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Public Forum on Tuesday, Oct. 19, to discuss consolidation of Scotch Plains and Fanwood

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SCOTCH PLAINS – Should Scotch Plains and Fanwood merge?

That is the question that will be discussed at a public forum on Tuesday, Oct. 19, at the Scotch Hills Country Club, 820 Jerusalem Road, in Scotch Plains.

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The free event will begin at 8 p.m. and will feature Gina Genovese, Executive Director of Courage to Connect New Jersey, who will explain the growing efforts statewide to connect

municipalities and outline the process that interested towns can follow. A question-and-answer session will follow.

The event will be hosted by Fred Lange, a Scotch Plains resident who heard Genovese speak in Plainfield on June 27 and asked her to make her presentation in his town, where shared services is already a hot topic. The shared services discussion between the two towns is a separate issue, although Genovese supports that discussion. This forum will focus on the potential benefits of merging both towns under one municipal government, with the goal of saving taxpayers money.

"There is such a maddening duplication of municipal services from one end of the state to the other," Genovese said. "New Jersey's municipal framework must ultimately be reduced to 100 or 150 towns or our state will become unaffordable for most of us to live here."

Lange said his ever-increasing tax bill is the reason he hopes to establish a grassroots movement to combine Scotch Plains and Fanwood.

"Taxes have gone up and we are paying for duplicate services and inefficient negotiations when it comes to labor," Lange said. "We've got to combine municipalities so we have better purchasing power, not only for supplies, but for labor too. Combining towns creates better efficiencies."

To learn more about Courage to Connect New Jersey, visit the organization's website: CourageToConnectNJ.org. The site offers a simple step-by-step guide for local groups and local governments to work through the municipal consolidation process.

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