

MAYOR
SEAN EARLEN

TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
Jim Conway
Lewis Jackson
Kristin Januseski
Mike Mansdoerfer



Township Administrator
Brandon E. Umba

CFO
Robin Sarlo

Township Clerk
Debra Shaw-Blemings

Friends and Neighbors,

In the past few months, you -- Lumberton residents and business owners -- have swamped Township officials with emails and calls complaining about significant increases in your sewer bills. The Mount Holly Municipal Utilities Authority, which provides sewer service to Lumberton, has increased residential and commercial sewer rates by more than 40% over the last three years. The three-year phased increase was first approved by the MUA Board of Directors in June, 2013, and sewer bills reflecting the final phase of the rate increase began showing up in Lumberton mailboxes late last year. Like you, the members of the Township Committee must pay these bills and are frustrated by both the rate increases and the lack of transparency on the part of the MUA.

In response to the concerns expressed by residents, the Township Committee is exploring the rights of Lumberton residents and businesses. We believe that the Mt. Holly MUA, which services Mount Holly, Lumberton, Eastampton, Westampton, Hainesport and parts of Moorestown, is not operating fairly towards Lumberton, the largest municipality it serves. Consider the following:

- The MUA is governed by a five-member Board of Directors, all of whom are appointed by the Mount Holly Township Council. Several Mount Holly Councilmen serve on the MUA Board. When Lumberton sold its sewer system assets to the MUA, we were not given the opportunity to nominate our own member to the Board of Directors; since then, we have had no input in who represents the interests of Lumberton ratepayers.
- Mount Holly residents enjoy a 33% discount on sewer connection and meter fees, and a 25% discount on their sewer flow rates, in comparison to the other participating towns, including Lumberton. Our understanding is that the MUA gives Mount Holly residents this significant discount because Mount Holly is a "host town," which means the sewer processing facility is located in Mount Holly and its residents must deal with the associated costs and inconvenience. However, in 2010, the MUA opened a sewer receiving and processing facility on Maple Avenue in Lumberton Township and Lumberton residents enjoy no similar "host town" reduction in sewer service rates or connection rates.
- As a sewer authority, the MUA is by law entitled to a 100% property tax exemption on the 14-acre Maple Avenue tract, which means we have lost the ability to earn tax revenue on this property for as long as the MUA operates the facility.
- Attempts by the Lumberton Township Committee to air the concerns of Lumberton residents have been ignored. We have sent several certified letters to Mount Holly MUA Executive Director Robert Maybury, starting last summer, asking for a meeting to discuss our concerns, but he has never responded.

The Lumberton Township Committee is troubled by the actions of the MUA Board, the lack of transparency in decision-making, and the ongoing failure to consider the needs of Lumberton ratepayers, much less answer our letters. We are committed to exhausting all options that may be available to us to respond to you, our constituents and Lumberton ratepayers. I am asking for your support in this cause. Until the members of the MUA Board feel pressure to do something, nothing will change. To voice your concerns, please contact Mt. Holly MUA's Executive Director Robert Maybury at info@mhmu.com or at 609-267-0015.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean Earlen".

Sean Earlen
Mayor

35 Municipal Drive, Lumberton, NJ 08048
Phone (609)267-3217 Fax (609)267-5566