

# Interest grows in housing fight

## Several large towns commit

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**CLINTON TWP.** – The breadth of a legal challenge to new state affordable housing rules is expanding, even before the first legal papers are drawn and filed.

The joint effort, begun by Mayor Nick Corcodilos of Clinton Township and involving 18 municipalities along the Route 78 corridor several weeks ago, has attracted the interest of other community leaders whose towns are miles away in Morris, Somerset, Sussex, Warren and Middlesex counties.

The focus of the legal challenge is that the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) failed to consider decisions of other

**The upcoming legal battle** may be the only way to modify these unrealistic housing calculations. Please see page 6.

state agencies crucial to sound planning and development, and has even ignored the provisions of the Fair Housing Act of 1985 under which COAH was created.

“We have an oral commitment from 15 mayors who attended our meeting on May 12 and are working with several other mayors,” said Corcodilos on May 30. “We intend to have an interlocal

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agreement prepared within a week."

According to Corcodilos, the process has been slow because each mayor has had to take the proposal back to their own towns after which each has to adopt a resolution authorizing the lawsuit. That takes time. Some of the largest communities that have committed include Bridgewater, Bernards and Montgomery Townships.

## Starting To Arrive

"The resolutions are beginning to arrive," said Corcodilos.

Last Tuesday, Clinton was the latest town to join the legal fight, with the Clinton Town Council passing a resolution to spend up to \$8,000 for legal expenses.

Meanwhile, Corcodilos continues to receive calls from local officials further away from Route 78. On May 15, only days after a report of the May 15 meeting appeared in newspapers, Corcodilos said he was contacted by a mayor in Sussex County who promised to encourage county-wide support and participation in the lawsuit.

The New Jersey State League of Municipalities is also soliciting municipal support of another legal challenge, and Corcodilos is encouraging towns to join their effort as well.

"We've make it clear there is no conflict between the two lawsuits," said Corcodilos. "Ours deals with some issues that are

regional concerns along Route 78 that the league's lawsuit may not address. The league's action addresses even more issues."

Corcodilos said one of the current problems is that three new bills have been introduced in the state Legislature intended to alleviate COAH-related problems, but in his opinion fail to do so.

In a press release issued May 19, Assemblyman Michael Doherty, R-Hunterdon, said he had introduced "common sense" legislation.

"The state's attempt to provide low-income residents with affordable housing is a laudable goal that has turned into a misguided package of regulations that have lost sight of reality and practicality," stated Doherty. "These new regulations will result in added costs and place inequitable burdens on municipalities, businesses and our taxpayers."

Corcodilos appears to agree with Doherty's statement, but at the May 28 council meeting said the three bills would likely create even more problems.

When Doherty's package of legislative bills was discussed at the meeting, Council President Kevin Cimei said one of them simply shifts the cost burden of providing affordable housing from new businesses to already overtaxed homeowners, a cost that is now shared.

"One of them (the bills) gives zoning powers to the Highlands Council," said Corcodilos. "Developers could appeal local zoning decisions to the Highlands

Council. That is what is essentially happening in the Pinelands."

"I do get nervous forwarding our zoning issues to other entities," said Cimei.

## Ongoing Battle

The ongoing battle between COAH and municipalities has been costing property owners money even before lawsuits are filed or new affordable housing units are built. Corcodilos said every time COAH changes the rules that it costs money on the local level.

"It cost us \$60,000 in the last round (Round 2 of COAH rules) to develop a new plan," said Corcodilos. "COAH has changed its rules three times, three times their rules were challenged, and three times the court has told them to re-write the rules. Each time this happens, towns have to re-write their local plans.

Township officials were surprised when, after they had finished discussing Doherty's proposed legislation, the assemblyman arrived at the meeting seeking their support. After a brief discussion, Doherty was told why Clinton Township did not agree with eliminating the cost of COAH housing from the backs of commercial developers and literally "dumping it on the backs of homeowners," as stated by Corcodilos.

Doherty urged the council to pursue their lawsuit and recommended that it find a way to get it into federal court instead of state court.

# PHOTO: A

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came by train to Glen Gardner from the city for one or two weeks during the summer to stay with local farm families. Their visits were sponsored by the Christian Endeavor Society. Once the children arrived in Glen Gardner, teams of wagons would take them to various farms in the township, said Lomerson.

Lomerson and members of his family are also represented in the collection. Lomerson's father, Joe, is shown in a shot from 1899 at the age of 8 with his other classmates at the Spruce Run Day School. In another picture, Joe Lomerson is shown delivering groceries from the Lance Brothers General Store to area residents by horse and wagon.

Lomerson's cousin, Charlie, a ranger at former Camp Watchung, was also a talented musician. One photo from 1940 shows young couples square-dancing at the Mount Lebanon Grange with music provided by the Charlie Lomerson Melody Band.

Ralph Lomerson himself is in one of the pictures shown digging a grave by hand at the cemetery at Spruce Run Lutheran Church in 1974. "That was the last grave I dug by hand," said Lomerson, a fourth generation gravedigger at the church. "After that I got a backhoe."

In the years before Valley View and Woodglen schools were built, one-room schoolhouses dotted the township, many of which are pictured in Lomerson's collection.

# St. John Neumann to hold auction

**LEBANON TWP.**—The 22nd annual Auction Weekend will be held on Friday and Saturday, June 6 and 7, at St. John Neumann Church, Route 513.

The weekend activities will kick off with a chance to win prizes at 6 p.m. on Friday with more than 100 baskets and specialty items, and a light supper menu. Numbers will start to be called at 7 p.m.

Also, tickets for a chance on other prizes will be available at \$2 each, and the drawing will be

held on Saturday evening. The prizes include a Weber Summit 420 grill, a HDTV flat panel TV, a Garmin 750 GPS, a Toshiba laptop and a Wii.

On Saturday, June 7, the Wine and Beer Tasting event will start at 5:30 p.m. under the big tents in the rear of the church. As the tasting progresses, guests are encouraged to wander through the auction area examining the auction items, or they can see many of them in advance by visiting the St.

John Web site at [www.ccsjn.org](http://www.ccsjn.org). Food will be served throughout the evening and at about the mid-point of the auction the winning tickets will be drawn.

Many items will be available also at the silent auction for those who may not be able to spend the whole evening at St. John's.

More information is available at [www.ccsjn.org](http://www.ccsjn.org) or by calling (908) 832-2513.

# PETRICK: N

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trict," said Tewksbury Committeeman Shaun Van Doren.

Six of the seven school board members present voted to offer Petrick the job. School board member Patricia Gavornik abstained.

Some members of the public that stayed to hear the vote had expected the school board to speak about the process of selecting an interim superintendent and were surprised when