

## **Joint Press Release**

### **The Mayors of Belmar, Bradley Beach, Lake Como, Neptune City and Neptune Township To Form a Study Group to Explore Opportunities for Sharing Services**

The mayors of Belmar, Bradley Beach, Lake Como, Neptune City and Neptune Township issued a joint statement today announcing the formation of a study group to explore opportunities to share municipal services between and among their municipalities and with other government entities.

The mayors' proposed Shared Services Study Group is a response to the increasingly challenging economic conditions in New Jersey, and in particular, the State's looming budget shortfall and the likely negative impact that shortfall will have on municipal aid in the coming budget year. Like all New Jersey municipalities with populations less than 10,000, Belmar, Bradley Beach, Lake Como and Neptune City experienced substantial reductions in state aid last year, and are facing the possibility of additional cuts in 2009. While all of these municipalities already participate in shared service arrangements through inter-local service agreements with one or more of the other municipalities, this represents the first time these neighboring municipalities have come together as a group to undertake an organized and ongoing approach to exploring additional opportunities for sharing services.

In furtherance of that effort, each mayor will be asking his or her governing body to adopt a resolution formally authorizing the municipality's participation in the Shared Services Study Group. The resolution states that the purpose of the group is to "to work together to identify and research opportunities for sharing services between and among" the participating municipalities and with other governmental entities in an effort "to reduce the burden on our taxpayers, without sacrificing the quality of the services we deliver."

The resolution authorizing the formation of the Shared Services Study Group makes clear that the group is authorized only to study and investigate opportunities for saving money through shared services, as well as the availability of grants to study the feasibility of shared service arrangements. The decision whether to participate in a shared service agreement, or even to apply for a grant to participate in a study, must be made separately by each participating governing body.

"These difficult economic times make it all the more imperative that we explore every opportunity to cut the cost of delivering services to our residents,"

said Belmar mayor Ken Pringle. "The proposed study group will be a valuable resource as we work together to squeeze every last ounce of waste and inefficiency out of our municipal budgets."

"We towns are proud of our individual identities, our history, and our independence. We don't have to sacrifice that," said Bradley Beach mayor Julie Schreck. "Working with our neighbors, in a win-win manner, to distribute costs and improve efficiencies may be our best strategy for sustaining both our economic viability and our character."

"As the mayor of a small community such as Lake Como, I am obligated to take the concept of 'Shared Services' to the next level," said Mayor Michael Ryan. "At this juncture I am prepared to take whatever steps necessary to reduce taxes while maintaining the same level of services to our residents."

"Municipalities must make every effort to keep increasing costs from burdening our taxpayers while remaining fiscally responsible and presenting their taxpayers a sound budget." Neptune City Mayor Thomas Arnone added, "Exploring shared service opportunities with neighboring municipalities, allows us all to share our resources, knowledge, and possibly save taxpayer's dollars, while we each continue to maintain our own separate and unique identities."

"As an elected official of Neptune Township, I am obligated to explore every opportunity to save money and improve municipal services for our citizens," said Mayor Michael Brantley. "Studying how we can share services with other government agencies will give us just that opportunity to explore."