



DOES TRENTON WANT HUNTERDON COUNTY TO SUCCEED?

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Hunterdon County Chamber of Commerce is submitting its position to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection regarding their efforts to reclassify 749 miles of waterways in New Jersey from Category 2 to a Category 1 designation. This includes the South Branch River that runs through Hunterdon County.

The Chamber is truly committed to the preservation of all of the natural resources that make Hunterdon County such a beautiful and pristine part of our State. However, this re-classification will potentially have a huge impact on the future redevelopment and repurposing of many commercial sites throughout the County. In order to have a favorable business climate and encourage opportunities, the State of New Jersey needs to make its regulations and the process by which decisions are made transparent and predictable.

We have seen, like the rest of the State, a major shift in demographics over the past decade here in Hunterdon County. Declining population, businesses relocating to other regions, increased burden on the business community in terms of regulations and demands have all had detrimental effects. However, despite these challenges, in the past 8-10 months we are beginning to see progress in the right direction.

This movement is starting to drive confidence back in the commercial investment market here in Hunterdon County and there are positive indicators of where our economy is headed. There are companies that are making significant investments in Hunterdon County. ExxonMobil located in Clinton Township is finishing up a major reinvestment into its site, which has expanded their workforce. Unicom Global has purchased the former Merck headquarters site and is positioning it as a research and technology park.

At the end of the day, this re-classification of waterways has the great potential of hampering if not shutting down development and investment throughout Hunterdon County. The impact this might have on our Municipal Sewer and Water Authorities to provide adequate supply for the demand to grow our County will be stifled. A very good example is that the Borough of Flemington which utilizes the Township of Raritan's Municipal Utility Authority could be greatly impacted on future growth. The lack of capacity the Raritan Township Municipal Utility Authority might be restricted to in the future will mean less water and sewer capacity to bring the Borough of Flemington back to its full economic potential.

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection needs to put forth the clear and transparent way they have come to their conclusions on making these determinations. They need to hear what the municipalities are saying regarding their economic futures and how this rule change will greatly hinder commercial investment in this region. One of the greatest assets Hunterdon County has is our beautiful landscape and mix of communities and commerce. However, with the number of existing commercial properties that don't have existing tenants or the number of properties that are currently underutilized, the State of New Jersey needs to work with our communities to ensure that we can not just survive, but thrive.

Sincerely,

President & CEO