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Council OKs Subdivision Proposal

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specialty Writer for The Times

During last Thursday's regular meeting of the Fanwood Borough Council, officials voted 5 to 1 in support of a proposal to subdivide approximately an acre and a half of Watson Road property across from the Borough Hall complex.

Councilman William E. Populus, Jr., explained that the land, which has been vacant for 10 years, could be subdivided into two lots, one of which could then be sold for the purpose of building a home on the site. The remaining parcel would be a flag lot that would continue to be owned by the borough.

He projected that the first lot, comprised of about 15,000 square feet, could be sold for between \$30,000 and \$40,000. The Fanwood Tax Assessor's Office has determined that the lot, once developed, could generate annual tax revenue of between \$6,000 and \$6,500, according to Councilman Populus.

Richard Bard, a resident of North Marine Avenue, spoke out against the proposal, telling the council "you're going to wind up with a flag lot if you subdivide it (the overall property), which will be absolutely useless."

Citing a study commissioned by the governing body last year of space availability for borough operations, Mr. Bard questioned the practicality of selling vacant land, "just to build a house." He suggested that the property could instead be used to relieve overcrowding in municipal offices.

"Once you start that snowball rolling down the hill, it's very difficult to stop," commented Mr. Bard, reiterating his opinion that the borough should not subdivide the property, which formerly was the site of Fanwood Borough Hall and the fire department.

"If you dispose of that land, you're making a terrible, terrible mistake. It doesn't benefit the public," he added. According to Councilman Populus, a stipulation would be included in the proposal requiring that a house be built on the main lot of the property within a certain period of time. If the lot was not sold, the land would continue as a single parcel owned by the municipality.

Councilman Louis C. Jung questioned the "functional capability" of the proposed flag lot. Councilman Populus responded that the site, which could be reached via a 15-foot-wide access way, could be used as a parking area for the Municipal Court, Carriage House functions and senior citizen bus trips.

Patricia Plante of Oakwood Court, a real estate agent and Mr. Populus' running mate on the Democratic ticket for two available council seats this year, cited several advantages to the subdivision and sale of a portion of the property.

She observed that the community would no longer have to maintain the land; that a home would generate taxes and that the borough would also gain revenue from the sale of the property itself.

An application and site plan must now be approved by the Fanwood Planning Board, according to Councilwoman Karen M. Schurtz, who is the governing body's representative to the Planning Board. She confirmed that the board could possibly hear the appeal by September.

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 galeader@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 materials.

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.

Forevents 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.



KEEPING IT CLEAN... These children recently picked up trash and debris during Clean-up Day at Brookside Park in Scotch Plains. Pictured, left to right, are Clean-up Day winners Gary Schardien, David Ginsberg, Laurie Romeo, Joyce Gibbons, Melissa Gibbons and Adriana Power. Please see a story on Page 10.

ARCHITECT TESTIFIES FOR DEVELOPER AT MEETING

Planning Board Hears Further Testimony About The Reserve

By JUSTIN BRIDGE
Specialty Writer for The Times

The Scotch Plains Planning Board heard further testimony on the proposed development known as The Reserve at its Monday meeting.

Robert Kraus, the attorney representing developer K. Hovnanian, presented the testimony of Thomas C. Barton to the board. Mr. Barton is a registered architect and the President of Barton and Associates of Philadelphia.

Mr. Barton presented the floor plans of the proposed townhouses to the board. Two types of townhouses are proposed for The Reserve. The first type is a two-story townhouse built over a split-level flat. The second type of building is a two-story townhouse built over another two-story townhouse.

The difference between the townhouses and flats proposed for The Reserve is a question of how many bedrooms and bathrooms are in each unit. Each townhouse contains three bedrooms and two and a half bathrooms, while each flat only has two bedrooms and one bathroom. Both types of units will have direct access to a one-car garage.

In addition, there will be several

townhouse units that Mr. Barton referred to as "premium" units. These units will each have a two-car garage. These "premium" townhouse units will be set over the 16 flat units set aside to meet the Mount Laurel agreements. These Mount Laurel flats will not have any garage and will have slightly less room than the regular flats.

Paul Ferriero, an engineer representing Scotch Plains, questioned Mr. Barton as to the safety of having housing directly above the garages. Mr. Ferriero asked if carbon monoxide would be a problem. Mr. Barton responded by saying "These units meet or exceed all of New Jersey's standards for this type of construction." Mr. Barton continued by explaining that there will be insulation built into the garage roof and the first floor to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

Although Wel-Don Materials of Westfield is challenging the approval of the development, their attorney, William A. Butler, had few questions for Mr. Barton, all of which dealt with the exact number of units that are to be built.

The proposed development will consist of 116 townhouse/flat-style

units built on 7.7 square acres of land adjacent to Union Avenue and Meadow Street. Sixteen of the units meet the requirement set forth by the Mount Laurel agreements and by the Council On Affordable Housing.

The next meeting of the planning board is tentatively set for Monday, September 15, at 7:30 p.m. at the Scotch Plains Municipal Building.

Interviews Are Underway For Community Assessment

One by one they are entering the Fanwood Library or the Community House and telling a professional interviewer what they think are Fanwood's strengths and weaknesses. The interviewing is the first phase of the borough's Community Assessment.

A little more than a year ago, Councilman William E. Populus, Jr. thought Fanwood merited an All-American Cities designation. A committee was formed to look into that possibility.

Members of the committee found that the first mandatory step to a nomination was to evaluate the community's general situation in 10 categories. Committee members recognized the potential value of a broad-based evaluation for Fanwood and its residents. Thus, the focus moved from obtaining the All-American Cities designation to taking an in-depth look at Fanwood's infrastructure.

The information gathered through the assessment process will guide borough leadership in planning for the 21st century. When this goal

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COMMUNITY EVENTS ON TAP

Council Approves Utility Vehicle; Gets Sewer Update

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specialty Writer for The Times

The Fanwood Borough Council unanimously approved a resolution last Thursday for purchase of a used support utility vehicle for the Fanwood Fire Department, which will enable firefighters to transport all their emergency equipment in a single trip. An accompanying ordinance also was passed during the council's regular meeting, approving \$12,400 in funding for the vehicle and for installation of a radio in the unit, which is expected to be in service by early next year.

During the council's August 6 agenda session, Fanwood Fire Chief Daniel Librandy told the governing body that the 1988 vehicle was available from a Summit vendor for \$11,200. He urged officials to give the green light to the one-ton, ambulance-style unit, which he said is the ideal weight and design to carry air cylinders, foam, 50-foot rolled hoses and other vital equipment.

The Fanwood Fire Department currently has two engines, purchased new in 1983, and a 1965 model which is used as a backup. Chief Librandy explained at the agenda meeting that these vehicles do not have the capacity, however, to transport all the equipment which may be necessary to the scene of an emergency at one time. He said firefighters have had to bring along gear in their own vehicles or return to headquarters to get additional equipment.

The total cost of making the utility vehicle "road ready," according to the Chief, will be nearly \$22,000. In addition to the cost of the unit itself, this figure reflects \$5,500 for a new

paint job; \$3,000 for a 117-kilowatt generator; \$1,200 for the radio, and \$500 each for installation of brackets to hold the air cylinders and for new lettering on the vehicle.

During the agenda meeting, Council President Bruce H. Walsh expressed reservations over purchasing the utility vehicle at the present time, and recommended that a comparison study be made of fire departments which are similar in size to Fanwood. Councilman and Fire Commissioner William E. Populus, Jr., presented data on several communities during last week's meeting, including Garwood, Mountainside, Dunellen, Kenilworth, Roselle Park and Winfield.

The report revealed that, although their budgets varied, most of those communities were equipped with ambulance-type utility vehicles like the one which was ultimately approved by the council for Fanwood. At the conclusion of Councilman Populus' report, Councilman Walsh remarked that "it's a big surprise to me and I'm glad we have these statistics," adding that he would now support purchase of the unit.

"We need this kind of equipment to keep us on par with other communities," the Council President remarked.

The council is expected to hold further discussions surrounding the additional costs of preparing the vehicle for service. Officials confirmed that there is \$15,000 available in capital surplus funds, and other money which had been set aside earlier. The council recently gave the Fanwood Volunteer Rescue Squad \$25,000 towards the purchase of a new ambulance, and has also planned to contribute money to the fire department.

Council members addressed several other issues during the nearly two-hour meeting, ranging from pending improvements to the borough's infrastructure to special tributes. Councilman Populus, the borough's representative to the Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority (PARSA), gave an update on that organization's work with the municipality in attempting to stem flooding problems in the borough.

He revealed that, following heavy rain on July 24, PARSA representatives did inspections at several manhole sites to track water flow in the sewer system. An inspection of Willoughby Road, where residents have experienced chronic sewage backups, indicated that the problem is being caused by heavy flows coming from elsewhere in the system, ac-

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FREEHOLDER PROTESTS SENATORS' AMENDING OF APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Proposed Green Brook Flood Control Project On Hold Pending Congressional Decision on Federal Funding

By JEANNE WHITNEY
Specialty Writer for The Times

The proposed \$362 million Green Brook Flood Control project to stem flooding in the Green Brook sub-basin — an area that includes portions of Union, Somerset and Middlesex Counties — is on hold until the United States Congress reconvenes in September to decide how much federal money, if any, will be spent on the project in the new fiscal year beginning on Wednesday, October 1.

Last month, Democratic senators from New Jersey Frank Lautenberg and Robert Torricelli surprised local officials by amending a Senate appropriations bill to kill federal funding for the flood control project.

Republican Union County Freeholder Henry W. Kurz reacted by saying, "They took out the entire Upper Portion funding of the project. I'm absolutely opposed to that." He called the senators' actions "cavalier" and without regard for "the long-term repercussions." Mr. Kurz vowed to introduce a resolution this week to county Freeholders urging the two senators to reconsider the action.

A spokeswoman for Congressman Bob Franks' local office indicated Mr. Franks, representing the Seventh District including Union County, was surprised by Senator Lautenberg's and Senator Toricelli's amendment to eliminate funding for the flood control project.

According to *The Star Ledger*, both senators subsequently said they were willing to work with Congressman Franks on a new version of a bill to secure funding for some portions of the project and seek a solution to the controversial Upper Portion of the project where seven acres of water detention basins are planned.

Last May, Congressman Franks negotiated an 11th-hour deal with county and local officials for a one-year delay in seeking federal funds for the proposed detention basins while getting the okay from local officials to proceed with the rest of the massive project. The disputed Upper Portion of the project is the least costly at \$55 million, while the two Lower Portions total \$307 million, according to United States Army Corps of Engineers' estimates.

Now, a compromise bill must be hammered out in a committee conference in September with both House and Senate members, if the project is to survive.

The community of Berkeley Heights in particular has questioned the need for detention basins in the county-owned Watchung Reservation. An independent task force, chaired by Flood Control Commission Treasurer Frank Meeks, 3rd, of Plainfield, was recently formed among community and county officials to seek solutions to the disputed Upper Portion. Scotch Plains representative

to the task force, Dennis Harrington, expects a one-year deadline at most, for the fact-finding group.

Spokeswoman Sue Hopkins of the New York District of the United States Army Corps of Engineers indicated other potential detention basin sites that were rejected in earlier studies may be reexamined. Freeholder Kurz speculated as well that there may be other possible detention basin sites farther down the Watchung Mountains. A key aspect of the proposed three-pronged flood control tactic is catching storm water at the top of the mountains for slow release into lower lying areas.

The New Jersey chapter of the Sierra Club has logged objections with legislators over the Green Brook project because of environmental concerns. Dennis Anderson, a physical science teacher and Sierra Club member said, "We are opposed to the entire project. But we understand the need for flood protection."

Sierra Club members have questioned proposed earthen levees along waterways that they say will destroy stretches of wetlands that now provide homes for wildlife. Mr. Anderson added, "We want them to consider solutions that take into account 'buy-outs' and floodproofing." A buyout eliminates development in flood-prone areas with government purchases of property that are then left vacant. The floodproofing strat-

egy raises existing homes and businesses above predicted flood levels.

The current flood control proposals in specific cases. The Army Corps claims the project will actually create an additional 300 acres of wetlands.

Mr. Anderson also fears that property currently in the flood plain will be developed later if the project is allowed to go through as is. He questions how safe from flooding the area really will be. "You can't make an earthen dam that can last forever," he added. The affected flood control

area totals 65.2 square miles.

The Green Brook Flood Control Project arose from the efforts of a commission formed in the early 1970s after severe flooding caused thousands of dollars worth of damage and ultimately six deaths in the Green Brook sub-basin region. As recently as October 1996 a fierce nor'easter set loose flood waters that closed off parts of Route No. 22 under several feet of water.

Chairman of the Green Brook Flood Control Commission, Vernon Noble,

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