

Harding Township Civic Association

THUMBNAIL ACCOUNTS OF CIVIC AFFAIRS

January 2010

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Harding Civic Association News The annual meeting of the Harding Township Civic Association will be held **Tuesday February 9**, at 7:00 PM, in the Township Kirby Hall. A brief business meeting, (including election of the nominees for the Board of trustees: current candidates: Renee Williams, Karin Weiner, Scott Shipley, Ellie Weiner, Hesna Pfeiffer, and Gwenn Claytor) will be followed by “**An Evening with the Mayor**”, **Marshall Bartlett, starting at 7:30 pm**. There will be an opportunity to meet other Township Committee members. The Township committee voted Marshall Barlett the new chairman (“mayor”) at its meeting on January 6 and Regina Egea, vice-chair. The replacement for James Rybka is Nicholas Platt, see story below.

If you are interested in joining, please either come and speak to one of the current Trustees, or write Barbara Brennan at BarbaraJBrennan@preludeinc.com; or call 973-267-2624. You can send in announcements for posting on the Civic Assn. 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 LIBRARY

StoryTime for pre-schoolers is held on Tuesdays at 10 a.m. All sessions include stories, songs, games, and a theme-related craft. Upcoming topics: Jan. 19: *Mice*; Jan. 26: *Penguins*; Feb. 2: *Groundhogs*; Feb. 9: *Doughnuts*; Feb. 16: *Trains*; Feb. 23: *Fun with Friends*.

Valentine Party—this special event of stories, games, and a craft will take place on **Saturday, Feb. 6 at 12 noon**. Children of all ages are invited! Sign up at the Library now. And coming up in March...a **Game Party** for the whole family: Bananagrams, Mexican Train, and more. Watch for details in the next *Thumbnail!*

Evening Book Group will meet on Wednesday, January 27 at 7:30 to discuss

The Help by Kathryn Stockett. February's book selection is *Slamming Open the Door* by Kathleen Sheeder Bonnano. In the planned **Adult Reading Room** (part of the new library building) there will be shelves for magazines and newspapers, not to mention comfortable seating in which to relax and read. Please send us your periodicals requests! If you wish to donate to the **Enriching Our Community** campaign for the new library, the forms can be accessed on the Library Web site: hardinglibrary.org

TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE TURNOVER: RYBKA TO PLATT...HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN?

The seat on the Township committee vacated by JAMES RYBKA has been filled by long-time resident NICHOLAS PLATT as an appointee by the Township Committee. In early December, Township Committee person Jim Rybka resigned unexpectedly with just over a year remaining on his term. Within a month, the TC seat was filled by Nicolas Platt. How did that happen? Thumbnail has the answer...

The rules for filling vacated municipal positions are governed by New Jersey statute. If the person who vacated the seat, had been a nominee of a political party (which is almost always the case), then that political party has 15 days to present three names to the TC for consideration. The TC then has 30 days from the occurrence of the vacancy to: (a) choose one of the three candidates, (b) reject all the candidates and request 3 new ones, or (c) pick an individual on their own.

Because Jim Rybka was a Republican nominee, the responsibility to propose the 3 possible replacements, fell to the eight Republican County Committee Members who represent Harding in Morris County. (Aside: Each of Harding's four districts has two committee members. The County Committee Members are elected by you, the voters – those often uncontested races way down at the end of the ballot. By law, each district must have a male and a female committee member.) A critical responsibility of party committees is to participate in the process of filling vacancies, which occur more frequently than you might guess, at all levels – municipal, county, state and sometimes even federal.

In an interview, Betsy Holdsworth, of the Harding Republican Committee, said that the group always takes its responsibility to find and propose candidates "very seriously". In this case, a meeting was called quickly. Brainstorming generated about 18 names and further discussion cut the list to 8. All eight were invited to be interviewed that Saturday. Six of the candidates were willing to serve and proceed with selection process. Candidates submitted resumes and were interviewed for 15 minutes. Candidates had to be registered, "serious" Republicans. When the smoke cleared

Nicolas Platt, Phillip Rosenbach and Peter Saulnier were the three individuals chosen by the Republican Committee to be submitted to the TC.

Bob Edgar, chairman of the Harding Township Republican Committee, notified Mayor Lou Lanzerotti of the three candidates. Lanzerotti requested resumes of the three nominees and distributed these to the other members of the TC. Schedules were coordinated and on December 21, in the thick of the holiday season, the candidates were interviewed, in alphabetical order, for 45 minutes each. The TC had prepared a list of some eight questions to pose to each candidate, and assigned responsibilities for the questions to members of the TC. Each TC member took careful notes during the interviews.

Following the interviews, the TC discussed the three candidates for approximately 45 minutes. The TC concluded that (1) each of the three was exceptionally well qualified to serve our town, and (2) the town was fortunate to have such capable individuals willing to serve in our local government. The TC also decided that given the immediacy of Christmas and New Year and everyone's holiday travel plans that they would re-convene as soon as everyone returned to deliberate and make a final decision.

On January 6, the TC again reviewed each candidate's resume and qualifications. Again, the members of the TC expressed their views that all three candidates had already served, and could be expected to continue to serve, our town very well. After some further discussion, a formal secret ballot was taken and Nic Platt was chosen to fill the vacancy which runs to the end of this year, 2010. This final caucus lasted about an hour. Lanzerotti said that TC took its responsibility very seriously which is obvious from the process described. He said, "The citizens of Harding deserve no less from its Township Committee".

FROM THE DEPUTY TOWNSHIP CLERK, 2010 CENSUS UPDATE

Especially to the attention of POST OFFICE BOX holders:

Many of you have expressed concerns as to how you will receive your census questionnaire since you do not receive mail delivery at your physical address. We have contacted the Census Bureau with this concern. We were told that post office box holders will receive census packets dropped off at their physical addresses by census workers sometime in February or March. Instructions will be included for filing the information by mail. Census workers will follow up with residents between February and July of next year to ensure a complete count of Harding's population. If you have any questions or concerns about this process, please call 973/267-8000.

FROM THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT:

We are in the process of planning our Male and Female cancer clinics along with our Adult Health blood work clinic. Please check for updated information on our Township website at www.hardingnj.org or call the Health Department information line at 973/267-8000, extension 190.

TOWNSHIP NEWS. Meeting – December 16, 2009

Attending Committee members: Bartlett, Egea, Lanzerotti, Ward

Future Meeting Agendas:

Jan 20 – First regular TC meeting of 2010. The department by department budget review will continue with the focus on Police Department, Court, Capital budget and COAH (Council on Affordable Housing), the town's court imposed low income housing obligation. 2009 will be reviewed and the options for 2010 will be outlined.

Feb 17 – the discussion of the options for 2010 will continue. Preliminary budget.

Mar 17 – introduce 2010 budget; April 21 – adopt 2010 budget

Public hearings were held on two Ordinances: (1) to approve the name of the road for the Primrose Partners subdivision – White Oak Lane. (2) To increase Planning Board fees paid by applicants for subdivisions. These fees go to defray part of the Planning Board costs. Though the fee increases are very large on a percentage basis (\$1.5K to \$3K per lot for a minor subdivision), the prior fees were low relative to neighboring towns. Harding Township fees will now be much higher than neighboring towns. Even so the higher fees will only modestly help to close the overall budget gap – by about \$20K in a “typical year”. Our town is wrestling with a budget gap that is nearly \$1 million in 2010.

Seven Non-Consent Resolutions were approved. Two were of some note. (1) To save a “couple thousand” dollars, the Township decided to switch to liability insurance carries from the Morris Joint Insurance Fund (“JIF”) to the Suburban JIF. The contract is for 3 years at \$122,279 per year and covers workers compensation and all liabilities. Commercial carriers were shopped but were found to be uncompetitive – workers comp alone was over \$200K. The Suburban JIF has historically had lesser rate increases relative to the Morris JIF. (2) A donation of \$10K from Weichert for police equipment was accepted.

PRESENTATIONS

Library Landscape Plan was presented the highlights of which were its low maintenance, deer resistance and fence around the HVAC machinery. The Garden Club raised \$25,000 for the project.

Cell Tower Extension Request Bounced Back. A Verizon Wireless representative presented their plan to extend the height of a cell tower on the Rt 287 rest stop by 10 feet to 144 feet. However because the Township Committee had not been informed prior to the meeting and because some questions were not able to be answered by Verizon (How many times has this tower been extended already?) and because there was no proof that the State Historical Preservation Office has approved of the plan, this “courtesy application” was denied for the moment in favor of a more formal presentation in the future.

The Budget Reviews Continue...

Health Department

Garry Annibal, HT health officer presented the \$321K budget which covers two full time employees, one part timer and contracted services. According to Annibal, all programs are mandated by the state. The budget is spent as follows:

Environmental Health (41.7%) - septic system and potable water inspection

Administration (21.3%) – department administration

Public Health (19.6%) – early detection cancer, flu shots, audit schools, etc.

Community Outreach (10%) – health education, work with other communities

Animal Control (7.6%) – contract with St. Hubert’s, etc.

Activity (the number of plans reviewed and inspections performed) was down dramatically in 2009 from the 2005-08 levels due to the decrease in building activity.

Back in boom years, inspections averaged about 275 per year and broke over 300 in 2006 and 2008. In 2009, there were only about 215. However, expenses rose in all categories – salaries, benefits and other.

The health department does generate some revenues – about \$70K in 2009 from fees & permits, dog licenses and reimbursement for medical services.

Annibal presented a budget with reductions that saved \$13.1K, or 13% (from the 2010 budget initially submitted) even though this reporter recalls that departments were told to present a revised budget that showed a 20% reduction. The savings came from four factors. (1) eliminate anticipated surplus (aka take out budget padding!), (2) cut in nursing staff at immunization clinics (longer wait), (3) no support for staff attendance at meetings or conferences (4) charge home owners for well water investigations. Further reductions could come from (1) transfer of costs to other departments like police, fire,

first aid, clerk, (2) charge participants for immunization and clinics, (3) increase response time for calls and assistance and complaints.

In the discussion, Annibal estimated, but did not have exact figures, that only about 20-40 individuals participated in the cancer screening and about 350-400 got immunizations. The TC requested more data – on the list of mandates that the state imposes and the exact number of participants in the health clinics over the years.

The Board of Health will consider charging for clinic services (rather than the current practice of making them free) but allowing for an appeal based on economic need. A suggestion was made that Harding could perhaps discharge its state mandate obligation by referring people to free clinics at Morristown Memorial Hospital. The only objection to this seemed to be that less people might participate if they had to drive that distance.

Department of Public Works

The DPW budget for 2009 was \$803K before benefits, of which about 54% was for salary and wages. For the presentation, the salary and wage expense was not allocated to various functional areas so it's not possible to know how the DPW's man hours are spent. However operating expenses (ex. materials and supplies) and overtime were shown by 6 categories:

Buildings & Grounds (11%) – Kirby hall, Bayne Pk, Showgrounds, Gatehouse, etc.

Solid Waste (10%) – annual curbside pickup, contract fee, tipping fee

Streets & Roads (9%) – maintenance of roads, basins and signs; materials, contracted services

Snow Removal (8%) – ice and snow operations, chemicals and salt.

Vehicle Maintenance (6%) – over 60 vehicles and equipments

Recycling (3%) – recycling center and truck; hauling material

As requested, the DPW budget presented showed a reduction of 20%, or \$159.4K, versus the budget submitted prior. No personnel were cut – all of the reduction came from operating expenses, overtime and contractors. According to the presentation, virtually all activities would be impacted...

Deferral of Road Improvement Program, Deferral of Line Stripping, Deferral of Education and Training, Deferral of Annual Bulk Clean-up, Deferral of Ice Rink Maintenance, Reduction in Timeliness of Ice Control Operations, Reduction in Landscaping Maintenance, Reduction in DPW Assistance in Recycling Center, Reduction in Vehicle & Equipment Service...

...though the impact was not quantified hindering the public's and the TC's ability make an informed decision about the trade off between the budget and the services.

The DPW generates revenue from a recycling "tonnage grant" and gets money from recycled material which is sensitive to market prices. Possible proposes revenue generating options included to (1) Collect at Recycling Center (scrap metal, car batteries, computer terminals); (2) Residents pay for disposal of certain difficult items -- refrigerators, air conditioners (Freon) , tires, propane tanks, computer monitors, fluorescent bulbs.

Harding Open Space Trust – aka HOST

As of 2009, Harding’s Open Space Debt Obligation was as follows:

Green Acres Margett’s Field	282,939
2008 Bond – Glen Alpin	932,478
2008 Bond – Other Open Space	2,260,940
Bond Anticipation Notes	2,033,000
Authorized but not issued (cancel in 2010)	406,313

Total Open Space Debt	5,915,670

In 2009, your Open Space Tax (4 cents) generated \$808,404. Debt service consumed \$471,438 of that or about 58% (including almost \$71K for Glen Alpin related debt). The balance of Open Space Tax Revs (\$336,966) goes to maintaining existing properties and building a surplus to acquire more property.

Other budget discussion...The TC is pursuing more shared services opportunities (i.e. combining functions) with neighboring towns but could not disclose specifics.

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT, November 19, 2009

Resolutions

Joseph and Joanne Tesi, 40 Lake Trail West, Block 41 Lot 17, “C” Variances Resolution Approved.

Peter and Ellen Eppie, 566 Tempe Wick Road, Block 34, Lot 8; One year extension of time granted.

New Applications

Ralph and Lynn Jones, 65 Pleasantville Road, Block 15, lot 23, “C” Variances Application involves two additions and a barn. Variances needed for front yard setback. Barn is unique because it is in front of the house on a corner lot. Application was recommended for approval with a variance to replace the fence.

Martin and Jane O’Connor, 117 Village Road, Block 8, Lot 9, “C” Variances Application involves the addition of a pool. A setback variance and lot coverage variance are requested.

The application was recommended for approval.

Diane Bakst/Tommaso Zanobini, 121 Pleasantville Road, Block 14, lot 1.01

This application involves the rebuilding of a barn. Variances for building height, front yard setback and lot coverage are requested. The application was recommended for approval.

Board of Adjustment, December 17, 2009

Resolutions - Approved

Ralph and Lynn Jones, 65 Pleasantville Road, Block 15, lot 23, "C" Variances

Martin and Jane O'Connor, 117 Village Road, Block 8, Lot 9, "C" Variances

Diane Bakst/Tommaso Zanobini, 121 Pleasantville Road, Block 14, lot 1.01

HARDING TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION, Report

December 2009

The 2010-2011 budget was discussed briefly. Dr. Purnell, Superintendent of Schools noted that the two overarching priorities for the upcoming fiscal year would be (1) lowering per pupil cost and (2) generating incremental revenue for the district that would further support long term goals while offsetting rising costs. The facilities/finance committee has been asked to make recommendations to the Board of Education that addresses each of these priorities.

Dr. Purnell noted that the U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, has begun to encourage national standards and is offering cash incentives for states that become involved. In November 2009, the Delegate Assembly of the New Jersey School Boards Association approved the notion of "national standards," but has yet agreed to proceed with any actions. More information on the Common Core State Standards Initiative may be found at <http://www.corestandards.org> and by following Dr. Purnell's blog (<http://drpurnell.blogspot.com>). The Board of Education discussed and agreed that there was opportunity to explore in more detail where Harding Township and Madison School districts could be advantaged by creating greater alignment specifically with schedules and curriculum review cycles as well as with academic and financial priorities.

Harding Township resident, John Flynn, spoke to the Board about recent Township Committee meetings he had attended and his concern for what he believes is lack of accurate information and misrepresentation of the Harding School budget that was being discussed. He encouraged someone with more factual data to attend these meetings and speak on behalf of the school district. Evelyn Douglas, Board President thanked Mr. Flynn for voicing his concerns and support stating that the Township Committee meetings would not be the appropriate venue for having those discussions.

Dr. Purnell then added that there had been erroneous reporting regarding the district budget and its affect on the town's overall financial position. He encouraged any interested parties with questions to contact either himself or any member of the Board (a reminder: BOE meetings are open to all public). Jim Novotny, Board member, then recommended that a joint committee be formed between the town and school district to identify opportunities for greater collaboration to address issues and common goals.

(The following letter was provided to Thumbnail by Timothy Purnell, Superintendent, Harding Township School)

Dear Harding Township Citizens,

It has come to our attention that there has been some confusion in the past few weeks regarding the aggregate amount of recent Harding Township School budgets. While we have been able to answer the questions posed to us directly, we thought a general letter might be helpful to provide information to others who have not been able to reach out to any of us specifically.

Of each tax dollar raised in the Township, approximately 44.3% of it is devoted to the School District with the remaining amounts being split between such areas as local, county, county open space and municipal open space. The School District's Tax Levy itself is composed of two primary elements: the first portion is devoted to debt service on outstanding indebtedness of the District and a second portion, called the general fund, is the source of funding for the operations (including general education programs, special education costs, Madison High School tuition, transportation, utilities, salaries, benefits, etc.) of the School District on a yearly basis. Debt Service is paid on indebtedness approved by the taxpayers in 1999 and originally issued by the District to fund the extensive renovations to the school. The general fund, or operating budget of the school, was \$7,647,729 for the school year of 2007-2008, \$8,031,810 for 2008-09 and \$8,381,595.50 for the 2009-2010 school year. This represents an increase of 5 percent and 4 percent respectively. The state only provides approximately 4% in state aid annually to offset the tax burden.

The Harding Township Board of Education is committed to fiscal prudence and is continuously looking at ways to manage school spending and limit any necessary funding increases. The District has established shared services relationships to mitigate costs and has identified areas to generate incremental revenue. Our budget process is

concentrated in January, February and March of each year when we put in place a proposed budget for the following school year, but our spending controls and vigilance continue throughout the school year. In fact, in October 2009, the District announced that its spending controls during the 2008-2009 school year resulted in an excess surplus of \$146,066.51, which will offset the School's tax levy for next year and all future years. It is important to note that savings realized by the School District do not serve to increase funds available for other township departments and programs but are returned directly to taxpayers in an offset to next year's school tax levy.

As noted, we are about to enter into the budget process for the 2010-2011 school year and welcome public participation at our meetings or through other community groups such as the PTO and the Vision Council. Our scheduled meeting dates for the first three months of 2010 are set forth below. In addition to providing feedback at meetings, please feel free to utilize Dr. Purnell's blog at <http://www.drpurnell.blogspot.com>. This would be an appropriate venue to discuss such matters and allows our superintendent to hear your concerns.

Thank you,

Evelyn Douglas, President, Harding Township Board of Education

(Harding Township Board of Education Meeting Schedule: January 25; February 8; February 22; March 8 and March 22, 2010.)

HARDING ALLIANCE AGAINST SUBSTANCE ABUSE key changes in NJ Motor Vehicle Laws will be effective May 1, 2010:

1. Curfew for young drivers will start one hour earlier at 11pm (last to 5am)
2. The new driver's "Provisional license" will be renamed a "probationary license".
3. Language in the motor vehicle laws regarding cell phone usage has been clarified to include a restriction on any hand held device (i.e. texting)
4. Fine for violating the night time driving or interactive wireless device restrictions is \$100.00 plus costs and fees, but no points for these offenses.

The mission of Harding Alliance is to provide education and resources to promote healthy decision-making and to avoid substance abuse and risky behaviors. More information, including our meeting schedule, can be found at <http://hardingalliance.hardingnj.org>. you have any questions or comments, please contact Judy Malloy, Chairperson, at judymotown@comcast.net.

HARDING OPEN SPACE TRUST (HOST). December 9, 2009

Mr. Murray appointed Land Trust representative to HOST. He reported LT Annual Appeal letters have been mailed. The Land Trust has started a clean-up/ removal of brush on the Land Trust property along Dickson Mill Rd. Correspondence with landowner for easement violation has been settled along far edge of Margetts Field. HOST has been asked to use its funds to help maintain open space property. While there is a cap of 10% for historic preservation, the rest of the funds can be used to maintain as well as acquire property. This measure is due to the current budget problems of the Township. There has been a major land preservation accomplishment in Chatham Twp, adjacent to the Harding border. About 100 acres of the Platt family farm will be sold to Morris County Park Commission.

Planning Board, no report.

Civic Association News and Announcements

Civic Association: The **DEADLINES FOR THE next 2 issues OF THE THUMBNAIL are February 5 and March 5**, 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 every other **Saturday: 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