

TOWNSHIP OF PRINCETON
2009 REORGANIZATION MEETING
Sunday, January 4, 2009
Bernie Miller, Mayor

WELCOME

My colleagues on Township Committee and I thank you for joining us today for our reorganization meeting.

I would like to thank my colleagues for the confidence they have shown in me by electing me Mayor. As the oath I just took states, I will endeavor to perform my duties as your Mayor to the best of my ability.

TRIBUTES

Township Committee Members:

I would like to thank former Mayor Phyllis Marchand for her tireless efforts on behalf of the residents of Princeton Township. For 21 years Phyllis served on Township Committee, 13 of those years as Mayor. It's fair to say that our accomplishments in 2008 resulted from her leadership. Thank you Phyllis for all that you have accomplished for our community over the last 21 years.

Vicky Bergman served on Township Committee with distinction. And before that as a volunteer on our Planning and Zoning Boards. Thank you Vicky for your long service to our community.

Lance Liverman has worked hard for our citizens, particularly in the areas of human services and recreation, and, has been a relentless advocate on behalf of our youth and senior citizens. Thank you, Lance.

Chad Goerner, has completed his second full year in office. He has demonstrated great energy and dedication to duty, especially on matters of finance and issues concerning traffic safety and the Route 206 corridor. Thank you Chad.

Liz Lempert, was just appointed to fill former Mayor Marchand's seat on Township Committee. Welcome aboard Liz.

And finally Sue Nemeth, who as my running mate won election of Township Committee this past November, welcome to Township Committee.

Boards and Commissions:

Our municipal corporation is only as good as the people we have working for it. On Township Committee we greatly depend upon our boards and commissions to undertake the public's work. On behalf of my colleagues I would like to offer a sincere "thank you" to each and every volunteer who serves on our boards and commissions, for all of his or her efforts on behalf of all of us. The citizens of Princeton have extraordinary experience, expertise, intelligence, creativity and insight.

We are all very fortunate that they give their time and talents to our community.

Staff:

I would also like to thank our staff, ably led by our Township Administrator, Jim Pascale, for its service to Princeton Township. It's comforting to know that when we take an action on Township Committee we can be confident that it will be carried out in a professional, courteous and timely manner.

Accomplishments:

2008 has been a year of many achievements for Township Committee and our staff. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight just a few of our major accomplishments during this year.

Engineering and Public Works Projects:

Under the excellent leadership of our Township Engineer, Bob Kiser, and our Public Works Superintendent, Don Hansen, our Engineering and Public Works Departments had a banner year. Some of their accomplishments included:

- Repaired, resurfaced and reconstructed over five miles of Township roads. Two miles of these roads were completed in-house by the Township's Public Works Department at a significant cost savings.
- We received over \$750,000 in grants and contributions for the work we completed this past year.
- We worked with NJDOT and a citizens group to advance the Route 206 Vision Plan and Concept Development Plan, which will serve to improve safety and pedestrian movement along and across the roadway.
- We adopted a Township regulation to limit the amount of impervious surfaces on individual lots to reduce flooding.
- Installed new paved parking surface in Barbara Smoyer Park.
- Completed a 3,000 ft. long pedestrian path along and crossing the Stony Brook.
- Installed a parking area off Cherry Hill Road for Tusculum/Mountain Lakes park access.
- Planted 78 trees of various species.
- Instituted a plastic bag recycling program.

- Distributed backyard composting bins to schools to encourage composting of leaves.
- Installed refuse/recycling containers at bus stops.
- Our recycling coordinator was the recipient of the NJ DEP 2008 Leadership Award for Outstanding Achievement in Recycling.

Regional Planning Board/Planning Department:

- We adopted a new housing element and fair share plan including our new round three affordable housing program.
- We conducted numerous public meetings on Princeton University's new campus master plan
- We adopted a senior housing ordinance to encourage development of market rate senior housing , so that our seniors can have the opportunity to remain here in Princeton Township
- We developed a sustainability plan for our community. This plan outlines goals, indicators and actions that we will undertake to make Princeton Township a greener community.

Township Clerk:

- Converted from a paper Township Newsletter to an "E"-Newsletter, to save taxpayer dollars and be more sustainable.
- Continued to increase the amount and timeliness of information uploaded to our award-winning website

Corner House:

- Implemented a new Corner House website featuring the work of Corner House. We now have the ability to accept online donations directly to the Corner House Foundation.
- Implemented a Women's Drug Court Program funded by the Division of Addiction Services, serving Mercer County women.
- Continued the Princeton Youth Project and graduated our first class in June 2008. We have been advised by the Princeton Township Police Department that there has been a decrease in gang-related activity and involvement in Princeton since the program's implementation.
- Implemented the second Corner House Leadership Institute for approximately 80 student leaders, including 12 former student leaders who served as chaperones for the 3-day retreat.
- Developed and implemented the first Princeton Alcohol and Drug Alliance Job Fair serving 300 Princeton youth and 19 employers; done in collaboration with the Princeton Public Library.
- Implemented multiple events for students attending all Princeton public and private high schools and middles schools. Attendance at these activities ranged from 150 to 500 students per event.
- Secured private and public dollars to cover the costs of all new programs in both clinical and prevention programs.

- The Corner House Foundation held its first Annual Fall Benefit, “Autumn Nights” honoring two former Corner House Student Leaders and highlighting our Student Leadership Teams

Finance and Tax Collection:

- We fully implemented online tax payments for residents offering two ways to pay: with credit card or via a checking account.

Information Technology:

- Installed a Video Teleconference in our Court Room which will save the Township approximately \$10,000 annually by eliminating prisoner transportation costs.

Human Services Commission:

- Crosstown provided over 3100 rides for seniors
- The summer employment program provided employment opportunities for 24 young people at 18 non-profits and government departments
- Ran the Annual Holiday Drive, with 152 children receiving a holiday wish from community donors.
- Worked with the Princeton YWCA and Not In Our Town to provide community dialogues on race relations.
- Administered the “Entre Amigas” (Between Friends) program. Entre Amigas includes professionals from other social service organizations to provide additional group facilitation (e.g. AAMH, Greater Trenton Behavioral Health, Jewish Family and Children Services, etc.) to address issues and concerns of mothers and daughters.

Health Department:

- Formalized our partnership with University Medical Center at Princeton to provide joint health education programs and to diversify programs throughout the community.
- Dog census was completed in the Township with 400 dogs being added
- Community-wide Health Needs Assessment is currently ongoing.
- Developed the first phase of a continuity of operations plan so that we can operate offsite during an emergency (computer file access and phone access).

Police:

- In the final phase of the accreditation process of the police department. That will be completed this in the summer of 2009
- Initiated a multi-jurisdictional truck and traffic enforcement program.
- Made positive strides in keeping our gang problem in check through heightened patrols and through education in our schools.

Recreation:

- Adopted a new Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- A new skate park was opened at Hilltop Park

Miscellaneous:

- We completed successful labor negotiations with our police and public works unions, with terms that include health benefit givebacks to save taxpayer dollars, while stabilizing employee-employer relations for the next 4 years.
- We reached agreement with Princeton Borough to provide subsidized parking for library patrons. This agreement runs in perpetuity to guarantee Township residents easy access to our wonderful library.
- Our newly-formed Citizen's Finance Advisory Committee helped create a user-friendly budget explanation

Looking Forward to 2009

Having talked about a few of our many achievements in 2008, I would now like to discuss three aspects of what I consider to be the major challenge that we face in the coming year. That is, how we as a community deal with the financial stresses brought about by the economic and political environment that we live in.

Beginning last year municipalities throughout the State were forced to deal with a new, tighter municipal cap on municipal expenditures. This cap was imposed by our state legislators because they could not bring themselves to deal with the need for broad based tax reform in our state. The cap encourages municipalities to draw down their financial reserves in order to maintain service levels and still stay within the cap. Here in Princeton Township we have used our reserves to maintain our AAA bond rating that enables us to borrow for our capital needs at a lower rate of interest, to fund unanticipated needs and to dampen what would otherwise be wide swings in our property tax rate from year-to-year. Under the state imposed cap it becomes more difficult each year for a municipality to provide the services that its residents need and expect. The Township Committee, with the help of our volunteer boards and commissions, accepts this task of maintaining our

reserves and financial integrity while providing the services that make Princeton Township an attractive place to live and work.

The presence of many tax exempt institutions in our community has both positive and negative effects. They provide employment and in many ways help make Princeton Township an attractive place to live. On the other hand, they are a challenge to the fundamental fairness of our system of taxation as they do not pay property taxes on their extensive holdings.

In 2009, with the help and support of our Citizens Finance Advisory Committee, the Township Committee will start the process of examining the financial impact on the Township of all of the tax exempt institutions that call our community their home. We will work to develop the metrics for establishing their fair share of the cost of the infrastructure and services that we provide for their use and benefit. Once the metrics have been established, we look forward working with these institutions to put our financial relationship on an equitable and transparent basis.

It is not possible to talk about the financial stress that our municipality will face in the coming year without taking pride in the fact that the fact that the many services that Princeton Township has consolidated with Princeton Borough have resulted in savings for both municipalities. Yet, the opportunity for further long-term savings in the areas of administration, police and public works still remain. We have one excellent public school system, one world class public library, one health department, one human services commission, one recreation department, and yet we have two administrations, two police departments, two public works departments and two sets of elected officials. Early in my professional career I worked as a project manager, and my boss told me that the job of a project manager was to work himself out of a job. My colleagues on Township Committee and I would like to extend this challenge to our friends on Princeton Borough Council. Let's work together in 2009 to quantify the long-term savings that could be

realized by our residents if we could achieve full municipal consolidation. If, as I believe, the savings are significant, I for one would welcome the opportunity to work myself out of my job on Princeton Township Committee by full municipal consolidation.

That's a lot on our plate for 2009 but you have a committed, energetic and knowledgeable Committee and staff to move these initiatives forward, and a constituency that is not shy in bringing alternative views to our attention! We look forward to balancing all the issues so that our community remains beautiful, diverse, financially viable and safe. We are here to listen, to learn and to legislate on behalf of all our residents.

Again best wishes to all here and those unable to be here for a healthy, happy, prosperous and peaceful 2009!

Thank You.