



TOWNSHIP OF BORDENTOWN
BURLINGTON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE:

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ADMINISTRATOR
LEONARD M. KLEPNER

To the Editor:

I am writing as Deputy Mayor and a member of the Bordentown Township Committee to explain what happened at the Turnpike Authority's "Public Meeting" on September 18 at the Bordentown Senior Center. Much of the public could not attend because the meeting was scheduled to begin at 5:00pm, a time when the majority of our residents are just getting out of work and beginning their commute home. This, I believe, was not an oversight. All the "public meetings" begin at 5, and I am convinced this is an attempt to limit public participation in a passive way. Actively, however, the Authority takes its lack of interest in the public's concerns a long step further by refusing to answer any questions during the sessions. This is contrary to the intent of the law requiring public hearings in these matters and displays the Authority's arrogance and ham-handedness in dealing with the public. I believe that this non-public-friendly process is deliberately driven by the Governor's covetous plan to "monetize" the Turnpike (with another inevitable toll increase) against the best interests of all the citizens of New Jersey. As the old adage goes, the fish stinks from the head down.

The real issues here, however, are the Authority's intent to displace scores of our residents, cause significant lowering of property values for hundreds more, and negatively impact the quality of life for all our residents, directly and indirectly. This will occur as a result of moving the Exit 8A bottleneck out of an industrial area to the north and into residential areas populated by Hamilton Township, Bordentown Township, Chesterfield Township, and Mansfield Township. The direct impact will be increased air and noise pollution; the indirect impacts are incalculable, but include all the consequences cited above permeating through neighborhoods not contiguous to the Turnpike plus loss of open space paid for with public funds and loss of the passive and active recreation opportunities associated with those open spaces.

The irony here is that the Township began an aggressive acquisition of farmland in 2000 to curtail development in the Township only to be faced with the dictatorial edicts of the Authority in its proposed seizure of much of that land and the quality of life that goes with it. The further irony is that the Authority's proposal and all these consequences are based on faulty studies and assumptions, and its presentation is disingenuous at best and fraudulent at worst. As to the first point, its noise studies, for example, were conducted after morning rush hour and before evening rush hour.

Anyone living in the communities in Bordentown which will be most affected--Holloway Meadows, Williamsburg Village, and Clifton Mill--knows that it is at present difficult to have a conversation on one's deck or porch due to the noise pollution already generated by the Turnpike.

As to the second point, the Authority proclaims that no buildings (read *homes*) are expected to be taken. It conveniently and, I believe, deceitfully does not address the relocation of utilities which will be necessitated by this project. These relocations will almost inevitably lead to displacement of residents from their homes, not only in Bordentown, but in the other Townships as well. I spoke of ironies earlier. The major irony and display of arrogance here is that the Authority cannot even accurately figure out where the metes and bounds of Bordentown Township are, even though Mayor Chidley has been telling them for months that their maps are wrong. They show a significant part of the Clifton Mill development, for example, as being in Chesterfield. They just don't give a damn.

For the record, the Township provided a five page request for information from the Authority based on our review of their ill-conceived, inaccurate, and, in our opinion, intentionally vague Environmental Impact Statement. This letter may be reviewed at www.Bordentowntownship.com. We have yet to receive a response. Specifically, we have asked for the following additional information:

- **Traffic Impact:** additional traffic on local primary and secondary roads; impact to existing and proposed on/off ramps; effects on traffic signalization; and number of overweight vehicles anticipated on both the Turnpike and Township roads;
- **Community Impact:** effects on property values; noise levels, actual sound studies on both sides of the highway, and locations of sound barriers; vibration impact on housing; effects on surrounding farms, open space and residential (specifically, Old York Business Park, Williamsburg Village, and Clifton Mill); loss of open space paid for by public monies; sound barrier for Holloway Meadows; and, **consideration of sub-grade/underpass construction**--in other words, lowering the roadway for the new lanes, which would mitigate many of our concerns. It is a solution the Authority absolutely rejects out of hand and refuses to consider;
- **Grading:** necessary testing for imported fill material; wetlands mitigation; stormwater management; soil erosion review; and, identification of floodplain crossings;
- **Environmental:** special species status; bald eagle habitat; and, wetlands;
- **Utilities:** required utility relocations and impact of relocations on the community. This is critical, since over the strenuous objections of the Township Committee, we had a gas pipeline enlargement rammed down the throats of our citizens in 2005, and that pipeline is in the path of the proposed widening, as well as a second gas pipeline, high tension electrical transmission towers, oil pipeline, and fiber optic lines, all of which require relocation and each of which requires its own 50 foot right-of-way. Additionally, we are a major corridor for these lines and cannot predict at this time what future expansions may occur.

Committeeman Roselli has invited the Governor, Commissioner, and others to come to Bordentown to address our issues face to face in a genuinely American open forum. Apparently, however, we are living in the People's Republic of We're Your Public Officials and We Don't Care.

Now is the time for all citizens to get involved, before a shovel hits the ground. Petitions will be going around Bordentown in the next few weeks. Please take a few moments to familiarize yourselves with the issues and make our voices heard. There really is strength in numbers, and the squeaky wheel really does get the grease.

Bill Morelli
Deputy Mayor
Bordentown Township