Citizens Committee, also noted the great loss to Fanwood citizens.

Seeks Info On Cable TV For Fanwood

Cable television possibilities for Fanwood were questioned at last week's monthly meeting of the Fanwood Borough Council. S.P. Gelwarg of 29 Cray Terrace said he represented the interest of his neighbors in seeking information on what it would take to have cable television in Fanwood.

The possibility hasn't come up for at least three years, nor have there been applicants for a cable TV franchise, Gelwarg was told. Back in the 1960's, the Council received proposals from two candidates, and "did not take disfavorable action," Councilman Van Dyke Pollitt recalled. The Council awaited a followup, and never heard further.

Someone would have to come forth with an application for a franchise, at which point the governing body would have to investigate the financial soundness of applicants before granting such a franchise.

Joseph Nagy, a Fanwood resident, pressed Mayor Ted Trumpp for his definition of the educational philosophy of the district from two profiles: course content and teaching techniques and strategy. Nagy cited Trumpp's statement that the forthcoming election is an opportunity to give a decision on whether to approve or disapprove the educational philosophy of the district.

Geiger indicates the \$3,500 increase over last year reflects a more realistic recruitment budget figure, since the funds appropriated have been inadequate.

At the present time in Scotch Plains-Fanwood, there are 7,400 students in 10 schools. Eight percent of them are black. Of a staff of 400, only 15 teachers are black - a fact which has been criticized from time to time by some community residents. Geiger seeks talented and capable blacks and women for teaching and supervisory staff, and is convinced that top quality people are available within these categories.

On a recent recruitment swing through the South, Mr. Geiger and Dr. Terry Riegel spent ten days working nine hours per day interviewing candidates. They saw 200 candidates on the trip, which cost \$2,500. Two positions which opened up following the trip were filled by black applicants from Atlanta University. Next week, Geiger plans a tour of Middle Western schools. He'll visit New England schools in March.

Geiger emphasizes his conviction that a strong recruiting effort will strengthen the educational offering within the school district. Recruitment should be a continuing effort regardless of teacher supply, he believes.

Pollitt's Statement

Fanwood councilman, Van Dyke J. Pollitt, has announced his resignation from the borough council, to be effective "at the mayor's earliest option but not later than March 1, 1975." He made the announcement at the council's public meeting last week.

Pollitt, the council's senior member, had been council president for four years and Police Commissioner since 1971. He was appointed by former mayor E.S. Hulsizer in January 1966, and was elected to three-year terms in 1966, 1969 and 1972. He had been Chairman of the Health & Welfare, Finance and Public Safety committees and was a member of all other councilmanic committees during his 9-plus years of service.

In his resignation statement, he noted he had served with three mayors and 17 different councilmen.

He cited three reasons for the resignation. "First, I have served here for 10 years and I am confident someone else can bring a more innovative and spontaneous response to these duties," he said. He then cited a private business interest that could place him in a position of conflict of interest. He said Borough Attorney, Edward Beglin, had confirmed the conflict possibility. The third reason involves a family responsibility "that demands my immediate attention," he said.

Pollitt heads a public relations company specializing in political and commercial public relations and advertising. He said the possible conflict involves that private company and not his position as Manager at Wallace & Tierman in Belleville.

In his resignation statement, Pollitt urged the council to complete the restructuring of the Police Department, to avoid delay in providing "competent" facilities for the borough government and to "take the initiative" to establish, if not a rapport, at least an understanding with the Board of Education. "Surely, it is better to pull together than to pull separately which has had the effect of pulling us apart," he said.

"I have loved every moment of my council service except this one," Pollitt said at the conclusion of his statement. "It has been a major part of my life."