



Township Of Lopatcong

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
Douglas J. Steinhardt

January 31, 2003

Dear Lopatcong Township Residents:

In the first several months of my first term, I went to great lengths to familiarize myself with the business of our Township, including the history of our form of government, a small "C." In doing so, I reviewed that government's charter and the duties and obligations of its several officers. It was through that process that I uncovered the Mayor's obligation to report at least annually on the state of the Township.

Since I'd learned in the months and weeks leading up to the November 1999 election that a chief complaint of many of our residents was a lack of information about our municipal government, its officials and actions, I decided to undertake to write bi-annually to all of you in an effort to keep you apprised of certain municipal matters. With that in mind, please accept my apologies for the delay in this my sixth of six letters on the state of the Township.

First, I would like to thank the vast majority of you for your vote of confidence in November 2002. As much as I strove to exceed your expectations in the preceding three years, I intend to make every effort to continue to do so in the three years ahead. And insofar as I undertook to correspond with all of you bi-annually over the past three years, it is a practice I will continue for the next three years too.

In or about October 2002 Council announced plans for the construction of the project tentatively titled "Lopatcong Park," a 30-acre recreational facility on the 80 acres of Township property surrounding the Township pool. With preliminary site engineering having been completed, the project is slated to include three new football/soccer fields, four baseball/softball fields, basketball and tennis courts able to be covered and frozen for ice skating during the winter, walking and biking trails, concession and equipment facilities, and a 13,000 square foot senior/community center. Council voted unanimously in November to start this project, approved preliminary funding, and it is expected that Paul Sterbenz, PE, municipal engineer, will be reporting back to Council in February his progress.

Ernie Gallant, Lopatcong Board of Education, advises that our new middle school should be completed on or about June 25, 2003 and ready to open in September for the 2003-04

school year. I am also advised that it is scheduled to be completed within budget and in that regard commend the Board and administration for their efforts.

Similarly, efforts continue to be made to bring the new Phillipsburg High School to fruition. Moreover, Lopatcong Township is playing a pivotal role in the Phillipsburg Board of Education's application for the construction of that complex at the intersection of Roseberry Street and Belvidere Road in Lopatcong. With Phillipsburg's Abbot District designation and through a new program instituted by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, it is expected that the new \$80,000,000.00 high school will be built in the near future, solely through State aid, and, therefore, at no cost to the taxpayers of Phillipsburg, Lopatcong, or any of the sending districts. I continue to be in constant contact with Phillipsburg Superintendent Gordon Pethick, Board President Rod Pianelli, the Governor's Office, and representatives of the EDA and State Board of Education to ensure that this project is completed.

We continue to defend the several lawsuits filed against us to compel developments and/or permit zone changes along Belview Road and in Morris Park. As was the case in July, we continue in the discovery phase of all suits, committed to defending our Township's right to control its development and unwilling to allow a developer or developers to turn our community into its personal, concrete playground.

In an effort to allay any concerns raised by the January application of Larkin Associates for approval for 126 age-restricted homes along Edwards Street and Brakeley Avenue in Morris Park, I wish to assure all of you that that application has no bearing whatsoever on our on-going efforts to condemn that property as part of the Township's open space plan, since NJ law requires that a property owner be compensated for the property's best and most valued use. As such, any approval would have no effect on our efforts or the ultimate value of the property. As I've maintained consistently thus far, I remain committed to preserving our last remaining parcels of open space and stand ready to endure any lawsuit and defend any claim that would compromise our ability to do so.

Controlling our tax rate continues to be my primary focus. I have begun the process of reviewing the upcoming budget with Carl Meixsell, municipal CFO, intent on finding cuts and realizing savings in every department. However, it is becoming increasingly hard to do so with the State budget crisis and lack of aid to municipalities and our public schools.

In keeping with Council's efforts to cut taxes and control spending, I continue to focus my attention on attracting new ratables into our business and industrial zones in an effort to defray our reliance on residential tax ratables to meet our municipal economic needs.

As a reminder, if you haven't already done so, please renew your dog license which was due by January 31st.

Also, please be aware that a snow emergency shall be in effect upon the accumulation of four inches of snow and all vehicles must be removed from the streets. Please do not cast any snow back into the street or you shall be subject to a fine.

Council is in the process of adopting an Ordinance to prevent a homeowner from discharging water from their property which could create a dangerous condition on public sidewalks and streets. In the event that such a dangerous condition is created, the homeowner will be notified to correct this situation or be subject to a fine.

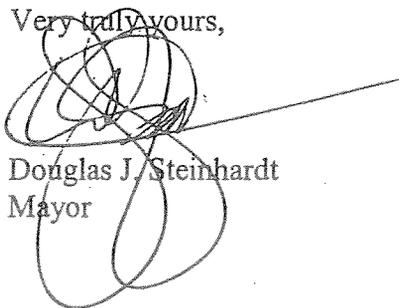
Environmental Chairman Frank Bröckerhoff would like to make all residents aware of a program available through the New Jersey Economic Development Authority providing financial assistance by way of a grant or low interest loan for removal, cleanup and replacement of underground storage tanks associated with fuel oil for home heating. For further information please contact the Clerk's Office.

My heartfelt congratulations to Stan Jessamine, Assistant Chief of Delaware Park Chemical Engine Company Number One and a professional fireman with the NY Fire Department Engine Company Number Seven named Citizen of the Year by the Phillipsburg Chamber of Commerce in 2002. Please make an effort to congratulate him for his accomplishments.

By the same token, I again wish to recognize and thank our emergency and fire personnel for their commitment, contribution and dedication to our community. As I've asked each letter prior, please make an effort to do whatever you can to support their departments, as you never know when you may be in need of their services.

As I commented in my five letters prior, Council meets on the first Wednesday of every month, with every effort being made to start promptly at 7:30 p.m. I look forward to seeing you there. As always, with kindest regards, I am,

Very truly yours,



Douglas J. Steinhardt
Mayor

