

March 2003

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Important Township Committee News

There have been fast-changing developments regarding a proposed “Demolition Delay Ordinance”. The most recent word is that the Township Committee **will not** be discussing the proposal at its March 19 meeting. This is because the “**Demolition Delay” Ordinance, #4-03 will be rewritten** and reintroduced at the April 2 meeting, its discussion postponed to an even later date. As originally written it called for a permitting process and demolition delay of up to 14 months for all structures within the “Historic Districts” of the Township. Mayor John Murray has said that the ordinance will be revised to include a **delay of up to 6 months for all structures in the Township built before 1915.**

On **March 19** at the Township Committee will be discussing **Ordinance #5-03 relating to conservation easements.** This proposed ordinance *requires* such easements be granted by the property owner to the Township, when a major site plan or subdivision is sought and when the following areas are identified on the plan: Freshwater wetlands and transition areas; lands within 50’ of the top of the channel bank of any state open water; stream encroachment areas; and unique environmentally -sensitive areas, such as mature forests, unique vegetation, extraordinary steep slopes and “scenic views”. The ordinance also proposes that the borders of the conservation easements be marked with permanent boundary markers or posts. A proposed “Deed of Conservation Easement” was provided as a companion to the proposed ordinance, which would run between the Grantor and the Township. The latter would have the right of entry to inspect that the easement adequately protected the land in question, in perpetuity.

See other related news on these issues, further in this issue. The text of the conservation ordinance has been posted on the Harding Civic Association website, <http://www.hardingcivic.org>.

Homeless Solutions holds Dream Builders’ Bash

The 3rd Annual Dream Builders’ Bash will be held on **Friday, March 21** at the Madison Hotel. The Bash will again feature a cocktail hour, dinner, dancing, a silent and live auction and awards. Last year The First Presbyterian Church of New Vernon was honored and over 100 residents of Harding attended. This year’s honoree is St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Morristown. The Bash benefits Homeless Solutions, Inc.’s programs for the homeless including the building of affordable housing. Purchase of tickets can be arranged through Pam Palumbo, Director of Development, 973 993-0833.

The **First Presbyterian Church of New Vernon** is hosting “A Time of Reflection and Prayer in Today’s World”, a series of six special Sunday evening services during the

Season of Lent. These begin on **Sunday March 9 at 5 PM** and continue every Sunday at 5 PM through April 13. The services will last about 45 minutes. The theme is "A modern look at the 23rd Psalm". Both traditional and contemporary music will be enjoyed. All welcome; questions, call the church office at 973 538 8394.

THE LIBRARY

A springtime ***Evening at the Library*** is planned for Wednesday, March 26 at 7:30 p.m. in the courtroom of the Municipal Building. The program, *Trash, Treasures, or Trends*, will delight all fans of the PBS "Antiques Roadshow." Harding resident Carolyn Remy, an antique and fine art consultant, is frequently on air as a participating appraiser. You won't want to miss this educational and entertaining evening. Refreshments will be served.

Art in Bloom update. Invitations will be in the mail this month for Friday, May 9 from 5 until 8 p.m. at the Kirby Municipal Building for another spectacular display of paintings, sculpture, photography, and decorative screens. Browse and buy while enjoying a glass of wine and delectable hors d'oeuvres. Come and enjoy favorite artists and meet new ones. **Note:** *Art in Bloom 2003* will be held *only* on the Friday, so don't miss it!

Storytime's new venue...Storytime has edged closer to the Library. It now meets in Parish Hall (the lower level) of the Church of Christ the King. Stop by the Library afterward and select some take-home books for your child. Lynn Hughes will be happy to help with titles.

Harding Township Historical Society

HTHS Open House at the Tunis-Ellicks House will take place on **April 6 from 1 to 4 p.m.** with program to be announced. Visitors are welcome to enjoy open hearth cooking and Mt. Kemble Lake exhibit throughout the afternoon. For information about program, call (973) 292-3661.

TOWNSHIP NEWS

Township Committee

Low Income Housing Update: Mayor John Murray updated residents recently as to the status of the proposed 24-unit township-owned low and moderate income housing, which has been in limbo for two years. The main cause of the delay has been the lack of state DEP approval for Morris Township wastewater management plan. The proposed housing requires a hook-up to the water and sewer system of Morris Township. This is because the overall wastewater management plan is for the whole of Morris Twp and the Harding development cannot move until the plan in its entirety is approved. The site is on 15.7 acres at Woodland and Kitchell Roads. Because the site has wetlands, it has not been considered for a separate septic system; Murray said he planned to meet with an environmental association to explore the possibility of other options. Another

approach would be to ask the state DEP to treat the Harding plan as separate from that of Morris Twp. There is some urgency on Harding's part due to the fact that the state Council on Affordable Housing revisits the low income housing commitments every six years, and Harding was due for adjustment last November. The Township received a one-year extension, but the numbers could still change. The proposed development as planned does satisfy the Township's requirements at the present time, which are 88 units. Of this total, the Township paid \$860,000 to Orange NJ to assume 43 units, then negotiated an adjustment downward from 44 to 23 as an incentive to build rental housing rather than for-sale units. The state encourages rental units because they are more affordable. Harding's population has decreased during the past six years, but the affordable housing quotas are based on a complex formula reflecting regional needs.

PLANNING BOARD, February 24

Discussion regarding the two proposed ordinances, demolition delay and conservation easement. The jurisdiction of the Planning Board is to review whether the ordinances are in conformity with the Master Plan. In the case of the conservation easement ordinance, that was agreed, and the ordinance passed back to the Township Committee for public discussion on March 19.

In the case of the demolition delay ordinance, this had been introduced at the Township committee on February 19, but the Planning Board had not received any information on the proposal until just before its meeting, so was unable to make a substantive decision. Following the Planning Board meeting, the Township Committee decided to make significant changes to the scope of the proposed ordinance.

HARDING TWP HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Members of the Board and the public appeared before the Township Committee on February 19, protesting the scheduled demolition of a 18th century bankhouse type of structure known as the Tunis House on Millbrook Road. Despite several months of sustained effort by members of the local historic commission and a flurry of last minute activity by neighbors to prevent it, it was destroyed by Thomas Seneca of Parsippany, who plans to build a 3,000 to 3,500 square-foot, four-bedroom home on the property. Seneca said he waited as long as he could for local preservationists to find a way to move the structure to another location, but now he has to get ready for the spring housing market. For the past several months, representatives of the Harding Township Historical Society and Historic Preservation Commission have been trying to secure a piece of property at the end of Millbrook Road in hopes of moving the bank house to the new location and preserving it. The Harding Township Historical Society wants to turn the area into a small historical park, and had hoped to move the Tunis house on to the Garrity property, but time ran out.

Ann Granbery, on the Historic Preservation Commission and resident across the street from the Tunis house presented the Historic Preservation position and its

frustration to the Township Committee. A Historic Properties Committee was formed about two years ago in Harding to come up with some new local regulations for preventing historic buildings from falling to new development, but progress has been slow. Another 18th C house at risk is on the corner of Youngs and Lee's Hill Road, which has been the subject of frustrating discussions within the Historic Preservation Committee in recent months.

HARDING TOWNSHIP SCHOOL BOARD NEWS

School Budget Update At its February 24th meeting, the Harding Township Board of Education approved its tentative 2003-2004 school budget for submission to the County Superintendent. The budget was reviewed on Friday, February 21st by members of the Budget Advisory Committee, including Esey Farrell, Sally Dudley, Peter Muratore, Robert Mathews, Rich Wiedmann and Mary Jane Canose.

The new budget is a result of the District's practice of "zero-based" budgeting, i.e. each individual expense requires justification and is not included merely because it has been approved in the past. This year, the district faced significant budget challenges, resulting primarily from increases in the number of students graduating from eighth grade this year and anticipated to attend Madison High School next year, increases (as faced by all employers) in the costs of contractually-mandated employee benefits and skyrocketing energy costs. Fortunately, the effect of these energy cost increases was minimized by the district's activity following an energy audit conducted two years ago. Following this audit, the school has already effected a lighting retrofit project last year as well as a new heating control system in the elementary school this year. As costs of gas and electricity increase, the district will continue to be able to take advantage of savings resulting from these projects.

Notwithstanding these savings and the "zero-based budgeting practices in place in the district, increases in the cost of Madison High School tuition, employee benefits and energy costs alone resulted in the district's initial draft budget containing increases in excess of those allowed under the budget "cap" rules implemented by the State. As a result, the administration and the Board reviewed every account once again and, while ever mindful of the need to preserve and maintain the excellence of the educational programs offered to our children, approved reductions in staff by eliminating one instructional aide position and a .5 teaching position, along with the accompanying benefits. They also approved additional cuts in supply requests, custodial overtime, and administrative costs. As a result of these actions, the district was able to develop a budget within the state mandated cap, and hold the overall general operating budget increase to 4.1%, which increases the tax levy by \$379,829. At the same time, the proposed budget provides for services and programs that enable the district to maintain its standards of excellence in education for all of our children.

The district also secured \$535,424 in retroactive funding from the State under the new Facilities and Financing Act, which will be applied towards the bond payments for

the recent construction/renovation project. These funds will lower taxpayers' debt service payments by \$44,516 per year over the next 12 years.

A public hearing on the budget is scheduled for Monday, March 24 at 7:30 p.m. in the Middle School Band Room. A copy of the budget will be published in the *Observer Tribune* as soon as approval is received from the County Superintendent's office, which is anticipated to occur on March 20. Additional information on the budget will also be posted on the district's website at www.hardingtwp.k12.nj.us and a budget issue of *Connections* will be mailed to all township residents. Questions on the budget can be e-mailed to budget@hardingtwp.k12.nj.us or directed to School Business Administrator Mary Jane Canose at 973-267-6398 x 114, or Superintendent of Schools Dr. Dennis Pallozzi at x 101.

Important Dates: **March 17:** The last day to register to vote in the School Board Election. **April 8:** Last day for Absentee ballot applications to be received by the county clerk. Applications can be downloaded from www.absenteeballot.net or www.morriscountyclerk.com or can be picked up in the Harding Township School Business Office. **April 15:** School Board Election in the Municipal Building, 2 to 9 p.m.

The annual state "Report Card" which charts progress in schools across the state came out recently. Harding School Superintendent Dennis Pallozzi said he was pleased with the results for both fourth and eighth grade students, however, and warned against reading too much into the numbers. Students are required to take the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment (ESPA) in fourth grade and the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) in eighth grade. The current data reflects scores from testing conducted last spring.

More than 89 percent of Harding fourth graders passed both the language and math sections required in the ESPA, an increase over last year, when 71.9 percent of students passed both tests. More Harding fourth graders passed the language proficiency test this year-93.4 percent, or 2.7 percent more than last year. 89.1 % of fourth graders were proficient in math, up a little compared with the previous year. Pallozzi attributed the ESPA score improvements, in part, to changes in the curriculum during the past couple of years. New curriculum programs were written and adopted specifically to align with ESPA, Pallozzi said, particularly in math. In addition, some staff members attended workshops to become more familiar with the testing parameters.

Only 78.3 percent of the school's eighth graders had passing proficiency scores in all sections of the GEPA, however, including language, math and science. In the language arts section of the GEPA, there was very little change from the previous year's scores for Harding eighth graders, with 91.3 passing in 2002. Overall, a lower percentage of eighth grade students passed math proficiency tests compared with last year. Among Harding eighth graders, 82.6 percent got passing scores, down from 92 percent from last year. In the science section of the GEPA, 91.3 percent of Harding eighth graders passed, down from 96 percent last year. Pallozzi said differences in class sizes help to account for variations in the percentage of students who pass from one year to the next.

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT, February 20

Pending Application #25-02, McClelland, Millbrook RD, BI 15, lot 27.04, a flag lot. Requesting "C" variance in increase impervious coverage and variance for setback. Coverage at 13.5%, compared to 10% allowed. Excess pavement to be removed from driveway, approved.

Pending Application #26-02, Gellert, Village Rd, Block 15, lot 10. Requesting variance for impervious lot coverage. Parking area will be reduced to achieve the 10% allowed. Site inspection date set.

Pending Appln #23-02, First Presbyterian Church, Lees Hill Rd, BI 49 lot 1. Amended plans include landscaping, buffer and tree conservation area and parking. Number of spaces reduced to 102 from 105. 50' conservation area between church property and neighbor North Addition to non-conforming structure, lot coverage supposed to be 25%, church proposes 41.5%. Board asked for revised plans, to be presented at next meeting.

Verizon, #20-02, Mt Kemble Ave, BI 36, lot 8, will comply with requests for additional landscaping. Requested, "hold" on addition, storm water management plan, and site lighting plan.

Sabol, #2-03, 2 Primrose Tr, BI 36, lot 2, seeking variances to rear yard setback, building area, and alteration of non-conforming structure. Asking to be permitted to add a new second floor and a small first floor addition. 2148ft² allowed, 2274ft² requested. This is a corner lot, 2 frontages, requesting 21.45' setback instead of 25'. Approved.

Swanson, #28-02, BI 1, lot 3. For a non-conforming structure in R1 zone, will increase setback in front by removing carport and adding garage to rear. Building coverage 2800 sq ft to 3500. Lot coverage 13.2% to 13.86%. Approved.

Cotton, Millbrook Rd, BI 17, lot 4, seeking variances to alter a non-conforming structure and exceeding the total building area for the R-4 portion of the lot. Applicants seek to construct a covered porch and stairs on the front of the house leading to the front door and additions to the side and back of the house. Approved.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Controlling the Canada goose population - Help needed from residents to locate goose nests! In its efforts to control the Canada goose population in Harding Township, the committee is organizing a major effort to treat the eggs of the geese, rendering them infertile. A federal permit has been obtained to treat the eggs in up to 25 nests and volunteers are being organized to implement this. ***The immediate challenge is to locate up to 25 nests of Canada Geese and to gain access to the properties where they are located.***

Residents are asked to help in this endeavor! The geese usually build their nests in the same locations year after year. Their proximity is indicated by the presence of goslings. Residents who have sighted goslings in prior years may therefore wish to get in

touch with the Committee at khmeister3@aol.com or by phone: (973) 605 8274 with that information. Additional volunteers are also welcome!

The project to treat the eggs of the geese is part of an integrated approach to cope with the excessive Canada goose population in the township. The program focuses on Bayne Park and includes an admonishment not to feed the geese and barriers to access water through the planting of shrubs and high grass around the pond and the creek emanating from the pond. The Garden Club in the context of a Ten Towns project to improve the water quality of the streams leading to the Great Swamp is doing the plantings. Similar plantings will be installed at the pond in front of the Church of Christ the King and at the creek on the church's property.

Geese begin nesting in March and most goose eggs hatch by May 30. The incubation period for goose eggs is 28 days. The goose starts incubating after it has laid a number of eggs. The eggs have to be treated early in the incubation period. Therefore, it is anticipated that the program to treat the eggs will start in the second half of March and extend through April.

A Note of Caution regarding Deer/Motor Vehicle Accidents

The Police Department advises drivers to observe the following precautions upon encounters with deer on the roadway: 1. When you see a deer entering the roadway, do not watch where the deer is going but rather where it is coming from. More likely than not, there are others following, and they might enter the roadway too. 2. Try not to swerve upon encountering a deer! You might hit a fixed object such as a telephone pole or a tree and serious injuries might be the consequence. 3. Travel slowly in the evening hours when vision is limited. 4. When a car in front of you brakes or slows down, do the same. It is possible that the driver has encountered a deer about to enter the roadway.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION, No report this month

SHADE TREE ADVISORY COMMITTEE No report this month

THE HARDING TOWNSHIP CIVIC ASSOCIATION annual meeting was held March 3. Gary Annibel from the Board of Health spoke about septic systems and their maintenance; Chris Allyn of the Environmental Commission discussed wells, and Ward Connon of the NVVFD spoke about fire fighting. The subject matter was very well presented and many thanks are extended to the speakers for an interesting and informative evening.

The deadlines for the next 2 issues of the Thumbnail are March 27 2003 and April 30, 2003. You should EM or fax articles (typewritten preferred, please) to the Editor, Hesna Pfeiffer, 973 605 1127, email hesnaj@aol.com. Call the editor if necessary, 973 540 8911. *The Thumbnail is copyrighted and published by the Harding Township Civic Association, and is mailed to every home in Harding Township.* Current and past issues of Thumbnail, as well as the Directory are posted on our Website- check it out: <http://www.hardingcivic.org>.

RECYCLING: Commingled recycling of plastics, aluminum and tin cans, glass bottles and jars, mixed paper, corrugated cardboard and household batteries at Municipal Garage every Wednesday, 7AM-Noon, (7AM to 9AM self service); and 1st and 3rd Saturdays 4/5, 4/26, 5/10, 5/24 from 9-12 AM. Residents are requested NOT to leave recyclable materials if the center is closed.

DATES TO REMEMBER, meetings at 8PM, unless as noted.

Municipal Court (1 st and 3 rd Tuesday)	6 PM	
Environmental Commission (1 st Tuesday)	7:30 PM	4/1, 5/6
Seniors (2 nd and 4 th Thursday at Pres Church)	11 AM.....	
Planning Board (4 th Monday)	8 PM.....	3/24, 4/28, 5/19
Hist Preservation Comm (1st Thursday)	8 PM	4/3, 5/1
Board of Health (2 nd Thursday)	8 PM.....	4/10, 5/1
Board of Education (2 nd and 4 th Monday)	7:30 PM....	
Board of Adjustment (3 rd Thursday)	7:30 PM....	3/20, 4/17, 5/15
Township Committee (1 st and 3rd Wed)	8 PM.....	3/19,4/2
Shade Tree (2 nd Monday)	3 PM	4/14, 5/12
Municipal Alliance (3 rd Wed at Harding Schl)	8:45 AM	4/16, 5/28
Harding Twp Civic Association	7:30 PM	4/7