

Harding Township Civic Association

THUMBNAIL ACCOUNTS OF CIVIC AFFAIRS

FEBRUARY 2012

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

FROM THE HARDING TOWNSHIP CIVIC ASSOCIATION:

At the public meeting held Feb 7, the following new Trustees were elected: Lotte Newlin and Jan Rizzo; and the following Trustees were re-elected: Barbara Brennan, Betty Cutler, and Jake Hays. Mayor Bartlett spoke to the public regarding the issues facing the township in the coming year. Please see the reports regarding the meetings under Township News heading, below, including a special section on the Police Contract.

NEW VERNON VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT:

The Auxiliary is trying something **NEW** for 2012:

What: **"CHILI/SOUP COOK-OFF"**

Where: Fire House, Village Road

When: **Sunday, March 18th** Time: 5:00PM - 6:00PM

For \$7.00 you can sample many different chilis and soups with fresh baked bread and coffee included. Homemade desserts and soda will be available for sale. Vote for your favorites! Prizes will be awarded. **If you would like to enter a chili or soup in the contest, admission is free.** Please call Connie Cherrillo (973-539-9383) or Pat O'Reilly (201-919-2183) to let us know you will be entering a pot of chili or soup.

HARDING TOWNSHIP BRIDAL PATH ASSOCIATION

From Kathleen Young: It's already well into February and we have been very lucky not to have such cold weather and averaging 40 degrees when it should be 23 degrees! Unfortunately it has been so wet with the relentless rain. Trying to clean up our trail system has been very challenging, to say the least! After the horrendous Hurricane Irene we had started to make some progress.....then that shocker of a snowstorm in October really set us back. I think I can say that, as of now, most of the trails (on the easterly portion of Glen Alpine Road) are now passable. They might not look so pretty, and we still have tons of work to do, but at least a horse and rider can get through safely. There are still areas up in Koven's Woods that will need some professional attention. We still have so much more to do, not only with keeping the trail system open, clear and safe, but with perfecting easements in and around the subdivisions that are happening around town. Please report any blockage or unsafe areas to me and I will address them as soon as I am able. You can always reach me on my cell phone **(973) 464-8738**, which is the best way to get me. My email address is klnyoung@hotmail.com if you want to reach me by email.

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NEW VERNON VOLUNTEER FIRST AID SQUAD (NVVFAS):

The following letter was sent to Thumbnail from Heston Allocco, President, NVVFAS

The Observer-Tribune published an article, "First Aid System On The Line" on January 12, 2012 with an accompanying Editorial that, in the view of the NVVFAS, gave the impression that many first aid squads were not properly trained and that state regulation and licensing should be required. The First Aid Squad would like to respond to all Harding residents especially those who read that article.

We can assure all residents of Harding Township that our response to medical 911 calls will be made in a timely fashion, with well-trained, capable volunteers, instilled with a strong sense of professionalism, sensitivity and respect.

All EMTs in NJ are trained to exacting standards set forth by State law and are certified by the NJ Office of Emergency Management Services (NJOEMS). Candidates for Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), whether paid or volunteer, must successfully complete a State prescribed course of studies and must meet State mandated background requirements. To maintain certification, EMTs must meet additional State mandated continuing education requirements that refresh skill levels and keep current with medical developments. In addition, the NVVFAS belongs to the New Jersey State First Aid Council (NJSFAC), a private organization of volunteer emergency service providers dedicated to excellence in patient care. Please call 911 with confidence whenever you need emergency medical attention knowing that trained EMT's will respond.

HARDING TOWNSHIP HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Dog Licenses:

If you reside in Harding Township and own a dog, age 7 months and older, that dog or dogs must be licensed every year by January 31, 2012. Harding Township gives their residents till **February 29, 2012**. After February 29th, a late fee of \$10 per dog will be charged. By State law, in order for a license to be issued, the dog's rabies immunity must be good through October 31, 2012. If your dog's rabies expires before October 31st, they will require a booster immunization before licensing. Questions, call 973/267-8000, ext.1968.

Health Screenings:

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The Health Department is having a free Female Cancer Screening on Thursday, March 29, 2012, from 9am to 11am at the Municipal Building. The screening includes an exam by a doctor, PAP test, blood pressure, and educational materials. An appointment is necessary.

Male Cancer Screening will be held sometime in April. Date to be announced. Please check the **Health Hot Line: 973/267-8000 ext 1962.**

A free Adult Health Fasting Blood-work clinic will be held on Thursday, April 19, 2012, from 8am to 11am at the Municipal Building. An appointment is necessary. The above clinics are for residents 18 years of age and older. To schedule an appointment for the above clinics, please call 973-267-8000, ext.1968.

Harding Township School's Husky Pups

The Harding Township School is accepting registrations for the "Husky Pups" pre-school program for the 2012 – 2013 school year. The program is open to children who are three or four years old. Instruction is differentiated between the three and four year old children within the classroom to cater to their development. The "Husky Pups" pre-schoolers will attend the program five days a week, for two hours and forty-five minutes each day. There are two sessions, with the morning program running from 8:25 – 11:15, and the afternoon program running from 12:10 – 3:00. Tuition is \$3,650 to be paid in monthly installments.

The program is taught by a certified teacher with a primary school endorsement. Teaching assistants also provide support for the class. The program offers a multi-sensory, interdisciplinary curriculum that reaches all students. In the past the "Husky Pups" have enjoyed exciting experiences throughout the year, including a visit from the New Vernon Volunteer Fire Department, a field trip to the Crewe Hill Horse Stables, hatching chicks in the classroom, and cooking lessons!

For applications or information regarding the program, please call the Student Services Office at (973) 267 – 6398 ext. 112. If you would like to schedule a visit to the classroom, please send e-mails to jlorenzo@hardingtwp.org or call (973) 267 – 6398 ext. 134. A birth certificate is required as part of the application process and a \$50 deposit must accompany the completed application.

NEW VERNON PRESBYTERIAN NURSERY SCHOOL (NVPNS) is now accepting enrollment for our 2½, 3 and 4 year old classes for the 2012-2013 school year. We are a non-denominational, educational program that offers a warm and nurturing environment that helps your child prepare for kindergarten. All of our classes start at 9:00 am for duration of 2 ½, 3½ or 4 hours

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respectively. We support our busy parents with optional early morning drop-off, Stay 'n Play until 3pm, summer camp and enrichment programs. Most importantly, our kids and parents have fun! Established in 1988, we are located in the Fellowship Building of the New Vernon Presbyterian Church at the crossroads of Village Road and Lee's Hill Road. Please call our Director, Laurie Ptalis at 973-326-9839 for a tour and visit our website at www.nvpns.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

From Alex Anemone, HARDING TOWNSHIP SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

The students have already started their Marking Period III classes and our administrative team is working on the proposed 2012-13 Harding Township School budget. We will be receiving our State Aid figures on February 21 and will be presenting the budget at a Board of Education meeting in March. As always, the public is invited to attend.

Our students are busy preparing for their annual tradition – the HTS Spring Musical. This year our featured show is *Seussical, Jr.* We will be hosting three shows: **Friday, March 16th at 7:30p.m.**; **Saturday, March 17th at 7:30p.m.** and **Sunday, March 18th at 2p.m.** Tickets are available in advance or at the door for \$9.00. For more information, please call us at HTS 973-267-6398 x165. Please hurry, this event usually sells out.

In addition, our staff and students will be hosting our second annual Technology Showcase on **March 28th at 7p.m.** in the Middle School gymnasium. Come for the *Intro to Twitter* and stay for the *Student-Directed Movie Trailers!* STEM projects will also be on display in our Middle School Science Lab.

KEMMERER LIBRARY

New On Shelves: Visit www.hardinglibrary.org for a list of the latest books and audiobooks on our shelves, including bestselling fiction, nonfiction and popular periodicals funded by our Giving Tree patrons. Come and sit by the fire in the Adult Reading Room and enjoy Consumer Reports, The Economist, and Time, which are now part of our reference collection.

Harding Seniors will host **Gary Kraidman on Feb. 23rd at 10:30am** in the Library to learn more about Warren G. Harding, the 29th President for whom our town was named. Mr. Kraidman will discuss his collection of Harding memorabilia, which will be on display at the Library through March. All are welcome to attend.

Evening Book Group. Wednesday, February 29 at 7:30 p.m. Join our evening book group for spirited discussions and shared insights. February's book selection is **The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie** by Alan Bradley. Set on a rambling English manor house in the 1950s, this delightful mystery provides a glimpse into post-war Britain and introduces the inimitable Flavia De Luce, budding chemist and detective. All are welcome.

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Conversation with a College Counselor. Thursday, March 29th at 7:00 pm: Did you know that college preparation begins as early as grades 7 and 8? In fact, the academic or extra-curricular choices made in middle school have an impact on a student's college opportunities. Join Harding resident **Betsy Sullivan** for an evening of insights on charting your child's path through high school. Betsy has extensive experience in the college process as a Guidance Counselor with Mountain Lakes High School and as a College Admissions officer. We hope you will join us for an enlightening and lively discussion. RSVP by email to desk@hardinglibrary.org, or at 973-267-2665.

Garden Seed Exchange at the Library: At the end of the sowing season many home gardeners find themselves saddled with lots of vegetable or flower seeds they cannot use. The solution is at the Library! Optimize your garden diversity by bringing in your unused seeds and exchanging them for ones that other home gardeners could not use. Drop in any time after Monday, February 13. New seeds only, please.

Winter 2012 Children's Programs will run until the last week in March. **Baby Play Group: Thursdays, 10:30am.** Moms and babies, 4 months-12 months of age, meet to play/chat and sing songs. Toddler Time: **Tuesdays, 10:30am and Thursdays, 1pm** for children ages 1-4. Listen to stories, sing songs and make a theme-related craft.

For children in grades K-3: **Pajama Story Time: Mar 16, 6pm. Pizza & Game Night: Feb. 23, 6-7pm. Book Buddies: Feb 11 and Mar 24, 10 am:** Read your favorite book to a friendly dog. **Valentine's Day Party: Feb 11, 12 noon. Fancy Nancy Party (rescheduled): Mar 24, 12 noon.**

Hold the Date: Friday, May 18, 2012 for a festive Cocktail Celebration honoring Michael Fitzpatrick, Ginny Moriarty and Kim Zsitvay for their outstanding efforts on behalf of the Kemmererer Library. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

HARDING ALLIANCE AGAINST SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Our mission is to provide education and resources to promote healthy decision-making and to avoid substance abuse and risky behaviors. Harding Alliance members are concerned citizens, police, health and school professionals. Please come and let your voice be heard. Our next meeting is scheduled for **April 25, 2012 at 8:30 AM** in the Guidance Office of Harding Township School.

Effective January 1, 2012, Harding Alliance will no longer accept state grant funding, and will rely on the generosity of local residents and private foundations. Please help us pursue our mission by identifying foundations to reach out to. We have also identified **two volunteer leadership positions** to fill. These are opportunities for leadership development through skill building and networking, while helping the community. **Vice Chairperson:** To represent township

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parents in identifying community needs for substance abuse awareness, and coordination of programming at HTS, and throughout Harding Township. Consensus building skills are helpful for working with various groups in town, including Township Administration, Public Safety, Kemmerer Library, Harding Seniors, and Harding Township School. **Development Officer:** To help Harding Alliance retain its independence, and to assist in its mission of substance abuse awareness, through identifying and developing fundraising opportunities in town.

Please contact Judy Malloy, Chairperson, at Judymotown@gmail.com if you have any questions. Mayor Bartlett, Chief Gaffney, Garry Annibal HT Health Department and Dr. Petersen (Principal, HTS) can also be contacted for further information on these vital volunteer positions. Please register for updates to our [website](https://sites.google.com/site/hardingalliance/) at <https://sites.google.com/site/hardingalliance/> and our blog at <http://hardingalliance.blogspot.com/>.

TOWNSHIP NEWS:

Report on Township Committee Re-Organization Meeting (1/13/12)

Annually, at the first meeting of the year, the TC holds its re-organization meeting where in the mayor is chosen by the TC and all committees, commission and boards are appointed (or re-appointed). As well the positions of liaison from the TC to the various groups are assigned. The details of the appointments are in another report.

Marshal Bartlett was appointed Mayor again for 2012. In a short speech he commended the employees of the Township for their service last year including through the two storms. He also highlighted the work of the many volunteers that provide so much service to Harding. He mentioned 3 projects specifically: (1) Joint Court with Madison; Citizens Park Advisory Committee; and switching animal control contract to Morristown from St Hubert's due to sharply higher fees.

The mayor mentioned several challenges facing Harding in 2012:

1. Negotiation of a contract with the Police union. Police represent over half of the township budget (not including school). Rather than negotiate directly, the TC will hire a professional to represent them. At the Meet the Mayor meeting on Feb 7, Bartlett stated that the police contract is up at the end of the year, and the Township Committee has not yet even started to address it. *See the separate report, below on the Police Contract.*
2. Budget – “won’t be fun” due to reduced revenues from tax appeals. TC is considering a new town wide reassessment.
3. Environmental Commission. All of the hundreds of easements have all been cataloged and now a program to monitor compliance needs to be initiated.
4. Primrose Farm – Phase 1 purchase will be executed in 2012 preserving over 100 acres.

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5. Emergency Preparedness Commission – new task force will design a disaster plan. Communication of status of utility service is critical.
6. Board of Adjustment will complete the work on the cell tower approval and the Planning Board will work on the Fawn Hill (Spring Valley Rd) subdivision; the Hurstmont subdivision (on Rt 202 north of Tempe Wick Rd) will be a big topic
7. Glen Alpin – remains unresolved but the TC is trying to “extricate the township gracefully”.
8. Huff Lawsuits against the Township and TC members personally continue to cost the Township significant funds.

Three other TC members in attendance (Lanzerotti, Platt and Ward) made comments as well. Platt and Ward praised the work of the Finance Committee (Lanzerotti and Egea) as “remarkable” and “brilliant”. Ward said that the atmosphere in the TC is congenial but open to a free exchange of ideas. Breaking the stereotype of the scientist, Lanzerotti turned poet and read a ditty that he composed the text of which perhaps can be published at a later date.

The annual re-organization meeting includes a usually perfunctory appointment of township professionals – attorneys, engineer, etc.

However, this year, there was drama around the re-appointment of the Apgar Associates’s Paul Fox as engineer. The Observer Tribune had just published a report that William Huff, of Tempe Wick Road, had written a letter to the TC objecting to the re-hiring of Mr Fox.

The substance of the letter follows: (from the Observer article January 13, 2012:

“In the letter to the Township Committee, Huff contends that other township residents as well have been ‘subjected to the needless delays and unwarranted engineering expenses created by Paul Fox’s misconduct. ‘We are confident that there are many more victims of Paul Fox’s abuse of his engineering position who are afraid to come forward for fear of reprisal. We also have no doubt that Paul Fox and his engineering firm Apgar Associates have reaped huge and unwarranted financial benefits from Harding Township’s taxpayers, and we have requested information about those benefits from the township,’ Huff wrote.

“We believe these facts alone would compel any reasonable and impartial governing body to seek an alternative to the rehiring of Paul Fox. Given the plethora of potential qualified candidates for this position, we further believe that the Committee’s failure to do so is a breach of its duties to the township and to Harding’s residents. We also believe that Harding’s re hiring of Paul Fox without competitive bidding is a misuse of the state law exception that permits this, allowing the Fox family through cronyism to maintain their lucrative hold over Harding Township’s engineering department,” Huff wrote.

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“There simply is no justification for not interviewing and hiring from among many other worthy candidates that are available. This case arises out of unrelenting official oppression and abuse of power exerted to advance purely private interests at the expense of plaintiff and other taxpayers of the Township of Harding.”

Despite the protest, Apgar Associates was ultimately re-appointed.

Justine Kovacs was recognized for nearly 30 years of service to town and bringing her “integrity” and energy to bear in capacities such as Shade Tree Commission (which she founded), Harding Open Space Trust (also founded), Environmental Committee, Citizen Parks Advisory Committee, New Vernon Garden Club.

TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING – JANUARY 26, 2012

With all TC members in attendance, the main topic of the meeting was the continuing discussion of the township budget.

At the December meeting the preliminary projections showed a \$277K deficit. Though expenses in aggregate are actually forecast to drop a hair, revenues are dropping more. Expenses are preliminarily expected to be down by \$12K (we said it was a “hair”) due largely to the Governor’s Pension reform (will save HT \$147K) and combining our court with Madison’s (will save \$72K). This takes total expenses to just under \$8.8mm. However revenues are expected to drop \$289K due to reductions in various fees, reduced traffic tickets and lower interest income. As well, downward property reassessments and subdued building activity, have combined to reduce the ratable base by \$6mm. This is a small fraction of the total assessed value, but it’s the first reduction in recent memory. As one TC member said recently, “The recession has finally caught up with Harding.”

By law a municipality cannot operate in a deficit (unlike the Federal government) so Harding has to increase taxes and/or cut expenses to get in balance. A 5% tax increase would close the \$277K deficit without cutting expenses. From the presentation, it appears that a 5% tax increase is not under consideration, nor is a tax increase less than 2%. Three combinations of taxes increases (2%, 3% and 4%) and their corresponding expense cuts from (\$168K, \$114K and \$60K) are on the table.

A slate of somewhat technical items (Option A) were presented that would close the gap by \$168K fully enough to allow for just a 2% property tax increase. We admit to not understanding these items but we were assured that they were not imprudent changes to budget estimations.

Most of the rest of the presentation was a review of the impact of pro-rata cost cutting on each of the departments (Option B) – Administration, tax collection, Tax Assessment, Finance,

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Planning Board, Zoning Board and Board of Adjustment, Health, Police, Public Works, Construction – at the 3 targeted levels of tax increase (2, 3 and 4%).

For instance, Administration has an estimated \$454K budget in 2012 (\$307K salaries & benefits and \$148K of other). Its share of the cost cutting would be \$5,310 at a 4% tax increase, \$10,089 at a 3% tax increase and \$14,868 at a 2% tax increase. To save the \$5310 (4% increase) would require the department to replace a fulltime employee (receptionist/deputy clerk) with two part timers. This could cause coverage gaps. To save the \$10,089 (3% tax increase) would require the personnel restructuring PLUS a reduction in outside professional services , and an overall reduction in G&A. These further reductions could eliminate the ability to special projects and not be realistic given increase in postage. The \$14,868 savings would have to come from all the above and a reduction in legal, advertising, code updating, and education of workforce.

Several of these departments have no or one fulltime employees, so it is very difficult to find cost savings as it would be in a large organization by reductions in force or outsourcing. So much of the savings are targeted to come from lesser hours (which decreases service levels) and reduction in outside legal work.

For readers interested in the details of the possible cost cutting and the trade-offs and consequences, we encourage you to check out the Township's website for the slides that accompanied this presentation by the TC's Finance Committee.

The highlight of the public comment session was a prepared comment from Walt Morris who expressed dismay at what he viewed a "demonizing the police" and putting more emphasis on low taxes over a strong police force. Mr Morris has a family member (Sgt Tom Downs, son-in-law) on the Harding Police force. Other comments called for an audit of the information technology budget, looking at more shared services and examining the overlap of Medicare with certain services provided by Harding Health.

Regina Egea Resigns. Township Committee person, Regina Egea surprised most of those in attendance by announcing her resignation from the TC. Apparently Governor Christie just offered her a big job in Trenton and she determined that she couldn't handle work and family and Harding TC. She said it was an honor to serve and the other TC members had very complementary things to say about her tenure. The process to fill the seat is well established. The political party committee persons (in this case Republican) choose three potential replacements and propose them to the remaining TC members. The TC members then pick the replacement.

THE POLICE CONTRACT

Although the police contract is up at the end of the year, and negotiations have not yet

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started, there are a lot of rumors and e-mails circulating around town on this subject. Thumbnail and the Civic Association does not favor any side of this issue, but are committed to getting the facts out, as best we can.

The Observer-Tribune published an article on the January 26 Twp Committee meeting, reproduced below:

“Misinformation on shared police service stirs concerns in Harding Township, by Mike Condon.

“Responding to comments made by one member of the Township Committee, and perhaps launching a pre-emptive strike before discussions even begin, one township resident, the father-in-law of a local police officer, has made his message clear: Don’t touch the police department. Township officials say, however, that what is being disseminated throughout the community is nothing more than misinformation and say nothing has even been discussed yet, let alone, decided.

“Sharing services, whether it be municipal courts or police patrols, is something the governor has urged all municipalities to do to keep ever-rising property taxes under control.

Red Gate Road resident Walter Morris, the father-in-law of Harding Police Sgt. Thomas Downs, read his statement at the Township Committee’s Thursday, Jan. 26 meeting.

“Already well into preparing the municipal budget for this year, committee members Thursday night took a preliminary look at each department, and how much each would have to cut to pass onto residents tax increase of two percent, three percent and four percent.

“In a previous interview, Committeeman Nicolas Platt said that the police department is the biggest single chunk of the municipal budget, and said that the committee will have to explore, potentially, a merged police department or cross-border patrols.

“In Thursday night’s presentation, Township Administrator Gail McKane presented figures showing that of the township’s approximate \$8 million annual budget, \$2.5 million is allocated to the police department, mostly for salaries and benefits. Morris said, however, that cutting the police department staffing should not be the answer to closing budgetary gaps.

Morris said the “continued pattern of demonizing and attacking the police department” is disturbing. “Starting in 2009, two patrolmen replacement positions were dropped from the budget, after an outcry from the public to retain them, even though a final decision was made that night and voted on to at least hire one,” he said.

“The committee justified this action to maintain a zero growth in the (municipal) tax rate. At the time, I argued that the township was digging a hole, as four percent was permitted and the new governor was proposing a two percent cap the following year,” Morris said.

“I questioned how that revenue was going to be made up in future years, when police hiring and support was needed? I don’t believe I ever got an answer. Obviously, at that time, leading the

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state with one of the lowest tax rates was more important than a strong and well trained police force," he said. "In 2010, an orchestrated attack on the police was made with the help of the press, charging that our police force was making excessive stops and writing too many tickets. They were basically told by committee members to reduce these numbers," Morris said.

"I believe this caused the prosecutor's office to investigate Harding. Although not a lawyer, it would seem to be that when committee members try to regulate the number of tickets written by its police force, it borders on the illegal," he said.

"I hope it isn't true, but the perception to me and many others is that there has been a conspiracy or at least a plan to demonize and attack the township's police force with an effort to do away with it, as we know it today," he said.

"Whether you appreciate and value our police or not, they deserve our respect, as every time they answer a call for the citizens of Harding, they are potentially putting their lives on the line," Morris said.

"They also have families, and have the same concerns about their jobs and futures as we do. They don't need to be cast as the bad guys by committee members in and out of the press, but they should be treated with the respect they deserve," he said.

"I am not against studying police options and department costs, but this must be done in an open and non-adversarial manner," he said.

"It is important that the department has proper representation and input in any study, as they are the experts on law enforcement, not this committee," he said.

"If decisions are being made strictly on budget and tax considerations, that is wrong and dangerous," he said.

He said that if the committee decides to reduce police protection in favor of lower taxes, the matter should be put to public referendum.

"Turning off the few street lights we have in town may not hurt our safety and quality of life, but reckless cutting of our police force budget and personnel has, and will," he said.

Response

Committee members did not respond to Morris' comments Thursday night but township officials have repeatedly said the prosecutor's investigation of the police department, which is still ongoing, had nothing to do with the increase in ticket writing.

Deputy Mayor Nicolas Platt issued a statement following the meeting, however, responding to misinformation that had been disseminated throughout the township in various e-mails after the meeting.

"I think this is a very healthy discussion and long overdue. However, the police department is just one of the many line items the Township Committee needs to address in the 2012 budget," Platt said.

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"To suggest that anyone on the committee wants to reduce "public safety" or do away with the Harding Police Department is absurd. The governor has specifically asked all municipalities to look into shared services. Our entire focus must be on how can we all work smarter and more efficiently," he said.

"We cannot be distracted by misinformation. The term "shared services" is nothing new. We have mentioned it and openly discussed it public meetings for the last two years.

"Bottom line is this. New Jersey has a \$150 billion in debts and unfunded liabilities. Our revenues are down and our costs keep going up. We are already the highest and the most over taxed state in the country. It is no longer a race to the bottom. We won. There is a near record number of homes on the market in Harding and an estimated 500,000 people have fled the state in the last decade," he said.

"It comes down to arithmetic. Even with the state mandated two percent annual cap, compounded, Harding Township will soon find itself in same hole as other towns. A Government Efficiency Management study released in January showed Morris County taxpayers could save \$50 million a year by regionalizing services. Thirteen of the county's 39 municipalities are now actively involved in follow-up studies of the proposal. This is the new reality and is being debated in every town hall in the state. I will be the first to admit that shared services may or may not make sense in Harding, but some aspects of it may make sense," he said.

"Perhaps we could augment the cost of one of our two patrolmen on night duty with one of our neighboring towns as I understand Chester Township now does for the Borough. Our DPW already shares equipment with other towns and maybe we can offer our expertise as well in other service areas such as health and construction. We owe it to the taxpayer to exhaust all our options. Raising taxes should be the last resort," Platt said.

Several township police officers were present at the meeting, sitting near the front, but did not speak. "

SUMMARY OF HARDING POLICEMAN'S BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION (PBA) CONTRACT

This year is the fourth and final year of Harding Township contract with the union that represents the Harding Police force, PBA Local 340. Given the citizen interest in the topic, your ***Civic Association has summarized the major elements of the current contract.*** The full text of the contract (about 40 pages) can be found at the Civic Association website, www.hardingonline.org

1. The current contract increased the salary at each "step" or "grade" level by 3.75%, 3.75%, 3.95% and 4.1% in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 respectively.

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2. Base Salary. In 2012, depending on their "step"/grade, a patrol officer (hired prior to 12/31/09) would be paid the following amounts:

Probationary.....	\$44,354
Step 1	\$51,068
Step 2	\$59,427
Step 3	\$73,677
Step 4	\$87,928
Step 5	\$94,621
Step 6	\$101,384
Step 7	\$108,090

"Each step represents one year in grade" and officers are "eligible to move up in grade on their anniversary date" provided they've met the requirements of their position.

Officers hired prior to 12/31/08 take one less year to attain the Step 4-7 levels of compensation.

Sergeants are paid a premium to patrol officers. In 2012, a step 1 sergeant will be paid \$112,647, while a step 2 sergeant will be paid \$116,371.

3. Longevity Increment. In addition to salary, officers are paid an increment for "time of service" as follows:

	Patrolmen	Sergeants
0-4 years	0	0
5-8 years	\$775	\$875
9-12 yrs	\$1275	\$1375
13-15 yrs	\$1775	\$1875
16+	\$2275	\$2375

4. Increment to Patrolman Acting In Supervisory Capacity. Each patrolman who acts in a supervisory capacity shall receive the salary of a step one sergeant for those hours worked in that capacity.

5. Vacation. Employees are entitle to vacation depending on calendar years of completed service:

1 st through 4 th year	80 hours (about 2 weeks)
5 th through 9 th year	120 hours (about 3 weeks)
10 th through 14 th year	160 hours (about 4 weeks)
15th through more	200 hours (about 5 weeks)

6. Holidays. Fifteen holidays. Effective Jan 1, 2005, holiday pay was included in base salary.

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7. Sick Leave. Effective 1/1/87 police are entitled to paid sick leave of 144 hours per year to be cumulative to a maximum of 2,400 hours. Upon retirement an officer is eligible to receive 8 hours of pay for every 24 hours of accrued, unused sick leave up to a maximum of 2,400 hours.

8. Funeral Leave. Five paid days off following death of a spouse or child. Three paid days off following death of parent, sibling, mother-in-law or father-in-law. One paid day off following death of brother or sister-in-law, nephew, niece, step-parent, grand parents, aunt or uncle. All of these paid days off are conditioned upon the officer attending the funeral of the deceased.

9. Personal Leave. Two days per year without need to give a reason.

10. Work Schedule. Department uses a "4/4 twelve hour schedule" – meaning that shifts run for 12 hours (7am to 7 pm and 7pm to 7am) and officers work 4 days on and then have 4 days off. Time worked in excess of the schedule is paid at time and a half.

11. Meal and Break Time. No additional compensatory time. One meal break (30 min) and one 10 minute break is permitted during each 6 hour tour of duty.

12. Insurance. Employees hired before 2009, were in a plan called the Traditional Health Plan. Employees hired in 2009 and forward were provided the Blue Card PPO coverage. A \$5,000 incentive was made available to get Traditional Plan participants to switch to the Blue Card PPO. Dental care with orthodontics is provided though there is a \$1000 deductible on the orthodontics. Prescription drug plan has a \$5 and \$7 co-pay for generic and brand name prescriptions respectively.

13. Tuition Reimbursement. Reimbursement is made for course work towards degrees in Police Science, Criminal Justice, Psychology, Sociology, Public Administration, Human Resources or other fields as determined by the Personnel Subcommittee. Reimbursement is a function of grade received: C = 50%; B= 75%, A = 100%.

14. Call Out Time. Any policeman called out on an emergency basis or for other necessary activities during off hours shall be entitled to a minimum of 2 hours paid at 1.5 times his hourly rate.

15. Retirement Benefits. Members are eligible for retirement benefits after 25 years of service credit in the Police and Fire Retirement System (PFRS) including at least 15 with Harding. If one retires prior to age 65, Township continues to pay for all health, prescription drug, dental and life insurance benefits until the member is eligible for Medicare. After age 65, the Township will reimburse the member for Medigap insurance at the rate of \$240/month (2012). If a spouse is not eligible and enrolled in Medicare, he/she shall remain in the Township's plan at no cost to the retiree until he/she is eligible for Medicare. Upon enrollment in Medicare, the retiree (and

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eligible spouse) shall continue to receive: (1) prescription drug coverage as per the Township plan; (2) dental coverage as before; and (3) free insurance benefits even after age 65.

16. Pension. Police are eligible for a pension benefit as per the Police and Fire Retirement System (PFRS). The PFRS is a defined benefit plan – a plan where the pension payments, i.e. the benefits, are fixed and are not subject to capital market risk as in a defined contribution plan. The eligibility rules and payout formulas are somewhat complex but this summary should give the reader a general sense of the plan. In general, three factors go into calculating the pensioner's annual payment – type of membership, number of years in system and their age at retirement. There are three types of membership – designated tiers 1, 2 and 3. A member is in one of the three tiers based on when they enroll in the PFRS. Tier 1 are members enrolled before 5/21/10. Tier 2 members were enrolled between 5/21/10 and 6/28/11. Tier 3 members enrolled after 6/28/11. The membership tier/type determines the member's "Final Compensation" – the figure used to calculate pension payout. Tier 1 members' pensions are based on their compensation (not including overtime) during their last 12 months of service. Tier 2 & 3 members' pensions are based on the average compensation of ANY three fiscal years preceding retirement. Again, overtime is not pensionable.

"Special Retirement" is for members of any age who have accumulated 25 years of service. The Special Retirement pension for Tier 1 & 2 members is 65% of final compensation plus an additional 1% of final compensation for each year of service over 25 years (up to 30 years). Tier 3 members receive 60% of final compensation plus the same 1% for each year over 25. Example: A 50 year-old officer, hired in 1993, retires in 2020 after 27 years of service. This theoretical retiree's (Tier 1) pension will be 67% of his final year compensation. If the officer had been hired in say, December of 2011, making him a Tier 3, then his pension would be 62% of his final year compensation.

The "Service Retirement" category covers officers with long tenure (40 or more years of service) or who are older -- those aged 55 plus including those at mandatory retirement age (65). For a member 55 or older, their pension is 2% of their "final compensation" times their years of service up to 30 years, plus an additional 1% for each year over 30. For a member with 33 years of service this yields an annual pension equal to 63% of their final compensation – 20 times 2% plus 3 times 1%.

Mandatory retirement (age 65), with 20-25 years of service the pension is 50% of final compensation plus 3% of final compensation for each service year over 20 years (up to 25 years). For an officer with 40 years or more of service, their pension is 70% of final compensation, plus an additional 1% for each year of service over 40.

Lastly there is a "Deferred Retirement" category that defines pensions for members with at least 10 years of service but less than the usual 25. The pension is 2% of final compensation

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for each year of service. As an example, an officer who leaves the force with 13 years of service would have earned a pension equal to 26% of their final year compensation.

HARDING SCHOOL BOARD, BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT, PLANNING BOARD , No reports this month

Civic Association News and Announcements

Civic Association: The **DEADLINES FOR THE next 2 issues OF THE THUMBNAIL are March 9 and April 6**. 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. The Civic Association website, www.hardingcivic.org, is updated frequently; we post events sent to our e-mail address: submissions@hardingcivic.org.

TOWNSHIP RECYCLING

The Hours of operation are every Wednesday from 7AM. to noon (7– 9AM self service); and every other **Sat.: 9AM to noon: Feb 18; Mar 3, 17, 31; April 14, 28.**

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); Automotive and light truck tires, (on or off rim) and Propane tanks (BBQ size only)

Computers, monitors, laptops and televisions. cannot be put into household trash. However, they **can** be brought to the Harding Twp DPW recycling center at the regular hours of operation. Tracy Toribio of Harding Twp DPW will answer your recycling questions 973 267 2448, Mon- Fri 8:30 am to 3 pm.

DATES TO REMEMBER, meetings as noted.

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)	7:30 PM
Board of Health (2 nd Thursday)	7:30 PM
Board of Education (1st and 3rd Monday)	7:30 PM
Board of Adjustment (3 rd Thursday)	7:30 PM
Township Committee(2nd Monday)	7:30 PM
Harding Open Space (2 nd Wed)	7:30 PM
Harding Twp Civic Association (3 rd Tues)	7:30 PM
Municipal Court- has merged with Madison NJ Court	

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