

January 2007
Happy New Year!

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Civic Association News

The annual meeting of the Harding Township Civic Association will be held **Monday February 5, at 7:00 PM**, in the Township Hall. A brief business meeting, (including election of the nominees for the Board of trustees: current candidates: Kara MacKenzie, Art Williams, and Janet Pearce) will be followed by "An Evening with the Mayor", the current incumbent being Dr. Lou Lanzerotti, starting at 7:30 pm. See Mayor Lanzerotti's remarks from the January 3 Township Committee meeting, below, for his interests for the Township in the coming year. There will be an opportunity to meet other new Township Committee members. Please come and bring your questions.

School Board Meeting January 22, 2007 Discussion on NJ State Property

Tax Reform *From Dr. Pallozzi, Harding Superintendent of Schools: Senator Kean and Assemblymen Bramnick and Munoz will be attending the January 22, 2007 Board of Education meeting to discuss issues related to pending school legislation. The meeting will be held in the Harding School library/media center at 7:30PM. Because of time commitments, the legislators (Senator Kean and Assemblymen Bramnick and Munoz) will either be there at the start of the meeting or around 8:30 p.m. **See Township News, below, for some details about the NJ state Property Tax reform legislation, which appears to propose forced consolidation of both smaller school districts and smaller municipalities, potentially impacting Harding Township. Although the legislation is in the very preliminary stage, nonetheless it is proceeding quickly in Trenton without a lot of publicity or citizen knowledge.***

From the Harding Township Committee: An Invitation to Serve Your Town

Currently and through out the year there are opportunities to serve on the Boards, Commissions, and Committees that support the governance of Harding Township. If you are excited by the possibility of contributing your time and talents to your town, we need to hear from you.

The only qualifications are that you be interested in getting involved, that you are a resident of Harding Township and that you have the time to attend meetings (usually once a month) and participate in committee activities. If you

have any special interests that you would like to pursue, it may be possible to place you on the Board or Commission that works in that area. If you are interested, please contact Cindy Phillips, Administrative Assistant at 973 267 8000 or email: CPhillips@hardingnj.org; or any member of the Township Committee.

HTRA Girls Lacrosse Registration For all Harding residents in grades 3rd-8th. Please e-mail us at harding_girls_lacrosse@yahoo.com for all registration forms. Registration deadline is January 27th. No Exceptions!

Harding Township Historical Society

The Annual Meeting of HTHS will take place at the New Vernon Firehouse on **Thursday, January 25** starting with a brief business meeting and refreshments at **7:30** and program at **8:00**. Guest speaker is Edwin Burrows, winner of the 1999 Pulitzer Prize in History for his book "Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898." His stellar credentials are equaled by his ability to transfix an audience with a combination of intellect, passion and humor. His talk is based on his upcoming book, "The Prisoners of New York," telling the story of confinement in New York during the Revolution. Not a well known part of American history, but with far reaching repercussions including groundbreaking agreements towards the humane treatment of prisoners of war still in effect today. What a speaker! What a story! HTHS members are admitted free, non-members pay \$5.00 at the door. Everyone is asked to make a reservation by calling (973)360-9426.

The New Vernon Garden Club will meet at **9 AM on Thursday, January 18** at the First Presbyterian Church of New Vernon on Lee's Hill Rd. in New Vernon. Architect Peter Dorne and his wife, Celia Huff, a landscape architect, will combine forces to present a program beginning at 10AM on landscape design focusing on creating beauty and harmony in the home and garden. Open to all Harding Township residents; for more information, please call Patti Wood at (973) 425-0878.

THE LIBRARY

Wednesday, January 31 at 7:30-9:00 p.m.: Evening Book Group... Join this

lively group of engaged readers who have lots to say. The book for discussion is *Dispatches from the Edge*, Anderson Cooper's memoir of life as the son of a celebrity mother and career journalist in the world's poorest and most war-ravaged areas.

Tuesday, February 6 from 4:30-6:00 p.m.: 4th and 5th Grade Book Club.

Villains in all forms and guises are the focus of this winter's Book Club, a fun-filled way to complete part of your school's annual reading requirement. The selection for February is Susan Cooper's Caldecott Award Winning-novel, *Silver on the Tree*. Drawing upon Celtic mythology, this first in a series of five fantasies tells the story of four children fighting the forces of evil in a world where magic is everywhere.

Closing: The Library will be closed on Mon, Jan 15, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Link to the Library: hardinglibrary.org. **Telephone:** 973-267-8000 ext 132.

SAVE THE DATE...<i>Art in Bloom</i> returns Friday & Saturday, May 11-12!
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TOWNSHIP NEWS

Harding Township Committee Reorganization Meeting, January 3, 2007

Attendance: Township Committee: Mr. Bartlett, Mr. Dinsmore, Mr. Ward, Mr. Murray, Dr. Lanzerotti; Town; Linda Peralta, Township Clerk, Gail McKane, Township Administrator, Maryann Nergaard, Township Attorney

Township Reorganization

Ned Ward and Marshall Bartlett were sworn in as members of the Township Committee. The Township Committee unanimously elected Lou Lanzerotti as Chairman ("Mayor") and Marshall Bartlett as Vice Chairman ("Vice Mayor") of the Township Committee.

The meeting was attended by Harding's elected representatives from District 21 of the New Jersey Legislature, State Senator Kean and State Assemblymen Bramnick and Munoz. District 21 is comprised of 16 municipalities including Harding Township. Morris County Freeholder, Jack Schrier, also attended.

Mayor's Opening Remarks and Priorities

Mayor Lanzerotti read a prepared speech regarding the priorities for the Township Committee for the coming year. Excerpts from his speech follow:

... the largest issue facing our Township in this coming year is the huge uncertainty that involves the policies that may be discussed and may potentially be implemented at the State level – by the Governor and legislature – that could seriously undermine our desire for self-determination, home rule, and sense of

community in Harding. This uncertainty arises from the proclaimed need to reduce property taxes. But the devil is in the details, and such an objective can not be achieved by sleights of hand or by shell games. Especially if the end result enlarges centralized costly state government at the expense of local government, and undermines responsible home rule and a sense of community in small municipalities and school districts. Such undermining could occur in terms of changes in the governance of public schools and in the forced merger of towns less than a certain population size.

“Locally, there is a set of issues that require addressing and resolution.

“The Township’s direct responsibility for the Glen Alpin house must end quickly and efficiently in order to halt the further expenditure of public resources. The large overhead of Glen Alpin on Township employees must be removed. The committee that is being formed to make the tough analyses and recommendations on Glen Alpin must move forward expeditiously.

“The Township Committee must continue to work closely with the New Vernon Volunteer Fire Department to ensure adequate water supplies for fire personnel and general public safety.

“One of the outstanding qualities of Harding is the active involvement and participation of citizens in civic issues and activities that they consider of importance and to which they bring a wide range of expertise. The Township Committee must make a larger outreach effort to continue to encourage active citizen participation in Township boards and committees.

“Protection of its environment and of its open spaces has been a hallmark of Harding even before the Great Swamp was saved in the early 1960s. Priorities for the protection of open space and of the environment need to be continually evaluated in order to ensure that limited volunteer time and limited public resources are devoted to the highest priority projects.

“The proposed new Harding Library will continue to require close collaborative coordination among the Township Committee, Township employees, and library committees as the library’s site contract is defined.

“Soon the post office will return to the center of New Vernon. The Township Committee, administration, and public safety officials must monitor closely the new traffic and usage patterns in order to ensure that disruptions are minimized to residents and businesses.

“The Township Committee must encourage and empower the Township’s administrator and all Township employees to provide cheerful and helpful service to citizens.

“Prudent use of public moneys must be the watchword for the 2007 Harding

Township budget. The capital expense account must be maintained and enlarged. Shared services should be vigorously pursued whenever they make fiscal sense.

“In the end, good will, collaborative efforts, and common sense are all that will be required to handle these tasks for the good of Harding Township. Thank you.”

Township Sub-Committees

The Mayor announced the Chair and Vice Chair assignments for each of the Township’s sixteen sub-committees. The Chair and Vice Chair are Township Committee members. (For a full list of the Township sub-committees as well as their respective Chairs and vice Chairs, see our website at www.hardingcivic.org.) The sub-committees have substantial influence on Harding’s policies and government. The other members of the sixteen sub-committees are appointed by the Township Committee, and are members of the Township administration and/or citizen volunteers. The sub-committee assignments have not yet been announced. According to the Mayor, not all of the sub-committee positions have been finalized and that Township Committee members Mr. Murray and Mr. Ward will be releasing a notice to the Thumbnail regarding what additional volunteers are needed, if any¹.

Upcoming Meeting Items

- In the January 17th meeting, the Township will be introducing a salary pay range ordinance, an ordinance to extend the budget beyond the budget cap, and an ordinance revising speed limit on Meyersville Road to 30 MPH.
- In an upcoming meeting, the Township will be determining how much of the responsibility for engineering work for the new library it will assume.

Announcements

- Gail McKane announced that the town cistern is complete and has been tested and accepted by the fire department.
- The Township received a copy of the Highlands Draft Regional Master Plan. The details of the Plan were not discussed. The Plan sets the policies for the implementation of the Highlands Act legislation. The

¹ During last year’s Township Committee election debates as well during some of the Township Committee meetings, it was generally acknowledged that new volunteers were needed for the sub-committees. Once the sub-committee members have been finalized, the Thumbnail will report on the appointments and report on the process and criteria used to appoint new members.

release of the Plan draft starts the process of public review, comment, and discussion. Freeholder Jack Schrier, who attended the meeting, is also a Vice-Chairman of the Highlands Council. More information on the Plan, see: www.highlands.state.nj.us/njhighlands/master/draft_rmp.html.

Correspondence

The Township received a letter From Hanover Township stating that a public hearing will be held on February 1st at 7 PM at the Hanover Municipal Building concerning Morris County Airport's plan to build a new airplane hanger on wetlands located on its property.

Hearing Persons Present

Senator Kean and Assemblyman Munoz addressed the Township Committee and members of the public with regard to the pending NJ State Property Tax Reform legislation. According to Senator Kean, the legislation was proceeding rapidly and without enough time for public or even legislative review. Kean was concerned about many aspects of the proposed legislation, see below:

New Jersey State Property Tax Reform Legislation

(Considering the large potential impact to Harding, the Civic Association urges Harding residents to familiarize themselves with this important legislation.)

Governor Corzine and NJ State Legislature are actively involved in drafting and passing a series of laws, collectively called "Property Tax Reform", with the stated purpose of controlling or lowering New Jersey's high property taxes. Implementing Property Tax Reform is a top priority of the Governor and the Legislature. At least some of the pending legislation is proceeding quickly and many of proposed changes could, if enacted, bring substantial changes to Harding, including impacts to our property tax rates, township government, school funding and local school control.

The driving force behind the legislation is to cut New Jersey's large and growing property tax bill, which is currently at \$20 billion annually or approximately \$6,000 for the average property, or \$2,300 per capita. Property taxes have been growing at about 7% annually since 2001. On a per capita basis, New Jersey's property tax rate is the highest in the nation. According to Governor Corzine, if unchecked, the property tax burden will double to \$40 billion within a decade. In 2005, Harding collected about \$18 million in property taxes or about \$5,500 per capita. Harding's tax rate is quite low, but tax per person is higher than neighboring municipalities.

In spite of high property taxes, New Jersey has a large budget deficit, projected at \$2 billion for the current budget. NJ's debt is currently \$30 billion,

has an annual service cost of \$2.3 billion, and is the third highest in the nation. It has doubled since 2002. Property tax cuts and deficit spending control will require spending cuts, and therefore much of the property tax reform effort is involved with attempts to cut spending.

Since about 55% of total property taxes, or \$11 billion, goes to pay for school costs, a significant amount of the legislation attempts to control such costs. According to the 2006 US Census report analyzing 2004 data, NJ public school district spending per pupil is the highest in the nation, at \$12,981 per student, 56% higher than the national average. The state legislature projects the cost per pupil to exceed \$16,000 in 2007.

General Provisions

It is important to note that there are many proposed bills related to property tax reform (over 50 alone introduced last year). Some of the proposed legislation includes:

- Property tax cuts for low to middle income taxpayers.
- Facilitating or requiring the use of shared services among municipalities (New Jersey has 566 separate municipalities).
- Legislation to facilitate, promote, or require consolidation of municipal governments, or school districts within a county level.
- Requiring school board elections, school budget votes, to be held during the November election when most citizens vote.
- Reform of the collective bargaining process for public school employee contracts.
- Establishment of mandatory caps on property tax increases.
- Creation of a state comptroller with the power to investigate state and local government spending

Current Legislation

Although none of the aforementioned legislation has been passed as of the date of this summary, it is currently reported that the Governor and the Legislature leadership are close to agreeing on a property tax cut where households earning less than \$100,000 a year would receive a 20% tax cut. The tax cut would gradually phase out for households making up to \$250,000 year. The state estimates the cost of the tax cut to be approximately \$2.4 billion which will be funded in part by last year's sales tax increase. The tax cut legislation also includes a provision requiring a mandatory 4% cap in tax increases. Last year property taxes increased over 7% statewide.

Reportedly the state Assembly is to meet on January 8th to consider other proposals including the creation of a county executive school superintendent

(who may have broad powers over local school boards and budgets), a comptrollership position charged with investigating and auditing government spending, and a commission to consider potential mergers of local municipal government.

Impact to Harding

The Township Committee and Gail McKane, the Township Administrator, have actively been working on shared services initiatives, which is consistent with the legislation.

Many of the proposals would directly affect Harding, but one of the largest impacts could be to the Harding Township School. The merger of school districts or the imposition of a county executive school superintendent could lessen or take away local control of the school. As the following table shows, over 40% of Harding’s property taxes go to school funding.

Tax	2006 Rate	% of Total	% Increase over 2005
Municipal	0.231%	23.9%	4.5%
County (Estimated)	0.237%	24.6%	2.2%
School	0.399%	41.4%	4.2%
Open Space/County	0.053%	5.5%	0.0%
Open Space/Harding	0.045%	4.7%	9.8%
Total	0.965%	100%	3.8%

Across the nation, states fund on average approximately 50% of school costs. In New Jersey, the state on average funds approximately 40% of school costs with the remainder funded by property taxes. In Harding, according to Dr. Dennis Pallozzi, the Superintendent of the Harding Public School District, local property taxes fund 92% of the school budget, with the state and federal government contribution making up the remaining 8%. The proportion of school funding received from the state is set according to a state funding formula (in part mandated by the courts), which itself has been criticized and may be changed. Dr. Pallozzi is concerned that the proposed new budget caps do not take into account the likely changes to the funding formula or the rising costs of the state mandated (but unfunded) programs such those required for special education. Dr. Pallozzi is planning to discuss the impacts of the pending legislation at the next Board of Education meeting scheduled for January 22.

Details on the proposed legislation can be found on the state legislature’s web site at: www.njleg.state.nj.us/PropertyTaxSession/jcgo.asp

An informative, non-partisan summary of New Jersey's tax structure can be found on the Tax Foundation's website at:
www.taxfoundation.org/research/topic/44.html

HARDING TOWNSHIP HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Harding Township Historic Preservation Commission - December 7, 2006

New Business – Chase Bank, 15 Village Road – This building is located in the Historic Village Business Zone. Chase Bank wants to replace the bank's sign and Commission members did not approve of the replacement. It was suggested a wooden sign and sign posts be installed instead of the cement looking sign that was proposed.

Mr. John Shackelton, 236 Blue Mill Road - This is a non-contributing home located within the Silver Lake Historic District. Mr. Shackelton came to the HPC for a concept review. He is intending to demolish the Cape Cod style home. The conceptual plans represented a new home with a footprint of 2100 sq ft. Mr. Shackelton expressed that he would like to build a home with a "farmhouse look". The Commission directed him to a few newer homes in the immediate area that have achieved this architectural style.

Jim & Ameila Nagle, 21 Pleasantville Road – This is a non - contributing residence located in the Pleasantville Historic District. Mr. Nagle came with plans to enlarge his existing residence. HPC members' suggestions included consistent window designs and siding material. It was also requested that the proposed height be lowered and a redesign be considered that would put the increased height in the center of the house and not at the end.

Board of Adjustment Variance Applications -Greenbaum Harding Realty d/b/a Greenbaum Interiors, 1105 Mt. Kemble Avenue – Amended site plans were introduced and Commission members were disappointed these plans were not consistent with original plans previously reviewed and commented. The HPC had approved maintaining a secondary barn structure on the property for storage of the dumpster. The Commission will recommend to Board of Adjustment that they not approve the revised use of the accessory structure and concrete pad for the dumpster.

Construction Review – Arthur Steinmetz/Carrie D'Andrea, 37 Glen Alpin Road – Recommendations made by the Commission in a prior review were not incorporated in these plans. However, at the January 4, 2007 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission plans were presented representing many of the changes requested by the HPC.

PLANNING BOARD, December 18

Minor site plan approval granted for Mt Kemble Limited Partnership, 1200 Mt Kemble Ave. Block 46.01, lot 9.

HARDING TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

At the December 18 meeting, Dr. Dennis Pallozzi, superintendent of schools, announced his retirement, effective June 30, 2008.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

A Note of Caution regarding Deer/Motor Vehicle Accidents

The Police Department advises drivers to observe the following precautions:

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.

Try not to swerve upon encountering a deer! Hitting a fixed object such as a telephone pole or a tree can result in serious injuries.

Travel slowly in the evening hours when vision is limited. When a car in front of you brakes or slows down, do the same. It is possible that the driver has spotted a deer about to enter the roadway.

Accidents: If you have a collision with a deer, pull the vehicle off the road with 4-way flashers on. If in Harding Twp. call the Harding Twp. Police at (973) 455 0500, or 911 if you are elsewhere. Wait for the police to arrive. They will take a report and provide other assistance, as appropriate.

Harding Open Space Trust (HOST) Committee, January 9, 2007

Projects' Status – Anderson Property - contracts for property transfer were signed in December. In addition to HOST funds of \$120,000 the County will provide \$900,000 for this attractive property by the end of the first quarter 2007.

Eggert and Thebault Properties – acquisitions are approved by the Township and final details, including inspections, are on track for closings in early 2007.

Farmland Preservation – the three farm properties' (Devine, Scaff and Haeberle) funding arrangements have been approved by New Jersey Department of Agriculture with funds to be available in early 2007. New State regulatory proposals regarding Farmland Preservation requirements and procedures are being formally considered and will require an early Harding Township response. Several other new property acquisition possibilities were discussed.

Finance and Stewardship – The Committee discussed the desirability and funding of some alternatives for joint, expert processing of future grant

applications. Additionally, 2007 goals were discussed related to new volunteer Committee membership, accountability and funding for previously acquired property maintenance and the publication of a detailed, informative HOST Handbook.

Harding Township Environmental Commission (HTEC)
Board of Adjustment, No reports this month

Civic Association DEADLINES FOR THE next 2 issues OF THE THUMBNAIL are February 2 and March 2, respectively. ***Announcements should be complete and concise to help the editor.*** Current and past issues of Thumbnail, as well as the Directory are posted on our Website- check it out: <http://www.hardingcivic.org>. Send questions or comments about Thumbnail to editor, ***email address: hesnaj@verizon.net***, or the Harding Township Civic Association, PO Box 72, New Vernon, NJ 07976.

RECYCLING: Commingled recycling of plastics, aluminum and tin cans, glass bottles/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 from 9-12 AM. Please do NOT leave recyclable materials if the center is closed.

DATES TO REMEMBER, meetings as noted.

Municipal Court (1 st and 3 rd Tuesday)	4 PM
Municipal Court (2 nd and 4 th Friday)	11AM
Environmental Commission (1 st Monday)	7:30 PM
Seniors (2 nd and 4 th Thursday)Chrst KingCh	11 AM
Planning Board (4 th Monday)	7:30 PM
Hist Preservtion Comm (1stThursday)	8 PM
Board of Health (2 nd Thursday)	8 PM
Board of Education (2 nd and 4 th Monday)	7:30 PM
Board of Adjustment (3 rd Thursday)	7:30 PM
Township Committee(1 st and 3 rd Wed)	8 PM
Shade Tree (2 nd Monday)	3 PM
Harding Twp Civic Association	7:30 PM