

Freeholder Director Lanza Reflects On 2017 County Accomplishments

Freeholder Board Director John E. Lanza provides an end of year reflection on the County's accomplishments during 2017, including holding the line on spending and taxes, honoring veterans, recognizing the late founder of the 4-H Fair, and preserving significant acreage of open space and farmland, to name just a few.

2017: No Budget/Tax Increase For Fourth Year

"First and foremost, the Freeholder Board enacted a County budget that froze the budget and the tax rate for the fourth consecutive year, while continuing to effectively and efficiently deliver required County services.

In fact, the County is spending less in 2017, than it was in 2006. This significant achievement is a result of the hard work and dedication of the members of the Freeholder Board and the County staff.

A key factor in continuing to hold the line on spending and taxes is our success in bringing the business like approach of sound financial controls to County finances. The independent auditors' report for 2016 gave financial operations a clean bill of health and we expect a similar report for 2017.

Over 900 Acres Preserved in 2017

The Freeholder Board recognizes that land preservation is a priority in maintaining Hunterdon County's rural character and special nature. During 2017 the Freeholders authorized the preservation of 365 farm acres and 610 open space acres.

The County boasts the second most preserved farmland acres in the state, with over 32,000 acres preserved. And, working with our municipalities and our preservation partners, like the Conservation Foundation, Hunterdon Land Trust, and D&R Greenway, we have been able to secure more open space for parkland and to maintain the County's natural beauty.

Land preservation cannot happen without funding both from the County open space fund and other sources. That is why the 2017 finalization of the sale of the

327 acre Hoffman farm in Holland Township was so important. The \$1.65 million sale price and the \$1.473 million in state farmland funding meant gaining preserved farm land that was put back on the tax rolls, all at no cost to Hunterdon County and Holland Township.

Roger K. Everitt Fairgrounds

Hunterdon County lost Roger Everitt in 2017. In a moment that combined sadness with joy, I was honored to join my colleagues and the Everitt family in August to unveil the Roger K. Everitt Fairgrounds, at the South County Park site of the 4-H Fair that Mr. Everitt founded and led for so many years. Roger is missed by his family, friends, and all of us who knew him, but his legacy will live on.

Hunterdon County a Purple Heart Community

The Freeholder Board commemorated the 73rd anniversary of D-Day on June 6, 2017, recognizing the sacrifice of all military members wounded or killed while serving our nation, by designating Hunterdon County as a Purple Heart Community.

The Freeholders were honored to be joined at that meeting by members of Chapter 700 of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, including D-Day veteran Richard Betts of Lebanon. It was a moving experience for all in attendance.

More In The Next E-Newsletter

And there are numerous other 2017 County achievements that I will address in the next edition of the Hunterdon Report, including establishing the Hunterdon Report as an email communication for constituents.”