

# THE TIMES

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SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD, N.J.

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15 CENTS

## School et Hassle Plays T l House

The new auditorium at School One was jammed to overflowing last Thursday night, as an audience of administrators, teachers, parents and citizens listened as a newly elected Board of Education voted to take a \$1 million cut in the combined budgets of the 1974-75 and the 1975-76 school years. The \$1 million reduction will have a much greater impact upon next year's budget, since \$820,000 will be cut from that budget in contrast to \$180,000 less with which to operate in the current year. It was explained that the smaller settlement for this year was made because most of the funds have already been committed.

The decision ends a year of appeals and counter-appeals over last year's budget which, like the budget presented to the voters here this March, was overwhelmingly defeated. Originally, the Councils of Scotch Plains and Fanwood removed \$969,000 from the current year's budget. Following appeal procedures, the state Commissioner restored \$714,000 of that amount - a move the Councils were in the process of appealing. Now, with a new Board in power, the total cut for this year was settled at \$180,000 removed from the restored \$714,000, but next year's budget will be \$820,000 less than that proposed to voters.

The decision on the two-pronged cut was made on a split vote. Henry Schwiering and Robbie Mason, holdovers from the last Board, voted negatively. Schwiering felt the budget figures he originally approved represent the best needs of the district, and that children would be hurt by the cut. Mrs. Mason said no priorities had been established before setting amount of the cut. "There will be celebration that the great schism which has existed is at an end, but I expect a doozy of a hang-over tomorrow, when reality sets in," she said.

Philip Labasi, another hold-over, disagreed. The "new" Board will see to it that the children are not hurt, and will work to minimally affect the children.

The Board was praised by some, questioned by others. Defeated Board candidates Don Dugan and John Corcoran praised the action, Corcoran asked the Board to establish a commission to investigate the effectiveness of reading and math instruction and to determine if the education is thorough and efficient.

## Tax Rates Go Up In Scotch Plains, Fanwood

Taxpayers in Scotch Plains will pay 4.1 percent more in taxes in 1975 than they did in 1974. The rate will be \$3.84, up 15 cents from 1974. In Fanwood, taxes will climb 11 percent, from \$4.06 to \$4.49. The rates were announced following the Thursday meeting of the Board of Education, when a \$1 million cut in the school budget was announced.

A home in Fanwood assessed at \$40,000 will bear taxes of \$1,796 in contrast to \$1,624 last year. Original predictions of Fanwood taxes had indicated a much larger raise, to \$4.77 per hundred. However, a 28-cent drop was made due to changes in the school budget.

Whereas Fanwood officials first set their budget based upon the full amount of the school budget, Scotch Plains Council initially estimated a tax rate which allowed for some reduction. There, a home assessed at \$40,000 will have taxes of \$1,536, up \$60 from last year.

Several people pressed for details on how the amount of cut was set. Joseph Nagy of Fanwood asked for the "scenario" leading to a decision on amount. Board President Richard Bard said that as of now there are nine different people with nine different sets of priorities on the Board, so that no specific set of priorities went into the decision. The amount was arrived at during bargaining negotiations with the Councils, and decision on the amount just seemed to work out that way, Bard said. Nagy questioned that the district could get along on that, to which Bard responded that two former Board members felt more could be trimmed.

Bard said that it is the intention of the Board, when it gets into the area of next year's cuts, to receive input from the administration, staff and general public. In the current year, operating without the \$180,000, the Board said there will be no staff cuts. There is no indication at this time as to whether or not there will be cuts next year, since sessions with the administration, staff, etc. have not yet been held.

In recent years, past Boards have announced their intention to dedicate any funds realized from the sale of abandoned School One on Park Avenue to needed improvements at Park Junior High. These are improvements which a past Board deemed necessary, but which were not included in a referendum authorizing monies for school additions. The Board voted again to dedicate the funds, with Mrs. Mason abstaining on the vote. She said the Board had not developed priorities on the \$1 million cut, and doesn't have enough information for a qualified decision. "All bets are off at this time," she said. Robert Carlson voted in favor but

## Final Action On Municipal Budget Moved To Monday

### F.Y.O. Fund Drive Saturday

The boys of the Fanwood Youth Organization, between 9 and 16 years of age, will conduct their annual door-to-door fund drive in the Borough this Saturday morning, (March 29). The F.Y.O. this year will field 29 Baseball teams, each of which is sponsored by a local merchant or group. The sponsorship fee defrays the cost of uniforms for the boys. Other league expenses must come from the proceeds of this one fund-raising event.

He reserves the right to use every dollar to provide a thorough and efficient education if need arises.

The Board postponed action on engaging a Child Study Team, for additional time over the summer months. Decision on the Child Study Team will be made after the Board sets priorities.

The bills list was OK'd by a narrow 4-3 margin. Thomas Falor said as a member of the audience, he often felt the bill list was rubber stamped. He hadn't had enough time to study the March list, receiving it only shortly before the meeting, he said. His negative vote was not intended to doubt integrity of the administration, but stemmed from a desire to do a good job as a Board member, he noted. Frank Festa and Vincent Shanni agreed with his position, and Mrs. Mason also asked for earlier receipt of the bills list monthly.

The Board has changed its public input portion of the monthly meetings to include a half hour of public comment before the staff report. Mrs. Lois Patterson asked for a half hour scheduled for before completion of all voting, stating that this half hour would really mean something.

The Board will hold a special work session, not open to the public, on April 2, to discuss past and future renovations at Muir School, after which the public will be informed of "where we've gone and where we're going."

It was announced that the board auditor, Charles Boehm, had been engaged by the last Board to investigate the possibilities that the township of Scotch Plains and the Borough of Fanwood could arrange a system of payments based on the calendar year rather than the fiscal year for paying the district, thereby bringing about no increase in tax rate. It was said that Boehm has reported to the Board that the Scotch Plains financial officer has agreed this could be done, and Boehm stands ready to assist Fanwood in the same kind of activity.

Bard asked that a meeting with Boehm and the two financial officials be arranged, stating that he is bothered that the Scotch Plains financial officer does not fully concur.

### Salary Increases Draw Major Fire From Audience

In most years, the most attendance one might expect at a municipal budget hearing might be a dozen. However, the state of the economy and/or taxes brought 50 people to the Scotch Plains Municipal Building Tuesday night for a public hearing on the budget. Final action on passage of the budget was postponed to another public hearing next Monday night, in order to incorporate a few minor but necessary changes.

Salaries and wages accounts drew the bulk of comment from citizens. Kermit Girowaldt said he can see no justification for salary increases at the municipal level this year. He said he has been unemployed since August, and four of his neighbors on Catherine Street have joined the ranks of the unemployed this month. There will be many businesses closing, and many people delinquent in their taxes, he predicted, due to the state of the economy. He claimed the anticipated revenues included in the budget will not be realized.

Larger towns are letting employees go, Girowaldt said, in pressing for elimination of salary increases. He claimed total increases for municipal salaries and wages were up \$180,000. Another citizen questioned 22 percent increase in salaries for streets and roads, while yet another questioned \$23,000 more for recreation salaries.

Mayor Robert Griffin first responded to the total amount set for increased wages. Of the \$180,000, \$45,121 is for RESOLVE, which must be included in the municipal budget but is, in reality, later funded by the state. An additional \$13,399 is set for Other Expenses, and eventually funded for RESOLVE.

The increase for salaries is, therefore, \$120,000, he indicated. Conceding the problems with the economy, Griffin said he nevertheless did not feel employees should bear a burden not commensurate with others in the general public. Part timers are being given no raises, and full-timers will receive seven percent raises. The police negotiations resulted in a seven percent raise,

with seven and a half between grades.

Councilman Larry Newcomb indicated that the Manager, Michael Blacker, checked the Bureau of Labor Statistics to find that the average income in this area changed by 6.3 upward last year. Walter Grote, another Councilman, explained that some of the total increase is actually attributable to new men added to the police to bring the department up to full force. Added late last year, the budgeting for their full year salaries for this year added considerably to the total. The same is true in streets and roads, it was said. A new employee late in the year added to the \$43,859 for salary increases.

Actually, the amount budgeted for streets and roads last year was very unrealistic in contrast to actual expenditures, Blacker said. Overtime and summer work were much higher than budgeted, he noted.

The township is faced with inflationary increases in materials, Griffin indicated.

Girowaldt asked about using federally funded employees, under a new program providing employees for municipalities. It is definitely being investigated, and possibilities exist, including a guard at the library. However, Griffin pointed out, these federally funded employees must be given new posts, and cannot be used to replace currently employed people. If they are accepted, they must be supervised by township personnel, so care must be taken in adding them.

Ed Spack of Wood Road quizzed Council on surplus. He said

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