

Lopatcong Township - Mayor Message June 6, 2007

Dear Lopatcong Resident:

One of my favorite tasks twice each year is my letter detailing the State of Lopatcong Township. Not only is it an opportunity for me to reflect on the approximately six months' past, but to contemplate the Township's short and long term futures. Eight months having elapsed since my last letter, and with so much on the horizon, I am pleased to report that Lopatcong is strong.

In November 2006, Township voters handily defeated the well-publicized and potentially divisive rent control referendum. Since then, matters between the Township, tenants and landlord have quieted and we've returned to the typical enforcement matters that had previously presented themselves to the Rent Leveling Board. Those disputes notwithstanding, Council remains fully committed to the ordinance and its general effect.

In early 2007, Council formed a subcommittee to address outstanding road improvement projects. I am pleased to report that the Municipal Engineer, Paul Sterbenz, completed a field inspection last week that will, literally, pave the way to finishing the lower Strykers Road improvements, with reconstruction of the railroad crossing at Strykers and Route 57 scheduled to begin in July.

Mr. Sterbenz also completed in May 2007, a study of the costs associated with repaving the roads in Delaware Park and Rose Hill Heights. Given the nearly \$1.3 million dollar cost associated with the overall project, Council is in the process of creating a construction schedule that would begin later this summer.

I am pleased to report that we are in the planning stages of the construction of a nearly 1.2 million square foot trucking and distribution center on lower Strykers Road (between Routes 57 and 519). I am meeting regularly with representatives of the Russo Development Company, NJ Department of Environmental Protection (regarding waste water expansion) and state and local engineers as we finalize the early stages of this project and Russo Development prepares to make formal application to the Township Planning Board for site plan approval. The multi-building complex would serve as a transportation and shipping hub. Truck traffic is proposed to empty out onto Route 519 in Greenwich, since it provides the most direct access to Highways 22 and 78. Once completed, the center would result in an approximately \$2 million dollar property tax ratable.

In May 2007 Council authorized the publication of Requests for Qualifications and Proposals in connection with our more than 100 acres of Ingersoll Rand property. That followed on the heels of our March 2007 decision to seek appraisals of the same lands. Since the Ingersoll Rand property was previously declared "an area in need of redevelopment," the Township Council, as the redevelopment authority, enjoys the right of eminent domain. Although condemning

the property is not our first choice, it is an avenue we are pursuing in the event Preferred Properties, the current owner, is unwilling or unable to make viable use of the land. Piscataway's Edgewood Properties is negotiating privately to acquire the site, while several other companies, including the Vornado Realty Trust, Wilfs and Woodmont Properties, have expressed an interest in acquiring it.

It was also in March that Council introduced the 2007 budget, which calls for a \$0.01 tax increase, owing primarily to State mandated increases in our pension contribution rates, insurance premiums and fuel and utility costs. To lessen the impact of the rising cost of living, we are actively exploring ways to cut costs by privatizing services, entering into purchasing coops, remarketing our banking and insurances, and participating in shared-services arrangements with surrounding municipalities.

It was as a result of our many shared-services discussions and in the wake of the several deaths on Route 22 and accidents on ancillary roadways, that Greenwich Township Mayor Bill Kanyuck and I devised what would ultimately become the Joint Task Force on Teenage Driving. Aimed at raising awareness among young drivers, and focusing on frequented roadways and high volume travel times, the program was a resounding success, endorsed by the Phillipsburg High School administration, and eventually subscribed to by all of the surrounding towns and townships.

Since my last letter, Council resolved with the Overlook Homeowners' Association the issues involving the support and maintenance of their roadways. Thanks to the members of its bargaining committee and to Council for bringing the matter to a palatable and amiable close.

Congratulations to Councilmen Bill Baker and Jim Mengucci on their reelection to Township Council. Collectively, they bring more than 25 years of experience to the dais. Individually, they bring their unique style and uncompromising dedication to Lopatcong Township. It is a privilege and pleasure to serve with them.

Congratulations also to Betty Kelly, Jim Marinelli II, Yola Marinelli, Bill Tickle, and Brian Weeks this year's Volunteer Recognition Dinner's honorees. As always, the Dinner was well attended. Each honoree was recognized for his and her individual contributions to the municipality. More than ever, volunteerism is the lifeblood of small communities that cannot afford certain paid services, such as fire, emergency, and coaching, making all of our volunteers invaluable assets to the Lopatcong family.

For those who haven't seen it, our Delaware Park fire company is near completing its physical expansion. Construction is nearly finished on the addition needed to house our 100' ladder truck.

As I ask each letter, please make an effort to support our fire and emergency

squads. They work tirelessly to protect us and preserve our community, and deserve our thanks and recognition.

June 16, 2007 is Community Day, followed our annual fireworks display. A new Community Day format promises to be just as family friendly, with activities for young and old alike. Thanks especially to Beth Dilts, our Municipal Clerk/Administrator for organizing this year's events.

Council President Camporine's "Movies at the Pool" starts July 10th and runs every Tuesday night until August 21st. This year's movie line-up includes Monster House, The Great Outdoors, Hoot, The Ant Bully, My Dog Skip, The Iron Giant and The Incredible Mr. Limpet. Shows start at dusk and are held indoors, under the pavilion, in the event of rain. A new bicycle is given away each night to one lucky boy or girl. I hope you will join us for these memorable, family nights.

To keep up on these and other community events, please refer to the Township's official website, [www.lopatcongtp.com](http://www.lopatcongtp.com). Recent updates make it an informative, user-friendly place to find important dates, forms, and other Township information.

Thanks again to all of you for allowing me to serve as your Mayor. I look forward to the challenges every day brings, and I hope the community is a better place for facing them.

Council meets the first Wednesday of every month, with every effort to start promptly at 7:30 p.m. I look forward to seeing you there.

Regards and, as always, I am,

Very truly yours,

Douglas J. Steinhardt