

# THE RIGHT WAY

A Newsletter to the residents of River Edge from  
Councilman Sandy Moscaritolo - (Candidate for Mayor)

## Don't Be Fooled Again

With the November election approaching, 22 year politician and 12 year incumbent Mayor Watkins is up to her old tricks about redevelopment at Huffman Koos. When she ran for re-election 4 years ago, she promised us a *“shovel in the ground”* with a food market, restaurants and retail stores. Watkins' campaign literature assured us that the property was clean, all approvals had been granted and that 25 million dollars in financing was secured. She was elected on that promise.

The shovel quickly vanished, along with the 5 million dollar building that was generating \$200,000 in annual tax revenue. Over the past three years, taxpayers have picked up the \$600,000 tab. It upsets me that thousands of people drive by on Route 4 every day and associate the fenced-in empty lot with River Edge.

Now with the current election upon us, Mayor Watkins suddenly announced “TOTAL WINE IS DOUBLING THE SIZE OF THEIR BUSINESS”, and that food markets and a major retail chain are also coming to the Huffman Koos site. Sound familiar? The announcement came as a complete surprise to borough officials, never mentioned at a meeting, and cannot be verified. Are you skeptical? When a member of the public tried to get more details at the Oct. 17<sup>th</sup> council meeting, Mayor Watkins refused to provide further information. The only thing happening is the Mayor's re-election bid. Mayor Watkins' promise fooled us once, DON'T BE FOOLED AGAIN. **Leadership Matters on Tuesday, November 8!**

## River Dell School Funding

Peg Watkins and I disagree on many issues. River Dell School funding is not one of them. I voted **NO** along with 3,374 of my neighbors. Her campaign ads accuse me of wanting to “negotiate” with Oradell on school funding. This is false. **To be clear, I have publicly written and stated that the present school funding formula is legal and fair. I never agreed to negotiate the funding formula.** What I said was I'm in favor of sitting down with Oradell to discuss ways *both*

towns could **save** money by more consolidation and shared services. It is always the same theme with the Watkins' campaign – try to divide our community, using scare tactics and partisan politics. From Washington DC to River Edge, NJ partisan politics is crippling this country. People are really fed up. **Leadership Matters on Tuesday, November 8!**

## **Record Tax Increase**

Municipal Taxes have **increased 15%** over the last 2 years under Mayor Watkins' council majority - **8% this year alone**. Much of the increase was the decision to pay off a \$458,000.00 debt in one shot. Instead of this tax increase, I proposed refinancing the debt at historically low 1.5% interest rates. Refinancing would have saved every homeowner a significant amount of money in these tough economic times. I was out-voted by the Republican-controlled council. In order to control taxes, I did the following:

- **I put an end to \$20,000 health insurance benefits for elected officials saving the taxpayers money.**
- **I voted against borrowing \$175,000 to fund a town-wide reassessment which is wasteful.**

Taking advantage of low interest rates and the prudent use of surplus had kept municipal taxes stable for 10 years. The Administration's new "slash and burn" fiscal strategy is to furlough rank and file employees and cut services and programs. Mayor Watkins promises more doom and gloom due to decreasing revenue. *Meanwhile, nothing is being done to actively seek available grant money or to reduce big ticket items like professional fees to those politically connected to the Mayor.* The fiscal policy of River Edge will only change with new leadership. **Leadership Matters on Tuesday, November 8!**

## **What Happened to "PAY AS YOU GO"?**

Mayor Watkins' new council was elected on the promise of "Pay as you go" and no new bonding. Guess what? After being sworn into office, over \$1,000,000.00 of new debt bonding began. In all fairness, a municipality needs bonding to run effectively. We all agree that capital repairs are needed at the DPW, the Library and Borough Hall. The Police Department desperately needs a new generator. That's what bonding is for. Here's the bottom line: Don't make

promises you can't keep. "Shovel in the ground", "Pay as you go". The Voters will remember and won't be fooled again

– Leadership Matters on Tuesday, November 8!

## **Town wide Reassessment – A shell game**

Mayor Watkins' council majority voted to borrow \$175,000.00 to do a new reassessment of all the properties in town. Generally, reassessments are required when tax assessments have fallen below 75% of their true value.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of a reassessment is to bring all the properties up to 100% of their true value. On October 1, 2011, the State Division of Taxation found that River Edge was up to 92% of true value for 2012.<sup>2</sup> I voted against the spending plan because the 8% drop in value simply did not justify the taxpayer expense. Again, I was out-voted by the Republican majority that wants to put the squeeze on taxpayers. Watkins and her majority say that the reassessment is needed due to the increase in tax appeals. The reassessment won't stop tax appeals. More often, a reassessment is like "ringing the dinner bell" for tax appeal attorneys to file even more appeals.<sup>3</sup>

The reassessment is a costly shell game played to give frustrated homeowner's the impression that the Mayor is doing something about taxes. Would you borrow \$175,000.00 so your taxes can go up? We will still be paying this loan off when it will be time for a full revaluation. In reality, a reassessment will not increase revenue. It is simply a waste of money. What's worse is that we are borrowing the money, so our debt increases in order to raise your taxes!

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## **The Properties**

Opinions differ on whether it was a good idea or a bad idea to buy the property next to the Cherry Hill School or the American Legion. **These purchases were not my decisions.** The fact is the council has a responsibility to maintain borough property. Just last year, in campaign literature, the Republicans, referring to these properties, promised that "going forward, we will seek grant monies for any incremental improvement to these properties ..." So why did Mayor

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<sup>1</sup> The Mayor boasts that "we saved 10%" of the cost by joining with Cresskill. The reassessment makes sense for Cresskill where the ratio is 76%. Why should River Edge taxpayers subsidize the cost of Cresskill's reassessment?

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/pdf/lptval/2011TEVBergen.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> My legal experience includes 25 years of tax appeal work for both municipalities and taxpayers.

Watkins support the Republican council when they **voted to return** a grant check for \$100,000.00 to the County rather than use the money for needed repairs at the American Legion? Was this another broken promise? If someone gave you a grant to repair your home would you return it? We own these properties; we have an obligation to put them to the best possible use. Grants are available. Don't play politics with town property and flush more of our tax dollars down the drain. **Leadership Matters on Tuesday, November 8!**

### **The Right Way – What I Will Do**

- Stop ugly partisan politics and find common ground *to unite our community*
- Launch a business development forum to find out why businesses have kept away from River Edge
- Comply with the Sunshine Laws (Open Public Records Act and Open Public Meetings Act)
- Build a strong relationship with our school districts
- Pursue consolidation and shared services with neighboring towns
- Support and encourage the army of dedicated volunteers that make River Edge great
- Go after funding for projects through County, State and Federal grants

### **The Open Door Policy**

I live and work right here in town so you can contact me by email at [smoscaritolo@riveredgenj.org](mailto:smoscaritolo@riveredgenj.org). Or call my law office at 201-225-2550. **Leadership Matters on Tuesday, November 8!**

### **Leadership Matters on Tuesday, November 8.**

Cast your vote for me, **Sandy Moscaritolo for MAYOR** and my running mates, **Kathleen Murphy** and **Thomas Papaleo for COUNCIL**. Together, we will work tirelessly to put River Edge back on a path of fiscal responsibility.

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