

# TOWNSHIP OF MARLBORO

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**Mayor**

Jonathan L. Hornik

September 28, 2009

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Dear Marlboro Resident:

As the calendar begins to close on 2009, and in keeping with my administration's pledge of open and honest government, I request a moment of your time to update you on some important issues and exciting initiatives that are currently affecting our community.

The deep national economic recession that has adversely impacted many of our residents has regrettably affected our own municipal government. We are now forced to do more with less. This year, in addition to decreased revenues from our investments, Marlboro received significantly less state funding, and took in fewer tax receipts. To deal with these unexpected events, my administration and our Township Council have worked diligently and harmoniously to develop short-term and long-term economic strategies to get us through these turbulent economic times. Rather than drastically increase taxes, we focused on reducing the expenses of our municipal government. Towards this end, we have restructured our government, consolidated job functions, and substantially cut municipal labor costs. These cuts were targeted and carefully considered, with great consideration to avoid any material compromise on essential and other municipal services. While we have no doubt that the economic strategy we are pursuing is the best for our Town, executing upon this strategy and implementing change has required that we make some tough decisions. "Change" is not always comfortable and seamless, but rather often takes considerable time, and effort. The changes we made in the last 18 months have been painful for some, but have already resulted in direct savings to our residents. The switch to a 4-day municipal work week and the heavily re-negotiated labor contracts of our blue and white collar union workers was not easy. However, tough times call for tough decisions and I thank our dedicated township employees for working with me to make these decisions in the best interests of Marlboro.

Please remember that I, like you, live in town with my family and believe that the tax burden on New Jersey residents is too high. Our pledge to make the tough choices through our short and long term strategies will continue as we work to make our local government leaner and more efficient.

## **DRAMATICALLY REDUCING MUNICIPAL SPENDING**

- As a general policy, we have cut all discretionary costs by 15% across the board since taking office;
- Through the implementation of a four day work week and the reduction in the size of our municipal government, we have reduced municipal employee expenses by over a half-million dollars in 2009, with additional savings anticipated for 2010 and 2011;
- We assembled a budget committee consisting of members of council and my administration to discuss strategies and review each line item expense;
- For the first time in history the 2009 Municipal Budget is almost \$2,000,000.00 (6%) less than last year's budget and over \$1,000,000.00 less than the budget submitted by the prior Administration in 2007;
- We reduced the number of municipal vehicles used by Township employees, eliminating the cost of maintenance and gasoline;

- We placed a cap on the legal fees paid to our Township attorneys, and required lower hourly rates for all professionals doing work within our Town; and
- We have successfully negotiated union contracts with our employees that fairly compensate our dedicated municipal workers while providing much needed relief to Marlboro taxpayers.

There is more to be done. We continue to explore ways to further consolidate Marlboro's government to eliminate duplication of costs and reduce expenses while preserving the level of services our Residents have come to expect and deserve.

### **INCREASING COMMERCIAL AND NON-RESIDENTIAL REVENUES**

While our immediate attention has been on the current fiscal budget, we are mindful of our long term pledge to stabilize municipal taxes through an increase in commercial ratables and added revenues. The Economic Development Committee has been given a mandate to market Marlboro for new business. Their efforts and initiatives have already paid off, and will continue to help our long term goals.

- We have added 230,000 sq. ft. of commercial ratables to our community, which will aide in shifting the tax burden from the residential taxpayer to the commercial taxpayer. Several new commercial developments, including a proposed major commercial re-development on Rt. 9, are in the planning stages and close to becoming a reality.
- The EDC's merchant directory on our Township website (free to Marlboro-based businesses), ribbon cutting ceremonies for new businesses, promotional video, "Shop Marlboro" campaign, Township Map and more have all served to distinguish Marlboro from other nearby Towns, thereby making Marlboro the "Gateway to Western Monmouth County," and a highly desirable location for businesses to locate; and
- Utilizing our current assets and manpower, we have introduced a new alarm service to our residents which will allow emergency monitoring directly with our Police Department. This will provide better response time to our residents in need and added revenue to our Town which we could exceed \$400,000 per year.

Through these and other initiatives, we are tackling the local fiscal problem that has been neglected for decades. The difficult challenges we face ahead will force us to continue to change the way our municipal government operates. We can no longer operate a large local government in these trying financial times. The current Council and I will continue to honor our pledge to watch every tax dollar spent on every level to support government.

### **REDUCING OR ELIMINATING COSTS FOR SERVICES**

In this economic climate it would be too easy to sit back and say that we simply do not have the funds to improve the services of the town. It is incumbent upon my administration to continue to think outside the box and explore every possible way to reduce expenses, and increase services at little cost to the community. We continue to explore public and private options to help fulfill this obligation.

- We are negotiating with a private developer to build an 80,000 square foot indoor sports complex on Tennent Road. This public/private venture will provide much needed indoor fields and courts for the thousands of our residents enrolled in our youth and adult athletic programs, as well as preferential time slots and discounted fees. It will also be a large new commercial tax ratable;
- We are discussing third party billing with our emergency response technicians in order to offset the costs of operating those volunteer organizations with third party insurance companies paying same;

- Through our grant writer we have identified many grant opportunities that brought funds into our community that would not have otherwise been obtained. In 2009, Marlboro has received a \$25,000,000 to aid in the clean-up of the Imperial Oil Site, a \$50,000 smart growth grant and an \$80,000 grant to improve our Senior Center and a \$162,000 energy efficiency grant just to name a few; and
- Through our Shared Services efforts we have both increased revenue to our Town by having our Shared Servicing partners pay into Marlboro's coffers and by sharing the costs of providing certain services.

The continuation of shared services and the consolidation of our local government is something that I and the Town Council strongly believe will help in bringing permanent stabilization to our local real estate taxes. We are committed and focused on this goal and will continue to guide our actions accordingly.

### **PRESERVING OPEN SPACE AND GREEN INITIATIVES**

Stopping the uncontrolled residential growth of the past where Developers had free run of our town, we have finally taken back control and kept our promise to aggressively purchased and/or restrict the remaining open space from being developed. Through Community Visioning and our Green initiatives we are planning and implementing sustainable efforts that will have long term financial benefits to the community.

- Our Open Space and Farmland Preservation Committees are actively identifying land to preserve with Township open space funds, as well as state and county grant monies. Majestic places such as Stattel Farm have been removed from planned developments, while we discuss the Township's interest in purchasing those lands with open space funding;
- We have and continue to be in active negotiations for several portions of land throughout the community and have successfully replenished \$1.4 million, in previously funded open space initiatives that have remained outstanding;
- Pursuant to state mandate, we have submitted an Affordable Housing Plan, under protest, which is consistent with Smart Growth Principals and designed to minimize the number of new roofs in town while satisfying our affordable housing obligation, minimizing sprawl and preserving open space;
- Absent a change in the law, we may ultimately have to build out our affordable obligation. However, in meeting the substantial shortfall that we inherited due to the poor policy decisions of the past, we will build no new market rate homes, saving the township from having to shoulder the burden of over 5000 potential new residences; and
- Our Town has finally gone Green, we have an active and engaged Green Team made up of twenty residents and volunteer professionals which will guide our community as we move forward in the age of sustainability. In the last 12 months, we have fulfilled the necessary requirements for Marlboro to be labeled a "Cool City" by the Sierra Club and have become a "Tree City" recognizing our commitment to preserving our natural resources. Most exciting is our participation in the Sustainable Jersey program, in which we are on pace to receive certification in less that one year. In becoming a responsible global partner, our sustainable efforts will also serve to significantly reduce our cost of energy. We have recently applied for a grant to allow for sustainable planning in our village commercial area that we expect to be a springboard for further sustainable economic development in town.

Please look out for the release of your Community Vision Plan, which our professionals and residents were able to develop using grant monies we received in 2008. This is your plan for Marlboro and my administration looks to implement it for you.

## **OPEN TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENT**

We have kept you 100% informed of our problems and decisions as we experience them along the way. We have done this by communicating through our local cable Channel 77, where we have filmed and broadcasted each and every Council meeting since my Administration has taken office. In addition, we have revamped our communications system including our town website and e-mail distribution policy where you can receive and obtain all information about the operations of my Administration and the Town Council. This has included us putting on all information relating to Affordable Housing, minutes to Planning & Zoning Board meetings and other important disclosures and/or information. I believe that transparency in government is absolutely necessary in order for you to continue to trust your local officials in making the right decisions for our community. If you are not currently signed up to receive e-mail updates and important communications from the Town, then you need to do so right now. It's easy and takes about 15 seconds, literally. Just log onto [www.marlboro-nj.gov/register\\_web\\_news.html](http://www.marlboro-nj.gov/register_web_news.html).

## **TEEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND OUR CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO SENIORS**

Our ever expanding Teen Advisory Committee, which started with just 10 members less than two years ago, is now the largest committee in our Town with more than 350 members committed to "Do Good" in our community. This outstanding group of young men and women, among other initiatives, works one-on-one with members of our senior community, teaching them the basics, and the complexities, of computers, electronic devices, and the internet. In addition, our TAC members regularly visit our elderly residents in our senior assisted living facilities and teach and then play virtual tennis, bowling, boxing, etc. with them using the Wii interactive games. TAC members are routinely called upon by our municipal government and by other Township committees and are always "ready, willing and able" to provide assistance or lend a hand, whether it be to the Marlboro Township Drug Alliance, Shade Tree Commission, Economic Development Committee, Green Team and more. Being an active member of TAC also results in our Town's Teens receiving community service credits that are needed for college, as well as opportunities for leadership positions and jobs. TAC has also successfully launched a "teen classified section" on the Township website that is designed to bring together Marlboro businesses in need of part-time and summer labor with Marlboro's teens who are in need of jobs. If you have a son or daughter between the ages of 12-18, then membership on TAC is a must. Just go to [www.marlboro-nj.gov/TAC-registration.html](http://www.marlboro-nj.gov/TAC-registration.html).

Our newly reopened Senior Center has enjoyed much use and will now benefit from \$80,000 in upgrades as a result of recent grant our Township has aggressively sought and now obtained. We look forward to enjoying this upgraded facility for years to come.

These are just some of the many initiatives that we have achieved in the last 18 months. I hope that even though the circumstances we have found ourselves in are difficult based on the economic environment, you continue to enjoy our great town.

As always, please contact my office should you have any questions, comments or other concerns.

Very Truly Yours,



Jonathan L. Hornik  
Mayor