

# THE TIMES



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Jeanne Whitney for The Times

FOUR DECADES LATER...Scotch Plains Township Clerk Barbara Riepe is presented with a vase of flowers by Mayor Irene K. Schmidt during a surprise presentation at last week's Township Council meeting. Mrs. Riepe was honored on the 40th anniversary of her employment with the township.

### TOWNSHIP CLERK JOINED MUNICIPAL STAFF AT 19 IN 1957

## Barbara Riepe Marks Her 40th Year With Township at Surprise Celebration

By JEANNE WHITNEY  
Specially Written for The Times

Scotch Plains Township Clerk Barbara Riepe marked a milestone last week with the 40th anniversary of her employment with the township.

"I've never known anyone, except (the former township clerk) who worked in the same organization for 40 years," said Township Manager Thomas E. Atkins, as the township surprised Mrs. Riepe during a televised Township Council meeting last week with an anniversary ceremony. Invited to the meeting — all unbeknownst to Mrs. Riepe — were family and friends as well as former Mayor Gabe Spera, her former boss and Township Clerk, Helen Reidy, Chief of Police Thomas O'Brien and other municipal co-workers.

"I really am surprised. I'm numb," Mrs. Riepe declared, after the Township Council momentarily suspended the regular agenda and a version of "This is Your Life" began for the dedicated Township Clerk.

Mrs. Riepe said she started work in the Clerk's office in 1957 when she was 19 years old.

"I always wanted to be a secretary," she said.

"Eisenhower was President of the

United States and Richard Nixon was Vice President then," Mr. Atkins pointed out.

Mrs. Riepe moved to the township from the neighboring town of Westfield when she was 12.

In 1987, after 30 years as Deputy Township Clerk, Mrs. Riepe was given the chance to move up following the retirement of her predecessor, Mrs. Reidy. Mrs. Reidy retired after 40 years of employment with the township.

"I didn't really want her to retire," Mrs. Riepe said.

Mrs. Riepe won the promotion to Clerk and said she remembers Mr. Spera saying at the time that anyone who stayed with a job that long as Deputy deserves a chance as Clerk.

"And you've done very well," Mr. Spera observed during the ceremony. Councilwoman and Deputy Mayor Joan Papen said, "We hope you're going to be here longer."

"I hope so too," replied Mrs. Riepe.

What does the Clerk do?

"I do marriage licenses and animal licenses. I'm the registrar of vital statistics (births and deaths), the elections and minutes for (council) meetings," Mrs. Riepe said. "I'm never bored."

Mrs. Riepe said she attends conferences with a group of Union County Clerks and Registrars in order "to be brought up to date" on changing laws that affect her duties. What was her worst moment on the job?

"Really, I think it was just a couple of years ago on election night. The library (one of the polling sites) was

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### SERIES ON AFTERMATH OF MT. LAUREL DECISION BEGINS

## Towns Currently in 2nd Round Of Certification to Provide Affordable and Fair Housing

By JUSTIN BRIDGE  
Specially for The Westfield Leader and The Times

The following is the first in a series of articles on the Fair Housing Act of 1985 which led to requirements for municipalities to provide affordable housing for those persons who meet the criteria established by the state's Council on Affordable Housing. This week's article concentrates on the history of COAH. Next week's story will focus on what local communities, covered by *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times of Scotch Plains and Fanwood*, are doing or have done to meet their COAH obligations.

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The Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) was created by the Fair Housing Act of 1985 in response to a series of New Jersey Supreme Court cases commonly known as the Mount Laurel decisions. Through these decisions, the state Supreme Court established a constitutional obligation for every municipality in the state to provide its fair share of low and moderate income housing. This is accomplished through each community's land use and zoning requirements. Existing units also may be refurbished in order to comply with COAH guidelines.

COAH is composed of 11 members appointed by the Governor with the consent of the State Senate. COAH has the power to define housing regions, estimate low and moderate income housing needs, set criteria for municipalities to determine their

own fair share numbers, and the power to review and approve fair share plans or regional contribution agreements for municipalities. COAH also can impose resource restraints and consider motions regarding housing plans.

COAH is an administrative and regulatory organization. The organization itself does not fund, or require that municipalities expend local funds to build affordable housing. Funding is provided by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs through its housing programs. Funding also is provided by the New Jersey Housing Mortgage Finance Agency using its bonding abilities or its federal tax credit allocations. Several municipalities also may utilize their own funds.

New Jersey municipalities must enter into the COAH process voluntarily. Each town must file a housing element and a fair share plan that establishes a realistic opportunity for the provision of a predetermined number of units affordable to low and moderate income households.

Within two years of these filings, the towns must petition COAH for approval of the plans. Petitioning assures protection from developers' lawsuits while COAH reviews the site plans. The Council may request revisions to the plans before granting its certification. Certification is granted for a six-year period and may be revoked if a municipality fails to support the continuing "realistic op-

portunity" for its fair share housing obligation, according to information obtained from COAH.

Municipalities can meet a portion of their fair share obligation through the rehabilitation of existing units. To provide the opportunity for the construction of new units, municipalities may zone specific sites for residential developments by the private sector. Developers must agree to build a fixed percentage of affordable units, usually 20 percent, of the total constructed units on the site, to market to low and moderate income households and to maintain affordability for 30 years.

Other methods for meeting the COAH obligation may include municipal sponsored construction, the purchase of existing units for sale or rent to eligible households, regional contribution agreements, and the creation of accessory apartments within existing structures.

Between the years of 1987 through 1994, COAH granted certification to 161 municipalities. Forty-two of these municipalities had fair share obligations of zero. The remaining municipalities have ongoing obligations totaling just over 21,000 units. Through August of 1995, over 2,950 of these units have been transferred through regional contribution agreements to the state's urban areas.

The Fair Housing Act permits certified or court-ordered municipalities to transfer up to 50 percent of

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## Fanwood Council Authorizes Receipt of Bids To Purchase Fire Dept. Utility Vehicle

By SUZETTE STALKER  
Specially Written for The Times

A resolution authorizing Borough Clerk Eleanor McGovern to receive bids for a utility vehicle for the Fanwood Fire Department was approved by the Borough Council during its regular meeting last Thursday, after Councilman and Fire Commissioner William E. Populus, Jr. stressed the importance of being able to transport all the necessary equipment to a fire scene in one trip.

Councilman Populus explained that officials have been looking into purchasing a used vehicle which would be able to carry everything firefighters may need to use in dealing with an emergency — including the jaws of life, special foam and a generator to provide additional lighting at night. The department currently has a main engine and backup pumper which can only carry hoses, firefighters and water tanks, Mr. Populus said.

He said that right now, a second trip must be made if supplementary is needed, or the equipment is brought along in separate vehicles. "The men have been carrying equipment in their cars," the Councilman revealed. "If

we have a catastrophic event, such as at the railroad, we would definitely need to have the vehicle over there."

Councilman Populus stated that a used vehicle would cost significantly less than the \$50,000 the borough would have to spend for a new vehicle, though he emphasized that many other communities are in the same situation concerning the availability of these vehicles. "When you're dealing with used equipment, you don't know when vehicles will become available," he advised members of the governing body.

The council also fondly remembered the late Peter P. Bernotas, a resident of Fanwood for 38 years, who died on July 1 at age 82. Mr. Bernotas, who regularly attended meetings of the governing body for many years, frequently addressed the council on senior citizens' concerns, tree preservation and keeping patriotism alive, among other issues.

A United States Army veteran of World War II, Mr. Bernotas was the recipient of the Purple Heart and various other citations, which were exhibited in a glass-topped display box during last week's meeting. The council

dais was decorated with yellow daisies and other flowers from Mr. Bernotas' garden, while a bouquet of red and white roses and blue hydrangea — donated by fellow Fanwood gardeners in his memory — rested atop the podium where Mr. Bernotas often spoke.

Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly described Mr. Bernotas, who had been active in Fanwood civic affairs and shared his tree expertise with students in the local schools, as "a selfless man of integrity." She said that he always made evident his concern for the residents of the borough, adding that "as I pass his house I'll always remember him."

"He challenged us, he questioned us and he was skeptical of what he heard from us and other authority figures," observed Council President Bruce H. Walsh, who described these qualities as the kind which inspired the early American patriots to question British authority and eventually to fight for democracy.

In addition, the council honored Mr. Bernotas with a resolution. Also cited was Christy Tighe, a member of the Fanwood Board of Adjustment,

who won the title of Mrs. New Jersey in Atlantic City on April 26. Mrs. Tighe, who was accompanied by her children, Willie, 3, and 1-year-old Louis, was praised by Mayor Connelly as "one of Fanwood's finest" for her achievements. She will compete for the title of Mrs. United States in Las Vegas on July 25.

Mayor Connelly issued a proclamation designating August 23 as CONTACT We Care Day, in conjunction with the annual 5K race held that day to benefit the organization. CONTACT We Care is a telephone helpline serving Union, Essex, Middlesex and Somerset Counties. Candy Santo, who heads CONTACT We Care, accepted the resolution on behalf of the organization. The Mayor, who said she will take part in the race again this year, urged all area residents to participate in the event.

In addition, the governing body extended Alice Pareti's term as Tax Collector until December 31, and announced the appointment of Margaret Ferreiro as a Library Board Trustee through December 31, 2000. Later in the meeting, in-grade promotions were announced for Patrol-

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## Eighth Graders' Scores Jump in 'Three R's'

By JEANNE WHITNEY  
Specially Written for The Times

Scotch Plains and Fanwood eighth graders got higher marks this year from the state in the "three R's," according to the results of a state standardized Early Warning Test (EWT).

Out of 253 district students tested earlier this year, over 95 percent scored at or above the minimum levels of proficiency required in reading, writing and mathematics. Last year, only 93.7 percent of students made the grade in all three subjects.

Of the three-part exam, reading results were the highest, with 98.8 percent of the students reaching minimum standards this year — over last year's 96.4 percent. In writing, results were up 3 percent from last year with 97.6 percent of the students passing. Mathematics was the lowest, with 95.3 percent meeting at least minimum standards.

Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Dr. John R. Crews called the district scores "very, very strong" at last Thursday's Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education agenda meeting. Dr. Crews said, however, that 33 eighth graders failed at least one section of the three-subject exam. No numbers were immediately available on the previous year's failure rate.

According to Board of Education President Dr. Donald E. Sheldon, since the early 1990s the EWT has been used to measure the success of public middle schools in preparing students for high school study. District Superintendent Dr. Carol B. Choye said teachers also look at test results early in the school year "to identify students who need support." The test results do not include Special Education or English as a Second Language (ESL) students, officials said.

Dr. Crews said administrators would analyze and report further on the test results this fall.

On a separate matter, Executive Director of Resolve Community Counseling Center, Inc., Nancy J. Benz, told Board of Education members that nearly half of all district students used counseling services as part of an ongoing mental health program in the district schools. The services will cost the district about \$123,500 this year, officials said, for the equivalent of 13-and-a-half days a week with district families and employees.

Ms. Benz said the services are designed to be short-term solutions requiring generally no more than 12 counseling sessions — with four or five being the average. Counseling for students and district employees may be individual, family or group, she added.

Ms. Benz said the staff of psychologists, social workers or counselors may advise an entire class if teachers or administrators indicate a need. For example, she described helping young students who were dealing with the death of a classmate's parent.

Parents of elementary students are notified in advance of the use of the mental health services. Middle and high school students may occasionally meet once or twice with a specialist, she said, before parents are notified. Sessions may be at the student's school or at the Front Street Center.

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HIGH ACHIEVERS...The Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary Club recognized the 1997 recipients of the Rotary-Garbe Foundation Scholarships and the Adele deLeuw Scholarships on June 25. The recipients were interviewed by club members Joel Whitaker, Janet Strunk and Barbara Hausleiter. The recipients of the Rotary-Garbe Foundation scholarships are: Julianne Arnold, James Madison University; Patrick Dempsey, North Carolina State University; Ursula Kodatt, University of Rhode Island; Alice Lin, Johns Hopkins University; Keith Oatis, Pennsylvania State University; and Kathleen Polito, American University. The Adele deLeuw Scholarship recipients are: Anthony Cangialosi, Stevens Institute of Technology; Michael Loberfeld, College of New Jersey; Keith Oatis, Pennsylvania State University; Christine Racine, Art Institute of Philadelphia; Darrick Lo, Cornell University; Ehrlic Lo, Columbia University; and Concetta Luongo and Amanda Podlas. Recipients and Rotary Club representatives, pictured left to right, are back row: Darrick Lo, Ehrlic Lo, Anthony Cangialosi, Michael Loberfeld and Lori DeMitt, President of the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary Club; front row: Robert Kraus, President of the Rotary-Garbe Scholarship Foundation, Christine Racine, Julianne Arnold and Kathleen Polito.

### 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 must 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.

Forewarned 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.