

# NEW JERSEY MUNICIPALITIES

New Jersey State League of Municipalities • njslom.org • February 2014

NJLM's 2014  
Legislative Guide

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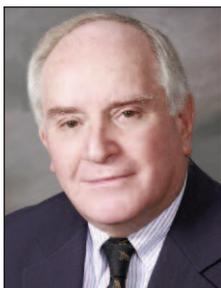
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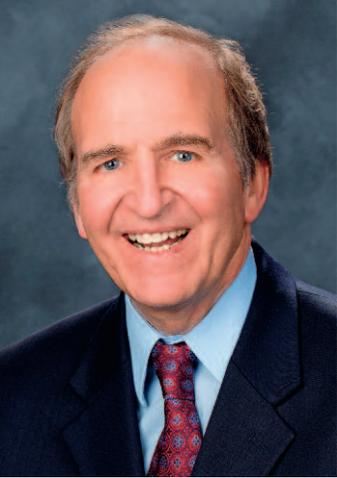
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FROM 222 WEST STATE STREET  
BILL DRESSEL, LEAGUE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**M**unicipal officials in New Jersey know that decisions made in Trenton can have a direct impact on their ability to provide quality services at the lowest possible property tax rates. As Governor Christie begins his second term, and as New Jersey's 216th Legislature gains momentum, you owe it to your constituents, to your colleagues in elected office, and to yourselves to make certain that your voices are heard in our State Capital.

[ LOCAL OFFICIALS WHO TAKE THE TIME CAN MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE ON A CRUCIAL PUBLIC POLICY OUTCOME. ]

Elsewhere in these pages, you will find our special legislative section which describes the vital role that you can play in the state's legislative policy-making process. As a 40-year veteran of League service,

I can tell you that when local officials take the time and make the effort to get involved, the results is better public policies for the people of our state.

For example, in 2010, after \$270 million of municipal property tax relief funding was slashed from the State Budget and the property tax levy cap was set at 2 percent, mayors and governing body members from the four corners of New Jersey rallied behind Governor Christie's management reform toolkit.

Reform of the state's binding arbitration system, which placed limits on public safety contract awards, was a major component of that package of bills. Local officials from throughout New Jersey contacted their Legislators in support of this initiative. The public employee unions rallied their forces to stop the reforms. And a few courageous Mayors walked through a gauntlet of opposition to testify to the need for limits, in legislative hearing rooms in Trenton.

Ultimately, compromise reforms were enacted. Under the terms of that compromise, the limit on arbitration awards is set to expire in April of this year. Without those limits, arbitrators will be able to impose awards that do not account for the 2 percent limit on the levy. Such awards would immediately threaten funding for all other municipal services. And, in the not-too-distant future, such awards could force local budget makers to reduce public safety staffing levels, as fewer local employees steadily take home higher percentages of local funds.

Accordingly, a major priority for us will be to convince the Legislature to permanently extend the limitations on arbitration awards, beyond the April 1 'sunset' date. Here again, local officials who take the time can make a positive difference on a crucial public policy outcome. ▲

# NEW JERSEY MUNICIPALITIES



## CONTENTS February 2014

### FEATURES



Transit-oriented Development

### COLUMNS

<b>From 222 West State Street</b> .....	<b>2</b>
By Bill Dressel	
<b>As I See It</b> .....	<b>10</b>
By Timothy C. McDonough, NJLM Past President; Mayor, Hope	
<b>Washington Watch</b> .....	<b>18</b>
By Robert Menendez, U.S. Senator	
<b>Under the Gold Dome</b> .....	<b>24</b>
By Darryl Isherwood	
<b>Legal Q&amp;A</b> .....	<b>36</b>
By Edward Purcell, Esq.	
<b>Getting the Most from Your League</b> .....	<b>44</b>
By Taran B. Samhammer	
<b>Business Card Directory</b> .....	<b>69</b>
<b>Garden Statements</b> .....	<b>72</b>
By Taran B. Samhammer	
<b>Events</b> .....	<b>72</b>
By Danielle Holland-Htut	



Street of the Week



Volunteerism

<b>Transit-oriented Development Is the Way to Go</b> .....	<b>4</b>
By John E. McCormac, Mayor, Woodbridge Township	
<b>Bloomington Focuses on the "Street of the Week"</b> .....	<b>8</b>
By Jon Dunleavy, Mayor, Bloomington & Ray Muller, Captain, Bloomington Police Department	
<b>Volunteers are a Town's Best Friend</b> .....	<b>12</b>
By Chuck Chiarello, Mayor, Buena Vista Township; NJLM Past President	
<b>Litter Marshals Help Keep Fair Lawn Clean</b> .....	<b>14</b>
By John Cosgrove, Mayor, Fair Lawn	
<b>We Must Preserve the Arbitration Award Cap</b> .....	<b>20</b>
By Declan O'Scanlon, Assembly Republican Budget Officer	
<b>Seeking Bipartisan Solutions for the People of New Jersey</b> .....	<b>22</b>
By Tom Kean, Senate Republican Leader	
<b>Wyckoff's Green Team Reaches Out to Businesses</b> .....	<b>26</b>
By Harriet Shugartman, Environmental Commission Chair & Robert J. Shannon, Jr., Municipal Administrator, Wyckoff	
<b>Local Finance Board Asks Tough Questions</b> .....	<b>30</b>
By Tom Neff, Director, Division of Local Government Services, DCA	
<b>Local Leaders Connect with Recovery Resources</b> .....	<b>32</b>
By Eileen Moon, External Affairs, Lincroft Joint Field Office	

### Make Yourself Heard—NJLM's Guide to Advocacy

<b>Building Resiliency After Superstorm Sandy</b> .....	<b>38</b>
By Terrence S. Brody, Deputy Executive Director, Governor's Office of Recovery and Rebuilding	
<b>Change and Prosper</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>A Parable from the Private Sector</b> .....	<b>42</b>
By Robert M. Czech, Chair/CEO, New Jersey Civil Service Commission	
<b>The Top 10 Environmental Developments of 2013</b> .....	<b>46</b>
By Lewis Goldshore, NJLM Environmental Counsel	
<b>Let's Change How We Think about Government Transparency</b> .....	<b>48</b>
By James R. Doherty, Administrator Clerk, Wantage Township	
<b>Towns Recognized for Sustainable Excellence</b> .....	<b>50</b>
By Randall Solomon, Co-Director, Sustainable Jersey	
<b>Addressing the Effects of Climate Change on Air Quality</b> .....	<b>54</b>
By Pam Mount, Member, New Jersey Clean Air Council & Richard Opiekun, Member, New Jersey Clean Air Council	
<b>Online Risk Management Support Available</b> .....	<b>58</b>
By David Grubb, Executive Director, Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance and Chris Botta, Mayor, Ramsey	
<b>Garden State Women are Ready to Run</b> .....	<b>62</b>
By Deanna-Marie Norcross, Program Coordinator, Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University	
<b>League Partners with NJEA</b> .....	<b>64</b>
<b>The Cat in the Hat Comes to New Jersey Schools</b> .....	<b>64</b>
By Christy Kanaby, New Jersey Education Association	
<b>Suzanne Walters Sworn In as League President</b> .....	<b>66</b>



Woodbridge  
Newark / New York  
Track 2

The Woodbridge NJ Transit Train Station, built in 1939 as a Depression-era work project, now serves 1,700 New York-bound commuters each day and is one of the busiest stops on NJ Transit's North Jersey Coast line.

# Transit-oriented Development Is the Way to Go



By John E. McCormac  
Mayor, Woodbridge Township

**W**oodbridge is a town with three very diverse train stations. They are all enormous catalysts of potential revenue for our municipal coffers.

Take MetroPark, opened in 1971 as Amtrak extended passenger rail transportation service in the fast-expanding Northeast corridor suburban market. The MetroPark station now has more than 7,000 daily riders on the New Jersey Transit (NJT) and Amtrak lines. It also has spurred enormous commercial growth, generating an estimated \$12 million a year in property tax revenue for Woodbridge Township.

We're also home to the Woodbridge NJT Train Station, built in 1939 as a Depression-era work project. It now serves 1,700 New York-bound commuters each day and is one of the busiest stops on NJT's North Jersey Coast line. In fact, local real estate agents tell me that residential home values in and around the Woodbridge station are consistently strong. People have discovered that residential neighborhoods in Woodbridge are an ideal place to live and conveniently commute.

Woodbridge also has the Avenel station, a lightly-used stop on the same line with no weekend service. For us, this is a major opportunity for redevelopment—it is an empty canvas, to be created in the way we envision.

All three stations—with varying scope and purpose—serve as lynchpins for a strong, sustainable future for our township.

In recent years, we have worked closely with local corporations to update and expand MetroPark. All should agree the hard work has paid off, as our township at the crossroads of New Jersey is home to some of the largest and most successful businesses in the state.

But the other two train stations have been trickier. We have worked closely with developers, engineers and architects and New Jersey Transit to figure out ways to maximize these enormous resources as transit-oriented developments (TODs). There has been tremendous vision and excitement. We plan to use the train stations as the center for walkable communities designed for young commuters and empty nesters.

But with the recession hitting in late 2007, many of our redevelopment plans were put on the shelf. Even with some great plans for the areas surrounding both train stations, the real estate market simply did not offer the revenue opportunities to make it happen.

Thankfully, times are changing. Forecasters are expecting home prices to increase 5 percent a year in New Jersey over the next few years, with more than 100,000 new jobs added between 2012 and 2013. In Woodbridge, we added some 2,000 private sector jobs over the past two years, with great potential for additional jobs as we further develop the Avenel Arts & Transit Village and as several industrial areas with national warehousing or production

operations expand. It all creates housing demand, and more importantly for municipalities, substantial ratable opportunities, especially in areas of the state that offer vibrant living within steps of a NJT stop.

**ONE OUT OF FOUR MUNICIPALITIES  
IN THE STATE HOSTS A RAIL STATION  
AND 30 PERCENT OF THE STATE'S  
POPULATION IS ALREADY WITHIN  
WALKING DISTANCE OF A TRAIN STOP.**

And there is more. New Jersey is ideally situated for growth in transit-orientated development. It makes sense, as one out of four municipalities in the state hosts a rail station and 30 percent of the state's population is already within walking distance of a train stop, according to NJT's demographic studies. Moreover, one in 15 employees living in New Jersey have jobs in Manhattan, a telltale sign that creating increased opportunities to live close to rail would benefit huge numbers of New Jersey residents.

Another statistic drives home the fact that Woodbridge and other New Jersey towns need to focus on redevelopment at train stations: The number of "transit-orientated" households is expected to grow along the Philadelphia-New York rail system by 83 percent between 2000 and 2030—an increase of 3 million.

The rationale for TOD redevelopment is nothing exclusive to New Jersey. Amtrak is pushing for more homes, offices and shops at Baltimore's Penn Station. In Pittsburgh, construction began this summer on a \$34 million transit center at the East Liberty station. In our area of New Jersey, developers are now building 116 upscale rental units within steps of the Rahway train station, while another developer wants to replace crumbling parking lots and an outdated industrial building at the Edison Train Station with apartments designed for young professionals and empty nesters.

More and more public officials see these transit-orientated developments as a way to generate new revenue from under-used land, replace outdated industrial buildings with a rich mix of new housing, small businesses, stores and restaurants.

Transit-orientated developments are an ideal way for municipalities to generate millions of dollars in new revenue with minimal impact on schools and roadways. That's because the people who make this housing choice are much less likely to have school-age children or to own cars—creating substantial net tax profits for host towns.

In Avenel, our plan is to redevelop the former 27-acre General Dynamics property, creating an arts village where artists and professionals can work and reside. The concept plan includes fewer than 500 residential units, with condominiums and townhouses, as well as lofts and studios. We envision a village of galleries, performance spaces, cafes and boutiques—all supported by this new housing and easy access to the train station.

Across from Town Hall, we have the Main Street Rehabilitation and Transit Village Plan, which calls for a whole new way of thinking about the Woodbridge train station. The design would be all about interacting within a walkable community, with traditional stoops offered for people to sit and connect, buy-local shops and boutique galleries, and open-air restaurants and dining. The plan is to create day, evening, and post-commute vibrancy.

The plan also includes a public plaza and park, as well as new design standards that encourage the concentrated construction of ground-floor retail and



The Avenel Arts Village & Transit-Oriented Development Plan takes advantage of its proximity to the Avenel Train Station for development of up to 500 housing units, a 10,000 square foot Arts Center, and 25,000 square feet of retail/arts village support space. The Avenel Arts Village creates a residential-friendly development that will encourage the growth of arts in the community and redevelopment within the Avenel section of Woodbridge Township.

restaurants, with apartments above, within steps of the train station. Again, such planned development would be a revenue boost for the municipality.

Besides generating municipal revenue, we believe our vision for train stations will help solve many of the issues now facing local government. Such developments would bolster disposable income, for example, by reducing housing and automobile costs. By eliminating the need for a car, and

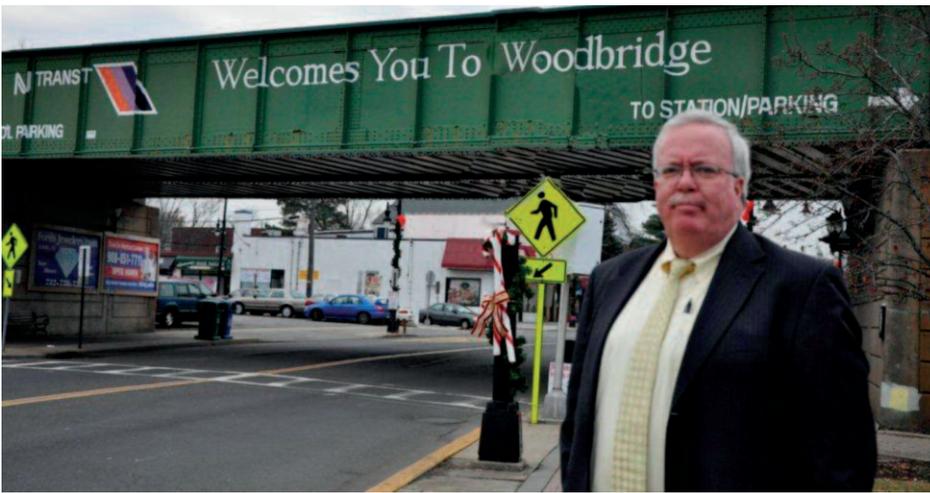
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Woodbridge Mayor John E. McCormac promotes Transit-Oriented Development at the Woodbridge NJT Station.

placing so many amenities within a short walk, some estimate residents could save \$3,000 to \$4,000 a year. A portion of these savings would likely go toward the purchase of local goods and services.

Transit-oriented development is a central part of our award-winning "Greenable Woodbridge" initiative. It can further our sustainability goals by

locating vibrant new housing near public transportation, which conserves open space and reduces dependency on cars. Meeting substantial housing needs in compact communities near transit also allows Woodbridge to preserve open space elsewhere.

I am proud to report that Woodbridge was named the New Jersey League of Municipalities 2013 Sustainable Jersey™

Silver-Level Certification Champion for the fifth consecutive year. We have achieved remarkable success that will stand as a milestone for years to come.

Transit-oriented development is also a way to spur economic development, as replacing aging structures with new construction has a tremendous ripple effect in the local economy by generating construction jobs and sales tax on construction materials in the near term, and higher tax revenue and private property owner reinvestment in the long term. TODs also provide a more cost effective way for Woodbridge to deliver services, as we anticipate such infill development would reduce infrastructure costs by up to 25 percent. Neither roadways nor water and sewer lines need to be substantially expanded or replaced.

As New Jersey—and Woodbridge—move beyond the recession, it is my anticipation that similarly-situated communities will revisit plans for transit-oriented development that were proposed during the real estate boom of the mid-2000s. Now is the time to give them a second look. ▲

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# Bloomingtondale Focuses on the "Street of the Week"



By Jonathan Dunleavy  
Mayor, Bloomingtondale  
& Ray Muller, Captain,  
Bloomingtondale Police Department

In small agencies throughout the country, community policing is not new or cutting edge; it is the way small town USA law enforcement has been done for quite some time. The resistance of some communities to merge departments has nothing to do with saving money. Instead, it is a result of the belief that a police officer who knows the people of his community as well as he knows his own family can be a more caring and trusted public servant.

The benefit of having police officers who know your citizens is like going to the same mechanic or hair stylist. Because they know you, they can better provide the services you expect to receive.

The reality though, is that over time the trust we place in those services can be eroded, due in part to the constantly changing world we live in. Providing police services to a small community like Bloomingtondale is no different. Although our population of 7,656 has only increased .6 percent over the last decade; changes in diversity, economy, and technology have transformed our community.

From an administrative point of view, addressing the aforementioned external changes in the municipality we serve must be coupled with the internal changes that are occurring as well.

As new officers are hired, older officers retire, and the struggles to do more with less under fixed spending caps are here to stay. Bloomingtondale police chief Joseph Borell's philosophy of "innovation vs. termination" is employed when challenging his 18 police officers to provide the most efficient community police services.

The Bloomingtondale Police Department's new "Street of the Week" (SOW) program is a good example of how our department is meeting this challenge. Reworking the most basic of police principles and incorporating a combination of social media technology with high police visibility, the SOW program demonstrates the proactive mindset of our police department.

In addition to random street patrol, the SOW program involves providing additional high visibility police patrols



Director of Bloomingtondale's "Street of the Week" program Patrolman Steven Smith poses with the sign that designates the Street of the Week, which will receive extra patrols, policing equipment and attention.

within a street predetermined at random throughout the Borough of Bloomingdale. In keeping with the desire to provide a safe atmosphere in all residential areas, officers will emphasize high profile, mobile and interactive policing. Our goal is to increase citizen confidence in the police department.

**THIS PROACTIVE,  
NOVEL APPROACH TO  
COMMUNITY POLICING  
IS IMPROVING  
POLICE/CITIZEN  
COOPERATION IN  
BLOOMINGDALE,  
STREET BY STREET.**

The primary method of policing will be vehicle patrol, limited foot patrol and limited bike patrol. Patrol shifts will be assigned to saturate the "Street of the Week" with the main goal being to interact with residents, when possible, to help residents get to know our officers. The program also gives officers an opportunity to hear residents' concerns and identify ways to improve the quality of life on that street.

**How It Works** Prior to the program's implementation, residents were mailed a "Street of the Week" program outline and a form titled "Quality of Life/Complaint" with their water utility bills. The form was also posted on the borough's website and on the Bloomingdale Police Facebook page. The designated officer (Patrolman Steven Smith) collected and analyzed each complaint and prepared an action plan for each street. In most cases, Officer Smith contacted each resident to better understand the concerns and plan the response.

Each week, a street within the Borough of Bloomingdale is designated as "Street of the Week" and targeted

for enhanced patrols. Then the department posts signs about the program and places a message board and driving speed recorder on the street.

Prior to going on patrol each officer checks the posted action plan for the targeted street and areas of concern. Then, throughout his or her shift, each patrol officer will cruise that particular street at least one extra time each hour in addition to the daily random patrol. Our officers are encouraged to seek out opportunities to interact with residents throughout the day. Any resident questions or concerns are reported to the program's director. Issues such as missing/obstructed street signs, animal complaints, suspicious cars, persons and speeding are noted in a complaint and forwarded to the appropriate office.

In addition to patrol officers, all command officers including the chief of police, captain, detective, and patrol sergeants also make extra patrols to the assigned "Street of the Week" when on the road.

**Results** Since July of 2012 when the "Street of the Week" program began, 14 municipal roadways and one county roadway have been targeted for heightened patrols. In all action plans, the number one complaint of residents living on those streets was speeding. Second on the list were animal complaints—ranging from bark-

ing dogs to black bears roaming the neighborhood. Other complaints received were defaced street signs, zoning violations, suspicious activity, and a lack of police patrols in certain areas of the borough.

The response to these concerns and breaches of lawful conduct has taken many forms and includes other allies in public service. With the cooperation of the Borough Mayor and Council, two recent hires have allowed the Bloomingdale Police Department to expand the traffic bureau to specifically target speeding and other moving violations. Suspicious activity reported on one street uncovered drug activity that has resulted in arrests and an ongoing investigation by our Detective Bureau.

The Department of Animal Control works closely with the police department and has been actively pursuing domestic animal and wildlife complaints. The Department of Public Works has replaced signage, fixed sidewalks, and repaired storm drains as a result of the "Street of the Week" reporting program.

The "Street of the Week" program initiated by the Bloomingdale Police Department helps us to focus our community policing efforts. This proactive, novel approach to community policing is improving police/citizen cooperation in Bloomingdale, street by street. ▲

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## The Super Bowl Is a Touchdown for Our Region



By Timothy C. McDonough  
Mayor, Hope; NJLM Past President;  
Senior Advisor, NY/NJ Super Bowl  
XLVIII Host Committee

Regardless of which team wins the Super Bowl on February 2, the game is a big win for the citizens of New Jersey. The first Super Bowl to take place in a cold-weather city in an open-air venue, the game allowed a major moment in sport history to play in our backyard.

I'm very pleased to have been a part of making it happen. And I appreciate the important role my fellow local elected officials as well as many state officials played in the process. Without your support we would have never been able to attract an event of this stature to our state.

It's been two years in the planning and required the input and effort of countless individuals, but you can be sure that the planning and extraordinary effort that went into hosting the game has been well worth it. Consider that:

- The direct economic impact on our region of hosting the Super Bowl is estimated at over \$549 million.
- Millions more will result from the widespread media coverage and publicity that showcased the hospitality and attractions of our region.
- Local residents have been able to enjoy and take pride in the related events and the excitement of the game.
- People from throughout the region, including over 10,000 volunteers contributed to the effort.

As host to one of the world's most popular sporting events, our region has been showcased in a way that it hasn't been before. We expect the game to provide an economic boost as fans descend on East Rutherford from all around the world. We also expect to see a rise in business activity well before and after game day. And in the years to come, the exposure provided by the game will prompt more people to visit the New York/New Jersey metropolitan region.

Finally, the NFL and the Host Committee expect that the impact of the Super Bowl will extend beyond the revenue and exposure of game itself. Our goal was to take advantage of the excitement and enthusiasm of the Super Bowl to raise money and touch the lives of thousands.

While fundraising efforts are an expected part of hosting the Super Bowl, we sought to set a new standard. We worked to raise millions of dollars that will go back into the community. A special target of our efforts is youth programs and organizations. The donations will be distributed to local community organizations through the Snowflake Youth Foundation, established and funded by the NY/NJ Super Bowl Host Committee.

Hosting the Super Bowl was a fantastic opportunity. By the time you are reading this we will know whether our vision for a true "winter" football game will have come true. And even though we can't guarantee the weather, it will have been a Super Bowl like no other. It is our hope that New Jersey can build on the success of this event to attract more events of this magnitude to the Garden State.

Fortunately, our region isn't new to hosting big events. MetLife Stadium, the New Jersey Sports and Exhibition Authority, the New York City Mayor's Office of Citywide Events and the surrounding communities have the kind of experience that can help our state win bids for major events. We also have the infrastructure that makes hosting an event of this scale possible.

By successfully hosting the Super Bowl, we've demonstrated to the world just how efficient, hospitable, and sophisticated our region is. We also enjoyed a rare opportunity to raise money for the less fortunate while boosting tourism and our economy. That's a winning formula that will outlast the final seconds of Super Bowl XLVIII! ▲

REGARDLESS OF  
WHICH TEAM WINS  
THE SUPER BOWL ON  
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# Volunteers Are a Town's Best Friend



By Chuck Chiarello  
Mayor, Buena Vista Township;  
NJLM Past President



Buena Vista Township has five volunteer fire districts and three volunteer rescue squads. The fire districts raise tax dollars for their equipment and maintenance of their buildings, but the big savings come from having several hundred volunteers that give our community a 200 percent effort, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**V**olunteers may be your best asset in getting quality, cost-effective services in difficult financial times, regardless of the size of your town. Think of all the volunteers your community depends on. Without the contributions of volunteers, how many of these services would have to be supported by taxes or discontinued? The mission of this article is to get your creative juices flowing with ways to show your appreciation and encourage volunteers.

The most widely recognized volunteers on the municipal level are firefighters and EMS (emergency medical services) providers—but don't forget all the members of your town boards and sub-committees serving your municipality, the sports organizations (coaches and leaders) who help to build the character of our youth or the people who donate their time at the hospital, churches, schools, charity groups, food banks, service clubs, scouts, and in countless others situations. Imagine doing without these people! Imagine not having their spirit.

**EVEN WITH THE HUMBLE PAY  
WE RECEIVE AS ELECTED OFFICIALS,  
I BELIEVE WE CAN BE THE  
ULTIMATE VOLUNTEER BY GIVING  
BACK TO OUR MUNICIPALITY.**

As they say on TV—but wait, there's more! Let's not forget our business community, labor unions, and local civic groups (such as the Lions, Rotary, Exchange Clubs and more). These clubs donate money, supplies, and services or give their time to your community. Leaders in every town in New Jersey will likely remember a time when one or more of these groups gave something to your community that you wouldn't have been able to afford otherwise.

In Buena Vista Township the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) completely wired a 10,000 square foot community center. On another occasion, they assisted in replacing stadium lights at our football field along with other non-union local contractors. The Exchange Club raised many a flag pole in our community.

These actions saved our rural community tens of thousands of dollars.

Think about how many times local retail businesses and corporations donated to our municipal governments and especially the schools. They've sponsored sports teams, tickets, door prizes, or placed ads in program books. Local businesses provide food, snacks, or services to make events happen that might otherwise have not. Many school districts have eliminated certain academic and sports programs. These programs have now been placed in the hands of volunteer parents, coaches or supporters to keep the programs alive. These caring volunteers rely on the business community to help them make things happen. Uniforms, materials and financial donations make the impossible happen in these difficult times.

Buena Vista Township has five volunteer fire districts and three volunteer rescue squads. The fire districts raise tax dollars for their equipment and maintenance of their buildings, but the big savings come from having several hundred volunteers that give our community a 200 percent effort, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Taxpayers have realized millions of dollars in savings over the years from these volunteer services. It's important that elected officials and taxpayers alike encourage these emergency volunteers to remain a vital part of our communities.

Programs like LOSAP (Length of Service Awards Programs) reward fire and EMS volunteers with nominal retirement benefits in exchange for their dedication to serving their municipality. We recognize the accomplishments of these volunteers at our televised township meetings for their efforts in tragic situations, following storms, or for awards they receive. As elected officials we must accentuate the positive where and when we can. If Buena Vista Township had just one paid 24/7 fire company it would exceed the expenses of all five of our volunteer fire districts combined. Knowing the benefit of your resources is important. Take an inventory of the volunteer assets your municipality has. Make your residents aware of what they are gaining and the dollars they are saving.

Besides recognizing fire and EMS vol-

unteers at televised meetings, we salute local sports teams, academic achievers, and give out "Making Buena Vista Proud" awards for special accomplishments in helping our community. We also promote good efforts in our township newsletters or on our website. Since Buena Vista Township is rural (42.5 square miles with 11 postal zip codes, two area codes and we border two counties) it's not always easy to promote the volunteer efforts in our community—but we try hard to get the message out.

Participate in your community—it helps keep volunteer moral high. Attend fundraising events, show up at sports games, have breakfast with the high school swim team, attend a fire company banquet or dozens of other possible functions. Your presence is appreciated—it truly is. The more often you show up, the more faith people have in their local elected leadership.

As I begin my 23rd year of elected service, I feel that the residents of

Buena Vista Township are fortunate to live where volunteerism, community service and generosity still abounds. Our nation has been through a difficult financial time. We are just seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. I can honestly say that Buena Vista could not have survived without the volunteer spirit that lives on here.

In closing, what are you doing to support your volunteers? Have you said thank you lately? Have you given a plaque to a retiring volunteer? When's the last time you stopped at the fire house and just said hello? Have you made time to find out what's happening in your community this week and showed up for an event you might otherwise not have gone to? Even with the humble pay we receive as elected officials, I believe we can be the ultimate volunteer by giving back to our municipalities. ▲

**Chuck Chiarello is a 23-year elected official in Buena Vista Township serving his 18th year as Mayor. He is also a League Past President.**



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# Litter Marshals Help Keep Fair Lawn Clean



By John Cosgrove  
Mayor, Fair Lawn

**F**air Lawn, a five square mile community in Bergen County with a population of 32,457, takes pride in the beauty of its community. However, like many communities we were struggling with the problem of litter. The borough was concerned because litter not only looks bad, it can also contaminate waterways when it is washed or dumped into the storm drains.

Fair Lawn has several creeks that drain into the Passaic and Saddle Rivers. Water from the roadways drains into storm drains and into these creeks. Runoff pulls all the litter that has accumulated along with contaminants into our waterways. This contamination can kill the wildlife that lives in the waterways.

We were concerned about our business districts because we knew that how the storefronts and streets look directly affects potential customers. Storefronts that are clean, neat and tidy are more likely to draw new customers. A business district that is clean looks prosperous and successful. Also, in the early 1990s, the City of Newark did a study on how litter and graffiti affected crime rates. For several weeks the city cleaned all litter, garbage and graffiti each day. During this period, the crime rate for this area plummeted. It showed the criminal element that the residents and businesses in the area cared about their neighborhood and would be more likely to report crimes or suspicious activities.



Runoff pulls all the litter that has accumulated along with contaminants into our waterways. This contamination can kill the wildlife that lives in the waterways.



Each Litter Marshal receives a Litter Marshal pin, a reporting pad for documenting littering incidents and educational materials to help people understand the seriousness of littering.

Over the years, in an effort to control litter, the borough had enacted a number of laws; including measures to prohibit littering in public places, dumping and placing flyers on vehicles. However, just having these ordinances on the books wasn't preventing people from littering or encouraging our residents to pick up litter.

**WE HAVE  
120 VOLUNTEERS  
WHO SERVE AS  
LITTER MARSHALS.  
SINCE THE PROGRAM  
BEGAN 112 VIOLATORS  
HAVE BEEN CAUGHT.**

And, unfortunately, enforcement of these laws was an uphill battle that the borough was losing. Our Police Department is too busy dealing with a wide-variety of other criminal activity to enforce litter ordinances. Due to budgetary constraints the size of our Police Department has been reduced, increasing the workload for each of the officers. Additionally, it is very unlikely that someone will litter or dump trash right in front of a police officer.

In 2004 our Clean Communities Coordinator Ron Lotterman, who also serves as the Borough's Recycling Coordinator, proposed starting the Litter Marshal Program. Modeled on a successful program from Ohio, the Litter Marshal Program encourages private citizens to anonymously report illegal dumping and littering. The intent of the program is to stop littering and dumping. In addition to enhancing our enforcement efforts,

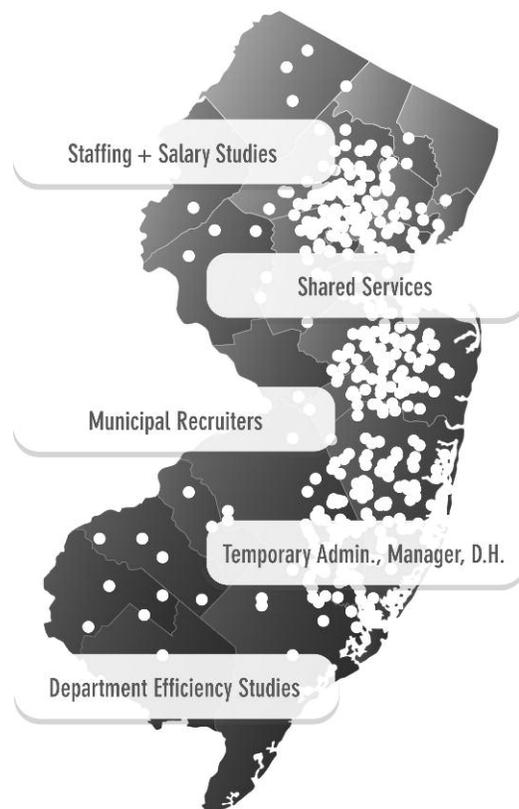
the program is designed to be educational. We want to make people think about what they are doing before they do it, so the program is designed to change people's behavior.

Once the Clean Communities Coordinator had the support of the Council and the Police Department (both essential elements to a successful program), he began to implement the Borough's Litter Marshal Program.

The program relies on volunteers. It

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gives residents an opportunity to be involved in making their community a better place. Each Litter Marshal receives a Litter Marshal pin, a reporting pad for documenting littering incidents and educational materials to help people understand the seriousness of littering. Litter Marshals are told not to confront anyone they witness littering or illegally dumping. They are to write down the license plates of the vehicle involved, the date and time of the incident, where the incident occurred and if they knew the type of material dumped or littered. They are also asked to note anything that might help the Clean Community Coordinator track down the offender.

**THE LITTER MARSHAL PROGRAM, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE THREE-LITTER CLEAN UP DAYS WE HOLD EACH YEAR, HAS MADE AN IMPACT.**

The Clean Communities Coordinator designed a brochure describing the Litter Marshal Program that could be given to potential Litter Marshals. He also designed a Storm Drain Litter brochure and a Clean Business Guidelines brochure to help educate our business owners about their role in keeping Fair Lawn clean. The borough set up a Litter Marshal Hotline for the Litter Marshals to report the incidents. We also provided an email address.

When the program first started the Clean Communities Coordinator would have the Police Department run the license plates provided by the Litter Marshals. The laws have changed since then, making it a little bit more difficult. Currently, the Clean Communities Coordinator has applied to the state for permission to run the license plates himself. Once he has obtained the address, he sends a Litter Violation Warning Notice along with several brochures and flyers relating to the effects of litter. The letter advises



We have 120 volunteers who serve as Litter Marshals. Since the program began 112 violators have been caught. The Litter Marshals have observed people throwing out cigarette butts, food containers, and drink cups.

that any future violations may result in a municipal summons with a maximum penalty of \$500 and/or 90 days of community service.

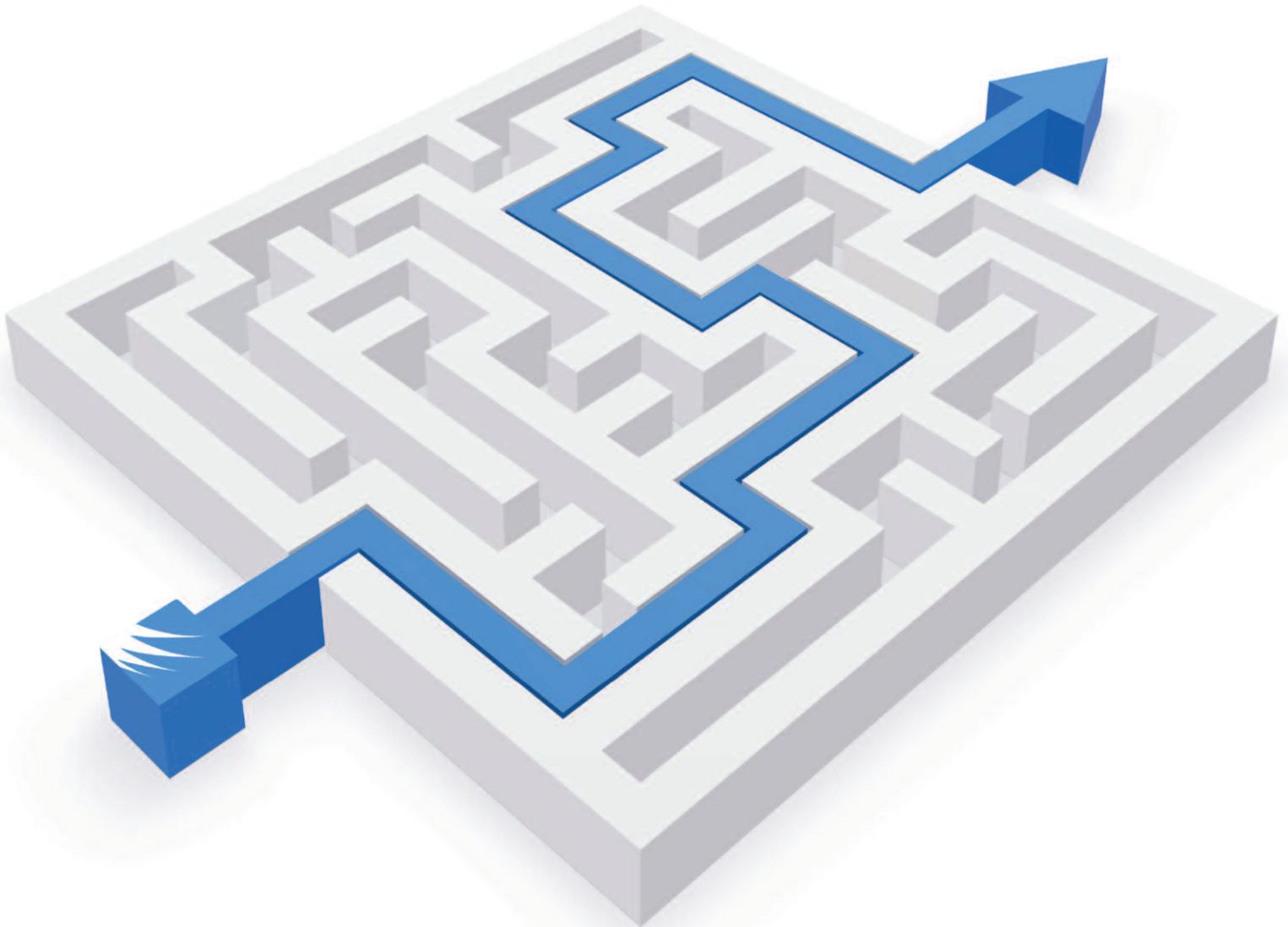
The costs for the program are not very high and implementation of the program is very easy. The most expensive part of the program is the cost of printing the brochures and the reporting pads. The violation letters are done in-house. The money we receive from Clean Communities is used to fund the program.

Fair Lawn received the New Jersey Clean Communities Enforcement Award in May 26, 2005. The New York Times gave the program a "thumbs up" for its efforts in cleaning up Fair Lawn. Several other municipalities have begun to use our program as a guide

to develop their own Litter Marshal program. Bergen County is using it through the Riverkeeper's Program.

We have 120 volunteers who serve as Litter Marshals. Since the program began 112 violators have been caught. The Litter Marshals have observed people throwing out cigarette butts, food containers, and drink cups. The Clean Communities Coordinator once spotted someone walking away from a picnic table and leaving his lunch waste behind.

The Litter Marshal program, in conjunction with the three-litter clean up days we hold each year, has made an impact. We continue to educate our residents and the business community on the importance of keeping Fair Lawn clean. ▲



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## Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act

By Robert Menendez  
U.S. Senator (Democrat)

**O**n October 29, 2013, one year to the day after Superstorm Sandy struck the New Jersey coast causing billions of dollars in damage and uprooting thousands of residents from their homes, I introduced the Homeowner's Flood Insurance Affordability Act. Bucking the partisan trend that has become all too pervasive in recent years, I reached across party-lines and worked with Republicans to find common ground on this issue. As a result, my legislation has earned broad bipartisan support from all ends of the political spectrum and all regions of the country. From progressives like Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts to conservatives like Senator John Hoeven of North Dakota, my legislation is currently cosponsored by 28 Senators, including eight Republicans.

My motivation for introducing this bill was the countless Sandy survivors calling my office, writing to me, tearfully pleading to me for help. They were facing what I've come to call a "triple whammy." First, they had their home damaged or destroyed by Sandy; then they faced rate increases caused by Biggert-Waters; and finally, to add insult to injury, they will soon face even higher rates as a result of new flood maps coming online.

For many New Jerseyans this "perfect storm" of events is simply overwhelming. It threatens to force victims out of their homes, causing property values to drop and potentially leading to mass exoduses of entire communities. And as foreclosures and declining housing values deplete their tax bases, Mayors struggling to rebuild will find they have fewer resources for recovery. If not addressed, Biggert-Waters has the potential to devastate communities and fundamentally alter their unique character. As a former Mayor, I understand these unique challenges facing local officials and the threat they pose. So while it's true that we must implement reforms to put the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) on a more stable footing, we need to do so prudently to avoid catastrophic unintended consequences.

My legislation would do exactly this by requiring FEMA to take a time-out in order to study and provide solutions to address the effects Biggert-Waters will have on flood insurance affordability and program participation. FEMA would also have to certify that they are using sound scientific and engineering methodologies to update flood maps, to ensure they are accurate. Until these steps are taken, homeowners who purchased their home or voluntarily purchased flood insurance after Biggert-Waters was enacted would receive the same treatment as before. In addition, homeowners who played by the rules and built

to code, only to see FEMA move the goalpost with updated maps, would be spared paying thousands of dollars in increased premiums.

And as the thousands of New Jerseyans who were incorrectly placed in high-cost, V-zones by the Advisory Base Flood Elevation (ABFE) maps FEMA released in New Jersey last December know all too well, FEMA's mapping process is far from perfect. I heard from countless Mayors who immediately questioned the accuracy of these ABFEs and I echoed their concerns to FEMA. And finally after months urging them to do so, FEMA finally admitted its mistake and released new working maps that showed more than an 80 percent reduction of V zones in some counties. We cannot allow erroneous maps to force people from their homes and destroy communities. The stakes are just too high.

Ironically, if not addressed, the drastic rate increases mandated by Biggert-Waters could actually have the perverse effect of hurting the program's solvency and costing taxpayers more. If premiums are increased too quickly, people will have no choice but to drop out of the program, threatening the program's solvency. In addition, reduced NFIP participation also increases the amount of disaster assistance payments the federal government must make, leaving taxpayers on the hook. That's because individual disaster assistance is used to cover uninsured losses caused by a natural disaster. The more people are uninsured, the greater our uninsured losses will be.

Critics allege that my bill merely delays higher premiums that are all but inevitable. But that's why my bill requires FEMA to propose long-term solutions to the problem of affordability.

One silver lining of Sandy is the influx of flood mitigation funds New Jersey has received to elevate homes, voluntarily buy-out severely flooded properties, and undertake other flood control efforts. But homeowners and towns haven't had the time to take advantage of these programs. For many homeowners, these funds might come too late, as dramatic rate hikes could force people out of their homes. What a tragedy it would be if survivors of the worst natural disaster New Jersey has ever seen were able to rebuild only to have their dream shattered by a man-made disaster. They shouldn't have to be stronger than the storm and FEMA.

The Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act is a broadly bipartisan, carefully crafted, tightly targeted approach to restore the solvency of the NFIP, keeping flood insurance affordable and accessible. We need to pass this bill and we need to pass it now. ▲

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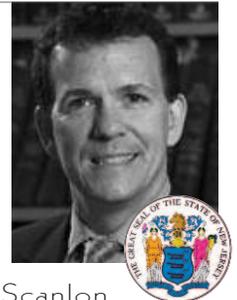
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- **23<sup>rd</sup>** in Public Affairs
- **24<sup>th</sup>** in Public Policy Analysis



# We Must Preserve the Arbitration Award Cap



By Declan O'Scanlon  
Assembly Republican Budget Officer

**F**or almost two decades the State of New Jersey designed a system of local government, with state mandates, that is doomed to fiscal destruction. Between an exploding pension system and a bizarre and unsustainable combination of conflicting tax caps and arbitration laws the Legislature sent local government on a path towards insolvency.

It doesn't take more than an understanding of grade school mathematics. If your budget is constrained, in this case by tax caps, while at the same time your largest budget line item (labor costs) is ordered to increase by an amount greater than your revenue increase, at some point you will go bankrupt. It's that simple. Yet that scenario was in place in New Jersey until Governor Christie and the Legislature passed the interest arbitration award cap in 2010, finally eliminating the absurd conflicting state mandates of our tax caps and arbitration mandates. The policy has been as successful as expected. I serve on the interest arbitration task force set up as part of the reform to assess its performance. Runaway salary increases and their disproportionate budgetary impacts have been curbed.

Unfortunately there was a provision baked into the law that would sunset it this spring. Essentially, the law would revert back to the broken system we had before the reform. Some will argue the system won't be identical—there were a few other wording changes made to the law that will be permanent, but the door is left wide open to arbitrators awarding contracts that exceed tax caps.

Permitting the sunset to occur rolls back one of the most important reforms we accomplished on a bi-partisan basis. This reform was responsible for a dramatic stabilization in property taxes. Any legislator who facilitates the sunset of this essential statute is playing a dangerous and irresponsible political game.

One critical aspect of the reform that does still need to be fleshed out is how salary structures of affected unions can be maintained. That is a fair concern raised by the unions and their representatives. Local officials should be explor-

ing ways to increase starting salaries for new hires. Unfortunately a byproduct of the ill-conceived sunset provision has been a disincentive to deal with long-term salary structure reform.

**IT IS THE VERY FACT THAT WE  
HAVE A TAX CAP THAT MAKES IT  
ESSENTIAL THAT WE MAINTAIN  
THE ARBITRATION AWARD CAP.**

Astonishingly, representatives of the affected unions have argued that the interest arbitration cap isn't needed. They argue that the tax cap alone will suffice to maintain tax rates. Either these folks simply don't understand the fairly basic facts I outline above, or they are lying to us. Simply put, if an entity has a cap on its revenue growth while its expenses (in this case salaries) outpace that cap, the entity will eventually go bankrupt. Or the entity will cease to be able to function as its budget is consumed by the disproportionately increasing salaries. It is the very fact that we have a tax cap that makes it essential that we maintain the arbitration award cap.

Permitting the arbitration award cap to sunset would be one of the single biggest failures of any New Jersey Legislature in the last three decades. We are so close to rectifying the disastrous set of rules, laws and mandates that previous Legislatures have inflicted upon our local governments. We must finish the job and make the arbitration award cap permanent. ▲

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# Seeking Bipartisan Solutions for the People of New Jersey



By Tom Kean  
Senate Republican Leader

**A**s New Jersey Senate Republican Leader, I look forward to improving New Jersey's communities by working during this new legislative session with mayors, council members and local administrations across New Jersey.

For New Jersey's diverse cities and towns, our legislative priorities continue to involve fostering shared services, consolidation and mergers where feasible, in order to reduce the property tax burden on residents and make local services more efficient.

Senate Republicans are working to enact a bipartisan solution to the sick-leave retirement jackpots for public employees, which carry a nearly \$1 billion property tax liability. Republicans and Democrats have publicly acknowledged the immediate—and in some cases—long-term financial strain that these lump-sum bonuses can put on local budgets and residents.

Senate Republicans also plan to work in a bipartisan fashion to repeal the duplicative layers of government that hinder consolidations, starting with civil service reform. We will continue to review opportunities to change the culture that has resulted in our state having the highest local government and public school district costs in the nation. These costs are threatening to drive families and employers out of our state.

Indeed, a big part of making New Jersey and its property taxes more affordable remains our quest to make our schools more efficient. Reform bills, such as last session's S-2171, will help to rein in the largest portion of property tax bills. Senate Republicans are trying to facilitate school consolidations and shared services, pushing for greater accountability and exploring school funding improvements. These measures will ensure that tax dollars for public education are distributed appropriately throughout the state. Our goal is to lessen property tax burdens for communities that pay the most and see their tax dollars wasted elsewhere in chronically failing districts.

**More jobs, revenues** Right now, one of the biggest issues at all levels of government is job creation and revenues. New Jersey has had a difficult time attracting and retaining employers, due to uncompetitive taxes, fees and regulations imposed by past Legislatures and governors.

But under the Christie Administration, things are starting to turn around. We've been able to cut red tape, create hundreds of thousands of new private-sector jobs, and prompted a decline in the unemployment rate.

To continue on this track, Senate Republicans and the governor are calling for a simplified and reduced income tax structure in New Jersey. This move will further improve our economy, create more opportunities for residents, keep families together in the Garden State, and generate more tax revenues to fund local and state services.

**Filling the courts** Senate Republicans are also trying to end an unprecedented gridlock that has prevented Supreme and Superior Court judges from being confirmed to fill empty seats.

The people elected and re-elected Governor Chris Christie in part to make the state Supreme Court whole and diverse. Our High Court faces many significant cases, such as COAH, which will hopefully be addressed by the Legislature in a balanced way this year.

At the Superior Court level, judicial vacancies are making it difficult for people to get restraining orders and preventing divorces and child custody issues from being settled in a timely manner. These vacancies are also creating backlogs in some municipal courts that are tasked with taking some of the Superior Court case loads. They must be filled.

**Stronger ethics, transparency laws** Senate Republicans will continue to push for the passage of our ethics and campaign finance reform package to protect the public from the waste and abuse of tax dollars in the form of no-show jobs, excessively rich contracts for special interests and illegitimate pension payments. We will also continue working with Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg to improve the state's Open Public Records and Open Public Meetings acts.

**Sandy recovery, storm preparedness** Last, but not least, we are still seeking the passage of Senate Republican measures to help thousands of New Jerseyans and several communities recover from Superstorm Sandy. We will also work for legislation that will ensure that our state is in the best position to weather the next disaster.

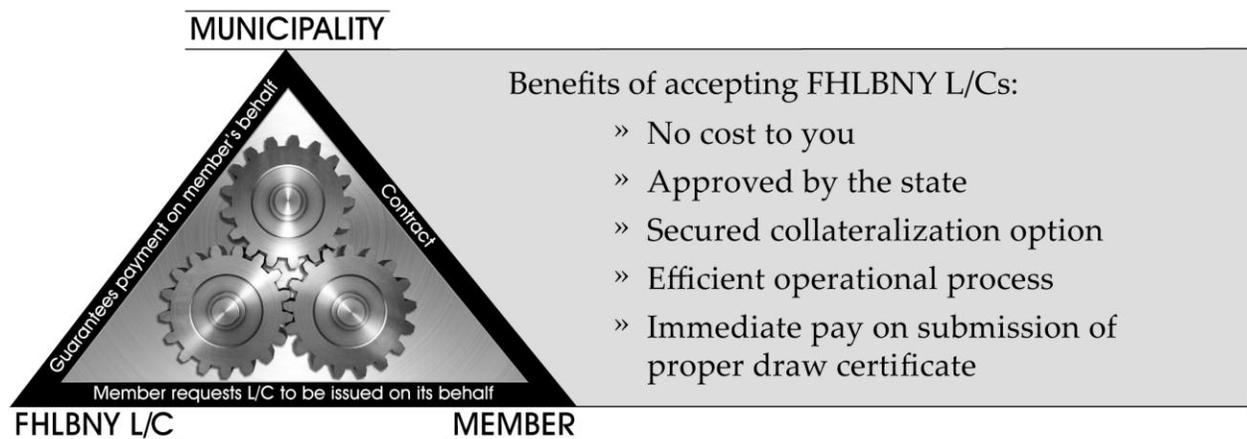
Thousands of people still have not received any insurance settlement or a fair shake, and Senator Jennifer Beck has a legislative solution: last session's S-2505 is now supported by a Democrat. We have proposals to help small businesses and communities recover from the storm. We will sponsor measures to hold utility companies accountable and to protect people from storm devastation and facilitate community recovery from future weather emergencies (last session's S2206; S2349; S2526; and several others). ▲



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# Under the Gold Dome

## Bipartisanship, Trenton Style



By Darryl Isherwood  
Senior Political Reporter, NJ.com

**T**he passage and signing into law of the DREAM Act, which allows the children of undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition at state schools, was hailed by Governor Chris Christie as another major step in a long history of bi-partisanship.

The work of the Governor and legislative Democrats should serve as a model for the rest of the country, Christie said at the time. Senate President Steve Sweeney also took a round of bows, congratulating Democrats for leading the charge to pass the landmark legislation and Christie for being willing to sign it.

But just how "bi-partisan" was it?

During his bid for reelection, Christie surprised Hispanics by voicing support for tuition equality. It was time, he said, to give children, who by no fault of their own were in the country illegally, a chance to go to college and as a result contribute to the state's economy.

The move helped him gain a majority of the Hispanic vote during his landslide victory.

Legislative Democrats thought they had an easy win. They'd work with Christie on a core issue and together would take a victory lap. But they apparently didn't read the fine print on Christie's support.

While he was on board with in-state tuition, the governor stopped short at offering financial aid, a sticking point with some Democrats. Sensing what they thought was vulnerability on the governor's part, they pushed the issue and lambasted Christie for flip-flopping to pander to Hispanic voters just days before Election Day.

The standoff looked like it might derail the bill until a deal was announced between Sweeney and Christie that would allow the bill to become law. The new law will make DREAMERS eligible for in-state tuition rates, but ineligible for financial aid.

So was it truly a bi-partisan compromise? In some sense the answer is yes. Democrats pushed through a bill that had long sat dormant in the Legislature and in the process

engendered the good will of the Hispanic community.

On Christie's side of the ledger, he made good on a campaign promise. But was it a compromise?

In the end, Christie got what he wanted through sheer force of will. He laid out his cards, drawing a line he was unwilling to cross. While Democrats tried to push the flip-flopper label, they knew Christie's intransigence would only play into the conservative base he was courting for a potential presidential run.

He walked the tightrope and got what he wanted, forcing Democrats to cave and picking up a win in the process.

That is bi-partisanship in the age of Christie.

Rarely has the governor allowed himself to be backed into a corner and even when there's been compromise, Christie has usually not given up much of value.

Don't get me wrong. Democrats were happy with the DREAM Act and it's clear from the attendance at Sweeney's press conference to announce the deal with the governor and Christie's signing ceremony that the constituency that benefits from the law was ecstatic too.

But to call the sausage making that went into the eventual signing of the bill "compromise" may be grinding up the truth and jamming it in a little casing, if only just a little.

ing, if only just a little.

One little known facet of the whole "deal" is the agreement between Sweeney and the governor gave rise to a bill that allowed for in-state tuition without state aid eligibility—the exact bill the Assembly introduced last spring.

Bi-partisanship in the age of Christie. ▲

*It has been a pleasure bringing you this column over the past two years, but with a new job comes new responsibilities. I will be passing the torch after this month to Ben Dworkin, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Rider University and Director of The Rebovich Institute for New Jersey Politics. I've enjoyed the feedback on the column. Be sure to say hello if we pass each other under the Gold Dome.*

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# Wyckoff's Green Team Reaches Out to Businesses



By Harriet Shugarman  
Environmental Commission Chair  
& Robert J. Shannon, Jr.,  
Municipal Administrator, Wyckoff

In 2011, the Wyckoff Township Committee established a municipal Green Team as a first step to participation in the Sustainable Jersey Program. With the Township Committee's endorsement, the newly established Municipal Green Team began to audit and document existing sustainability programs and the many ways in which Wyckoff was already incorporating energy savings, waste reduction and sustainable business practices. We were pleased to discover the extent to which the broader community wanted to assist with and participate in all aspects of this new program.

In 2012, building on this community interest, a sub-committee of the Wyckoff Green Team explored ways to encourage additional segments of the Wyckoff community to embrace sustainable actions. The municipality's Green Team had successfully achieved the Sustainable Jersey Cer-

tified Bronze level through actions initiated by the Wyckoff Township Committee and the Municipal Green Team. Our initiatives included energy audits of municipal buildings, implementing and promoting once a week recycling and a program to encourage residents to recycle half of their household trash known as the "Nifty Fifty."

In addition our Green Team members partnered with the Wyckoff Public Schools to encourage recycling and were seeking to expand the community's participation.

Next, the team approached the township's highly visible business community, through the Chamber of Commerce. In March 2012, the green team proposed a Chamber of Commerce Sustainability Program. The Chamber of Commerce endorsed the proposal and a committee of three Green Team members and three business owners researched sustainable actions and crafted the program.



Members of the Wyckoff Municipal Green Team pose with business owners and their certificates. Pictured (left to right) are Harriet Shugarman, Chair of the Wyckoff Environmental Commission; Nancy Schuring, First Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce and owner of Devon Fine Jewelry, Lee Parker, owner of Three Chicas Mexican Kitchen; Jay Vidockler, President of the Chamber and owner of Chocolate Etc. and Wyckoff Mayor Rudolf E. Boonstra.

The Chamber of Commerce Sustainability Program outlined a series of actions to be adopted and integrated into the business work day. In December 2012, a Green Wyckoff Business Program (GWB) was announced as an exciting partnership. Thanks in part to the excitement generated by the early success of this program, Green Team members were encouraged to look for other opportunities to attain Silver Sustainable Jersey Certification. Ultimately, Wyckoff became the first town in Bergen County to attain Silver Sustainable Jersey Certification.

The Green Wyckoff Business program strives to encourage business owners and operators to recycle, reduce and reuse. The objective is to improve the environment and bottom line of local businesses, as well as that of the surrounding community. The program's main goals for enhancing business and community sustainability revolve around energy and water conservation, waste reduction and the promotion and use of sustainable products and services. The GWB Program is one step in creating a cleaner,



The Green Team acknowledges Chamber of Commerce members who participate by providing them with a certificate suitable for framing and a PDF of the GWB logo. Businesses may also use the PDF on their advertising in 2013 and 2014.

stronger and more beautiful community for us and for future generations.

Chamber President and owner of Chocolate Etc., Jay Vidockler, a supporter of the program, noted that when he first learned of the program: "it really made me think. There were

some environmentally friendly things I was doing and others I wasn't conscious of so I started to do more of them. It really is easy for any business to do and if everyone in the Township took these steps, it could really make a difference."

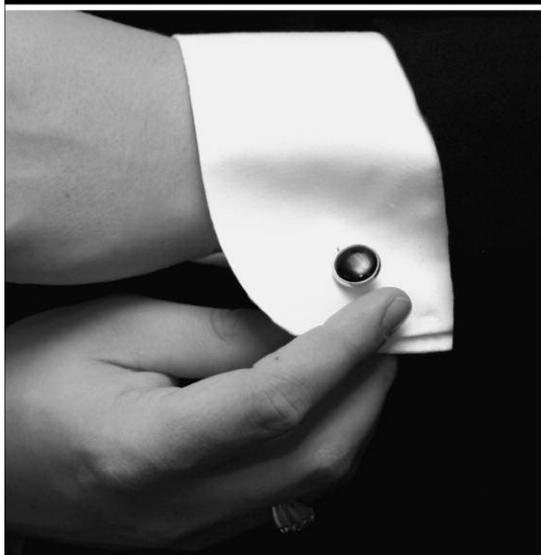
To participate, businesses reviewed a questionnaire/application and checked off sustainable actions relevant to their business. After each item, a short explanation of how they met the requirement is necessary. (A minimum of 15 items in total are required using at least four of the six sustainable action categories).

Examples of sustainable actions from the six categories include:

#### CATEGORY 1—RECYCLE/PRECYCLE

- Decrease waste in operations/production/office practices with the three R's—Reuse Reduce, Recycle
- Recycle laser printer cartridges
- Eliminate single use beverage containers for employees and guests.
- Eliminate paper documents by having electronic forms and contracts

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#### **CATEGORY 2: ENERGY/ ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

- Perform an energy audit and take measures to reduce energy use in identified areas
- Track water and energy usage via utility bills. Report and correct any causes of inconsistently high usage.
- Replace all A-type incandescent lamps with compact fluorescent lamps of high efficiency such as LED, dimmable cold cathodes, or MR16
- Use lighting controls such as dual technology occupancy (motion sensors, photocells or time clocks)
- Purchase energy star saving equipment and appliances
- Unplug equipment not in use, turn off heat and airconditioning at night, weekend or other times when business is closed

#### **CATEGORY 4: WATER USAGE**

- Replace toilets, taps with low flow models/ urinals with low flow or water free
- Use drip irrigation
- Install smart irrigation controls
- Install a cistern or rain barrel

#### **CATEGORY 5: OFFICE/BUSINESS— PRODUCT/SERVICE SUSTAINABILITY— CUSTOMER**

- Offer sustainable/renewable/ recycled products for sale/use/distribution
- Offer organic, biodegradable and fair trade products for sale
- Offer incentive to customers who bring their own coffee mugs, to-go dishes or reusable bags
- Offer or sell durable reusable bags.

#### **CATEGORY 6: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/SITE BEAUTIFICATION**

- Agree to water, on a regular basis, the flower tubs placed by Partners in Pride in close proximity to your business
- Clean litter and debris in front of your business and/or in your parking lot on a regular basis
- Raise consumer/customer awareness and consciousness towards environmental issues and benefits of green goods and services
- Provide clearly labeled containers in front of your business that accept recyclable items and service the containers by recycling them at the Wyckoff Recycling Center
- Plow snow from all ADA parking spots and shovel snow from barrier free curb ramps in front of your business

Each of the six categories included several sustainable action items; businesses were required to select 15 sustainable actions from four of the six categories.

Chamber members quickly came on board. After the first year and a half, 10 percent of our businesses signed on to participate in the GWB Program. Participating businesses have come from a wide range of sectors and have been both large and small businesses; examples include: a large chain grocery store, a restaurant, a retail store and a management consultancy and digital firm. The breadth of businesses which have participated in this early stage of the program have given us confidence in the format of the program and its usefulness for diverse businesses.

The Green Team acknowledges Chamber of Commerce members who participate by providing them with a certificate suitable for framing and a PDF of the GWB logo. Businesses may also use the PDF on their advertising in 2013 and 2014. The GWB is intended to be a bi-annual program. At the end of the two year period, businesses will be asked to "reapply."

The Green Team welcomes Chamber of Commerce members' comments, suggestions and ideas. The GWB Program will be revised and updated based on these comments. In 2014, the Green Team plans to interview participating businesses to learn more about how their involvement in the program has impacted their business and find ways to improve the program.

As our country and the world look for ways to create sustainable, long term solutions to address our economic, environmental, energy and climate problems, local solutions to these global problems are being recognized as powerful opportunities to move forward in concrete ways. The GWB program is a positive step in this direction.

By setting up a system where local businesses can become community leaders, Wyckoff's goal is to create an environment that will enlighten, empower and inform the broader community about ways that each one of us can become part of the solution. ▲

Harriet Shugarman is the Executive Director and founder of ClimateMama and a mentor and climate leader for the Climate Reality Project.

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# Local Finance Board Asks Tough Questions



By Tom Neff, Director  
Division of Local Government Services, DCA

Over the course of the past year, the Local Finance Board has begun requiring local governments that request approval for unusual financings or special exceptions to submit written documents that address a standard set of tough questions. Additionally, the Local Finance Board has been increasingly putting strings on certain approvals. It's a change in approach by this regulatory board, but it amounts to appropriate due diligence and accountability for taxpayers. The change is long overdue and the following explains why the new approach is fair and reasonable.

Most municipal officials don't ask for special state approvals for things like skipping a down payment; borrowing for capital needs with a maturity schedule that is back-loaded; borrowing to address budget impacts due to over-collections on over-assessed properties; or borrowing to refund emergencies. This is because most municipalities responsibly budget and plan for the future and are fortunate enough not to be faced with true emergencies beyond their control.

The Local Finance Board reviews these request, in part, by reviewing a standard set of questions that applicants must answer. The questions are designed to determine whether the applicants are taking reasonable steps to prepare for the challenges that led to the requests and whether they are doing what they can to avoid resorting to debt.

Questions are asked in the following areas:

- When did the local government become aware of the challenge that led to their request and what have they done to address it?
- Did local officials hold the line on spending by keeping their own compensation reasonable and free of excess?
- Did local officials take a realistic stance on union contracts and compensation increases for nonunion employees?
- Have best practices have been employed?
- Has an effort been made to secure reasonably-priced insurance?

To be sure, there are municipalities appropriately seeking approvals for unusual financings and exceptions and their requests are approved by the Local Finance Board without much discussion. Municipalities that fall into this category include municipalities that do what they can to keep assessments current and defensible; plan for capital needs; and otherwise keep costs under control.

Unfortunately, there are municipalities whose requests

for these sorts of approvals result in unwelcome embarrassment for applications. For example, applications have revealed instances where governing body members knew of problems and did not plan for them; managers pulled down more than \$200,000 in compensation with recent 5 percent raises; part-time governing body members received excessive compensation; or the town's insurance costs were almost \$1 million more expensive than the State Health Benefits Plan.

It is of paramount importance that potential applicants to the Local Finance Board understand the new paradigm. Local officials must be prepared to discuss any inadequate answers on the tough questions that are being asked and to address their shortcomings. The taxpaying public, and the vast majority of good actors that are tired of being lumped in with the outliers, expect and deserve no less. ▲



The Local Finance Board reviews a set of questions that determine whether the applicants are taking reasonable steps to prepare for challenges and whether they are doing what they can to avoid resorting to debt.

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# Local Leaders Connect With Recovery Resources



By Eileen Moon  
Assistant External Affairs Officer,  
New Jersey Sandy  
Recovery Office, FEMA

**S**takeholders from Hurricane Sandy-impacted communities around the state gathered in Trenton two months ago to participate in the Sandy Resource and Funding Summit hosted by the New Jersey League of Municipalities at the New Jersey State House Annex.

Organized in partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Sustainable New Jersey, The New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association, and New Jersey Future; the Summit provided an opportunity to learn more about the logistics of disaster recovery and to meet one-on-one with subject matter experts, representatives from state and federal agencies and private sector organizations engaged in funding, planning and support for recovering communities.

Despite a challenging commute caused by an early December snowstorm, the event drew more than 70 people, a 75 percent attendance rate despite the whims of Mother Nature.

Participants included elected officials, representatives from 24 nonprofit organizations and liaisons from the Governor's office, state Senate and Assembly and the New Jersey Congressional Delegations.

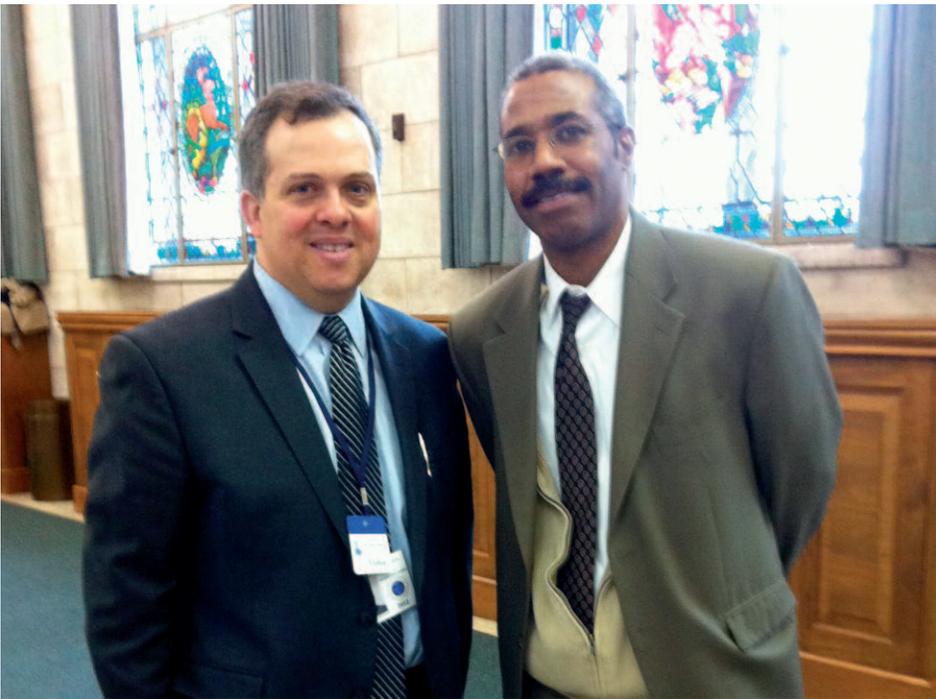
During the opening session, technical specialists and funding providers from federal and state agencies and the private sector presented brief overviews of their role in the recovery effort and provided information on sources of professional advice and funding assistance.

Michael Cerra, Director of Government Affairs for the League of Municipalities, gave the opening remarks, which were followed by introductory remarks by FEMA Community Recovery Specialist Christopher Curtis Vreeland and Partner Remarks by David Kutner, Recovery Planning Manager for New Jersey Future; Linda Weber, Resiliency Network Manager of Sustainability New Jersey; and Charles Latini, Chapter President of the New Jersey American Planning Association.

Representatives from federal and state agencies were also introduced. They included: Carleton Lewis, senior management analyst for U.S. Housing and Urban Development; Eugene Chebra, Assistant Director for the Division of Water Quality, NJDEP; Peter Blum, P.E., Chief of the Planning Division, Philadelphia District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Harris Friedberg, Senior Business Development Officer,



Patti Gross, Committee Person, Maurice River Township; Matthew Suchodolski, Economic Development Specialist, US EDA; Meghan Wren, Director/Founder, Bayshore Center at Bivalve; and Phillip Tomlinson, Project Manager, Bayshore Center at Bivalve learned about sources of recovery funding during a Sandy Resource and Funding Summit in Trenton in December.



Michael Cerra, NJLM Director of Governmental Affairs, talks with Sean Thompson, Local Planning Services, Department of Community Affairs, during the recovery summit.

NJEDA; and James Robinson, Emergency Preparedness Specialist, NJDOT. The general introductions were followed by several break-out sessions

that provided participants with an opportunity to speak one-on-one with experts. Eight New Jersey communities repre-

sented at the Summit—Highlands, Sea Bright, Tuckerton, Little Egg Harbor, Downe Township, Commercial Township, Greenwich Township and Maurice River Township—have been working with FEMA’s Community Recovery Assistance Division to plan for their communities future.

“Over the past four months, community stakeholders have carefully identified, scoped and vetted approximately 70 long-term community recovery projects,” said William G. Dressel, Jr., Executive Director of the League. “These projects include shoreline protection, economic development and tourism, just to name a few. The goal is to rebuild these participating shoreline communities in a more environmentally resilient and economically sustainable manner.”

The Recovery Resource and Funding Summit offered these communities an opportunity to connect with the resources they need to make their visions a reality.

Summit partners had three major goals in hosting the event: to provide guidance on long term technical and financial recovery assistance; to assist



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communities in identifying potential sources of funding for their recovery projects, and to create opportunities for affected communities to build relationships with organizations that can assist them in the rebuilding effort.

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"FEMA occasionally hosts funding summits as one of its community



Kathy Ireland, Deputy Mayor, Maurice River Township and Virginia Rettig, Refuge Manager, Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge discuss storm recovery plans.

recovery best practices," said Vreeland. "For the Sandy Recovery Resource Summit, we delayed it until after our communities had developed their recovery project proposals. This enabled the communities to present well-researched, vetted and prioritized project proposals to those funders in attendance. Most importantly, preliminary discussion on grant eligibility could be quickly determined.

The relaxed and open dialogue fostered some very creative ideas that might not have occurred in a more formal grant submission process."

Response from attendees was overwhelmingly favorable.

"It was a great chance for stakeholders in several Sandy-impacted communities to meet with potential funding agencies and officials to discuss recovery options and potential funding streams," said Philip Tomlinson of the nonprofit Bayshore Center in Bivalve, Cumberland County. "Such meetings are helpful in engaging local residents, governments and other stakeholders in the process of identifying potential funding sources, and alerting them to the details of long-term recovery planning and implementation. As Recovery Plans move forward, more such meetings would be beneficial, and would help to keep recovery initiatives moving forward at the state, local and federal levels."

For Leah Yasenchak of the nonprofit New Jersey Future, (a Smart Growth advocacy and community resource organization), the opportunities to consult with representatives from the NJDOT, the Army Corps of Engineers, Forsythe Wildlife Refuge and the NJDEP were particularly valuable. She was able to report back to her constituent towns on potential sources of funding, permitting, shoreline restoration and flood prevention.

"It was a good session!" Yasenchak said. "I was also able to talk with the person from Stockton who is doing the Main Street Study and the person from Sustainable Jersey who is pulling together a directory of technical resources. I'll be meeting with both of them early in January to see if there is anything useful they have to offer."

"The Sandy Recovery Resource and Funding Summit exceeded all of our expectations, especially considering the weather," said Vreeland. "We know that these communities appreciated the opportunity to network with senior-level subject matter experts and have one-on-one discussions to address their concerns. We heard very favorable comments from those in attendance."

"We will reach out to those agencies that couldn't attend in order to help set up future community-level meetings," Vreeland said. ▲



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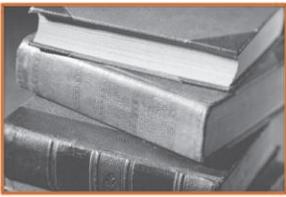


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## Appropriate Authorities & Texting During Council Meetings

By Edward Purcell, Esq.  
Staff Attorney-  
NJLM Associate Counsel

**Q** *Is it legal for members of the town council to email and text one another when the council is in session?*

**A** No, that is likely a violation of New Jersey's Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). OPMA requires that meetings of the governing body be open to the public. Smart phones and other types of technology are becoming more and more ingrained in the lives of everyday Americans. This type of easy interconnection and access to information can be great for keeping up with friends or getting answers to a game of trivial pursuit, but it poses serious consequences for elected officials during public meetings.

Let's review the pertinent language from OPMA. In passing the law, the Legislature declared that the purpose of the law was to protect the "right of the public to be present at all meetings of public bodies, and to witness in full detail all phases of the deliberation, policy formulation, and decision making of public bodies." The law further defines "meeting" as any gathering "whether corporeal or by means of communications equipment, which is attended by, or open to, all of the members of the public body, held with the intent... to discuss or act as a unit upon a specific public business of that body." The law provides for a few exceptions when the public can be excluded but the general rule is that "all meetings of public bodies shall be open to the public at all times."

There is no case law on point here but the plain language of the law would clearly preclude the use of cell phones by council members during a meeting because it would subvert the right of citizens to "witness in full detail all phases of the deliberation, policy formulation, and decision making of public bodies." A violation of OPMA can lead to the voiding of any of the ordinances passed by the governing body when the violation was taking place. This action is called an action in lieu of prerogative writs.

An action in lieu of prerogative writs is a much used and fundamental part of New Jersey law. Indeed, they are legal actions that find their source in the New Jersey Constitution at Article VI, § 5, paragraph 4. This legal

instrument can be used to void any ordinance enacted in violation of OPMA.

In summation, it is not a good idea to communicate via text message or email with other local governing body members during meetings.

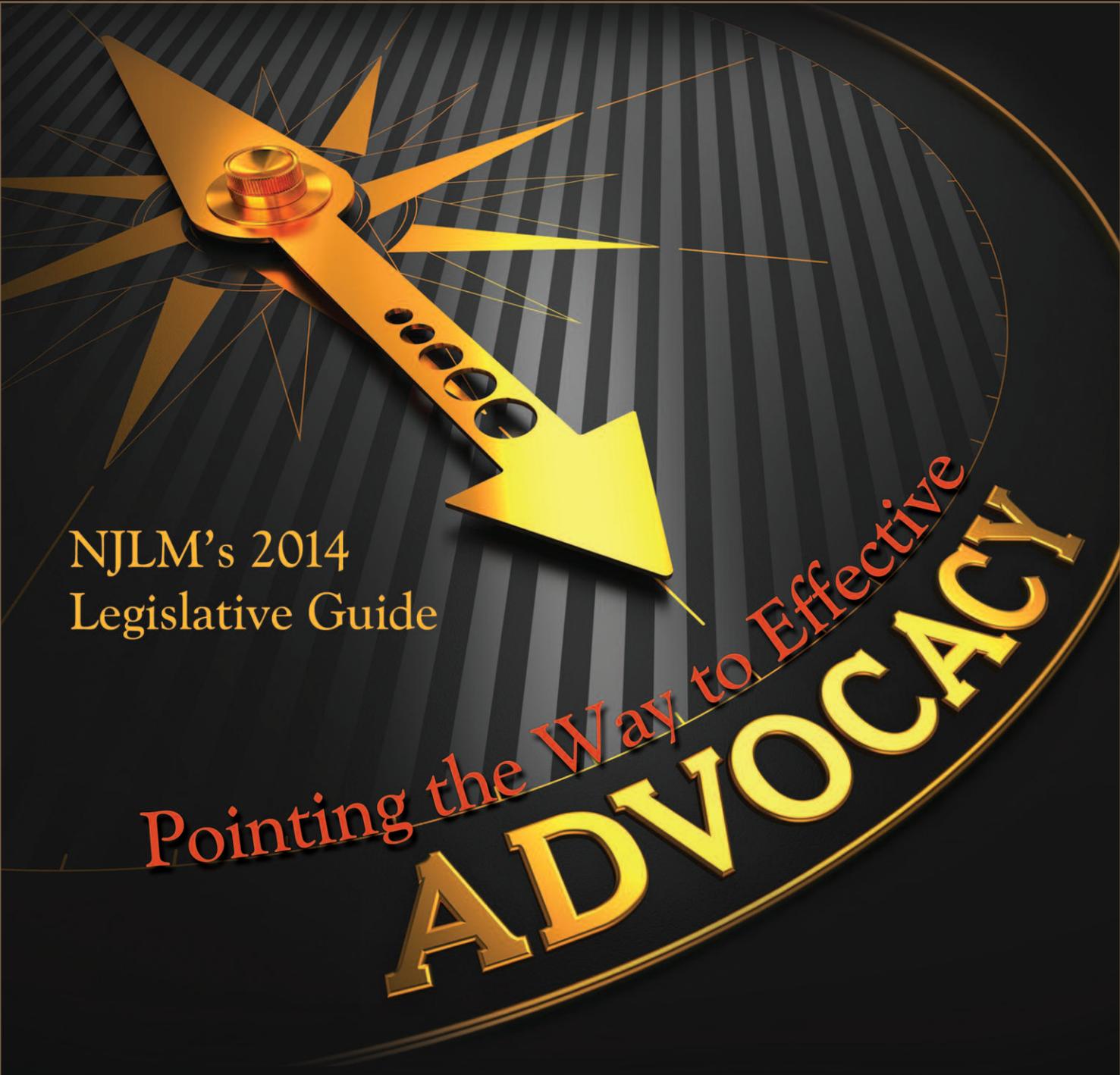
**Q** *I am confused about the role of the "appropriate authority" for our town's police department. What do they do?*

**A** The "appropriate authority" is a required position, to which a person or a governmental body must be designated when a municipality creates a police department. N.J.S.A. 40A:14-118. Simply put, the "appropriate authority" is a civilian position which is empowered to oversee the police department. They are responsible for promulgating the policies, rules and regulations under which the police department functions.

The "appropriate authority" does not oversee the day to day operations of the department. If the municipality chooses to create a "chief of police," the chief does that. As an example, the "appropriate authority" might direct the chief of police to provide police security for a certain event, but only the chief would be able to determine which officers were assigned.

The statute does not specify who must be appointed the "appropriate authority." Indeed, some municipalities have appointed entire subcommittees to fulfill this role. Most, however, appoint the municipal administrator as the "appropriate authority." This has a number of benefits because as administrator that person would be regularly available and have an excellent working knowledge of their municipality. ▲

*This column is for informational purposes only, and is not intended as legal advice.*

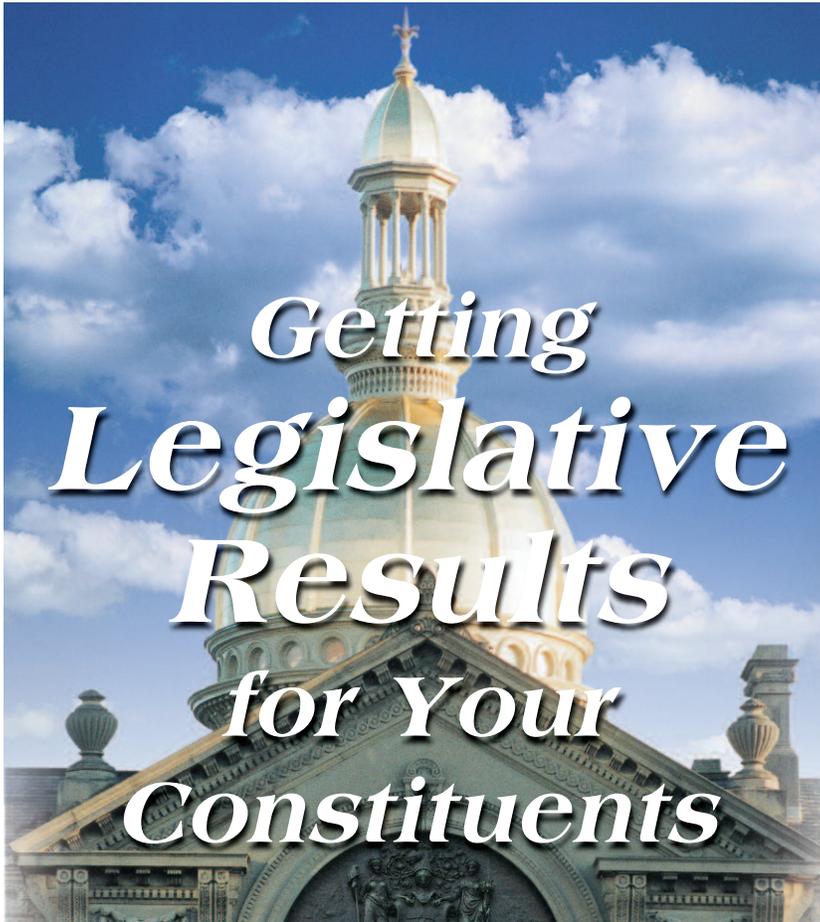


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*In the year 2014, we will witness the beginning of a new session of New Jersey's State Legislature. We, in New Jersey municipal government, can embrace this chance to help shape the future and protect the interests of those who have given us their trust and their votes.*

*We can do good while we have the chance, in our own municipalities and, working together through the League, we can help our colleagues who serve at the state level to do the same. Throughout the year, the First Annual Session of New Jersey's 216th Legislature and Executive Branch Departments, Divisions and agencies will consider numerous issues that will affect, for good or ill, our ability to meet the needs and aspirations of our fellow citizens.*

*The League was created to inform and assist us. With our united effort, the League can accomplish those goals. We must learn together. We must speak together. We must stand together. The League is the tool we can use to do all three.*

*Our League Government Relations team works hard to keep us informed of developments in Trenton. They co-write a regular "Legislative Update" column, which appears in each issue of our magazine, New Jersey Municipalities. This column features pithy updates on legislation under consideration by the New Jersey State Senate and the General Assembly. They also collaborate in the publication of the "Legislative Bulletins." These pamphlets report on the deliberations and decisions of our Legislative Committee regarding the bills that could affect our ability to fulfill our oaths of service to our fellow citizens. And the Legislative team sends us letters to mark the progress, or lack thereof, of bills of special importance. These "Legislative Alerts" serve two purposes. The first is to inform us. The second is to inspire us to get involved.*

*We cannot expect policymakers in Trenton to appreciate the impact of their decisions on our hometowns, unless enough of us are willing to tell them about it. On any issue that is important to you, your municipality and your fellow citizens, you need to follow up with your two representatives in the General Assembly, your state senator and, when and if a bill should reach his desk, with Governor Chris Christie, as well.*

*If you would like to get more deeply involved in our Government Relations program, please contact myself or our Executive Director, Bill Dressel. We welcome new volunteers to our Legislative Committee. We appreciate the commitment of municipal officials who are willing to come to Trenton to testify on important municipal issues. If a problem comes up in your municipality that could be best dealt with by action at the state level, let us know about it. We can often help get the ball rolling by contacting key Legislative or Executive Branch personnel. If a bill or a regulation is introduced that could hamper your ability to advance the public's interest, reach out to us. In any one of these instances, your active participation could spell the difference between success and failure in the public policy arena.*

*In these pages, you will find information on the Legislature, the legislative process, how the League develops its legislative policy, how the League can help us and how we can help ourselves. We hope you find this helpful. We wish you good luck. And we salute you on the choice you have made to dedicate yourself to a life of public service.*

Very truly yours,

*Suzanne M. Walters*

Suzanne M. Walters,  
President, New Jersey State League of Municipalities



NJLM Director of Government Affairs Michael F. Cerra, and Senior Legislative Analysts Jon Moran and Lori Buckelew talk with Senate President Steve Sweeney.

priorities and expressing municipal concerns.

They represent the New Jersey State League of Municipalities. Those six are Executive Director Bill Dressel, Assistant Executive Director Michael Darcy, Director of Government Affairs Michael Cerra, Staff Attorney-NJLM Assistant Counsel Ed Purcell and Senior Legislative Analysts Lori Buckelew and Jon Moran.

They work hard on your behalf. But, with the numbers and the odds stacked up against them, they can never succeed without your help.

As the late Speaker of the House Thomas Philip (Tip) O’Neill, Jr. often said, “All politics is local.” At your League of Municipalities, we never lose our confidence in that sage proverb. It has been, is and will continue to be the foundation and the cornerstone of all League Legislative activities. All of what we do in Trenton is directed at allowing you to put that maxim to work, right in your own municipality. Any success we have is the result of your local action.

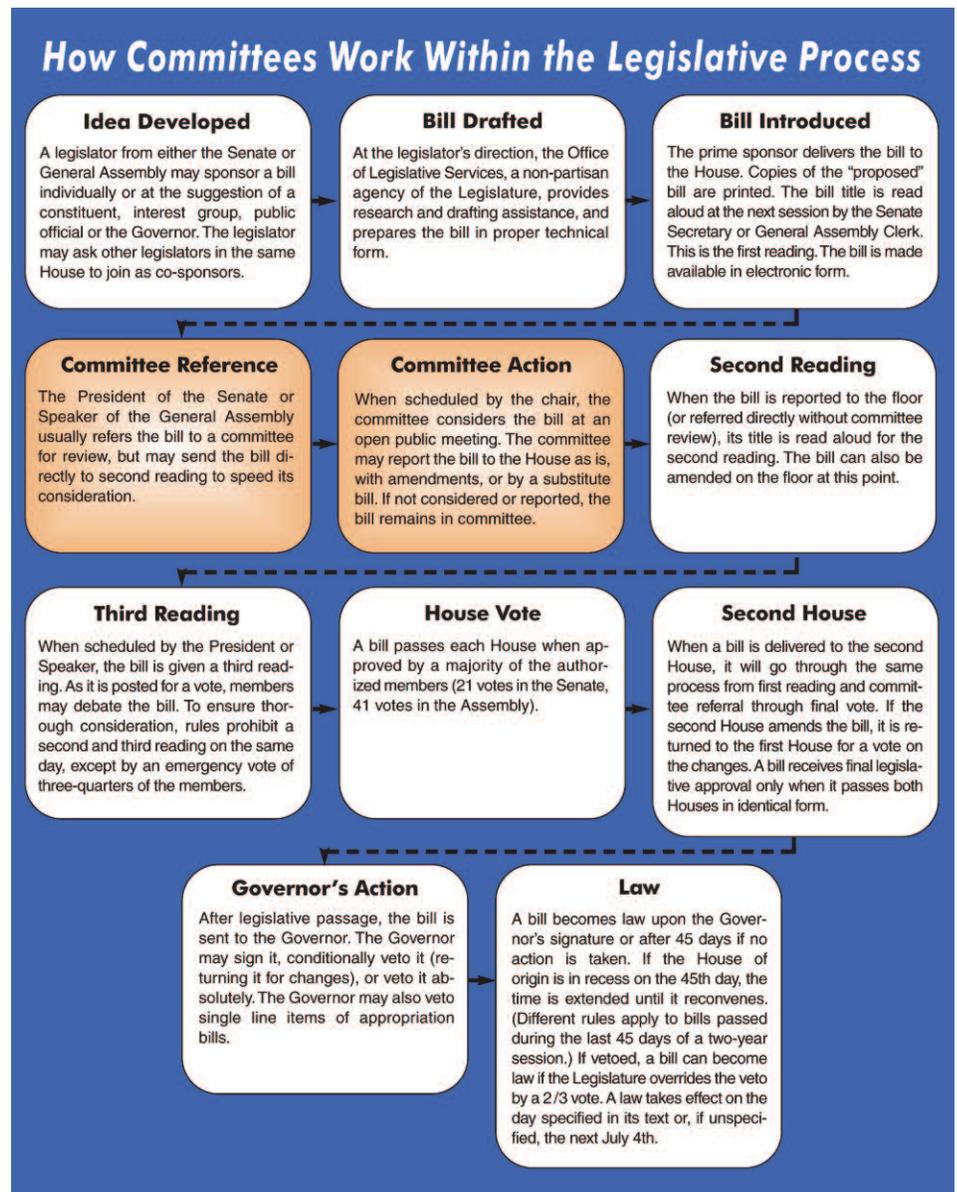
Without your advocacy, municipal issues will never get the attention they deserve, in Trenton or in Washington. Without your participation, the municipal perspective will never prevail.

In short, the best strategy for legislative success is consistent local participation in the process. We don’t expect you to engage in grassroots lobbying 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. But we do know that our efforts in the State House will bear little fruit, unless you spend some time and make some effort on state and federal issues.

Your position in municipal government gives you a unique power to influence legislative decisions. You are both a constituent and a colleague of the decision-makers.

### Legislative Process

Throughout this legislative process,



Source: "Making Your Voice Heard" Office of Legislative Services, 11/2012.



(left to right) Senate President Steve Sweeney; former Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver; NJTV Chief Political Correspondent Michael Aron; NJLM President Suzanne M. Walters; Senate Republican Leader Jon Bramnick; and Senator Tom Kean served on the panel for the Legislative Leaders Perspective Session at the League's Annual Conference.

described in the chart below, your League has been playing an active role. Letters outlining the League's position on behalf of municipalities have been sent to the appropriate members of the Legislature at all stages—when the bill was in the original committee, when it came up on the floor for debate, in the other house, if the bill moved, and ultimately to the Governor, if the bill progressed to his desk. In the course of a typical session, the League's correspondence files grow to impressive proportions.

About 100 or so bills affecting municipalities do survive the process and become law in the average two-year session.

How does the League arrive at a position on the hundreds of bills that affect us? It does so through the efforts of the League Legislative Committee. This 100-member body reflects the broad spectrum of municipal viewpoints. Officials from all parts of the state reflect the concerns of rural communities, suburban municipalities and our larger cities. The committee also comprises a cross section of mayors, governing body members, attorneys, engineers, managers, municipal clerks and other key local administrative officials.

Following each meeting of the committee, League staff members write letters outlining the positions that the committee has taken at the meeting. Usually within 48 hours, these letters are in the mail to members of the Legislature.

Officials in every municipality are also notified of the Legislative Committee's findings through the familiar Legislative Bulletin which is sent to the mayor, each member of the governing body, the municipal clerk, the attorney and the manager or administrator. In addition to reporting the committee's positions on various bills, the Bulletin also reports on all the bills having a local impact which become law; and it carries special alerts on developments that require special action by our members. The bulletin can be

## New Jersey State League of Municipalities Legislative Policy

1. Legislation will be **approved** by the Legislative Committee only if it appears that enactment will benefit our members.
2. The Legislative Committee will **oppose** all proposals which:
  - a. Impose additional costs upon municipalities (directly or indirectly) without providing new revenue to pay such cost from sources other than general property taxes;
  - b. Take away revenue now received by municipalities unless replaced from some source other than general property taxes;
  - c. Exempt property from general property taxes unless equivalent, new replacement revenues are provided by the state;
  - d. Provide tenure protection for municipal officers and employees since such tenure intrudes on the appointment prerogatives of the Mayor and Governing Body;
  - e. It is essential that the municipalities of the State should act in unison on adverse legislation, and hence if only a portion of the members are affected by undesirable bills, these bills should be opposed as a matter of principle, or otherwise unfavorable legislation will be enacted piecemeal;
  - f. The Legislative Committee will act in conformity with the spirit of the Home Rule Act and will oppose all measures involving attempts to have the State interfere in the local affairs of municipalities;
  - g. The Legislative Committee will **normally** oppose a proposal that would either (1) deprive municipalities of rights, powers or privileges, or (2) deprive them of **substantial** actual revenues, whether from the State or Federal Governments or locally generated. The Legislative Committee will **normally** approve proposals that would benefit any Municipality or group of municipalities; provided the proposals do not (1) **significantly** deprive other municipalities of rights, powers or privileges, or (2) deprive them of **substantial** actual revenues, whether from the State or Federal Governments or generated locally.
3. The Legislative Committee will take **no position** on legislation if one group of members is adversely affected and another benefited. The Legislative Committee will take **no position** on bills where a clear consensus cannot be reached. A prevailing vote of 2/3 or a quorum of 30 shall constitute such a clear consensus. When more than a quorum is present, the 2/3 rule must prevail to sustain a clear consensus. In cases where **no position** is taken because of a lack of clear consensus, the staff will be instructed to communicate the concerns on both sides in their contacts with legislators. Where appropriate, action on a particular bill pending before the Committee may be deferred, pending review and direction by the Executive Board. The determination of appropriate circumstances warranting referral to the Board shall be made by the chair and the Executive Director.
4. The League Legislative Committee does not draft legislation. Its purpose is to consider all bills which have been introduced and which have some effect upon local governments. The League, however, periodically creates special ad hoc committees to work with individual Legislators in drafting legislation, sometimes, but not necessarily related to resolutions adopted at the League Conference. In such instances, bills provided by such special committees will represent the position of the Legislative Committee for further action. For the purpose of coordination, such special committees will include

## Advocacy Tips

Courtesy and knowledge of the issues can be, as in Bogart's timeless line, "... the beginning of a beautiful friendship..." between you and your state and federal representatives. But even if differences in political affiliation or philosophy hamper the development of friendship, you can still have cordial relations with them. And a good relationship is essential to effective advocacy.

**Get Personally Acquainted with Your Legislators**—Bridges are built to bring us together. So, in a metaphorical kind of a way, all involved in local government are involved in the building of bridges—in bringing together all kinds of people, ideas and ideals. Build strong bridges to your state and federal legislators. Never let them fall into disuse. If you haven't already done so, call their local offices. If you can, arrange to meet them there. If you can't, then ask to talk directly with them. Don't wait until you need their support to contact them. It might be too late.

**Get to Know Your Legislators' Staffs**—Each state Legislator in New Jersey represents a district that includes approximately 225,000 people. Each of our Congressmen represents over 700,000. And our two U.S. Senators represent all of our state's 8.9 million people. That's a lot of constituents to hear from and to serve. Obviously, they can't do it alone. They rely heavily on trusted and loyal aides to help them better serve. Frequently, you may be unable to talk directly with your Legislator to express your concerns on a particular issue. If that be the case, a call to the Legislator's aide or other staff, whom you know and who knows you, is the next best thing.

**Invite Your Legislators to Special Events**—The opportunity to meet and communicate with constituents is a valuable gift to any elected official. Invite your legislators and their staffs to local and regional league meetings as guests or speakers. Also invite them to parades, town festivals or other events as guests or participants. Your hospitality will not be forgotten. And rarely will it go unrewarded.

**Get on Your Delegation's Mailing List**—Then you will receive newsletters and other communications from your legislator's office. This will help you to learn their feelings about issues that are particularly important to them. Effective communication depends more on careful listening than on brilliant rhetoric.

**Recognize Legislators' Problems**—You can try to hear all that they are saying, but you'll never hear all that they are hearing. Your Legislators represent all of the constituents in your area. Their duty is to represent all of the people to the best of their ability. There may be times when you think your Legislators are on the wrong track, but they may have facts that are not available to you. Never threaten political or other consequences if the Senator or Representative refuses to see an issue your way. Remember that you can disagree without being disagreeable.

**Say Thanks**—Nothing grates more on a relationship than ingratitude. Remember to thank Legislators regularly and publicly for their time, work, support and votes. Never discount the importance of a thank you; it can really make a difference.

**Stay Informed on the Issues**—The Assembly and Senate convene for the regular legislative session every year. The 2014 session convened on January 14. Throughout its deliberations,

the Legislature is making important decisions that may have a direct impact on your municipality. You can't lobby what you don't know! Stay abreast of the issues through the local media and the League.

**Social Media**—You can also use the internet and social media to increase awareness of local issues and concerns.

**Use the League**—Remember that your League staff will be informed of the critical issues and can assist you in your advocacy efforts. They can also assist in analyzing the information to explain what an issue might mean to your hometown.

**Read the League's Publications**—The League's Legislative Bulletin is published throughout the Legislative Session. This is supplemented by Legislative analyses and Membership Alerts full of timely information on key municipal issues that are being considered by the Legislature. Other legislative publications include the League's annual "Legislative Action Agenda" and the Update column that appears in each issue of this magazine.

**Express Yourself**—The time for listening and learning never ends. But, eventually, the time comes for talking. Because of who you are and because of the office you hold, you owe it to yourself, you owe it to your constituents and you owe it to your state and federal representatives, themselves, to speak, honestly and forthrightly, on the issues affecting your municipality. Some may say that Legislators have no time or inclination to answer their phones or read their mail, and that one single contact won't make any difference anyway. In most cases, these views are wrong. Thoughtful, factual, persuasive contacts can change Legislators' minds and cause them to review their positions. Be sure to have accurate facts and good arguments about any issues you discuss with your legislators. Make sure you understand the particular bill in question.

**Write Letters Carefully and Thoughtfully**—Each letter you write should cover one proposal and should reference the bill number in a separate line at the top of the page. Present your opinion logically and base it on facts. Emotional appeals do not influence votes, nor should they. The importance of personally contacting a legislator on time cannot be overemphasized. An eloquent letter does no good if it arrives after a vote. You may also fax or e-mail a letter or brief note to your Legislator to get your position across in a short time frame.

**Use the Local Media**—Schedule meetings with the editorial board and staff of your local newspaper to discuss legislative issues and positions. Schedule sessions on local television and radio shows to discuss the issues and their impact on your municipality.

**Attend Mayors' Legislative Day**—The League's Mayors' Legislative Day is held early each year. This is an opportunity for municipal officials to visit with key state policy-makers on crucial municipal issues that are being considered by the Legislature and by Executive Branch agencies.

**Invite your Legislator(s) to League Functions**—While Legislators receive a written invitation to League activities, the personal touch is always nice. Call your legislators and invite them personally to the Mayors' Legislative Day and the League Conference in November.

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- New Jersey Fire Prevention and Protection Association
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- New Jersey Institute of Local Government Attorneys
- New Jersey Municipal Management Association
- New Jersey Planning Officials
- New Jersey Society of Municipal Engineers
- New Jersey State Municipal Prosecutors Association
- New Jersey State Plumbing Inspectors Association
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- Community Recreation Society of New Jersey
- Registrars Association of New Jersey
- Tax Collectors and Treasures Association of New Jersey

## Legislative Reporting and Bill Services

The Office of Legislative Services no longer offers mail subscription service of bills in hard copy. The complete text of all bills and laws are available on the New Jersey State Legislature website. Bills and other related information can be viewed and printed. The site is updated daily, therefore, information is timely. The service is free to the public. Visit [njleg.state.nj.us](http://njleg.state.nj.us).

**The League's 2014-2015 Legislative Roster** Cost is \$15 for members and \$25 for non-members. Contains updated information and photographs of the Governor and his cabinet, members of the State legislature, Senate and Assembly Committee. New Jersey's Congressional Delegation and a handy district locator. Contact Shirley Cade at (609) 695-3481 ext 114 email: [scade@njslom.com](mailto:scade@njslom.com)

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# Building Resiliency After Superstorm Sandy



By Terrence S. Brody  
Deputy Executive Director, Governor's  
Office of Recovery and Rebuilding

Over the past year, the Christie Administration has designed and implemented nearly 40 disaster relief programs to respond to the impacts of Superstorm Sandy. These programs aim to help displaced homeowners and renters; provide working capital to impacted businesses; offer technical and financial assistance to stabilize our communities; and identify and address critical infrastructure vulnerabilities. Simultaneously, the state has incorporated planning and best prac-

tices into all of our recovery initiatives to ensure we build back better and more resilient than before.

Resiliency has been a maxim guiding the state's recovery process. Defined as "the ability to recover readily," resiliency is more than just elevating individual homes and building flood walls around certain facilities. To achieve resiliency, New Jersey set heightened rebuilding standards and is providing critical recovery resources, including financial support and technical assistance, to explore measures that



The Administration recognized that in order to protect life and property, we could not rebuild to decade-old standards. Governor Christie established by emergency rule the best available data from FEMA's new flood maps, plus one foot of freeboard, as the general rebuilding standard. This standard will help us to adapt to changing flood hazard risks and corresponding federal flood insurance rates.

can reduce risks for entire regions. With these resources, the state has laid a solid foundation to better prepare for the next disaster.

Early on in the recovery, the state adopted more resilient building standards. In January 2013, while emergency response operations were still active in our communities, Governor Christie established by emergency rule the best available data from FEMA's new flood maps, plus one foot of freeboard, as the general rebuilding standard. This standard will help us to adapt to changing flood hazard risks and corresponding federal flood insurance rates. The Administration recognized that in order to protect life and property, we could not rebuild to decade-old standards. Federal agencies subsequently adopted this standard for all reconstruction activities funded by the Sandy Supplemental Appropriation.

**THE STATE  
HAS INCORPORATED  
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THAN BEFORE.**

The state also provided our communities with the necessary tools to guide local planning efforts. For example, the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs launched the Post Sandy Planning Assistance Grant Program, which provides communities with planning grants to develop strategic recovery plans, prepare community design standards specific to flood hazard areas, and analyze local land use practices to facilitate a smart and efficient rebuilding process at the local level. As part of the program,

communities are encouraged to combine resources to pursue regional projects and solutions where feasible.

In addition, the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management launched a planning initiative under FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to provide eligible counties with grants to develop multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plans, incorporating the municipal perspective to address regional vulnerabilities. As part of the state's hazard mitigation planning, a

cross-agency effort was initiated to identify regional resiliency opportunities by examining the locations and characteristics of critical infrastructure including drinking water, wastewater, transportation, transit, energy, and communication systems. Studying where multiple infrastructure systems intersect and overlap enables the state to highlight and implement synergistic mitigation initiatives.

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measures, we built out the Office of Emergency Management's Disaster Recovery Bureau. The Disaster Recovery Bureau provides impacted communities with much-needed technical assistance to help navigate FEMA's Public Assistance and associated Section 406 mitigation program. Through FEMA's "406 mitigation" funding, communities can both restore damaged assets and pursue forward-thinking mitigation measures to reduce risk. With the assistance of the Disaster Recovery Bureau, 89 percent of all large community projects (i.e., projects over \$500,000) have incorporated a mitigation component.

To ensure that the state wisely applies limited federal recovery resources, we are undertaking a comprehensive risk assessment. The risk assessment evaluates the state's current and future flood risk; identifies communities and regions that are highly vulnerable to flooding and storm surge; and develops designs for new infrastructure measures or improvements that can blunt storm

surge and reduce flood risk. By pursuing cost-effective risk reduction measures, we will better prepare the state for future extreme weather events and other hazards.

## SANDY TAUGHT US THAT ENGINEERED BEACH SYSTEMS SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCE FLOOD RISK FROM STORM SURGE.

As part of the risk assessment, the state is partnering with thought leaders in civil and environmental engineering, storm water management, watershed and water environment restoration, and hydrology. These experts, from six of the state's universities, will study the cause of repetitive

flooding and design mitigation strategies for flood-prone communities that are not being addressed by current or planned U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects. These studies are being coordinated with communities to incorporate local perspective and data.

The Administration also is collaborating with the Army Corps on a \$20 million comprehensive resiliency study, funded through the Sandy Supplemental Appropriation. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's contribution to the study includes providing its own data and institutional perspective, and sharing the findings of the university studies to inform the Army Corps' study. On a parallel track, the state has partnered with the Army Corps to advance beach and dune construction projects on 44 miles of New Jersey coastline. The project will give New Jersey the most comprehensive and continuous coastal protection system it has ever had. Sandy taught us that engineered beach systems substantially reduce flood risk from storm surge.

New Jersey is also addressing energy vulnerabilities. Through a collaboration with the nation's energy laboratories, the state surveyed municipalities and critical facilities to identify innovative and community-tailored energy solutions. The goal is to improve energy efficiency and create greater resiliency.

For example, the state is working closely with the U.S. Department of Energy to study and develop a micro-grid capable of providing highly reliable power to support the state's transportation infrastructure. The state continues to encourage adoption of suitable technologies, including combined heat and power, fuel cells, and solar power with storage capability. In recognition of the state's work in this area, the President's Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force lauded the Christie Administration for "embrac[ing] the opportunity to provide national leadership in energy resilience."

Overall, New Jersey has made tremendous progress since Sandy hit our shores just over a year ago. The road to recovery and resiliency is challenging, but we will continue to work tirelessly to prepare for the challenges of tomorrow. ▲

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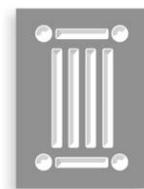
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Change and Prosper

# A Parable from the Private Sector



By Robert M. Czech  
Chair/CEO, New Jersey  
Civil Service Commission

I'd like to share a fable about two towns.

Once upon a time, a great factory in the middle of a prosperous nation fell into ruin. Its owners, not willing to write off their investment, saw that another of their factories was succeeding where the great one failed, even though the second plant was located in a much smaller nation with fewer workers. They called a meeting of the managers of the two plants and instructed that the successful ones teach their ways to the others. Soon the great factory was once again productive, making the same amount of product it had in its heyday, with half the number of workers. There was great rejoicing in the land, and its leaders began to wonder if they could work the same miracles in their domain.

BusinessDictionary.com defines productivity as "A measure of the efficiency of a person, machine, factory, system, etc., in converting inputs into useful outputs. Productivity is computed by dividing average output per period by the total costs incurred or resources (capital, energy, material, personnel) consumed in that period. Productivity is a critical determinant of cost efficiency."

As in private industry, the public sector faces the challenges of improving productivity. How do we provide gov-

ernment services in the most cost effective manner? How do we tie employee performance to the mission and goals of the agency? Being accountable to the taxpayers requires government managers to be held accountable for the performance of their agency and its employees.

Here I must clarify that the "fable" at the start of this article comes from a May 2012 Wall Street Journal article

## JUST LIKE SHAREHOLDERS, TAXPAYERS ARE DEMANDING CHANGE.

about a steel mill in Burns Harbor, Indiana that noted, "Left for dead a decade ago, this 50-year-old facility on the shores of Lake Michigan has been rejuvenated thanks to an unusual experiment by its owner, Luxembourg-based ArcelorMittal. In 2008, Burns Harbor was "twinned" with a hypermodern mill in Gent, Belgium. Over 100 U.S. engineers and managers were flown across the Atlantic and told to "do as the Belgians do."



Today the public sector is also being challenged by financial realities. Productivity must improve; personnel costs and effectiveness cannot be ignored.

The result was record output at the Indiana facility. Mirroring what was done in Belgium, the plant has invested in technologies and new systems. They are now making "the same amount of steel with nearly half the people." This type of modern benchmarking, where a better performing facility is matched with a failing facility, enables an organization to incorporate successful initiatives from other areas.

Though it requires fewer employees, the mill was not closed. It continued to provide jobs and tax revenues to the community. The benefits far exceeded the reduction in personnel levels. Survival required change. Applying what was working somewhere else was an acknowledgement of reality.

Today the public sector is also being challenged by financial realities. Productivity must improve; personnel costs and effectiveness cannot be ignored. As with the Indiana mill, change will have a cost, but the potential benefits are great. Burns Harbor improved productivity with half the personnel. Could a government bureaucracy achieve these results?

Should an employee's performance be a bigger component of pay and advancement? Does the taxpayer deserve this since they are doing the paying and receiving?

Personnel costs and performance are not the only factors in measuring productivity, though they are probably the most important. But all too often when "merit and performance" are brought up in the same sentence as "public employees," opponents say it would violate merit and fitness.

But I must repeat: Survival requires change. Applying what is working somewhere else is an acknowledgement of reality.

For example, reducing the onerous legal requirements regarding the movement of personnel in Shared Services agreements may result in fewer personnel. But the benefits—lower costs and increased efficiency—outweigh the losses.

The salary caps in employee compensation and Police and Fire arbitration awards may have lowered salary growth. But they also made it easier to maintain personnel levels in essential services, such as

public safety. The same applies to greater employee contributions for pension and health benefits.

We at the Civil Service Commission are not exempt. Our productivity must improve to assist with performance enhancement at the local level, and we have undertaken a number of initiatives to change for the better.

Reducing the time between job announcement and the final hiring decision is important. As part of this effort, we are expanding the capacity and capabilities of the online application system. This system is now the main way that applications come into the Civil Service System.

Title classification reduction and title consolidation help reduce testing and provide more flexibility in job descriptions. Our continuing efforts to move more titles from the competitive to the non-competitive division, when appropriate, will reduce testing delays while maintaining professional position qualifications such as professional licensing requirements.

At the state level, we are improving employee evaluations to better coordinate

individual performance with the goals of the agency, and to better incorporate merit and performance in employee advancement decisions. Although this has been met with opposition, we believe using this approach reinforces our constitutional mandate of merit and fitness in public employment.

To reinforce the role of managers and supervisors in improving performance and productivity, Civil Service is offering NJ STEP (New Jersey Supervisory Training for Empowering Performance). This training program is open to all state and local agencies, including non-Civil Service jurisdictions, and has already graduated 360 government supervisors.

As illustrated by the Indiana steel mill example referenced at the outset, the status quo is not always sustainable. Just like shareholders, taxpayers are demanding change. The Governor agrees. That is why improving productivity and performance at all levels of government will continue to be a priority as we move forward over the next four years. ▲

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# Getting the Most from Your League



## Prepare for Bargaining with NJLM's Arbitration Resources



By Taran B. Samhammer  
Bureau Research and Services Coordinator

**O**n January 1, 2011 the Arbitration Reform Bill (A-3393) took effect. This legislation changed the arbitration process to help municipalities control the rising cost of public safety personnel labor agreements. The legislation's key provision—a 2 percent cap on interest arbitration awards—will expire on April 1, 2014 unless it is extended by the state Legislature. However, regardless of whether it expires or is extended, it is important to stay current on arbitration law in order to effectively negotiate contracts with municipal labor organizations. A lack of education could lead to greater concessions on your part and a larger financial burden for your municipality.

In 2014 the League is launching a new and improved arbitration service. For many years the Arbitration Reporter has been published as a book on a quarterly basis. After reviewing the content of these books, League staff members have decided that the content can be revised to make this guide even more valuable.

The revamped Arbitration Reporter will be a newsletter emailed to subscribers quarterly. Each issue will include a summary of the new Interest Awards published, which includes salary percentage increases, concessions made and trends. Web links to view the full award will be provided.

The newsletters will also include information on new bills that might affect the arbitration process and an analysis of the trends occurring in arbitration awards. The table of arbitrators, docket numbers and award dates that were a feature of the previous printed version will also be included. This new series will be a step above the previous printed version, as it will provide an in-depth analysis of the issues currently affecting arbitration decisions. The new digital version will replace the printed books.

The new format will also include articles authored by the League's Labor Counsel Brian Kronick, Esq. and Joseph Hannon, Esq., both with the firm Genova, Burns, Giantomasi & Webster, and League Staff Attorney/Associate Counsel Ed Purcell, Esq. on current labor relations topics and Appellate and Supreme Court decisions.

The Quarterly Arbitration newsletter is part of the Police

and Fire Labor Data Service, a service that also includes the Selected Police and Fire Contract Provisions and the Police and Fire Salary Scales; a total of four books. These four books are published annually and include contract data and salary scales collected from police and fire departments throughout New Jersey.

**THE LEAGUE'S  
NEW AND IMPROVED  
ARBITRATION REPORTER  
NEWSLETTER WILL  
INCLUDE ANALYSES AND  
TIMELY INFORMATION  
REGARDING RECENT  
ARBITRATION AWARDS  
AND LEGISLATION,  
AND WILL BE  
AVAILABLE DIGITALLY.**

Each year the League queries New Jersey's police and fire departments to gather information concerning their most recent labor agreements. Data includes, but is not limited to, educational provisions, uniform allowances, health insurance coverage, longevity and vacation schedules. Books in this series contain data for Patrol Officers and Firefighters only; information for Superior Officers is not included. The series is available by subscription, and subscriptions may be purchased to receive the whole series as a package or to receive publications individually.

To view a sample page of the Police and Fire Labor Data Service books, visit the League's Arbitration Center, which is part of the League's Bureau of Municipal Services, at [njslom.org/Arbitration\\_Center\\_main.html](http://njslom.org/Arbitration_Center_main.html). The Arbitration Center also lists web links to pertinent resources, guidance and

court decisions.

In addition to the printed resources mentioned, the League offers a complimentary legal consultation to its local government members. Contact League Staff Attorney-Associate Counsel Ed Purcell, Esq. by phone or e-mail for clarification on labor relation principles or grievance procedures (609-695-3481, Ext. 137 or [epurcell@njslom.org](mailto:epurcell@njslom.org).) Please note that the League does not offer legal advice to its members.

Additionally, each fall the League holds a Labor Negotiations Primer seminar to increase its membership's understanding of collective negotiations and discuss recent legislation. To view a full listing of League seminars visit [njslom.org/seminars](http://njslom.org/seminars).

It's best to be prepared when entering into collective negotiations. The League offers its membership resources to help them become more knowledgeable. Take the time and effort to educate yourself with the resources that the League provides, and enter into negotiations prepared. ▲



NJ GMIS will hold its fifth annual government Technology Education Conference on March 27, 2014. This one-day event is a “must attend” for anyone responsible for the use of technology in the public sector. If you are a CIO, help desk technician, web master or K-12 tech supervisor you won’t want to miss this event. The conference covers topics of interest for all technology professionals in the public sector, including: In-depth technical sessions, management issues, IT specialties & applications, web, social media and communications, K-12 education and more.



“Beak’s Rules of Leadership” learned and developed over his many years as a Marine and a civilian director. Many of these rules were tested when Lieutenant General Howell took command of The Johnson Space Center with a work force of 15,000 individuals, including hundreds of astronauts and scientists and thousands of

engineers. Lt. General Howell was the Director of the Space Center when tragedy fell; the space shuttle Columbia exploded. In this session, Beak will explore his “Rules of Leadership” that made him an unparalleled commander and manager.

Last year’s event saw 150+ attendees, 13 educational forums and 39 vendors, providing lots of networking opportunities. We are applying for four contact-hours of IT CEUs issued by the Division of Local Government Services!

NJ-GMIS is an association of New Jersey public sector technology leaders. We provide organizational structure, networking and activities to enhance coordination among state, county and local governments along with public school agencies. NJ-GMIS also provides a forum for the exchange of ideas, information and techniques. Our goal is to enhance members’ knowledge of hardware, software, communication, security, policy and other developing issues as they relate to government technology activities.

The TEC 2014 Keynote Address will be presented by Lieutenant General Jefferson “Beak” Howell, Jr. J.D. ‘Beak’ Howell is presently an adjunct professor with the Lyndon B. Johnson School for Public Affairs at the University of Texas in Austin. Beak’s impressive resume includes 37 years as an officer in the Marines in which he commanded at all levels: leading infantry platoons of 50+/- Marines, a 250-Marine fighter/attack squadron, a 5,000-person aircraft group, a 15,000-person aircraft wing, and ultimately a Marine force of 80,000+ Marines and sailors.

General Howell will present “Lessons in Leadership” This engaging and informative session will focus on

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# The Top 10 Environmental Developments of 2013



By Lewis Goldshore  
NJLM Environmental Counsel

**T**he year 2013 was an eventful one for environmental law and policy. This article reviews the year's Top Ten issues, all of which have direct implications for local government.

**10 Sewerage Connection Fees** *Associates, LLC v. No. Bergen Municipal Utilities Authority* involved a dispute between two sewerage authorities over sewer connection fees from a new development. The wastewater was collected by one utility and treated by another. The State Supreme Court held that both authorities could charge a connection fee that was linked to the capital costs of the relevant portion of its sewerage system.

**9 Right to Inspect Private Property** The State Supreme Court upheld a DEP inspector's right to conduct a warrantless search of residential property to determine whether a freshwater wetlands permit had been violated. *New Jersey Dep't of Env'tl. Protection v. Huber*. But the Court noted that the wetlands act's administrative inspection provisions did not authorize forcible entry without a warrant when consent was denied. Where a property owner subject to a permit objected to entry, DEP was authorized to assess a monetary penalty and seek judicial relief.

**8 On the Court's Docket** The State Supreme Court will decide two Spill Act cases in 2014. The first, *Magic Petroleum Corp. v. Exxon Mobil Corp.*, concerns whether DEP has primary jurisdiction to determine Spill Act claims for allocating liability. In the second, *Morristown Assocs. v. Grant Oil Co.*, the question is whether the general six-year statute of limitations applies to Spill Act contribution claims.



The gubernatorial race's focus was directed at pocketbook, rather than environmental, issues. But to the extent that environmental concerns received attention, Senator Buono's record and message resonated with the environmentalists.

**7 Compensation for Dune Construction** *Boro. of Harvey Cedars v. Karan* clarified the rules for determining just compensation where a dune was constructed that partially blocked the views of an oceanfront property owner. The state Supreme Court reversed the jury's award of \$375,000 in damages and concluded that in partial taking cases, just compensation should be based on all relevant, reasonably calculable, and non-conjectural factors whether they decrease or increase valuation. The ruling's impact on condemnation awards will require future litigation.

THE DEP IS NOW  
MUCH SMALLER AS A  
RESULT OF SUCCESSIVE  
BUDGET CUTS AND  
THE PRIVATIZING OF  
SOME OF ITS PREVIOUS  
RESPONSIBILITIES.

**6 Waiver Rule Upheld** The Appellate Division upheld a DEP rule that authorized waivers from strict compliance with its regulatory requirements. In re N.J.A.C. 7:1B-1.1 et seq. But it required the agency to comply with the Administrative Procedure Act for a guidance document, frequently asked questions and application forms that had been posted on the department's website. The concern that the waiver process would be used to short-circuit environmental reviews has not occurred—to date no waivers have been approved.

**5 Global Warming** Governor Christie has acknowledged that global warming is occurring, but has expressed doubts concerning what to do about it. He angered environmental groups by withdrawing from the Regional Gashouse Gas Initiative (a multi-state program designed to reduce carbon dioxide) and by reallocating earmarked funds for clean-energy projects to balance the state's budget. These actions were taken despite

global warming and sea level rise having been linked by authoritative sources to the severity of the damage caused by Superstorm Sandy.

**4 SRRA/LSRP Update** Those involved in hazardous site cleanups have become increasingly familiar with the Site Remediation Reform Act (SRRA) and the use of licensed site remediation professionals (LSRP). SRRA was intended to speed up cleanups and reduce costs but achieving those goals has been difficult. SRRA's implementation has been mired in the completion of forms and keeping up with the technical guidance. Additionally, the LSRPs have tended to be conservative in their approach to remediation.

**3 Sandy Aftermath** The recovery/rebuilding efforts following Superstorm Sandy have resulted in substantial environmental and land use impacts. While some of these issues were immediately apparent, others will require additional time before they are clarified.

The Christie administration took the lead by securing federal funding, removing red tape to facilitate rebuilding and seeking to buyout flood prone properties. The Legislature promptly responded to the devastation with several proposals designed to address specific aspects of the recovery/rebuilding process.

**2 Gubernatorial Race** The gubernatorial race's focus was directed at pocketbook, rather than environmental, issues. But to the extent that environmental concerns received attention, Senator Buono's record and message resonated with the environmentalists. She was able to garner endorsements from some, but not all, of the organized groups; but in the end that didn't matter.

In contrast, Governor Christie distanced himself from nearly all of the environmentalists four years ago and maintained an icy relationship with them during his first term. Rapprochement with the professional environmentalists is unlikely to occur during the second term.

**1 DEP's Makeover** From the earliest days of the first Christie Administration, the priorities included making the state more attractive to the business community and removing red tape. As a result, DEP is now much smaller as a result of successive budget cuts and the privatizing of some of its previous responsibilities. In general, it is easier for the regulated public to deal with due to the retraining of the staff, the increased use of technology and a vastly improved website. The unresolved question is what additional environmental policy changes will be put in place during the second Christie administration. ▲



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# Let's Change How We Think about Government Transparency



By James R. Doherty  
Administrator Clerk,  
Wantage Township

A review of the history of New Jersey state government will reveal that major paradigm shifts occur based on foreseeable trends. Historic changes with far-reaching impact have followed a fairly predictable cycle, with two common goals: greater transparency and greater efficiency in the operation of municipal government.

The Progressive Movement swept through American government during the first decade of the 20th Century. This led to the adoption of the Walsh Act in 1911, which introduced the then-radical concept of non-partisan elections into the New Jersey government landscape. Roughly two decades after the Progressive Movement took hold in New Jersey, the state saw the adoption of the Municipal Man-

agers Act of 1923, which allowed for the hiring of a professional business manager to assist an elected body in the running of a municipality.

Fast forward two decades, and the winds of change once again swept through our state, culminating in the adoption of the Faulkner Act in 1950. This law provides municipalities with a wide range of options for a municipal government charter, and created opportunities for direct participation by the general public in the government process. Two and a half decades later, largely as a reaction to the Watergate scandal, the Open Public Meetings Act was adopted. OPMA added further guidelines for the operation of municipal government and increased transparency in government operations.



Two and a half decades after the Open Public Meetings Act, the trend toward increased transparency took another leap with the adoption of the Open Public Records Act of 2001.

In 1995, the state Legislature concluded that the process of Recall was appropriate for implementation on a statewide basis. Prior to the adoption of the Uniform Recall Election Law, this option was only available in Faulkner Act and Walsh Act municipalities. The impact of this law is evident as the public makes use of this "direct power" to address the effectiveness of their elected representatives.

Two and a half decades after the Open Public Meetings Act, the trend toward increased transparency took another leap with the adoption of the Open Public Records Act of 2001.

Today, almost two decades since the Uniform Recall Act was adopted, it appears that another major paradigm shift could be on the horizon in New Jersey.

This past year, the push toward reform has focused on proposed changes to the Open Public Meetings Act, as well as to OPRA. Although the Open Public Meetings Act, adopted in 1975, needs updating, the devil is in the details.

Senate Bill S-2511 has become the focal point of proposed changes to OPMA in the state Legislature. The bill's sponsors have been undertaking the herculean task of reaching out to stakeholders to find acceptable wording that will implement fair changes.

Various groups have already weighted in on the perceived shortcomings with S-2511. Also, the text of the bill is likely to see further change in the near future as the outreach program is reviewed and assessed by the sponsors. My purpose in this article is not to re-hash the talking points on this bill. Rather, I suggest that there is a flaw in the basic premise from which this bill proceeds. The bill creates an unavoidable conflict because there is no such thing as "one size fits all" municipal government. Pushback against such a proposed state law has been vociferous, and will not likely go away.

Although many municipalities are unhappy with the Open Public Meetings Act, that fact should not be used to force changes upon hundreds of municipalities that are not experiencing problems.

Senate Bill S-2511 assumes that the state legislature must stand between local elected officials and the general

public in order to ensure proper governance. Such an approach achieves the exact opposite result. It breeds resentment and conflict.

As I see it, there is no reason why the New Jersey State Legislature should dictate to a local Mayor how he or she runs a local meeting. Senators were not elected to run local meetings of governing bodies. That is the responsibility of the Mayor. My suggestion is simple: let mayors run their meetings. And give the public a voice to express unhappiness with their mayor's actions, if it exists, and the power to affect change, if change is desired.

## THE GOAL SHOULD BE TO GIVE THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND LOCAL GOVERNING BODIES THE VEHICLE FOR OPEN PUBLIC DISCOURSE.

To achieve effective government, we all need to redirect our paradigm to one of cooperation. The state Legislature should stand with local elected officials, who in turn should stand with the public. When that happens, we achieve good governance.

The goal should be to give the general public and local governing bodies the vehicle for open public discourse. Show them the route and hand them the keys. There's no reason for the state Legislature to do all the driving.

For local governing bodies, the key for effective public discourse is a workable Byron M. Baer Open Public Meetings Act, a statute that does not micro-manage; a statute that is current with technological advances; a statute that provides flexibility in administration.

For the public, the vehicle for open public discourse should include universal availability of Initiative and

Binding Referendum. Give this right to the public, and there will no longer be any reason for the Legislature to police local governing bodies. Each municipality would have the power to change or implement whatever meeting guidelines they desire for their own local jurisdiction, using "best management practices," identified in OPMA as a starting point. In this scenario, each municipality can decide how long a public comment session should last during public meetings in their town; each municipality can decide for itself whether subcommittees are subject to the requirements of OPMA.

As was the case with Recall, the power of Initiative and Binding Referendum is currently reserved for use by the public in municipalities that have adopted the Faulkner Act and Walsh Act. As was done with Recall, isn't it time that New Jersey made this direct power of the public an opportunity throughout the State of New Jersey?

It would also make sense to expand Initiative and Referendum to include actions by Boards of Education, and Special Districts.

Finally, the current statutes which explain the procedures for Initiative and Binding Referendum need to be streamlined and simplified. This process should be much more user friendly than it currently is. Many times, even those municipalities that currently have Initiative and Referendum see little action from the public in exercising this right. This is due to how onerous and scary the procedure can be for the average New Jersey citizen.

I truly believe the legislators and local elected officials who are debating amendments to OPMA all have the best interests of their constituents in mind. I just think the discussion is misdirected. Give the power to the people. Then stand back with confidence that we can all work together to build the society we need and deserve. ▲

**James R. Doherty, Administrator Clerk of Wantage Township, is a Coadjutant Professor for Rutgers University, teaching the Elections Administration course for individuals seeking Municipal Clerks certification. Mr. Doherty is currently the Editor of The Quill, which is the quarterly Newsletter of the Municipal Clerks Association of New Jersey, and was honored as the New Jersey Municipal Clerk of the Year for 2012.**

# Towns Recognized for Sustainable Excellence



By Randall Solomon  
Co-Director, Sustainable Jersey

**F**ifty-nine New Jersey towns achieved Sustainable Jersey certification in 2013, bringing the total up to 137 municipalities that are now certified. Since the program's launch in 2009, there has been a significant increase in the number of towns applying for and achieving certification in 2013. Sustainable Jersey's 399 participating communities represent over half of the state's municipalities and nearly 75 percent of its population.

Each year, Sustainable Jersey recognizes three towns that have achieved the most sustainability actions. The Sustainability Champion award is presented to the municipalities that have scored the most points in the Sustainable Jersey certification program in three population categories: small (0-4,999), medium (5,000-39,999) and large (40,000+). The 2013 Sustainability Champion award winners are Woodbridge Township, Madison Borough and Bordentown City.

**Woodbridge Township (Middlesex County)** For the fifth year in a row, the Sustainability Champion award winner in the large municipality category is Woodbridge Township.

The Township was certified with a record high of 870 Sustainable Jersey certification points.

Woodbridge implements its sustainable actions through the Greenable Woodbridge program. Woodbridge has done actions that range from a \$7 million project to install energy-producing solar panels on municipal buildings to the designation of Woodbridge as a Mayor's Wellness Campaign community.

The township has implemented automated trash collection and single-stream recycling that has increased recycling and decreased the amount of waste going to the county landfill. The completion of energy-saving audits at municipal buildings and facilities and the integration of fuel efficient hybrid vehicles into the municipal fleet are projects that place Woodbridge on top. The township also designated 106 acres in an underutilized industrial section for the development and construction of a state-of-the-art Enviro-Technology Incubator.

Woodbridge Mayor John E. McCormac said, "Sustainable Jersey serves as a benchmark for our sustainable initiatives, while providing the township with additional resources needed to plan for our green future."



Pictured (left to right) accepting the Sustainability Champion Award in the large municipality category are Donna Drewes, Co-Director, Sustainable Jersey; John E. McCormac, Mayor, Woodbridge Township; Marta Lefsky, AICP, PP, Director, Township of Woodbridge Department of Planning & Development; Susan Coan, Regional Vice President, Atlantic City Electric (Annual Awards sponsor); and Randall Solomon, Co-Director, Sustainable Jersey.

**Madison Borough (Morris County)** The Sustainability Champion winner with 465 points in the medium municipality category is Madison Borough. Madison manages its sustainability program through a group called Sustainable Madison. Created by ordinance in 2012, this group is charged with encouraging sustainable practices. The eleven member team includes six residents, the Borough Engineer, the Borough Assistant Administrator, the Department of Public Works Supervisor, the Board of Education Head of Buildings and Grounds, and an Environmental Commission member. The group works with little to no budget and relies on volunteers.

With each year, Sustainable Madison has grown in size and support from

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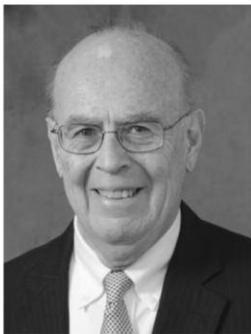
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the community and municipality. In early 2013, Betsy Uhlman, chairperson of the Sustainable Madison Advisory Committee, held a successful "Green Forum" on the campus of Drew University, with a follow-up summary at the Borough Council meeting. More than 100 residents, business people, students and public officials turned out to exchange ideas about how Madison can become more sustainable and save municipal dollars.

Mayor of Madison Township Robert Conway said, "Madison is a great place to live now; we have taken the Sustainable Jersey program seriously because we intend to be a great place to live in the years ahead too."

Madison's sustainable priorities include recycling and waste reduction, energy efficiency, land use and transportation, natural resources and food and health. Sustainable Madison did a waste audit at Madison High School to assess demand for an organic waste composter and then got a grant from the Madison Rotary to buy one. The borough has also focused on recycling and composting all of the downed trees from Hurricane Sandy by having them turned into mulch for borough landscaping.

Sustainable Madison attributes its success to having a town with abundant volunteerism, maintaining close ties between Sustainable Madison and the Environmental Commission and making



Pictured (left to right) accepting the Sustainability Champion Award in the small municipality category are Pam Mount, Chair, Sustainable Jersey Board of Trustees; Zigmont Targonski, Commissioner, Bordentown City; Joseph Malone, Mayor, Bordentown City; Donna Drewes, Co-Director, Sustainable Jersey; Cathy Elliott-Shaw, Co-Chair, Bordentown City Green Team; Cindy Gallagher, Co-Chair, Bordentown City Green Team; and Randall Solomon, Co-Director, Sustainable Jersey.

sure that the Council and Mayor support the sustainability efforts.

**Bordentown City (Burlington County)** The Sustainability Champion winner with 390 certification points in the small municipality category is Bordentown City. As a small community with a small city staff, most of the Sustainable Jersey actions are done by volunteers. Bordentown City is a model for ground-up sustainability planning and implementation.

The Bordentown City Green Team was formally established by the city's governing body in 2010, and went on to achieve bronze-level certification in the Sustainable Jersey program that year. For the first three years, the Green Team operated without a budget, and relied on in-kind donations such as equipment, supplies and services. In 2013, the Green Team received its first allotment of \$400 in the Bordentown City Environmental Commission budget.

A good indicator of how the program continues to grow is its annual Green Fair. Each year the number of exhibitors and attendees has increased. In 2013, due to the Green Team's efforts, eight resolutions relating to Sustainable Jersey were passed by the governing body. Other events held were a backyard composting workshop, a lighting fair and a sewer plant tour.

Joseph Malone, Mayor of the City of Bordentown, said, "Our Environmental Commission and the Green Team are second to none. The members of the Green Team and Environmental Commission are informed in state of the art techniques and offer many practical environmental courses and talks."

To read a full profile of the sustainability actions completed by these three towns, and all of the Sustainable Jersey certified towns, visit [www.SustainableJersey.com](http://www.SustainableJersey.com) and click on the Participating Communities page. ▲



Pictured (left to right) accepting a Sustainability Champion Award in the medium municipality category are Donna Drewes, Co-Director, Sustainable Jersey; Ben Wolkowitz, Councilman, Madison Borough; Susan Coan, Regional Vice President, Atlantic City Electric (Annual Awards sponsor); Astri Baillie, Councilwoman, Madison Borough; Heather Shepard, Member, Sustainable Madison; Kathleen Caccavale, Member, Sustainable Madison; Betsy Uhlman, Chair of the Madison Environmental Commission and the Sustainable Madison Committee; Bob Contey, Mayor, Madison Borough; and Randall Solomon, Co-Director, Sustainable Jersey.



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# Addressing the Effects of Climate Change on Air Quality



By Pam Mount & Richard Opiekun  
Members, New Jersey Clean Air Council

**W**e hear these words all of the time: climate change, global warming, greenhouse gas. For good reason these terms are never far from the lips of scientists, environmentalists, policy makers, and public health officials. But how much attention are we paying to the meaning of these terms and how they relate to each other? Perhaps the most important thing to know is how these factors affect the quality of the air we breathe in the Garden State. What are the regional impacts? What are the impacts in our neighborhoods?

It's apparent to anyone living in the state that New Jersey has recently experienced higher temperatures in summer and wildly changing weather patterns, as recently evidenced by Hurricane Sandy. How much of this can be attributed to climate change resulting from manmade sources? Research has consistently shown that the emission of greenhouse gases including carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), black carbon, and other air pollutants are among the major factors driving climate change. The effects of climate change can

complicate the state's ability to maintain air quality standards and can lead to adverse health outcomes, such as increased hospitalizations due to asthma and increased incidences of cardiovascular disease.



**THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE CAN COMPLICATE THE STATE'S ABILITY TO MAINTAIN AIR QUALITY STANDARDS AND CAN LEAD TO ADVERSE HEALTH OUTCOMES.**

Because of recent storm-related events, the New Jersey Clean Air Council (CAC) elected to address the effects of climate change on air quality within the state. This issue is a long-term challenge for New Jersey, and the CAC believes it will require a significant on-going effort to anticipate, evaluate and prepare for present and future adverse events.

Because of recent storm-related events, the New Jersey Clean Air Council (CAC) elected to address the effects of climate change on air quality within the state. This issue is a long-term challenge for New Jersey, and the CAC believes it will require a significant on-going effort to anticipate, evaluate and prepare for present and future adverse events.

Although New Jersey has made great strides in achieving both national and state air quality standards, the effects of a changing climate could reverse some of this progress. The potential air quality impacts of climate change include a 2 to 8 part per billion increase in the summertime average ground-level ozone, the lengthening of the ozone season, the exacerbation of ozone levels on already high ozone days, and increases in particle pollution. In addition to changes in ambient levels of chemical air pollutants, climate change is anticipated to increase concentrations of allergy causing pollens. These changes in air quality have the potential to adversely affect the respiratory and cardiovascular health of New Jersey residents.

Moreover, certain adaptive responses to climate change can have an adverse impact on air quality. These responses may include distributing power generation to minimize power outages, local reliance on backup electric generators, increased power plant operation in warmer summer months, and burning and other methods of dispos-



Changes in temperature, precipitation, and pollution levels also can exacerbate pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma and allergies, particularly in children and the elderly.

ing of storm-generated waste.

In addition to naturally-occurring phenomena, anthropogenic activities (activities resulting from the influence of human beings on nature) release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Thus, greenhouse gas mitigation measures have the potential to impact air quality unrelated to climate change either positively or negatively, depending on how they are implemented. The increased use of alternative fuel vehicles, shifting from coal to natural gas for power generation, and energy conservation can all have air quality benefits that need to be carefully managed.

The air quality impacts cited above can have a wide range of health consequences on all sectors of the state's population. Increases in ozone and other pollutants can cause and aggravate lung and cardiovascular diseases, lead to more cancers and premature deaths. Changes in temperature, precipitation, and pollution levels also can exacerbate pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma and allergies, particularly in children and the

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elderly. Other especially vulnerable populations may include low-income communities, communities of color and the chronically ill. Avoiding these threats requires careful planning and action at multiple levels of government. The goal of the 2013 Clean Air Council public hearing was to identify and better understand these critical issues as a basis for recommendations for a comprehensive action plan.

The CAC considered testimony given by academics, industry experts, state and federal government scientists, and the public at a hearing that focused on the impact pollutant emissions can have on air quality. As in the past, the CAC acknowledged that any successful attempt to mitigate the effects of climate change and minimize potential adverse outcomes to both environmental and human health can only be achieved by a cooperative effort that includes municipal governments.

Following a review and discussion of the testimony received at the public hearing, the CAC made numerous recommendations in its annual report

to New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin. The full 2013 CAC Public Hearing Report and detailed recommendations can be found at [www.state.nj.us/dep/cleanair/hearings/ph\\_2013.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/cleanair/hearings/ph_2013.htm).

Some key strategies they recommended included addressing the need:

- to increase both adaptation planning and mitigation planning to be able to rapidly respond to climate-related events in ways that have the lowest impact on both environmental health and health of New Jersey's residents;
- to develop more green initiatives for both commercial and residential buildings;
- for the NJDEP to focus on regional and local strategies to identify excessive regions of pollution within the state;
- to continue to work with major pollutant emitters in neighboring states to reduce their emissions. Those emissions find their way to New Jersey due to prevailing winds from west to east. This strategy is on strong footing, as it follows the successful 126 petitions against a power plant in northeastern

Pennsylvania that was also challenged in court and upheld; and

- for the NJDEP to develop better guidance on the use of gas-powered generators and fuel storage for these generators and other gas-powered equipment.

To learn more about air pollution, greenhouse gases, and how they affect climate change and human health, read the full report and determine how you, as an important stakeholder, can make a difference in your community. ▲

Pam Mount is a former Lawrence Township (Mercer) Mayor and Owner of Terhune Orchards. Richard Opiekun, M.A., M.S., Ph.D. is an Environmental Scientist.

*The New Jersey Clean Air Council (CAC) is an advisory group that makes recommendations to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) on air quality matters. It is not a division of the NJDEP, and the views expressed in this article represent those solely of the CAC as presented to the NJDEP in the CAC's 2013 Public Hearing Report "Addressing the Adverse Effects of Climate Change on Air Quality."*

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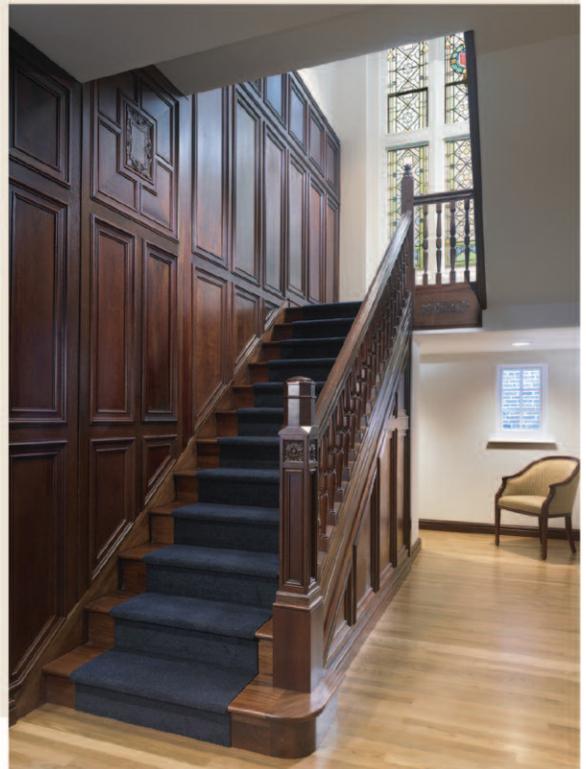


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# Online Risk Management Support Available



By David Grubb  
Executive Director, Municipal  
Excess Liability Joint Insurance  
& Chris Botta, Mayor, Ramsey

**W**hile risk management is an important priority in local government, it can also be time consuming. The Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund (MEL) has developing an on-line resource center at NJMEL.ORG to make it easier for local officials to find the information they need to implement sound programs. While a few of these resources are limited to MEL members, most can be used by any New Jersey governmental entity.

**Management Resources** Risk management begins with the governing body and senior management. The MEL has recorded eight webinars that can be viewed by anyone on-line.

- *Basic Risk Management for Local Government Officials* provides an overview designed for newly elected or appointed officials.
- *Responsibilities of a JIF Commissioner* discusses the state regulations for the governance of JIFs.
- *Workers' Compensation* reviews New Jersey's

workers' compensation law and strategies to control claims.

- *Title 59* reviews the provisions of the Tort Claims Act.
- *Environmental Liability* complies with the NJDEP's Storm Water Management training requirements for local officials and employees.
- *Ethics in Local Government* discusses the Local Governmental Officials Act and a series of actual cases.
- *Pedestrian Safety* describes a community-based program to prevent pedestrian accidents. We recommend that all local officials view this video. MEL also distributes free DVD copies.
- *Public Officials and Employment Practices* covers precautions local officials need to take to avoid litigation and personal liability.

**Employment Practices** Unfortunately, a series of court decisions have made it far more difficult to defend lawsuits concerning Employment Practices. The court established specific guidelines for what an employer must put in place. They include the following:

- *Written policies* The MEL developed a model employment policies and procedures manual that is available on its website. This manual is updated every two years and includes complaint procedures;
- *Training* Every two years the MEL distributes a training program specifically for managers and supervisors and a special training program for police chiefs. Your local JIF will contact you about the arrangements for these programs in your area. The MEL has also developed a training program for non-managerial personnel that includes a new video every other year. This is also available on the website.



Risk management begins with the governing body and senior management. The MEL is taking the lead to efficiently deliver these resources through the use of a special purpose website.

- **Monitoring** It is good practice to monitor compliance by asking employees if they have experienced harassment or discrimination at the end of the training program or whenever difficulties come to your attention.

In addition to addressing these areas, it is important that senior management makes an unequivocal commitment to preventing harassment and discrimination. This is why the MEL conducts annual seminars for elected officials who enroll using MEL's website.

These principles also apply to town sponsored volunteer organizations, especially fire departments. Every community needs to adopt a resolution extending the anti-harassment program to volunteers and the public and provide training. The MEL website has an anti-harassment training program that was especially written for volunteers.

**Employee Safety Training** The MEL website also includes an on-line learning management system that is designed to monitor each employee's compliance with training requirements. MEL members can access this system by

clicking "MSI—MEL Safety Institute" at the top of the webpage. Make sure your local unit has registered each employee. Also require that training records be audited to make sure all employees are up to date.

Each year, the MEL conducts over 1500 training courses around the state including the programs required by PEOSHA. To facilitate training, the MEL frequently conducts training days where the most frequently requested courses are conducted back to back. This minimizes time off from regular duties. The on-line learning management system is designed to facilitate the registration process for these courses.

In 2013, the learning management system also included on-line programs that permit employees to comply with many PEOSHA requirements without traveling to class. This substantially improves productivity. The specific topics include the New Employee Orientation, Preventing Back Injuries, Crossing Guard Orientation, DPW Safety, Office Safety, Fire Safety and Driving in Urban Areas.

The list of on-line courses has just

been expanded to include the annual Blood Borne Pathogens and the bi-annual Right to Know Refresher Training required by the state. In particular, these two courses account for a major portion of training related down time. To comply with the PEOSHA's regulations, the MEL has established a toll-free number that employees can call to have their specific questions answered.

Another way to reduce the accident rate is to keep reminding everyone of the basic precautions. In the safety section of the website, there are a series of Safety Bulletins and Frequently Asked Questions that supervisors can use in their daily reminders.

**Public Works** Working with heavy equipment is inherently dangerous and it is critical that managers and supervisors talk about these hazards daily. The MEL launched a special program called "Don't Get Caught in the Crush Zone" to address this type of accident.

The video section of the website also has numerous other videos that can be streamed on line. Most of these videos can be viewed by anyone while the others are password protected. Inciden-



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tally, the password is "MEL." An even larger video collection can be ordered over the website. Any MEL member has access to this lending library.

**Firefighters** The safety section on the website includes an extensive discussion of the firefighter heart attack issue. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has issued an alert that sudden cardiac death represents the most common cause of on-duty firefighter fatalities.

The MEL recommends that towns require an annual physical consistent with NFPA Standard 1582, Chapter 7.4-7.7. Firefighters should be encouraged to monitor and control their blood pressure, cholesterol and weight, and stop smoking to ensure that their risk of heart attack is within reasonable limits.

**Police** The MEL encourages agencies to complete accreditation by updating their policies and procedures as well

as training records. To make it easier to achieve accreditation, the MEL and the Chief's Association now make available to MEL members special software to organize and manage the accreditation process. The Association also provides a comprehensive model manual with all of the policies and procedures needed for accreditation. This model is now available from the Association on disc and is free to any New Jersey law enforcement agency.

The web site also has extensive materials on school crossing guards. In fact, the position of school crossing guard is now one of the most dangerous jobs in local government. The MEL and the Chief's Association have collaborated in a new program that is reducing these accidents. All municipalities in New Jersey can use this program.

**Other Features**

- **Claims Reporting** Most claims can now be reported on-line.
- **Ordinance and Decision Library** This section has models of various risk management related ordinances and resolutions. For example, one of the most recent additions is a police promotion ordinance.
- **Legislative Positions** This section discusses the risk management implications of proposed legislation.
- **EPL (Employment Practices Liability) Hot Line** Members of JIFs that use the MEL's employment practices program can sign up to use a hot line service that gives access to employment attorneys.
- **Public Records and Public Notices Section** The MEL's website now contains all of the documents such as agendas and minutes required of any local unit of government under recent legislation.

To summarize, local governments cannot afford to develop the materials for an effective risk management on their own. They need access to research and model programs. The MEL is taking the lead to efficiently deliver these resources through the use of a special purpose website. ▲

David Grubb is Executive Director of the Municipal Excess Liability Joint Insurance Fund and a former Deputy Insurance Commissioner and former Mayor of Park Ridge Borough.

Chris Botta is the Mayor of Ramsey Borough and an attorney with Botta and Associates.



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# Garden State Women are Ready to Run



By Deanna-Marie Norcross  
Program Coordinator,  
Center for American Women  
and Politics, Rutgers University

**A**t the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), we know women officeholders make a difference. Bringing to the policymaking process their experience solving community problems, communicating effectively, and managing; women officeholders help make government more transparent, inclusive and accessible. Here in New Jersey, more women are answering the call to public leadership and envisioning themselves as candidates. In the 2013 elections, New Jersey had 67 women running for the legislature, besting the previous record of 65 women candidates in 2011 and far exceeding the 51 women candidates in 2001, the last time New Jersey had a gubernatorial race in a year when all seats in both houses were on the ballot. New Jersey now ranks 12th in the country for the proportion of women in its legislature, quite an improvement from being in the bottom ten as recently as 2005.

While it is promising to see more New Jersey women running for office, political parity is still a distant dream in the Garden State. Women comprise less than a third of the legislature, less than a quarter of freeholders, and hold less than 15 percent of all mayoral seats. Studies show that women are less likely to be asked or encouraged to run for office and are more likely to be actively discouraged from running, despite the evidence that women are successful candidates once they throw their hats into the ring.

If you know successful women who would make great candidates, encourage them to run for office. If you are a woman who has thought about running, consider this your invitation!

To help demystify the process of running for office, CAWP offers the annual Ready to Run™ Campaign Training for Women. This bipartisan two-day program offers a unique opportunity to hear directly from prominent elected and



Participants learn how to run for public office during the 2013 Ready to Run program.

appointed leaders, campaign consultants, and party officials about how to get ready to run. Since CAWP created the program in New Jersey 17 years ago, over a quarter of Ready to Run™ alumnae have run for office, and of those who ran, 70 percent won their races. Take a tip from these winners – attend Ready to Run™ and then gear up your own campaign! With an extensive and growing network of successful women candidates, the time to run is now.

cations and media, internet strategies, and fundraising.

In addition, Ready to Run™ features a Diversity Initiative designed to encourage more women of color to seek public office. CAWP has partnered with steering committees to host three separate pre-conference programs: Elección Latina; Rising Stars: Educating Asian American Women for Politics; and Run Sister Run: Women of the African Diaspora

Changing the Political Landscape. These programs will take place immediately prior to the main Ready to Run™ program on Friday, March 21.

Spread the word to colleagues and friends! Limited scholarships are available. For more details or to register, visit [www.cawp.rutgers.edu/ReadytoRun](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/ReadytoRun). For more information, contact Deanna-Marie Norcross at (732) 932- 9384, ext. 223 or [dnorcros@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:dnorcros@rci.rutgers.edu). ▲

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This year's Ready to Run™ program is scheduled for March 21 and 22 at the Douglass Campus Center, Rutgers-New Brunswick. Ready to Run™ features two tracks: "I'm Ready to Run, Now What?" and "I'm Not Ready to Run Yet, But..." The first track, for women who are ready to run for office within the next year or so, features interactive workshops that cover the fundamentals of launching an effective campaign and navigating the political parties as a potential candidate. The second track covers topics such as positioning yourself for future office, getting appointed to boards or commissions, getting involved in the political parties, and turning advocacy experience into political experience. Participants in both tracks will participate in plenary sessions on communi-

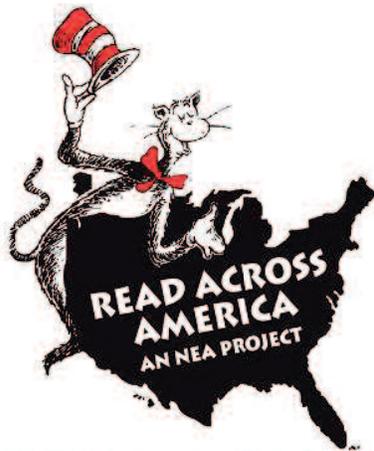
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# League Joins NJEA in Read Across America Celebration



By Christy Kanaby  
Read Across America  
State Coordinator, New Jersey  
Education Association

It's that time of year again! That's right, it's time to don your red and white stovepipe hats and join the nationwide celebration of reading. Monday, March 3, is Read Across America Day, and for the 14th year running, the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities are working together to promote reading and literacy through Read Across America-NJ.

Read Across America is an annual celebration of reading that culminates this year on March 3, the day after what would have been the 110th birthday of prolific children's book author Theodor Seuss Geisel, known and loved worldwide as Dr. Seuss.

**Nationwide celebration of reading** Nationwide, educators and communities are urged to take part in "Grabbing their hats and reading with the Cat." Schools around the country will celebrate the day with reading fairs, assemblies, and other literacy-related events.

NJEA encourages community leaders to join local schools in their celebrations. All participants are invited to pay tribute to Dr. Seuss by proudly wearing an iconic red-and-white stovepipe hat, the symbol of his signature character, the Cat in the Hat. NJEA is proud to support the National Education Association's continued partnership with Smile-makers, a Staples company, for all Dr. Seuss-related items



Oxford Township Mayor John Ort reads to students as part of the 2013 Read Across America Day celebration at Oxford Elementary School. Photo courtesy of Oxford Township Elementary School.

where a percentage of the profits from Read Across America sales will be donated to benefit the NEA's literacy program. Community leaders can view these items at [www.smilemakers.com/NEASeussStore](http://www.smilemakers.com/NEASeussStore)

"NJEA is proud to continue our long-standing tradition of supporting Read Across America," said NJEA President Wendell Steinhauer. "It continues to be one of our most popular programs of the year, and I know firsthand that our members are dedicated to enhancing childhood literacy in creative and innovative ways."

**"PARTICIPATING IN  
READ ACROSS AMERICA  
IS A TERRIFIC WAY TO  
LET THE KID IN ALL OF US  
REDISCOVER THE JOYS  
AND ADVENTURES THAT  
BOOKS CAN BRING."**

NJEA has made a major investment in Read Across America and each year that commitment grows. This year, NJEA's thematic approach is rooted in the beloved Seuss book, *The Sneetches and Other Stories*, a collection of four short stories by the acclaimed author. Published in August, 1961, this book was named one of the Teachers' Top 100 Books for Children in a 2007 NEA poll and one of the Top 100 Picture Books of all time in a 2012 poll by *School Library Journal*.

In addition, thanks to NJEA's ongoing passion to support childhood literacy in exciting ways, retired educators will again travel across the state in February and March dressed in seven-foot-tall professional Cat in the Hat costumes. They will visit hundreds of schools, bringing the literacy message to thousands of students. For the fourth year running, the Cat will gift the library of each school he visits. This year, each school will receive a copy of *The Sneetches and Other Stories* for students to enjoy.

Along the way, the Cat will encounter the many creative ways that schools cel-

brate Dr. Seuss' birthday, including everything from read-ins and pajama parties to reading extravaganzas featuring politicians, pundits, sports celebrities, and stars of television and movies.

**Community Relations** While the benefits of encouraging children and families to read are obvious, programs like Read Across America offer an excellent opportunity for public officials to build on their relationships with the community.

"When children see their parents and community leaders taking the time to read to them, it provides the inspiration that our children need to develop a life-long love of reading," Steinhauer stated. "Participating in Read Across America is a terrific way to let the kid in all of us rediscover the joys and adventures that books can bring."

**Getting Involved** The simplest way to get involved in Read Across America is to volunteer as a guest reader in your local school on March 3, but here are some other ways you can help celebrate Read Across America:

- Encourage your local governing body to adopt a proclamation designating March 3 as Read Across America Day in your community (available at [njslom.org](http://njslom.org)). Invite representatives of the local education association to be present when the resolution is adopted.
- Conduct a book drive or donate books on behalf of the local governing body to schools or public libraries.
- Host a day or evening of family reading in the council chambers. Work with local school staff to organize the event and invite parents.
- Talk with local business leaders and other public officials, as well as police officers and fire fighters, to encourage them to get involved in the Read Across America celebration. They can read, donate books, or host a Read Across event of their own!

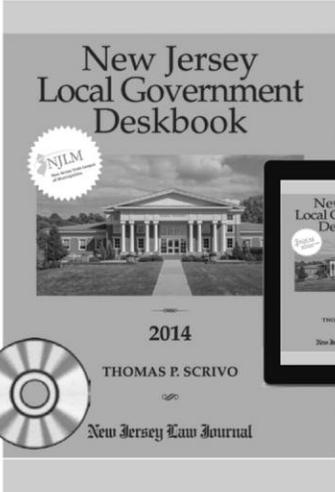
So, what are you waiting for? This March, plan to grab your hat and read with the Cat! After all, in the words of the late Dr. Seuss, "You're never too old, too wacky, too wild, to pick up a book and read to a child!" ▲

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# Suzanne Walters Sworn in as League President

**M**ayor Suzanne Walters was sworn in as the President of the New Jersey League of Municipalities during a

ceremonial event held on Thursday, December 12 at the Reeds at Shelter Haven. Mayor Walters took her oath of office from Cape May County Freeholder Director Gerald Thornton. Dozens of elected and appointed officials from Cape May County and South Jersey attended the event. Walters addressed the audience and announced she has

already met with the Chief of Staff for Governor Chris Christie, and plans many trips throughout the state to discuss key issues facing municipal governments. Also making remarks to the audience and congratulating Mayor Walters on her appointment was New Jersey League of Municipalities Executive Director William Dressel. ▲

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Mayor and League President Suzanne M. Walters is congratulated on taking her oath of office by Cape May County Freeholder Director Gerald Thornton.

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# Garden STATEments

If your community has a unique program or story, write to Taran Samhammer c/o The League of Municipalities, 222 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608 or via email at [tsamhammer@NJSLOM.org](mailto:tsamhammer@NJSLOM.org).



By Taran B. Samhammer  
Bureau Services & Research Coordinator,  
Bureau of Municipal Information

**Ventnor** middle school students recently participated in the national campaign: “Thumbs Down for Bullying” and pledged not to bully each other. Students participated in a week of respect that included a variety of activities, such as wearing a sports jersey to signify teaming up against bullying and awards presentations throughout the week for their participation. Students also received shout-outs from teachers when spotted being helpful to others. Classroom lessons included how to maintain good friendships. In addition, the school created a giving tree which listed positive character traits that translate into being a good and giving friend.



In other **Ventnor** news, the city held its second “trunk or treat” last October. In 2012 this event was created as a result of Superstorm Sandy. Trunk or treat offers residents the opportunity to gather at their local community complex, park their cars and hand out candy from the back of their vehicles. The city believes that this event provides a safe alternative to door to door trick or treating. The parked cars create a safe walking route, as well as bringing community members together.



**Raritan Township** recently improved its website to make it easier for township staff to update it. Giving personnel the ability to make changes will help to prevent information on the site from becoming outdated. This will be especially helpful during emergencies, as the Office of Emergency Management will be able to share information quickly via the internet. The township committee sought to create a site that was easy to upload to, while meeting all requirements needed for personnel to effectively complete their responsibilities.



**Ocean Township** (Monmouth) recently acquired Whalepond Village, a 55 and over community of rental apartments, through a grant received from the Department of Community Affairs’ Balanced Housing Program. The township’s previously imposed 20-year senior housing restriction on the community expired in 2012 and it was feared that homes could become market rate housing, forcing senior citizens on fixed incomes to look for new homes. After acquiring the property the township was able to pass it over to a new owner and ensure that the facility remains affordable for the senior population currently residing there.

**Frenchtown** encouraged residents to compost their leaves on their properties this past fall. Frenchtown made the move to reduce the demand for leaf collection after a malfunctioning leaf vacuum machine made collection more difficult. The town informed residents that they could improve their soil by simply placing fallen leaves on gardening beds to deteriorate or using a lawn mower to shred and distribute them on lawns. Leaf compost is an effective mulch for lawns and gardens. For more information on composting visit the U.S. Department of Environmental Protection’s website at [epa.gov/compost](http://epa.gov/compost).



**South Plainfield’s** Mayors Wellness Committee held a contest this past fall asking residents to create a new logo. The contest was open only to residents, and the winner received a \$100 Visa gift card. The winning logo will be used in future promotional materials. Second and third place prizes were also awarded. The contest was open for approximately two months and winners were announced on the borough’s website, Facebook page, and at a council meeting. Contest stipulations requested the logo promote the committee’s mission of “Be Healthy. Be Safe. Be Well.” and be visually appealing in both color and in black and white.



## Events

- Feb 5** . . . . . 22nd Annual Mayors Legislative Day; Statehouse Annex, Trenton
- Feb 28** . . . . . A Quick Review of Budget and Audit Updates; Online Webinar
- March 4** . . . . . Budget, Ethics, and Procurement Seminar; Conference Center at Mercer
- March 7** . . . . . Municipal Websites, Social Media, and Internet Security for Municipalities; Online Webinar
- March 19** . . . . . Women in Municipal Government Day, Princeton Marriott

Visit [njslom.org/seminars](http://njslom.org/seminars) for changes and updates.  
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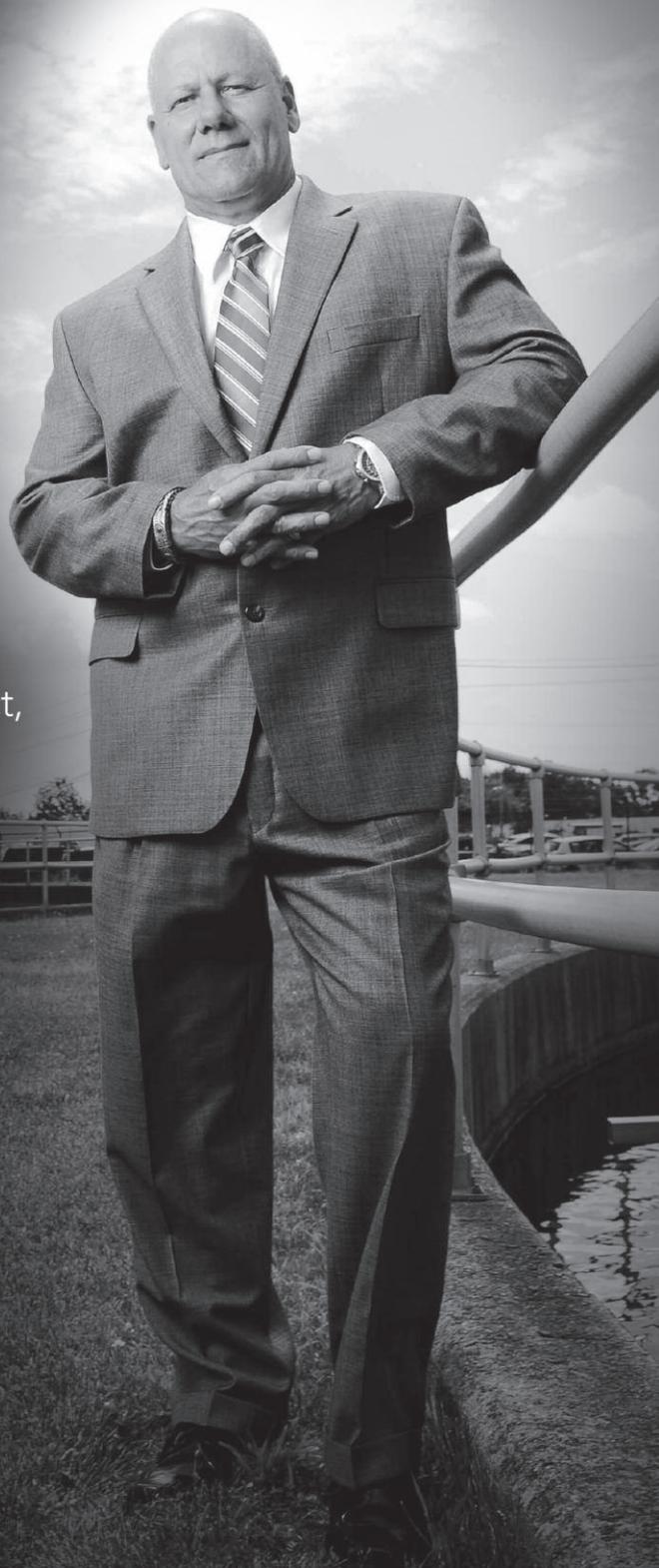
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