

Family Promises program under study by Mt. Pocono council

by Pattie Hughes

Mount Pocono Borough Council president John Finnerty opened the regular meeting of Mount Pocono Borough Council on May 19 with a moment of silence in memory of Gloria Scalamandre, wife of council member John Scalamandre. The couple was married for 51 years. Scalamandre thanked council members and residents of Mount Pocono for the cards, calls and prayers for his family.

John Cordes, pastor of Mount Pocono United Methodist Church, and several church members were present at the meeting to discuss the church's involvement with Family

Promises. Family Promises serves families displaced due to a job loss or other crisis. Families spend the nights at area churches and days at the day center located at Wesleyan Church in Stroudsburg.

Each church hosts the families for one week, three times during the year. Mt. Pocono United Methodist Church is scheduled to host the families the week of July 6-15 and two other weeks in October and January. Currently, there are 13 people in the Monroe County Program.

The church had appeared at a September council meeting to discuss their involvement. At that meeting, zoning officer Joe

Brady advised council that using the church as sleeping area is in violation of the Borough's zoning ordinances and the state's Uniform Code of Construction, which states requirements for ingress and egress, including minimum dimensions for windows.

Borough solicitor James Farerri told church members what they are doing is "praiseworthy, but ordinances are passed to protect people. God

forbid there was a fire." The church has not submitted a permit application to use the church for the program.

According to Brady, other churches have not asked permission from their municipalities. He told council he spoke to the zoning officer in East Stroudsburg, who was unaware of the program. "Other churches are doing it, but they're doing it illegally."

After some discussion, it was decided code officer Bill Webber would visit the site to determine if the space meets the guidelines in the ordinance.

Earlier in the meeting, state representative Mario Scavello presented two checks to council for the Downtown Beautification Project and storm water repairs. Scavello expressed his support for the Family Promises project.

Mount Pocono resident Mike Oser appeared before council for the second time to request the borough send a letter to the Monroe County Board of Elections to have a question placed on the November ballot for the repeal of the library tax in Mount Pocono. After the library's request for additional funding was denied by voters in the primary election, Oser began collecting signatures to repeal the current one mil of taxes currently paid by Mount Pocono residents to support the library.

Council asked Atty. Farerri for his opinion and was advised to send the letter. Oser has collected seven signatures on his petition, which he claimed at a previous meeting was the same number collected by the library to place the original measure on the ballot.