



City of Bridgeton  
City Hall Annex, 181 E. Commerce St, Bridgeton NJ 08302

## **Ask the Mayor** a monthly impromptu column

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On behalf of the Bridgeton Public Works department I want to express our sincere thanks for getting the cars off the street with the snow storm. I witness first hand how big of a difference it made during this amazing snow storm. I know it still will be days before thing return to normal but your cooperation really helped getting the city streets cleared.

A few weeks ago Bridgeton's Business Administrator and I met with the Dept. of Community Affairs or (DCA), Local Finance Board over the Distressed City Program that the city has been in for sometime. We were able to secure two million two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$2,250,000.00) to fill in the budget gap we face this year. DCA has supplemented the city's property taxes to close the gap made years ago when property taxes were not raised to cover the cost of city services this lead the city to receiving a subsidy that has gone on till now. Now we have a new governor who I fully support, who has the task of trying to rein in the entire states financial problems and lower operating cost at all levels of government without raising taxes. As you may have read in the papers over the past few weeks this Distressed City Program is over and over the next four months we need to find ways to eliminate our dependence of state aid.

The major problem that is unique to County Seats in New Jersey is reduced ratable. Some fifty-two percent (52%) of all property in Bridgeton do not pay property taxes. From our state prison, state buildings, county owned properties, to non-profits not paying property taxes but, requiring all city

services that are paid for by the other forty-eight percent (48%) of property owners. Residents need to understand that like the country, state, county raising taxes is not a popular option, so that means cuts in service. Furloughs, layoff, or job stoppages only reduce cost for the short term; we need to think long term about what Bridgeton wants moving forward.

The city has started the process of evaluating what our town is moving towards with its recently finished Master Plan. Currently we are working on a Visioning Plan and just recently we are starting to meet with our downtown business and property owners to develop a redevelopment plan that will provide the frame work to maximize the potential of the downtown.

Bridgeton's goal is to be self sufficient yet affordable. It would be a fair commitment if non-profits, Federal, State and County governments would support the county seats at a percentage of their impact to the host community. Please call your Federal State and County officials and demand a permanent host community fee that will help not just Bridgeton but all county seats to provide the basic services for all residents of New Jersey.