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## How The Tentative School Budget Could Affect Local Taxes

Scotch Plains and Fanwood residents received a brochure this week from the Board of Education, detailing the tentative 1975-76 school budget of \$13,604,444. The budget is up only 6.47 percent - one of the lowest percentage increases in years, the brochure indicates.

However, the impact of the tentative budget on local tax rates is not exactly 6.47 percent. What it is exactly depends upon where one looks at the statistics.

If one looks at figures tallied up by the Borough of Fanwood, the total amount to be raised for schools would jump 14.1 percent next year. That's if Fanwood doesn't collect its portion of the \$714,000 restored to the school budget by the state Commissioner of Education following an appeal by the Board of Education. The Fanwood portion of the \$714,000 is \$185,640, and it is now in a further appeal process. To date, none of it has been collected, either in Scotch Plains or in Fanwood.

If the litigation results in an order for restoration, Fanwood could collect its \$185,640 by adding that amount to next year's taxes. Then, the amount to be raised for schools would be 23.1 percent. Apparently, Fanwood would act in that manner if the appeal outcome is unfavorable, since preliminary budget infor-

mation provides for such an exigency.

Less tax information is available as yet from Scotch Plains, since a government turnover and a new township manager dictated a request for a delay in introducing a municipal budget.

However, Scotch Plains could conceivably be in much the same boat - with either an approved 1975-76 school budget to cover by tax collections, or by the new plus the old.

Michael Blacker, new Township Manager in Scotch Plains, said the problem is that the increase in the budget percentage for the school district is made on the assumption of the \$714,000 restored by the Commissioner, when in reality taxpayers haven't yet paid that amount. That still has to be raised from last year, if appeals fail, and it means \$533,000 for Scotch Plains. The Scotch Plains portion of next year's budget would be \$9 million plus the as yet

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## Seek Council Approval For Village Green Plan

A plan for a landscaped Village Green tied in with the grounds of the Scotch Plains Cannonball House on Front Street with Park Avenue, prepared by Landscape Consultant Virginia Frost, was presented to the Scotch Plains Bicentennial Committee at a recent meeting. The Committee endorsed the general concept of the landscape plan and recommended that it be presented to the Township Council for endorsement.

Mrs. William Elliott announced that the Plainfield Garden Club has generously offered to partially landscape the Cannonball House section, but that the cooperation of many other service groups would be needed to complete the entire project. Part of the plan includes an octagonal bandstand facing Bartle Avenue with open areas for summer concerts and landscaped screening of the adjacent municipal building.

To clarify the location of the local Revolutionary battlesite, Mr. Detwiler read a letter from Mr. Kemble Widmer, State Geologist and consultant on the state's official map on the Battles and Skirmishes of the American Revolution in New Jersey. Mr. Widmer wrote, "It looks like we will be revising the map and from the information you have given me, I suspect the battle location may be relocated. There should perhaps be space to move the reference south and slightly west at the next go-round."

Because the battle had been so badly neglected and nearly forgotten, the Committee adopted a resolution to try to establish a memorial to The Battle of the Short Hills, which took place in the area on June 26, 1777. Since it was a running battle that took place from Plainfield through Scotch Plains to Westfield and up into the Bloody Gap of the Watchung Mountains, with

British retreating through Rahway and Clark, the Committee recommended that the new Ash Brook County Park in the middle of the encounter be the place for the memorial. The Committee endorsed plans to have commemorative ceremonies to the Battle on the site on Sunday, June 26, 1977, inviting surrounding towns to join in on activities.

"Bonnets, Bustles, Bloomers and Bikinis," two hundred years of changing fashion, a show and luncheon is slated for Saturday, April 12 of this year at Shackamaxon Country Club, starting at 12 noon, announced Mrs. Elliott, Chairman.

The Committee set their calendar of future events to include a 10 Mile Run around Historic Scotch Plains and Fanwood on Memorial Day, May 30th in 1976 arranged by the local YMCA; a Carriage Show and Tour as a part of the annual parade on May 31st in 1976, chaired by Mrs. Sheldon Seidman; and sunrise to sunset programs on the 4th of July in '76 to include the Ox Roast handled by the Jaycees with Chairperson of the Day being Mrs. Harry P. Messemer, Jr. The Greater Plainfield Area 4th of July Parade in '76 is scheduled for Monday, the 5th of July under the direction of the American Legion.

## Fanwood Municipal Budget Is Up 11.6%

### Total Jump In Fanwood Tax Bill Could Be 18%

The Fanwood Borough Council introduced an estimated 1975 budget of \$1,443,434 last night. The actual budget figure is down .4 percent from last year's \$1,449,194, attributable primarily to a reduction in the reserve for uncollected taxes, from eight percent reserve, or \$301,464 in 1974 to five percent reserve, or \$215,041 in 1975. The reserve fund drops 28.7 percent by the change in percentage set aside. However, the good news is offset by the bad - a drop in anticipated revenues from \$944,902 last year to \$880,805 this year. This 6.7 percent decrease in revenue offsets the reserve, resulting in a total municipal amount of \$562,629 - up 11.6 percent from the 1974 total.

The municipal budget is not the end of the story, however. The municipal budget will represent approximately 13.08 percent of the Fanwood taxpayers tax bill. The remaining taxes go to schools, 72.85 percent; to county, 12.97 percent; and to veterans and senior citizens exemptions, 1.10 percent.

Fanwood's portion of the tentative school budget for 1975-76 is \$2,947,228, or 14.1 percent more than in 1974. However, if Fanwood adds another \$185,640 next year to cover Fanwood's portion of the \$714,000 still uncollected from the present year's school budget due to court appeals, the total to be raised for schools in Fanwood would be \$3,132,868, or 23.1 percent

more than in the present year. The county budget tally for Fanwood is expected to increase 10.1 percent for Fanwoodians, from \$506,757 to \$558,000, while veterans and senior citizens is expected to drop 6.2 percent.

Assuming passage of the proposed 1975-76 school budget and assuming litigation favorable to the school district regarding the controversial \$714,000, the average Fanwood taxpayer may find his tax bill 18.0 percent higher next year. The estimated tax rate is 4.83, in contrast to 4.06 last year. Taxes paid on a \$40,000 house would be \$1,932 in 1975, in comparison to a \$1,624 tax bill for 1974.

## Bicentennial Committee Holds Meeting

The Fanwood American Revolution Bicentennial Committee held its January meeting on Monday, January 27.

New members were introduced - they include Mr. Fred Ritter, Boy Scouts; Mrs. Stella George, Suburban Club; Mr. Robert Buob, Recreation Commission; Mr. M. Douglas Beals, Republican Club.

Reports of activities throughout the community were heard and Fanwood's Bicentennial Celebration promises to be a true "grassroots" effort - in keeping with the founding of our country.

Among the many activities discussed were - painting of the town's park benches - to be a joint effort of the Recreation Commission and the Democratic Club. Mrs. Grace Paltz, Fanwood Library, has been doing research on the Blue Laws of days gone by and the committee will select a day for Fanwood's residents to observe at least some of the blue laws!

The Philathalians are planning a pageant - local playwright, Mrs. Charlotte Baker, is the author of the original work. The Philathalians will also again present the Fanwood Bell Ringing Ceremony on July 4th.

The Girl Scouts plan an outdoor demonstration and display of Colonial Crafts to be held on the streets of both Scotch Plains and Fanwood in May 1976.

The children of LaGrande School will organize under the leadership of Mrs. Helen Harper, to provide a lasting memorial. It is hoped that a tree can be planted on the Slocum property with a plaque that recognizes the importance that LaGrande School has had in Fanwood's community life.

Mrs. Joan Bonner, Democratic Club, offered to do some research and collect examples of newspaper articles concerning historical events.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Art Association is considering providing works of art for the municipal offices. The Fanwood Women's Club will have a float in the parade manned by members in colonial costume.

The Republican Club has offered to coordinate a Christmas display of luminarias for Christmas Eve 1975.

Mrs. Mae Donnelly, Senior Citizens, will provide home-baked goodies at the Memorial Day Picnic in 1976.

The chairmen, Mrs. Audrey Martin and Mrs. Norma Clark, announced that they expect to receive notice of Fanwood's designation as a Bicentennial town very shortly.

## Where's The Surplus? Mayor Griffin Asks:

Thomas Van Vliet, a candidate for the Board of Education, came to the Township Council of Scotch Plains to ask whether there was, indeed, money in surplus in town coffers to pay for the township's share of the \$714,000 restored to the school budget by the state Commissioner of Education.

At the present time, the township is appealing the decision of the Commissioner. The \$14,000 has never been collected and no final determination has yet been made as to where the funds would come from if they are to be collected. Last week, at a public hearing on the school budget, Charles Ferguson, President of the Board, said the \$714,000 could come from surplus in the accounts of Fanwood and Scotch Plains, negating the need for taxpayers to fork up the \$714,000 in addition to costs for next year's budget.

Mayor Robert Griffin suggested Ferguson come down and show the township just where the surplus funds are. Griffin said whatever surplus there is is used to continue operations of the township for a three-month period in the beginning of the year, while the annual budget is being formulated. Griffin said no determination of surplus amount has been made yet, nor has the township been able to evaluate the impact of the school budget on taxes. However, he indicated, a final budget meeting scheduled for this Saturday should enable the governing body to reach some real and solid conclusions.

In response to Van Vliet's question, Councilman Walter Grote said the auditor for the board had suggested recently that the towns recoup the \$714,000

without collecting taxes. Grote said that when the auditor talked to the treasurer, it was illustrated that his recommendations would have exhausted all the reserves, which would not be financially feasible. The board audi-

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## Master Plan Committee Holds Meeting

The Ad Hoc Citizens' Committee named for a revision of the Master Plan of Scotch Plains met last night, Wednesday, February 5, for a discussion of Master Plan Survey Report 1, entitled "Land Use, Physical, Population, Housing," prepared by Planning Consultants, Boorman and Dorram, Inc. The discussion was led by Citizen's Committee resource members Joseph D'Annunzio, of the Union County Planning Board, Daniel Bernstein, and David Ringle of Peterson-Ringle agency.

The citizens' group, under direction of chairman Ruth Castel and co-chairman Rev. Bob Shoemsmith, also discussed directions and guidelines for discussion of the second survey report, "transportation" and Planning Goals for Scotch Plains, which will be the subjects for the March meeting of the committee.