

Township Debt

Municipalities may raise money for capital expenditures by issuing bonds. The amount of money that township governments may borrow for capital improvement is limited by state law and may be exceeded only with the approval of the Local Finance Board. The Township's debt limit is 3½ per cent of the average assessed valuation over a three year period of the real property of Scotch Plains. Before an ordinance authorizing the sale of bonds can be adopted, the ordinance must be advertised and a public hearing must be held. Whenever Township debt is created, taxpayers may, by petition, require a special binding referendum on the question.

Township property taxes must provide the funds necessary to balance the township and school district budgets. Funds to operate the Scotch Plains-Fanwood schools must be paid in full to the school district by the Township Council. State law sets a debt limit of 4 per cent of the average assessed valuation over a three-year period of the real property in Scotch Plains and Fanwood when the school district finds it necessary to raise money for capital expenditures such as new buildings and additions to existing buildings.

PUBLIC PROTECTION

"Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety." — Shakespeare

Police Department

The task of patrolling the Township's streets and roads and protecting its residents is performed by the police force of 42 men, headed by the Chief of Police. The basic duties of the Police Department are to prevent crime, to apprehend alleged offenders, and to obtain legal evidence for use in the courts. The Department has additional functions of patrol, traffic and parking regulations, licensing any canvassers and taxi drivers, inspection of taverns, issuing gun permits and narcotics control.

Personnel

The Chief of Police is generally appointed from the ranks. All positions, including chief, come under civil Service. The force consists of the Chief, two captains, four lieutenants, seven sergeants, four plainclothes detectives, and 27 patrolmen. The members operate in two divisions, patrol and detective.

There are 22 school-crossing guards serving parttime, who are under the jurisdiction of the Police Department but who are not subject to the qualifications of Civil Service.

Special officers are appointed yearly for parttime special service at parades and dances and for auxiliary duty during vacations. They have the same powers when on duty as regular police officers. Two matrons are also available for duty when needed.

Qualifications

To become a member of the police force, a candidate must be a citizen between the ages of 18 and 35, a high school graduate, and of good moral character. According to state statute, he must also pass physical and Civil Service examinations.

Training

Successful applicants are kept on probation for twelve months after attending a ten week training program at either the Union County Police Chiefs Training Academy, Union College, Cranford, or the New Jersey State Police Training Academy at Sea Girt. All members periodically attend special training sessions in subjects such as riot control, narcotics control, and use of new equipment.

Scotch Plains has the use of a county mobile crime laboratory purchased with federal funds. County courses in riot control and prevention have been held for representatives from each of the municipal police forces to enable a jointly trained law enforcement group to operate together in case of an emergency.