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Borough Council Set to Award Contract For Forest Road Park Upgrades

By SUZETTE F. STALKER
Specially Written for The Times

The Fanwood Borough Council was expected to award a professional services contract during its regular meeting tonight to a Middletown firm which will develop and oversee upgrades to the building and grounds

Councilman Ryan said \$38,500 of the bid amount will cover projects to which the borough is definitely committed at the park, including expansion of the existing park building with a 1,600-square-foot addition. Also planned are drainage and field improvements; new backstops,

plan for improving the surface of a roller hockey rink at the park. However, work on the rink itself may be done as a separate project, Mr. Ryan said.

The balance of the total bid amount will cover two additional options – a topographical study and an irrigation system study – should the governing body decide to pursue them.

The renovations are slated to cost less than \$350,000. Councilman Ryan said the building addition will be funded with a Senior Focus grant of \$100,000 which the borough received from Union County last year.

The rest of the work will be paid for with a \$100,000 grant awarded to Fanwood in 1999 through Union County's Project Pocket Park Program, and matched by the borough with \$150,000. Officials also hope to use some of this money for improvements to LaGrande Park in 2002.

Once the Forest Road park building is expanded, it will serve as a meeting place for the Fanwood Senior Citizens and other groups. It will also provide a large utility room for the



Ingrid McKinley for The Times

REVAMPING...The Fanwood Borough Council is expected to award a professional services contract during its regular meeting tonight to a Middletown firm which will develop and oversee upgrades to the building and grounds at Forest Road Park later this year.

at Forest Road Park later this year.

T & M Associates, which specializes in construction, landscape architecture and design services, was approved for a contract "not to exceed \$47,000," according to Councilman Thomas P. Ryan, Jr., the governing body's Liaison to the Fanwood Recreation Commission.

The company, which previously did design work for LaGrande Park in Fanwood, was one of four firms that were interviewed and three which submitted proposals for the Forest Road Park project.

fences and benches and bringing the park's two baseball fields into compliance with current standards by correcting the distance between the backstop and home plate.

The planned upgrades additionally include removal of several metal drainage grates which are located on playing fields at the park and are considered a safety hazard, Councilman Ryan said.

Plans also call for maximizing the park's playing field and basketball areas; creating a peripheral walking and exercise path, and designing a

Scotch Plains Man Dies Following Accident Across From Post Office

By SUZETTE F. STALKER
Specially Written for The Times

An elderly Scotch Plains resident died last Thursday after an apparent medical crisis caused him to lose control of his car, which crashed into a building opposite the township's Post Office.

Rudolph Lukacovic, 84, had entered the Post Office driveway on Park Avenue, turned around in the rear lot and was going back up the exit driveway en route to pick up his wife when he suddenly accelerated, Sergeant James Rau, Traffic Safety

Supervisor for the Scotch Plains Police Department, said.

Mr. Lukacovic's 1992 Buick Century traveled across Park Avenue and struck the brick front porch of a mixed use building at 9:43 a.m., according to Sergeant Rau. The crash caused minor damage to the structure.

No one else was injured as a result of the accident and no other vehicles were impacted by the car's trajectory, the sergeant stated. There were no other passengers in the vehicle at the time the accident occurred.

Sergeant Rau said it has since been

determined that "it was a medical cause" which led to the accident. Mr. Lukacovic had sustained "some injuries to his hands" as a result of the crash but there were no other visible signs of trauma, the sergeant confirmed.

Following the accident, Mr. Lukacovic was transported by Scotch Plains Volunteer Rescue Squad personnel to Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center in Plainfield, where he later died. Sergeant Rau said the police department was notified of his death shortly after noon.

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Cheri Rogowsky for The Times

MAKEOVER MAGIC...At the Jewish Community Center (JCC) in Scotch Plains, Montclair native and make-up artist extraordinaire Bobbie Brown helped youngsters celebrate "Fashion Week." She autographed copies of her latest book, which advises women of all ages how best to apply cosmetics. Pictured, left to right, are: Ms. Brown and twin sisters Ilana and Arielle Herzberg, 9, of Westfield.

Recreation Commission.

While T & M's bid was the highest of the three received, Mr. Ryan said the governing body had "good reasons" for going with the firm, based on the overall package offered by the company, as well as its reputation.

He said one of the other bid proposals did not include overseeing the work, while another excluded daily visits to the site. Mr. Ryan observed that T & M's proposal included 15 hours of oversight per week. "That was very important to us," he remarked.

In addition, T & M was "a company that we knew and the previous work (the firm performed for Fanwood) had been done in a manner that was appreciated by the government at the time," the councilman noted.

Under New Jersey Municipal Contracts Law, a municipality is not required to select the lowest bidder when awarding a professional services contract, Mr. Ryan explained.

The other two firms which submitted proposals were Kinsey Associates of Hackettstown and Lord, Anderson, Worrell and Burnett of Burlington. A Warren company had also expressed interest in the project but did not submit a proposal.

Councilman Ryan presented each of the bid proposals to the Recreation Commission at its January 23 meeting, where they were also evaluated by Borough Engineer Richard Marsden.

Mr. Ryan said the commission subsequently recommended to the council that T & M be awarded a contract

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School Board Looks to Trim Budget By \$500,000; Boosters Urge Increase In Music Dept. Funding

By SUSAN M. DYCKMAN
Specially Written for The Times

Discussions continued at the February 8 meeting of the Scotch Plains-

Fanwood Board of Education as administrators work to pare down preliminary estimates for the 2001-02 school budget. Since figures were first presented to the board, administrators have shaved off \$143,635 from various accounts; they are considering chopping off an additional \$500,000.

Officials had projected a 4.3 percent increase in spending over last year's \$46.9 million board approved budget.

While recognizing the need to keep a tight lid on the forthcoming budget in the wake of passage of the \$35.7 million bond referendum, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Carol B. Choye expressed concern that cuts could be in places "that may hurt us a bit."

The administration is considering reductions in a number of areas, including staffing. The original budget proposal of called for five new teachers; that number may be more like three and a half.

"There are some places we could tighten up a bit," explained the superintendent, without exceeding the district's traditional guidelines for class size.

Other accounts that could see budget reductions are supplies, tuition for out-of-district placement of special education students and staff development.

Representing the Music Boosters Association, Scotch Plains resident Bruce Smith urged the board to go through with the recommended \$103,000 increase in the music budget as the program is "in serious need of financial support."

Mr. Smith noted certain vendors will not even service the schools' instruments any longer because they are in such poor repair.

Business Administrator and Board Secretary Anthony DelSordi confirmed Scotch Plains-Fanwood schools will receive an additional \$331,935 in state aid for 2001-02 (primarily for transportation and special education costs), along with achievement awards for Park and Terrill Middle Schools and Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School totaling \$47,965.

How those figures will factor into budget preparations was discussed at a special budget meeting Tuesday, February 13. Further budget discussions will take place Thursday, February 22. The board is scheduled to adopt a tentative budget at its February 27 business meeting.



Fred Lecomte for The Times

LIGHTING THE WAY...Elected officials and others, several of whom are wearing 19th-century costumes, welcome the first of the "Fanwood" lamps at South and Martine Avenues in the borough last Thursday. The 15.3-foot-high lamps are part of a comprehensive Victorian streetscape theme being implemented to give the municipality a unique identity. Pictured, left to right, are: Mayor Louis C. Jung, Renate Maroney, Councilwoman Karen M. Schurtz, Darlene Palombo, Council President Joel Whitaker and Clayton S. Pierce, Fanwood Downtown Revitalization Coordinator. Mrs. Maroney and Mrs. Palombo are both members of the Historical Society of Scotch Plains and Fanwood.

The board's planned revisions to the district's Field Trip Policy have the potential to set off some lengthy discussion in upcoming meetings. The basic changes to the policy are as follows: the board must approve all field trips which take students 150 miles or more away from Scotch Plains or those for which air travel is required; a nurse must be present on a trip when certain medication must be dispensed; revised language of

permission slips clarifies that students' personal luggage, backpacks, etc. may be subject to inspection.

New policy language also emphasizes the importance of field trips being educational in nature.

Board members approved an additional Preschool Disabled Class for the coming school year. It will be located at Evergreen School.

In other business, Dr. Choye re-

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Marketing Students Get Lesson in How to Run A Council Meeting

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times

In connection with a mayoral proclamation declaring this week to be DECA Free Enterprise Week, eight members of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School DECA chapter ran the Scotch Plains Township Council's meeting on Tuesday night, managing to zip through a relatively-heavy agenda in 40 minutes.

DECA is an association of marketing students at the high school. Once each year, the students stand in for the five Council members, the Township Manager, Attorney and Clerk and proceed through the agenda and vote on ordinances and resolutions. In December, a group of DECA students visited Washington in order to develop a better understanding of the global economy and met with officials at the White House, the International Monetary Fund, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the AFL-CIO and the United Steelworkers.

At the Council's meeting on Tuesday night, the Council passed several amendments to the salary ordinance and approved an ordinance appropriating \$160,000 from the State Department of Transportation in connection with improvements to a section of Raritan Road. The Council also passed professional services resolutions appointing Killam Asso-

ciates to provide professional engineering services for a site plan for a new pro shop at Scotch Hills Country Club and EKA Associates to provide professional engineering services in connection with a sub-division application for the "hedge property" that will be submitted to the Township Planning Board.

The township government hopes to eventually sell the government-owned hedge property, located on Park Avenue next to the Municipal Building, so that it can be developed into a mixed use commercial building. At the end of the meeting, a proclamation was issued declaring February as Black History Month in Scotch Plains.

The DECA students taking part in the Youth-in-Government program were Rob Bugg, who played the role of Mayor Martin Marks; Andrew Elko, who stood in for Councilman Frank P. Rossi; David Larkin, who sat in for Councilwoman Geri M. Samuel; David Bell, who played Councilwoman Sharynn Porter's role; Douglas Gillie, who sat in for Councilwoman Paulette Coronato; Ryan Crawford, who played the role of Township Manager Thomas E. Atkins; Andrew Pavoni, who stood in for Township Clerk Barbara Riepe; and Brett Bushinger, who played Township Attorney Douglas Hansen's role.

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CYAN YELLOW MAGENTA BLACK



SWINGIN' AROUND...Last Tuesday was a bright, warm day in the region. This ornamental wood carving of a little girl on Linda Place in Fanwood seems to be enjoying the warmer weather.

Ingrid McKinley for The Times

Consultant's Report Offers Six Options For Upgrading And Maintaining School Fields

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially Written for The Times

WESTFIELD -- The Westfield Board of Education was presented with six alternative plans last Wednesday night, ranging from \$165,000 to \$3.5 million, to renovate and maintain the school district's 11 fields. The more expensive plans were for all-weather terrain at several fields.

The results of a comprehensive study conducted by a professional engineering firm and commissioned by the Westfield Board of Education to evalu-

maintenance as the major detriments to field conditions. The study also recommended rotation schedules in order to allow the fields time to recuperate after renovations and maintenance.

Excessive use in concentrated areas during practice, usage when the fields were wet and improper fertilization/weed control were also cited as causing restoration problems.

The six alternative plans for renovating and maintaining the fields were outlined in the study, including cost analysis for each alternative. The all-weather terrain, although requiring less frequent maintenance and permitting year-round sports, is very expensive to install and requires vandalism protection.

Mr. Disko's firm recommended one of the alternatives as being preferable to the others, involving renovations at four school fields, then shifting programs to those fields, while the other seven are allowed to recover. The cost for this preferred alternative was estimated to be between \$515,000 and \$670,000.

Board President Danielle Walsh said that no decision had been reached and that all of the alternatives were being given consideration.

District Superintendent Dr. William Foley discussed the alternatives for raising the funds necessary to accomplish these goals. Sharing services, staff and equipment with the town was discussed as a cost-effective means for both the Board and the town to accomplish their field recovery goals.

Financial support by the leagues and raising property taxes was also mentioned as possible funding sources.

Many members of the public as well as league coaches suggested to the Board that it would be preferable to put one individual in charge of a field maintenance program in order to make the system work.

Soccer coach Chris Carson said, "You have to put someone in charge who will take pride in the fields, to get the job done."

Kimble Avenue resident Jim Rood recommended that all-weather turf not be dismissed because of the cost, because, in his opinion, it was the best solution.

Mr. Disko explained that Professor Indyk did not recommend all-weather turf because it raised certain safety issues in addition to being cost prohibitive.

Several members of the public stated that the necessity of using herbicides is an idea that should be considered, despite opposition by some parents.

Mayor McDermott said that he was in the process of creating a committee

that would look into ways that the Board and the Town could share services.

Councilman Sullivan suggested that the Board consider other options to increase the much needed supply and

demand for fields, such as night lights or new land acquisitions.

Dr. Foley said that the Board will meet with the leagues to garner their input on the various plans.

Membership Cards That Track Use Being Considered for Memorial Pool Operation

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially Written for The Times

WESTFIELD -- The Recreation Commission discussed implementing a new membership card system for Westfield Memorial Pool members at their monthly meeting on February 8.

The new cards will be similar to scanned grocery store cards, and will track utilization times of the members. Commission Chairman Keith S. Hertell said that pool members will be informed when they can trade their old cards in for the new ones, which he expects will take place gradually, over the summer.

"Card scanning will allow us to keep track of who uses the pool and when, so that we can curtail our schedule and programs to fit users' needs," Mr. Hertell said.

The Recreation Commission is also seeking a food concessionaire for Memorial Pool that will accept credit cards, which the town recently began accepting.

Mr. Hertell explained that as a convenience to pool members, it would be much easier for members, especially children, to use credit cards to avoid having to carry loose change.

Memorial Pool will be conducting an experiment by providing lounge chairs this summer, Mr. Hertell reported. Approximately 30 to 40 chairs will be placed at the pool as a service to members.

"This is to make it easier for pool members by giving them one less thing to carry in," Mr. Hertell remarked.

Designing a master plan, which will deal with long-range planning of the town's facilities was also discussed at the meeting. Mr. Hertell said that the Commission agreed there was enough expertise and knowledge amongst Commission members to devise the master plan themselves, without having to pay for an outside consultant.

He added that the Commission would be receptive to any and all contributions from the public to the facilities master plan.

The Recreation Commission made a recommendation to the Town Council on their choice of an engineering firm from among several candidates for the design phase of the Memorial Pool renovations. After interviewing six candidates for design services, the Commission chose the firm of Schoor DePalma of Manalapan.

Mr. Hertell said that Schoor DePalma was chosen based on their superiority in a number of qualitative categories, including their presentation, experience and reputation.

DePalma's bid was midrange of the

six firms, according to Recreation Director Glenn Burrell, at approximately \$85,000.

The Town Council is scheduled to vote on the choice at their Tuesday, February 20 meeting.

If confirmed, the engineers will spend the next few months drawing up renovation plans for the pool. Bids for the construction phase of the pool project are expected to go out in May or June, Mr. Burrell confirmed.

The Commission expects to break ground on the construction phase of the pool project immediately after Labor Day.

The process for choosing a design firm for the Memorial Park renovations will also begin shortly, Mr. Hertell said. The process will include scheduling leagues and programs at other fields while Me-

morial Park is out of commission.

The Recreation Commission will meet with the residents in the neighborhood of Brightwood Park, one more time, to discuss park improvements. The Commission plans on clearing some of Brightwood's trails and installing aerators in the pond, but they want to meet with residents to insure that these plans are acceptable to the residents, Mr. Burrell reported.

"We plan to leave Brightwood in its natural state," Mr. Hertell said, "because we have many residents who want it to remain undeveloped."

The Recreation Commission's regular monthly meeting is held on the first Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the Recreation Office of the Municipal Building.



KING OF THE MOUNTAIN...These youngsters in Scotch Plains used whatever mounds of snow survived the sun to play "King of the Mountain" this week.

Cheri Rogowsky for The Times

in Westfield last fall. He noted that Baran, who is being held at the Union County Jail in Elizabeth, is also a suspect in other incidents which occurred on the south side of town during that period. Bail was set at \$25,000 for the charge involving the Summit Avenue home.

As part of their investigation into last week's burglaries, authorities are asking area residents to be on the lookout for anything suspicious, regardless of how minor it may seem, and to call the Westfield Police Department at (908) 789-4000 if they notice something out of the ordinary.

This includes unknown individuals who come to the door and say something "that doesn't seem right or doesn't feel right," Lieutenant Parizeau explained. "It's one of the ways they (intruders) check to see if someone is at home."

Elizabeth Baker Spends Spring Semester in Spain

SCOTCH PLAINS -- Elizabeth Baker, a junior at Colgate University, is among 17 students spending the spring semester with the Vassar-Wesleyan-Colgate Program in Madrid, Spain with Fernando Plata, Associate Professor of Spanish at Colgate.

Elizabeth is taking courses in the Spanish language, literature, art and film, as well as history, political science and sociology. She is also learning about Madrid, Spain and Europe in the Instituto Internacional.

Elizabeth is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Baker of Scotch Plains. She is concentrating in international relations and Spanish at Colgate. She is a 1998 graduate of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

SP-F BOE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

viewed two versions of the 2001-02 school calendar. Because construction at the schools will continue during the summer of 2002, the superintendent said construction is the driving force behind the calendar configuration.

"We have to close school as early as possible in June (2002)," she explained. The board will vote on the calendar at the February 27 meeting.

Forest Rd. Park

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

for the work at Forest Road Park. He noted that the actual renovations are scheduled to take place from August through October of this year, with completion eyed for the spring of 2002.

Borough officials are investigating alternatives for sports leagues who use Forest Road Park while work there is being completed. The park is utilized by both youth and adult leagues for athletic programs from spring through fall.

Mr. Ryan said use of LaGrande Park may be extended while work is being done at Forest Road. He added that officials also expect to look at other options through the Shared Services Committee comprised of representatives from Scotch Plains, Fanwood and the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education.

Accident

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Mr. Lukacovic, a retired tool-and-dye maker, had lived in Scotch Plains since 1952. He is survived by his wife, Veronica, three children and two grandchildren. Funeral arrangements were under the direction of the Rossi Funeral Home in Scotch Plains.



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