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TUESDAY'S ELECTION WILL DETERMINE IF DEMOCRATS RETAIN 4-3 MAJORITY

Councilman Populus, Mrs. Plante Face Mr. Whitaker, Mr. Trumpp In Races for Two Available Seats on Fanwood Borough Council

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specialty Writer for The Times

Fanwood voters will head to the polls on Tuesday, November 4, to fill two vacancies on the Borough Council. The general election will wind up a campaign season in the borough which saw much focus on economic initiatives, property taxes and municipal services.

There are 4,729 registered voters in Fanwood, according to the Union County Board of Elections. The borough has a population of 7,115.

Four candidates are vying for the seats currently held by Democratic Councilman William E. Populus, Jr., and Republican Councilman Dr. Chester R. Lindsey. Both vacancies represent full, three-year terms.

Dr. Lindsey, who served two non-consecutive terms on the council and was a Mayoral contender in 1995, opted not to run for reelection this year, saying he wanted to give others a chance to participate as members of Fanwood's municipal government.

Councilman Populus is seeking his second full term on the governing body. Joining him on the Democratic ticket this year is newcomer Patricia Plante. Their Republican challengers are Joel Whitaker, who previously ran for council three years ago, and David Trumpp.

The Democrats have maintained a 4-3 majority on the governing body since 1988. The council currently includes three Democrats and three

Republicans, with Democratic Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly acting as tie breaker when necessary.

A victory by both Democratic candidates would give their party a 5-2 majority, while a dual win by their opponents would give the Republicans a 4-3 edge. It would also eliminate the Mayor's tie-breaker role in the event of a party-line vote. If a Democrat and a Republican capture the two vacancies, the status quo will be maintained.

Councilman Populus, a 27-year resident of Fanwood, currently serves as Fire Commissioner and as Chairman of the council's Administration and Finance Committee. He also is a member of the governing body's Public Safety and Recreation and Community Services Committees.

In addition, Councilman Populus was named in January of 1996 as the borough's first representative to the Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority, on which he serves as Chairman of the Engineering Committee.

The candidate was originally appointed to fill a vacancy on the council in 1993, and was elected to his first full term the following year.

Councilman Populus is the founder and President of Populus & Associates, Inc., a real estate appraisal firm in Westfield. He is a licensed New Jersey real estate appraiser.

He and his wife, Marilyn, live on La Grande Avenue and are the par-



William E. Populus, Jr.
Democrat for Borough Council*



Patricia Plante
Democrat for Borough Council



Joel Whitaker
Republican for Borough Council



David Trumpp
Republican for Borough Council
*Incumbent

ents of three children.

The councilman, a United States Navy and Air Force veteran, received the Jerry Boryea Award last year in recognition of his contributions to recreational programs in the community.

As Liaison to the Fanwood Recreation Commission during his first two years on the governing body, Councilman Populus guided the renovation of La Grande and Forest Road Parks.

Mrs. Plante has lived in Fanwood for nine years, residing with her husband, Tom, and their young daughter on Oakwood Court. She is em-

ployed as a real estate agent with Burgdorff ERA in Westfield and serves on the Fanwood Board of Health.

She was recently appointed to the Union County Transportation Advisory Committee by former Fanwood Mayor and current Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders Chairwoman Linda d. Stender.

The candidate, who attended Kean College and Union County College, previously worked for the federal Social Security Administration for 18 years, finishing her tenure there as Operations Supervisor.

In her present career, she has

achieved membership in the National Association of Realtors and the New Jersey Association of Realtors (NJAR), the NJAR's Million Dollar Club and the Burgdorff ERA President's Club.

Mrs. Plante also serves as a volunteer for the Brunner Elementary School Parent-Teacher Association and for the Scotch Plains-Fanwood YMCA's children's programs. She also was a member of the borough's Centennial Committee, which organized Fanwood's 100th year celebration in 1995.

Mr. Whitaker, a Fanwood resident for 18 years, is making his second

bid for a seat on the governing body. The owner of a Fanwood publishing company, he lives with his wife, Donna, and their two young daughters on Marian Avenue.

The council nominee served on the Fanwood Planning Board from 1981 to 1985, including a two-year stint as Chairman, and also was a member of the borough's Downtown Development Commission from 1984 to 1986.

Mr. Whitaker obtained his master's degree in journalism from Indiana University and his Juris Doctorate from Temple University Law School.

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StreetFest Activities Occur Despite Rain

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specialty Writer for The Times

Scotch Plains Day/StreetFest '97 did not fall on a sunny day, but area residents still turned out to browse for bargains and enjoy activities along the Village Green.

Originally scheduled for last Saturday, the festival, sponsored by the Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association (SPBPA), was postponed until the following day due to rain. There was rain again on Sunday, but several events still took place.

Ray Pardon, the owner of Nuts n' Plenty on Bartle Avenue and SPBPA President, reported that in spite of the weather, "a fairly sizeable" number of people still attended the downtown celebration, which pays homage to the community's heritage.

He noted that more than 75 people participated in the Five Mile Road Race. Among the other activities which came off as planned were the Mayor's Civic Awards ceremony, during which distinguished residents were honored for their contributions to the community.

There also was a dance exhibition given by members of the Moderne Dance Academic of Fine Arts, and a fashion show presented by Rosie's Treasures Boutique, Look Twice and BJ's Dressing Room, all of Scotch Plains.

Local merchants also held their

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CLIMB ABOARD...Rachel Harth gets an assist from her mother as she climbs on top of a pony for a ride during Scotch Plains Day activities.



DANCE FEVER...Students from the Moderne Academy of Fine Arts dance to the tune "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy of Company B" during an exhibition at last Sunday's annual Scotch Plains Day. Pictured, left to right, are: Courtney McDonald, Christine Troiano, and Beth Hogan.

School Superintendent Explains Deficit in Budget During Presentation to SP-F Board of Education

By SUSAN M. DYCKMAN
Specialty Writer for The Times

In her October 23 presentation to the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education to explain a \$700,000 deficit in the 1997-1998 school budget, Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Carol B. Choye, drew an analogy between a checking account and a savings account.

"Our checking account is in good shape," Dr. Choye announced. "We can pay our bills. The problem doesn't impact education, staff or children. It's not a problem with materials, supplies and equipment."

However, the Superintendent continued, "Our savings account is at zero. We need to come up with \$700,000, partly for the mods (modular classrooms), and \$290,000 for additional tuition."

The savings account the Superintendent referred to is an unreserved fund balance, commonly referred to as "free balance."

During the special meeting, board members were joined by a 35-person audience that included members of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), school administration and Scotch Plains-Fanwood Educational

Association (SPFEA), and a handful of parents.

Councilmen Stuart S. Kline and Martin Marks attended from the Borough of Fanwood and the Township of Scotch Plains, respectively.

The reasons given for the deficit are a rise in tuition costs, the modular classrooms, additional appropriations and insurance assessments.

The district's 1997-1998 tuition costs for special education, Union County Vocational-Technical Schools (UCVTS), Union County Magnet High School and state facilities grew to \$2,326,839, an increase of \$290,000 over budget.

While the district had been advised by the county that two local students would be accepted into the magnet school, six Scotch Plains-Fanwood students were ultimately enrolled at a cost of \$36,000.

In addition, Scotch Plains-Fanwood enrollment at the UCVTS grew to 42 students (up from 32 last year) at a cost of \$105,000.

The district's \$6 million special education budget, while heavily mandated by the state, is two-thirds funded by the district. This includes outplacement for 60 students.

"The amount we pay for out-of-district placement," Dr. Choye said, "is close to the amount we receive from the state. If we received full funding for special education, it would take a lot of pressure off programs we want to do in special and regular education."

Additional appropriations amounted to \$662,814 and included \$151,066 for special education during the 1996-1997 school year, \$410,000 was deferred to 1997-1998. The remaining encumbrance of \$335,302 is being used to support the modular payment schedule launched in May 1997 with a \$86,000 payment.

Of the \$795,000 appropriated for modular classrooms during the 1996-1997 school year, \$410,000 was deferred to 1997-1998. The remaining encumbrance of \$335,302 is being used to support the modular payment schedule launched in May 1997 with a \$86,000 payment.

In November, a \$50,000 payment is due for the foundation work for modular classrooms. The modular classes are slated for installation at Elementary School One and Coles

and Evergreen Elementary Schools.

To these debts were added insurance assessments totaling \$497,554, as outlined by E. James Lawton of G. R. Murray Insurance. Mr. Lawton has represented the district for 23 years.

Mr. Lawton broke down the nearly half-million dollar insurance assessment into four parts. The first element is a terminal reserve liability charge of \$91,396. This is defined as an estimate by the insurance carrier (Cigna) of unpaid claims which must be funded in the event the district terminates its health coverage.

Given the district's long-term relationship with the insurer, Mr. Lawton hopes to get Cigna to eliminate this charge.

An A-4 Surcharge of \$144,614 was paid under a 1994 state ruling which requires districts to cover health insurance costs for retirees with 25 years of service by paying a percentage of their medical premiums into the state benefit program.

The board also reimbursed Cigna for \$153,365 in claims paid during April and May of 1996. These claims exceeded the district's \$100,000 per employee limit. As Mr. Lawton ex-

plained, if those claims had been incurred later in the year, the board's Medical Trust Account (or Claim-Fund) would have built up sufficient margins to cover the claims on its own.

In addition, given that Cigna processed nearly 1,000 more claims for Scotch Plains-Fanwood employees last year, the district paid out \$108,179 to cover the rise in claims.

Under the board's present minimum premium insurance program, Cigna holds a Premium Stabilization Account in the board's name for which the district is paid interest. This account is part of the district's free balance and its existence has allowed the board to negotiate lower premiums over the years.

The moneys owed to Cigna were deducted from the board's Premium Stabilization Account.

"How come we didn't know this was going on?" Mr. Lawton asked rhetorically. "There were no red flags. It came in with all the other monthly reports from Cigna. We were lapse in reporting this to you."

Dr. Choye offered a number of reasons why this situation occurred.

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A Special Edition For Our Readers

As a public service, we are distributing *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood* to all Westfield and Fanwood residents as well as to our regular circulation in Scotch Plains and throughout the region. The full coverage of these two areas is to provide as much local election information as possible on the candidates who are running for office.

This special issue represents several firsts for Watching Communications. One is the borough-wide distribution of our paper and the other is the fact that several pages of the paper are in full color. We hope to be able to produce more color pages in the future through the support of our advertisers who help us meet the increased production costs. This has been exciting and challenging for us.

The Westfield Leader can also be viewed on the Internet. The Internet version of our newspaper now contains full size color illustration pages. Our Internet address is: www.goleader.com.

We hope our readers find this special edition interesting and useful. The enthusiastic support of our advertisers made it possible.

We dedicate this edition to the many citizens who campaign tirelessly seeking election to public office, win or lose.

Full campaign coverage starts on Page A-5
Remember **VOTE on November 4th**