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David B. Corbin for The Times

AN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE... About to enter the new world of education are these first graders at the Howard B. Brunner Elementary School in Scotch Plains. Pictured, left to right, are: Jimmy Strobel, Tommy Holt, Ryan Mullen, Andrea Apuzzo, Katelyn Cavanagh, Lauren Cutrone, Alexis Turner and Debra Delle Donne. Scotch Plains-Fanwood schools opened yesterday.

Fanwood Planning Board Confirms Resolution for Preschool Program

Westminster Preschool Sponsored by Fanwood Presbyterian Church

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specialty Writer for The Times

There were no new applications heard August 28 during a brief meeting of the Fanwood Planning Board, which reviewed correspondence and memorialized one resolution. The resolution confirmed the board's July 24 conditional use approval for the Fanwood Presbyterian Church at Martine and LaGrande Avenues to operate a new preschool program on its premises.

Fanwood Presbyterian, which was represented at the public hearing several weeks ago by Woodbridge Attorney Jonathan Phillip and Church Administrator Marshall Palmer, received permission for the Westminster Preschool to occupy three classrooms in its Christian education building beginning Monday, September 9.

The Westminster Preschool, sponsored by the church but self-supporting, will occupy classroom space formerly used by The Acorn School, another nursery school program, which had leased the area from the church for many years up until a few months ago. Board approval was also granted for jungle gym equipment to be installed in the playground area in late October.

The new weekday preschool will have a morning and afternoon session for children between 2 1/2 and 4 years old, with approximately 30 children enrolled in each session. Westminster Preschool Director Nancy Bantz reported the morning session will last from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., with a break in between, and the afternoon session will run from noon until 2:30 p.m. Parents will be able to pick up their children during the interim between sessions.

"We're really happy with the enrollment and people seem pleased about the school," said Mrs. Bantz, noting that there are already 56 children signed up for the program. She added, however, that a few afternoon spaces were still available in the afternoon session.

Mrs. Bantz explained that instruction would be provided by five teachers, including a music teacher, and three aides. Planned activities will include arts and crafts plus music,

with recreation provided in an upstairs gymnasium, as well as lunch and snacks. In addition, there will be an optional "lunch bunch" program on Thursdays and Fridays for which children can bring their lunch and stay to play between the morning and afternoon sessions.

Each session will have a half hour of supervised outdoor playground time, which had prompted the board during the public hearing to approve the playground equipment permit on condition that the 22-foot by 29-foot area would be enclosed. Following a discussion then as to whether an enclosure around the play space should be required as a condition of approval, board members decided the safety of children enrolled in the program would be enhanced if the playground was enclosed.

The resolution confirmed the church had agreed to install a fence around the parameters of the playground. In addition, an existing asphalt surface will be replaced with a different material which officials said will reduce storm water runoff. Mr. Palmer acknowledged during the public hearing that the church also planned to maintain an existing wooden fence along the edge of the church parking lot.

The board confirmed there were no objections to the Westminster Preschool or the planned playground area from the Fanwood Board of Health, Environmental Commission, Shade Tree Commission, Police Department Traffic Safety Bureau or Tax Collector's office.

The Fanwood Fire Department and Fire Prevention Bureau also approved the program, with the provisions that it remain within the same area of the

TENTATIVE ACCORD ENDS THREAT OF STRIKE AS SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS

Teachers Union, Board of Education Reach Tentative Agreement; Members Vote Today

Union and Board Negotiation Teams Have Met On and Off for Past Seventeen Months; Fact Finder's Report Was Delivered August 20

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specialty Writer for The Times

A tentative contract agreement was reached August 28 between the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education and the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association, climaxing 17 months of tense negotiations which had threatened to lead to a strike by union members during the opening days of the 1996-1997 school year.

The union, comprised of about 427 teachers, secretaries and aides, learned the details of the proposed agreement at a 7 a.m. meeting Tuesday morning, and were expected to vote on it this afternoon, Thursday, September 5, at about 4 p.m. The Board of Education is scheduled to vote on the proposed contract on Thursday, September 12.

The financial terms of the settlement call for teachers to receive annual raises of 3.92 percent, 3.34 percent and 3.59 percent over the three years of the pact, which covers the 1995-1996 school year retroactively

and extends through June 30, 1998.

Negotiation teams for the board and the union met for more than four hours last Wednesday night to discuss a report from fact-finder Daniel Brent of the state Public Employee Relations Committee (PERC) prior to signing a memorandum of agreement. Mr. Brent was assigned to the negotiations in May after the board and the association failed to reach a settlement with the aide of a state mediator.

Members of both the board and the association were pleased to have reached the tentative contract and expressed relief that the prolonged negotiations process had apparently reached an end. The Scotch Plains-Fanwood school district had been the only one in Union County not to have reached a contract settlement.

"We're elated to have an agreement and we're looking to have our teachers back in the classrooms giving our children the best possible education without the diversion of a job action," Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education President, Dr. Donald E. Sheldon, a member of the board's negotiation team, told *The Times* on August 29.

Dr. Sheldon described the fact-finder's recommendations, which were non-binding, as having been "helpful" to the negotiation teams in reaching the tentative agreement. The report, which had been due on July 7, was not received until August 20.

"We sat down and discussed the fact-finder's report from their perspective and from our perspective

and came to a meeting of the minds," the School Board President remarked.

In a statement issued by the school district Tuesday, Dr. Sheldon also maintained that "even though the fact-finder's report was received much later than expected, we believe it was the catalyst that was needed to finally bring the negotiations to a conclusion."

Scotch Plains-Fanwood Superintendent of Schools Dr. Carol B. Choye, in the same statement, commented she was "thrilled that we can now put our full attention where it always ought to be — on our students and the improvement of their learning."

The board's negotiation team was chaired by Morris H. "Butch" Gillet, who was re-elected to his second term on the Scotch Plains-Fanwood School Board in April. In addition to Dr. Sheldon, the team also included board members Mrs. Theresa Larkin and August L. Ruggiero.

The union was represented at the negotiations table by Association President Barbara McGuane and Past Presidents Mrs. Sonya Martin, Mrs. Elaine Kolker, Mrs. Grace Klimko and Irwin Kauffer. Mrs. Judith Massimo and Mrs. Mary Salinard, both of whom are also Past Association Presidents, represented the secretaries and aides, respectively.

Past Association Vice President Camille Berkowicz and current Association Vice President Theodore Wurster were non-voting members of the team, substituting for Mrs. McGuane during contract talks when

necessary.

Assisting the union negotiators was Ronald Harvey of UniServe, a regional office of the New Jersey Education Association, which is the state teachers union. UniServe advises municipal teacher unions on legal questions during negotiations. Representing the board in the same capacity was Raymond Casseta.

"We've been negotiating for 17 months. I'm very relieved and I'm looking forward to a new positive outlook on the opening of schools this year. I think that's everyone's point of view," Mrs. McGuane commented the day after the tentative agreement had been reached. "We just want to get into the classrooms and teach the children and put the rest of it behind us."

The union's previous contract expired on June 30, 1995, with negotiations for a new contract having begun six months earlier. After a dozen contract talks failed to resolve the labor dispute, primarily involving salaries and employee benefits, the board declared an impasse in negotiations last September 13, after which state mediator Scott Buchheit of PERC was brought into the discussions.

As the 1995-1996 school year progressed without a settlement, the union staged several job actions. Members picketed outside the school district's administrative offices at Evergreen School before the Board of Education's September 21 meeting. Teachers refused to work most Back to School Nights and union members exercised their legal option to take Election Day, November 7, as a paid legal holiday, which resulted in the closing of schools that day.

During the stalemate, union members charged the board was procrastinating in reaching a settlement. Dr.

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Democratic Convention Was 'Thrill Of Lifetime' for Freeholder Cohen

By CAROL I. COHEN
Specialty Writer for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Editor's Note: The following article was written by Democratic Union County Freeholder Carol I. Cohen of Westfield, who attended last week's Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Ms. Cohen, a delegate to the convention, has provided a detailed description of the convention along with her personal impressions. The article follows a similar story in our August 22 issue by former Westfield Mayor Ronald Frigerio, who attended the Republican National Convention in San Diego. His wife, Mrs. Janet Frigerio, served as a delegate to that convention.

Amazing, a thrill of a lifetime. Those are the words I use to describe my experience at the Democratic National Convention. I know there were no last minute surprise nominations, no back room wheeling and dealing. But for me, a person who has had a love of politics and the political process all my life, who has avidly watched the Presidential conventions and taken part in numerous Presidential campaigns, being there at the epicenter, was a thrill.

Last year, when I turned 50, I decided that it was time to move out from behind the scenes where I typically had been in the political process and run for office. After working and campaigning harder than I ever thought possible, I was elected a freeholder in Union County. The next logical step was to go to the convention that I had watched so intently on television for so many years. So I put my name in nomination as a Public Elected Official Delegate and was nominated at the New Jersey State Democratic Convention in the spring.

While at Newark International Airport waiting to board the plane to Chicago, I thought, will this really be as great as I had imagined? Had I come so far down life's road that I have become too jaded to enjoy the experience ahead of me?

I arrived at 10:30 p.m. at the Midland where the New Jersey delegation

was staying. A party was going full blast in the ballroom. Monday afternoon, Congressman Robert E. Andrews, one of a number of unannounced Democratic gubernatorial candidates, had "A Taste of Chicago" luncheon bash at the Navy Pier.

After the convention, there was a birthday party for New Jersey Senatorial candidate Robert G. Torricelli at the Rookery, a beautiful 1930s art deco building with an amazing wrought iron encrusted lobby. But the highlight of the festivities was a "hoopla" honoring Senator Bill Bradley at Michael Jordan's Restaurant. It was the event to be at, by invitation only. Luckily, I had gotten one and I pulled off a coup that will endear me always in my sports enthusiast son's eyes. I got an autograph from Phil Jackson, Coach of the National Basketball Association (NBA) Chicago Bulls.

Other parties included "A Slice of Chicago Pizza Party," sponsored by another gubernatorial hopeful, Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. and a Blue Z Party by another would-be candidate, George Zoffinger of Essex County. After filling up on ribs and dancing to the music of a blues band, I dragged my friend, Union County Court Clerk Joanne Rajoppi, over to the grand ballroom on the Navy Pier to an event hosted by Chicago Mayor Richard Daley.

So much for the festivities after the convention. Each morning, Ms. Rajoppi, Union County Freeholder Linda d. Stender, Michael Murphy, the son of former New Jersey Governor Hughes, and another gubernatorial hopeful and

myself, rose at 6:45 a.m. to take a morning jog down to the Chicago waterfront.

The first morning of the convention, I heard a rousing speech by Secretary of Housing Henry Cisneros, who outlined the six major factors of the Clinton Administration Program: Safety of families and children, safeguarding jobs and property, ensuring education and training, keeping the streets safe, protecting the environment and ensuring peace throughout the world.

After the breakfast, we caucused with Congressman Torricelli. He quipped, quoting Churchill that "You can count on Americans to do the right thing — after they've tried everything else." He also pointed out that Democrats did not have to apologize for the economic policies which had brought in 10 million jobs in the past four years and reducing the federal deficit by 60 percent in three years.

On Tuesday morning, Mrs. Tipper Gore spoke about her husband, Vice President Al Gore, and her concerns about family and children. She pointed out that the Family Medical Leave Act, which allowed parents to care for their children and children to care for their parents in times of need, was passed by the Clinton/Gore administration and opposed by Mr. Dole. We were then sent off to battle by the cries of Don Fowler, Democratic Campaign Chairman.

Another morning, we heard from Congressman Richard A. Gephardt, who would become Speaker of the House if the Democrats win control for the House. He talked about how President Clinton

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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.

Pick Up Photos On Timely Basis

Photographs submitted to *The Times* become the property of the newspaper and are returned as a courtesy. All photographs should be picked up at *The Times'* office, 50 Elm Street, within 60 days.

Residents Invited to Surf The Internet at FestiFall

The Quintillion Division of AT&T and Watchung Communications, Inc., trading as *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times* of Scotch Plains and Fanwood, will team up during the Westfield FestiFall on Sunday, September 22, to provide area residents with Internet access and to explore the future of communications for the communities.

Visitors to *The Westfield Leader/Times* office during the annual FestiFall will receive free AT&T WorldNet software, with five hours of free Internet access per month for AT&T customers, for one year, and instructions on how to sign up for AT&T service.

Further information is available on the Web: <http://www.quintillion.com/westfield>.



ON THE FLOOR...Union County Freeholder Carol I. Cohen of Westfield, Seventh Congressional District Candidate Larry Lerner, and Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi pause for a picture on the floor of last week's Democratic National Convention in Chicago.