



THE REGIONAL CENTER

Fall
2014

BRIDGEWATER • RARITAN • SOMERVILLE

A partnership for a better tomorrow
IN SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

BRIDGEWATER SEEKING NEW RAIL STATION

At a recent Regional Center Partnership meeting, Bridgewater Mayor Dan Hayes announced that the Township Committee is in active discussion with NJ Transit regarding the construction of a new rail transit station in the south western portion of the Township.

Proposed for Milltown Road in proximity to North Branch Park, the station would be the second in the township and would be a stop for the one-seat ride to Manhattan. Bridgewater's other station is next to TD Bank Ballpark on the opposite side of the township.

The location is near the Vanderhaven Farms community and already meets many of the criteria of a Transit Village.

The Mayor expects that the station's location will make Bridgewater better able to attract the Millennial generation of 25 to 35-year olds, a growing demographic with discretionary income that will contribute to the success of local businesses.

The Mayor also announced that a new bus Park & Ride is being constructed at the intersection of Route 22 and Milltown Road.

REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERSHIP SAYS THANK YOU TO RETIRING BOB BZIK

At the May meeting of the Regional Center Partnership, the entire membership thanked Bob Bzik, retiring Director of Planning for Somerset County, for his dedication to the growth and success of the organization.

The resolution presented thanked him for his 33 years with the County, 24 years serving as Director. "Bob's commitment to the Regional Center along with the support of the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders, Bridgewater Township, Raritan and Somerville Boroughs, the Somerset County Business Partnership, the Somerset County Park Commission and our business and institutional-sector representatives have been essential in helping the Regional Center Partnership achieve numerous milestones, projects and initiatives..." The resolution goes on to list 19 key factors contributing to the success of the Regional Center since its inception.



Partnership Chair Troy Fischer (l) presents resolution of gratitude to retiring Planning Director Bob Bzik.

SOMERSET COUNTY-5TH BEST PLACE TO LIVE IN THE USA

Movato Real Estate blog, in a survey ranking 640 counties in 6 categories, determined that Somerset County, New Jersey is the 5th best place to live in the country. Criteria included: Unemployment rate; Median household income; Median rent; Median home price; Percent of families living below the poverty line; and High school graduation rate. According to the survey, "There's beauty, friendliness, and a ton to see and do."

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COMPLETED DAM REMOVAL OPENS RARITAN RIVER TO FISH & RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

John Jengo of MWH Americas, a water and wastewater consultant, reported to the Regional Center Partnership on the successful completion of the dam removal on the Raritan River. The removal of the three dams will open up a 10-mile stretch of the middle and upper portions of the river to fish migration for the first time in more than a century. The portion of the river twists through a diverse residential, commercial, and agricultural portion of Somerset County including Bridgewater, Raritan, Somerville, Bound Brook, and Manville.

The project is being carried out and financed by the El Paso Corp. as compensation to the public for harm to natural resources caused by past pollution at a refinery and three polymer plants that were operated by or affiliated with the El Paso Corp.

The dams removed included the Calco Dam in Bridgewater, built by the Calco Chemical Co. in 1938 to disperse chemicals from its facility; the Nevius Street Dam, built in 1901 for aesthetic purposes and later retrofitted to provide water to ponds on the Duke estate in Hillsborough; and the Robert Street Dam which was constructed prior to 1930 for purposes that are not known.

GROUPS PARTNERING TO CLEAN UP THE RARITAN RIVER

A number of groups have recently banded together focused on cleaning up the Raritan River of the tons of garbage that have accumulated over the years. A group that formed in 2013, known as “Just 2 Eagle Scouts,” began cleaning up sections of the Raritan River in central Somerset County. Supported by the Somerset County Park Commission Rangers, another group of Scout, student, and adult volunteers followed by participating in the American Rivers National River Cleanup, a nationwide community-based initiative to clean up rivers and streams and to raise public awareness about the need for healthy rivers. Also joining the effort is the Central Jersey Stream Team, a grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to the restoration of Central Jersey waterways and surrounding land.

The initial effort resulted in the removal of 507 tires and other unwanted materials from a stretch of the river from Neshanic

Station to Raritan Borough. The May 2014 effort resulted in approximately 900 tires removed along the bank of the Raritan behind the Torpey Athletic Complex in Bridgewater.

Tire disposal was funded through Somerset County’s allocation from the Clean Communities Program Fund. New Jersey Clean Communities is a statewide, comprehensive, litter-abatement program created by the passage of the Clean Communities Act in 1986.

For their efforts, on May 22, 2014, Somerset County Park Commission and Central Jersey Stream Team were given a Clean Water Award from NJ Clean Communities for the tire removal project.



RARITAN BOROUGH CONTINUES TO PLAN RIVERFRONT REVITALIZATION

Raritan Borough hosted a “Riverfront Summit” at Duke Farms to review the Borough’s “River Town” initiative, a strategic combination of recreational, cultural, economic development, and infrastructure program along the Raritan River/Orlando Drive corridor.

Attended by approximately 70 people, the Summit featured speakers from Raritan Borough, Somerset County, Duke Farms, the Somerset County Business Partnership, Rutgers University, the Central Jersey Stream Team, and John Jengo, a noted Hydrogeologist.

Major planning and infrastructure projects being considered along the riverfront corridor include the complete rezoning of the riverfront for recreational, cultural, and supportive retail uses; the ongoing reconstruction of Orlando Drive from Route 206 to Lyman Street; the creation of a Wayfinding System that will direct visitors from the Raritan Train Station to the Somerset Street business district and the riverfront; extension of the County greenway/bikeway along the Raritan; and the potential for a northern gateway into Duke Farms from the Nevius Bridge. A completed element of the plan is the removal of the two dams upstream of Raritan that has enabled new ecological and recreational opportunities along the river in proximity to the Borough.



Nevius Street Bridge

RAIN BARREL REBATE UPDATE

As of the July, 2014 Regional Center Partnership meeting, the Rain Barrel Rebate program run by the New Jersey Water Supply Authority and administered by the Regional Center Partnership had accomplished the following within the Regional Center boundaries:

- Since 2011 30 properties have received rebates (7 in 2014)
- 25 rain barrels have been built in Peters Brook Watershed workshops
- 3 Regional Center businesses (J&J Information Technology, Ethicon & Janssen) and NJ American Water received River-Friendly Certification
- Somerset County Park Commission Green Knoll golf course has been certified as River-Friendly
- Somerville’s Vanderveer School and Bridgewater-Raritan High School have been certified as River-Friendly

J&J INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EARNS RIVER-FRIENDLY CERTIFICATION

The Somerset County Regional Center Partnership presented a unanimously passed resolution to Johnson & Johnson Information Technology (J&JIT) commemorating the recently awarded River-Friendly Certification for Business. JJIT is located on Route 202 North in Raritan.

River-Friendly Certification is a program of the New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) in which the NJWSA works with landowners to improve water resources by implementing actions in categories including: water quality management and nonpoint source pollution management; water conservation, native habitat and wildlife enhancement; and education and outreach.

Among the programs implemented over the two-year process were creation and employee maintenance of a butterfly garden; development of a site map with environmental issue priorities; signage at water collection areas; construction of bird houses; creation of flower beds; controlled lawn maintenance program; promotion of native species throughout the property; a public awareness signage program; a rain barrel workshop for employees; employee education programs; and distribution of a monthly newsletter.

The Regional Center Partnership has been an active partner with NJWSA promoting conservation and environmental protection measures in the Peters Brook Watershed and throughout the Regional Center communities of Bridgewater, Raritan, and Somerville.



Regional Center Partnership Chair Troy Fischer (r) presents a congratulatory resolution for attaining River-Friendly Certification from the New Jersey Water Supply Authority to Janice Masvidal, IT IS Senior Director, Enterprise Data Centers & Building Facilities (c) and Hugh Symonds, Senior Principal Engineer (l) of Johnson & Johnson Information Technology.

MUNICIPAL UPDATES

BRIDGEWATER

A new Hampton Inn proposed at Route 22 and Ronson Road has been approved.

The Township is pursuing a redevelopment plan consisting of a housing component at the former Weyerhaeuser property in Finderne behind the southeast corner of the Main Street/Finderne Avenue intersection.

RARITAN

Mayor Jo-Ann Liptak has reported that the Stone Bridge at Raritan apartment complex on Route 202 is nearing full occupancy.

Reconstruction of the Orlando Drive road surface from Route 206 to Loomis Street has been completed.

SOMERVILLE

Retail space is under construction at The Edge on West Main Street. With Starbucks, Weight Watchers, and Sports Clips already operating, Wine Chateau, and Wolfgang's Steak House expect to open before the end of 2014. Wine Chateau offers a selection of wines from around the world with more than 17,000 domestic and imported premium wines available. Wolfgang's offers the finest steaks in locations including Park Avenue, Tribeca, Midtown, and Times Square in New York City; Hawaii; Beverly Hills; Miami; and Tokyo.

New Jersey Transit has designated a developer for the land adjacent to the Somerville Landfill and south of the Somerville Train Station. NJ Transit has proposed a residential development for that area.

Somerville has completed the historic restoration of Borough Hall utilizing the Somerset County Historic Preservation Program.

NEW FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR 2014

To advance the work of the Regional Center, the Regional Center Partnership allocated \$45,000 for the 2014 Challenge Grant program (\$15,000 per community) and

\$27,000 for 6 additional solar-powered Driver Feedback Signs (2 per community); \$5,000 as "seed money" toward hosting a visioning session in spring 2015, and \$12,000 toward the cost to update the 2006 Regional Center Strategic Master Plan.

The spring visioning session will chart the course for the Regional Center for the next 5-6 years, determining where to allocate future funding and resources. Participants will brainstorm about how the Regional Center can best be positioned to take advantage of accomplishments and initiatives including achieving Plan Endorsement from the State Planning Commission, completion of the Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the ongoing Somerset County Investment Framework initiative.

2014 REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERSHIP

Chair: Troy Fischer
Vice-Chair: Jason Dameo
Treasurer: Freeholder Peter Palmer
Secretary: James Ruggieri (non-voting position)

At-large Private/Institutional Sector Representatives
Troy Fischer, Chair, Senior General Manager,
Bridgewater Commons*
James Driscoll, Site Manager, Workplace Solutions,
Johnson & Johnson Company*
Jason Dameo, General Manager, Dameo Companies*

Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders
Patricia Walsh, Freeholder*
(Freeholder Peter Palmer, Alt.*)

Somerset County Planning Board
Walter Lane, Director of Planning, Somerset County
Bernie Navatto, Chair, Somerset County Planning Board

Bridgewater Township
Mayor Daniel J. Hayes, Jr.*
Councilwoman Christine Henderson-Rose
Planner Scarlett Doyle
Henry E. Reynolds, Jr., local private/institutional
representative

Raritan Borough
Mayor Jo-Ann Liptak*
Councilman Greg Lobell
Planner David Maski
Don Christensen, local private/institutional
representative

Somerville Borough
Mayor Brian Gallagher*
Councilman Dennis Sullivan
Planning Board Vice-Chair Lisa Yates
Rick St. Pierre, local private/institutional
representative

Somerset County Business Partnership
Michael Kerwin, President/CEO
(John Maddocks, Alternate)

Somerset County Park Commission
Ray Brown, Secretary/Executive Director
(Cynthia Sullivan, Alternate)

*RCP Executive Committee member

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BRIDGEWATER, RARITAN, SOMERVILLE • SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

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