

Township of Frelinghuysen  
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April 7, 2021

Dear Frelinghuysen Residents:

This last year has been a challenging year for the Township. COVID-19 has likely impacted every family in different ways. This has required constant attention by your Township Committee. Revenue issues are always at the forefront. State school aid has been cut by \$4M for North Warren Regional through the next few years, and by more than \$300K for the Frelinghuysen School likewise through the next few years. This state engineered pressure on our tax base (and on our children's education) is unfortunate, but there is no end in sight to these state school aid reductions. Also, there are increased financial demands for certain services. I am proud to report for the second straight year, the Township's portion of the tax rate has remained flat, so there should be no increase on the municipal tax portion of the tax rate for 2021.

We have accomplished a great deal over the last year, including: (1) negotiating a new municipal court agreement with the Town of Belvidere; (2) completing the first phase of the repaving of Greendell Road; (3) moving toward the final engineering of the salt shed which the Township residents voted to keep in the Town Hall complex, and (4) revamping the new website which is now more user friendly and functional. Thanks also to the Recreation Committee and its volunteers for constructing the dugouts on the Rydell playing fields.

This year we anticipate finishing the bidding process on the salt shed. We also hope to finish the second phase of the Greendell Road paving project. This year the Township received approval for a NJDOT grant of approximately \$186,000 for the repaving of Camp Wasigan Road. We expect to receive the funds and complete the project next year. The old shed at the FFP has finally been demolished and grading will take place at the site. Old phone poles have been removed from the FFP, and the Land Managers will be attempting to rehabilitate the historic well house on the property. These are some of the higher profile projects that the residents will "see."

The Township is also aggressively involved in efforts to have high speed internet/broadband service extended to all of the areas of the Township which are underserved. We have had meetings with the USDA, Congressman Gottheimer, Altice (Optimum), and Planet Networks, to facilitate ultimately what we hope will be universal connectivity in the Township within the new few years. I wish to thank Congressman Gottheimer personally for all of his efforts on behalf of all the rural towns in the 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District to hopefully make this a reality.

However, much of the work of the Township Committee, and there is a lot of it, involves other matters which involve substantial time commitments. These include the several budget meetings

necessary to keep the tax rate flat, work sessions to address various other issues in the Township, such as the various agreements and contracts the Township enters into in the ordinary course of business, consideration of new ordinances as well as capital expenditures, which we also hope to reduce in order to effectuate a reduction in the Township's overall debt again for the second year in a row.

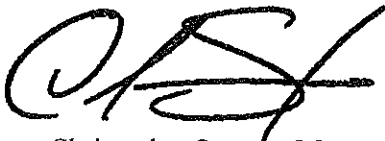
I want to thank every member of the Committee for all of the hard work and dedication they have shown over the last year in connection with what is a very significant time commitment by every one of them. I also wish to thank every volunteer member of each of our Township's various Boards, Committees, or Commissions for their dedication to the Township, as well as our Land Managers, our Clerk and other employees.

Township residents should look to our new and improved website for the most up to date information. As I have previously indicated in last year's letter, I do not believe in public discourse on Facebook or social media. Not everyone is on these mediums, and my participation as Mayor, in my view, is not a best practice. I am aware other Mayors have Facebook pages. None of the prior Frelinghuysen Mayors maintained a dedicated Mayor's Facebook page, and I likewise choose not to. I do not want to invite a quorum in violation of the Open Public Meetings Act, and I do not wish to engage on a platform which I believe censors its users, and cancels opinions with which it does not concur. There are other issues as well, such as the preservation of materials on the Mayor's Facebook page pursuant to State law as public documents, even long after the Mayor is not, well, the Mayor. I therefore encourage residents attend Township meetings where there can be an open and frank discussion and debate with the entire Committee regarding issues which affect our Township.

Lastly, many residents inquire regarding matters which are being investigated by the State Police. Be advised that I will not comment on continuing investigations. I believe that is sound policy. Moreover, since Frelinghuysen does not have its own police department, the State Police is not answerable to me or to the Township and therefore it is not obligated to share information with us.

I once again thank all of the residents of the Township for making Frelinghuysen a great place to live.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CS', written over a horizontal line.

Christopher Stracco, Mayor