



SCOTCH PLAINS

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FIFTY CENTS

Mrs. Connelly Is Saluted During Final Regular Meeting as Mayor

By SUZETTE F. STALKER
Specially Written for The Times

Presiding over her final regular meeting as Mayor of Fanwood last Thursday, Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly was lauded by colleagues and others for her contributions to the community over a span of nearly two decades.

Mrs. Connelly, who has announced her intention to run for the Seventh Congressional District seat in 2000, will leave office as Mayor after one term at the end of this year. She will be succeeded by Republican Councilman Louis C. Jung on New Year's Day.

She was elected as Mayor in 1995, following nine years as a Borough Councilwoman. Mrs. Connelly also served as Police Commissioner and as a member of the Planning Board and the Environmental Commission.

In a surprise presentation, Mayor Connelly was honored by William Sheppard, veterans' representative to the USS New Jersey BB-627, a coalition which supports the Battleship New Jersey, and Rear Admiral Timothy B. Beard of the New Jersey Naval Militia Joint Command, a recently-established counterpart to the New Jersey National Guard.

Mrs. Connelly was recognized for her strong support over the past several years of the successful campaign to bring the *New Jersey* — the most decorated warship in United States' naval history — home to the Garden State.

Also taking part in the salute — arranged by Mr. Sheppard and Councilman Jung — was the ceremonial Honor Guard of the New Jersey 821st Air Force Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (AFJROTC) at Scotch Plains-



Suzette F. Stalker for The Times

OATH OF OFFICE... Police Officer Brandon Lorenz is sworn in last Thursday as the newest member of the Fanwood force. Joining Officer Lorenz, pictured left to right, are his mother, Mary Lorenz; his girlfriend, Lynn Yotcoski, and Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly, administering the oath of office. Mayor Connelly herself was honored with several presentations that evening as she prepares to leave office at the end of this year.

Fanwood High School.

The unit has served as the Honor Guard for the "Flags Across America" program, which championed the return of the battleship for more than three years. Mrs. Connelly was named as an Honorary Command Drill Instructor — the Honor Guard's personal award for superior service — for her steadfast support of the unit. She is only the second person to receive the honor.

The Mayor, in turn, presented a resolution citing the award-winning chapter for its promotion of the ROTC program and other activities. She also presented the Mayor's Award for Civic Contribution to ROTC

members who recently helped clean out the Patricia M. Kuran Cultural Arts Center, formerly known as the Carriage House.

Mrs. Connelly additionally received a round of kudos from colleagues on the governing body. Councilman Jung thanked her for "giving a good part of your life" to public service. He also recounted some of her accomplishments, from her role years ago as a negotiator when Fanwood reached a settlement with the state Council on Affordable Housing, to the establishment of the annual Fanny Wood Day festival and the debut of the Millennium Clock.

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Residents Seek More Info. On Overcrowding Options

By SUSAN M. DYCKMAN
Specially Written for The Times

The results of the community survey presented during the December 9 Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education meeting show residents wanting more information about the options presented for dealing with increased enrollment and overcrowding in the school district's public schools.

Mailed in late October, the 30-question survey polled approximately 12,500 local residents and non-resident staff members. It was designed to gauge public opinion regarding the future of educational programs and the use of facilities in the district.

Ten percent of the surveys delivered were returned, according to Kathleen Meyer, Public Information Coordinator. Results will help the board determine what the public already knows, what it needs to know and how best to get information to the public.

Board member Edward J. Saridaki, Jr. pointed to the public's clear preference for a direct newsletter as the information source of choice.

"It was a way to knock on everybody's door," said Mrs. Meyer of the survey.

The board is presently reviewing six options for managing the growing student population. These are outlined in a capacity analysis and building option study prepared by The Thomas Group of Princeton.

Because the survey was mailed prior to receipt of that study, there were just three alternatives presented to the public:

1. Add onto Terrill Middle School and move fifth grade to Terrill and Park Middle Schools;
2. Convert Terrill into an elementary school and restructure the dis-

trict into six (kindergarten through grade six) elementary schools, one grade seven and eight school and one grade nine through 12 school.

3. Build a sixth elementary school. Possible responses included: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree or need more information.

Conversion of Terrill into a sixth elementary received the highest number of "strongly agree/agree" responses (348), compared to 285 for building a new school and 224 for moving the fifth grades into the middle schools.

Board member Jean McAllister found it interesting there was so much support for the Terrill conversion option.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Carol B. Choye focused on the one-third of the respondents who requested additional information with each option.

In her comments, the superintendent also recognized the 33 percent of the respondents who used the open-ended questions to offer their own alternatives and to speak out on the facilities' issue.

Movement of the fifth grade into middle school received the highest number of "strongly disagree/disagree" responses (566), compared to 478 for building a new elementary school and 376 for converting Terrill into an elementary school.

In commenting on the "strength of the opposition to move the fifth grades," board member August Ruggiero suggested there is a "pre-conceived resistance" to the idea among members of the public.

Other results showed 75 percent of the respondents expressing awareness of sizable enrollment growth over the past six years; 85 percent

agreed the same programs and opportunities should be available to all students at the same grade levels. The survey also showed strong support for a full-day kindergarten program.

Just over half of the respondents agreed that any decision regarding facilities usage or expansion should enable the district to maintain racial balance among schools of the same grade levels. Nearly 79 percent of respondents believed the decision should provide flexibility to meet future unforeseen needs like unexpected enrollment growth or program changes.

A copy of the survey results is available from the Public Information Office in the administrative building at Evergreen Avenue and Cedar Street in Scotch Plains.

With respect to the facilities issue, Fanwood resident Liz Murad requested that safety concerns be factored into board discussions. She

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Towns Still Discussing Fluoridation

By KIM KINTER
Specially Written for The Times

Now that the Westfield Regional Board of Health passed a resolution recommending the fluoridation of the local water supply, officials from area municipalities on the same Elizabethtown Water Company line must decide what they will do.

Because 27 municipalities — including Westfield, Mountainside, Fanwood and Scotch Plains — are served by the same Elizabethtown Water Company line, in order for Westfield to begin having fluoride added to the water all the other communities must sign on to the idea.

In Mountainside, which is one of the communities served by the Regional Health Board that passed a resolution recommending that Westfield pursue fluoridation of the town's water supply, the matter has yet to be discussed.

Acting Borough Administrator James Debbie said that he has seen a letter sent by Westfield Mayor Thomas C. Jardim informing the borough about the fluoridation issue and asking whether the borough would be interested.

He expected the issue to be addressed soon and assumed the Regional Health Board would recommend the borough to say yes to fluoridating the water supply.

During the December 9 regular meeting of Fanwood's governing

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Scotch Plains Township Council Awards Shade Tree Contract To Caffrey as Don's Service Questions \$55/Hour Bid Proposal

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times

After hearing a protest from the losing bidder, the Scotch Plains Township Council on Tuesday night

awarded a contract for shade tree work next year to Caffrey Tree Service, which has performed this type of work for the township for the past several years.

Prior to voting on the bid, the council heard from a representative from Don's Tree Service, the only other bidder for the contract, who questioned the Caffrey bid, at \$55 per

hour, and felt it was impossibly low for the service that would have to be provided by a three-person work crew with various equipment.

The work will involve maintenance and removal of shade trees on municipal property and in the township's parks.

The employee from Don's Tree Service, whose own bid was considerably higher, cited state guidelines that suggest a rate of \$20.75 per hour per worker, not including the cost of equipment. She also asked why the bid award had been published in an industry newspaper two weeks ago.

After saying that the bid award had obviously been printed erroneously based on incomplete information, Township Manager Thomas E. Atkins said Caffrey's has consistently had its work praised by various township departments and has charged

the same rate for its services for a number of years.

Township Attorney Andrew M. Baron stated that the township is required by law to accept the lowest bid, provided that the bid complies with certain legal and other requirements.

At its final regular meeting of the year, the council also passed a resolution proclaiming January 1, 2000, as Scotch Plains Public Library Day.

The library is a direct descendant of the Scotch Plains Reading Society, which was founded on January 1, 1800.

The council also agreed to amend local law and hold its reorganization meeting on Sunday, January 2, at 1 p.m. Existing municipal law requires this meeting to be held on January 1, while state law is more

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Development Prospects Reportedly Received for Dean Oil Property

By SUZETTE F. STALKER
Specially Written for The Times

Governing body members have indicated that they will not pursue acquisition of the Dean Oil property at the present time, while waiting to see whether reported development prospects for the lot would benefit the community.

Three bids have reportedly been received for the long-vacant, 1.3-acre site at LaGrande Avenue and Second Street, borough officials said during the Mayor and council's December 1 agenda session, although they did not believe that any of those who made the offers had entered into a purchase agreement with the property's owner.

Weichert Commercial of Morris Plains has been marketing the property, although the realtor handling the matter could not be reached for confirmation on reported development proposals for the lot.

Fanwood tax records show the owner of the Dean Oil property to be Savers' Shares of Morristown. A purchase agreement with the property owner is necessary in order for an applicant to seek site plan or variance approval from the Fanwood Planning Board.

Councilman Joel Whitaker, Chairman of the council's Land Use and Historic Preservation Committee, said one of the reported development offers is for a medical office building which would not require any variances — only site plan approval — from the Planning Board.

For much of this year, the property was the focus of a controversial petition by a development partnership known as LaGrande Realty Associates, LLC, which sought permission from the Fanwood Planning Board to erect a two-story apartment complex there.

Neighbors protested the proposal

en masse at an extended series of Planning Board hearings which spanned the summer. Opponents claimed the development represented overuse of the lot and would have a detrimental effect on the surrounding area.

Further concerns arose in September after one of the developers re-

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Despite Constant Warnings on Y2K Transition, Stores Report No Mad Rush to Stockpile Supplies

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially Written for The Times

Editor's Note: This article is the second in a series on the Y2K issue.

Sales of emergency supplies have

been marginal, report local store managers, despite the approaching millennium event.

Even though the media and local town officials have been advising people to stock up on canned goods, flashlights and other black-out related supplies, many stores have not seen any purchasing activity above normal seasonal levels.

Fanwood A&P's Manager Mike Buck reported that extra cases of flashlights and batteries, which they have in stock, are not moving out of the ordinary.

"People are buying the same quantities of batteries that they usually would be expected to in this pre-Christmas holiday season," Mr. Buck stated.

The A&P, like most other food chains has stocked up on extra batteries, flashlights and bottled water in preparation for what they thought would be a larger-than-usual demand.

"We have a special sale on cases of certain vegetables," Mr. Buck added, "but no one's panicking just yet." Donna Sevell-Leber, Secretary-Treasurer of the family owned

Westfield Lumber and Home Center on North Avenue, reported that the only item she has seen move more than usual are the oil lamps.

"There have been only a few requests for generators," Ms. Sevell-Leber commented. "I think we may see customers stock up on emergency supplies after they get their holiday shopping out of the way," she added.

CVS in Scotch Plains and Eckerds in Fanwood haven't experienced any mad dash to refill prescriptions yet, according to managers for both drug stores, despite advice from media and town officials to refill prescriptions early.

Terri Wiggins, Acting Manager of Eckerds, suggested that customers could request a printout of their prescription activity for the year, as a safe guard against computer failures. However, Ms. Wiggins does not expect that there will be any computer problems during the New Year transition.

According to the Federal Reserve Board's Internet Web site at

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Times Announces Early Deadline

The deadline for submitting releases for consideration for the Thursday, December 30, issue of *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood* is Thursday, December 23, at 5 p.m. The newspaper offices will be closed on Fridays, December 24 and 31.

Readers are invited to submit suggestions and ideas in the form of one to three sentences regarding the December 30 issue. This edition will be a collector's issue blending old and new articles and advertisements, while ushering in the new century.

All comments and suggestions may be submitted to press@goleader.com.

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Mayor Connelly Honored At Her Last Regular Mtg.

Fellow Republican Councilman Stuart S. Kline concurred, saying Fanwoodians owe the Mayor "a debt of gratitude" for having put in hundreds of hours on behalf of the borough over the years.

Among the Democrats, Councilwoman Karen M. Schurtz noted that Mrs. Connelly looked beyond political affiliations to choose the right people for various positions during her tenure. She also credited the Mayor with showing her that "possibilities exist."

Councilwoman Katherine Mitchell, who has known the Mayor for some 15 years, thanked Mrs. Connelly for "your confidence in me." She said the Mayor, along with predecessors Linda d. Stender and the late Patricia MacDonald Kuran, inspired her to seek public office herself.

Local businessman and former Republican Mayoral contender Daniel P. Valentino, 3rd, presented the Mayor with a bouquet of roses as a farewell tribute. He fondly recalled how Mrs. Connelly helped out on short notice during a UNICO event, when he found himself short on volunteers, and with a fundraiser as well. Mr. Valentino praised the Mayor for being "genuine" and "a rarity in politics."

Thanking all for their tributes, Mayor Connelly said she would save her own remarks for a special meeting of the governing body which will be held on Tuesday, December 28, beginning at 7 p.m. The purpose of the meeting is to wrap up borough business for the year.

Under other matters last Thursday, Brandon Lorenz, the newest member of the Fanwood Police Department, was administered his oath of office by Mayor Connelly.

It was also announced that Adele Kenny, Director of the Fanwood Cultural Arts Committee, has been named to the borough's Historic Preservation Commission and that Matthew Glennon has been appointed as Planning Board Liaison to the Environmental Commission. Both appointments run through December of next year.

The council introduced an ordinance on first reading calling for a revision to the Borough Code whereby an individual named to serve as Borough Attorney would need to have a minimum of five years experience as an attorney, compared with the 10 years currently required.

Although no individual has been identified publicly as a prospective successor to Borough Attorney Dennis Estis, it is believed someone else will be named to the post once the new administration, with a Republican majority, takes over in January.

Councilman Jung said he felt the change in the required number of

years of experience for the attorney's position should be instituted so it would match that for the municipal judge in Fanwood.

While agreeing that the minimum amount of experience for these positions should be "across the board," Mrs. Schurtz said she felt any candidate for the attorney's post should have some background in municipal government operations.

Mayor Connelly said she believed the salary of the individual should be commensurate with his or her experience.

Councilman Whitaker remarked that an individual would ideally possess experience, knowledge and "the ability to learn," since the borough attorney deals with a myriad of issues related to borough government functions.

Also unveiled on first reading last week were a pair of ordinances authorizing funds from two previous ordinances to be reallocated. The money, originally earmarked for now-completed automation of the Fanwood Memorial Library, will be used instead for the final phase of library upgrades.

Two ordinances were adopted on second reading. One approved an amendment to an ordinance passed by the council last month renewing the borough's agreement with Comcast Cablevision of New Jersey, Inc. for operation of a cable television and communications system in Fanwood.

The amendment deletes a passage from the original decree stating the cable company would contribute \$5,000 toward the cost of a consultant to work with Fanwood's Long Range Planning Committee as a condition of approval of the pact.

Comcast will still make the donation, but it will be in the form of a gift. Per regulations set forth by the state Office of Cable Television, donations as a condition of approval are only allowed if the money will be used for cable television purposes. The funds donated by Comcast are intended for downtown redevelopment efforts.

The other ordinance adopted last week limits the use of certain government-owned buildings and equipment for political fundraising. It is endorsed by New Jersey Common Cause, an organization which seeks to maintain government integrity by eliminating such potential conflicts of interest.

Finally, resolutions were passed authorizing the borough to submit a grant application to the New Jersey Department of Forestry for trees to be planted along South Avenue, and authorizing Fanwood to receive bids for lighting fixtures in the downtown area and for storage sheds for the Public Works Department.



SUCCESSFUL CLEANUP...A group of local youngsters recently spent hours removing debris from the historic Patricia M. Kuran Cultural Arts Center in Fanwood, formerly known as the Carriage House, so that the facility can be used for a variety of cultural arts programs in the future. Among those who took part, pictured left to right, are: Joe Lubinski, Erik Van Hoesen, Jim Drewes and David Kelly.

Offers Reportedly Received To Develop Dean Oil Site

Before that can happen, however, the local Planning Board must determine that the property meets the legal criteria for being in need of rehabilitation. Borough Attorney Dennis Estis said attempting to acquire a property in this manner can be more difficult if there are development offers for the site.

Before the company closed its operations there a decade ago, the Dean Oil site was used for many years as a storage and distribution facility for fuel and heating oil. It subsequently underwent a cleanup to eradicate contaminated soil and groundwater which had been traced to underground storage tanks formerly located on the property.

Following last Thursday's regular council meeting, Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly told *The Times* that consultants and others familiar with the Dean Oil property have favored developing the site as a mix of retail and second-floor apartments.

Township Council Awards New Shade Tree Contract

flexible and calls for such a meeting to be held during the first week of the new year.

Republican Councilman Martin L. Marks, who will become Mayor on January 2, asked for residents to volunteer to serve on the various township committees, commissions and boards to which new members will be appointed at the start of the new year.

Separately, the council, after a nearby resident asked for assurances on noise control, approved a special use permit allowing Burger King on Route 22 to place several tables outside its premises for customer use.

Town Continues Discussion On Fluoridating Water

Regional Board of Health's resolution at its first conference session after the first of the year. At that meeting, he said, it will be decided as a governing body whether the Board of Health's resolution was a "concept we support." He added that the council would "obviously" trust the Board of Health's judgment on the matter.

Mayor Jardim has been looking into the matter of fluoridation, along with the Board of Health, for the last year. When he found out that fluoride was not added to the local water supply, he contacted the Board of Health to ask what it thought about the matter.

The Board of Health responded at the time that it was a matter worth pursuing, but that it might take a lot of work because so many other communities had to sign on the idea.

Mayor Jardim said that the Town Council likely will deal with the

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Committee Begins Interviews to Fill Administrator Post

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Times

WESTFIELD - A special selection committee formed in September by Mayor Thomas C. Jardim has begun the process of finding a new town administrator. Edward A. Gottko informed the Town Council over the summer that he would be retiring effective Saturday, January 1.

Mr. Gottko, who joined the town's payroll in 1979 as Town Engineer, has served as administrator since 1993.

Mayor Jardim told *The Westfield Leader* Tuesday that the committee interviewed four candidates on December 4 and is slated to question another six prospects this Saturday, December 18. At that point, the committee will reduce the number to three finalists. Twenty-five resumes have been received to date.

"We should be ready to select someone by the beginning of the year," said Mayor Jardim.

He expected the new administrator to be on board "by mid or late January at the earliest."

The Mayor described the first set of interviews as "a good initial round of interviews."

Among the skills the committee is looking for are municipal administrative experience, good people skills and someone who is innovative. He said the successful candidate will face a demanding citizenry and governing body.

An advertisement published by the town on the New Jersey State League of Municipalities Web site also listed knowledge of economic development, labor negotiations, contract administration, budget preparation and personnel matters as key qualifications sought by the town. The successful candidate will oversee a budget of over \$23 million and a staff of 200 full-time employees.

"We are looking for someone who will give us stability," Mayor Jardim

said. Veteran Second Ward Councilman James J. Gruba, a member of the committee, said the committee is "looking at some very qualified people" to replace Mr. Gottko.

"We have some excellent resumes. These are all current administrators in the State of New Jersey," he said, noting that most municipal administrators start out as town engineers or as municipal financial people.

While residing in Westfield or Union County is not a requirement for the position, "availability is an important criteria" the committee will consider, said Mr. Gruba.

Mr. Gottko, according to Mr. Gruba, has agreed to assist the council during the 2000 municipal budget process "in a consulting capacity." That process began in September.

In an effort to generate applicants, the town advertised the position in the state League of Municipalities' magazine and through a professional managers' organization based in Cranford. Westfield was also well represented at the League's convention in Atlantic City in November. There, officials spread the word about the administrator opening in Westfield.

"We definitely saw a dramatic increase in the number of applications (received by the town) after the (November council) election," the Mayor admitted.

Among the applicants are some Westfield residents. The list of candidates includes a number of individuals with municipal government administrative experience, as well as persons with both private sector and municipal backgrounds.

The selection committee includes Republicans Mr. Gruba and Assemblyman Richard H. Bagger, a former Westfield mayor, and Democrats James Hely, a former long-time Councilman, and Fourth Ward Councilman Lawrence A. Goldman.

Westfield Firefighters Pay Respects During Funeral of Massachusetts Firemen

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD - A group of five firefighters representing Westfield's fire Department traveled to Massachusetts last Thursday to attend the funeral service for the six firemen who lost their lives in the December 2 Cold Storage Warehouse blaze in Worcester, Mass.

They joined more than 20,000 firefighters from around the world who also attended the solemn service. President Bill Clinton was among the guest speakers who addressed the families, friends and colleagues of the lost firemen.

The warehouse fire, which lasted for several days, was started by two homeless squatters who knocked over a candle during an argument, reports have said. The two individuals have pleaded "not guilty" to charges of involuntary manslaughter, according to the Worcester County District Attorney's Office.

The five firemen from Westfield who attended the service were Captain James Ryan, Acting Captain Michael Brennan, Lieutenant Peter Klebaur, Lieutenant Frank Isoldi and Firefighter James Ryan, Jr.

Captain Ryan said the funeral service was "overwhelming" and called it the greatest show of brotherhood that a community could receive.

"We all knew that we had to be there because we know that could have been us," Captain Ryan said.

"The processional march across the Town of Worcester of thousands of firefighters in total silence, except for the soft drum tattoo and tolling

church bells was deeply moving," Captain Ryan related. "From a distance, we could see the continuing wisps of dark smoke and the crane overhanging the wreckage," he added. "It was very eerie."

Captain Ryan stated that it didn't matter that the building was abandoned and occupied only by squatters. Firemen do not discriminate in who they are trying to save, the Captain related.

The Massachusetts firemen killed in the blaze were Paul Brotherton, 41; Jeremiah Lucey, 38; Lieutenant Thomas Spencer, 42; James Lyons, 34; Timothy Jackson, 51 and Joseph McGuirk, 38.

Two of the firefighters were missing from a roll-call after the firemen were ordered out of the blazing building. Four additional firefighters lost their lives when they entered the burning building searching for their two lost colleagues.

Firemen from neighboring towns have spent the last few weeks combing through the wreckage searching for the bodies of the victims, but temperatures that reached as high as 2,000 degrees during the blaze, have hampered finding their remains.

As of December 10, only two of the six victims' bodies had been recovered. By December 13, all but one of the bodies had been found.

Mayor Raymond Mariano of Worcester declared December 9 a day of mourning and the Worcester's schools and offices were shut down.

The Mayor was quoted in the *Daily Globe of Worcester* as saying, "Heroes are ordinary men and women who reach out every day to help their community."

The six firemen leave behind five widows and 17 children.

Fanwood

TV-35 Schedule

Friday, Dec. 17, 7:00 P.M.
Holiday Show with Santa

Friday, Dec. 17, 8:00 P.M.
Fallen Flags Vol. II

Sunday, Dec. 19, 7:00 P.M.
Fallen Flags Vol. II

Sunday, Dec. 19, 8:00 P.M.
Holiday Show with Santa

Sunday, Dec. 19, 9:00 P.M.
Millennium Clock Dedication

Tuesday, Dec. 21, 8:00 P.M.
Fanwood's Nature Center

Tuesday, Dec. 21, 9:00 P.M.
Holiday Show with Santa

Tuesday, Dec. 23, 8:00 P.M.
Holiday Show with Santa

Tuesday, Dec. 23, 9:00 P.M.
Fallen Flags Vol. II

Residents Seek More Info. On Overcrowding Options

expressed concern that there is no barrier between the street and students who congregate outside Park Middle School.

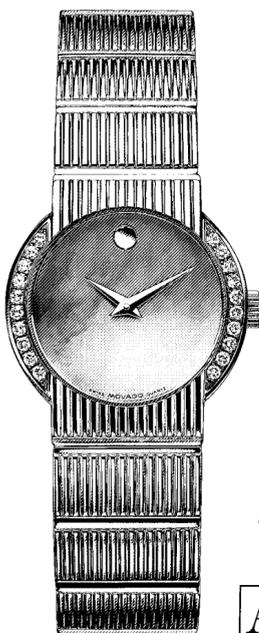
In response, board member Jessica M. Simpson indicated agreement had been reached with the county, township and school district to rebuild the curb in front of Park and have it repainted.

During the meeting, Mr. Ruggiero

noted the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association (SPFEA) had asked the board in writing for contract negotiations to be reopened. He did not elaborate on what precipitated the union's request.

Mr. Ruggiero planned to report on the board negotiating team's December 2 meeting with the SPFEA in closed executive session following the December 9 public meeting.

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