

REDEVELOPMENT

The first session of the Borough's efforts to re-designate our downtown as an area in need of redevelopment occurred on September 24, 2008.

In a disturbing return to the past practice of incivility and intimidation, our planner's testimony was often interrupted by the catcalls, rude comments and personal attacks of a vocal minority.

This attempted intimidation of the members of the Planning Board continued during a Special Meeting of the Mayor and Council held on September 29, 2008. As reported by Ashley Kindergan of The Record and in a Community Life editorial on October 1, 2008, this unruly crowd refused to leave the Council Chambers when the closed session meeting was to start, which required the governing body to leave its own Chambers and adjourn to a first floor conference room to conduct its meeting.

Those who disrupted the September 24 Planning Board session and September 29 Mayor and Council meeting claim that redevelopment will cost the Borough money. However, just the opposite is true. Presently, there are underutilized properties throughout the downtown which, if redeveloped, will add much needed business and residential ratables to our tax base. This will help control your property taxes, not increase them.

These objectors also complain that our Borough can not support any additional residents whether adults or children. However, they do not mention that in 1970, the Borough's population was 8,418 and now it has decreased in 2007 to 7,343. (Source: US Bureau of the Census)

Let me firmly assert that I will continue to lead this Borough and bring about the better Emerson for our current residents and for future generations. Redevelopment was my commitment when I ran for office and it is still my commitment to the majority of residents.

The redevelopment's initial Request for Proposals published and disseminated by the Borough in 2006 (before I was mayor) and again in early 2007 under my administration afforded property owners the ability to develop their own properties. Unfortunately, until redevelopment came along,

most property owners were unwilling or unable to develop and improve their own properties. This led to stagnation and decay.

Accordingly, while we still have a good-faith duty to allow Millennium, our current preferred redeveloper, to negotiate a developer's agreement with the Borough, I will propose that alternatives be written into the revised plan which will again afford property owners the ability to develop their properties under certain requirements.

My proposal will carefully balance the Council's and my preference for a comprehensive redevelopment of our underutilized downtown, with an understanding of the challenges faced by property and business owners who are in the redevelopment zone.

Given our current economic climate, individual property owners who care about the town and who make the necessary investment in their properties can make a difference. Just look at the Emerson Pharmacy and the Oritani Bank buildings on Kinderkamack Road. Under the Redevelopment Law, because these property owners developed their properties in accordance with the Redevelopment Plan now in existence, their properties will not be affected.

In conclusion, the governing body will continue to advance the best interests of the entire Borough, in an open and honest fashion, by finally bringing Emerson a beautiful, viable downtown and much-needed improvements to Kinderkamack Road -- a road that was obsolete by 1959 and has only gotten worse over the past 49 years.

10-2-08

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.