

November 2009

Harding Township Civic Association

THUMBNAIL ACCOUNTS OF CIVIC AFFAIRS

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Harding Civic Association Holiday Party Meeting/Membership Event

The Harding Township Civic Association will be holding the December meeting at the Firehouse on **Sunday, December 6 from 2-5pm**. We are hosting a Holiday Party and invite any residents who may be interested in joining the Civic Association to come out and meet us. We need volunteers to help us, so if you have been thinking about volunteering, now is the time to come out and see what we are all about. RSVP not required, but appreciated. Barbara Brennan at BarbaraJBrennan@preludeinc.com or 973-267-2624.

You can send in announcements for posting on our calendar of events, see the Civic Association website www.hardingcivic.org for instructions.

We also can send you the Thumbnail via e-mail, sign up also on our website www.hardingcivic.org.

The annual community Ecumenical Thanksgiving Pot Luck Supper will be hosted by the First Presbyterian Church of New Vernon on **Sunday, November 22 from 5 pm to 7 pm**. Participating churches are the Church of Christ the King, the First Presbyterian Church and the Green Village United Methodist Church. The public is cordially invited to attend. For information, please call the Church Office at 973-538-8394.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Harding Township Health Department is planning to have H1N1 (swine flu) clinics for high risk groups as specified by the Center for Disease Control. Presently, high risk groups include: pregnant women, caregivers of infants less than 6 months, Health Care and Emergency personnel, people aged 4 to 64 with chronic illness, children and young adults aged 6 months to 24 years. As vaccine becomes available, the clinic date information will be on the Health Department Hotline at 973-267-8000, extension 190.

THE LIBRARY

Storytime at the Library meets on Tuesdays at 10 a.m. with stories, songs, and a craft: November 17 ~ *Pets*; and November 24 ~ *Turkeys*. Special programs will be held in January, February, and March. Check the December *Thumbnail* for details.

Extra...read all about it! In the new adult reading room, we will be offering a selection of periodicals: daily newspapers and magazines. **As this is a new venture for us, we would appreciate hearing from you.** What would you like to see there? Kindly e-mail suggestions to desk@hardinglibrary.org.

New: *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* is the latest DVD in the children's AV collection. Disney's Pixar animated film, *Up*, will be available in November to be followed by holiday videos.

Evening Book Group, Wednesday, December 2 at 7:30 p.m. Join us for a discussion of *The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon. Set in post-World War II Barcelona, the novel traces the story of a mysterious author, Julian Carax, and his circle. If you enjoyed *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Name of the Rose*, this is the perfect book for a cozy weekend on the couch and then a spirited group discussion!

Is your Library card up to date? In order to access online catalog requests and databases, you need a Harding barcode number and PIN. Do we have your e-mail address and current phone? If you don't have a card, you are missing out on an excellent County-wide service. Fill out a registration form today!

The New Vernon Volunteer Fire Department would like all residents and their families to join us in celebration of the lighting of our new Christmas Tree. Festivities will begin at 6:00pm, Saturday December 5, 2009 at the New Vernon Fire House, rain or shine.

There will be a brief dedication of the tree and blessings from the churches. Following, the Firehouse will be open to all for refreshments including wine, soda, cheese and other snacks. The New Vernon Volunteer Fire Department recently replaced the tree at the corner of Millbrook Road and Village Road on the Fire Department's property. The tree, which has been lit for many years, has grown too big and unsightly. In fact, there were numerous other trees growing within the main tree. The tree has been a

safety issue in regards to line of sight coming out of Millbrook Road and in regards to the raising of lights around the power lines. The Fire Department would like to keep the center of town in the Christmas spirit and has since purchased a new tree to watch grow and become a new staple in the center of town. The new tree is placed back from the roads a few feet to ensure better visibility and distance from the power lines.

Glen Alpin Conservancy Announces Availability of New Book About Glen Alpin History

The Glen Alpin Conservancy is pleased to announce *Glen Alpin, A Corner of History* is now available. The corner of land where Glen Alpin sits has historical significance that pre-dates the American Revolution. The story starts with the purchase of the property in 1751 and traces the owners and property to 2009. The 120 page book contains over 200 photographs including color photos of the stained glass from the McAlpin era and the wall murals in the music room and reception room from the Princess era. Find out which famous generals stayed at the Kemble house during the American Revolution, which Kemble family member was thought to be an American spy, who donated land to the Morristown National Historical Park, who shimmied down the bed sheets to escape being held at a religious school, and who was swindled out of thousands of dollars. Also included are maps from Revolutionary times up to today, photographs of the interior and exterior of Glen Alpin and Hurstmont from the 1930's and 1940's, and floor plans including the original McKim, Mead, and White blueprints for Hurstmont. A copy of *Glen Alpin, A Corner of History* will be sent with each contribution of \$125 or more. In order to receive yours for the holidays, orders must be received by November 25. Make checks payable to: The Glen Alpin Conservancy, P.O. Box 235, New Vernon, New Jersey 07976.

Harding Alliance Against Substance Abuse

Unused, unwanted and expired medications are being collected by the **Harding Township Police on Saturday, November 14, between 10AM and 2PM**. Further information about **Operation Medicine Cabinet** can be found at drugfreenj.org/medicine or by calling Harding **Lieutenant Nunn at 973-455-1389**. Representatives for the Alliance are sought who can help organize

parent programming. This is not a major time commitment, nor does it involve fundraising. If you have any questions or comments, or would like a copy of our handout 'Legal and Other Consequences of Substance Abuse' please contact judymotown@comcast.net or pick one up in the Kirby Municipal Building rotunda. More information, including our meeting schedule, can be found at <http://hardingalliance.hardingnj.org>.

TOWNSHIP NEWS

Township Committee Wrestles with Large Looming Budget Gaps...Supporters Turn Out for Police Department

At the October 21, Township Committee Meeting, attended by all members, the Committee wrestled with a budget that is proving more difficult to balance than any in memory. Because revenue sources are expected to be flat to down while major cost items are generally up, some very difficult decisions will have to be made about services provided and the level of property taxes.

The October meeting was held in front of a standing room only crowd, by far the largest in years. As the meeting unfolded it was clear that the crowd was there for the discussion of the Police Department, the staffing of which impacts the overall budget for 2010 and 2011. The current (2009) fiscal year, which ends 12/31/09, appears to be tracking tolerably close to breakeven (a zero surplus or deficit). This happy result is occurring, even though Harding is suffering a revenue shortfall, largely because the Police Department is not staffed at the level that was budgeted. Specifically, the 2009 budget called for 14 police personnel while there have been just twelve for most of the year. Savings from these two unfilled slots have allowed the Township to operate in balance even though revenues have slumped. (Note added by Editor, Correction from last month: Chief Gaffney commented the Police department was staffed with 15 officers in 2007, not 12 officers as reported last month in Thumbnail)

2010 & 2011 – Looming Ugly

This year, the Township Committee has adopted two new tactics in the budget process – (1) start the budget process earlier (now, before the year begins rather than in the spring when the year 3-4 months complete); and (2) take a longer view (2 years rather than just one year at a time).

In its initial cut at the numbers, the Finance Committee thought it prudent to assume that all income lines will be flat or down in 2010 and 2011, as they are in 2009. Further without taking action, the largest expense items will be either flat (debt service; capital spending) or up (personnel costs - salaries, healthcare benefits and pensions costs). The initial cut at the numbers also assumed staffing levels at all departments at 2009 budgeted levels – i.e. Police at 14 rather than the 12 actually on staff now. When these assumptions are combined with an assumption of zero property tax increase (versus a 2.65% increase in 2009), the bottom line is \$963K of red ink in 2010 and a \$769K gap in 2011. This is a two year gap of \$1.7mm on an annual budget of roughly \$9mm – or about 10% of revenues per year...a hefty deficit.

By statute, the gap must be closed. So more revenue (increase taxes, fees etc) or cost cuts (layoffs, cost sharing, etc) will have to be found. Interestingly, of the \$9mm in income, only about \$5mm comes from property taxes. The other \$4mm comes from (in highest to lowest order) prior year surplus, state aid/utility tax, construction and permit fees, COAH fees, court fees, and a multitude of other smaller items.

Further constraining the task of getting to balance is the fact that a NJ state statute caps property tax increase at 4%. So the maximum allowable increase in property taxes (4%) would raise only \$200,000 (4% of \$5mm) leaving a still large amount of red ink in 2010 and 2011.

The Finance Committee's presentation enumerated several areas that will be explored for savings:

1. **Drive Four Key Revenue Generating Departments to "Revenue Neutral"**. Four departments have specific fee revenue attached to them though they operate at a deficit. These four departments are Health, Court, Planning & Zoning and UCC (Uniform Construction Code, the department involved in construction compliance). Combined these departments will run a deficit of about \$800K on revenues of \$330K in 2009. The hope is that these departments can be brought closer to "revenue neutral" (revenues equal costs). Obviously this would require very aggressive action on costs and massive increases in fee schedules.

2. **Furloughs.** Furloughing all HT employees (except for Police) for a single day saves something under \$10K. So closing all services (ex Police) for one day per month saves \$110-120K over a year.
3. **Layoffs.** Police department is currently staffed with 12 PBA employees. The average salary is \$92,206 and benefits are \$66,146. There are 19 fulltime administrative employees with an average salary of \$61,791 and benefits of \$29,052. As well the Township employees 12 part timer administratives at an average salary of \$25,700 and benefits of \$5,573.
4. **Shared services.** This strategy has been used to good effect in the past and involves combining a function with a neighboring municipality. The major functions are public safety (police), public works, health department, and court. Working against this strategy having immediate impact, is the fact that negotiating a shared services agreement takes months even if both parties are motivated.
5. **Health Department** – part of this department is already a shared service with Hanover Township, but the cost has still escalated by sharply over the last 5 years. However, the total spend here is estimated at only \$95K in 2010, so it doesn't represent a large potential source of savings.
6. **Tap Surpluses** – this is not recommended as it could negatively affect Harding's bond rating (AAA currently) and would make it very difficult to rebuild surpluses in the future.
7. **Apply for Extraordinary Aid** – HT would not qualify until it used up all the surpluses and budget reserves.
8. Reduce Reserve for Uncollected Taxes

The spending for schools is not within the scope of the municipal budget project as the schools represent an entirely different budget and tax mechanism. However, the TC will encourage the school administration to be aggressive in order to minimize the overall property tax increase.

Closing a \$923K budget hole, is no easy task. Consider:

- A maximum allowable tax increase of 4% raises only \$200K.
- Shared service agreements with other towns take time to negotiate.
- Even if construction fees were raised sharply, there is much less construction underway these days.

- Average policeman costs about \$150K in salary and benefits
- Average administrative person costs about \$90K
- A furlough of all employees except police saves \$10K per day.
- Debt has to be serviced
- Low interest rates (to stimulate the economy) are keeping interest income at minimal levels.

The budget process will continue in earnest in November and December at least. The slides used by the Finance Committee are available on the Harding Township website. Citizens interested in voicing their opinion on priorities and tradeoffs are encouraged to attend TC meetings.

Police Department

The Police Department is the largest department, accounting for over a third of the staff expense including benefits. The police force is currently at 12 but the preliminary 2010 budget projection above 2010 assumes 14. Current staffing includes a chief, one lieutenant, two sergeants, and 8 patrol officers.

Supporters of the police department packed the room. At least 30 citizens spoke positively about the police force. Comments were varied and are difficult to summarize. Several comments were emotional anecdotes about how the police had helped and in a couple cases, had literally saved lives. All of the public called for increasing the staffing, and some wanted the department expanded to more than 14. A speaker or two mentioned the higher staffing recommendation of a study done a few years ago. (Some expressed displeasure that the consultant's report was never being released publicly possibly because it was delivered verbally.)

Just a few individuals acknowledged the budget problem discussed immediately before but admonished the TC to "cut somewhere else". A couple of speakers suggested getting rid of Glen Alpin as a solution. (Note: due to the original grant financings, "getting rid of Glen Alpin" has proven legally nearly impossible.). One individual even suggested combining Harding's 6th, 7th, and 8th school grades with Madison. No one in the audience suggested combining other departments, like the Police Department or Department of Public Works, with a neighbor.

Committee person Jim Rybka made a motion to increase the staffing to 14 and promote 2 patrolmen to sergeant (which come with raises). This motion failed on a 3-2 vote (Bartlett, Egea and Ward against) due to concern

about balancing the budget.

A second motion to increase the staffing to 13 (and promote 2 patrolmen to sergeant) was passed in a 5-0 vote. Keeping the staffing at 13 helps to close the projected budget gap as that forecast was based on 14 police personnel.

PLANNING BOARD MEETING- OCTOBER 26, 2009

All members present.

Discussion: The Township Committee has asked the Board to review a waiver of the steep slopes requirement on a property on Tempe Wicke Road. A site visit was scheduled for November 14th. Mr. Newlin then thanked the Board members for their service for the prior year, especially Mrs. Olcott.

Executive Session: The Board then met in executive session to discuss the assessment of professionals and associated finances.

Operational Topics: Several operational topics were then discussed. Mr. Lanzerotti announced that budget planning for the township for 2010 and 2011 had begun. All major revenue sources were flat or down for 2009 and the same trend is projected for 2010 and 2011, leaving a budget gap of roughly \$1.7M for the two years. He then reviewed several areas that could be explored to eliminate the budget gap.

Mr. Newlin reminded that Board members need to participate in Board activities including those of the subcommittees. He asked the members about preferences regarding receipt of materials (packets, email, etc.). Ms. Phillips made two suggestions to tighten up processes: timely receipt of materials to get on the agenda, and payment of escrow prior to the hearing date. Ms. Phillips will also confirm the process to track whether conditions in resolutions have been met by applicants.

Mrs. Olcott expressed a need to streamline the flow of information from various township committees (HOST, historic preservation, etc.) during the application process; liaisons need to step up regarding comments on applications. There also needed to be better tracking of topics that come up in Board subcommittees. Mr. Lanzerotti suggested that neighbors receive notice of development prior to formal application and the 200-foot notice requirement.

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT, OCTOBER 15, 2009

New Applications

Joseph and Joanne Tesi, 40 Lake Trail West, Block 41 Lot 17, "C" Variances

Property has been vacant for 2.5 years. The property will go from a 4 bedroom to a 3 bedroom with 3.5 bathrooms. Currently the property is non-conforming. The lot is undersized, does not meet the front yard setback requirement and the proposed house will be exceed the lot coverage limit. Neighbors voiced their support for the proposed house. The application was recommended for approval.

Board of Adjustment, September 17, 2009, was canceled

Board of Adjustment, August 20, 2009

Resolutions

John Sumas, 6 Lake Trail West, Block 41, Lot 3, Ordinance Interpretation/"C" Variance, (Carried from June and July). On the advice of counsel no action will be taken until the required escrow has been paid.

Matthais and Deborah Knerr, 11 Hartley Farms Road, Block 4 Lot 31, "C" Variances, Approved.

Board of Adjustment, June 18, July 18, 2009

Resolutions

Robert and Kara Toohey, 75 Village Road, Block 16 Lot 13.01, "C" Variance, Approved.

John and Kathryn Harris, 46 Lee's Hill Road. Block 49 Lot 10, "C" Variance, Approved as Amended.

J. Michael and Christine Pearson, 74 Village Road, Block 15 Lot 9, "C" Variances, Approved as Amended.

Edward W. Remig, 24 Glen Alpin Road, Block 21 Lot 13, "C" Variances Approved as Amended.

Pending Applications

Matthais and Deborah Knerr, 11 Hartley Farms Road, Block 4 Lot 31, "C" Variances; Recommended for approval subject to a landscape plan creating a buffer with vegetation.

HARDING TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION, October 5, 2009

Harding Township allows prudent usage of district facilities to groups directly or indirectly related to the school and its operations as well as community organizations formed for charitable, civic or educational purposes.

In recent years, the costs associated with this practice have increased while usage rates have not resulting in negative value. Having reviewed the current policy and applicable charges, the Board approved the raising of rates when facilities are utilized by “for profit” organizations and companies. The increase, which goes into affect immediately, is \$100 over the current rate per facility and will not affect non-for-profit use. The Board continues to reserve the right to pass on any additional charges if incremental custodial or maintenance services are required.

New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) is the annual statewide multi-grade assessment program that serves to provide early indication of individual student’s progress in Math, Science and Language Arts literacy. At the meeting Dr. Purnell, Superintendent, reviewed the details of this year’s results for Grades 3 through 8 providing both a comparison to prior year as well as the school’s ranking amongst a district factor group. The New Jersey Board of Education establishes the standards of performance that calls for proficiency rates of minimally 95% and/or 5% improvement to prior year for the class medium of each curriculum. Results for Harding Township may be found on Dr. Purnell’s eBoard located on the school’s website. Action plans to address deficiencies are expected to be presented to the Board at a future meeting.

As previously reported, Harding Township School District will commence QSAC (Quality Single Accountability Continuum) in November. This self-assessment procedure will measure school district effectiveness in the areas of academic achievement, governance, operations and administration, finance and facilities with the goal to insure the highest level of educational offering. There are several stages to the process culminating in an evaluation and validation by the Executive Country Supervisor’s office.

The Harding School District passed its annual audit with “flying colors” thanks to the hard work of Jim Minkewicz, Gail Swenor and Sheila Morrison from the business office as well the school’s teachers, administration and support staff.

HARDING OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE(HOST) Nov. 4, 2009.

Mr. Murray reported 2 mailings of Harding Trust for information & funds appeal have been sent township-wide. NJ State Green Acres Bond issue was approved by 50.3% in Harding Twp in Nov. 2 election.

Mrs. Olcott (Planning Bd) reported no new applications so Board reviewed its concept of conservation easements. Applicant should pay for baseline study. The Township Administrator sent letters to 2 landowners encroaching on Margetts Field.

Mr Bartlett (Township Com) noted revenue down and projected deficit of \$923,000 in 2010 due to rising municipal costs, and lack of new income.

Maintenance and monitoring plans discussed in review of HOST properties. Voluntary monitoring of 4 Township-owned "orphan" properties approved if no HOST funds needed.

HARDING OPEN SPACE TRUST (HOST) Sept. 15, 2009

Mrs. Bologna reported HOST/HLT summer intern submitted 4 draft letters regarding encroachments and 4 proposed property management letters for approval. Discussion of encroachments on easements will consider obvious damages to Township owned properties and other easements.

Congressman Frelinghuysen continues efforts at legislation to annex Eggert property, Rt. 202, recently purchased with Harding open space funds, to Morristown National Historical Park. Management Goals for HOST's Open Space property were outlined for work needed on trees endangering public safety. Culling trees on former Von Zuben property, Blue Mill Rd, will be postponed.

Civic Association News and Announcements

Civic Association: The **DEADLINES FOR THE next 2 issues OF THE THUMBNAIL are December 4 and January 8**, 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.

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: 11/21, 12/5, 12/19, 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 Preservation 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(3 rd Wed)	7:30 PM
Harding Twp Civic Association (1 st Monday)	7:30 PM