

Letters to the Editor

Assisted Living Facility Would Create Negative Impact on Town's Character

Generally in a small community such as Scotch Plains and Fanwood, news of any new business or development spreads rapidly throughout the town. But not this time. The best-kept secret is an application pending before the Scotch Plains Zoning Board for the construction of Magnolia Gardens.

Magnolia Gardens is a 95-bed combination assisted living and nursing home facility proposed on Martine Avenue between the YMCA and Fenimore Drive. It will require the demolition of two viable residential homes in order to construct the 58,000-square-foot two-story facility. Such a facility is currently not allowed in an R-1 Zone (residential).

The construction of Magnolia Gardens would cause a drastic impact to the character of the neighborhood and the community. In fact, if this facility is constructed, it could affect future applications throughout the Township of Scotch Plains and Fanwood.

This may be a stepping stone for future applicants to purchase tracts of lands,

destroy homes and construct businesses in your neighborhood.

As lifelong residents of Scotch Plains and Fanwood, we have seen the development of these communities first hand. The serenity and bucolic nature of the residential neighborhoods is the main reason we are bringing up our children in this town.

This facility will increase traffic at an already congested intersection, destroy a densely wooded area and place an additional burden on the essential services of the community.

Please come out and voice your objection to the construction of this facility at the Scotch Plains Municipal Building on March 15, 24 and 30. This application must be stopped in order to preserve the character of our community. Clearly there are other locations which are appropriate for this facility.

Raymond and Joan O'Connell Scotch Plains

Resident Posts Reasons To Oppose Construction of Magnolia Gardens

Editor's Note: This letter was written to the Chairman of the Zoning Board of Adjustment and copied to the Township Attorney and the attorney for the applicant with a copy sent to *The Times*.

I strongly oppose "Magnolia Gardens" for the following reasons:

1. The site is not presently zoned for this proposed project.

2. The character and nature of the neighborhood would be seriously adversely affected because of the proposed six-foot high, 105-foot, wide masonry wall, parking lot, and large two-story building.

3. Traffic, already a problem on Martine Avenue, would be seriously adversely affected, as well.

4. Permitting this proposed project would set a terrible example by encouraging other developers and interests to push for further erosion of the present zoning laws in this neighborhood as well as throughout Scotch Plains for their particular projects with dire consequences for the character and nature of this neighborhood and for Scotch Plains. In fact, one real estate broker approached me about dividing up our lot for development!

5. For all of the reasons stated above, a serious consequence would be the reduction in value of the residences in the neighborhood and not least because prospective buyers could not be assured that the nature and character of the neighborhood would remain the same. Studies

indicate that strict zoning and zoning enforcement are among the best ways to maintain and increase property values.

Please understand that I favor assisted living and nursing facilities which help solve a very serious situation in our country. The problem with this proposed project is that it is proposed for the wrong site.

A good alternative would be the downtown business district of Scotch Plains which would benefit from the increased pedestrian traffic and commercial needs the proposed facility would create.

Please also understand that I favor land development but I also appreciate the value of zoning. Vice President Gore has proposed a program, this is a non-partisan idea, to stop the senseless urban sprawl which is destroying the character and nature of America the Beautiful.

At the core of this program is the idea that there must be a defined urban center beyond which land development must be strictly limited. This is also at the core of the zoning ordinance of the Township of Scotch Plains.

Anyone who has visited Britain, Germany, and other European countries is impressed by the preservation of open space and the character and nature of cities, towns, and villages.

Just this Sunday (February 28) *The New York Times* published a fascinating article about Wordsworth's beloved Lake District in northern England whose rural character has been kept over the centuries.

Scotch Plains, of course, is not strictly rural but it has much of the feel of a rural community. I am not, to state again, against land development. I am, however, in favor of land development which is centered in the center of the township and not in neighborhoods such as the one in which "Magnolia Gardens" is proposed to be placed.

Preservation for preservation's sake is not an ideal but neither is development for development's sake. There must be a balance. The zoning ordinance of the Township of Scotch Plains was drafted with that balance in mind. The result is a beautiful township which balances preservation and development.

"Magnolia Gardens" would tip this balance irrevocably in such a direction as to undermine the rationale of the ordinance and the character and nature, to repeat, of this neighborhood and of the Township itself.



Kimberly A. Broadwell for *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times* ENDORSED AGAIN...Mountainside Borough Councilmen Paul Mirabelli and Keith C. Turner, along with Mayor Robert F. Vigilanti, celebrate having received their party's nomination for reelection. Pictured, left to right, are: Councilman Mirabelli, Councilman Turner, Mayor Vigilanti, Assemblyman Alan M. Augustine and Assemblyman Richard H. Bagger at the Mountainside Republican Party Convention on March 3.

Three Incumbents Nominated By Mtsd. Republican Club

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

MOUNTAINSIDE —The Mountainside Republican Club held its convention March 3 at Borough Hall, nominating three incumbents for next November's election.

Mayor Robert F. Vigilanti will be seeking his fourth term as the Borough's Mayor. He was nominated by Police Chief James Debbie.

Councilman Keith Turner, nominated by club member and last year's election campaign manager Dona Osieja, will be seeking a fourth term serving the borough. Last year, Councilman Turner served as the Council President.

Councilman Paul Mirabelli, nominated by Club Member Rosemary Graziano, will be competing for his second term.

The Mayor addressed his fellow club members by saying that

Mountainside statistically has the highest real-estate value in the county and the lowest effective tax rate. He also announced that "Mountainside has been a clean, well run community."

During his speech he asked his fellow citizens why they chose to live in Mountainside and stated that all Mountainside residents should ask that question when they vote in the next election. He stated that to protect the community from higher taxes and decreasing real-estate values, Mountainside residents should vote Republican.

He suggested that more of the borough's young people should "be brought into the Republican fold." The Mayor also noted that out of 21 municipalities in the county, only six were still Republican including, Mountainside, Berkeley Heights,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Worried Residents Should Have Been Accommodated At Recent Meeting

It may be a first for New Jersey: A law designed to ensure free access to public meetings was used to deny the public access.

More than 200 Fanwood residents turned out on February 24 for a Planning Board hearing on a developer's plan to construct a three-story, 36-unit apartment building and parking lot on the former Dean Oil property.

The Planning Board normally meets in the Borough Council Chambers at Borough Hall. That room, however, could not accommodate the over-capacity crowd. The meeting could have been moved to another location.

The Planning Board Chairman took the position that the Open Public Meetings Act would not permit the hearing to be moved elsewhere, either to another area within the Borough complex (e.g. the adjacent firehouse) or to a school auditorium less than half a mile away.

In addition, the Mayor and Planning Board should have requested Channel 35 to televise the entire proceeding.

We regret that the Mayor and Planning Board turned Fanwood residents away, and adjourned the meeting for another month. This issue is too important to be delayed.

We also believe that our local cable channel, TV-35, should televise these

proceedings so that Fanwood residents can be fully and accurately informed as to the evaluation of this application.

Louis C. Jung
Stuart S. Kline
Fanwood Councilmen

Symphonic Orchestra Concert Amazes Resident At Terrill Middle School

I had the honor of attending the Symphonic orchestra concert of Brainerd High School from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. at Terrill Middle School in Scotch Plains.

As I arrived about 10:15 a.m., I observed two giant buses by the entrance, but only about six or seven cars there in the parking lot. I was amazed but also shocked not knowing what was going on with such a poor turnout.

I entered and was given a program and I noticed the auditorium was a good 80 percent empty. I then glanced up at the stage and I observed the Brainerd High School Symphonic Orchestra. What a great scene.

Conductor Paul Melby was checking with the band members having them tune up and waiting for the bus from Chelsea to bring their group, most of them disable and with walkers and canes. The good thing about it was that all the aisle seats were empty which made it very convenient for them.

So within a few minutes while everyone was getting situated, the orchestra carried on.

They played a lovely variety of music. Enjoyed "Amazing Grace," but more so "America the Beautiful" which was heavenly done, the best I have ever heard. Later, for a real switch, the orchestra really blasted away beautifully with the "Stars and Stripes Forever."

I am so glad that I did not miss this excellent performance, but so sad for the occupant members of Fanwood and Scotch Plains who missed such a delightful program. Why, I do not know.

God bless them all that made the arrangements and those that did attend sponsored by the Chelsea of Fanwood.

James F. Denny
Fanwood

Stephen Schoeman
Scotch Plains

We are pleased to announce that **Francis R. LaRosa, Jr.** has joined our firm as a Vice President - Investments

55 Broad Street
Red Bank, NJ 07701
(732) 741-6464
(800) 662-3108

SALOMON SMITH BARNEY
success is earnedSM

Salomon Smith Barney is a service mark of Salomon Smith Barney Inc.
© 1999 Salomon Smith Barney Inc. Member SIPC A member of crtgroupp

Civile
Ristorante Italiano
NORTHERN ITALIAN CUISINE WITH A CONTINENTAL FLAIR

Elegant Dining
Extensive Wine List
Catering/Private Parties
Open for Lunch and Dinner

Ask About Our Cooking Classes * Music During And After Dinner On Friday Evenings

▶ NEW JERSEY'S FINEST DINING EXPERIENCE ◀

24 North 20th Street Kenilworth NJ
908.709.1155

LAW OFFICES OF
JON M. BRAMNICK

TAKES PLEASURE IN ANNOUNCING THAT
CLARENCE A. ABRAMSON
FORMER VICE PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL AND CORPORATE SECRETARY, MERCK & COMPANY, INC.

HAS BECOME OF COUNSEL TO THE FIRM

1827 EAST SECOND STREET
SCOTCH PLAINS, NEW JERSEY 07076
908-322-7000

Corporate Center at Westfield

50 Cardinal Drive, Westfield • Union County, New Jersey

Owned and managed by:
PARAGANO ASSOCIATES, L.L.C.

CORPORATE CENTER AT WESTFIELD
1,281 Sq. Ft. • NEW CONSTRUCTION • WILL DIVIDE

- Prime location near Route 22-24 GSPkwy & I-78
- State-of-the-art HVAC systems
- 24-hour access
- Private, park-like setting
- Custom-finished interiors
- Flexible office layout, full design services, turn key construction
- Union County's most prestigious address

For additional leasing information please contact owner/developer/manager:
Paragano Associates, L.L.C.,
899 Mountain Avenue, Suite 3A
Springfield, New Jersey 07081
Phone: (973) 376-1010
Fax: (973) 376-1037
<http://www.paragano.com>

The Good Life Requires A Great Mattress.

Save 35-50% and take home a FREE down comforter*

Nothing beats the comfort and quality of a handmade Shifman mattress. Only the finest quality cotton felt upholstery is utilized, and it's hand-tufted. For maximum comfort each boxspring is 8-way hand-tied with fine Italian twine. *And now, when you purchase any Shifman Ultra Premium set, we include a luxurious white goose down comforter absolutely free (up to \$200 value).

Limited Time Only

BANCROFT	SPECIAL EDITION	SANISUPPORT	SATURIN [®] OR SUPER SANOPEDIC [®]
Sugg Retail Sale Twin ea. pc. 240. 119. Full ea. pc. 360. 189.	Sugg Retail Sale Twin ea. pc. 410. 219. Full ea. pc. 540. 299. Queen Set 1200. 649. King Set 1800. 999.	Sugg Retail Sale Twin ea. pc. 760. 399. Full ea. pc. 920. 499. Queen Set 2070. 1149. King Set 2930. 1599.	Sugg Retail Sale Twin ea. pc. 840. 449. Full ea. pc. 1020. 549. Queen Set 2270. 1249. King Set 3230. 1749.

Valley Furniture Shop
20 Stirling Road Watchung, NJ 07060 (908) 756-7623
33 Forest Avenue Hawthorne, NJ 07506 (973) 427-1848

Hours: 10 - 5:30 Mon. - Sat., Evenings: Tues. & Thurs. 'til 9pm. **Sun. 1-5**

EQUITY BORROWING

UNDER PRIME

Pay Under Prime for the life of your loan with our 5-Year Home Equity Credit Line!

NO POINTS!
NO APPLICATION FEE!

Great Introductory Rate
5.75% APR*
2% Below Prime for the 1st 6 months

PLUS!
.5% Below Prime for the remainder of the loan!

7.25% APR*
(Prime currently 7.75% APR)

*Annual Percentage Rate. Offer is for loans up to \$250,000 secured by single-family, owner-occupied NJ homes and may be withdrawn without further notice. Rate is variable and may change monthly. Rate is based on most recent Prime Rate as published in the Wall Street Journal. The highest rate that can be charged is 16.0%. Property insurance is required.

The Town Bank of Westfield
A Bank of Your Own
"On the Circle"
520 South Ave.
Westfield, NJ 07091-0220
908-301-0800

HOURS
Drive-In
Monday through Friday 7:30am to 6:00pm
Saturdays 9am to 1pm
Lobby
Monday through Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm
Saturdays 9am to 1pm

Member FDIC