

Scotch Plains – Fanwood Shared Services Study Committee

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Scotch Plains – Fanwood Shared Services Study Committee Seeks Public's Views

Scotch Plains Mayor Nancy Malool and Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr jointly announced in March that their respective Governing Bodies were creating a new joint committee to conduct a study of a wide range of possible shared services between their neighboring municipalities. This Shared Services Committee was formed and has been meeting regularly.

Wanting to focus its efforts on issues of greatest concern to residents, the Scotch Plains – Fanwood Shared Services Study Committee has scheduled a public forum to hear residents' views on the most important issues to be addressed during a Shared Services Study to be undertaken by the two towns. Residents of the two communities are invited to attend the public forum on Thursday evening, June 18, 2009, at 6:30 PM, at the Scotch Plains Fanwood High School.

According to Mayor Colleen Mahr, “We want this to be an inclusive process that fully considers the sentiments and perspectives of the entire Scotch Plains - Fanwood community. We want to deliver a report that answers every reasonable question.” At the meeting, residents may share with the Committee members which issues are most important to them.

The Scotch Plains – Fanwood Shared Services Study Committee will study and recommend whether the two towns should share one or more departments or one or more municipal services, and if so, the extent to which such a partnership would be mutually beneficial. Scotch Plains and Fanwood have enjoyed an outstanding, cooperative relationship for many, many years, including having received numerous joint grants, and having established new joint programs. Mayor Nancy Malool stated that “It is the goal of the elected officials of our two communities to expand on this record of success.”

With staff assistance and a 100% funded grant from the NJ Department of Community Affairs, the Committee has hired Jersey Professional Management of Cranford, NJ as the consultants to study and report on various aspects of the sharing of services between the two municipalities.

The June 18th meeting is a public forum, not a public hearing. “Usually,” said Mayor Malool, “government issues a report and asks people to react. We want to talk with people first. We want to hear their views. Then, over the next six months, we will try to address all of the points they raise.”

Jersey Professional Management President Dan Mason added that “This study is in its initial stage with the engagement of our firm. Now, the public’s input and questions will help guide us in the most productive fashion.”

Both Mayor Mahr and Mayor Malool emphasized that there will be additional opportunities for public comment as the study progresses. The committee will hold at least two public meetings/hearings, one in each town, before the final report is issued. Among the most important issues identified by the Committee to date include a thorough review of all financial implications and the impacts upon municipal operations, administration and service delivery.

Mayor Malool said, “In these difficult economic times, we need to look at all cost-saving measures. This study will thoroughly evaluate all of the services provided by both towns and determine how we can continue to best serve our residents while lessening the tax burden. Although the 2009 budget will not be able to be impacted by the results of this study, I am hopeful that there will be an opportunity to realize significant savings in future budgets.”

Mayor Mahr said, “After many years of excellent cooperation between our two towns, we want to assure our residents and taxpayers that we are reviewing all opportunities to reduce costs and save taxpayers some of their hard-earned tax dollars, and still maintain the same small town identity we have all come to enjoy and love. This new study committee is committed to this goal.”

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