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LOCAL TOWNS ASKED TO CONSIDER PUTTING WASTE DISPOSAL IN BUDGETS IN ORDER TO JOIN COUNTY PROGRAM

UCUA Moving Ahead With Lease Deal; Six Municipalities Pass Resolutions of Intention to Continue Sending Trash to Burner

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specialty Writer for The Times

Although Westfield and Fanwood have yet to decide if they are in or out, the Union County Utilities Authority (UCUA) and county officials expect to sign a 25-year deal by the end of December to lease the county's solid waste incinerator in Rahway to the builder of the facility, Ogen Martin Systems.

By signing contracts with the utilities authority, towns within the county would be guaranteed a charge of \$50 a ton over the next quarter century with increases based on rises in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Based on at least one report, that fee would rise to around a \$100 a ton by the year 2021, the year when the lease would expire. The tipping fee, prior to the end of waste flow controls, would have been just under \$200 a ton by the same year.

Included in the tonnage fee will be \$19, known as the Environmental Investment Charge (EIC), a term created by the Department of Environmental Protection for the outstanding debt on waste burners in the state.

In order to make up for the loss of tonnage from those towns which don't opt to sign on with the county, the UCUA plans to offer the waste flow capacity to transfer stations and haulers within the county first, and later to towns outside of Union County.

Those county towns that do not contract with the UCUA would still

be charged for their share of the debt on the incinerator, said Freeholder Chairwoman Linda Stender during a press briefing last Thursday.

"Those towns, (without municipal waste contracts), as do the other 14 towns (communities with waste disposal included in the property taxes), will have an obligation to help pay off the debt," she explained.

Municipalities could either pass ordinances to require haulers to collect this fee or simply put the charge in their municipal budgets.

"The reality is everyone throughout the county will be paying the same proportion of the debt," said Freeholder Vice Chairman Daniel P. Sullivan.

As part of the lease agreement, municipalities would voluntarily sign 25-year contracts with the UCUA. Waste haulers would, in turn, sign pacts with the individual towns. Fourteen communities already have contracts with haulers.

Contracts generally run from three to five years, with the latter being the maximum allowed for municipal contracts in New Jersey.

The UCUA has asked towns to pass resolutions by early December indicating whether they intend to participate in the new voluntary system of dumping municipal waste at the incinerator.

Freeholder Stender explained that if the lease is not signed, "property taxes will be affected because the state is still standing firm that this

debt will be paid off."

"We decided we had to settle this (the incinerator debt) ourselves. We are hoping that the state will step in and provide some relief to us but we are not sitting back waiting for them," Freeholder Sullivan said.

UCUA and county officials have worked out the lease deal in response to a state court decision handed down in 1996 which found New Jersey's system of waste flow controls as unconstitutional. That decision was upheld on appeal.

On November 10, the United States Supreme Court decided not to intervene in the case, thus ending waste flow controls in the state.

In order to sign the lease, the UCUA must amend the county's Solid Waste Management Plan to detail how the county will dispose of waste in a post waste control era. The amendment includes the lease deal, voluntary contracts with the towns, restructuring of the debt on the incinerator, and the collection of the investment charge.

Freeholder Stender said the county is proposing to collect the investment charge based on the 60 percent obligation by Union County waste generators and 40 percent for Bergen County, as originally agreed to in contracts signed several years ago.

The incinerator lease would generate \$175 million to pay off the \$283 million in bonds issued for the county burner.

Freeholder Stender noted that the UCUA is working on additional deals to take in waste from pharmaceutical firms, which could generate \$5 million of additional revenue. The waste would consist mostly of out-of-date prescription drugs.

The remaining \$100 million of the debt on the incinerator would be retired partly through a \$11.6 million loan guaranteed, but yet to be received, by the state and reserved funds included with each of the bonds issued on the burner.

"The more revenue that doesn't come in, the more the reserved funds are going to get eaten up," Freeholder Stender stated, explaining that any additional revenue, such as from the state, will lower the EIC — thus reducing waste disposal costs in the county. The total reserve funds is said to be over \$40 million.

In terms of the \$20 million emergency funding the state has provided to go towards the \$1.6 billion in total debt on the five incinerators in the state, Freeholder Nicholas P. Scutari, at last week's Freeholder meeting, referred to the small amount as "like putting a finger in a dam that is about to explode."

The Authority has scheduled a meeting for Tuesday, November 25, at which the UCUA commissioners will vote on the amendment to the Solid Waste Management Plan. The amended plan will then be presented to members of the Solid Waste Advisory Council (SWAC) for information purposes.

SWAC has scheduled special meetings for Mondays, December 1 and 8, in the Union County Administration Building on North Avenue in Westfield. The first meeting will be open to UCUA members, Freeholders, SWAC members and county Mayors.

The second meeting is for haulers who service Union County. The council is headed by Fanwood Director of Public Works Raymond Manfra.

The change to the waste plan would also have to be approved by the Freeholder board.

UCUA Executive Director Dr. Joseph Spatola told the Freeholders last week that the contract with Ogen Martin "is very close to being finalized."

In an attempt to stay competitive, the Union County Freeholder board approved a resolution to authorize the UCUA to immediately drop the tipping fee at the county burner from \$83.05 per ton to \$50 for Union County users of the system.

The Freeholders also gave the UCUA the power to immediately

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NUMBER ONE'CE AGAIN AS SECTIONAL CHAMPS...The Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School boys soccer team gathers in the middle of Simons Washer Field in Scotch Plains once again to have their picture taken. The Raiders won their fourth consecutive North Jersey, Section 2, Group 3 State soccer championship by humbling Millburn High School, 4-4, on November 17. The Raiders are presently the top public high school soccer team in New Jersey.

Scotch Plains Council Acknowledges Efforts Of District's Students

By MARIA CICCARELLA
Specialty Writer for The Times

With a soccer team kicking into state level competition, vocalists singing a high note on Broadway and band members marching straight through Giants Stadium, students in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school district have earned the respect and smiles of the Scotch Plains Township Council, who at last week's public meeting recognized students, educators, parents and administrators on some of their latest successes.

On behalf of the Council, Mayor Irene T. Schmidt presented Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Carol B. Choye, and Ted Wurster, President of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association, with official proclamations — naming the week of November 16 through 22 as American Education Week.

Although council matters continued as usual, school events and achievements easily became the focus of the night. In her report, Deputy Mayor Joan Papan spoke on Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) Council plans to conduct a district-wide school census in the spring.

The results of the census, Councilwoman Papan said, would focus on student makeup and "help district and town people for future needs."

In addition, Councilwoman Papan introduced Park Middle School PTA President Judy McLoughlin, who informed the council of the local "angels" at the middle school. Thirty students were recently selected to perform as the lead choir in the Madison Square Garden production of *A Christmas Carol*.

"Being named the number one choir is a designation of their skill and ability," Ms. McLoughlin said.

Dressed as angels, these students will perform in 25 shows during the run of the production, including the prestigious 2 p.m. Christmas Day show.

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood students are the only New Jersey representatives, amid four choirs, to perform with the production this year. Ms. McLoughlin urged residents to support their students by attending one of their shows.

In other business, the council awarded Caffrey Tree Services a contract to perform shade tree work throughout the town for \$55 an hour; only a dollar more than the charge for the 1997 year.

Caffrey Tree Services has worked with the town for the last several years, according to Township Manager Thomas E. Atkins, and has performed well.

Before pushing three ordinances to the Tuesday, November 25, meeting for public hearings and final adoption, the council gave its approval for roadway and sanitary sewer work on Lamberts Mill Road to begin.

The three ordinances introduced were road improvement grants from the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) appropriating a combined sum of \$255,000 for use to improve Woodland Avenue, the Hetfield Avenue Bridge, and Raritan and Rahway Roads.

Council member William F. McClintock openly expressed his feelings on the large dollar amount.

"We're always happy to accept grant money to improve our roads," he said.

An ordinance authorizing the private sale of township land at 659 Jerusalem Road was introduced. Council members explained the lot is too small to build on.

"It's a substandard lot," said Councilman Robert E. Johnston. "It doesn't make sense to have it sit dormant."

Councilman Johnston and the other council members said the owner of the adjacent lot could purchase the lot from the township and add to the property.

Bryce Street, a resident of Waverly Street, in objecting to the council action, said that if the land is purchased by the owner of the adjacent property — a commercial property where large construction trucks and material are used — it could have hazardous effects on the neighboring properties.

Currently, Mr. Street sees the land as a "buffer" between the commercial property and possible encounters with construction material, and the street, which he indicated is used by many neighbors, including young children and a wheelchair-bound neighbor.

"I want to stop this before someone in our community gets hurt," said Mr. Street.

Councilman Johnston said he was sympathetic to Mr. Street's concerns, however, he said making the property available for purchase does not mean it will be sold.

Councilman Johnston also said that any safety hazards which may be caused by the purchase would be looked into prior to making a permanent sale.

Mr. Street adamantly insisted that placing the property for sale would be detrimental to the surrounding community, and succeeded in gaining approval from the council to receive a special analysis of the area from the Scotch Plains Police Department's Traffic Bureau, which would be presented at the following meeting.

Fanwood Council Unveils Ordinance to Merge Zoning and Planning Boards by January

By SUZETTE STALKER
Specialty Writer for The Times

Following extensive discussions on the matter since the summer, the Fanwood Borough Council last Thursday introduced an ordinance authorizing the merge of the municipality's Planning Board and Board of Adjustment, effective in January.

Council members, who approved the ordinance on first reading last week, are expected to adopt it at their next regular meeting on Thursday, December 11. The measure calls for the Planning Board to assume the duties of the Board of Adjustment, which would be dissolved.

Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly, who serves on the Planning Board, said merging the two boards would reduce the amount of time applicants had to wait before being granted a public hearing on their appeals, and

would cut costs to taxpayers in terms of fees which are paid to board attorneys.

The new system would additionally compensate for an insufficient number of volunteers willing to serve on the two boards, and a steady decline in the number of applications being heard, officials have said.

In a report presented to the governing body two months ago, Councilwoman Karen M. Schurtz said greater "consistency and communication" would also be achieved by having a single board to deal with residents' applications.

Mr. Schurtz, a member of the Planning Board herself, chairs the council's Building and Zoning Committee. That committee unanimously supported the idea of merging the boards.

Under other business, Councilman Louis C. Jung, Chairman of the Pub-

lic Works Committee, reported that Fanwood's Public Works Department had completed two passes of all borough streets since October 27 during its annual leaf pickup program. The last pickup is scheduled to be completed by Friday, December 5, Mr. Jung said.

The councilman advised residents not to let branches or other debris get mixed in with the leaves, to discourage children from playing in leaf piles at the curb and to avoid driving through the stacks of leaves.

Councilwoman Schurtz, the governing body's representative to the Fanwood Downtown Redevelopment Committee, gave an update on pending improvements to the borough's business district.

She reported that the committee has picked out 10 benches, made of recycled materials and iron, to be placed in the downtown.

Councilwoman Schurtz added that last year's banners will be put up while new ones are being ordered, and new planters are expected to be installed in the spring.

She said the committee is also currently discussing what kind of trees should be added to the downtown landscape, as well as ideas for further promoting the business district.

Mayor Connelly acknowledged numerous people, organizations and events at the outset of the meeting. A presentation was made to youngsters Christopher and Daniel Piccola for their portrayal of "Vince and Larry" in an automobile safety demonstration at the recent "Fanny Wood Day" celebration. Their brother, Brian, was invited to lead those in attendance at the council meeting in the pledge of allegiance.

Proclamations were issued honoring the 35th anniversary of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Kiwanis Club; National Epilepsy Awareness Month, the 50th anniversary of the Fanwood-Scotch Plains YMCA, American Education Week from November 16-22, and Joseph Scarpatti Day. A member of the Class of 1960, Mr. Scarpatti lettered in football, basketball and track at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

He later played as defensive back for the Philadelphia Eagles and the New Orleans Saints professional football teams, and was honored during halftime at a game November 8 between the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Raiders and Westfield's Blue Devils, which was played at Perry Tyson Field in Scotch Plains.

Resolutions were announced rec-

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Early Deadlines Told For Nov. 27 & Dec. 4

The offices of *The Times* will be closed on Thursday and Friday, November 27 and 28, in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday.

The deadline for news releases, pictures and letters to the editor for publication in the November 27 issue is today, November 20, at noon, as previously published in the November 13 edition.

Copy should be e-mailed or faxed. *The Times* e-mail address is press@goleader.com. The Fax number is (908) 232-0473. Submissions can also be dropped off at our office at 50 Elm Street in Westfield, or through our mail slot.

Sports releases must be submitted no later than 10 a.m. on Monday, November 24. Obituaries will be accepted up until 5 p.m. on Monday.

All copy must be typed, double-spaced, upper and lower case, no more than 500 words in length, and should include a daytime telephone number where the submitter can be reached.

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.

Submittals for the issue of the Thursday, December 4 issue are due by noon, Tuesday, November 25. Sports releases for events occurring over the extended Thanksgiving holiday weekend are due by noon Monday, December 1. Obituaries will be accepted up until 5 p.m. on December 1.



FOR OUR YOUTH...State Senate President Donald T. DiFrancesco of Scotch Plains purchases tickets from Fanwood-Scotch Plains Share-In-Youth Raffle Co-Chairwoman Lauren Birns. The annual Rotary raffle raises funds for local youth charities and activities. This year's recipients will be the Tiny Tim Fund, Resolve Community Counseling Center, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Student Leadership Conference, Fanwood-Scotch Plains YMCA and the Dave Ringle Scholarship Fund. For more ticket information, please contact Ms. Birns at (908) 889-0660. The raffle drawing will be held on Wednesday, December 10, at Snuffy's Pantagale Renaissance.