

Somerset unveils plans for an 'airy' complex

By BEV McCARRON

A glass and marble structure 20% larger than Somerset County's old courthouse will be the newest county building in Somerville in the spring of 1990.

An architect's rendering of the proposed new county administration building unveiled at a board of freeholders meeting yesterday showed a five-story edifice with an atrium. The 500,000 square foot building will be built across a courtyard from the new county jail now under construction at the corner of High and Grove streets.

Bids for the \$10 million construction project are expected to be taken in January with construction to begin next spring. Both the jail and the new administration building should be ready to open in the spring of 1990. Freeholder Patrick Fittipaldi said.

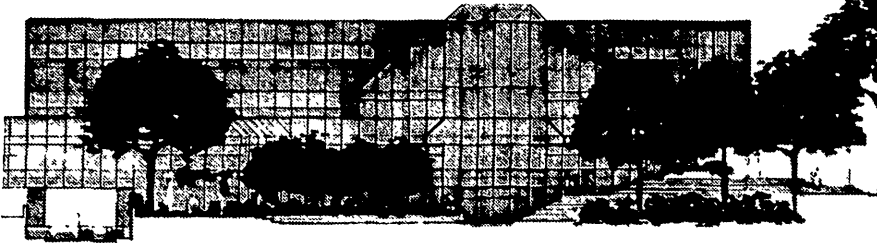
Most of the departments in the present administration building, at the corner of North Bridge and High streets, will be shifted to the new building. The old administration building will be refurbished to house the prosecutor's office and other departments now located in satellite offices throughout the county. Fittipaldi said.

The freeholders earlier this year scrapped a plan to enlarge the current administration building, saying regulations governing asbestos removal would make expansion of the 1953 building costly and impractical because county offices would have to be relocated while the removal was performed. Instead, the old building will be emptied temporarily when the new building is finished.

"We're going ahead with it."



ELEVATION FROM GROVE STREET



ELEVATION FROM THE ARMORY

An artist's rendering of the new Somerset County Administration Building

Photo by Steve Andruscia

"There's no question about that," Fittipaldi said yesterday.

To make room for the new building in the county complex, the old courthouse annex on Grove Street, next to the Somerset Hotel, will be razed. The new building will be to the west of the county parking deck, and will be connected to it.

The architects are the Musial Group of Elizabeth, which has designed the planned expansion to the current administration building. The building has lots of glass, with a three-story atrium lobby.

"What we were looking to do is get an open effect with lots of lights, a feeling of outdoors," Fittipaldi said.

The county complex now sprawls over two blocks in downtown Somerville, and includes a new courthouse, the old courthouse, a church that serves as a jury holding room, the old administration building, the jail, the sheriff's department communications center, a recently completed parking deck, and the courthouse annex.

Workers in Warren voting on contract

By ART CHARLTON

Members of the largest union representing employees of Warren County's government are to vote on a three-year contract today that would include an average raise of 12.5 percent this year.

County employees represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) will have the opportunity to decide whether to accept the contract from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. in the basement meeting room of the Courthouse Annex in Belvidere.

Employees represented by AFSCME have been working without a contract since Jan. 1, when the prior two-year labor agreement expired.

Negotiations have been under way since early last fall, resulting in the three-year proposal for about 500 workers in white-collar and blue-collar county jobs represented by the union.

AFSCME Local 3287 represent county employees at the health department, Warren Haven, the county nursing home in Mansfield Township, the road, bridge and maintenance departments and Warren Acres, the county's juvenile detention facility. Also represented are clerical workers at the county administration building and courthouse.

The remainder of the county's more than 700 employees are represented by other unions or are in non-union positions.

According to MaryAnn Garuti, president of the AFSCME local and a member of the union's negotiating com-

mittee, the contract includes average raises of 12.5 percent this year, 9.5 percent next year and 9.5 percent the following year.

Garuti said she was satisfied with the contract, adding, "The (negotiating) committee is happy with it."

However, she noted, "I don't know what the vote is going to be."

Members of the freeholder board previously have called for increasing the salaries of Warren County employees, who make less than their colleagues with other municipal and county governments and workers in many comparable private sector jobs.

The contract will provide a "slight" increase in the shift differential for working nights and weekends, Garuti said.

Workers would receive pay increases retroactive to Jan. 1 if the contract is approved, Garuti said, but the shift differential would not be retroactive.

New benefits in the proposed contract include an optical plan, a prescription plan, tuition reimbursement, an increased uniform allowance that has been extended to additional departments and an increase in longevity pay.

Garuti said the longevity benefit would give workers a \$300 bonus after 10 years of employment, plus \$25 more for every additional year in the county employ, up from the previous base level of \$225.

Secret balloting to ratify the contract had been planned for a week ago, but was postponed until today. "We had details to work out," Garuti noted.

Rockaway Twp. road converted to one-way

The Rockaway Township Council last night adopted an ordinance that converts Old Middletown Road into a one-way street for a quarter-mile between Mt Hope Road and Snyder Drive.

Thomas Darby and David Miller, both of whom live on the street, asked for additional improvements they said were necessary for safety.

"There are other problems at the other end of the street," said Darby. He argued that there is a chronic speeding problem and that 25 children live on the street, so there is a need for stop signs along the road.

Miller added there are 11 homes near his end of the street that house 16 children.

Council President Jeffrey McEntee agreed with the residents, saying the street is "very narrow, and a speeding problem does exist that needs monitoring."

The council referred the problem to police Capt. John Daley, who is expected to review the situation and recommend action.

The council also adopted a \$40,000

bond ordinance that would fund the purchase of a mobile command unit for the fire department and a new water tank for one of its pumps.

The council introduced a \$260,000 bond ordinance that would fund the resurfacing of 10 roads in the White Meadow Lake area, plus seven others in the township. A public hearing is scheduled for Aug. 1.

Township engineer Ronald McKinnon said that, if adopted, the work would be completed by year-end.

In other business, the Rockaway Township Soccer Association awarded the first Massie Monvi Memorial Soccer Scholarship to two high school seniors.

Jennifer Griffith of Morris Knolls and David Schlachter of Morris Hills High schools each received a \$250 scholarship for the organization for outstanding performance in the sport.

Massie Monvi was a coach in the Rockaway Township Soccer League who died while playing in a game last year. The association created the award in his honor.

Developer ordered to hand over land

A Parsippany-Troy Hills developer was ordered yesterday to honor a 1980 agreement to deed about five acres to a homeowners' group.

Superior Court Judge Kenneth MacKenzie in Morristown ruled that the M&E partnership must honor the deal it made when it took advantage of a Parsippany ordinance that allowed it to trade land dedicated to open space preservation for smaller building lot sizes.

Attorney Clark Cornwell, representing M&E, maintained his client was entitled to clear title on the 4.85 wooded acres behind the Stacy Court development off Smith Road. He noted M&E paid taxes on the land between 1980 and 1986.

Attorneys James Pryor, representing Parsippany's planning board, and Edward Berger, a Stacy Court resident, argued it was the intention of the township to preserve the land in its natural state.

Berger explained no property owners' association ever was formed because the homeowners were unaware of M&E's agreement to deed the land for open space in return for higher-density development. He said an association will be incorporated for the purpose of accepting the deed from M&E.

After ruling against M&E, MacKenzie said the partnership of Joseph Marinaro and Robert Eckstein was not entitled to a reimbursement for about \$2,500 in taxes on the land.

Orange names cop director

Charles C. Cobbertt, 49, was appointed police director by the Orange City Council last night. Cobbertt becomes the first black to hold the position.

Cobbertt, who replaces former Mayor Paul Monacelli in the post, has been a member of the police department for 20 years. He began his career as a patrolman and rose to the rank of lieutenant.

"I promise I will do all I can to bring honor back to this department."

Cobbertt told the city council, "I'm sure he will bring the morale and unity back to the force that has been lacking for so long," said Councilwoman Louise Corvino.

The council awarded a contract to Bruno Associates Inc. of Bloomfield for an amount not to exceed \$32,000 to solicit public funding for community programs.

A public meeting regarding budget amendments has been scheduled for 6 tonight in the council chambers.

Maplewood maintenance fines rise

The Maplewood Township Committee last night adopted two ordinances that increase the penalty for inadequate property maintenance by 400 percent.

The ordinances are amendments to a code that levies a \$200 fine for failing to keep up residential or com-

mercial property. The maximum penalty is a \$1,000 fine, 90 days' imprisonment and 90 days of community service.

The measures mark the first increase in penalties under the township housing code in more than a decade.



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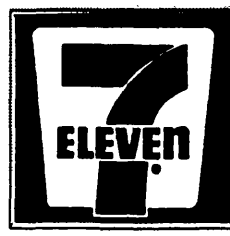
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