

COMMENTS OF MAYOR THOMAS E. HENNESSY, JR.

**TOWNSHIP OF COLTS NECK REORGANIZATION
JANUARY 6, 2008**

I would like to thank the Township Committee for allowing me the honor to serve as your Mayor, and I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all Colts Neck residents, friends, family, neighbors and honored guests a very Happy New Year.

I would like to thank Jim Stuart for serving as Mayor last year. His leadership, eloquence and insight into the complex issues facing the Township were instrumental in making 2007 a very productive year for Colts Neck. Jim, thank you for a job well done.

Congratulations to Ken Florek on his re-election. The Township is fortunate to have someone of Ken's intellect and energy serving for the next three years.

To be part of local government is a rewarding experience, and I appreciate the confidence that the residents of Colts Neck have displayed by returning me to office for three terms.

Having the opportunity to serve as your Mayor is the highest honor in my 35 years of public service to the Township.

I continue to stand for open and inclusive government, and will strive to inform citizens of Colts Neck activities, events, and opportunities to serve, so as to nurture a strong sense of Community.

Reflecting upon what attracted me to Colts Neck in the early seventies - open space, beautiful surroundings, good schools, fine recreation programs, prudent zoning, and stable government - I realize that these are still the very attributes of Colts Neck today.

I was fortunate to become immediately involved in Township government as an associate member of the Environmental Commission in 1973. Over the years I have witnessed how volunteers in public service have worked to improve the quality of life in town and the wonderful camaraderie developed

among those sharing this common goal.

We are very fortunate in this town to have such a high caliber of volunteers contributing their expertise and enthusiasm.

All volunteers share a common goal—to help others and in doing so, make Colts Neck the very special home that it is to all of us.

I would like to make special mention of one of the Township's longest serving volunteers, Dr. John Vig. John has served more than 36 years on the Environmental Commission and is its past Chairman. He is also a trustee of the "Friends of the Library" and is the web master of the town's official web site. John was recently selected to be 2009 world-wide President of IEEE, the world's largest technical professional organization. In that esteemed position, John will lead 100,000 IEEE volunteers worldwide.

On behalf of the entire Township Committee, I would also like to thank each and every volunteer for your service to the community. Your participation and commitment of your time and talent is deeply appreciated.

I will to briefly touch upon some of the important issues that will affect the Township this year:

Earle Housing

As most residents are aware, for the past three years the Township Committee has been vigorously opposing the Navy's plan to privatize 300 homes at Naval Weapons Station Earle, whose occupants may become untaxed Colts Neck residents. We will continue our steadfast opposition to this misguided plan.

The Township Committee looks forward to working with our Congressman Chris Smith, State Senator-elect and current Assemblywoman Jennifer Beck, Assemblypersons-elect Caroline Casagrande and Declan O'Scanlon, and Freeholder Director Lillian Burry, to block the Navy's plan.

Deputy Mayor-elect Ben Forester and Committeeman Jim Stuart will continue to diligently protect the interests of Colts Neck as members of the Earle Housing Sub-committee.

Affordable Housing

As part of the *Westminster vs. Colts Neck* affordable housing litigation settled two years ago, the Township is protected from similar litigation at the present time.

However, the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) has recently promulgated new rules and regulations that, if adopted, will have profound ramifications on Colts Neck. Last year the Township believed our so-called “third round” obligation would be to provide some 40 affordable units. The new rules may mandate the Township provide approximately 80 affordable units.

The Township will likely have until December of this year to decide whether or not to file a plan with COAH and if so, to develop a plan that would satisfy the Township’s obligation in this regard.

Committeemen Florek and Stuart will serve on the Sub-committee to continue work on this important matter.

Revaluation

In 2007, the Township Committee awarded a contract to perform a mandated total revaluation of all properties within Colts Neck. It is expected that field work, in this regard, will begin in the next 60-90 days and will conclude by the end of the year. All residents will receive an explanatory letter on the revaluation process in the near future, and once preliminary assessments have been determined, residents will have a full opportunity to meet and discuss their assessment with professionals from the revaluation firm or our Township Tax Assessor.

It is expected that the new assessments will become effective for the 2009 tax year.

Farmland And Open Space Preservation

The Township Committee will remain supportive of all efforts to preserve farms and open space. With expected closings this year of two additional farms, the Township will have preserved over 900 acres of farms and open space since the program began some ten years ago.

A special thank you to all members of the Farmland and Open Space Committee for your efforts over the years and to Colts Neck residents who overwhelmingly approved two referendums dedicating a portion of our property taxes for this purpose.

2008 Municipal Budget

The Township Committee will soon begin work on the 2008 municipal budget, a responsibility it takes very seriously. The Township Committee utilizes a zero-based budget format, whereby every appropriation must be completely explained and justified. Likewise, all revenue is fully analyzed and maximized.

Residents are encouraged to attend and participate in the budget preparation process. Meetings for this purpose will start in February.

(Summation)

There will be many important and complex issues facing the Township Committee this year. The Township Committee will work to resolve each issue with the well being of the Township and its residents paramount.

We appreciate your continued support!

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