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# THE TIMES

of

## Scotch Plains - Fanwood



OUR 38th YEAR - ISSU!

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**JUNIOR CITIZENS...** On a recent trip to Fanwood's Borough Hall, members of Girl Scout Troop No. 729 at Elementary School One learned how a small town runs. Mayor Maryanne S. Connolly, center, treated them to a full tour, where they met with department heads and police officers. In the Council Chambers, they held a mock town meeting. Pictured with the Mayor, left to right, are: front row, Amanda Lipets, Melanie Lee, Katie Van Heesteren and Michelle Daurney; back row, Kella Guzman, Brianna Falco, Marisa Bianco, Sarah Boffa, Meghan Kelly, Yvonne Chen and Gaby Falco.

### NJCAAN CONTINUES PUSH FOR OCEAN ROUTING Citizens Group Seeking Help In Gaining Air Noise Relief From Latest FAA Maneuver

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Times

The latest change in Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) flight patterns, shifting flight paths to the west of the Arthur Kill waterway and directly over heavily populated areas of Union County, was the final straw as far as members of the New Jersey Coalition Against Aircraft Noise are concerned.

The 5,000-member group, more commonly known as NJCAAN, has asked Congressman Bob Franks for his help in addressing the latest change in flight patterns. NJCAAN, which has membership in 18 of the state's 21 counties, is also gaining more headway on its proposal for

ocean routing. Many legislators, including Congressman Franks and Senator Frank Lautenberg, have endorsed the plan.

Jerome Feder of Westfield, a member of the NJCAAN Board of Trustees and a representative on the Union County Air Noise Advisory Board, stated in an October 16 letter to Mr. Franks that the FAA announced its latest traffic routes change on September 23.

On the previous flight patterns, aircraft climbed over the Arthur Kill and industrial areas to 3,500 feet, Mr. Feder said. The shift of patterns to the west has resulted in a drop of 1,000 feet in the altitudes flown by aircraft just before they fly over residential areas.

"The proposed route change results in aircraft being lower and noisier as they overfly New Jersey," he explained.

Mr. Feder noted that air traffic patterns have been under experiment by the FAA since it attempted to implement the \$6.5 million Solberg Mitigation Plan last year.

This plan, the net result of the Environmental Impact Study following the implementation of the federal agency's Expanded East Coast Plan, was aimed at alleviating increased noise, specifically over the local Scotch Plains and Fanwood area following residents' complaints.

The environmental impact study was ordered as part of the Air Safety Capacity Expansion Act of 1990. The study took 5 1/2 years to complete.

NJCAAN has said the announcement that the FAA will implement a revised Solberg Plan in January will actually provide no real relief, since

these flight patterns have already been implemented with the more westerly patterns over residential areas.

Michael Schatzki sits on the NJCAAN board and is President of the New Jersey Citizens for Environmental Research, the group which produced the data on the impact of jet noise in the region and brings it to NJCAAN, a policy-making group. The research group received the funding to conduct the ocean routing study.

Mr. Schatzki said he believes the FAA never intended to implement the Solberg routes.

"It has never been implemented and it never will be," he said.

Had this plan been implemented, air traffic departures and arrivals from Newark International, LaGuardia, and JFK International Airports would have been changed to reduce noise over Union, Essex, Middlesex, Somerset and Morris Counties.

NJCAAN representatives say Solberg only shifts the problems of air noise to other areas of the state, which they say does not solve the problem. Mr. Schatzki noted that NJCAAN voted 21-1 against Solberg when it was originally unveiled in September of 1994 for this very reason.

Under the original Solberg plan, planes were supposed to proceed south of the airport for 9.5 miles before making a westerly turn to Hunterdon County.

With the latest shift over populated areas, NJCAAN is pushing more than ever for the FAA to act on a system of routing air traffic departures over the

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### Adjustment Board OKs Three Resolutions; Final Meeting to Take Place Next Month

By SUZETTE STALKER  
Specially Written for The Times

The Fanwood Board of Adjustment met briefly last Thursday to memorialize three resolutions of appeals which were granted on October 16. Members also reviewed correspondence and reflected on the Borough Council's recent decision to merge the board with the Planning Board.

Last month, Leonid and Musya Fleysher of La Grande Avenue were awarded bulk variances from the Borough Code to build an attached garage on their property. The couple had required the variances to accommodate their proposed side yard setback and for the existing width of their corner lot property.

William and Karen Piliago of Portland Avenue successfully petitioned the board for permission to build a 10-foot-high deck onto the rear of their bi-level home. A bulk variance

was required because the couple's proposed rear yard setback fell four feet short of the distance permitted under the Borough Code.

Stanley and Donna Zaleski of Locust Avenue received approval to maintain their existing driveway, which the applicants had widened from 10 to 22 feet last summer without realizing they were in violation of the Borough Code. The couple were also awarded a variance for their present side yard setback, which was altered when the driveway was widened.

Board Attorney Charles H. Brandt subsequently reminded those in attendance that the Board of Adjustment would meet for the final time on Thursday, December 18, after which it will be disbanded.

Pending adoption of an ordinance by the Fanwood Borough Council, the Planning Board will assume the duties of the Board of Adjustment, beginning in January.

The ordinance was introduced November 13 during the council's regular meeting, following months of discussion concerning the benefits and possible drawbacks of merging the two boards. Members of the governing body are expected to adopt the ordinance on second reading on Thursday, December 11.

Officials opted to combine the boards after determining the merits outweighed any disadvantages. The merge, they have said, will reduce costs to taxpayers, shorten the amount of time applicants must wait for a public hearing, and compensate for a lack of sufficient volunteers to serve on both municipal bodies.

Mr. Brandt observed that, as of last week, there was only one appeal scheduled to be heard by the Board of Adjustment at next month's session. He said he intended to draw up resolutions for any cases on the December 18 agenda, which would be memorialized the same night as the public hearings.

He predicted that the Planning Board, which has had very light caseloads this past year, would experience an influx of business once the merge occurs.

The Planning Board hears matters related to land use, which have steadily declined since the borough is almost completely developed. More common are the petitions for additions and renovations which have been the responsibility of the Board of Adjustment.

Mr. Brandt said one issue the Planning Board would likely have to deal with down the road is the arrival of cellular towers, which are used to

transmit signals to mobile telephone users.

While there are no such towers in the municipality at present, the board attorney anticipated that "Fanwood's time will come. I guarantee it."

During a presentation he made before the Planning Board two months ago concerning proposed revisions to the borough's zoning ordinance, Mr. Brandt discussed the controversy over cellular towers.

He said homeowners generally oppose having them in residential areas, although there are few alternatives since the small community lacks any tall buildings where they could otherwise be located.

### DONALD HAMILTON CHARGED WITH STEALING \$1.25 MILLION FROM CLIENTS

## Westfield Attorney Faces 10 Years After Admitting Embezzlement

By JEANNE WHITNEY  
Specially Written for The Times

A former Westfield attorney and resident, Donald Hamilton, admitted last week in Union County Superior Court to embezzling \$1.25 million over a period of eight years from the estates of five clients.

He could face 10 years in prison for his guilty plea to theft "by failure to make disposition" of clients' property, stocks and cash.

Union County Prosecutor Thomas V. Manahan said, "This is a case involving the largest misappropriation of funds ever prosecuted against an attorney in this county."

According to a *Star-Ledger* report, the 52-year old father of five began filching his clients' money after a \$900,000 land purchase and subdivision deal in Tewksbury Township 11 years ago turned sour.

He and his ex-wife, Alwine, formed a company called Highland Fields Inc., which originally subdivided the property into eight parcels.

Hamilton then built himself an 11-bedroom, 14-bath manor on nine acres of the 45-acre property located along Bissell and Welsh Roads.

He reportedly bought another house in Windham, New York, in the Catskill Mountains.

Shortly after the Tewksbury house was completed, Hamilton divorced and sold the house for a reported \$1.2 million.

The *Star-Ledger* reported that Hamilton later sold adjacent parcels of land for a total of nearly three quarters of a million dollars.

Hamilton agreed to disbarment earlier this year after the state Office of Attorney Ethics called him on the theft, according to the Union County Prosecutor's office.

Hamilton had a private law practice located on North Avenue in Westfield until April of last year.

One victim of the swindle was identified as an Elizabeth man who, reportedly, lost two-thirds of his \$724,000 estate. Beneficiaries of another victim's \$250,000 estate were never notified, while Hamilton ignored other victims' inquiries or misled them, according to authorities.

Union County Executive Assistant Prosecutor Robert P. O'Leary said the identities of the other victims could be revealed at the time of Hamilton's sentencing on Friday, January 16.

A 10-month investigation by Sergeant Steven W. Siegel of the

prosecutor's office revealed the extent of Hamilton's plundering of estates entrusted to him after the Trenton Office of Attorney Ethics disbarred him. Officials at the Attorney Ethics office could not be reached for comment by press time.

The Ethics Office also maintains a toll-free grievance hotline.

Assistant County Prosecutor Alan Shiver said victims will be awarded their money by the court after Hamilton's sentencing, though some have already been paid.

Hamilton is a former teacher, according to published reports, who lived on a sailboat in the Virgin Islands. He graduated from Seton Hall University School of Law in Newark in 1975, and served as Deputy to then-Union County Surrogate Mary Kinane.

He later became a senior partner in a Linden law firm. He hooked up with attorney Richard Kress in a Westfield law partnership for two years and then went into his own practice.

Hamilton lives in Lebanon Township and is free pending his sentencing. Attorneys who knew Hamilton have described him as quiet and unassuming.

### Two Local High Schoolers Among ThinkQuest Champs

Kevin Grinberg of Fanwood and James Kao of Scotch Plains, both students at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, are among the winners in the second annual ThinkQuest competition.

Working in teams over the past year, ThinkQuest participants, ranging in age from 12 through 19, combined their creative and technical skills to build web pages to be used as educational tools by students and teachers worldwide.

More than 1,400 teams from 40 countries participated in this year's event. The winning students and their coaches were awarded scholarships and prizes totaling more than \$1 million at the ThinkQuest awards ceremony, held November 24 at Loews L'Enfant Plaza Hotel in Washington, D.C.

Kevin and James, who earned fourth place for their website "Basketball Explorations," received \$6,000 each. Their coaches, Arlene Riegel of Edison and Diane McKenna of Gillette, were each awarded \$1,000, while the school received \$1,000, as well.

Four Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School students altogether had been named as finalists in ThinkQuest, which a spokeswoman described as the world's largest Internet contest. The other two finalists were James E. Bishop and Anthony O. Cangialosi, both of Scotch Plains.

Each of the finalists received an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. to present their websites.

To participate in the 1998 ThinkQuest competition, students must form teams now and submit written proposals for the website they would like to create and a plan for its development by Saturday, February 28.

Teams whose plans are approved must submit final web pages by Monday, August 31.

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### 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 [goledner@times.com](mailto:goledner@times.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, upper and lower case, no more than 500 words in length, and include a daytime telephone number where the submitter can be reached.

For events 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.

### 'Tricky Tray' Auction To Benefit the Needy

The Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School DECA Adult Chapter, an association of marketing students, will sponsor its 15th annual "Tricky Tray" Auction on Tuesday, December 9, in the high school's cafeteria.

Admission to the auction is \$5, a cost which includes 24 raffle tickets and free refreshments. Featured prizes include two complimentary Continental Airlines tickets good for any destination in the mainland United States, Mexico or the Caribbean, a videocassette recorder, portable television, tickets to a Giants football game, among other prizes.

Much of the proceeds will go to DECA's many community activities, including a Thanksgiving Day dinner for the homeless and holiday gifts for homeless and needy families and children.

Doors will open at 7 p.m. with the auction beginning at 8 p.m.

### Township to Hold Annual Downtown Holiday Bash

Downtown Scotch Plains will once again come alive with holiday spirit on Sunday, December 7, with its third annual "Old Fashioned Holiday Celebration."

The Scotch Plains Business and Professional Association (SPBPA) and its 185 members have organized the day's events in conjunction with the Department of Parks and Recreation.

There will be entertainment, hay rides, a petting zoo, pony rides, face painting, a bake sale, sidewalk sales, the annual tree lighting and the arrival of Santa, among other activities.

Brownie Girl Scouts will hold a tree-decorating contest, to be judged by Mayor Irene T. Schmidt and the

Scotch Plains Township Council.

Merchants are also encouraged to decorate their windows for the holidays, with these displays to be judged by members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School DECA, an association of marketing students.

The historic Cannonball House will be open for the museum, and everyone is invited to visit the museum.

Horse-drawn hay wagon rides will be held during the afternoon. There is a 50/50 raffle planned to benefit the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation in Scotch Plains.

The annual tree lighting will take place at 4:30 p.m., followed by the arrival of Santa. Children through age 7 can visit with Santa and parents are invited to take pictures.



**GROUP 3 STATE CHAMPIONS...** Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School boys' soccer Head Coach Tom Bresnisky accepted the trophy after the Raiders defeated Brick Memorial High School, 2-1, in the Group 3 Championship game held at The College of New Jersey in Ewing on November 21. Coach Bresnisky handed the trophy over to Tri-Captain Adam Koster, and the entire Raider team ran a victory lap while holding the trophy up high for everyone to see. Please see a story on Page 11.