

## **Kenneth F. Florek 2006 End of Year Comments from the Mayor**

The Township Committee had an active year in 2006. We adopted a 10.1 million dollar budget, keeping the portion of our taxes used for municipal purposes to just 9.61 percent. We adopted 23 Ordinances, 5 of which were mandated by the State for dealing with stormwater management. We also adopted 185 Resolutions for meeting the day to day needs of our community.

This year had a number of very positive events that we can be proud of. We dedicated and opened Five Point Park, a fine addition to our parks system that provides additional baseball and soccer fields as well as a nature walk and playground. We also completed a new Life Fitness Trail around the Town Hall municipal site, paid in part by a County Open Space Grant.

We improved the baseball fields at both Cedar Drive School and Conover Road School, with a significant contribution of both money and manpower from the Colts Neck Sports Foundation. These improvements included grading, fencing and bleachers that will make the fields safer for players and more accommodating for spectators.

In a strong statement of our commitment to open space, we closed on the purchase of the development rights to the 110 acre Purdy Farm on Willowbrook Road. The rights to this property were expeditiously acquired through the aggressive actions of the Township Committee in pursuing a pledge of State and County cooperation prior to closing. We have also taken the initial steps to pursue several additional farm properties that are considered most desirable for preservation due to their development potential.

The Township Committee has been looking into the latest round of affordable housing requirements set by the State. Although we believe that the State should not mandate the creation of high density housing in a town such as Colts Neck, which requires well water and septic systems throughout the community, we are actively seeking to minimize the impact through good planning.

We have remained vigilant in our efforts to keep the Federal government from making housing at Earle Naval Base available for sale or rental to the public. The primary need to maintain the safety of our community, as well as to avoid the associated costs to our residents, has been an overriding concern that we will continue to monitor closely. Notwithstanding, we continue to enjoy a close relationship with the Base itself, including shared services that benefit both the Base and our Township.

This year we also looked into establishing a new formula for funding the Freehold Regional School District. We participated in meetings with other towns in the District that are likewise paying a disproportionate share of the expenses, to consider options designed to remedy the inequity. Several cases are currently in the courts which may be authoritative and we hope to use them to obtain a more equitable funding formula without the need for independent legal action.

To assist our volunteer Fire Department in their duties, we have approved the purchase of a new brush truck that will replace two existing brush trucks, a former military vehicle that is over 50 years old and has recently been disabled and another vehicle that is over 20 years old and would require significant refurbishment to meet today's needs. The new brush truck will be purchased with existing capital funds and does not require bonding.

We have also transferred two police cars, with high mileage that makes them no longer safe for use as high speed pursuit vehicles, for use as fire police vehicles. These cars, with emergency lighting, will be of minimal cost to the Town while providing much needed safety for our residents, our volunteer firefighters and our volunteer fire police during fire emergencies.

The Township Committee has approved the purchase of a replacement dump truck for the Public Works department, which will help to keep our roads clear from brush, leaves, snow and ice. Our Public Works department does an excellent job, and we need to provide them with replacement vehicles as older vehicles begin to fail so that they can maintain our high standard.

To further address the quality of life for our residents, we have resolved student parking issues and dealt with noise concerns related to the High School. These matters have been attended to through meaningful dialog and the cooperation of all involved.

In connection with the five year anniversary, we made sure to remember those from our community and others who lost their lives in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. We also remembered the passing of Jim Gary, the sculptor who graced us with our September 11 Memorial and had a deep association with Colts Neck.

We recognized and honored Freeholder Ted Narozanick for over 45 years of distinguished public service upon his approaching retirement from the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders. We also recognized Colts Neck resident Andrew Freddo, a member of the United States Chemistry team that placed second in International Competition, as well as three Colts Neck residents that achieved the rank of Eagle Scout this year, Jon-Edward Lelesi, Aaron Lay and Dean Hakim.

Of course, 2007 will bring new challenges and opportunities. I look forward to continue working on the Township Committee to meet those challenges and opportunities in the best interest of the residents of Colts Neck.