

THE TIMES



FANWOOD

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FIFTY CENTS



EXTREMELY HAPPY TO BE IN SCHOOL... These first-grade students could not be happier as they settle down to work in Sondra Leedy-Chernoff's classroom at McGinn Elementary School in Scotch Plains. Pictured according to desk sections, front group, visually from left to right, are: Kapri Kreps, Andrew Brockel, Sarah Daniele (closest in photograph), Anne Marie Noronha; left section, Melissa Fitzgibbon (far left), Alexandria DiGiacomo, Sasha Friedman, Michael Roth, Odia Ebose; seated back section, Jillian Coffey, Jennifer DiGiuseppe, Mangok Tamhankar, Rachel Krissman, Dorjan Bogdanovski; standing, Mrs. Leedy-Chernoff, Dana Hinton, Kaitlin Rau, Kelly Monrey; right section, Evan Lake, Jessica Mlado.

ACTING ZONING OFFICER NAMED AT SPECIAL MEETING

Council Discusses School One, Fire Vehicle, Chief Parenti's Successor During Busy Meeting

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specialty Writer for The Times

The Fanwood Borough Council covered a broad range of topics during its September 3 agenda meeting, including traffic safety at School One, the purchase of a new support utility vehicle for the Fanwood Fire Department, the pending appointment of a new police chief, and historic preservation concerns.

A proposal to merge the borough's Planning Board and Board of Adjustment also was discussed.

Council President Bruce H. Walsh, who presided at last week's meeting in the absence of Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly, said approximately 35 residents attended a recent meeting of the council's Public Safety Committee.

They came to voice their concerns over people who park or turn around

on Madison Avenue while dropping off and picking up their children at nearby School One, which is located on Willow Avenue in Scotch Plains.

Area homeowners have been experiencing difficulty exiting their own driveways and also are concerned about the safety of the children walking to school, according to members of the committee.

Residents suggested that borough and education officials could work together toward possible use of the school property as an alternative to parking or turning around on the street, said Councilman William E. Populus, Jr., who is a member of the Public Safety Committee.

They also proposed temporary placement of signs along Madison to see if it would deter these practices. Councilman Populus said a resolution on the matter is expected to be voted on at the council's regular meeting tonight, Thursday, September 11, adding that the signs could be put up along the south side of Madison within the next several weeks.

The governing body are scheduled to adopt on second reading tonight, September 11, an ordinance appropriating \$12,400 in capital surplus toward the purchase of a used support utility vehicle for the fire department. Officials approved the purchase of the ambulance-style unit from a Summit vendor, as well as a radio for the vehicle, during the council's regular meeting on August 14.

Council members backed the purchase of the vehicle following an

appeal by Fanwood Fire Chief Daniel Librandy, who testified at the governing body's August 6 agenda session that by allowing firefighters to transport all their equipment to an emergency scene in a single trip, it would better enable them to do their jobs.

Officials also discussed the cost of a new paint job for the vehicle, which Chief Librandy projected last month to be \$5,500. The municipality is expected to have the vehicle by October, although it will likely not be road ready before the end of the year, council members anticipated.

Besides the paint job and lettering on the vehicle, a new generator and brackets to hold oxygen cylinders are scheduled to be installed in it.

The pending retirement of Fanwood Police Chief Anthony J. Parenti on January 1, and the selection of his successor, was also discussed by the governing body. Police Commissioner Walsh explained that, traditionally, the next top-ranking officer within the department is appointed by the council as the new Chief of Police, if the Mayor, the Police Commissioner, the council and its Public Safety Committee determine he is the right man for the job.

He conceded, however, that the governing body also has the authority to appoint someone else.

Councilman Populus said that, in addition to rank, the governing body should consider a candidate's management skills, as well as his ability to incorporate new policies and procedures with standard ones, before rendering a final decision.

He indicated that he has no reason not to support Chief Parenti's anticipated successor, but felt the council still needed to talk with him "to see what his long-term goals are."

Councilman Walsh recommended that the matter be referred to the Public Safety Committee, adding that the council should know "within a month" how it will proceed concerning selection of the next police chief.

The council is expected to award a \$2,000 bid to Nancy Zerbe of Historic Preservation Consulting, Inc., for an historic district assessment. According to Councilwoman Karen M. Schurtz, Chairwoman of the council's Building and Zoning Committee, the purpose of the assessment is to determine whether any sections of Fanwood can be designated as historical districts and thereby eligible for county and state funding.

Councilman Populus suggested that Ms. Zerbe's technical expertise could also be of assistance in getting the Carriage House placed on the national and state historic registries. The Watson Road building, which is home to the Depression-era Philadelphians theater group, is in need of a new roof and lavatories.

Finally, Councilwoman Schurtz reported the Building and Zoning Committee has unanimously agreed that the Fanwood Planning Board and Board of Adjustment should merge beginning in January.

Councilwoman Schurtz listed several advantages to merging the two

PROPOSED 11.7-ACRE SITE LOCATED OFF JERUSALEM ROAD

Scotch Plains Council Reviews Proposal To Build Senior Citizen Housing Complex

By JEANNE WHITNEY
Specialty Writer for The Times

While the Scotch Plains Township Council considered Tuesday whether to designate 11.7 acres of property for redevelopment under the state's Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, a handful of area residents raised objections to a proposal for senior citizen housing at the site.

The council said it would hold off on a vote for the possible rezoning of the property, located just off Jerusalem Road at Broadway near the Westfield border, until its next regular meeting on Tuesday, September 23.

Nearly two-thirds of the collection of 24 lots making up the proposed redevelopment site is owned by the township, while the remainder is owned by private investors known as Broadway Associates, of which Westfield attorney James B. Flynn is a principle partner.

Broadway Associates has indicated an interest in buying the property from the township. A year ago, estimates put the value of the township property in excess of \$1 million.

According to professional planner Susan C. Kimball, the collection of vacant or abandoned lots meets stan-

dards for redevelopment under state law in that the sites have been vacant more than 10 years and contain dilapidated structures.

Furthermore, the site, on the whole, has a "unique topography" with "poor or remote access" that makes it unlikely it would be privately developed, she said. Ms. Kimball added that redevelopment of the site is consistent with the township's Master Plan.

According to officials, the township Planning Board began looking at the area for redevelopment zoning in 1994. Since the mid-1980s, the area has been zoned for low-to-moderate income housing following the Mount Laurel court decision, according to council members.

Several residents of nearby Johnson Street and Waverly and Emil Places rejected the notion of any development of neighboring properties. Mr. Flynn responded that the site plan for redevelopment showed no structures closer than 100 feet to any property line.

A 250-unit complex with underground parking is proposed for the partially wooded and hilly site. One hundred and sixty-five of those units

would be for seniors' "assisted living," according to Mr. Flynn, while the remainder would be primarily one-bedroom apartments.

A separate medical facility and seniors' daycare center may be at the site as well, he said. He was not able to provide estimated costs for the units.

Mr. Flynn said building coverage of the nearly 12 acres would be between 14 and 22 percent. Some proposed buildings are higher than two stories and the main entrance to the complex would be from the Madison Avenue side, he said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



WELCOME BACK BUFFET... Elementary School One, which serves Scotch Plains and Fanwood, held its traditional Parent-Teacher Association/Staff luncheon on September 3. The buffet luncheon, featuring an Italian theme, was prepared by members of the school's PTA Executive Board. Dr. Carol B. Choye, Superintendent of Schools, and School One Principal Jeffrey Grysko, both spoke at the event. Pictured, left to right, are: School One teachers Joann Clark, Annie Lucas, Flo Clark, Trish Brill, Jill Sitvinski and Terry Jodyns.

Schmiede Tree Service Gains Zoning Bd. Nod For Taller Garage Roof

By CANDACE WALLER
Specialty Writer for The Times

The Scotch Plains Zoning Board of Adjustment approved the application September 4 of Martin Schmiede, who appealed to the board for permission to reconstruct his garage so that his trucks can be serviced.

Mr. Schmiede, who is the owner of Schmiede Tree Expert Company located on South Avenue, testified that he could not fit his two cherry picker trucks (large vehicles that help him get into tall trees) in the garage because they wouldn't fit through the doorway.

During the winter months, Mr. Schmiede said his hydraulic lines would freeze, making it hard to get the vehicles started.

Architect Michael Giambalvo answered questions from Mr. Schmiede's attorney, Robert Kraus. Mr. Giambalvo has been a licensed architect in New Jersey since 1994.

"We want to take off the roof and raise it up to 14 feet," said Mr. Giambalvo in his testimony before the board. "We will use brick and stucco on the new building. The old building should be condemned - it's in a state of functional decline."

Mr. Schmiede purchased the site in 1984 from the Manford family. The trucks were being kept outside along with a trailer and electric pole. The new edifice would be about 33 feet high with a 14-foot doorway. The building will not house an office and would be used to service the trucks. The trailer and electric pole would be removed.

The board accepted the application for the variance with a few conditions. The stipulations are that the bathroom be handicapped-accessible, no hazardous materials would be stored in the building and the light over the Schmiede sign on the building would be turned off by 11 p.m.

Audience members were concerned about the lighting, with several officials stating that the lights from buildings are a disturbance.

"The only objection I detect from the audience is the lighting," said board member Thomas Perrucci. "I don't see a compelling reason to have a sign (which is illuminated by the lights) on the building. If we do approve this application you must include a timer for the lights."

In other business, the majority of board members rejected the application of Joseph DeRose & Sons, who sought approval for a minor subdivision and expansion to convert their two-family residence on Mountain Avenue to a two-family dwelling.

They needed the variance because their lot size was 4,800 square feet, a few feet short of the 5,000 square feet stipulated by approved guidelines. Only board member Frank Rossi approved of the application.

Mr. DeRose's attorney, Daniel Bernstein, questioned Paul DiFrancesco, a real estate broker for 25 years, concerning the past history of the board making exceptions for lots which are a few feet short of guidelines.

"We don't believe we have a two-

Township Council to Hold Meeting With Green Brook Task Force Head

By JEANNE WHITNEY
Specialty Writer for The Times

The Scotch Plains Township Council agreed during a conference meeting last week to meet with Chairman of the Green Brook Flood Control Task Force, Frank Meeks, 3rd, next week.

The task force came about as a result of Union County objections to two proposed storm water detention basins in the Watchung Reservation which are part of a \$362 million project to stem flooding in lower lying regions. The proposed basins will cover seven acres of the 2,002 acres of the county-owned reservation.

Township Councilman Robert E. Johnston was clear about his support for the so-called upper portion of the project, stating, "the water must be detained up at the top of the mountains."

The proposed basins are one element of a three-part flow control strategy that also includes building earthen levees and deepening water channels throughout the Green Brook sub-basin region, in an effort to avert severe flooding and damage as has happened in the past.

Councilman Johnston also pointed

to concerns about sewerage system pipes running below waterways slated for modifications, but added that local sewerage authorities are in touch with the Green Brook Flood Control Commission. Vernon Noble is Chairman of the Commission.

Township officials indicated that Democratic Union County Freeholders are reluctant to give the go-ahead to the proposed detention basins because of environmental concerns raised by the New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club, and possible county maintenance costs of the basins - to be shared with the state - after they are built.

The task force will have a year to come up with proposals for a compromise that local officials and communities can agree on in order for the upper portion of the project to seek federal funding and survive.

Meanwhile, the Township Council agreed to support a resolution in favor of a \$3.7 million bill for the flood control project passed by the United States House of Representatives in July. A United States Senate bill passed the same month, but did not contain any funding for the flood control project.

According to a letter from Con-

gressman Bob Franks of New Jersey's Seventh Congressional District (which includes Scotch Plains and Fanwood) that was provided to *The Times*, strong local support for the House of Representatives version of the bill is needed to hammer out a compromise bill with the Senate that includes project funding.

The final version of the bill is scheduled to come before the House as early as next week, according to Congressman Franks.

On a separate matter, the council said it will consider hiring a consultant in an effort to revise township sewer tax ordinances based on capacity and flow of usage. Officials indicated that the township will look at organizations that have been exempt from sewer charges in the past.

The council said it will also consider a \$252,900 bid from contractors to improve Brookside Park and pond this year. Officials said the cost was about 5 percent over original estimates because of evidence that nearly 60 percent more dirt must be dredged from the pond than previously anticipated.

After landscaping and cleaning the Brookside pond, any remaining

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. The fax number is 232-0473.

Releases, pictures and letters to the editor can also be dropped off at our office located at 30 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.

Forecasts 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.