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FANWOOD

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## Public invited to attend Education Board meeting

At the Regular Public Meeting of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education on February 27, High School Principal Dr. Terry K. Riegel and High School guidance counselor Karen McDermott will make a presentation on 1) a cap on field trip absences and 2) class rank at the High School. The public is invited to attend this meeting, which will begin at 8 p.m. at the Administrative Offices of the Board of Education, Evergreen Avenue & Cedar Street, Scotch Plains, New Jersey.

## Circus train to run again

On Saturday, April 11, circus lovers can get on the train in Fanwood at 8:05 and travel in ease and comfort, while being entertained by clowns, to Madison Square Garden to view the 10:30 a.m. performance of the Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus. This year's feature is "The Amazing Mongolians, beyond the borders of imagination!!!"

In conjunction with the New Jersey Transit Department, the Scotch Plains Recreation Commission is offering this special excursion. Tickets will cost \$15.00 for children eleven and under and \$19.00 for adults. These prices include the train ride and entrance to the Garden. A guide will accompany the group, and a box lunch may be eaten on the train. A thoroughly unique experience is promised for first-time participants, and those who took the train to the circus in the past, are invited to repeat their enjoyment at a very nominal cost. Registration will be held March 2-20, 1992.

For further information, call 322-6700.

## Borough Council rejects tank removal bid

Whether or not to accept the lowest bid to remove six underground storage tanks became the topic of much concern at the February 12 Fanwood Borough Council monthly public meeting. Borough attorney Dennis Estis stated that "there were two specific problems" where the bid submitted by the Tyree Company "did not satisfy bid documents." He cited the "financial statement" and "consent of surety" as being the two problems.

In obvious disagreement about whether to accept the lowest bid, a somewhat tense exchange ensued between Borough Engineer Richard O. Luster and Estis. Engineer Luster made a point concerning financial statements being requested for other Borough projects. He referred to the Paterson Rd. project stating that there is a lien against the company hired. It was later learned that the lien has been placed by a materials supplier against the company and is not against the Borough.

After various questions were posed to both Luster and Estis by the mayor and council, Stender asked Luster if he had anything further to add. Mr. Luster replied, "you heard the attorney's advice." Mr. Luster added that a vote to reject this bid may cost the Borough an additional \$25,000. Throughout the discussion, Luster contended that the company could have been given an opportunity to correct what Estis described as "problems" prior to the vote being taken.

Council members McGonigle, Connelly and Lindsey voted to reject the bid. Councilmen Borger and Rossi were absent from the entire meeting. Councilman Andrew MacDonald left prior to the vote being taken. This bid will now have to be re-advertised on February 27 and opened on March 9.

In other business, Councilman Kevin McGonigle stated that he had attended four Board of Education meetings where the topics discussed

concerned the "budget and proposed cut-backs." McGonigle specifically mentioned the February 5 meeting which began at 8:05 p.m. and went into executive session at 8:06 p.m. According to

McGonigle, the 200-400 people who attended were "infuriated." The Board of Education opened the meeting to the public at 9:20 p.m. He "strongly advised residents to attend board meetings."

McGonigle mentioned the "possible elimination of music and sports" and questioned the administrative needs of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood School District.

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## Former mayor views township as a great place to live

(This is the second in a series of interviews with former mayors of Scotch Plains. Alice Agran served as a councilwoman and was mayor in 1981.)

Interviewer: Madam Mayor, how do you feel about the town today?

A.A.: Speaking to people confirms the fact that Scotch Plains remains a great place to live. There's no question about it. Today, as ten years ago, there are minor concerns and irritations but most everyone likes the quality of life in our town. They want to stay! Suddenly, though, a serious concern arises in that people are literally being taxed out of their homes. This is not unique to Scotch Plains and we can't undo what has taken years to develop: burgeoning tax bills for all of us. But at least we can try to analyze it.

I: Please give us your rationale.

A.A.: Assessing the whys and wherefores of these taxes brings forth the fact that only a small portion of our total tax bill is spent on municipal purposes. On an average assessed home of \$113,000, Scotch Plains residents pay \$5,200 in taxes. Only \$936, or 18% goes for municipal spending. Of the remaining 82%, \$1,040, or 20%, goes to the county and the remaining 62% goes to our schools.

Much of the county taxes are earmarked for welfare, correction and court costs. Of these monies, little is returned to Scotch Plains. County government always has and always will be shrouded in mystery. Most of us don't have the foggiest notion as to what goes on there. But they do get 20% of our tax dollar.



ALICE AGRAN

I: What about education?

A.A.: Education is entirely different. All of us are knowledgeable here. We all have solutions. And we've been discussing this in depth at home and in small groups for the past 20 years. Books can be written as to whether more money means better education. It certainly hasn't during my lifetime. School enrollment has fallen 40% and the capital plant has shrunk by a third, and yet, school costs, as a percentage of budget, fell only to 62% from 70%. Mean and lean have never been applicable to the educational apparatus throughout our country. It's probably time to start! Sadly, it's probably too late.

I: What are your thoughts regarding the remaining 18%?

A.A.: When we speak of the small remaining 18% municipal portion,

we see first hand some of the problems pervasive throughout our system. Let's take the current budget for 1992. The recommended increase of \$500,000 (4.7%) appears manageable. But where is it going? A full 60% is to fulfill state mandated costs. Here's a rundown: \$80,000 increased health insurance; \$45,000 increased sanitary sewer treatment; \$58,000 for police and fire pensions; \$12,000 for fire hydrant service.

I: And the balance?  
A.A.: That involves old mandates from the past. A 1972 law mandated leaf removal (environmental concern). By 1984, leaves could no longer be burned at landfills and could be composted only. Leaf removal and disposal runs an estimated \$200,000 annually.

In 1976, the Health Service Act mandated inspection. Please turn to page 11