

**Louis D. Greenwald, Chairman
Assembly Budget Committee**

March 26, 2008

**Legislative Budget and Finance office
State House Annex
PO Box 068, Room 140
West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08625-0068**

Thomas E Harper, Mayor
Wrightstown, NJ 08562

I would like to thank the committee for this time to testify on behalf of the residents of Wrightstown Borough, I am Thomas Harper, Mayor of Wrightstown Borough.

Wrightstown Borough is a very small community in Burlington County; population is only 749 people per our 1.1/4 sq miles.

As the Mayor, I am here to speak with you on opposition to Governor Jon Corzine's, recommendations to cut state financial aide to certain size municipalities.

I am aware that NJ has a financial problem, and that this didn't just happen overnight, that the problem has been going on for quite some time.

I am aware that you should not and cannot try to balance the state budget on the backs of small communities, as well.

Wrightstown Borough's budget for 2007 was 1.1 million, and with what the Governor has put into his budget for us, it will be a 49.4% reduction.

A loss of \$543,439.00! Just to keep my budget even, there would be an increase of \$1.75 tax rate for my residents. Where is the tax relief in that?

The borough has had and will continue to look at shared services, for we know this is the future.

We are a NO frills Government. You have before you a copy of our accounting of our shared services.

I am not against cuts to get the budget balanced, but not all at once, there has to be a way to make it fair to all.

10% a year for 10 years, or something along those lines, for everyone.

Give us time to adjust and recover, and I believe we can.

All six of my full time employee's, wear many hats and have learned to do more with less. This to me is a pure form of consolidation. Most of my employees' start young, learn the business, and move on to the private sector or bigger municipalities with better pay. At first I was disappointed, but than realized...this is the way it is with a small community.

Let me give you one example of a dilemma that we are facing in my town, the state construction code:

The program is called Permits New Jersey; the state of New Jersey has its own permitting software program. The system constantly times out while entering permits, constantly crashes, and software support for this program consists of one person.

Because of these issues, we would constantly be late with permits. Before the end of last year we were able to get by with the reason for the lateness was because of faults with their system (the States), this is no longer an acceptable reason for lateness of permitting. Because of this, I was forced to purchase another system.... with a hefty yearly maintenance fee. This is just a very small part of the State of NJ, telling municipalities, how to run their towns and not providing the cost or means to ensure that it is met with properly.

The budget? How to improve? Lets look at what NJ is paying to have vehicle's inspected by an outside agency, why not let private NJ enterprises do this? I believe that 15% to 20% of inspections are now done this way. Why not let them do it all and save NJ the money.

NY & PA, our neighbors, already and have been doing this privately for years.

Again, I would like to thank you for taking the time to listen to what I have to say. I hope that my words will have some impact for the smaller towns of New Jersey.

Wrightstown Borough shares the following Services.

1. School (Shared with New Hanover)
2. Court (Shared with North Hanover)
3. Emergency Medical Services (Shared with North Hanover)
4. Fire Services
5. Animal Control (Shared with Upper Freehold Township)
6. Apartment Trash Pick Up (County-wide shared service administered by AVR Resource Group)
7. Municipal Alliance (Shared with New Hanover)
8. Global Imaging Services (Shared with Burlington County Technology Information Office)
9. Mosquito Control (Burlington County Mosquito Control Commission)
10. Road Stripping (Burlington County Traffic Department)
11. Recycling (County Program)
12. The Borough participates in the Burlington County Shared Services Forum which is a group formed for the sole purpose of finding and implementing shared services throughout the County.
13. The Borough and Plumsted Township have conducted a feasibility study for sharing water and sewer services.
14. Our Tax Collector, Tax Assessor, Construction Official, Construction Subcode Officials and Finance Officer also work for other municipalities thus avoiding the need for full time employees and benefits.
15. The Borough Shares meeting facilities, office equipment, labor and supplies with the Wrightstown Municipal Utilities Authority

Wrightstown Borough Shared Services Relieving State of Responsibility

1. Construction Office shared with Springfield Township
2. Fire Prevention Bureau provided to New Hanover Township

The New Hanover/Wrightstown School District shares the following services.

1. Transportation
2. Natural Gas purchase (Burlington County Natural Gas Consortium)
3. Copy Paper purchases (Pittsgrove Twp. Consortium)
4. Wrightstown/New Hanover Municipal Drug Alliance (after school programs)
5. Purchase of class room supplies (Educational Data Services Cooperative)
6. Burlington County Substitute Registry Member for reduced rates
7. BC Education Services (PT Counseling/Speech Services)
8. New Hanover for Maintenance assistance and equipment loans
9. Wrightstown Borough for snow removal and application of salt and sand along with trash removal and recycling