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**Scotch Plains - Fanwood**



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## FATE OF

## 1997-1998 SCHOOL BUDGET ALSO WILL BE DECIDED

# Mrs. Dettmar, Mr. Ruggiero, Mrs. Larkin Face Five Newcomers In Race Tuesday for Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education

By SUZETTE STALKER  
Specially Written for The Times

Scotch Plains voters will elect three representatives to the Board of Education next Tuesday, April 15, while in both the township and Fanwood voters will decide the fate of the proposed 1997-1998 school budget. According to Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi's office, there are 13,907 registered voters in Scotch Plains and 4,679 in Fanwood.

In the school board race, incumbents Lillian M. Dettmar, August A. Ruggiero and Theresa Larkin, all Scotch Plains residents, are being challenged by newcomers Frances Gonzalez, Jean McAllister, Kristen Croag Paparella, Norman A. Ross and Thomas Russo. Each vacancy is for a full, three-year term. There are no Fanwood seats available this year.

Listed on the ballot also will be the \$36,935,929 tax levy for the school budget. It calls for a 1.64 percent tax increase for Scotch Plains property owners and a 2.47 percent increase for those in Fanwood.

The proposed budget would increase the tax bill in Scotch Plains by \$7.50 on the \$115,000 average assessed value. In Fanwood, the budget would increase the tax bill by \$74.70 on the average assessed value of \$83,000, according to school officials. If voters reject the budget, it will be turned over to the township and borough councils, which would have 21 days to take action.

The total \$41.8 million spending plan reflects a 2.64 percent increase over last year's budget.

Mrs. Dettmar, who is Vice President of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education, currently is seeking her sixth term. She and her husband, both retired teachers, have lived in the township for 37 years. They

have two grown children who were educated in the local school district.

During her campaign, Mrs. Dettmar has cited her experience as a 15-year member of the school board. She has been elected Vice President of the board seven times and is the former Chairwoman of the board's Policy, Athletic, Community Relations, Staff Appreciation and Legislation Committees.

Mrs. Dettmar also has been a member of the Negotiations, Finance, Buildings and Grounds, Budget Advisory and Grievance Committees. She has served as President of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) Council and as board Liaison to the PTA Council. In addition, she has been a member of several PTA executive boards in the district.

The candidate has stressed her role as Legislative Liaison to the New Jersey School Boards Association as particularly relevant, in that she is able to keep the school board informed about such issues as school funding legislation.

Mr. Ruggiero, who has lived in Scotch Plains for 24 years, also is running for his sixth term. The veteran school board member and his wife have two grown children, both of whom graduated from the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school district. He is a full professor of mathematics and physics at Essex County College in Newark.

He has been President of the school board five times and is the former Chairman of the Policy, Budget, Curriculum and Instruction Committees. He currently chairs the Administrative Negotiations Committee and is a member of three other committees. In addition, he has served on the Community Relations, Finance,



Jean McAllister  
Ballot Position #1

Buildings and Grounds and Negotiations Committees.

Mr. Ruggiero is a member of the Willow Grove Presbyterian Church in Scotch Plains, where he is Superintendent of the Adult Sunday School and a member of the Coordinating Committee, which arranges for homeless families to stay at the church.

The candidate, like Mrs. Dettmar, has emphasized his lengthy experience as a board member while maintaining that he remains open to new ideas. According to Mr. Ruggiero, his goals include improving education in the district, while demonstrating fiscal responsibility in formulating school budgets and strengthening relationships between the board, school district employees and the community.

Mrs. Larkin, who currently is winding up her first term on the board, has three children. As a member of the Negotiations Committee, the candidate represented the board during contract talks last year with the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association. She is also a member of the board's Policy Committee.

She additionally serves as Liaison to the Scotch Plains-Fanwood PTA Council and the Municipal Alliance Committee, as well as with commu-



Thomas Russo  
Ballot Position #2



Theresa Larkin  
Ballot Position #6

nity relations. She is a member of the Coles Elementary School and Terrill Middle School PTAs, as well as the Terrill School Music Boosters.

Mrs. Larkin has stated during her campaign that she remains committed to ensuring that school tax dollars are spent to promote academic excellence; to maintaining current class sizes by regularly reviewing student enrollment trends and to keeping the lines of communication open among board members, administrators, staff and the community.

A lifelong resident of Scotch Plains, Mrs. Gonzalez was educated through the local school system and has two children who are recent graduates of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. Her professional background includes 16 years of corporate experience and nine years in management.

The candidate currently is employed by Middlesex County College as a Youth Coordinator, teaching students between the ages of 14 and 21 skills which will make them employable. She has stated that her main reason for running for the school board is to help give all students an education which will prepare them for the social and technological challenges of the next millennium.

Among her goals, Mrs. Gonzalez

explained, is that all students will view themselves as a vital part of the education community. She stressed the importance of meeting the educational requirements of every student, including those with special needs, with input from all aspects of the school district.

Mrs. Gonzalez has maintained that the district needs to support educational programs which will provide students with the flexibility to compete in an increasingly complex society. She argued that students should be able to think both creatively and critically, and that they should graduate with a sense of direction and self-esteem.

Mrs. McAllister and her husband have lived in Scotch Plains for four years and have two young children. Prior to leaving her job to raise her family, Mrs. McAllister was employed as a marketing and sales executive in Manhattan. While living in New York she was also a literacy volunteer.

The candidate said her experience working with trusts and investments has trained her to see the value of every decision which affects financial resources. She added that her professional background also has given her expertise in translating

### Pictures Not Available

Norman J. Ross  
Ballot Position #3

Kristen Croag Paparella  
Ballot Position #4

Frances Gonzalez  
Ballot Position #5

August Ruggiero  
Ballot Position #7

highly technical data into language easily understood by the public.

Mrs. McAllister's stated objectives include providing district students with the most effective teaching methods and materials available; improving communication between the board and the community; stressing academic excellence, developing guidelines concerning accountability of staff and students, achieving more family involvement in the education process and maintaining a safe environment for teachers and students.

Mrs. Paparella grew up in Scotch Plains and, after living in Illinois for more than a decade, returned to Scotch Plains in 1993. The married mother of two has a son enrolled in the ninth grade at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School and is a member of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Music Boosters. She also was active in various church and community activities while living in Illinois.

The candidate, who has worked as a bookkeeper and credit analyst for more than 15 years, currently is employed as a full-charge bookkeeper with RJM in Scotch Plains. Calling for a fresh perspective on the school board, Mrs. Paparella has argued that members need to objectively study

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## Township Council Okays \$15.3 Million Budget With Three Tax Point Hike

By JEANNE WHITNEY  
Specially Written for The Times

The Scotch Plains Township Council unanimously adopted this year's \$15.3 million municipal budget — representing a three-and-a-half percent increase over last year — on Tuesday in five minutes without the benefit of comments from residents during the public hearing portion or the televised call-in segment.

The new budget will increase taxes for the year by three tax points or \$34 a year on a house with a market value of \$230,000 and assessed value of \$115,000. The proposed Board of Education budget that is to be voted on by the public this Tuesday, April 15, would increase taxes by another five points, according to township officials. If approved, that will bring the tax increase up to \$80 for the average township homeowner, officials said.

Introduced March 4, the municipal budget was subject only to township "self-examination" this year, instead of a state review. According to Municipal Manager Thomas E. Atkins, an initiative by Governor Christine Todd Whitman allows towns deemed in good financial standing to have the option of skipping a state review every few years.

According to officials, the projected 1.4 percent overall tax increase is the lowest in years.

In other business, the council unanimously passed a resolution opposing the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders' decision to allow golf clubs regular blocks of tee-times at the three county golf courses. Councilman Dr. Martin Marks called the issue a "hot topic" among local golfers, saying, "Every resident should have an equal chance at tee-times."

The county's new phone-in reservation system for scheduling tee-times has also come under attack for charging additional fees for the service.

Previously, golfers at the three county-run courses had complained of long lines for a chance to tee-off. Councilman Marks said he heard that eager golfers gathered as early as 2 a.m. for a place in line. Last week, Freeholder Daniel P. Sullivan called the reaction to the reservation changes "growing pains," saying he approved the new arrangements will benefit all the county's golfers.

Councilman Robert E. Johnston said the block of tee-times for clubs was an issue because the blocks were being "prime time" on weekend mornings. Councilman Marks

pointed out that although the council has no jurisdiction over the county golf courses, Ash Brook is located in the township. The other two county courses are Galloping Hill in Union and Oak Ridge in Clark.

On a separate matter, the council again introduced an ordinance to take bids for sale of a 600-square-foot piece of township property along Route No. 22. The previous bidding session yielded no takers. Buyers must be contiguous property owners, officials said. A different ordinance introduced Tuesday will allow a raffle on Sunday, June 8, by the Emmanuel Cancer Fund.

The council unanimously approved a Planning Board recommendation

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## Scotch Plains Planning Board Approves Gas Transfer Station

By JEANNE WHITNEY  
Specially Written for The Times

Elizabethtown Gas Company won approval Monday from the Scotch Plains Planning Board to build a metering and natural gas transfer station on Terrill Road near the Roy Rogers restaurant. The station will allow for natural gas transfer from an interstate high pressure pipeline owned by Texas Eastern Transmission Corporation to Elizabethtown's system.

According to Elizabethtown's Manager of Engineering Design, Michael Stonack, the facility will "enhance the gas supply" in the township by 50 percent. "Especially in very cold weather, we've had some pressure problems," he said.

Currently, the township is at the end of the line for gas service that comes via Woodbridge. Although the proposed site is in a business zone, residential property borders the eastern side of the three-quarter acre lot and the existing interstate pipeline runs about 50 feet from the rear border. The station buildings will be in the rear half of the lot.

In a 7-2 vote to approve the project, Planning Board Vice Chairman Sal Lauro said he voted no because "I still have some concerns about the overall development of the plan."

Board member Donald Novello, who also voted to deny the application, questioned whether other sites



A MILESTONE...Scotch Plains-Fanwood Superintendent of Schools Dr. Carol B. Choye congratulates Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School junior David Gewirtz, who was recently elected President of the state Future Business Leaders of America for the 1997-1998 school year. They also are celebrating the selection of the local chapter as New Jersey's "Outstanding Chapter" for the fourth consecutive year. Please see story on Page 10.

besides the one in Scotch Plains were considered by Elizabethtown Gas.

Mr. Stonack assured the board that the station was a "common facility and not unusual" and that the company had 17 similar stations throughout the state. It will take three months to build, he said. He also indicated the company hopes to put larger new pipes down under Terrill Road toward Midway Avenue to North Avenue in a separate four-month project.

A 30-foot-long heater or furnace surrounded on three sides by a 12-foot high metal and fiberglass "sound" wall will be at the site behind a 30-foot-square, one-story, white vinyl siding peaked-roof metering "house." Temperatures will reach 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit in the heater, according to Mr. Stonack, in order to keep the necessary pressure in the gas system and in turn keep the equipment at 45 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit. The unmanned station will operate around-the-clock with electronic off-site monitoring, Mr. Stonack said. Natural gas is used in home heating systems.

In response to the board's fears over safety, Mr. Stonack said an immediate response to a station problem was possible from a remote monitoring site by "turning off gas flow valves with the touch of a button. We turn off the gas to the pilot in the heater." An employee could be at the station within 15 minutes, he said. Under normal circumstances, em-

ployees will visit the site twice a week, he said. A maintenance check will be done yearly.

A gas explosion last year in Edison involved a Texas Eastern pipeline but according to Mr. Stonack, it did not involve a station like the proposed township facility.

"I believe that one (in Edison) had no shut-off. Gas just kept coming," he said. "This facility is designed to the ultimate. And we certainly are experienced in putting this type of facility in."

Mr. Stonack said Texas Eastern has more than 3,000 similar stations throughout the United States.

The facility's separate heater will have a 25-foot high flue about 12 inches round. Waste emissions from the heater will be similar in makeup to that from a home furnace — carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide — Mr. Stonack said. There will be a backup generator at the site. The proposed facility meets all federal and state regulations, he said.

There will also be security lighting, cameras and 20-foot high pole lights at the site. Elizabethtown Gas said it will landscape the property, install sidewalks and pave and maintain the front driveway. The entire lot will be fenced, according to the proposal. Mayor Irene T. Schmidt and several other Planning Board members objected to proposed "unsightly" barbed-wire at the top of the fence.

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## Borough Council Eyes Tree Damage Policy

By SUZETTE STALKER  
Specially Written for The Times

During its agenda meeting Wednesday, April 2, the Fanwood Borough Council proposed that a policy be established to address potential liability for damage caused by falling branches or trees which are located on borough property. The discussion was sparked by a recent incident in which a branch fell on to a car which was parked on Montrose Avenue, causing \$1,300 worth of damage.

The Fanwood Shade Tree Commission, which keeps records of complaints made regarding trees that are damaged or in need of pruning, had not been notified about any problems with the tree on Montrose Avenue prior to the incident, according to Borough Clerk Eleanor McGovern. She said that in cases where there was no evidence of a problem, the borough is generally not considered liable.

However, in two earlier cases of tree damage to property, the borough paid the deductible portion of the owners' insurance claims. In the first case, the Shade Tree Commission had received a complaint about a tree but the work was still pending when the incident occurred, according to Mrs. McGovern. In the second, the property owners had alerted a contractor working on other trees in the neighborhood about the tree which ultimately caused the damage but it had not yet been scheduled for repair.

Councilman William E. Populus, Jr., a member of the council's Public Safety Committee, recommended that development of a policy be referred to the committee. Fellow committee member Councilman Chester R. Lindsey said he felt the borough bears some responsibility for the Montrose Avenue incident since the owner of the car, an area resident who commutes to work, was parked in a non-restrictive space.

Mrs. McGovern noted, however, that the municipality's insurance company generally regards such incidents where there was no evidence of a problem with a tree as an "act of God" and would not regard the borough as liable for the damage.

Officials heard a brief presentation at the outset of the meeting from Ben Sellitto, President of Cost Cutters Group in Parsippany, who gave an overview of how his company offers instruction in "Total Quality Management" (TQM) to help clients improve management, operations and customer satisfaction.

Mr. Sellitto said that his firm, which has been in business for 25 years, has trained 600 Union County govern-

ment employees in TQM techniques and offered to provide a complimentary, half-day workshop to about a dozen borough employees of the borough to instruct them in these skills.

He stated that there are "serious problems in the way we do work in our culture," explaining that companies have a tendency to group employees according to the function they perform, which he argued can lead to conflict rather than productivity. A more effective system, Mr. Sellitto said, is to group together all the people who are needed to get a job done and give them "process engineering tools."

The company President stated that, in evaluating how to improve the quality of work, companies in the United States also focus heavily on failure analysis, whereas cultures such as the Japanese, who commonly practice the TQM philosophy in their companies, emphasize preventive measures. He said the latter approach in attempting to perfect work can help organizations avoid liability, discrimination and harassment lawsuits.

In other matters, the governing

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### 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 [goleader@aol.com](mailto:goleader@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.