Property Tax Reassessments

Under the law, New Jersey municipalities are required to do property tax reassessments every 10 years. Morris Township’s last reassessment was in 2001. If you haven’t already, you should receive a letter in the mail with details on the Assessment. According to Township Police Chief John McGuinness, when the Assessor comes to your house, they will have a photo ID that you should see before allowing them entry in your home. Chief McGuinness was going to try to get the names of the Assessors and pass that information along. The process of reassessment will take many months to complete. Assessors will inspect the exterior of your home and, if you are present and allow, they will also check out the interior. There are a variety of programs including assistance for veterans and seniors. Check out the Township’s website page on this matter at: http://www.morristwp.com/130/Tax-Assessor.
BURNHAM PARK ASSOCIATION

Winter 2015 Newsletter

Morris County Open Spaces Preserved

136 acres of Giralda Farms, part of former Dodge estate

It is wonderful to be able to report that the 136 acre Giralda Farms property (a remnant of the former Geraldine R. Dodge estate) was purchased at the end of December 2014 when Morris County, Chatham Township and the Open Space Institute raised more than $14.1 million to buy this land. This public/private endeavor preserves the largest remaining open space tract in southeast Morris County, saving "an important wildlife corridor and opportunity for passive recreation while helping to protect water quality in the region leading into the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge," said Sally Rubin, executive director of the Great Swamp Watershed Association. As reported in the Dec. 27, 2014 Daily Record, the Open Space Initiative partnered with Normandy Real Estate Partners in the winning bid to preserve the land for public use. Several public and private sources leveraged the funding needed to secure the purchase... with funding support from the NJDEP’s Green Acres Program, Chatham Township, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the F.M. Kirby Foundation, Normandy Real Estate Partners, the Morris County Municipal Utilities Authority, Morris County Park Commission and the Morris County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Special thanks go to the Morris County Open Space Trust Fund Committee and County Freeholders and the Morris County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Special thanks go to the Morris County Open Space Trust Fund Committee and County Freeholders and County Freeholders whose vote to spend the largest amount for one project in its history, namely $10 million of the $14.1 million total needed, showed the vision to recognize this as a “legacy” investment for the future, acknowledging the need for expansion of the County Park’s heavily utilized Loantaka Brook Reservation. Chatham Township and Morris County Park Commission will share ownership of the property which will add 2.3 miles of pedestrian trails adjacent to the 744 acre Loantaka Brook Reservation. More good news: Morris Arts’ annual Giralda Music & Arts Festival in June will continue to be held on this site.

21 acres of the Rosenhaus property on Picatinny Rd./Vallevue Farms

Another bit of good preservation news is that the Morris County Freeholders voted to apply open space trust fund monies to purchase and preserve 21 acres — a portion of the Rosenhaus property known as Vallevue Farms — Picatinny Rd. for $800,000, thus saving some additional land in Washington Valley area.

Other Morris County open space purchases included 6.5 acres of Hillcrest Woods in Boonton Township, 83.50 acres of Beasley Ridge in Jefferson Township, 2.1 acres of Ogden Parcel Open Space Acquisition in Rockaway, 10.58 acres of Blue Mill-Pine Brook Preserve in Harding and 5 acres of the Morris Canal Greenway-Shippenport (owned by the Canal Society of NJ — for a total of 264.834 acres preserved for $12,130,000. More details and maps of these properties can be found at: http://morrisplanning.org/divisions/PresTrust/OpenSpace/Map%20of%20Approved%202014%20Projects.pdf

GREEN STRIP (East and West Lake Blvds.) TRAILS PLAN

Morris Township’s Recreation Director Bill Foelsch met with BPA to discuss plans to construct a walking trail in the Green Strip between East and West Lake Blvd. Unfortunately the first trail cut was far wider than represented to BPA. We have been reassured by Director Foelsch that the overly wide trail will be narrowed, with vegetation restored and that future trail construction will conform to the more modest, footpath dimensions originally described. Stay tuned...and keep your eyes on Green Strip in the Spring.
Neighborhood Watch Comes to Burnham

Thanks to the efforts of Michelle Esposito, Allison Arakelia, and Kristin Gallucci, Neighborhood Watch is now in place. Anyone else interested in implementing a Watch program on their street should contact Police Chief John K. McGuinness directly at jmguinness@mtpd1422.com or call (973)326-7471. Part of the process is education in learning how to improve your own home security, how to “target harden” your valuables, learn what “unusual activity” is and how to report it to Police, become informed “eyes and ears” of the Police Department and receive crime alerts including information you may not read in the newspapers. Citizens work with the Police to prevent crimes and together improve the quality of life.

Some suggestions we can all apply:
1. Always lock your home and vehicle when you are not in them
2. Place your valuables in unusual places so that robbers cannot find them easily or quickly
3. Keep the lights on at night around entrance doors, etc. (would a thief prefer to break into a well-lit or a dark house?)
4. Trim shrubs and plantings close to house so that thieves cannot hide their break in efforts
5. Lock the door from your garage into the house

If you see unusual activities – unfamiliar people lingering, strange cars cruising slowly through the neighborhood, anyone acting out of the norm, it is better to call the police than to remain silent. Sometimes your observation might be the key clue to preventing a crime. The police would rather receive more calls from alert neighbors than find out, after the fact, that someone saw something important but was too reticent to call. Your call can be anonymous if you wish – you do not have to give your name or address when you call even when asked.

ICE CAN BE NICE:
Skating in Burnham?

Douglas Vorolieff has volunteered to check into this possibility. In years past, the pond closest to Rt. 124 periodically had thick enough ice to safely permit ice skating. It is a fond memory of long time residents to have skated on the pond and warmed hands at the fireplace! We are hopeful that, if there is a sustained cold spell and conditions are safe, the Town will post a green flag at the park to signal skating is allowed.

Verizon’s Plan for Small Network Node in Burnham Park

Verizon has submitted plans to the Town of Morristown to place a “small network node” in Burnham Park, with antenna atop the restroom/concession stand building – at a total height of 28’ (8’ above the 20’ height of the center roof) near the Little League field area. This would also be accompanied by equipment cabinets (housing transfer switch, generator, etc.) in an 8’x8’ fenced compound to the left of the doorway area of the building. Below is a sketch of the elevation looking east. We will keep you posted once plans become more definite.

DID YOU KNOW TOWNSHIP ORDINANCE PROHIBITS WILDLIFE FEEDING?

As innocent and appealing as it might seem to feed wildlife like deer, please note that Morris Township’s Ordinance 14-04 prohibits feeding wild animals and waterfowl. Because of the threat of rabies, the threat to the health and safety of all Township residents, please refrain from doing so. Far from being harmless, feeding wildlife is very disruptive to natural feeding habits of wildlife and harms them by altering their diet and behavior in multiple ways. It attracts predators (such as bear, coyotes, etc.) and encourages wildlife to concentrate at artificial feeding areas, making them more susceptible to disease transmission. Even deer are not “harmless” or tame animals. They have razor sharp hooves and antlers and can injure or even kill humans. Animals used to being fed alter their own natural foraging (and diet) and cause dangerous car collisions, altercations with pets and potentially spread diseases to household pets.

While feeding of waterfowl is also prohibited for similar reasons as above, feeding of songbirds and backyard birds is permitted as long as such feeding does not create an accumulation of droppings, become an attractant for rodents or other wild animals and bird feeders are placed at least five (5) feet above the ground.

BIG FINES: Penalties involve a fine of between $50-$500 for each offense, together with the cost of prosecution. (A separate offense shall be deemed committed on each day or part of each day during which a violation occurs or continues – so fines can build up quickly).

Please take this information to heart and help wildlife by respecting the wildness of these creatures - and respecting the law enacted to protect them.
A plan to add a Dunkin’ Donuts ‘satellite’ shop to the Gulf station on the corner of Mills and Washington has been submitted to the Morristown Board of Adjustment. About 20 variances are needed for the project to proceed including one that would allow fast food in an area not zoned for such use. There are also lot setback and parking variances needed. The proposed plan would bring the drive-through area within 10’ of the adjacent home and would be open from 5am-11pm. The applicant’s civil engineer provided testimony at the public hearing on January 21st and additional meetings – with expert testimony by the applicant’s planner and traffic expert – will follow. Former Town Mayor Jay Delaney is representing the applicant.

The next public hearing takes place on March 4th at 7:30 pm at Morristown Town Hall, 200 South St. (parking in rear off Franklin). Check out Kevin Coughlin’s excellent reporting –at http://morristowngreen.com/2015/01/22/too-close-for-comfort-morristown-residents-question-proposed-drive-through-dunkin-donuts/... Stay tuned for an update on the results.

HONEYWELL UPDATE:

According to NJ.COM, in late August 2014, the Morris Township Committee approved a general development plan for the Honeywell tract, bringing 235 townhomes and 900,000 sq. ft. of office space to the 147 acre site. That approval allows the Rockefeller Group Development Corp. to next present a site plan and gives Rockefeller 12 years to finish the project (though Rockefeller could seek an extension if it needs more time). As previously reported by NJ.com, Honeywell is slated to sell the site to Rockefeller Group and K. Hovnanian Homes, which together plan to redevelop the property.

Still Thriving After All These Years: Moms and Tots

Jen Carcich continues to amaze us all with her energy and commitment to community. The Moms and Tots group she founded is still going strong, with 400 or so members and activities ranging from the book club, toy swaps, cookie swaps, Mom’s night out, Dad’s night out, pizza tastings and even a recent excursion into marketing Mom’s crafts at the newly opened Just Jersey Store (on South St. near Elm in Morristown). Check out https://www.bigtent.com/groups/motownmomtot to find out details of upcoming events and to participate.
Pipeline Population Explosion!

Encouraging news re. the proposed Pilgrim Pipeline:

As of December 19, 2014, the State Legislature has mounted an effort in support of multiple municipalities to stop the Pilgrim Pipeline. As the NJ Conservation Foundation reports, this is proposed to run from Albany, NY to Linden, NJ passing through drinking water supply watersheds and numerous preserved lands in Bergen, Passaic, Morris, Essex and Union counties. This pipeline would carry North Dakotan Bakken Shale oil, considered one of the most combustible types of oil in the world. For more details, check: http://www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2014/12/assembly_opposes_pilgrim_pipeline.html.

Efforts are also mounting to promote the PENNEAST PIPELINE which would route a natural gas pipeline through Hunterdon and Mercer Counties, carrying fracked gas from PA 108 miles from Wilkes Barre, PA to a point north of Trenton. Local groups are mobilizing in opposition.

PINELANDS PIPELINE: Sadly, Governor Christie (who was unhappy that this was previously defeated by one vote on the Pinelands Commission) has appointed two new members to the Pinelands Commission who are much more sympathetic to his promotion of a pipeline through the Pinelands. Jeff Tittel of the Sierra Club remarked that the Pinelands Pipeline, if approved, would defeat/dismember 40 years of successful preservation/protection efforts for this treasured preserve.

Paradoxically, the open spaces New Jersey residents treasure and have fought so hard to preserve have become easy targets of pipeline promotion. It is clearly more difficult for pipeline promoters to argue in favor of pipeline construction through heavily populated areas. However, these open spaces were preserved for the people – to maintain vital natural resources such as drinking water supplies, farmlands, critical habitats, etc. – NOT for pipelines which could bring catastrophic spills, leaks, explosions, decreased property values, negative health impacts and destruction of irreplaceable resources. Even the construction process is hazardous, exacerbating erosion with removal of vegetation and blasting to prepare pipeline beds, as well as dramatic disruptions of rivers, wetlands and entire ecosystems which are so critical to our communities. The greater, long term public interest should always come first.

New Apts. Coming to Dehart Street

Thanks to excellent reporting by Kevin Coughlin, editor of www.MorristownGreen.com, the wider public is informed about the details of the pending development on DeHart Street in Morristown.


The bottom line is that, despite urgings from Councilman Stefan Armington and others, the developer declined to add more affordable units to the plans and threatened to walk away from the building if required to do so. The artist’s rendition of current plans for the building (from Maple Ave., looking across Wells Fargo parking lot toward DeHart St.) is shown above. If the amended plans are approved by second vote on Feb. 10th, the building would include 5 stories, with 59 apartments (instead of the 36 condos approved a decade ago). Three apartments would be “affordable” units – along with 3,000 sq. ft. of retail space and the possibility of artists’ studios on the street level. Stay tuned...

Fill in your name, address and telephone number on this stub. Make checks payable to the Burnham Park Association. Send to our Treasurer, Don Siebert, 178 Hillcrest Ave., Morristown, NJ 07960. Thanks to those neighbors who have supported BPA so generously. DUES PAID IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS OF 2014 WERE CREDITED TO CALENDAR YEAR 2015

Membership/Dues Payment I/We enclose our 2015 Burnham Park Association dues of:

$10 Basic/Pine $25 Sponsor/Maple $50 Patron/Beech $100 Benefactor/Oak $250 Thomas Paine Club

Name: ________________________________
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If making additional contribution, please indicate amount and purpose (e.g. plantings for Arbor Day, etc.)

Amount: ______________________________ Purpose: ______________________________
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