

MAYOR'S MESSAGE - 2005

Former Mayor Ken Short stated that 2005 was a very busy year in Washington Township. Our growth rate was very slow - 1.6% this past year as compared with 2% for 2004. Our Planning Board approved 29 new lots along with 363 age-restricted housing units to be built down by the Hackettstown Border. The Township continued with its road improvement program – paving Paula Drive, Flintlock Drive and Cedar Court. Comm. Walsh, with his efforts with the Morris County Open Space Committee and the Farmland Preservation, preserved an additional 574 acres of farmland in Washington Township. In addition to that, 127 acres of open space recreational area for passive recreation were added. We have over 650 acres slated to be preserved in 2006. By the end of this year, we should have close to 40% of Washington Township restricted from building – that's approximately 11,600 acres. This past year also saw the completion and fencing of three additional softball fields located at Palmer Park. We also completed three all-purpose fields at Falcon Fields. The Township also purchased 35 acres adjacent to the Middle School for the future site of a community center. This past year Washington Township lost two civic leaders – Jack Borgenicht and Bill Harrington. Falcon Fields was renamed Harrington Park this last October to honor Bill Harrington.

Comm. Short stated that the Township Committee also passed major environmental ordinances – the Ridgeline, Steep slope, Stream Corridor and Stormwater Ordinances. Due to some extremely difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions in 2005, the Township has restored its financial strength. Our bond rate was challenged this year. Our surplus never grew the way it was expected to due to programs outside the control of the Township. Our bond rating has remained intact. The Township has obtained additional revenues this past year – just short of \$1.2 million – with the sale of a liquor license, tax office and several small parcels of land. Last year at this time, we had a surplus just shy of \$400,000. Our surplus is now approximately \$2.93 million, so some of the programs we have put into affect have taken place.

Comm. Short stated that he wanted to recognize Freeholder Director Margaret Nordstrom. He stated that she was a Washington Township Committeewoman about ten years ago. Then, she moved on further and became Mayor, and then Freeholder. Last evening, she was elected to the highest elected position in Morris County – the Freeholder Director. She has been a leader of her community, and Comm. Short said he personally wanted to thank her again.

Comm. Short stated he wanted to thank the Township Committee, the Township employees and volunteers, his wife Sue, his family, and residents of Washington Township for supporting him as Mayor for the past two years. He has always taken great pride in the Township. Comm. Short thanked everyone for allowing him to serve them as Mayor.

MAYOR'S MESSAGE – 2006

Mayor Tobin welcomed Kevin Nedd to the Washington Township Committee. He thanked Comm. Short for his dedication and efforts on behalf of Washington Township - especially during his two years as Mayor. He took an extensive amount of time away from his business to work on behalf of Washington Township. This included several trips to Trenton to meet with NJDEP. He also met with Morris County Officials, attended public hearings on proposed legislation and regulations impacting our town, and held discussions with mayors of other municipalities.

My view of the coming year comes in two parts. Each of us was elected by the majority of all the residents voting in the general election in Washington Township. Therefore each of us has an equal role in decisions affecting our town. The Mayor is selected by his peers on the Township Committee, and his vote has no more weight than any other committeeman. The success or failure of this year's committee is highly dependent on all five committeemen working as a team. We will disagree on some projects, ordinances and priorities - that's a healthy process that ensures that the decisions that we make are the collective vision of what is best for our town. I have the benefit of four intelligent and competent colleagues on the committee. There is no question that each one of the them has a strong personality with equally strong opinions on a variety of issues. They bring a wide variety of knowledge, experience and competency on the challenges facing our town in the coming year. I am confident that we will use all these skills to achieve the best results for our town.

The second part of my view for 2006 is how we determine the direction and priorities for the coming year. I am asking that my four colleagues bring their top five goals and projects to the regularly scheduled public meeting for the Township Committee in January. I will state that I believe a top priority for all five committeemen is to control the municipalities portion of the property tax and minimize any increase consistent with providing all state-mandated services and all necessary public health and safety services to the residents. Some of the challenges that I see facing us in 2006 include completion of contract negotiations with the Department of Public Works and Police Unions with one key element being the sharing of health benefit costs by the union members and the Township. Completion of contract negotiations with municipalities served by our joint communication system and getting them to pay their fair share of the cost to operate and maintain the system. Renewed discussions with NJ Department of Transportation and Hackettstown regarding Hackettstown's determination to have a bypass built through our town connecting State Highways 57 and 46. And, regrettably, the task of replacing Chief Ed Ehrenberg who is retiring this year.

Finally, I want to recognize one of the most least-appreciated groups in this town and that's the non-contracted municipal employees. The municipal employees have the unenviable task of trying to make all the Township

