

SCOTCH PLAINS PUBLIC LIBRARY
1927 BATTLE AVENUE
SCOTCH PLAINS, N.J. 07076



SCOTCH PLA

Scotch Plains

THE TIMES

of

Scotch Plains - Fanwood

AUG 08 1996

THIRTY-FIVE YEAR - ISSUE NO. 32

JSPS 485300
Printed at Scotch Plains, N.J.

Thursday, August 8, 1996

Published
Every Thursday

232-4407

FIFTY CENTS

DOWNTOWN VISION PLAN BEING REVIEWED BY OFFICIALS

Township Planning Board Unit To Submit Design Concept Plan On Business District to Council

Township's Goal Aimed at Providing Economic Growth By Attracting More Shoppers to Downtown Businesses

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specially Written for The Times

The Scotch Plains Planning Board is expected to submit a design concept plan for redevelopment of the central business district to the Township Council for its approval shortly after Labor Day, officials confirmed this week, as part of a long-range goal to have the municipality's Master Plan completely updated by the year 2000.

Master Plan Committee Chairwoman Maria Sartor, in an interview with *The Times* last Friday, reported that officials currently are reviewing a "downtown vision plan" prepared by Wallace, Roberts & Todd, the Philadelphia professional planning

firm retained by the township, and presented to the Scotch Plains Planning Board on June 17.

Officials hope the plan, which Mrs. Sartor described as a suburban variation of the traditional urban design concept, will give the central business district an economic boost through renovations and improved public amenities aimed at attracting more shoppers to the area. The downtown particularly faces competition from businesses along Route No. 22

Wallace, Roberts and Todd, working with an ad hoc Central Business District Committee of township officials and others since last fall, forged "a highly creative visual plan," including recommended short-term and long-term objectives for the downtown, according to a summary which accompanied the main document.

The comprehensive plan contains an analysis of existing physical and economic conditions in the downtown, including parking, traffic patterns and pedestrian concerns; opportunities and constraints; design issues and goals, as well as the recommendations. It also includes three illustrations, in full color and drawn to-scale, of alternative redevelopment concepts.

The central objectives of the plan, as explained in the document, are to "improve the image of the Scotch Plains central business district;" to make the downtown "more pedestrian friendly;" and to "tie together the existing central business district into a unified whole, functionally and aesthetically" through a series of improvement and development projects.

Architects of the plan at Wallace, Roberts & Todd, in developing their design concept and accompanying recommendations, prepared a base map and conducted a visual survey of the central business district to determine significant existing characteristics.

They also reviewed various maps and data on the downtown, including

the 1994 Master Plan Reexamination Report, the township zoning ordinance and a study compiled late last year by members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School DECA, an association of marketing students, of attitudes among businesses and consumers concerning the central business district.

In February, the firm organized a workshop during which approximately 20 township officials, business representatives and citizens, working in four groups, addressed the entire gamut of downtown redevelopment issues, including parking, access and circulation; residential and business mix; aesthetics and amenities, and residential considerations.

The key to revamping the central business district, according to the plan, is construction of additional retail establishments along the west side of Park Avenue. Wallace, Roberts and Todd maintained that increasing the "critical mass" of retail space in the downtown would generate tax revenues and provide "retail variety and continuity" on both sides of the street.

The three design concepts included with the plan offer alternative routes for expanding retail in the central business district. The first of these calls for 11,300 gross square feet of retail space to be built on the current site of the Municipal Building parking lot, with a three-level parking deck for 168 cars located behind the retail building. A total of 180 parking spaces, including 105 for the Municipal Building, would be provided under this version.

The second concept, which also proposes 11,300 gross square feet of retail space for the west side of Park Avenue, involves relocation of the Scotch Plains fire house from behind the Municipal Building and development of the property into surface parking. This alternative allows for 168 surface parking spaces, including 105 for the Municipal Building.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



William A. Burke for The Times

A PLAN OF VISION...The Scotch Plains Planning Board is expected to submit a design concept plan for redevelopment of the central business district to the Township Council after Labor Day. Pictured is the recently refurbished building on Westfield Avenue.

Enthusiastic Children, Parents Greet Weatherman Spencer Christian From 'Good Morning America'

Meteorologist Visits Fanwood Library to Discuss His New Book on Geography

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specially Written for The Times

An enthusiastic group of approximately 150 children and parents gathered at the Fanwood Memorial Library last Wednesday for a visit with Spencer Christian, the witty, affable meteorologist of the popular American Broadcasting Company (ABC) program "Good Morning America," who talked with them about his life and travels, as well as his new book about geography.

The event was part of the library's Summer Reading Club series of programs featuring the theme "Circle the World With Books," which is being used by area libraries, including the Scotch Plains Public Library, this year to encourage youngsters to read about other countries, according to Fanwood Library Assistant Gloria Rusnak.

Among other programs the Fanwood Memorial Library has sponsored in conjunction with this theme was the expected visit yesterday, August 7, by Ms. Teri DiFrancesco, Union County Area Director for the New Jersey Special Olympics, and two Special Olympic athletes, for a discussion with children combining the international flavor of the recent Olympic Games in Atlanta with the concepts of acceptance and overcoming challenges to achieve goals.

Mrs. Rusnak arranged the visit by Mr. Christian at the request of Children's Librarian Susan Staub, who knew of the veteran weather forecaster's interest in geography and felt he would be an ideal guest.

"When I contacted his office in New York, he most graciously agreed to come and speak with our children," the library assistant remarked. She reported Mr. Christian spent

more than an hour talking with the children in the library's Fanwood Room, signing autographs and copies of his book, and taking pictures. Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly, along with Fanwood Memorial Library Director Bruce Buckmaster and Steven Clark, President of the Fanwood Memorial Library Board of Trustees, were also on hand to welcome him.

The children, ranging in age from preschool to 12 years old, listened attentively as Mr. Christian, who has been with "Good Morning America" for 10 years, described his many trips around the United States and abroad as part of his job. He said there are still some places he has yet to visit, such as Egypt and Israel, that he would like to see some day.

After sharing anecdotes about his travels, Mr. Christian opened the floor for questions from the youngsters who wanted to know such things as which country among those he has visited was his favorite, who his boss is, what happens on a television program during commercials and whether he gets to stay over for a vacation when visiting another state on assignment.

Some of the children told him about their own adventures abroad, including a Scotch Plains youngster who described a recent trip she and her family took to Nigeria.

"He was very relaxed, very comfortable with the children, as they were with him. They weren't shy at all," Mrs. Rusnak observed.

"Spencer Christian's Geography Book," the third penned by the meteorologist, investigates the landscape of the United States through historical and cultural information, as well as statistics, and is geared toward

both adults and children. The author dedicated the 246-page work to his parents and "the other wise and concerned adults who offered me guidance and encouragement when I was a child."

He told his young audience and their parents that he was inspired to learn about geography because, as the son of working-class parents growing up in rural Charles City, Virginia, 25 miles southeast of Richmond, his only opportunity back then to visit exotic places around the world was through his imagination and through books.

The meteorologist, who is also the author of "Spencer Christian's Weather Book" and "Electing Our Government" served as ABC Television's on-air spokesman in 1988 for the "Readasaurus" program which was part of the network's Project Literacy US campaign to promote literacy among American youth. He also has worked with numerous charitable organizations.

The Summer Reading Club, an annual program sponsored by the Fanwood Memorial Library from June through August, is designed to boost children's interest in reading. For this year's theme, youngsters were invited to attend library programs and read books about geography, use an atlas or a cookbook from another country and select books describing the history, art and literature of other cultures.

Participants were given "passports" in which to record the activities they completed with sticker flags of other nations, and red pins dotting a large wall map depict the various countries the children have "visited" this summer. The idea behind this year's "Circle the World With Books" theme,

according to Mrs. Rusnak, is that even if they have not had a chance to visit other countries, they can still learn about these places through books.

Scotch Plains Sidewalk Sales, August 8, 9 and 10: Story on Page 3

Free Concert To Feature Reggae Music

The group Verdict, featuring reggae, calypso and soca funk, will perform a free concert tonight, August 8, at 7:30 p.m. on the Village Green, Park Avenue in Scotch Plains. The group has performed at numerous night clubs in the Tri-State area and Pennsylvania and has a large selection of international soca and reggae music. In addition to their own original materials, they play hits by popular artists from Jamaica, Montserrat, Trinidad and England.

The three members of the group include Roland Richards, keyboards and vocals, who has four Arrow compact discs to his credit; Johnny Youth, drums and vocals, original founder of Verdict, and Marcelino Thompson, bass and vocals who performed live and recorded with The Mighty Sparrow, Duke, Designer, Chalk Dust, Arrow, David Rudder, Inspector and many other soca artists.

In case of rain, this concert will be held in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School on Westfield Avenue. For further information, please call 322-6700, Ext. No. 220.

DEADLINES HELP PAPER SERVE YOU

Those preparing press releases for submission to *The Times* are reminded all copy should be in the hands of the Editor at 50 Elm Street, Westfield, by 4 p.m. on the Friday before the Thursday on which they wish it to appear.

Times releases also may be mailed to Post Office Box 368, Scotch Plains, 07076 to meet the above requirements.

For events which happen the weekend prior to publication, press releases should reach the Editor by Monday of the week of publication at 10 a.m.

Obituaries will be taken until Tuesday at 5 p.m.

For events which are planned weeks or months in advance, we encourage submission of stories as early as possible prior to the event.

The above deadlines are meant to enable us to prepare your copy carefully.



IN APPRECIATION...Assemblyman and Scotch Plains Mayor Alan M. Augustine presents a Joint Legislative Resolution to Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League President Dianne Leduc. In appreciation of the efforts of volunteers who operate the organization's Thrift Shop, the shop turns unwanted items into marketable merchandise to be sold inexpensively, with the proceeds used to benefit programs for youth and the communities of Scotch Plains and Fanwood.

Service League Volunteers Commended With Resolution

The Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League was honored by a state Joint Legislative Resolution by Assemblymen Alan M. Augustine of Scotch Plains and Richard H. Bagger of Westfield and State Senator Donald T. DiFrancesco of Scotch Plains for its 22 years of service to the two communities and Union County through its Thrift Shop.

The resolution honors the 55 volunteers who have maintained the Thrift Shop and have donated their time to recycling unwanted items into saleable goods, then selling them inexpensively to the public.

The Mayor of Scotch Plains, and Assemblyman Bagger and Senator DiFrancesco represent the 22nd Legislative District which includes Fanwood, Scotch Plains and Westfield.

The State Senate and the General Assembly acknowledged the league and the Thrift Shop for its contributions and expressed best wishes for its continued success and vigor.

Assemblyman Augustine, who is the Mayor of Scotch Plains, and Assemblyman Bagger and Senator DiFrancesco represent the 22nd Legislative District which includes Fanwood, Scotch Plains and Westfield.



Courtesy of the Fanwood Memorial Library

WELCOME TO FANWOOD...Members of the Fanwood Memorial Library staff welcome Spencer Christian, center, the "Good Morning America" meteorologist, to the library last week. The weather forecaster, who recently had a book about geography published, spoke to approximately 150 parents and children at the library about his life and his travels around the world. The visit by Mr. Christian was arranged as part of the library's Summer Reading Club activity series, which this year is featuring the theme 'Circle the World With Books.' Joining Mr. Christian, left to right, are: Library pages Lauren Mangione, Marissa Mangione, Shannon Price and Aleda Rusnak; Children's Librarian Susan Staub and Library Director Bruce Buckmaster.