

# Town Topics

# Township of Livingston

## Council Members

Gary S. Schneiderman  
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## Inside:

*Inside View:*  
 Water Pollution Control Facility 2

Recycling Batteries & Appliances 4

Local Ordinances 5

Revaluation Update 5

Results of "Trash Talk" 6

Cutting Edge: Mobile Plate Hunter 900 7

Improving Our Streetscapes 7

Free Health Department Screenings 8

Farmer's Market 8

Summer 2008

[www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org)

## Preserving Livingston's Open Space

### An Overwhelming Response

Voting booths in 2002 saw Livingston residents prove an important point: that they genuinely care about preserving the Township's open space.

That's when the community overwhelmingly approved a referendum to establish an Open Space Trust Fund.

The Fund was created to finance the purchase and preservation of open space in Livingston. Residents' approval of that property tax of three cents (\$.03) per \$100 of valuation has made a significant impact.

Since 2002, the Open Space Trust Fund has acquired three properties for preservation.

*(Continued on page 4)*



The Township's Open Space purchase of Orchard Hill includes two-and-a-half acres on Hillside Avenue.

## Your Municipal Budget: State Mandates & Local Cost-Cutting

### Reducing Impact

Like many municipalities across the State, Livingston's 2008 budget must incorporate both increased pension mandates and loss of State revenue.

However, increased efficiencies and long-range planning are helping to reduce the impact of these losses on the local tax rate.

Though the 2008 tax rate shows an increase of 8.2%

over last year, less than one-third of that is attributable to local operations.

### Documented Savings

Township Manager Michele Meade, in presenting the

*(Continued on page 3)*

**Inside View:****Water Pollution Control Facility****Inconspicuous & Industrious**

Barely visible from Eisenhower Parkway, an immaculately kept thirty-three acre Township facility sits on Naylon Road. This critical part of the municipal infrastructure operates 24/7, but is rarely seen – or even given a thought – by residents. Livingston’s Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) receives about a million gallons a day of wastewater (influent). It all comes from the sanitary sewer system that connects to Livingston homes, businesses and industries. Now, that’s a lot of wastewater!

**Crystal Clear**

Upon arrival, wastewater goes through a carefully monitored, multi-step process:

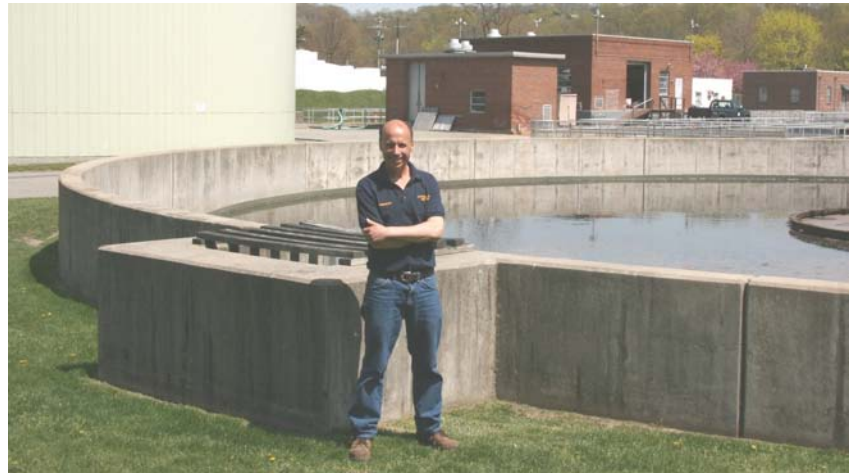
1. Grit removal
2. Clarification
3. Aeration
4. Nitrification
5. Disinfection
6. Chlorine neutralization

Only after all of these steps have been successfully completed is crystal clear water (effluent) released into the Passaic River.

Continual testing is performed at various stages of the process. This assures that the plant retains its discharge permit and meets the stringent standards of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

**Planning Ahead**

Most New Jersey towns rely on a regional plant. Having its own WPCF gives Livingston greater control. This means cost, maintenance, fees and operational decisions are kept in closer touch with the rate-payer base.



**Above:** WPCF Superintendent Joe Greco beside a tank that is part of the nitrification process. **Below:** Lab Supervisor Regina Horton conducts tests on the temperature and pH of influent and effluent.

For example, the DEP will be enacting more stringent regulations on phosphorous discharge. In anticipation of this, Livingston is currently undertaking a demonstration project to remove phosphorous through a chemical process. This proactive step could save millions of dollars in future plant modification costs.

**The Highest Standards**

WPCF Superintendent Joe Greco has more than 20 years of experience in wastewater management. He is active in both the State and National Water Environment Federation, and in the Passaic River Coalition.

Greco’s knowledge and proficiency are key to supervising the eleven-person WPCF staff. His under-



standing of DEP regulations and environmental issues enable him to plan appropriately for the future of the plant. He and his staff are dedicated to assuring that the Livingston WPCF maintains its reputation as an extremely well-maintained and well-run municipal facility.

**And That’s Not All...**

If you’d like to find out more about the WPCF, here’s some good news! Joe Greco and his staff will be hosting an “Open House” in the Fall. They will offer materials and facility tours to residents interested in learning more. Be on the lookout for further information later in the Summer!



**Reminder:** The decals on all the Township’s storm water drains are a reminder that, unlike water in the sanitary sewer system, this system empties directly into rivers and streams. It is important to never put oil, anti-freeze, dog waste, trash, or other pollutants into street drains.

**Your Municipal Budget** (continued from page 1)

\$42,868,609 budget, described measures taken in 2007. These measures have already resulted in documented savings of over \$550,000 and are enabling the Township to hold cost increases below the 3.8% cost-of-living increase, all without cutting services or programs.

These are just a few ways in which the Township has reduced costs through operational efficiencies:

- Establishing centralized fleet maintenance for Township vehicles,
- Creating a Building Maintenance Division within Public Works,
- Shifting the Parks Division into the Public Works Department,
- Consolidating contracts,
- Sharing equipment,
- Taking advantage of economies of scale,
- Utilizing skills of staff members more broadly, thus
- Reducing the need for outside contractors.

**Competitive Bidding**

Now that the Township has a Purchasing Manager, many more contracts are going out for competitive bidding. This results in significant savings when the Township purchases goods and services.

For example, through a competitive bidding process for the municipal recycling contract, the Township was able to:

1. Increase the types of plastics that can be recycled, and
2. Receive payment for its recyclables.

In 2006, the Township received no recycling income. In 2008, the Township anticipates recycling revenue of \$250,000.

**Stability**

To stabilize the tax rate and better anticipate capital expenses, the Township is using long-term financial planning.

According to Chief Financial Officer William Nadolny, “Multi-year

**Want More Information?**

For a detailed explanation of Livingston’s Municipal Budget, please visit the Township website at [www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org).

Click on **Legal Budget Document and Livingston User-Friendly Budget Guide,**

Or, call the Town Clerk’s office at 973-535-7940.

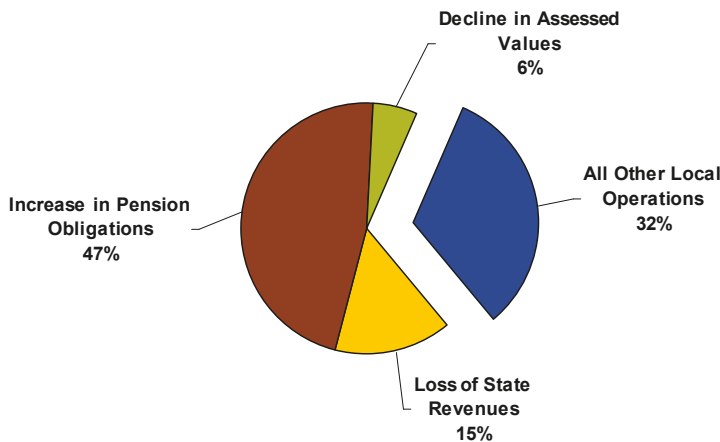
planning enables us to make more intelligent decisions and avoid stop-gap actions in response to crises or sudden changes outside our control.”

For example, a “snow removal trust” has been established. Budgeted money not spent for snow removal in one year will be set aside through this Trust to cover costs and avoid budget overruns in a future winter of heavy snows.

**On Average**

For the average Livingston home assessed at \$79,807, the 2008 budget represents an increase of \$176.76 in the municipal tax bill. Neither water nor sewer rates will increase in 2008.

**Township of Livingston  
Components of 2008 Tax Rate Increase**



## Recycling Batteries & Appliances

### More Recycling Opportunities

Are you wondering how to responsibly dispose of used batteries and old appliances like refrigerators and air conditioners? The Township's expanded Recycling Program has the answer!

### Batteries

Dispose of your used batteries in the specially designated containers located at the Senior/Community Center, the Public Library, and Northland Pool. Look for the large green containers marked "Recycling – Batteries Only".



### Large Appliances

Call Town Hall at 973-992-5000 to arrange for a special recycling pick-up of large, heavy metal appliances. These additional pick-ups for items like air conditioners, stoves and refrigerators will be done on the last Wednesday of each month. Not only will the metal be recycled, but you'll be adding to the Township's recycling income! ■



**Top Right:** Residents take advantage of Livingston's most recent Electronics Recycling Day.

**Left:** Just a few of the many used batteries collected for recycling. Disposed of in a landfill, their chemicals would have leached into the soil.



Visit [www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org) for more information about the Township's **Expanded Recycling Program**, including lists of acceptable and non-acceptable items

## Preserving Open Space *(continued from page 1)*

### A Picturesque First

Gateway North is a one-acre parcel of land located at the intersection of Laurel and Shrewsbury Avenues.

Acquired for \$350,000, this picturesque spot has a stream running through it and offers a lovely view to those entering the Township.

It also boasts proximity to hiking trails in twenty-nine acre Prospect Park.

### An Historic Second

Our second acquisition was Orchard Hill. It is located adjacent to both Board of Education and Community Center properties.

This approximately two-and-a-half acres on Hillside Avenue was most recently owned by the Pat Byrne family. The home on the property was built sometime between 1740 and 1780, and is being evaluated for structural integrity and historic significance.

Prior to its \$1.175 million purchase by the Trust, the land had been approved for a small sub-division. The

Open Space Committee is considering several uses for the property, including walking trails and community or historic gardens.

### A Recreational Third

Most recently, the Trust excitedly announced its most recent purchase: two acres of land adjacent to both Madonna Drive and to fifteen acres which were already owned by the Township.

The land was purchased for \$2.2 million from the Newark Archdiocese in cooperation with St. Philomena's parish. The purchase brings a positive conclusion to what has been an extended discussion of a controversial plan.

That plan, which was to develop mid-rise, multi-family residences on the site, was strongly objected to by parishioners, neighbors, and the Board of Education.

Now, the land will be used for recreational purposes, including full-size and "short-sided" soccer fields, and increased parking for events at the Memorial Oval.

### Win/Win

Councilman Steve Santola, a founder and active proponent of the Open Space Trust, explains, "The Trust provides two significant benefits. First, it offers the means for paying sellers a fair market value for their land. Second, it enables the Township to acquire land that has recreational, environmental or historic importance. An active program to preserve open space improves the appearance, livability and desirability of our town."

### State and County Grants

Our Open Space Trust makes Livingston eligible for State Green Acres Planning Incentive Grants and for grants from the Essex County Open Space Trust. As a result of the local Trust, Livingston has received annual State Planning Incentive Grants totaling \$1.8 million since 2003. This includes a matching \$300,000 grant received in 2007.

Essex County has been a partner in many of the Township's Open Space

*(Continued on page 5)*

**Preserving Open Space** *(continued from page 4)*

and recreational projects. The County provided 25% of the purchase price for Gateway North, as well as funding for the Littell's Pond renovation, Prospect Park trails, and Okner Fields. The municipal assessment per Livingston household is, on average, \$23 per year.

All the acquisitions to date have been funded by a combination of local, State and County monies.

**More Than Meets The Eye**

"It's easy to underestimate the amount of open space in

Livingston," observes Paula McGovern, chair of the Open Space Trust Fund Committee. "But we drove around, walked the town, examined tax maps and inventoried historic properties. It was surprising how many pockets of space there are that are undeveloped or underdeveloped."

Since its formation, the Committee has assessed 20 properties and met with eight owners to discuss possible land acquisition.

In addition to McGovern, the Open Space Trust Committee members are Sam Ratner, Renee Resky, Murray Lieber, Sue Fershing, Will Jones, Mary Ann Kotlarich, Township Manager Michele Meade, and Township Council liaison Arlene Johnson. The Committee welcomes suggestions from Township residents.

For more information about the Open Space Committee, please visit the Township web site at [www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org).

**Local Ordinances**

**Lawn Watering**

With warm weather comes flowers, grass, and the inevitable need for watering them.

Under Livingston Township Ordinance 26-2003, lawn (and athletic field) watering is allowed every other day only, on an odd-even basis. The system is simple:

- **odd-numbered street addresses** may water only on odd-numbered days, and

- **even-numbered street addresses** may water only on even-numbered days.

For those locations **without street addresses**, watering may be done as follows:

- odd-numbered days on streets with names starting in A through M, and
- even-numbered days with streets with names starting in N through Z.

Exceptions to odd-even watering restrictions include flowers, trees, shrubs, and vegetable gardens. These may be watered with watering cans or handheld hoses.

For more information, including a complete list of watering exceptions and acceptable watering methods, visit the "Ordinances" section of the Township website at [www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org).

**Revaluation Update**

**Moving Forward**

The Township is moving forward with the County-mandated Revaluation.

After extensive research and interviewing, and with the assistance of the Blue Ribbon Citizens Committee, the Town Council selected Appraisal Systems, Inc. (ASI) to implement the program.

**The Process**

Now that ASI has been selected, the appraisal process is scheduled to begin by the end of June and should take approximately five months. Assessments will then be calculated and mailed to residents by the end of the year.

**Keeping Informed**

As more information about scheduling and procedures is available, it will be published in the *West Essex Tribune*.

In addition, a special web site will be created. The site will discuss the Livingston revaluation process and answer questions that property owners may have.

This special web site will also detail progress throughout the entire process and will eventually list all data collected.

The site can be reached via a link from Township web site at [www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org).

**Do you have questions about or problems with your trash collection?**

Waste Industries invites residents to call with complaints or if trash is not collected.

To resolve a problem or have a question answered, please call Ernie, the Company's liaison to Livingston, at 973-583-5382.

## Results of "Trash Talk"

Judging from the number of trash cans sitting at curbside, many homeowners are not taking advantage of Livingston's free backyard trash collection service. To find out why, we invited residents to participate in an on-line "Trash Talk" Survey.

### To Haul or Not To Haul...

Of the 414 respondents to the survey, 60% said they haul their own trash cans to the curb, while 40% make use of backyard or side-yard pickup. (This suggests that non-users of backyard pickup were probably over-represented in the Survey sample.)

### Why Not?

The next logical question to ask, then, is why people still carry their own trash cans out to the curb.

At 40%, the largest group cited their concern over collectors skipping them or not putting containers back properly. This group believes the Township's backyard pickup to be inconsistent or undependable.

Another 16% said taking trash cans out is just a habit they haven't bothered to stop. A few respondents (<1%) cited security issues or preference to keep their backyard gates locked. And 12% of respondents indicated that they had not been previously aware of the service and might use it in the future.

### Different Views

Nearly two hundred respondents provided written comments to explain their views and practices. And based on the flurry of "Letters to the Editor" that soon followed in the *West Essex Tribune*, it seems we may have touched a small nerve.

Many people took advantage of the opportunity to praise the pickup service and compliment the courtesy and efficiency of collectors. Several referred to backyard

trash pickup as "one of the best services we have in Livingston". Some respondents commented that having trash cans at the curb is "unsightly" and regretted that everyone does not use the backyard service.

On the other hand, about 10% said they would prefer to eliminate backyard pickup and use the money saved to reduce taxes.

### Insight

The Township contract for backyard pickup averages out to \$64 per household per year. It was negotiated with two key points in mind:

1. Providing convenience to residents, and
2. Maintaining the Township's appearance.

Upon reviewing the survey results, Mayor Gary Schneiderman commented, "We appreciate that so many residents participated in this survey and thank them for sharing their views. Clearly, we need to do a better job, both in informing residents about the service and communicating to our trash collection company when there are shortfalls in service quality. We certainly will consider the survey comments when we negotiate the next trash collection contract. In the meantime, this is a service that has been paid and contracted for, and we hope that all residents will feel comfortable making use of it."

### An Invitation to Residents

Waste Industries is Livingston's trash collection company. They invite residents to call with complaints or if trash is not collected. To resolve a problem or have a question answered, please call Ernie, the Company's liaison to Livingston, at 973-583-5382.

## Cutting Edge: Mobile Plate Hunter 900

Michael and Dana Miller wanted to do something for Livingston. Lee Peyser understood their desire to “give back” to the community and put them in touch with Police Chief Michael Erb. The rest, as the saying goes, is history.

### State-of-the-Art

The Livingston Police Department is now one of only 5 police departments in the entire State equipped with a state-of-the-art Mobile Plate Hunter 900 License Plate Recognition System (LPRS).

Police Captain Craig Handschuch and Lieutenant Jeff Payne have overseen the entire project, from planning through installation and implementation. The end result has been even more impressive than they had anticipated. The speed at which the LPRS functions is nothing less than mind-boggling.

### Added Protection

Cameras mounted on the rear of the police car automatically read license plates at a rate of several plates per second. The Police car itself can be moving or stationary, and the LPRS **checks every license plate that passes**, traveling in either

direction. Each plate is instantaneously evaluated against two separate databases: the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Files and the FBI National Crime Information Center Files.

### Clear Benefits

The new LPRS provides an additional layer of protection for the Community. It does so while offering several distinct operational benefits:

- Working quickly,
- Operating easily,
- Requiring minimal manpower, and
- Identifying “of interest” or dangerous vehicles – those associated with open warrants, stolen vehicles, outstanding tickets, and expired registrations, to name a few.

### Cars, Not People

One thing the LPRS does not do is check on individuals. The system is designed strictly as a license plate program. The information it provides has to do with only one thing: whether or not the plate and/or vehicle has a violation within either the Statewide or Nationwide database.

Any other information – for example, the car owner’s name or address

– will still be checked manually by a Police Officer.

The big difference now is that instead of an Officer manually checking license plates for violations, the system will automatically check all the plates it passes and tell the Officer which ones need additional investigation.

### Proactive

In discussing the new LPRS, Police Chief Erb stated, “The Millers’ generosity has meant that the Police Department can afford this state-of-the-art-system years sooner than would otherwise have been possible. The LPRS allows us to be more proactive in protecting the Township, potentially preventing trouble before it has an opportunity to occur. That translates into the ability to respond more quickly, and to better protect and serve our entire community.”

Livingston Township is considered to be a charitable entity for income tax purposes, so gifts such as this one are tax deductible. For more information, or if you would like to make a donation yourself, please call the Township Clerk at 973-535-7940 for details. ■

## Improving Our Streetscapes

### Livingston Center

Sidewalk construction and streetscape improvements are well under way! This Spring, the Business Improvement District (BID) began improvements in the business district near Livingston Center.

The plantings, bollards and sidewalk improvements will stretch from Arden Road to Karig’s Hardware on Livingston Avenue, and from Ashby Drive to Rossmore Terrace on Mt. Pleasant Avenue.

The finished streetscape will resemble that of the Northfield Center business district. Plantings and construction were completed there last Spring.

BID projects are financed through assessments of the Township’s business and commercial enterprises. ■

The completed streetscape at Livingston Center will include textured pedestrian crosswalks similar to these at Northfield Center (shown at right).



# Town Topics

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Livingston, NJ 07039-3994

Phone: 973-992-5000  
Fax: 973-535-7967

Visit us online at  
[www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org)

Township of  Livingston

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Livingston, New Jersey 07039

## Free Health Department Screenings

The Nursing Division of the Livingston Health Department will offer residents several free Screening Clinics in July and August.

### Skin Damage Detection

- Location:** Northland Community Center
- Days:** Wednesdays, July 9<sup>th</sup>, July 28<sup>th</sup>, and August 6<sup>th</sup>
- Times:** 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
- Walk in or call for an appointment:** 973-535-7961, ext. 226, 227, or 228

All ages are encouraged to take advantage of this free screening!

### Blood Pressure Monitoring

Blood Pressure Clinics are offered monthly by appointment only.

- Fridays, at the Library:**  
June 20<sup>th</sup> and July 18<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
- Wednesdays, at the Senior/Community Center: (Lower Level)**  
July 9<sup>th</sup>, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, and August 20<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

**Please call for details and to schedule an appointment :**  
(973)-535-7961 x226, 227 or 228. ■

## Farmer's Market

Stop by the Livingston Farmer's Market and pick up something fresh!

- Day:** Every Thursday,  
June 12 through October 30, 2008
- Time:** 12:00 Noon – 6:00 p.m.
- Location:** Firehouse Commons,  
45 S. Livingston Avenue  
(behind Walgreens)

**What:** Locally grown farm-fresh produce, plants & flowers, cheese, breads, soups, sauces, chili, dips, pickles and more!

**Merchants Include:**  
Alstede Farms, Dr. Pickle, High Mountain Foods, Sy Griskonis Farm & Greenhouse, and Key Ingredient ■