

# THE TIMES

of

## Scotch Plains - Fanwood



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**GUEST APPEARANCE BY PRANCER...**The time is near and Prancer, a reindeer from the Alaskan range, is greeted by Harold Kafka owner of the Scotch Plains Zoo. Prancer and friend Dancer, along with Santa and his sleigh, will greet all comers on Saturday, December 7, from noon till 2 p.m. at the Zoo.

### GOVERNING BODY OPPOSES NEW REGULATIONS REGARDING EMTS

## Township Council Set to Hire Consultant To Pursue Cannonball House Roof Repair; Officials Urged to Apply for State Grants

By JEANNE WHITNEY  
Specially Written for The Times

The Scotch Plains Township Council unanimously agreed at its regular meeting November 26, to hire a consultant for \$3,000 to pursue a plan for repair and historical preservation of the Osborn Cannonball House on Front Street.

A specialist in historic preservation and formerly with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Mrs. Nancy Zerbe of Metuchen, will guide the township through the process of grant applications and certification from the State Register of Historic Places in an effort to save the pre-Revolutionary War house and museum from ruin. Members of the Historic Preservation Commission say the wood shingle roof now leaks and said they worry about the effects of the coming winter weather on the structure.

Mrs. Zerbe has recommended the township apply for \$60,000 in matching grants to repair and maintain the house and its accompanying structures. Council members noted the number of schools that bring students for house tours, calling the historical site "a jewel" and "a real treasure." Councilman Robert E. Johnston has

compared the Cannonball House to the active Miller-Cory House on Mountain Avenue in neighboring Westfield. The grant deadline for the year is June of 1997.

In other business, the council showed its determination to support the township's volunteer rescue squad and squads statewide by passing a resolution opposing proposed state regulations that reportedly will hamper training opportunities and increase costs for emergency medical services.

The regulations were proposed by the Department of Health and Senior Services (DOHSS) after the 1992 passage of a law creating a fund for training Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) from surcharges on traffic violation fines. Assemblyman Richard H. Bagger has said the proposed regulations overstep the original intent of the legislation that he co-sponsored and has asked the DOHSS to withdraw the measures.

The New Jersey State League of Municipalities adopted similar resolutions several weeks ago, condemning the regulations and urging the distribution of the as yet unreleased funds to local squads. The township resolution also urges public hearings

"to determine the true needs of EMS (Emergency Medical Service) providers and our communities."

The township resolution will be sent to Governor Christine Todd Whitman and the State Legislature. Earlier in its conference meeting, Township Manager Thomas E. Atkins reported to the council on the Suburban Municipal Joint Insurance Fund (JIF). Records indicate the township's projected assessment for 1997 rose 3 percent, from \$383,943 to \$395,366. The group agrees to a 5 percent cap on yearly increases, he said. Fanwood and Bernard Township have not yet renewed membership in the fund, Mr. Atkins said. Both Cranford and New Providence have been invited to join the JIF but it is unclear at this time whether they will accept, according to Mr. Atkins.

The JIF group is also conducting a feasibility study for creating a Health Insurance Fund (HIF). Mr. Atkins said, even though Scotch Plains recently signed a three-year contract with CIGNA for health insurance coverage.

In its regular meeting, the council agreed to accept a \$54 per hour bid from Caffrey Tree Service for next year in an effort to keep up with the demand for tree trimming and removal in the township. Stump grinding costs \$40 per hour and tree planting, \$45 per hour. Director of Public Works Walter DiNizo said the Department of Public Works alone can not handle the work, particularly following storms and emergencies. During a conference meeting earlier in the day, the council said it also would consider authorizing the use of contractors for emergency snow removal at \$85 and \$100 per hour.

Mr. Atkins told the council that nearly 60 percent of the township's leaves have been collected as of November 26. He said between 18,000

and 20,000 cubic yards of leaves are collected annually and so far, 12,000 cubic yards have been picked up.

Councilwoman Irene K. Schmidt reminded residents that following this year's October 18 to 23 nor'easter, Union County was one of five New Jersey counties to be declared eligible for Federal government funds through FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). She said individuals with damage as a result of the storm may call FEMA offices at 1-800-462-9029. (An Editorial in today's paper explains this process.)

The council also agreed, through a resolution, to allow businesses to have outdoor or sidewalk sales during the December weekends leading up to Christmas, weather permitting.

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## Decorations Up Despite Grinch

By JEANNE WHITNEY  
Specially Written for The Times

Scotch Plains' lighted snowflake holiday decorations are up and shining despite "the Grinch," says Scotch Plains Councilwoman Joan Papen. Mrs. Papen has called communications company Bell Atlantic "the new Grinch in town" who is trying to steal Christmas (à la Dr. Seuss) after her repeated attempts to have the township pay Bell Atlantic \$150 per telephone pole in order to install more electrical outlets and brackets for holiday decorations downtown failed.

Mrs. Papen said that in the past, the township has added more street blocks to the decorated downtown area in this way. This year, however, Bell Atlantic told her the brackets are a "safety hazard." She said Bell Atlantic has also put new metal terminal

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## SAT Scores in Math, Verbal on Rise Since '92; Bids OK'd for Additions to Coles, Evergreen

By SALLY BECKWITH  
Specially Written for The Times

At the regular meeting of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education on November 26, six students from Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School and Terrill and Park Middle Schools were awarded cash prizes for essays they wrote about the rewards of reading.

The awards were given by two programs, "Renaissance Reader" and "Readers Rule," jointly sponsored by the Board of Education, the Educational Enrichment Foundation of Scotch Plains and Fanwood, Alfonso's Pizzeria of Scotch Plains, Pyramid Books of Fanwood, and TGI Friday and Applebees of Watching.

Warmly congratulated with applause from board members and family and friends, the award winners and their cash prizes were: High school students Courtney Pearson, \$500; Christina Hillman, \$400; Laura Lazzaretti, \$300; Park Middle School students Kimberly Myers, \$300, and Tara Porter, \$100, and Terrill Middle School student Leanne Kacsur, \$200.

Leading off the regular agenda meeting, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, Fred DiFeo, presented an overview of student Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores from 1992 to 1996. Scores in both the mathematics and verbal tests have steadily improved, with Scotch Plains-Fanwood students scoring above state and national averages and sometimes also surpassing the District Factor Grouping average. Crediting curriculum changes and enhancement activities and programs in areas such as social studies, science and music and art, Mr. DiFeo commented also that "We still have a long way to go to improve strategies for helping our youngsters score well in their SATs."

During the public comments portion of the agenda, representatives from the high school girls' softball team asked to speak in favor of the re-appointment of Jim Mason as varsity coach for the team. Superintendent

of Schools, Dr. Carol B. Choye, informed the group that the board was not presently looking at school coaching positions, but would be doing so in future private session. She promised a spokeswoman for the group that she would inform her of the proper time for them to speak before the board on Mr. Mason's and the team's behalf.

The board approved the bid of Harold Storer Company of Boonton, for \$745,302 to construct a two-room modular addition to the Coles and Evergreen Schools and School One. As presented by board Business Manager and Secretary, Richard Marshall, the modules would help to accommodate the school system's increased enrollment. Mr. Marshall commented that although the present school enrollment is 4,271, statistics show the birth rate increase to be declining.

"We should not be in a rush to build new schools," he stated. In answer to board member Edward J. Saridaki, Jr.'s objection that the \$750,000 expenditure was not fiscally prudent and his recommendation that the board revisit the plan, Dr. Choye reminded Mr. Saridaki that the need for increased classroom space had been discussed for over a year and the board had found the module plan to be the most academically cost-effective.

Board President, Dr. Donald E. Sheldon, also commented that the board had spent a "great deal of time and study in a thoughtful process" in coming to recommend the plan.

With only Mr. Saridaki voting no, the board approved the motion to award the construction bid. Ms. Deborah Asher of Scotch Plains, during the public comment section of the meeting, asked the board to be sure that the bathrooms in the modules be handicapped accessible.

The board also approved the agreement negotiated between the international Brotherhood of Teamsters Local No. 102 and the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education for a 3.7 percent wage increase retroactive

to January 1, 1996 and continuing through December 31, 1998. Only Board member Richard J. Meade voted no, citing the increase as too great.

In a following discussion, several board members expressed their reservations over the proposed Union County Magnet School of Technology to be located at the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools in Scotch Plains.

Citing the tuition cost per student of \$24,000 for four years of high school, payable by the local boards of education, would be equivalent to financing private school education when "our resources are finite," board member Ms. Jessica D. Simpson recommended that the board's concerns should be made known to the Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Board member August Ruggiero said he felt the curriculum being presented was a "blank page," and

Mr. Meade warned that the Vo-Tech Board of Education was trying to sell parents an "undeveloped program."

The strongest criticism of the proposed school was voiced by board member Morris H. "Butch" Gillet, who warned parents not to "risk their kids' future on a thin pipe dream."

The Fanwood Planning Board is expected to hold a public hearing soon regarding the borough's revised Master Plan, which board member Karl Eschle confirmed last week is about 95 percent completed. Municipalities must update their plans, which

serve as guidelines for community growth, every six years in accordance with state law.

Mr. Eschle, a former Chairman of the Planning Board who represented the body during discussions this year with the Borough Council's Building and Zoning Committee concerning the revised Master Plan, said at

the board's November 26 meeting that he expected copies of the plan would be available in time for the board's agenda session on Monday, December 16.

At that time, officials will have an opportunity to "read it, digest it and see if any changes need to be made," said Mr. Eschle.

The board is expected to approve the Master Plan by Monday, December 23, after which it will go before Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly and the Borough Council for the governing body's approval. Mr. Eschle noted that the public will have an opportunity to comment on the Master Plan at both the agenda and regular meetings of the Planning Board this month.

Board Chairman Gregory Cummings commented that approving the Master Plan prior to the holidays would be "a nice way to close out the year." He stated that copies of the revised Master Plan, which officials have been updating over the past eight months, will be available for the public to review at Fanwood Borough Hall. The new document is

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## Fanwood Council Allocates \$3,000 For Downtown Revitalization Study

By SUZETTE STALKER  
Specially Written for The Times

During a special public meeting Tuesday, the Fanwood Borough Council voted 3-2 in favor of allocating \$3,000 in the 1997 municipal budget to retain a consulting firm to perform a downtown revitalization study. The funds will supplement \$7,000 which was included for the study in this year's budget.

The council voted on the funding measure following a presentation by Ms. Bettina Zimny, Principal Planner with the RBA Group of Morristown, which the Fanwood Downtown Revitalization Committee felt had presented the best proposal for the study in terms of the firm's presentation, level of expertise and proximity to what the borough is seeking in terms of downtown redevelopment, according to Councilwoman Karen M. Schurtz, the governing body's Liaison to the Downtown Redevelopment Committee.

Ms. Zimny discussed how the study would take place in six phases. The first of these would be a two-day discussion and reconnaissance of the downtown conducted by RBA with members of the Downtown Revitalization Committee, the Borough Council, other borough officials, merchants and the Fanwood Police Department, to identify needs and problems.

The firm would next prepare a summary of existing conditions in the downtown, followed by a conceptual development plan including recommendations concerning streetscapes, traffic calming techniques, traffic and pedestrian circulation and parking. An implementation plan would then

be developed in which these aspects would be organized and prioritized to establish short- and long-term revitalization goals.

Finally, a report would be compiled by RBA for presentation to the council and the public, including artistic renditions and before-and-after sketches to give an "overall feel" of the proposed improvements, according to Ms. Zimny. She added the report would provide information concerning such specifics as benches,

street lighting, tree grates and paving.

"Our approach is really a team approach with the community," Ms. Zimny told the governing body, adding that "good public involvement"

would be a key factor in helping the project to progress in a timely fashion. She stated that communities can receive redevelopment funds through federal, state and local sources, as well as fundraisers such as "buy-a-

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**TRUE THANKSGIVING SPIRIT...** Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School DECA students exhibit some of the food they recently purchased after a successful canister drive for the needy. The students expected to deliver over 120 food baskets, made up of fresh fruits and vegetables, staple items such as rice, flour, eggs, bread and, of course, a turkey with all the trimmings, to needy families in the area in time for Thanksgiving. The students worked with the Fanwood Presbyterian Church, St. Bartholomew's Roman Catholic Church in Scotch Plains and the Scotch Plains Welfare Department in preparing the food baskets. DECA is an association of marketing students.

### Disaster Aid Available For Victims of Flooding

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has announced that residents of five counties in New Jersey, including Union, who sustained losses or damage as a result of flooding, which occurred from October 18 and 23, may apply for financial assistance.

President Clinton signed the disaster relief declaration on November 19 for Union, Somerset, Morris, Middlesex and Hudson Counties.

Residents and businesses may call 1-800-462-9029 or 1-800-462-7585 for the speech or hearing impaired from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., daily, to see if they are eligible. Persons may be eligible for temporary housing or repairs. Homeowners, renters and business owners may be eligible for low interest loans while individuals or families may apply for grants.

During the call to register for assistance, which a FEMA representative said averages 20 minutes, an appointment will be made for a FEMA inspector to visit the homeowner or business to verify storm damage.

FEMA notes that the deadline for home disaster and business physical disaster loans is Saturday, January 18. Economic Disaster Loans may be applied for up to Tuesday, August 19, 1997. For more information regarding financial assistance, please see this week's editorial on Page 4.