

Committee Meeting – December 1, 2008
MAYOR’S REPORT

THE ECONOMY & THE STATE OF THE TOWNSHIP:

Tonight I would like to focus on one issue only. That issue is the state of the Township in light of the current economic climate. Many if not all of us here have felt some type of backlash from the slowdown in the economy. We all had to pay higher prices for many goods and services and some have lost their jobs, their life savings and even their homes as a result. Probably the only bright spot in the current economic situation is that gasoline and fuel oil prices have dropped considerably which will help us all as the winter sets in.

While the financial condition of the Township is currently stable, we too have seen the effects of the economy as builders are constructing fewer new homes and contractors are seeing a drop in remodeling jobs and home additions. Some of the commercial developers are putting their projects on hold as banks and investors are reluctant to make loans to finance these projects. All of this translates into fewer assessments for new homes and ratables and fewer additional taxes collected, which leads us to the big question, what will 2009 and 2010 bring? While we will continue to see moderate growth in new home sales we should also see some substantial commercial projects go on line in the next two years. The Lighthouse Drive commercial corridor will begin to develop by next summer with the Super WaWa and CVS being built along with the retail plaza and storage facility just down the road. Also on Lighthouse Drive there will be a 100,000+ square foot shopping plaza/professional center next to the CVS. Retail locations on West Bay Ave., Route 9 and the new carwash will be opening within a few months. As for the residential outlook, Whispering Hills has broken ground on Rosehill Road with a combination of over 250 single family homes, townhouses and apartments, the Fifth Avenue tract of senior homes should begin next year and the Patriot’s Cove apartments off Route 9 will soon be completed. On Gunning River Road, the Hampton Ridge development is underway with a combination of 54 single family homes along with a medical plaza scheduled to open in 2009.

While Barnegat, along with the County, the State and the rest of the Nation is certainly feeling the pinch of the current economic slowdown, we are still strongly moving ahead with both residential and commercial growth.

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If the Township is to continue to move forward in a fiscally responsible manner, we need to do a few things that will insure our financial future while providing the needed services to our residents at a reasonable tax rate. No one, including me, likes to see their taxes go up so I am proposing the following actions that will help us meet these goals;

1. Continue our freeze on all non-essential hiring.
2. Replacement of employees that resign only if their position is essential to maintain the level of service and safety to our community.
3. Reduction in overtime in all departments, again without sacrificing the safety and welfare of the community.
4. A Township land sale of any unwanted properties. (Not the Cox House)
5. A public auction of all retired equipment and vehicles.
6. Continued and expanded discussions of shared services with the Board of Education and our neighboring municipalities.
7. Expanded recycling efforts to include schools and commercial entities.
8. A concentrated effort to recoup our expenses for the Menk homes from the County and the Menk Corporation.
9. An increase in our water and sewer hookup fees for new construction, which are far below the surrounding municipalities.
10. When practical, a freeze on “operating expense” accounts.
11. The elimination of onsite bonding for commercial construction resulting in more enticement for commercial entities to locate their businesses in Barnegat Township.
12. Implementation of my proposed water conservation ordinance for residents and businesses that use less than 10,000 gallons per quarter offset by an increase in higher tier usage fees.

These may be only some of the measures we can undertake to stabilize our tax rate but we as a Township need to tighten our belt just as many of our residents have already had to do. I am asking this Committee to make a concerted effort to accomplish these 12 goals that will ease the tax burden on the residents of our town.

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THIS WEEKEND:

**Saturday, Dec. 6th – Santa Breakfast @ the Rec. center @ 9 AM (sold out).
Santa’s Winter Workshop @ BHS cafeteria 12 to 3 PM.**

**Santa Lights Barnegat @ dusk followed by Santa @ the
Birdsall Street fire house @ 6:30 or 7 PM.**

Open house at the Cox House from 6 to 8 PM.

Sunday, Dec. 7th – Pearl Harbor Ceremony at the Dock – 10 AM.

**Santa Toy Run 2008 @ 1 PM. Starts @ 71 Highland Dr. &
ends @ Fay’s Harbor Inn on Route 9. Bring a Toy!
Music & a buffet.**

**Jeffrey M. Melchiondo
Mayor, Barnegat Township**