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ENHANCED LOOK...K9 Resorts LLC was approved unanimously for a variance for a minor subdivision at 57 South Avenue by the Fanwood Planning Board last Wednesday.

Fanwood Planning Bd. OKs Variance for K9

By CHRISTINA M. HINKE Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

FANWOOD — K9 Resorts LLC was approved unanimously for a variance for a minor subdivision at 57 South Avenue by the planning board last Wednesday.

Co-owner and Chief Executive Officer of K9 Resorts, Steven Parker, leased a vacant building adjacent to the current facility, which the company owns. The plan is to move the dog daycare to the adjacent lot and create a new facility there.

K9 Resorts has been in business for 10 years and has since expanded to a franchise of seven locations, the applicant's attorney, Jeff Lehrer, said.

The positive criteria of the plan, Mr. Watson said, included complying with standards of having air,

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SP Budget

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Preceding Mr. Poerio at the budget meeting was Joseph Timko, now the acting director of the Public Works Department. Mr. Mirabella said Carlos Luaces, hired a year ago, had been dismissed last Friday.

Going forward, Mr. Mirabella said he was looking at a variety of options for the DPW, including hiring a full-time director as well as exploring shared-service relationships with either Fanwood or Union County.

During his brief budget presentation, Mr. Timko reviewed requests for several pieces of equipment and also urged a small increase in the budget for overtime pay, noting that the "snowstorms are killing us."



NEW OFFICER...Kristopher Jackus is sworn in as one of five new officers in the Westfield Police Department. The ceremony took place during the town council's February 24 meeting as Police Chief David Wayman looks on.

Scotch Plains-Fanwood BOE Hears Budget Presentation

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education Business Administrator Deborah Saridaki presented a proposed school budget of \$85,560,209 to the board at its meeting last Thursday.

According to Mrs. Saridaki, salaries make up 57 percent of the budget, which is up 1.89 percent from last year. Mrs. Saridaki said benefits account for 19 percent of the budget, noting that the cost of health insurance has gone up by 16 percent since last year.

The rest of the budget consists of \$1 million in a fund balance, \$156,800 in other local sources, \$2,947,508 in state aid, \$300,000 in extraordinary aid and \$25,619 in Medicaid.

Mrs. Saridaki said there are six additional staff positions included in the budget. Those positions are as follows: one high-school physical education teacher, one middle-school nurse, one middle-school basic skills teacher, one middle-school self-contained special-education teacher, one middle-school self-contained special-education aide and one middle-school supervisor of special education.

Mrs. Saridaki noted that since 2008 enrollment has fluctuated between 5,502 to 5,550 total students, peaking in 2011 with 5,583 students.

Mrs. Saridaki reported that there were quite a few initiatives supported by the upcoming budget, including additional substitute coverage for professional development; textbook updates for Zoology, Forensic Science, Social Studies Alive for the fifth grade and health books for grades 9 to 12;

increased participation in the Science 2 Students learning program for middle- and high-school students; new elementary music workbooks; supplemental teaching programs for pre-school and kindergarten and expansion of some technology hardware where needed.

In other business, the board of education approved a resolution making March Youth Art Month.

It was noted that students from the Coles Elementary School third grade participated in the Odyssey of the Mind program held at J.P. Stevens High School in Edison, and that Grease was playing at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School in the upcoming weeks.

Board President Nancy Bauer informed the audience that two highly attended information sessions were successfully done for parents in the district over the past week regarding the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) testing. It also was noted that the Girls Varsity Swim Team had recently won the state championship at the College of New Jersey when they defeated Princeton.

The next board meeting will be held Thursday, March 19, at 7:30 p.m., in the administration building on Evergreen Avenue and Cedar Street in Scotch Plains.

WF Planning Bd. Denies S. Chestnut Subdivision

By LAUREN S. BARR Specially Written for The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times

WESTFIELD — Much to the delight of the gathered crowd at Monday night's meeting of the planning board, the board unanimously denied an application for a non-conforming subdivision at 613 South Chestnut Street.

The applicant, Elshiekh Enterprises, represented by Robert Renaud, sought to take a 100-by-150-foot lot and make two 50-foot lots. Owner Haney Elshiekh argued that the two homes would be completely different in style and would fit in the neighborhood better than one larger home which he said would, "stand out like a white elephant."

The applicant argued that the subdivision would improve drainage in the area with the installation of a drainage system, and new homes would correct the current non-conforming setback of the existing home. Members of the public and board members pointed out that those issues would also be corrected if only one home was built.

The property is zoned for R10, which requires a 10,000-square-foot minimum; however, the applicant argued that because it borders R6 (6,000 square feet required) properties that it would be acceptable to treat it as such.

While Mr. Elshiekh said the sale of the property was not contingent on approval of the subdivision, he did say that the owner would receive more money from the sale if a subdivision was approved.

Board Chairman Vince Wilt said that Mr. Elshiekh was "bringing it (building one large home) up like it's a threat."

Board member Robert Newell raised concerns that granting such an application would set a precedent. He said that there were similar lots in the area and that breaking the zone would cause a "creep" of zoning changes.

Resident Robert Priestly questioned the planner, Kevin O'Brien, as to whether he knew the size of the large home on the corner of South Chestnut Street and Fourth Avenue, or the sizes of the new homes recently constructed off of Fourth Avenue, which Mr. O'Brien did not.

Town Planner Bill Drew pointed out that this neighborhood in particular was examined very closely in the most recent master plan review, and that while the town chose to change some zoning along neighboring Hillcrest Avenue, it deliberately did not change the zoning on South Chestnut Street.

All of the neighbors who spoke out against the subdivision said that they favored a single larger home rather than two homes.

Fourth Avenue resident Gregory Talmont said, "This town is a veritable celebration of (zoning) notches" and that it was done on purpose to provide for a variety of homes. He

said he would much rather see one oversized house there than "two boxes."

Mr. Newell said, "I disagree with the applicant that these (proposed) houses are conforming with the neighborhood."

The board unanimously denied the application. Councilman James Foerst, who had been on the dais for earlier hearings, was absent for this application.

Earlier in the evening the board unanimously approved the application of Westfield Superstore to construct a 970-square-foot addition to the former Lindeman Buick building on North Avenue. The application was originally heard at the January board meeting, where the board asked for some changes to be made to parking, signage and lot coverage. The applicant withdrew two of their sign variance requests and reconfigured the parking lot to allow for additional plantings and a safer traffic flow.

A conforming subdivision of property at 417 West Broad Street was also approved by the board. There is currently an older home, which had been a doctor's office at one point, and is in a state of disrepair, according to the owner.

Mr. Drew requested that the street tree be preserved if it could, and Town Engineer Kris McAloon said the applicant needed approval from Union County before removing the tree. The applicant's engineer, Richard Titus, said the tree was likely 50 years old and has "outlived its usefulness."

While some residents bemoaned the tearing down of an older home, the most immediate neighbor to the property said he was in favor of the subdivision and was looking forward to someone taking care of the neglected property.

Councilman Foerst told residents that given the zoning, it was possible for the builder to construct two two-family homes on the lots, but that he is only seeking single-family homes.

Finally, the board approved an enclosed patio dining area for La Famiglia Sorrento on Central Avenue. The applicant is enclosing an existing patio area so that it can be used all year round.



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ACTIVE DISCUSSION... Fanwood Councilman Tom Kranz, pictured far left, discusses the Length of Service Award Program with the borough council at Monday's council agenda meeting.

Fanwood Council

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installed in any new or used police cars purchased, or the camera is to be placed on the police officer's body, Mr. Tompkins added.

The cost of the camera is about \$10,000 per car, and \$800 for a camera on the police officer's body, Mr. Tompkins added.

Freeholders

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"How are the taxpayers supposed to have any confidence in the Union County Improvement Authority?" Mrs. Renna questioned.

John Bury of Kenilworth said he read in media reports that Mrs. Stender was given a "deal" whereby she retains her new position. He questioned how this was done as the UCIA board has not met since the scandal hit the press.

"To have (Union County Democratic Chairman) Jerry Green just say, 'I'll do this; I think it belittles everybody (freeholders) here,'" Mr. Bury said.

Bruce Paterson of Garwood said he recommended last year that the freeholders roll the improvement authority into Union County government, which he said would save \$600,000.

"Now it's blowing up in your faces," Mr. Paterson said, noting that in addition to the Stender scandal, former freeholder Dan Sullivan, the executive director of both the improvement authority and the county's utilities authority, gave out unauthorized monthly pay bonuses to himself and staff in 2013. Mr. Paterson said it cost the county \$80,000 in legal fees to recoup \$50,000 in bonuses.

Mr. Paterson requested that County Counsel Robert Barry give a legal opinion on whether Freeholder Mirabella has a conflict of interest by being both a freeholder and Scotch Plains township manager. Mr. Paterson said Mr. Mirabella should have to abstain on county budget votes.

When Mr. Barry did not issue a comment, Mr. Paterson shouted at the conclusion of the meeting that Mr. Barry was a "coward."

In other freeholder business, the board approved a \$109,906 reduction in repairs to the exterior of the Union County Board of Elections building on Broad Street in Elizabeth for a new total cost of \$1,215,984.

The board appointed Fanwood Councilman Jack Molenaar, Roger Stryeski of Roselle and Mountainside Councilman Robert Messlera as delegates and Mountainside Engineer Michael Disko, Jr. as an alternate to the Union County Transportation Advisory Board.

Zenon Moriak of Mountainside was appointed as a delegate to the Union County Air Traffic and Noise Advisory Board.



PROMOTED...Marcin Kapka is sworn in as a sergeant in the Westfield Police Department at the town council's February 24 meeting as his family looks on.