

August 1, 2005

Dear Lopatcong Township Resident:

I think one of the things I find most appealing about Lopatcong Township is that despite its growth it continues to maintain a small-town appeal. There is still a level of accessibility and familiarity with local government, its services and residents. And while there are occasional anomalies, i.e., April's hostage standoff at Overlook, Lopatcong remains safe and secure in its relative obscurity.

Those small-town characteristics notwithstanding, our school system still provides an exceptional education and our students rank perennially among the best locally and nationally. Our Clerk/Administrator, Beth Dilts, lends excellent municipal oversight and management. CFO Betty Dobes offers innovative approaches to our financial health. Chief Scott Marinelli directs a 13-person Police Department in which we are confident and proud. Fire Chief Pat Rivoli and Emergency Squad Captain Don Obley supervise Fire and Emergency Departments that render state-of-the art care and responsiveness. Gary Woolf, our Emergency Management Coordinator, has proven time and again his ability, utility and versatility. To borrow the catch-phrase coined by my friend and colleague, Councilman Jim Mengucci, Lopatcong is "a people helping people community." For these and the many reasons that follow, I am pleased to report that Lopatcong remains strong.

In July Council hired Lopatcong resident Steve Hockman to head our newly restructured Department of Public Works [hereinafter "DPW"]. Supervising both the Road and Buildings and Grounds Departments, Mr. Hockman brings a level of professionalism, experience and Township knowledge to the position. In addition, by reworking the DPW and the manner in which its employees are hired, Council was able to bring on Mr. Hockman and four full-time employees for less than it cost to employ our three former DPW employees.

In keeping with the DPW theme, Council voted in June to settle our claims against the three, former Road Department employees accused of stealing overtime from the Township. As The Express-Times reported, the Township was reimbursed more than \$100,000.00 in cash and benefits as part of that settlement. Moreover, Council's implementation of new internal and external controls will prevent similar, future abuses.

Recognizing that a Township is only as good as the foundation upon which it is built, Council is in the early stages of evaluating and updating our municipal infrastructure: our roadways and the storm and waste water systems that run along and under them. Council, in August, voted to authorize Joe Pryor, our Waste Water Engineer, to update our Waste Water Management Plan. He was likewise directed to prepare plans to improve other storm and waste water systems in the Delaware Park section of the Township. At Councilman Mengucci's request, a committee was formed to study storm water and drainage issues Township-wide, with emphasis on the Morris Park, Delaware Park and Rose Hill Heights sections of the Township. The lower portion of Powder Horn Drive was repaved in July. And in August, Council awarded to Tilcon New York, Inc., the more than \$2 million dollar contract to widen, reconstruct, realign and repave lower Strykers Road, between Route 57 in Lopatcong and Route 519 in Greenwich Township.

Regarding our long-awaited revaluation, after CLT's work was rejected by the Warren County Tax Board and in hopes of avoiding a lawsuit with CLT, we are negotiating with the company an agreement that will allow a third party to complete certain material deficiencies in its revaluation, at no additional cost to the Township. We have every confidence that by doing so, the revaluation can be completed this year and the values placed on the tax books for 2006.

Council, the Rent Leveling Board and our Brakeley Gardens residents were vindicated in July when the Superior Court dismissed Salem Management's complaint challenging the constitutionality of our decades-old Rent Control Ordinance, Salem's allegations and petty name calling notwithstanding. Although Salem has appealed the Superior Court's decision, Council has every confidence in our municipal attorneys and ordinance to withstand appellate review. I will report back to you later our progress.

Work is nearly completed on phase one of the Lopatcong Park, our 80 acre active and passive recreation area behind and adjacent to the Township Pool. After a recent extension granted to Bob Viersma and Sons, Inc., the contractor performing the work, construction is scheduled to conclude by November 1, 2005. It includes several baseball, softball, soccer and football fields, biking and walking paths, parking and open space. Future phases call for lighting, concessions and the construction of a more than 13,000 square foot community center.

Council is currently considering a policy that would allow our employees to "opt out" of Township-provided health insurance. Depending on employee interest and program availability, early estimates suggest a cost savings of more than \$50,000.00, or one cent in our tax rate.

Recognizing the practical impossibility of every resident keeping abreast of every municipal ordinance, action and resolution, allow me to describe briefly several ordinances adopted in July and enacted in August that have sweeping effect on all of us. In response to new storm water regulations adopted and enacted by the State Department of Environmental Protection, Council was forced to adopt and enact the following six

ordinances: Ordinance No. 2005-12, which amended Chapter 101 entitled "Dogs, Cats, and Other Owned Animals" addresses the proper disposal of pet waste. Please see the enclosed flier for further explanation. Ordinance No. 2005-13 amended Chapter 143 entitled "Littering" and addresses the proper disposal of garbage, recycling materials, grass clippings, etc. Ordinance No. 2005-14 established new Chapter 200 entitled "Improper Disposal of Waste," which prohibits the spilling, dumping or disposal of materials other than stormwater to the municipal separate storm sewer system. Ordinance No. 2005-15 amended Chapter 201 entitled "Illicit Connection" and prohibits unauthorized connections to the municipal separate storm sewer system. Ordinance No. 2005-16 established new Chapter 150 entitled "Wildlife Feeding," which prohibits feeding of unconfined wildlife in any public park or on any other Township owned or operated property. Ordinance No. 2005-17 entitled "Yard Waste Collection Program" outlines new rules and regulations for the proper collection and disposal of yard waste. Please pay special attention to our display ad in The Express-Times which will outline the terms for this year's Leaf Pickup Program. The full text of each can be found on-line at www.lopatcongtp.com, the Township's official website, or at the municipal building.

Special thanks to Council President Victor Camporine for his "Movies at the Pool" Program. Run three days in July and every Tuesday in August, it is a great success. I encourage anyone who has not yet participated, to attend. It is a wonderful way to relax and unwind with family and friends.

Thanks again to Chairwoman Kathy Degan, Diane Hall and Rainie Roncoroni, the Community Day Committee, on another great Community Day. Thanks as well to our sponsors and vendors for making it a success.

Congratulations to Darlene Eger, Sue Flad, Kevin Maguire, Pete Pump, Cathy Stires and Gary VanVliet, recognized at this year's Volunteer Recognition Dinner. Insofar as volunteerism is so essential to the vitality and viability of every small town, please be sure to extend your regards as well.

Please join me in congratulating Al Purdy, who retired in June after 32 years of service, as a Teacher, the District's first Assistant Principal, Principal/Chief School Administrator, and finally, Superintendent of the Lopatcong School System. In my nearly six years as Mayor, I came to know and respect Mr. Purdy as an educator, administrator and individual and know I join Council President Camporine, Councilmen Baker, Curry and Mengucci in wishing him health and happiness in his retirement. By the same token, please join me in welcoming our new Superintendent, Dr. Michael A. Rossi, Jr. He joins us from the Hillsborough School District, and Council and I look forward to continuing under his direction the good rapport developed under Mr. Purdy's leadership.

Fall cleanup will take place on Saturday, October 1, 2005, from 7:00 am to 12:00 pm at Delaware Park Engine Co., Lopatcong Fire Co. #2, and the Municipal Pool parking lot. For further information, please call the Clerk's Office.

Council President Camporine started a Brush Drop-Off Program that will begin Saturday, August 27, 2005, from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm and be available every fourth Saturday in September and October, 2005. Residents may take their brush, which includes tree branches and shrubbery, but not grass and loose leaves, to the Department of Public Works located at N. Third and Beers Sts. in Delaware Park. This program will run from April through October every year hereafter.

The Township began a Home Rehabilitation Program in 2003 designed to facilitate the rehabilitation of certain existing housing units. Homeowners are determined eligible through established annual income limits that are defined by the number of persons per household. You may contact Wayne Degan at 859-3355, Ext. 236 for more information.

As I have each letter, please remember to support our local Fire Departments and Emergency Squad. They are staffed with dedicated volunteers trained to serve and protect us. It is important that we remember to support and encourage them.

Finally, as I always conclude, 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.

Sincerely,

Douglas J. Steinhardt
Mayor, Lopatcong Township