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VOTERS TO DECIDE FATE OF \$36 MILLION SCHOOL LEVY ON APRIL 15

BOE Adopts \$41.90 Million Budget With Increases of 1.64 & 2.47 Percent in Tax Levies

By ALEXANDRA JELKES
Specially Written for The Times

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education adopted a budget Tuesday night of \$41,895,641. A total of \$36,935,929 will be placed on the election ballot during the school board elections on Tuesday, April 15.

The budget includes a general fund of \$40,454,784, debt service of \$487,483 and state and federal grants of \$953,374.

The board offered a comprehensive plan on "what is the best educational program we can provide within existing fiscal parameters yet allowing for innovations and initiatives," school officials explained.

The board said the budget maintains strong academic programs, a variety of electives, current class size, co-curricular and interscholastic activities, curriculum cyclical review (including English/Language Arts Assessment Phase and Elementary Science Implementation Phase), development of the state's newly-required core curriculum standards and proficiencies, professional development with a focus on technology as it supports meeting curricular objectives, and technology initiatives.

Board members explained that they were able to increase spending for cyclical review programs which include mathematics, English and lan-

guage arts, physical education, foreign language, science, social studies, state and federal programs, office occupation, and library and media.

Also receiving increases in funding were the Scholastic Assessment Test initiative, elementary curriculum development, technology infrastructure and library books. The total increase in these areas comes to \$215,687.

Assistant Superintendent for Business Richard J. Marshall addressed the financial side of the budget. He said the board was able to reduce a number of areas.

The programs reduced include a part-time teaching position for pre-kindergarten, handicapped students, Resource Room retirement savings and supplies, one basic skills teacher, an alternative program, a part-time media teacher at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, the Resolve Community Center contract, guidance testing, executive administrative costs, maintenance and grounds, transportation, and capital outlay. The total savings on these programs comes to \$420,967.

The local tax levy for the school budget for Scotch Plains is \$3.10 per \$100 of assessed valuation, which represents an increase of .05 or 1.64 percent. The increase on the average assessed home (not market value) would be \$7.50 per year. In Fanwood, the rate would be \$3.73, which is an increase of .09 or 2.47 percent for the average assessed home at \$74.70 per year.

Some of the "programs and services" above and beyond those required in the basic state model which Scotch Plains-Fanwood must follow, are: existing neighborhood schools, manageable and productive class sizes, a comprehensive, sought after special education program, and a comprehensive program of extracurricular activities and interscholastic athletics.

Among the district's offerings, the

board stated in handouts given to the press, are an "experienced and highly trained" staff (59 percent with master's degrees or better) averaging 19 years of experience, a full-time media specialist and nursing staff in each building, and shared time vocational and technical programs, reading recovery and a comprehensive array of advanced placement programs. Officials pointed out that the district also offers specialized counseling services through Resolve, and the Adult School Program.

The board discussed the possibility of a budget presentation for Channel 34, the local cablevision access channel in Scotch Plains, and confirmed that it is in the works.

"We want to highlight this to the public, so they can get a good orientation of what's going on since the turnout tonight was so low," added Dr. Carol B. Choye, Superintendent of Schools.

During the public comment section of the meeting, Gordon Mosser, Vice President of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Soccer Association, addressed the board on interscholastic athletics. Mr. Mosser prefaced that his comments were made in good faith and that some of his points came from "reliable sources."

"You as parents and educators should realize the importance of athletic programs. The athletic budget has only been increased by \$2,000. This does not even help pay the salaries of the coaches."

"Right now there are over 2,000 children participating on the club level. Of these 2,000 children, 50 percent are in the school district. There is no priority given to the interscholastic athletic program. We would like to ask you to reexamine this part of your budget," Mr. Mosser stated.

Board member August A. Ruggiero responded that the board is "not happy" with this situation either.

Board Vice President Lillian M. Dettmar agreed with Mr. Mosser's comments and stated that she has always been "an advocate" of athletic programs and promised that the board would review this issue.

Police Nab Suspect In Three Burglaries

Scotch Plains Police Chief Thomas O'Brien announced yesterday that as a result of a three-week investigation that was initiated by the arrest of a burglary suspect by the Plainfield Police Department and an extensive investigation conducted by Detective William Schultz of the Scotch Plains Police Department, charges of burglary, theft and possession of burglary tools were filed against Craig S. Urquhart, 29, of Elizabeth.

Urquhart was charged with burglarizing three residential homes within the township during the period of January 28 through February 26. Numerous items of stolen property were recovered along with a quantity of other property which detectives are attempting to identify as being associated with other burglaries within the county, according to the Chief.

Urquhart was remanded to the Union County Jail in lieu of \$22,000 bail.

Chief O'Brien cited the Plainfield, Westfield and Scotch Plains police for the successful outcome of this investigation.

Deadlines Told For Submittals To The Times

Those persons preparing press releases for submission to *The Times* are reminded that copy should be E-mailed or faxed by 4 p.m. on the Friday prior to publication. *The Times'* E-mail address is gleader@aol.com. The fax number is 232-0473.

Releases, pictures, and letters to the editor can also be dropped off at our office located at 50 Elm Street or through our mail slot. To ensure that submittals reach our office prior to deadline we encourage E-mail or faxed material.

Sports stories which occur prior to the weekend should be in by the Friday deadline. Weekend sports events must be submitted by noon on the Monday prior to the publication date. Obituaries will be accepted up to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays.

All copy must be typed, double-spaced, no more than 500 words in length, and include a daytime telephone number where the submitter can be reached.

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

Please note that in addition to making our deadlines, the publication of submittals may be delayed due to space considerations. All submittals are subject to being cut due to length, edited for style and clarification at the discretion of the editor.



EASTER FUN...This area youngster makes a new friend during an Easter Egg Hunt which was held last Saturday on the Village Green adjacent to the Municipal Building in Scotch Plains.

Scotch Plains Zoo Hearing Is Postponed; Owner Fined by Municipal Court Judge

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specially Written for The Times

A hearing regarding the embattled Scotch Plains Zoo, which had been scheduled for last Thursday in Superior Court in Elizabeth, was adjourned until Thursday, April 10, in order to give a court-appointed attorney and an independent veterinarian additional time to prepare reports regarding conditions at the 6.5-acre facility.

Zoo owner Harold Kafka, meanwhile, pleaded guilty Monday in Scotch Plains Municipal Court to charges related to the housing of some of the animals at his establishment, which is located three miles south of Route No. 22 on Raritan Road. The zoo is home to approximately 150 animals, including a number of exotic or endangered species.

The penalties imposed on Mr. Kafka are expected to be either reduced or dismissed, however, if he meets conditions which were previously agreed upon between him and the New Jersey Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife by Monday, April 14, according to Municipal Court Clerk Yvonne Rude. The division opted not to renew Mr. Kafka's operating permits in January, citing multiple violations concerning public safety and animal welfare.

The division issued summonses to Mr. Kafka following a March 12 in-

spection by a conservation officer and a zoologist, who found the zoo's orangutan house unheated due to a lack of oil and the lights turned off, according to division spokeswoman Sharon Southard. Heat was restored to the unit, which houses several primates, as well as alligators, after an anonymous benefactor offered to have the oil tanks replenished.

Mr. Kafka also was issued a summons for failure to repair cages which house wolves at the zoo, and another for failure to properly house an otter at the facility, the Court Clerk said.

Scotch Plains Municipal Court Judge Joseph Perfilio fined Mr. Kafka \$5,000 plus \$30 court cost for failure to have the orangutan unit heated. The fine will be reduced to \$250 on the condition that the zoo owner makes arrangements for the orangutan to be transferred to another location by April 14, the Court Clerk confirmed.

Mr. Kafka was issued the same penalty for the charge involving the wolf enclosure, which will be totally abated if the zoo owner meets agreed-upon conditions, the Court Clerk said. She confirmed that the zoo owner was fined \$200 plus \$30 court cost for failure to adequately house the otter, which will be reduced to \$50 if he fulfills the necessary requirements.

On March 5, Superior Court Judge

Frederick C. Kentz, Jr. appointed attorney Martin O'Connor, 2nd, of the Union law firm of O'Connor, Morss and O'Connor, as legal custodian to examine the financial records of the zoo, which was bought three years ago by Mr. Kafka and his wife, Deborah, of Waichung. The facility, formerly known as the Terry Lou Zoo, was previously owned by Frank and Louise Terry, who now live in Florida.

At the upcoming hearing, Judge Kentz is expected to review written reports from Mr. O'Connor, veterinarian Dr. Kathy Jamison of Pennsylvania, and reptile expert Bill Boesenberg of Elmwood Park. Dr. Jamison was scheduled to tour the Scotch Plains Zoo yesterday, March 26, to inspect conditions at the site. Among the zoo inhabitants are elephants, giraffes, large cats, primates, llamas, deer and birds.

According to Ms. Southard, the Fish, Game and Wildlife Division declined to renew the Kafkas' per-

mits after inspectors found that the zoo owners failed to provide "adequate shelter, food and water, as well as sufficient heating and ventilation" for some of the animals. Mr. Kafka has filed for a hearing before an administrative law judge to appeal the charges. No date has been scheduled yet for the hearing, Ms. Southard acknowledged.

Mr. Kafka recently told *The Times* that he was confident that he would be able to work out any problems with the state and denied that any animals at the zoo were mistreated. He said several weeks ago that he still plans to upgrade the facility pending final approval of his site plan by the Scotch Plains Board of Adjustment and emphasized that he intends to keep the zoo open.

Last year, Mr. Kafka was fined \$1,700 for failure to file annual or quarterly reports and an additional \$4,000 for other problems. Mr. Kafka also owes \$3,300 to the Elizabethtown

BOE Candidates Night Covers Varied Topics

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specially Written for The Times

The eight candidates vying for three available seats on the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education this year outlined their qualifications, discussed their positions and fielded questions from members of the audience during a Candidates Night sponsored March 19 by the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) Council.

Held in the high school auditorium, the forum featured the three incumbents and five newcomers seeking election to the board on Tuesday, April 15. Board Vice President Lillian M. Dettmar is running for her sixth term; August A. Ruggiero, a member of the board since the 1970s, is seeking his fifth consecutive term, and Theresa Larkin is making a bid for her second term. All three open seats are held by Scotch Plains representatives.

Challenging the incumbents are Frances Gonzalez, Jean McAllister, Kristen Croag Paparella, Norman A. Ross and Thomas Russo. All five, like the three incumbents, have children who are enrolled in, will be attending or have graduated from the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school district. All have college degrees and have been involved in community activities.

Moderator Margaret Walker of the Westfield Area League of Women Voters opened the nearly three-hour program by introducing the candidates to approximately 80 people in attendance. Each of the candidates was then allowed to make his or her introductory statements, which included background information and the reasons for running for the board.

The candidates were asked to answer two questions submitted by the PTA Council and a third from the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Chapter of Junior States of America, a national organization dedicated to promoting political awareness among adolescents. Each candidate was allocated two minutes to answer each question.

The first question posed by the PTA Council was, "With the prospect of a magnet school for science and technology on the horizon, which do you think is more important in this day and age, a comprehensive education or a specialized education? In which direction do you think our school district should go, how do you see the district getting there, and how can it be financed?"

The magnet high school, approved by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders earlier this month, is scheduled to open in September at the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools campus in Scotch Plains. Designed for the intense study of science, mathematics and technology, the school will accept several hundred students based on their grade point average, an admissions test to identify abilities and standardized test scores.

Most of the candidates said they believed that a comprehensive education, which embraces history, literature, foreign languages and the humanities — as well as technology — was more advantageous than a specialized education in preparing "well-rounded students" for college and careers.

Mr. Russo felt a magnet high school could be "divisive" to the district by taking students and resources away from the overall high school community. Mrs. McAllister was concerned that the magnet school would address the needs of a select group of "super kids" rather than the total student population.

Mr. Ruggiero and Mrs. Dettmar cited the wide range of courses, including advanced placement offerings, which are already available through the school district, and Mrs. Paparella commented that the existing school district could provide accelerated mathematics and science courses for students who require them. Mrs. Larkin remarked that a comprehensive program promotes a "harmonious educational community," as well as offering "something for everyone."

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A BIG HIT...The third grade Brownie Troop No. 541 performed the musical number "One Singular Sensation" from A Chorus Line at the recent Evergreen Elementary School's variety show. Please see story and more photographs on Page 10.

Weldon Materials Attorney Objects To Change in Zoning Near Quarry

By JEANNE WHITNEY
Specially Written for The Times

The Scotch Plains Township Council heard objections Tuesday night from a lawyer representing Weldon Materials over a change in zoning ordinances that could allow more than 100 three- and four-story condominiums or townhouses to be built near the company's quarry site on Union Avenue.

The project reportedly would include low-to-moderate income housing. An attorney for members of the Donato family — who currently own the estimated nine acres for the proposed development — said, "it is not dangerous to develop the site."

Councilwoman Joan Papen said "I think this ordinance is in the best interest of this community." Councilwoman Papen said that under an earlier plan developed by the township to satisfy the state's Council On Affordable Housing (COAH) "mandates," the zone was identified as a site for low-to-moderate income housing units. The council unanimously approved the changes

in the ordinance.

A developer identified as Hovnanian, according to Weldon's attorney, has already advertised the sale of the proposed condos in a major daily newspaper saying the units would be built this summer. The attorney for the quarry claimed the proposed site was "a flood zone" and said, "this is not a proper site to be putting 326 people." The Donatos' lawyer admitted the proposed road leading to the housing units was in a flood zone, but the proposed units themselves were not.

The quarry, operating as Fanwood Crushed Stone, currently notifies 42 nearby residents when it "blasts" or detonates explosives at the site, according to its attorney William Butler of Westfield. Mr. Butler accused the council of "placating the developer" by changing the ordinance to allow four-story condos. Officials insisted the decision makes it possible for the town to follow through on its COAH commitment to provide housing for those persons with incomes of \$25,000 to \$30,000 annually.

Township representative to the Greenbrook Flood Control Commission, Lawrence Newcomb, asked the council to defer a decision on the ordinance until the Commission could examine it. Officials said the Planning Board had recommended proceeding with the changes. In addition, any site plan for the project would require approval from the Planning Board, officials said.

In other business, the council said it was still waiting to act on a second round of bids for township animal control services. The council agreed to a special meeting next Tuesday, April 1, at 8:30 p.m. order to move on the issue. The council said it received bids from both Garden State Kennels in Stirling and Associated Humane Societies in Newark. Garden State is temporarily providing services to the township, officials said.

According to township officials, Garden State charges extra for "after hour" services. Last year the township spent about \$2,500 on extra fees, officials said. The total annual bill for

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