

December 2008

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Harding Township's Annual Blood Drive

Will be held on **Saturday, January 17, 2009**, at The New Vernon Presbyterian Church at 2 Lee's Hill Road from 8:30 AM till 2:00 PM. This is co-sponsored by Christ The King, The United Methodist Church in Green Village, and The New Vernon Presbyterian Church. The American Red Cross needs blood to provide a safe and adequate supply of blood to local hospitals. Please help meet the challenge of saving lives. Please call Mary Van Kirk at (973) 425-0114 to schedule an appointment or drop in at your convenience on Saturday. Children are welcome to come with their parents.

HARDING TWP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Annual Meeting will be held **Tuesday January 20, 2009**, at 7:30 PM, in the sanctuary of the First Presbyterian Church, New Vernon. The program is "An Evening with Abigail Adams" as presented by the American Historical Theatre of Philadelphia with actress and historian Kim Hanley in the starring role. Her talk is a personal, intriguing look at the politics and mores of this amazing 18th century woman who was far ahead of her time in every way. Admission is free for HTHS members and \$5 at the door for non-members. No reservations are required.

THE LIBRARY

Holiday Hours: early closings at 1 p.m. on 12/24 and 12/31. Closed 12/25 and 12/26. Open regular hours 12/27, 1/02/09 and 1/03/09.

Evening Book Club...will meet on **Wednesday, December 17 at 7:30 p.m.** to share insights and discuss *Rabbit-Proof Fence* by Doris Pilkington. This non-fiction account is a gripping memoir of three young Aborigine girls' escape from boarding school and their long trek home through the outback. We urge you to join us even though it's habit forming!

Holiday Hint: Have you noticed the fully-stocked book cart outside the Library door? Be sure to add this to your list of holiday shopping stops. It's the perfect place to purchase bargain books in mint condition and benefit the Library at the same time...a feel-good experience!

StoryTime for pre-schoolers meets on **Tuesday mornings from 10-11**. Themes

for the month are: *Firefighters*, December 9; *Fun with Food*, December 16; *The Snow Man*, December 23; and *The Mitten*, December 30. Storyteller Jennifer Carlin also meets with the four-year-olds at the Presbyterian Church Nursery School one Friday per month.

Coming Up in the New Year ~ American Girl Doll Party: Saturday, January 20 at 10:00-11:30 a.m. Dress up and bring your American Girl doll (or any other loved doll) for a delightful tea party with activities, crafts, and stories. Intended for ages 6-8. **Fairytale Forest: Sunday, January 25 at 4:00-5:30 p.m.** Once again, HTL staff and students from Harding Township School will create a fairytale kingdom for youngsters and the young at heart. Intended for ages 3-6, but all are welcome. Please register at the Library or call 973-267-8000 X132. Take time from the holiday bustle to relax with a good book. Visit the Library!

HARDING TOWNSHIP HEALTH DEPARTMENT

At the November 13, 2008 meeting the Board of Health introduced an ordinance to raise the sewer service fees. The increase was proposed to meet the increase passed earlier in the year by Morris Township. There are about 240 homes in Harding that are connected to the Morris Township sewer system. Harding is billed for the service and in turn bills the residents. In June, Morris Township increased their costs to Harding for the first time since 1997 by \$113 a year. The proposed ordinance allows Harding to collect these charges. There will also be a surcharge to recover fees already paid to Morris Township. Charges for use of Harding's pump station and the hook-up fees remain the same. Certain inspection and permit fees are being removed from the ordinance and only construction fees will apply to new or altered connections. A public hearing was scheduled for December 11, 2008.

HARDING TOWNSHIP OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT is conducting an online survey, and invites residents to participate in a citizens survey on the topic of natural hazards. The survey is part of a FEMA project in which Harding, along with other New Jersey communities, is participating. To take part, residents should log on to the Morris County website at www.morrisoem.org and go to the upper left corner to "Need Hazard Protection Think Mitigation" and click on "Take Our Citizen Survey". After reading the letter, click on the words, "take the survey now." Participants are asked to fill in the information as truthfully as possible. Information collected from around the county and state will assist emergency planners in identifying the most critical areas of concern and various mitigation strategies. For more information, contact

the Harding Township Office of Emergency Management: Harding Twp Police Department (973) 455-0500

New Vernon Garden Club News

Members of the New Vernon Garden Club participated in a holiday workshop, assembling red velvet bows and holiday wreaths. These were used to decorate New Vernon village. This continuing and long-standing project of the Club has received several awards from the Garden Club of New Jersey. The Club is grateful to the village merchants who have generously supported this project through the years.

From the Harding Land Trust

Celebrating the preservation of our 34th property in 18 years, this has now reached 300 acres of privately conserved land. The year ended with the preservation of the corner of Blue Mill Road and James Street – a highly visible, scenic rural streetscape that will now remain forever unchanged! Protecting land in perpetuity is a big responsibility and one we take very seriously. Monitoring and maintenance of our properties is an important role of our organization. This year we are excited to have embarked on a multi-year restoration program aimed at improving habitat for native birds, curtailing the spread of invasive species, and improving stream health on several of our large properties. This investment in stewardship will benefit our community for many years to come. This year the Harding Land Trust welcomed new Trustees Kara MacKenzie-Plante, David Shepperly, Roger Greenway, and Linda Cahn to our Board.

If you are not a member of the Land Trust, please take this opportunity to join in preserving Harding's scenic, historic and ecological assets. A strong, dedicated, conservation-minded membership is paramount to our open space protection efforts and we need your help. For more information, please contact us at 973-267-2515 or visit our website at www.hardinglandtrust.org.

TOWNSHIP NEWS

Township Committee Meeting – November 19, 2008

Attendance: All

Mt Kemble Recreation Complex

By a vote of 3 (Bartlett, Murray, Rybka) to 2 (Lanzerotti, Ward) the Committee passed a resolution to supporting Morris Township's petition for re-

zoning the property for use as athletic fields subject a “memorandum of understanding” which would clarify such items as hours of use, emergency and police coverage, lighting, etc. Lighting for night usage was the major sticking point as Morris Township said that unless the fields could be used at night as well as during daytime, the cost was not worth it. Neighboring residents were opposed to the project for several reasons including the night lighting. Reasons for the approving the resolution over objections of Harding residents were (1) the lighting was deemed not seriously objectionable and (2) to maintain good relationship with Morris Township. The members that were against the resolution cited the lighting issue and the “murky control” over future control of the property.

Council on Affordable Housing (COAH)

The Housing Element and Fair Share Plan of HT’s Master Plan was presented. This document included HT’s plan to meet state requirements for providing affordable housing, not an easy task given the cost of land. The latest formulas that COAH has promulgated (so-called 3rd round) demand that HT create 35 units of affordable housing. The formulas are somewhat complex and can appear to lack sense -- ex. job growth drives of the obligation even though employment within the township has been shrinking for years. But they come from the State, they what they are, and they are not subject to negotiation except perhaps as they conflict with requirements for land preservation demanded by the Highlands Act, that other big Trenton imposed regime that controls land usage. The plan presented is for HY to meet the 35 unit goal in the following way:

Credit from Prior Round Surplus	5
Credit for Special Needs Housing from 2001	5
Construct more units at The Farm at Harding	2
Allow “Accessory Apartments”	10
Special Needs Housing	6
Rental Bonus	<u>7.75</u>
Total	35.75

The two additional units to be constructed at The Farm at Harding (Woodland Road and Kitchell Road) are expected to cost \$350K for both.

Accessory Apartments are apartments in out-buildings on the property of residents, presumably those with larger acreage. These were permitted come years ago, but were banned more recently. The Plan calls for allowing 10 on these units. A one-time payment of \$20K (municipal subsidy) is to be given to each property owner to inducement them to participate. The apartment must be less than 1200 sq ft. The property owner must commit to a 10 year, rent controlled term of lease. The rent is \$842 per month without utilities (\$940 with

utilities) for a one bedroom or \$1131 for a two bedroom without utilities. An administrator, hired by Harding (at compensation of \$5K per unit or \$50K), will find and choose the tenants. If successful, the Plan (available at Kirby Hall) appears to be a low cost solution to the Harding's COAH obligation.

Aside: The Plan is recommended reading for those residents curious about the Harding's housing stock (age, values, type, occupancy), demographics (population, persons per dwelling, changing age profile, employment characteristics and employment/job availability in Harding).

Glen Alpin Financial Analysis – ie. What has GA cost Harding?

The TC hired Suplee Clooney & Company (SCC) to determine what GA has cost The Township so far for (1) acquisition, (2) renovation, and (3) ongoing costs of maintenance and debt service.

(1) Acquisition. The final actual cost of the acquisition was \$1,169,572.27 -- \$175K of which came from Harding Open Space Trust Funds, the source of which is property taxes. The rest came from Country and State grants. These grants come with a time delay so HT incurred \$45,864.98 in interest on borrowings while awaiting receipt of the cash from the grants. Therefore Harding's **direct acquisition cost was \$220,665.**

(2) Renovation. To date \$1,373,063.91 has been spent on renovation, with \$598,438.91 born by Harding. The bulk of the rest came from State and Country grants while a modest amount came from private donations. Again, grant money is received with a delay and the Township incurred \$100,108.54 in interest expense. Therefore total **renovation costs to date, that have been directly born by Harding, are \$698,547.45.**

Recall that approximately two years ago, as the costs were recognized to be spiraling out of control, the TC resolved to cap renovation costs (not including interest) to Harding at \$968K.

(3) Ongoing Costs. Ongoing costs are of two kinds. First there are so-called "indirect" costs for grass cutting, clean up, snow removal, monitoring, gas and electric -- some of which are provided by Harding Department of Public Works. These indirect costs were pegged at \$14.3K and \$16.8K in 2006 and 2007 respectively. No estimate was made for other costs such as project management and administration, which is born by the Township Administrator. SCC estimated that these **indirect costs will rise 4% per year and will total about \$558K over the next 20 years.** Obviously, these costs would be paid from HT general funds.

The second element of ongoing costs is debt service on the bonds sold to permanently fund the Township's share (capped \$968K) of the costs for

renovation. A table in SCC's report shows **total interest expense of about \$383.5K over the 20 year life of the bond.**

Township Committee Regular Meeting – December 3, 2008

Attendees: Bartlett, Lanzerotti, Murray, Ward; Absent: Rybka

Announcements / Reports / Presentations

New COAH Regulations. State Senator Thomas H. Kean and Assemblyman Jon M. Bramnick were present at the meeting to discuss new state regulations that alter the way COAH is being administered. Assemblyman Bramnick has spent the past several weeks traveling throughout his district and the state to meet with various municipalities in an effort to understand what questions and/or concerns both local government officials and public citizens have on COAH regulations as well as the process. The deadline for submitting affordable housing plans to COAH is December 31, 2008 with certification expected by June 2009.

Members of the Harding Township Committee posed several questions to Senator Kean and Assemblyman Bramnick regarding COAH's current legislation. Some of the key issues raised were:

1. Confusion regarding the Highland Council and what, if any, benefits or detriments there are to participating.
2. How is the COAH allotment determined for each municipality and why is there seemingly little opportunity to challenge allotments when deemed not appropriate.
3. What funding services are available to towns that elect to forego using property taxes to subsidize affordable housing.
4. It is believed that COAH does not carefully study the details of town's zoning requirements or preservation strategies when determining allotments.
5. Credit or special latitude should be given to towns that offer affordable housing opportunities to town employees.

Senator Kean stated that he and other members of the legislation are working hard to find a bi-partisan solution that will address many of the perceived difficulties with the current COAH regulations. In the meantime, he and Assemblyman Bramnick assured the Township Committee and public attending the meeting that they will represent the issues raised and respond back to the Committee with additional information and/or potential changes in the coming weeks.

Resolutions – Non-Consent

Several resolutions that addressed specific points within the Harding Township

proposed plan for COAH were approved. This plan will most likely not be finalized or submitted prior to December 15, 2008.

It is estimated that the annual shortfall to manage and support The Farm at Harding is \$200,000 or 1 cent of every tax dollar.

Other Announcements

Mr. Lanzerotti proposed and the Committee agreed that at the next Committee meeting a process be defined for determining what the specific points on the resolution for the Mount Kemble Recreation Facility will be.

Correspondence

Communication was received from the Dept of Transportation informing Harding Township of three future projects that will impact residents. They include:

1. Closing the rest stop on Rt 287 to vehicles
2. Repair of the Harter Road bridge (Summer 2009)
3. Route 202 bridge replacement (2010)

Harding Open Space Trust (HOST)– Nov. 12, 2008

Continuing the close integration between HOST and the Harding Land Trust (HLT), Tina Bologna (Executive Director – HLT) communicated about the stewardship work performed on acquired properties. Work on the Waterman Meadow involves filling large holes, seeding to grow grass and attract birds and treatment of fields with proper herbicides. Additionally, brush clearing and dead tree removal on the Von Zuben land has commenced.

Judie Ward distributed a draft of a new HOST information brochure featuring attractive photos of acquired properties. The brochure, set to be distributed across the Township, describes HOST goals and accomplishments and key contact information.

John Murray then shared a presentation, jointly prepared by HOST and the HLT, used at a meeting of the Morris County Open Space Trust. Although the plea for financial support failed, the presentation did describe the case for preservation of the Post and Rail Farm and kept the door open for different approaches in the future.

The current financial status of the HOST Fund was then presented by Gail McKane. The Fund currently has a cash balance of \$2.2 million and, after acquisition of the Eggert land later this year, will drop to \$1.5 million. It is anticipated that the Township will be reimbursed \$400,000 after closing (Morris County -\$325,000, HLT - \$25,000 and Green Acres - \$50,000). The funds will then be applied to attractive acquisitions and necessary stewardship in 2009. It was noted that the Trust for Public Land (TPL) has an option to purchase the

Twin Brook Farm, adjacent to the Great Swamp, which is owned by the Stevens family. Sally Dudley was informed that Mr. Stevens is seeking a subdivision (six acres) approval from the Planning Board. HOST is interested in this situation and will track the request process.

The Committee then went into executive session to strategize a new approach to a key property acquisition.

Planning Board - November 17, 2008

In attendance: Thomas dePoortere, Virginia Moriarty, Marshall Bartlett, Isobel Olcott, John Murray, David Dietz, Alf Newlin, Gary Hall, Susan Kimball, Paul Fox, Cindy Phillips. Absent: Carol Vellekamp, Robert Edgar, Peter Saulnier. Isobel Olcott ran the meeting.

HOST Brochure-

Judie Ward presented the new brochure that explains what HOST does, its past successes, and its partnership with the Harding Land Trust. It contains beautiful pictures of the acres that have already been preserved. It will be included in a future town wide mailing.

Correspondence-

The Planning Board received a letter from a resident on Youngs Road asking that they review the minimum setback requirements in the R-1 and RR zones. The matter was referred to the advisory committee.

Applications-

Application: PB-09-08, Applicant: **Timothy Stevens, Block 56, Lot 17, 17 Woodland Road**, Minor Subdivision with Variances, Action: Consideration of Completeness Waivers. The applicant is looking to subdivide the property and sell part of it to the Great Swamp and keep part as a buildable lot(s). There are no plans to build on the buildable lot(s) at this time. The Great Swamp is interested in the land because of the turtle habitat at the back of the property. The applicant is requesting waivers on the completeness of the application, specifically in three areas: 1- landscaping, 2- soil erosion, 3- conservation easement. Since there are no plans for a building at this time, there will be minimal disturbance of the landscaping and soil. In addition, it was felt additional conservation easements were premature at this time. The Board granted the three waivers of completeness.

Application PB-11-08, Applicant: Thomas **Walden IV, Block 56, Lot 11, 56 Meyersville Rd**, Special Flood Hazard Development Permit. The application was postponed to another meeting.

Public Hearings-

Draft Community Facilities Plan: There was only one resident with a question regarding artificial turf at the Harding Elementary School. The Board responded that the Plan did not go into that level of detail and that topic would be addressed if and when the school wanted to install artificial turf. The Plan was accepted and will be added to the Harding Master Plan.

Draft Housing and Fair Share Plan (COAH): There was some discussion on the accessory housing component. Susan Kimball pointed out that using accessory housing worked well in Tewksbury, a Hunterdon county town that is similar to Harding. She said there are benefits for the homeowners who signed up for the plan and the town worked hard to promote the benefits. Tewksbury ended up with more homeowners wanting to participate than what was needed in the town. The Planning Board approved a resolution to adopt the Plan and will be sending it to the Township Committee. The Plan needs to be sent to the Township Committee to endorse it before forwarding to the State. The Plan will also become part of the town's Master Plan. It was noted that the Board of Health passed a resolution pledging to expedite any applications for accessory housing.

Historic Preservation Commission

At the meeting on December 4, the **Gregory and Amy Mulford application for demolition permit of the structure at 18 Meyersville Rd** was discussed. This property, a contributing historic structure, was formerly owned by Penny and Don Hinckle. The Hinckles, long time Harding residents and environmental activists, had made many public pronouncements regarding their lack of placing any conservation easements on the property, due to its "indivisibility". The Mulfords first obtained subdivision approval in February 2008, due to the existence of the property in a "split zone", with the back of the property in Harding R3, and the front of the property in Harding R2. The latter requires only a 30,000ft² area (less than 1 acre), and was a fully conforming lot, at the front corner of the property on Meyersville Rd. At the time of the subdivision, the existing house was represented as being the proposed residence of the applicants. The existing structure violates the permitted setback requirements from the extensive wetlands on the property, but this was permitted to continue as a preexisting use.

The chair of this commission has commented that its official minutes can be found on the Township website <http://www.hardingnj.org/> at the past minutes icon. (Editor's note: there is significant delay in posting from the actual meeting

date.)

Board of Adjustment.

Board of Education, No reports this month

Civic Association: The **DEADLINES FOR THE next 2 issues OF THE THUMBNAIL are January 9 and February 6**, respectively. Current and past issues of Thumbnail, as well as the Directory are also on our Website: ***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.

If you would like to participate more actively in the Civic Association, please let us know who you are. We are currently soliciting nominations for new members to the Board of Trustees. This group meets monthly. All members make a commitment to cover a Township meeting, sometimes as infrequently as bimonthly, sometimes semi-monthly, take notes on the proceedings, then send in a write up to the Thumbnail. By covering and disseminating information on the workings of the Township government, you serve others who cannot attend meetings, but who are vitally interested. If you are interested, send an Email to the editor, *hesnaj@verizon.net*, or write The Harding Township Civic Association, PO Box 72, New Vernon, NJ 07976, or come to the next meeting, at Kirby Hall, **7:30 PM, Monday December 5.**

The **Civic Association Annual Meeting is usually the first Monday in February at 7:30 PM**, in the Township Hall. We try to schedule "An evening with the Mayor", but the exact date will be announced later. There is also a brief business meeting, including election of the nominees for the Board of Trustees: current candidates are: Elizabeth Cutler Bissell, Barbara Brennen and Scott Shipley. Dev Modi had been elected in the fall to fill an empty seat.

TOWNSHIP RECYCLING

Commingled Recyclables: consists of all aluminum and tin cans, glass bottles, and only plastic bottles and containers with the Recycling symbol, and #1 or #2. Try to crush plastic bottle to conserve space. Please remember no plastic or paper bags. **Commingled Mixed Paper recycling;** consists of all paper, cardboard, newspaper, office paper, magazines, and books. Please put loose or

shredded paper in paper bag. Please flatten all boxes or fill with other paper products.

Other accepted items; Batteries; automotive (car) and household (rechargeable accepted); Computers and all related peripherals, i.e. printers and monitors; Automotive and light truck tires, (on or off rim) and Propane tanks (BBQ size only)

The Hours of operation are every Wednesday from 7AM. to noon (7– 9AM self service); and **Saturdays: 12/20, 1/3, 1/17, 1/31, 9AM to noon.**

DATES TO REMEMBER, meetings as noted.

Municipal Court (1 st and 3 rd Tuesday)	3 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)	7:30 PM
Shade Tree (2 nd Monday)	3 PM
Harding Twp Civic Association (1 st Monday)	7:30 PM