

COLIN BAENZIGER  ASSOCIATES

EXECUTIVE RECRUITING

Gary La Venia

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Resume

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Summary

With more than twenty-seven (27) years of government experience at the executive level, I am a proven leader with demonstrated skills in organizational development, management, finance, budget and human resources. I am experienced in management, policy development, review, interpretation and control of objectives, policies and procedures;

- Extensive management experience of government organizations on county and local level
- Strong leadership skills
- Proven organizational development ability
- Excellent communication/public relations skills
- Human Resource responsibility/labor relations & contract negotiations
- Proven Innovator
- Extensive finance & budget experience
- Certified Government Finance Officer
- Achievement Oriented
- Long standing membership on a number of State, County & Local Boards, Commissions, Committees & service organizations
- Employ a team approach to management

Relevant Experience

Township Manager, Township of Maple Shade, NJ

March 2010 – Present

The Township of Maple Shade, located in Burlington County NJ, with a population of over 20,000 the municipality has an operating budget of over \$20,000,000; it has 100 municipal employees to include three organized labor groups. The Township, which is approximately 5 square miles, operates a Municipal Water and Wastewater Treatment utility. In addition to my duties as Township Manager I am the Executive Director of the Utility which has a budget in excess of \$14,000,000. I am also the Emergency Management Coordinator for the Township with the responsibility of working in concert with State, County and local officials to insure the necessary planning, precautions, and contingencies are in place to deal with and all emergent situations to include man-made and natural disasters.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- CAO of the Township of Maple Shade and the Maple Shade Utility Authority
- Responsible for the overall management of the day to day operation and business affairs for the municipality
- Executive Director of the Water and Waste Water Management Utility
- Manage all matters pertaining to finance and budget, purchasing, personnel administration, contract negotiations and administration.
- Possess all executive and administrative powers pertaining to personnel and related issues.
- Interact on a regular basis with federal, state and local officials, community leaders and all others doing business with the municipality
- Prepare and oversee both the Municipal and Utility operating and capital budgets
- Emergency Management Coordinator

Achievements

- ❖ Instituting new updated web-site
- ❖ Creating and installing new energy efficient, green HVAC and lighting for municipal complex to include solar arrays on several Township facilities
- ❖ Expanding and updating computer hardware, software and services
- ❖ Expanding television access to council meetings for local residents
- ❖ Instituting customer service training for municipal employees

**Director of Burlington County Improvement Authority
Burlington County Shared Service Coordinator
Burlington County Bridge Commission, Palmyra, NJ**

February 2004 – February 2010

Burlington County, New Jersey is 850 square miles, the largest county in the State; it extends from the Delaware River to the Atlantic Ocean. The population is approximately 550,000 residing in 40 municipalities. Once, almost 100% farmland, roughly one third of the region is now extensively developed. Growth occurred at a tremendous rate. The remaining area is predominately farmland and pinelands preservation area; the most farmland and open space of any county in the state. I am the first Director of the Burlington County Improvement Authority as such I was responsible for proposing, organizing and implementing all activities of both the Improvement Authority and the Burlington County Shared Services Forum

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Direct all activities and operations of the Improvement Authority
- Intricately involved with development and redevelopment projects in Burlington County
- Develop and oversee financings for governmental, non-profit & certain, specific private sector entities
- Manage a team of legal & financial consultants
- Work closely with federal, state, county, local government officials, business, community leaders' & citizen groups on a regular basis.
- Handle special projects, special events, orchestrate, organize and conduct varied meetings
- Direct and coordinate ongoing shared service & consolidation efforts of local governmental entities in the County primarily through the Burlington County Shared Services Forum which I established and oversee as the County Shared Services Coordinator
- Interact regularly with federal, state, county and local officials and community stake- holders

Achievements

- ❖ First Director of Burlington County Improvement Authority
- ❖ Formed the Burlington County Shared Services Forum recognized as one of the most innovative organizations of its kind in the State
- ❖ Organized and directed \$400,000,000 in pooled government lending's and \$100,000,000 in private sector conduit lending's to date, managing a team of professionals involved in the process to include attorneys, financial consultants, other financial professionals and government officials
- ❖ Directly involved in the formation of an elected the first vice-president of the New Jersey Shared Services Coordinators Association
- ❖ Oversaw the initiation and implementation of the Burlington County Storm Water Management Plan, Burlington County Energy Conservation Plan, and Rancocas Creek Clean-up (a model project for the entire State)

- ❖ Published in the NJLOM Magazine, speaker at the NJ Government Finance Officers Association Conference, the New Jersey Association of Counties, and the New Jersey League of Municipalities Annual Conferences
- ❖ Burlington County Chamber of Commerce Voice of Business Award for Economic Development

Township Manager, Township of Riverside, NJ

July 1986 – February 2004

The Township of Riverside located on the Delaware River in Burlington County NJ has a population of over 15,000 with a budget of over \$20,000,000; it has 80 municipal employees to include two organized labor groups. The Township is 2.0 square miles making it the one of the most densely populated municipalities' in South Jersey. It is one of the most ethnically diverse communities in the county. The Township also has a Municipal Wastewater Treatment facility overseen by the municipality.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Responsible for the overall management of the day to day operation and business affairs for the municipality
- Manage all matters pertaining to finance and budget, purchasing, personnel administration, contract negotiations and administration.
- Interacted on a regular basis with federal, state and local officials, community leaders and all others doing business with the municipality
- Deputy Treasurer worked closely with the CFO to insure efficient and effective fiscal management
- Purchasing Officer- Directed all purchasing for the Township
- Certified Municipal Welfare Director and Registrar of Vital Statistics

Achievements

- ❖ Reduced health benefit costs by 40% while maintaining the same level of coverage for all employees
- ❖ Overhauled and reinvigorated a very poor Public Works Department into an effective and efficient group of motivated employees
- ❖ Substantially reduced other insurance costs for the municipality by becoming one of the founding communities of the Burlington County Joint Insurance Fund for which I served as the first secretary and subsequently chairperson for 8 years
- ❖ Installed the first computer network for servicing every department in the organization thereby creating efficiency, reducing workload, and increasing productivity of the workforce which increased and improved services offered to our residents
- ❖ Instituted the first township newsletter
- ❖ Named Chairman of the NJ League of Municipalities Legislative Committee on Pension, Personnel, & Elections Committee

**Executive Assistant/Environmental Administrator
Burlington County Health Department, Mt. Holly, NJ**

February 1984 - July 1986

The Burlington County Health Department provides complete health and environmental services to all 40 municipalities in the County of Burlington

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Personnel administration
- Overall supervision of the environmental staff
- Budget preparation and administration
- Right to Know Law administration for all of Burlington County
- Directly involved in the formation of the Burlington County Environmental Response Unit

Achievements

- ❖ Instituted the administration of the Right to Know Law for the County of Burlington and all municipalities in the county to include setting up a countywide education and training program for government professionals
- ❖ Directly involved in establishing the Burlington County Environmental Response Team
- ❖ Directly involved in establishing the Burlington County Hazardous Waste Disposal Program
- ❖ Employed as the first Environmental Administrator in Burlington County

Education

Rutgers University Graduate School of Public Policy **Master of Public Policy**
Emphasis on Finance & Budget, Organizational Development, Personnel Administration

Rutgers University **BA in Political Science (High Honors)**
Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement in Political Science, inducted into the Phi Sigma Lambda Honor Society

Burlington County College **AA Social Science**

Rutgers School of Continuing Education **Certified Government Finance Officer**
License #0888-0049

Professional Affiliations

Past Vice President - New Jersey Shared Services Coordinators Association
Chairperson - Burlington County Local Advisory Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (LACADA)
Burlington County Chamber of Commerce (Member of the Economic Development Committee)
Member & past chairperson of the Riverside Twp. Redevelopment Advisory Committee
Maple Shade Township Main Street NJ Board of Directors (part of Main Street USA)
Burlington County Route 130 Advisory Committee (past chairman 1997 -2004)
Member, Burlington County Anti-gang Task Force
Member NJ League of Municipalities Legislative Committee (Past Chair Pensions, Personnel and Elections subcommittee)
Maple Shade Advisory Board of Commerce
Chairman for the Professional Managers Municipal Joint Insurance Fund (Past Chair of BURLCO JIF)
Sitting member of the NJMEL
ICMA

CB&A Interview

Gary La Venia

Education

MPP, Rutgers University Graduate School of Public Policy, New Brunswick, NJ
BA, Political Science, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

Experience

Township Manager, Maple Shade, NJ	2010 – Present
Burlington County Bridge Commission, Palmyra, NJ	2004 – 2010
Director of Burlington County Improvement Authority, Burlington County Shared Services Coordinator	
Township Manager, Riverside, NJ	1986 – 2004
Executive Assistant/Environmental Administrator, Burlington County Health Department, Mt. Holly, NJ	1984 – 1986

Background

Mr. La Venia is currently the Township Manager for Maple Shade, NJ. Maple Shade has a population of 20,000. The Township employs 110 people, eleven of whom report directly to him. The Township's general fund budget is \$15.7 million, with an addition \$8 million for the sewer and water, making the total budget \$23.7 million. The three most important issues currently facing Maple Shade are:

- Business development. With its close proximity to several large cities and on the path of two major freeways, the Township is attractive to businesses. It has taken every step possible to make the permitting process as easy as possible. The township also helps business development by establishing redevelopment districts which offer incentives to prospective companies. While the township has taken the necessary steps to promote business development, it needs to continue working at it and attract more companies;
- Maintaining the level of services. Although Mr. La Venia successfully maintained services over the past two years, his efforts required considerable creativity and time. In 2011 he helped centralize the Township and County police dispatch systems. This move eliminated four positions, which provided the money he needed to continue with the same level of service. A tax increase totaling just \$80 per year per household was also instituted. Without financial help from the State, each township must continue to struggle to pay for services and more creativity will be needed; and
- Revenue losses. Continuous property value declines, coupled with the increases in tax appeals, have negatively affected revenues. Mr. La Venia has fought to avoid tax increases but, when the Township's revenue continued to fall, increase became inevitable. Though the increase was minimal, if the trend of lost revenue continues, Maple Shade will have to look at reducing service level, increasing taxes or taking on more bond debt.

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Interview Comments

Mr. La Venia is eager for a new opportunity, which is why he has applied to Key West. He has a broad and distinctive background with experience working for a health department, bridge authority, and township. So far he has spent his career in New Jersey, one of the most regimented states in the United States, and his skills will easily transfer to another local government. Key West is a tourism magnet with a diverse population. Mr. La Venia is excited about learning how to handle the types of challenges raised by tourism and the issues of living on an island. He knows how to govern a municipality, and moving to Key West would simply require adapting to this wonderful unique community.

Mr. La Venia's management style is inclusive. He seeks the input of the staff professionals and is well aware that he does not know everything. He needs to hear the opinions of others to ensure he understands each issue to its fullest. Good communications are key to his successful management style. He believes strongly in holding regular staff meetings where each department director shares what their specific department is facing and asks for advice from the others. Using this technique, everyone learns and works as a team, rather than in separate silos.

The staff Mr. La Venia has worked with over the years would say he is a fantastic manager. He has pointed them in the right direction when they needed such guidance, but otherwise allowed them to do their jobs with little interference. He is a coach and an adviser to his staff. His elected officials would say they are happy with Mr. La Venia's performance. He is good at accomplishing his assigned tasks and keeping the elected officials informed. They would add that he is productive and moves the Township in the direction they want it to go.

Mr. La Venia strengths have helped him be successful as a manager. These strengths are his ability to lead, ability to understand complex issues, his knowledge, and his fairness. He has helped make positive change through his leadership. The ability to understand complex issues is a must in local government. He has a grasp not only on the specific topics but also what the people affected by their decisions will be faced with. He can examine an issue, see all sides, have empathy, and take into account what is required to make something happen. Mr. La Venia has gained considerable knowledge in his lifetime, both through his education and from his experience in management. This knowledge has been crucial to his success. Lastly he believes in being completely fair. He provides services to all citizens in the same manner and does not make exceptions for anyone. He applies the same standards to everyone he works with and serves.

Weaknesses are not easy to discuss, but none the less Mr. La Venia has them. One of his weaknesses is that he is nice to a fault. While being pleasant is not a weakness in itself, he gives the benefit of the doubt to his employees and the community. A few times this choice has proven to be the wrong one. Still he does not see how he might change this aspect of his personality –it is part of who he is. A second weakness is that he occasionally gets angry too quickly when dealing with incompetence. He does not take the matter lightly when people do not perform simple tasks or put the organization in harm's way. His niceness does not prevent

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him from quickly stopping a situation that could damage the services or image of the Township. Finally, his last weakness is that he relies too heavily on his professionals. Given his heavy workload he does not have the time to get immersed in the details of projects and generally takes at face value the information given to him by his department directors. The result has been he has been asked questions he could not answer and realized he should have asked the follow-up question.

Mr. La Venia does not have a formal performance measures, but he evaluates all aspects of his operations based on the budget. He is able to gauge how much of the expected capital improvements were completed and calculate whether or not they were completed at a reasonable cost. He also performs annual employee evaluations for the administrative staff.

Reflecting on twenty-seven years of municipal work, Mr. La Venia could point out dozens of projects he is proud of. One venture he is very excited about is bringing commuter light rail transportation to Burlington County. The proposal was highly contentious, but he pushed forward knowing it would eventually benefit the County. Now rail transit has become one of the largest engines for economic development in the area. People initially opposed to the idea now see the advantages of a rail system.

Another project Mr. La Venia is especially proud of was his reorganization of the Shared Services Committee. When he was given the assignment to head the committee, it consisted of a twelve person panel that rarely met and had only half a dozen people attending. He transformed the committee into a forum that allowed for dialogue and generated meaningful discussion. By the time of his departure the forum was regularly attended by between 60 to 80 elected officials plus business and municipal staff members who expected to be affected by the topic of conversation. For instance, if the subject to be discussed was whether to consolidate fire services, a large number of local firemen would attend. Many regionalization or consolidation ideas were hotly debated, but those concepts needed to be discussed for the benefit of each municipality.

The biggest failure of Mr. La Venia's career occurred in Riverside. Around 1998 he and the Mayor established a 120 acre industrial redevelopment area, which included a building on the historical registry. Soon after, an engineering firm purchased the historical building. The township expected that this firm would completely renovate the building and that would attract other businesses. However, the firm chose only to restore the first two stories and left the remaining six in their existing dilapidated condition. The building did not promote the industrial park. After several years he came up with the idea to approach economic development in the area differently. He went to the Council with a proposal to use eminent domain and purchase the building, after which Riverside would completely renovate the building and place condos or senior housing there. The Council hoped to see this historical building renovated but wanted the work done by a private developer, without the use of eminent domain. Ten years later the building still sits there, in even poorer condition. Mr. La Venia learned that, although he brought in experts to convince the elected officials of the benefits of eminent domain, he could not

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change their minds. Sometimes elected officials do not share his vision and, while he still thinks he chose the best path, he must follow the vision set out by the Council, not his own.

When asked, Mr. La Venia indicated he has fired people but does not enjoy the process. He attempts to take steps beforehand to prevent firing an employee such as counseling or rehabilitation for those who have failed drug tests. He follows the organization's guidelines for progressive discipline. That requires thorough documentation and ensuring he has all of the background and necessary information. If an employee does not heed the counsel or does not make necessary changes, then firing the person becomes essential to the success of the organization.

Many of the challenges facing Key West are typical of all cities in the country, such as economy and maintaining services. Beyond these, the additional challenges facing Key West are:

- Tourism related issues, such as how to keep tourists and residents happy;
- Storm management;
- Emergency management; and
- Beach re-nourishment.

If hired as City Manager, Mr. La Venia would take the first six months:

- To get to know the staff, community, businesses, and especially the Council;
- Not attempting any drastic changes as he learns the culture, and the ins and outs of the job;
- As a top priority, to get to know what direction the Council wants the City to move in and how they feel about the staff; and
- Applying the same process to the staff, listening to what they think requires change and identifying the people who are strong in their positions, and those who are not.

Mr. La Venia has had a positive relationship with the media during his career. He is as direct as possible and says as little as he can. As another aspect of his philosophy for working with the media he does not over embellish any story. Being factual is important when speaking to reporters. Lastly, he encourages his elected officials to avoid answering any questions they are not required to. To assist here, he suggests they direct difficult questions to the public information officer or person within the City whose job responsibility is answering such questions. Having just one person communicating with the media projects a more unified front with less opportunity for error.

In his time off Mr. La Venia enjoys golfing, going to the gym, skiing and reading. He also loves going to the beach, which will be a great past time in Key West.

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Reason for wanting to leave current position

Mr. La Venia is excited about the prospect of managing Key West. After spending his whole career in New Jersey, he is prepared for a new challenge. He is looking for a different environment to work in and is excited about Key West and its diversity. Although he is ready for a change, he is extremely selective in the positions he is willing to apply for and Key West is at the top of his list.

Words or phrases Mr. La Venia uses to describe himself:

- People person,
- Fair,
- Knowledgeable,
- Even tempered,
- Policy oriented, and
- Community oriented.

Current salary

\$120,000 + a car

Interviewer's impressions

Competent, confident and experienced. Particularly knowledgeable of budgets and economic development.

Interview completed by:

Emilee Anderson
Colin Baenziger & Associates

Candidate Response to Requested Questions

Questions for the Candidates

Please answer each of the following seven questions. Brevity will be appreciated – in other words, if you can answer the question with a short answer, we would appreciate it. Some of the following questions will require longer answers, however and we realize that. For those, to the degree possible, try to limit your response to each question to 500 words or less (approximately one page with one inch margins, Times New Roman font, single spaced).

1. Describe your experience in finance, budgeting, cost control, infrastructure and maintaining an efficient organization. As part of your answer, describe the approach you would take to evaluating our organization to insure it is operating as efficiently and effectively as possible.

I am now and have, throughout my career, been directly involved in budget development and financial management. Utilizing input from department heads, and historical data detailing expenditures, while working closely with the CFO it has been my practice to present the most prudent document practical taking into account that unexpected events routinely occur and as such contingency must come into play.

Currently, I prepare an operating budget, and a capital budget for both the municipality and the utility. My situation demands financial accountability, New Jersey has a 2% cap on the operating budget appropriations, allowing only limited very specific exceptions and a 2% levy cap.

I have practical experience in preparing budgets for fiscally distressed communities and will be very candid in saying that Council must establish realistic priorities, services often times are effected, personnel reduction may occur. Declining revenue is the norm at this juncture in time and as such hard decisions are being made.

My approach to evaluating the organization to insure it is operating as efficiently and effectively as possible would entail:

- A comprehensive review of the labor force to determine if the operation is utilizing the labor force in the most productive way possible
- I would look at whether the organization has enough, not enough or perhaps too many employees, if cuts are warranted if so where? Administrative, public safety, public works, recreation?
- A determination as to what services are of the greatest priority police, courts, streets and roads, community development, social services, recreation?
- Is privatization of services a viable alternative to create efficiency through the use of the economies of scale realizing a loss of some control is oft times an inherent consequence?
- I believe this must be a deliberate, detailed, comprehensive process with extensive input from key staff members.

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2. Describe your experience with sustainable communities and a tourism based economy.

My current community is currently involved in working toward earning state certification as a sustainable community. We have a comprehensive recycling program, composting for vegetative debris, solar on public buildings, a water conservation ordinance is in place, and water restrictions are the norm. The community is in the process of completing a multi- community waste water re-use project. We follow strict storm water regulations and provide storm water education to public officials on an annual basis. The municipality is looking at the envelope and lighting in all buildings as well as setting aside dollars to upgrade HVAC to insure maximum energy efficiency. The next step in the process will be to institute the purchase of green vehicles to create a green fleet.

I have not had the opportunity to work in a community whose primary source of income is tourism based. I understand that the responsibilities of providing services to the residents, both those who live there year round and seasonally, are of great import. I am also cognizant there are needs to be a focus on creating a welcoming atmosphere, the need to sustain community appearance and desirability, provide an environment and policies that encourage the types of business that cater to that particular clientele while creating employment opportunities for the residents. In addition, I see the need to insure all public amenities are maintained in good, clean, safe working order for the protection of the user and the community. I also realize there must be great emphasis to foster a work force that is customer friendly.

3. Significant weather events occur from time to time in Key West. Describe your experience preparing for and dealing with the aftermath of storm events and /or natural disasters.

As the Emergency Management Coordinator for the Township of Maple Shade I do on occasion deal with severe storms, in my case many are snowstorms. I have not experienced the need to evacuate an entire community, which I realize is always a possibility in an area susceptible to hurricanes such as Key West. I have worked with the Red Cross and other Emergency Management organizations and professionals. I have manned the Emergency Management operations center as part of an Emergency Management team during severe weather as recent as last year when this area experienced hurricane force winds and tropical rainfall. What I did was on a lesser scale but no less critical or procedurally different. Securing shelters, insuring they were stocked with necessary provisions, placing all Emergency and Public Safety Personnel on standby securing outside vendors for additional equipment and supplies if required is all part of the planning and if necessary execution of the operation.

4. Describe your experience building effective teams, facilitating consensus, and bargaining with unions.

As a manger team building is vital to building a successful organization. Utilization of regular staff meetings, insisting taht department heads are aware of issues faced by their

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counterparts, sharing ideas, varying points of view, possible solutions is an effective means of team building, one I use on a consistent basis.

Facilitating a consensus can be easy, difficult or sometimes impossible it depends on the issue the willingness of the parties to look at all the factors involved and compromise, if necessary, if that what it takes to move forward. My responsibly is to present all the facts and options in an unbiased manner with a recommendation. Council's responsibility is to the review the facts, weigh the options, weigh my recommendation and move forward based on the information they are presented with coupled with the input from they receive community and other interested parties.

I am currently in negotiations with three unions, the PBA, the Teamsters and the Police Senior Officers. I have negotiated or been part of labor negotiations for the last 25 years of my career in public service. This process has become increasing more challenging over the last 6 years. I have found it very effective to utilize the services of labor counsel and am currently doing so, especially in dealing with public safety unions.

5. Key West prides itself on its diversity and its accepting attitude toward all groups. Describe your experience in encouraging diversity within your organization and working with diverse community groups. What role do you intend to play in the Key West community?

Riverside Township, where I served as manager for 18 years, was a very diverse community and as such required the ability to be able to interact with diverse groups of people who at times had competing interest or priorities. Organizationally, I have always made it a priority to employ the most qualified individual regardless of who they are. I enjoy interacting with diverse groups of people, realize that different groups, have different backgrounds, different life experience at times this creates different expectations, fears, concerns, and points of view. I have always made it a point to hear what the other person is saying, try to understand where they are coming from and respond in a forthright manner.

I see myself as an active member of the community. I like to be actively involved with different organizations; I enjoy participating in community events. I like speaking to community groups, it provides a good way of getting to know the people who live in your town and it gives them a chance to interact with you. I like to be a part of the community I live in.

6. From your research and knowledge of Key West, what do you believe are the four biggest challenges facing the community in the next four years? Have your faced similar challenges your prior employment experience, and how might they assist you in developing strategies to successful respond to those challenges?

Allow me to break down the four issues cited in the recruitment brochure.

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- The reconstruction of North Roosevelt Blvd – the questions has do you reconstruct a major traffic artery, especially in a city with one way in and out with minimum disruption. Every artery in New Jersey is a major artery; no-one wants to cause a delay. This state has 9,000,000 people who all seem to be on the road at the same time along with many more traveling up and down the northeast corridor. My approach is basic, road construction takes place at night after 8:00 PM and ends by 6:00 AM. Construction is done in such a way as to insure the cart way is passable every day during peak travel times. Cost is a factor as you may pay premium prices for labor, but if the project is competitively bid you can hold costs down, especially in this economy. This is tried, true and effective in keeping traffic disruption to a minimum. Couple this with effective, straight forward dissemination of information to include at least one public hearing with the engineer, contractor and appropriate city officials on hand to thoroughly review the project detailing what travelers should expect can minimize anxiety and preclude a great deal of consternation.
- The homeless problem is a difficult issue for any community; I would surmise it is an even greater issue for a community whose economy is based on tourism. As an aside I recently traveled to Portland Oregon, a wonderful city, unfortunately there are a large number of homeless. One of the first things I recall when I think of the city is the number of homeless; I found it disturbing. No locality wants that. No community wants this issue to be one of the first things someone passes along to another when they are describing their visit.

As a former Welfare Director I realize the tremendous strain this situation places on a municipality, a county or for that matter a state. At the same time the solutions are difficult. Do you push them out of the city? No, that is not effective or equitable. Do you provide appropriate housing? Possibly, this is very expensive but effective for a portion of the population. What about the portion of that population that consist of substance abusers or the mentally who often refuse shelter? Do you rely on charities such as churches, non-profits, the Salvation Army or like minded organizations? Yes, at every opportunity.

Is all of this effective? In my experience, somewhat, but not entirely, this is a difficult issue at best, it has become epidemic in this economy leaving communities leaders to make what are oft times difficult, sometimes unattractive, or unpopular choices.

- Enhancing the appearance of the community sounds like an easy task.
In reality, that takes determination, resources, and the will to do what is required when it comes to dealing with delinquent or neglectful property owners. A strong, comprehensive property maintenance code administered, strictly and uniformly is an effective way of dealing with this problem. As for public properties, the city has an obligation to maintain them to, at minimum the standard they would expect of business and residential property owners. In reality, in an economy that depends on tourism the resources necessary should be set aside to insure they are always maintained at a very high level.
- Carrying out the city's comprehensive plan, as in enacting any Master Plan, requires establishing priorities, setting short and long term goals, identifying resources, then moving forward in a deliberate, concise, incremental manner.

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While this requires leadership on the part of the Manager in carrying the process forward, the impetus for setting the direction often lies with Council, municipal boards, community organizations and other stakeholders.

7. Assume for the moment that you are the City Manager of Key West and you are doing next year's budget. Your preliminary numbers project a significant budget deficit. What departments would you look at in terms of cutting expenses? Would you consider layoffs and benefit reductions?

I have been directly involved in budget preparation and the evaluation of services for much of my career. It should be noted that while evaluation of services is a function of budget preparation, it is also a policy decision that must be discussed and approved by Council. The ramifications of service cuts are often more than budgetary and, as such, merit more than monetary consideration.

The last three years define fiscal stress. Declining revenues, a deflation of equalized valuation, declining property values, an increase in foreclosures, coupled with escalating costs, especially in energy and health care, have wreaked havoc on the budgeting process. I have been somewhat fortunate in the fact that each year for the last three years I've had surplus revenues to help offset expenses. Even in light of that, I have had to act to curtail services. Last year I reduced my labor force by four positions with layoffs and over the last two years, I have reduced an additional four positions through attrition. Fortunately, this represents a small cut in service which has not been noticed by the residents of this community. In addition, property taxes have gone up each of the last two years.

There is no easy fix in this economy; in light of declining revenues, priorities must be established. Essential services must be identified and funded. Secondary services are always first to be cut. Before any cuts are made; it is incumbent on me and staff to explore all avenues to create efficiencies through better use of resources or through the utilization of the economies of scale.

Nothing is off the table, to include the possibility of privatizing certain departments, layoffs, a reduction in benefits, perhaps some type of employee furlough program in lieu of layoffs. Everything is open for discussion.

Background Checks

**Background Check Summary for
GARY F. La VENIA**

Criminal Records Checks:

Nationwide Criminal Records Search	No Records Found
County	
Burlington County, NJ	Results Pending
State	
New Jersey	No Records Found

Civil Records Checks:

County	
Burlington County, NJ	Results Pending
Federal	
New Jersey	No Records Found

Motor Vehicle

New Jersey	No Records Found
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Credit

Very Good

Bankruptcy

No Records Found

Education

Results Pending

Employment

Confirmed

Background Check Summary for GARY F. La VENIA

Personal Information Questionnaire

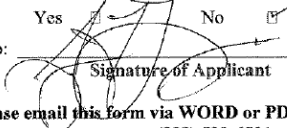
Name of Applicant: Gary F. LaVenio

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony?
Yes No
2. Have you even been involved in a domestic abuse incident that resulted in you being arrested or that was covered by the media?
Yes No
3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy?
Yes No
4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
6. Have you ever been convicted of driving while intoxicated?
Yes No
7. Have you ever sued a current or former employer?
Yes No
8. Do you have a personal My Space, Face Book or other type of Web Page?
Yes No
9. Do you have a personal Twitter Account?
Yes No
10. Is there anything else in your background that might cause a reasonable person concern if he/she became aware of it through the press or any other mechanism?
Yes No

Attested to:


Signature of Applicant

Please email this form via WORD or PDF DOCUMENT to kknutson@cb-asso.com or via fax to (888) 539-6531 no later than 9:00 AM 04/23/2012.

(Note: Please be sure to sign the form with your actual signature if you are sending Fax or PDF Document)

Reference Notes

Gary La Venia Reference Notes

Richard Brook – Township Administrator, Florence, NJ 609-499-2525

Mr. Brook became the Township Administrator of Florence in 1989, which is when he met Mr. La Venia who was the Township Manager of neighboring Riverside. They have remained in contact throughout the years and have collaborated on various projects. Mr. La Venia is a thorough and knowledgeable manager. He communicates affectively which is one of the best qualities a manager can have.

Mr. La Venia has a great grasp of financial issues. He generally prepares the budget himself rather than delegating it to his Finance Director. He has a good relationship with his staff. He is not someone who claims to know everything but rather is not afraid to ask his employees for clarification if he does not fully understand a situation. However, when an employee does not perform up to standard, he is equally not afraid to move forward with disciplinary action.

When Mr. La Venia was the Burlington County Shared Services Coordinator he created a place for municipalities to convene and discuss the opportunities they might have for collaboration. He personally organized numerous seminars on various services with the intent of starting discussion about whether or not it would be feasible to share services across other municipalities. The seminars were open to the public, and business owners attended regularly, rounding out the discussion on how municipal decisions could possibly affect all aspects of the community. Mr. La Venia's passion for regionalization and collaboration began in Riverside where he was instrumental in putting together a joint insurance fund. He also helped several municipalities pool their debt together to save money on interest rates. Finally he pushed to pool the contracts for natural gas and energy needs so they could negotiate better prices.

New Jersey is a tough state to work in due to the extremely regimented nature of municipal affairs. If Mr. La Venia succeeded in New Jersey, then he can succeed anywhere in the country. He has the integrity and skills necessary for facing any challenge. He will make a fantastic City Manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Mr. La Venia:

- Even keeled,
- Well respected,
- Effective,
- Communicator, and
- Pragmatic.

Strengths: Well rounded, self-starter, knows insurance and bond issues, and a good communicator.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Gary La Venia Reference Notes

**Kristi Howell-Ikeda – Executive Director, Chamber of Commerce, Burlington County, NJ
856-439-1948**

Ms. Howell-Ikeda has worked with Mr. La Venia since 2005. He did a great job for Burlington County and is currently doing a great job for Maple Shade.

When Mr. La Venia worked for the Bridge Commission he acted as the liaison for the Chamber of Commerce. He helped the Chamber receive much needed sponsorships and supported the Chamber's vision. He kept Ms. Howell-Ikeda well informed.

Mr. La Venia has not been involved in any controversial issues or events. He supports his community with integrity. He has changed the Maple Shade culture in the short two years he has been there. The Township was previously known for not being business friendly. He took it upon himself to help the downtown redevelopment organization meet its goals and collaborate on plans for further progress.

Maple Shade has already gone through a political fight with the government transitioning from one political party in majority to another party now in control. This shift caused some turmoil but Mr. La Venia brought common sense to the situation and helped the elected officials work together better than they had in several years.

Ms. Howell-Ikeda does not have daily interaction with Mr. La Venia but, from her perspective, he has done an excellent job so far, and she has no reason to believe he would not continue as a great City Manager for another municipality.

Words or phrases used to describe Mr. La Venia:

- Outgoing,
- Collaborator,
- Sense of humor,
- Committed, and
- Community oriented.

Strengths: Follows through, and bridges the gap between municipalities and businesses.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Linda Marriot – Manager, Business Association, Maple Shade, NJ 609-352-3390

Ms. Marriot has worked with Mr. La Venia since 2010. They are in communication, in different forms, at least once each week. They have built a strong working relationship. Mr. La Venia does a fine job as Township Manager. She hears even better comments from those who work more closely with him.

Gary La Venia Reference Notes

Mr. La Venia has good rapport with his elected officials. He has not engaged in any negative activities which have embarrassed the township, and has immersed himself in the community. He has an obvious knowledge of budgets, understands the budgeting process, and can balance a budget.

The previous Township Manager retired after serving Maple Shade for 28 years. This former manager had become entrenched in his ways and was no longer performing some of his duties. When Mr. La Venia came to the Township he created more links between the City and its community organizations. His style included more transparency and open communications with the police and fire departments. Also, if a citizen wanted to come to Town Hall and speak with him directly, Mr. La Venia could be found in his office and he answered phone calls. In the past people had to leave messages on voice mail or would not be able to meet with the manager because he was nowhere to be found. Mr. La Venia changed the concept of customer service. Ms. Marriot no longer hears complaints concerning the manager's office. Instead she receives calls about how responsive Mr. La Venia is and how he treats people as though their problems were the most important matters on his list of items to address.

Mr. La Venia understands all aspects of town management with the experience to support him as a quality candidate for City Manager. Ms. Marriot definitely recommends him for the position.

Words or phrases used to describe Mr. La Venia:

- Represented the City well,
- Nice,
- Reserved and quiet initially,
- Friendly,
- Ethical, and
- Accessible.

Strengths: Budgeting, making presentations, relating to businesses, and getting things done.

Weaknesses: The Township has some long term employees who continued to be a problem in customer service. She is unsure how well he manages troublesome employees.

Chris Bishop – Reporter, Burlington County Times, NJ 609-871-8140

Mr. Bishop has reported on Maple Shade and has known Mr. La Venia since 2010. Mr. La Venia has done an outstanding job so far. He displays a confidence that people pick up on; so they feel good about him being at the head of the organization.

The Township Council listens to Mr. La Venia, and he shows great respect for them in their position as the policy makers. He does a superb job managing daily operations very smoothly. Residents have not complained about his treatment of them, which leads Mr. Bishop to believe

Gary La Venia Reference Notes

he takes care of peoples' concerns. He makes quality presentations because he is articulate and clearly expresses himself.

As Township Manager, Mr. La Venia has dealt with controversial issues, such as the possibility of locating a marijuana medical treatment center in Maple Shade. Obviously this has been a hotly debated issue and is not yet resolved. However, he remains calm and plays his role by providing unbiased information to the Council.

Mr. La Venia will do a magnificent job as City Manager, and Mr. Bishop recommends him.

Words or phrases used to describe Mr. La Venia:

- Competent,
- Not a politician,
- Laid back,
- Reserved,
- Community oriented, and
- Friendly.

Strengths: Gets to the point, and cooperative with the media.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Richard Horton – Township Committee, Riverside, NJ 856-764-1447

Mr. Horton worked with Mr. La Venia in Riverside from 1986 to 1998. Mr. La Venia did a phenomenal job as Township Manager.

Mr. La Venia was astonishingly good at balancing the various personalities and agendas on the Council. The standing of the political parties swayed back and forth from Democrat to Republican several times during his time in Riverside. Despite these changes he maintained his position, which speaks to how well he performed his duties. He never backed down from an assignment from the Council provided that what was requested of him was legal and ethical. He kept Mr. Horton informed via telephone calls or office visits.

Residents enjoyed working with Mr. La Venia. If a taxpayer with a problem called him, he responded immediately and either resolved the matter himself or delegated it to the appropriate department. If he did delegate the problem to someone else, he always followed through to ensure that person was happy with their town's service. He made ordinary citizens feel that none of their issues were small; if they were concerned, then those issues concerned him even more.

Mr. La Venia is a creative manager, an especially essential trait in the position he had. In a small town such as Riverside where he had a small number of employees, he found ways to provide important services with less financial cost. He combined the Planning Board and the Zoning

Gary La Venia Reference Notes

Board into one and called the new entity the Land Use Board. By combining the personnel and board members he helped the Town accomplish more.

Mr. La Venia can handle the financial side of a municipality very well. He worked collaboratively with the Treasurer to put the budget together and swiftly made adjustments in case of emergencies. He knew where the money was and how to move it around if necessary.

While Mr. La Venia would have liked to make more changes in Riverside the Council was extremely conservative in its spending decisions. For instance, he proposed constructing a new and much needed town hall; however, although they respected his opinion they were not willing to designate the funds for such a project. Still, he was able to turn around the Spring Garden Park. The Park was in a problem area where illegal activity was rampant during the night, and families were afraid to play there during the day. He worked closely with the Police Department to address the illegal activity issue and assigned other departments to position more lighting and build better playground equipment at the park. It soon became one of the Town's most pleasant places to visit.

Over the entire eighteen years Mr. La Venia served as Township Manager he never complained about his salary or what he was asked to do. He appreciates a challenge, which is probably why he is applying for another position. He will make a great City Manager because he is capable and has the experience to do the job.

Words or phrases used to describe Mr. La Venia:

- Articulate,
- Mild mannered,
- Gets along with everyone,
- Helpful,
- Family oriented, and
- Community oriented.

Strengths: Hard working, cooperative, bipartisan, easy to work with, and experienced.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Jeffrey Hatcher – Business Manager, Delran, NJ 856-461-3341

Mr. Hatcher has known Mr. La Venia since about 1989. They managed neighboring communities. They have worked together in some capacity through all the positions Mr. La Venia has held. He is an incredible manager.

Riverside was a tough place to work. People on both sides of the political spectrum are vocal and openly fight over issues. He calmly went about establishing collaboration and consensus

Gary La Venia Reference Notes

among the different Councilmembers and successfully stayed in his position for almost two decades. He left this position of his own accord to pursue new experiences.

Mr. La Venia is a nice person and Mr. Hatcher is certain that this trait extends to how he works with residents. As a manager Mr. La Venia works with the public on a daily basis, through phone calls and personal meetings. He also makes presentations to various groups within the community and at Council meetings.

They were two of the three original managers who established the Joint Insurance Fund. In the first year Mr. Hatch was Chair and Mr. La Venia was the Vice Chair, and they swapped positions in the second year. Initially the Fund comprised ten cities and has since grown to over twenty.

Mr. La Venia did an extraordinary job as the Shared Services Coordinator. He organized meeting on topics common to most, if not all, of the County's communities. He helped organizations entrenched in how they had always operated and got them to collaborate with other towns. He also helped with bonds for towns through the Bridge Authority.

Controversy is not uncommon in local government, but Mr. La Venia has never taken actions that would bring controversy to any of the organizations he worked for. He will easily transition his skills to another city and will be an unbelievably good City Manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Mr. La Venia:

- Some think he is reserved,
- Outgoing,
- Thoughtful,
- Listener,
- Gauges situation and can be quiet or talkative, and
- Personable.

Strengths: Helps people move forward, and works well with people who have diverse issues.

Weaknesses: Mr. Hatcher is not exposed enough to Mr. La Venia to identify any weaknesses.

Charles Hilton – Former Township Committee Member, Riverside, NJ 856-461-0252

Mr. Hilton worked with Mr. La Venia from 1995 to 2004. Mr. La Venia did an excellent job for Riverside and in 2004, when Mr. La Venia was looking to leave, Mr. Hilton tried to convince him to stay by offering further incentives.

The Township Committee members in Riverside are part time but Mr. La Venia remained in constant contact with them to ensure each member received the same information. He could be innovative when the situation warranted, but overall the City did not have enough money to

Gary La Venia Reference Notes

tackle many new ideas. He was creative with how he provided services to the community given that he had such a small staff.

Mr. La Venia could be described as both a leader and a manager. He led the employees in meeting the Town's goals but also simultaneously managed processes. His financial skills are top notch. He put together the Riverside budget, and if a revenue problem arose he could easily resolve it. The Town went through budget cuts during various periods, but Mr. La Venia assisted the Committee as it made decisions on appropriate cuts without significantly affecting services.

For the first part of Mr. La Venia's tenure he worked on many capital projects. When the Town was finally ready to move forward with such plans the market crashed, and those projects had to put them on hold. He eventually worked with private developers and got the work to proceed by offering incentives to those developers.

Mr. La Venia had a strong commitment to combining resources with other municipalities in the region. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Joint Insurance Fund and getting neighboring towns to pool their bond debt to obtain lower repayment rates.

Customer service is a definite strength for Mr. La Venia. He engages people when he speaks to larger groups and when meeting one-on-one with citizens. He takes their issues seriously and addresses them promptly. As a man of integrity, he never did anything to embarrass the Town.

Mr. La Venia is an outstanding manager and should be considered a top candidate for any City Manager position.

Words or phrases used to describe Mr. La Venia:

- Outgoing,
- Good personality,
- Sense of humor,
- Fair,
- Flexible, and
- Experience.

Strengths: Knowledge base and contacts within the state.

Weaknesses: None identified.

**Rosemary Flaherty – Director, Community Development, Maple Shade, NJ
856-779-9610 ext 151**

Ms. Flaherty has worked with Mr. La Venia since 2010. He is a team player and approachable, just a couple of the qualities which make him a fantastic Township Manager.

Since Mr. La Venia's arrival in Maple Shade he has updated the township's website to make it more user friendly and instituted changes to many of the Standard Operating Procedures. He is very good at keeping the elected officials and staff well informed. Each week he sends a report

Gary La Venia Reference Notes

to the Mayor and Council, with copies for department heads. He also set up regular staff meetings which have increased communications and created a team atmosphere. These examples illustrate that he is a leader first and foremost.

The taxpayers are Mr. La Venia's top priority. He has focused the Town's approach as being more public friendly. If a problem or issue needs to be addressed he immediately gets to work on the matter and ensures that it is dealt with. He is a member of most community organizations as well, putting himself forward as an advocate and volunteer for the Township.

As a manager Mr. La Venia considers his staff's feelings when he approaches a situation while at the same time keeping his organization's financial and political health as his focus. He has not hired very many people, but he has secured some of the top regional contractors. He has helped Ms. Flaherty gain an understanding of the other side of an issue as well. One construction official she hired wanted to branch out and start his own department. Ms. Flaherty resisted because she had helped put the Community Development Department together in the first place and could not see the benefit in this person's plans. Mr. La Venia organized a meeting with these two individuals and the other department heads to discuss the situation. During this meeting she began to recognize the advantages this change would bring. She holds no animosity toward the Construction Official and is thankful Mr. La Venia allowed her to come to the conclusion on her own before the change was made.

In his short two years in Maple Shade Mr. La Venia has initiated road improvement programs, funded by grant money, and had new, energy efficient HVAC systems put in place at several townships facilities. With his state contacts he managed to get more projects accomplished more quickly and efficiently than others could. He took over responsibility for preparing the budget. Previously the Finance Director did this job, but it regularly took several revisions before the Council approved it. However, Mr. La Venia successfully got each budget he had prepared approved the first time.

Mr. La Venia made numerous changes in Maple Shade, and change can foster controversy. He makes decisions he thinks are the best for the Township. He has been a breath of fresh air, giving the Township a new pulse. She would regret losing him, but he is at a point in his life where he is ready for change. Ms. Flaherty highly recommends him for a City Manager position.

Words or phrases used to describe Mr. La Venia:

- People person,
- Outgoing,
- Fun,
- Nice,
- Fit and youthful,
- Down to earth, and
- Follows through.

Strengths: Economic development, working with other government entities, budgets, and master planning.

Gary La Venia Reference Notes

Weaknesses: None identified.

Armando Riccio – Contracted Labor Counsel, Maple Shade, NJ 856-914-2079

Mr. Riccio has worked with Mr. La Venia since 2010. Mr. La Venia has been accessible and easy to work with.

The two men communicate on a daily basis when they are dealing with a project or issue. Mr. Riccio does not get as many phone calls from Maple Shade as he does from the other municipal clients he has. To Mr. Riccio fewer calls are an indicator that Mr. La Venia works well with his staff, and he deals with problems before they become large enough to require an attorney.

Mr. La Venia is a wonderful communicator. He gets his point across whether he is dealing with a situation one-on-one or in a group setting. He does not try to impress upon others that he knows everything but rather admits if he does not have the answer to a question. If he is unable to answer someone's question he seeks out the information and provides it to them promptly.

The concept of eliminating longevity pay for nonunion employees was once suggested as a way to cut the budget. Mr. La Venia researched the idea and concluded that, while he could legally take such action, he might end up pitting nonunion and union employees against each other and possibly have nonunion employees leave the organization because of this change. He examined the situation in a practical manner. He is prepared to accept Mr. Riccio's advice or consider his suggestions, but may not always follow it if he can identify a legal and more practical solution.

If Mr. Riccio were on an interview panel for a City Manager he would closely consider Mr. La Venia because of his broad background with managerial and leadership skills to get the job done.

Words or phrases used to describe Mr. La Venia:

- Flexible,
- Multifaceted,
- Can be aggressive if the situation warrants it,
- Ethical, and
- Knowledgeable.

Strengths: Day-to-day operations, well rounded, and knows more than the average manager.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Deborah Crowe – CFO and Treasurer, Riverside, NJ 856-461-4299

Ms. Crowe worked with Mr. La Venia from 1986 to 2004. He did an incredible job as the Township Manager and caused the City no heartache or problems.

Gary La Venia Reference Notes

Mr. La Venia and Ms. Crowe's offices were next door to each other; so they were in constant contact throughout the day. During his time in Riverside he hired several people most of whom have remained, with little turnover. He was a hands on manager but did not micromanage. He made his employees feel that he worked with them, not that they worked for him. His approach helped establish a positive, open atmosphere where the staff felt comfortable coming to him when they required his assistance. In Riverside he had a staff of only thirty six people who offered all the services except trash removal and animal control. The Town's ability to provide quality services with such few numbers was testament to Mr. La Venia's ability to lead the organization at a high performance level. Overall he is both a leader and a manager. He rallied his employees to meet goals and managed the Town's processes well.

Riverdale residents had only good comments to make about Mr. La Venia. He reached out to people and helped them resolve their concerns. With his open door policy taxpayers could comfortably sit and meet with him if they wanted. He also took the initiative to reach out into the community and speak to local groups such as the Rotary Club or at senior citizen events.

Although Ms. Crowe is the CFO, Mr. La Venia also has his CFO license and worked closely with Mr. Crowe on financial matters. He has experience preparing budgets and is well aware of how to account for the municipality's revenues and expenditures. During his time in Riverside he balanced the budget each year and did so without causing controversy.

Riverside was mostly a built out town; so Mr. La Venia helped the Town focus on redevelopment. He attracted private developers and proactively conducted outreach to get others interested in the Town. He managed to get the Town started on construction projects which had been in the planning stages for years. He was an outstanding negotiator when dealing with the unions. Prior to Mr. La Venia's arrival settling each new contract could take several years. However, he managed to settle contracts within a couple of short months. He does not allow problems or crises to fester, but rather resolves them and moves on.

Ms. Crowe truly enjoyed working for Mr. La Venia and did not want him to leave in 2004. He will be an extraordinary City Manager. She highly recommends him for this position.

Words or phrases used to describe Mr. La Venia:

- Personable,
- Active in community,
- Always looks forward,
- Leader,
- Innovative, and
- Able to make changes happen.

Gary La Venia Reference Notes

Strengths: Knowledgeable, thorough, and dependable.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Completed by: Emilee Anderson, Colin Baenziger & Associates

Internet Research

*Internet Research
La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Burlington County Times (Willingboro, NJ)
April 5, 2012

Residents in Maple Shade can expect higher tax bills

Author: *Chris Bishop; Staff writer*

MAPLE SHADE - Taxpayers can expect to pay on average about \$82 more a year in property taxes under a \$15.06 million municipal budget.

The Township Council, which unanimously introduced the budget last month, will hold a public hearing at 7 p.m. April 26 at the municipal building on Stiles Avenue.

Under the spending plan, which is about \$289,945 higher than last year's \$14.7 million figure, taxpayers will see the tax rate rise from 61.9 cents to 65.9 cents per \$100 of assessed property value, a 4-cent increase.

The owner of a home assessed at the township average of \$205,000 will pay about \$1,350 in local purpose taxes, an \$82 increase from last year's figure of \$1,268. The amount does not include school, library, county or open space taxes.

The school board recently adopted a budget that will raise the average taxpayer's school taxes by about \$80.

The municipal tax levy will increase from \$9.7 million to \$10.2 million, \$526,039 more.

Aside from the usual rise in expenses for insurance and pensions, officials cited the decline in ratables, which are land and buildings that can be taxed. Local government depends heavily on ratables, especially commercial properties, to support services.

Officials said the community lost about \$17 million in ratables in the past year.

"It's a function of falling property values," Township Manager **Gary LaVenia** said.

Despite the ratable losses, **LaVenia** was positive about the business outlook.

"We are very fortunate in Maple Shade. We have a strong business base," he said.

He pointed to new businesses such as the development of a CVS pharmacy and Wawa on Route 73 as well as a Fiat dealership on Route 38.

Copies of the budget are available at the Township Clerk's Office from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

*Internet Research
La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Burlington County Times (Willingboro, NJ)

October 5, 2011

Another medical marijuana center proposed for county

Author: *David Levinsky; Staff writer*

MAPLE SHADE - Burlington County could potentially become home to two medical marijuana dispensaries if a nonprofit group receives local approval to operate in a vacant building off Route 73.

Compassionate Sciences Inc. is scheduled to appear before the township Zoning Board on Oct. 12 for approval to run a medical marijuana dispensary in the former Office Furniture Outlet.

Andrei Bogolubov, a spokesman for the nonprofit organization, said the board will decide if a dispensary is permitted under the existing zoning or if a waiver is required.

Bogolubov said his organization selected the building because it is easily accessible and isolated from residences. The building would be used solely as a dispensary for the drug, which would be grown elsewhere.

"We're looking at other areas of Burlington County for cultivation," said Bogolubov, who declined to identify the locations.

"We're going to put our best foot forward," he said Tuesday about the upcoming Zoning Board hearing. "We looked at sites that we believe would be acceptable to the community. ... The Maple Shade location, it stands alone and it's well situated for access and exits. Now it's up to the town."

Township Administrator **Gary LaVenia** declined to comment on the proposal. The township's zoning officer was unavailable for comment Tuesday.

Based in Sea Cliff, N.Y., Compassionate Sciences is one of six nonprofits that were selected by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services to grow and distribute marijuana to patients with debilitating conditions.

It is one of two groups approved to operate in the South Jersey region.

The other nonprofit, Compassionate Care Foundation Inc. of West Trenton, is targeting a vacant building in Westampton for both growing and dispensing operations. The proposed site is off Hancock Lane, near Route 541 and the Exit 5 interchange of the New Jersey Turnpike.

Westampton Township Administrator Donna Ryan said last week that representatives from Compassionate Care Foundation have met with municipal officials but have yet to apply for a certificate of occupancy for the building.

*Internet Research
La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Bogolubov said the potential close proximity of another marijuana dispensary would not be a factor.

"I suspect we're fairly close because of the traffic," he said.

If Maple Shade approves the dispensary location, Compassionate Sciences must still receive approvals from the Department of Health and Senior Services before it can open.

Items the group must submit include a site-specific security plan and a list of employees for criminal background checks.

Bogolubov said his group planned to employ about 10 or 12 people.

The nonprofit has no specific timetable for opening, but is working toward meeting the state's target of early 2012, he said.

"It's all contingent on approvals," he said.

Under New Jersey's medical marijuana law, patients seeking the drug must register with the state after receiving a physician's certification of a debilitating medical condition - such as cancer, glaucoma or HIV/AIDS - for which traditional drugs or treatments would not be effective, and for which the potential benefits of marijuana would outweigh the health risks.

The state will maintain a registry of medical marijuana users as well as the doctors who prescribe the drug.

Bogolubov said New Jersey's program is the most strict of any medical marijuana program because it does not permit chronic pain as a qualifying condition.

"Virtually all the abuses seen in other states come through that," he said. "That's not going to happen in New Jersey. You're going to have to be genuinely ill. That's a critical distinction, and I think it will make New Jersey a model for the rest of the country."

*Internet Research
La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Burlington County Times (Willingboro, NJ)

June 14, 2011

Maple Shade gets boost for sports field

Author: *Chris Bishop; Staff writer*

MAPLE SHADE - The township, well-known as a sports-friendly community, is getting some help for enhancing its athletic facilities.

The Burlington County Board of Freeholders awarded the township a \$250,000 grant that will cover in part the cost of extending the Woodlawn Sports Complex.

The sports area between Woodlawn Avenue and Collins Lane already has eight fields for baseball and softball, but another field was clearly needed, local officials said.

"We have a lot of kids in sports for a small town," said Heather Talarico, president of Maple Shade Soccer.

Talarico praised Township Manager **Gary LaVenia** for his work in securing the funding.

"Gary did a great job getting us the grant. It will definitely help," she said, noting that the township has 500 children involved in soccer alone.

A number of sports organizations in town could make use of the extra field, Talarico said.

"We will sit down with sports organizations to see who needs it the most," Township Councilman Jim Fletcher said.

The township acquired about 3 acres in 2007 on Collins Lane, adjacent to the Woodlawn complex, when it bought the Solomon tract. The land originally belonged to resident William Solomon, whose relatives sold it to the municipality for \$400,000. Solomon's house was torn down last year. The land, which still needs some grooming, runs up to the back of the playing fields.

Talarico said she preferred an artificial turf field, but that it may not be practical.

The next step is to see what an artificial turf field would cost versus a natural one, Fletcher said.

"We don't know if an artificial turf is too expensive," he said.

The plan is to get bids for natural and artificial fields.

The township is committed to funding up to \$800,000, Fletcher said. He said he didn't know what the final cost would be for the new field.

Internet Research

La Venia. Gary

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Officials have said the cost could go as high as \$1.5 million if "all the bells and whistles" are included, such as parking, concession stands and a bathroom.

Fletcher said he was grateful to the freeholders for their support through their Municipal Parks Assistance Program.

"Once again, the objective here is to assist towns in taking care of their local recreational needs at a time when they are facing budget constraints and must address other priorities," Freeholder Director Bruce D. Garganio said in a news release. "I consider this the 'no town left behind' program, in that our goal was to extend this grant opportunity to all 40 towns."

Fletcher said the council was supportive of the town's sports groups and added that if volunteers were needed, there would be no shortage.

Internet Research
La Venia. Gary

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

South Jersey Local News

February 19, 2010

New Maple Shade manager selected

by Gary McPherson

MAPLE SHADE—After several months of searching, Maple Shade has found its replacement for longtime Township Manager George Haeuber.

Council announced last week that **Gary LaVenia** will be taking over the reins starting on March 8. **LaVenia** currently serves as Director of the Burlington County Improvement Authority at the Burlington County Bridge Commission.

“We’re thrilled to death,” said Mayor Anthony Saporito. “It was an arduous selection process. The people of Maple Shade deserve the best to replace George.”

Haeuber is retiring after 25 years of service to Maple Shade, leaving big shoes to fill. But Saporito is confident that they have found the right man to do so.

“He (**LaVenia**) has tremendous experience with dealing with the ins and outs of government, said Saporito. “He was the township manager in Riverside for 16 years. That was the deciding factor—experience.”

*Internet Research
La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Courier Post - Cherry Hill, N.J.

Date: Oct 25, 2007

Panel asks Burlco to back bonds for projects

Author: CAROL COMEGNO

Burlington County was asked Wednesday to back an additional \$6.5 million in bonds the county bridge commission wants to sell to finance municipal projects in three communities.

Riverside, Mount Holly and Cinnaminson would benefit from the county's AA bond rating and save a combined \$171,000 in borrowing interest on the bonds, according to the bridge commission proposal.

The county board of freeholders adopted a resolution on Wednesday evening setting a public hearing on the request for 7 p.m. Nov. 28 in the county administration building.

During a workshop presentation that was made to the freeholders before the formal meeting, the commission's director of improvement authority operations said the \$6.5 million would be its eighth pooled general obligation bond.

Gary La Venia, the commission representative, said the bulk of the tax-exempt issue -- \$4.5 million -- would be for Riverside to pay for more than 10 projects.

The projects would include acquisition of land for a possible municipal government annex, an environmental study for the municipal building and improvements to local parks.

Cinnaminson's share would be \$1,463,000 for library, parks, playgrounds, roads and other improvements as well as purchases of police and public works equipment.

Mount Holly is seeking \$520,000 mainly to replace the heating and air conditioning systems in the municipal building and purchase a diesel generator.

The building on Washington Street was damaged during flooding of Rancocas Creek.

The county has backed \$363.6 million in capital projects and bond refinancing financed through the bridge commission's improvement authority powers over the last five years.

The combined interest savings to the county and participating municipalities on those bonds since then is \$13 million, according to **La Venia**.

If the measure is approved, the bonds would be sold in December.

Reach Carol Comegno at (609) 267-9486 or ccomegno@courierpostonline.co

*Internet Research
La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Burlington County Times (Willingboro, NJ)
September 7, 2006

Towns join forces to borrow

Author: *John Reitmeyer BCT staff writer jreitmeyer@phillyBurbs.com*

MOUNT HOLLY -- Three municipalities in Burlington County and the county Board of Freeholders are planning to borrow nearly \$30 million this fall through the county bridge commission.

The Burlington County Bridge Commission, which also serves as an improvement authority, is planning to sell bonds in November to raise money for the freeholders and local governments in Bordentown City, Maple Shade and Medford.

Gary LaVenia, director of improvement authorities for the bridge commission, outlined the bond issue during a freeholder conference meeting yesterday. He said sharing professional fees and using the freeholders' AA bond rating to get a strong interest rate would net about \$600,000 in savings for the participants.

"That's not too shabby," **LaVenia** told the freeholders. "It's a good-size issue."

The freeholders are planning to borrow \$5.8 million to continue improvements at the Parker Center at the Pemberton Township campus of Burlington County College, county Treasurer Christine Nociti said.

Bordentown City is borrowing \$4.28 million to buy a fire truck and improve old City Hall, the Gilder House and Railroad Avenue, **LaVenia** said.

Maple Shade is planning to borrow \$12.8 million to buy a fire truck and other equipment, demolish two buildings and make road and sewer improvements, he said.

Medford is borrowing \$6.5 million to pay for road and sewer improvements, vehicles and other equipment for the fire companies, communications and data-processing equipment and to improve athletic fields, he said.

The bridge commission was granted the authority in 2002 to organize pooled bond issues guaranteed by the freeholders. The three-member panel also operates the Burlington-Bristol and Taco-ny-Palmyra toll bridges.

*Internet Research
La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Courier Post - Cherry Hill, N.J.

Date: Mar 30, 2006

Officials want communities to cooperate

Proposed initiatives create incentives for municipalities to share services

Author: Anna Nguyen

A team of Burlington County legislators hopes a series of state initiatives will inspire municipalities to start sharing services in order to ease the property tax burden for residents.

Sens. Martha Bark, R-Medford, and Diane Allen, R-Edgewater Park, and Assemblymen Larry Chatzidakis, R-Mount Laurel, and Francis Bodine, R-Moorestown, introduced bills this legislative session that provide incentives to encourage local communities to share and combine services. The bills await assignment to committees.

"The theme here is about cooperation, and the state should be the catalyst for this," Chatzidakis said. The eight-bill package includes:

- Restoring funding to the state Regional Efficiency Aid Program to \$20 million to give towns an incentive to share services.
- Creating a task force to evaluate regulations that hamper municipalities in sharing services.
- Rewarding municipalities and counties by \$20 per person for reducing property taxes over three years. The money would have to be used for debt services or capital projects.

Chatzidakis said some of the bills were introduced in previous years, but he thinks they'll gain more support this year in light of the current budget situation. Last week Gov. Jon S. Corzine proposed a \$30.9 billion budget that would cut spending by \$2 billion and add \$1.8 billion in taxes in an effort to close a projected multibillion dollar gap.

"I think the timing is perfect for this," Allen said.

The sharing of services could occur between nearby municipalities or entities within municipalities, such as the municipal government and school district.

Currently, municipalities across the county go out to bid together for products such as fuel, said **Gary La Venia**, who leads shared services for the Burlington County Bridge Commission.

"I think the legislation encourages a mindset that New Jerseyans want at all levels of government -- cost efficiency and effectiveness," said David Rebovich, managing director of The Rider Institute for New Jersey Politics. "Republicans and Democrats, too, believe that they can identify more savings in state operations and programs through this year's budget process. My sense is that these bills can gain bipartisan support in the legislature," he added.

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Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Burlington County Times (Willingboro, NJ)

April 2, 2004

A time to share - Municipalities learning the value of pooling services, equipment

Author: *Editorial*

While you've been sweating bullets over income-tax forms, school and municipal officials have been struggling to craft budgets voters can live with.

Headlines the past few weeks have told the story:

An \$11.9 million budget in Tabernacle would see the owner of an average home paying \$61 in local school taxes. Medford's \$40.7 million spending plan is \$4 million more than last year's.

In Southampton, residents face a \$64 hit in the pocketbook for local school taxes if next year's budget passes.

We single out these communities not to suggest their fiscal planning is deficient, but rather to note there's a common denominator running through these figures.

It costs real dollars to run a school district or a municipality.

Energy, employee salaries, building maintenance, property insurance - these are immutable facts of life.

More than 50 representatives of Burlington County townships, school boards and utilities have taken an important first step toward saving taxpayers' money.

Your money.

The men and women participated in a meeting Wednesday of the Shared Services Forum, a program designed to encourage cooperation across township borders.

Burlington County officials organized the forum three years ago, hoping to reduce property taxes that were going nowhere but up.

Early on, participants took part in vehicle auctions and pooled purchases of equipment. They also found ways to share personnel, and co-sponsor employee-training programs.

But the organization ran out of steam, and membership fell away. Now the Burlington County Bridge Commission has stepped in to jump-start the effort.

Gary LaVenia is the commission's improvement authority director and the man who's helming the forum.

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A former Riverside Township administrator, **LaVenia** said after the gathering Tuesday that sharing a property-maintenance officer with Delanco saved his town \$20,000.

That may sound like a pittance compared with multi-million-dollar budgets, but it shaved a penny off Riverside's tax rate.

Multiply that by other examples, and soon you'll be talking real money.

Trenton has long recognized the value of shared service, as far back as the Whitman administration.

Now the office of Gov. James E. McGreevey has commended the bridge commission for assuming control of the initiative, and is encouraging the 566 municipalities in the state to buy into the philosophy.

Locally, the forum made the welcome decision to waive the membership dues it formerly charged to join its ranks.

It also helps that the bridge commission is administering the program in-house rather than paying a consulting service, as it had been doing.

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La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Burlington County Times (Willingboro, NJ)

April 1, 2004

Reorganized shared-services group draws crowd

Author: *John Reitmeyer BCT staff writer jreitmeyer@phillyBurbs.com*

WESTAMPTON - More than 50 representatives from Burlington County municipalities, school boards and utility authorities shared breakfast and ideas during the first meeting of the reorganized county Shared Services Forum yesterday.

The theme of the event, held at the county Special Services High School, was that cooperation with other governments can save taxpayers' money, and this is a good time to do that.

Gary LaVenía, the Burlington County Bridge Commission's improvement authority director, said he's been reading about rising budgets lately in the newspaper. **LaVenía** is a former Riverside Township administrator who noted sharing of a property-maintenance officer with Delanco saved his town \$20,000, which was nearly a penny off Riverside's tax rate.

"It does start to add up," **LaVenía** said. "I can speak from personal experience."

Burlington County organized a shared-services group three years ago in an effort to reduce rising property taxes.

Since then, the organization has held vehicle auctions, participated in pooled purchases of equipment and goods, and sponsored employee-training programs. The forum has also spawned agreements between governments to share personnel and equipment to save money.

The organization, however, has also seen its membership dwindle. The bridge commission, which oversees operations of the Tacony-Palmyra and Burlington-Bristol bridges and also serves as an improvement authority in Burlington County, sought to reinvigorate the group by assuming control from the out-of-county consulting firm that been running its meetings.

LaVenía said he was impressed with the turnout at yesterday's meeting, the first since the bridge commission became involved.

Maple Shade Township Manager George Haeuber, a member of the forum's executive committee and a longtime advocate of shared services, was impressed, too.

"It's gratifying to see the terrific attendance," Haeuber said. "That's a great thing and it leads us to the next step in this and that is to encourage dialogue, network and to get to know each other."

It helps that the bridge commission decided to administer the service for free and waive the membership dues that had been collected by the consulting firm, said county Freeholder Dawn Marie Addiego. "You can't beat the price of admission."

*Internet Research
La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Courier Post - Cherry Hill, N.J.

Date: Feb 26, 2004

Bridge panel to manage shared services

Courier-Post staff

MOUNT HOLLY The Burlington County Bridge Commission will take over a program for sharing local government services in hopes of increasing participation.

The county board of freeholders agreed Wednesday to the restructuring of the Shared Services Forum, which has saved local governments money by allowing them to contractually cooperate for services.

Gary La Venia, director of improvement authority operations for the bridge commission, said the commission will assume management of the forum from a paid firm and immediately save the members the \$500 annual dues. He said the commission is not charging any fees.

There are 20 municipalities, school districts and other local agencies that are members of the forum. The group has saved money through joint personnel services, equipment sharing, vehicle auctions and training programs.

"The bridge commission's willingness to run the forum at no cost to the county, participating schools and towns is an offer we can't refuse," said Maple Shade Township Manager George Haeuber. Freeholder-Director Vincent Farias said he hopes the dropping of dues paid to the previous management firm -- Jersey Professional Management of Cranford -- will bolster participation by more municipalities. The county also paid \$20,000 to get the forum started.

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La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Times, The (Trenton, NJ)

January 11, 2004

Bridge panel taps official

A longtime Riverside Township administrator has accepted a job with the Burlington County Bridge Commission in the finance department.

Gary F. La Venia will become the director of improvement authority activities for the bridge commission. In that capacity, he will coordinate aggregate bond transactions that make low-cost capital improvement financing available to county municipalities and other approved entities.

He also will oversee authority activities centering on assistance for local redevelopment, especially in the Delaware River/Route 130 corridor.

"It is on behalf of Riverside that I have had the good fortune to be involved in the Route 130 Revitalization Program since its inception eight years ago. "I see this position with the bridge commission as an opportunity to become more involved in corridor activities, not to mention the fiscal needs of other towns throughout the county," he said.

Since the program started two years ago the commission has financed a total of \$200 million in capital improvements that generated \$8.5 million in interest and finance savings.

The commission anticipates assembling at least two bond offerings per year in the future, allowing municipalities to generate interest savings to pass on to the taxpayer.

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La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Burlington County Times (Willingboro, NJ)

January 7, 2004

Commission adds activity director

Author: *Lisa Helem BCT staff writer lhelem@phillyBurbs.com*

RIVERSIDE - Longtime township Administrator **Gary LaVenia** announced yesterday he would resign to take a job with the Burlington County Bridge Commission.

He will start his \$89,500-a-year job as director of improvement authority activities Feb. 2. His job responsibilities will include coordinating bond transactions that make capital-improvement financing available to municipalities in Burlington County.

The commission oversees operations at the Tacony-Palmyra and Burlington-Bristol bridges. It received the power to act as an improvement authority from the state Legislature in January 2003.

"It's an opportunity that I felt that I couldn't pass up. It's a good opportunity and it's something new, fresh and exciting," **LaVenia** said.

LaVenia started as township administrator in 1986 and has served for 17 years. The position currently carries a salary of \$82,000.

George Nyikita, executive director of the Burlington County Bridge Commission, said commissioners had been discussing the need for the position over the past six months.

"We felt it was time to hire somebody full time to reach out to municipalities and other public entities to see how we could help them in their finances," he said.

Nyikita said **LaVenia** was selected because of his background in financial and redevelopment issues as township administrator.

"He's someone with immediate knowledge of every municipality in the county. He has worked with administrators, other public officials, worked with the county economic development department. There's so much knowledge that he brings," Nyikita said.

LaVenia, 49, has lived in Riverside for 27 years. He said he counts among his local achievements working to spur redevelopment interest in the Golden Triangle area of town and working with a developer who recently proposed housing for an area on Franklin Street.

Asked about his legacy, the Holy Cross High School and Rutgers University graduate said, "I hope that when people talk about me, they will say good things. It's not an easy job for anyone who does this work, so you hope people look at the good things that happen."

Mayor Jeffrey May praised **LaVenia's** work.

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"He served us well. He's always been willing to go above and beyond the call of duty. We're sorry to see him go," he said.

May said the township would soon begin advertising for a replacement, but could not predict when the position would be filled. **LaVen**'s last day is Jan. 30, but he has agreed to stay on part time through the township budgeting process.

Burlington County Times (Willingboro, NJ)

November 2, 2003

Officials explore Golden Triangle

Author: *Lisa Helem BCT staff writer lhelem@phillyBurbs.com*

RIVERSIDE - Just as ancient explorers once searched for El Dorado, the mythical "City of Gold," officials in this 152-year-old river town are searching for a developer to mine the economic potential of their own golden plot of land.

The land in question is the Golden Triangle, an area bordered by Pavilion Avenue, the railroad tracks and Rancocas Creek. The 32-acre tract is adjacent to the NJ Transit light-rail station and is among the largest pieces of developable property in Riverside.

The triangle consists of contiguous parcels owned by the township, NJ Transit, Mortlin Auto Body, Lippincott and Jacobs Consulting Engineers and the General Motors Acceptance Corp.

The Township Committee has looked into redeveloping the area, zoned for mixed use. However, finding someone with a long-term interest in the property has been difficult, said Township Administrator **Gary LaVenia**.

"Over three years, we have talked to at least 10 people who have had an interest, but have not taken that final step," he said.

As recently as spring, Denver, Colo.-based LandBank Group Inc. approached the Township Committee with a plan to build an undisclosed number of condominiums in the seven-story Keystone Watch Case Co. building, the focal point of the Golden Triangle.

The structure, built in 1908 to manufacture gold watches, is now owned and occupied by Lippincott and Jacobs Consulting Engineers. As part of its proposal, LandBank wanted to acquire the building, a spokesman said.

"Our development plan was residential - multifamily, residential condominiums. We looked at the market and felt that was the appropriate end use," said Ray Hendry, LandBank's project manager for the site.

But about a month ago, LandBank expressed concern about "environmental and financial" issues they said needed to be resolved before development could proceed.

"We remain interested in the Golden Triangle as an opportunity, but there were issues that we couldn't resolve within the constraints," Hendry said, declining to provide details.

Township officials have said the hesitance of LandBank and other developers is related to the fact that the land is classified as a brownfield, an environmentally contaminated area with past

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Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

industrial or commercial use.

Developers tend to shy away from environmental cleanup costs, said Mayor Robert Van Meter. "All of them want the township to foot the bill for cleaning it up," he said.

Fred Mumford, a spokesman for the state Department of Environmental Protection, said initial environmental assessments of the site were completed by a township consultant in October 2002.

Still to be collected are soil and groundwater samples.

According to **LaVenian**, studies showed some metals pollution from past industrial usage. Soil and groundwater samples still need to be completed to determine the extent of pollution, Mumford said.

The township is pursuing grants for a feasibility study that would determine the nature of contamination and the environmental risk at two parcels at the triangle: a 14-acre tract owned by the township and an 11-acre parcel owned by GMAC and marketed by Philadelphia-based GVA Smith Mack.

The township could use loans for cleanup work through the DEP's Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund, Mumford said.

Richard Schliecher, a broker with GVA Smith Mack, said the company wants to sell the land to the township, but he wouldn't specify an asking price.

In addition to cleanup, a key part of triangle development is the towering watchcase building. Any workable plan would have to include it, township officials have said.

Van Meter said Lippincott and Jacobs has been reluctant to collaborate with the township on plans for the building. The township has started the process of acquiring the building through the right of eminent domain, which would involve court action to force the company to sell to the township. The township would then sell it to an interested developer.

"We are looking to use eminent domain on the building. We want the project to go forward, but it's a piece of the project that builders need," he said.

I. Wayne Lippincott, president of Lippincott and Jacobs Consulting Engineers, did not respond to requests for comment for this story.

The township has hired Maple Shade-based Renwick and Associates Valuation Solutions to appraise the building, which was valued at \$1.3 million when it was last appraised in 1991, Van Meter said.

Township officials are waiting for a developer with the funding to develop the Golden Triangle,

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a move they said would help resuscitate the entire downtown.

"It is the hope of everyone that it's going to happen sooner rather than later," said **LaVenia**. "The Township Committee has been working very hard to push the development."

LandBank could re-enter the picture. "We'd still like to do the Golden Triangle," Hendry said.

That area is certainly a growth area for residential. You have a significant transportation infrastructure with the light rail," Hendry said.

Philadelphia Inquirer, The (PA)

March 5, 2001

RIVERSIDE TO TURN PART OF HOSPITAL INTO AFFORDABLE APARTMENTS

Author: *Leonard N. Fleming INQUIRER STAFF WRITER*

The fruits of revitalization are beginning to show in this once vibrant, industrial township, which is now coming back to life, with new sidewalks and trees and the expectation of a light-rail line next year.

And within that redevelopment plan, state, county and local officials say, is an unusual approach to providing mandated affordable housing to low- and moderate-income residents.

An agreement was recently reached with the owner to turn a portion of the old Zurbrugg Hospital into 40 age-restricted affordable-housing apartments, in a move that state officials say is unprecedented.

Plans are also under way to entice downtown business owners to renovate vacant spaces or apartments above storefront businesses into low- and moderate-income units. As incentives, Riverside officials have altered zoning and are vying for more than \$1 million in so-called small cities revitalization grants.

Expected to be officially approved by the state's Council on Affordable Housing this week, the Riverside housing plan aims to create and rehabilitate a required total of 51 affordable-housing units over the next six years.

"The concept is to take old apartments that have been long since abandoned and give the landlords an incentive to create and rehab more units," said Mark A. Remsa, the county planner in charge of helping to revamp the towns along the Route 130 corridor. He approached Riverside officials with the plan.

"It's basically a carrot approach," he said, referring to the incentive funds.

The next step for Riverside officials, who had previously not addressed their affordable-housing obligation, is to seek approval for state funds while persuading storefront business owners to renovate vacant spaces or apartments for housing purposes.

Mamoun Afifi, 39, could be a candidate. He owns the Golden River Restaurant building on Scott Street. Above the restaurant are two large, abandoned floors that were once used as a chiropractic office and meeting rooms.

Afifi estimates that it would take \$150,000 to renovate the two floors, an investment he cannot afford to take on himself.

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Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

"I would be interested. . . . If I'm not paying anything out of my pocket, fine," Afifi said. "I'm here to help people."

Afifi said he would have no qualms about having low- to moderate-income families living in the building above his restaurant. "It doesn't matter who they are - we're all the same," he said.

Dick Welch owns the old Zurbrugg Hospital. Part of the building - renamed the Crossing of Riverside - has already been converted to market-rate, age-restricted housing with 58 units. Sixteen are currently occupied.

Welch insists that when the low- to moderate-income units are created there next year, the residents will be treated like the older residents who can afford market rent.

"It will be a very nice place for these people to live," Welch said. "I wish people wouldn't even know they were low-income. I don't want people segregated because of that."

Riverside officials have yet to identify the residents who would qualify, but they know the need is there. Based on the 1990 census, more than 22 percent of township households were considered low-income; 17 percent are moderate-income households.

Before World War II, the municipality that sits at the corner of the Delaware River and the Rancocas Creek buzzed with a strong industrial base, with new homes going up.

But as the population shifted from the river towns to other parts of Burlington County, the region began its steep decline. It left vacant buildings and apartments over storefronts. And it went from a community with owner-occupied housing to one with a third of its units as rentals, according to a housing analysis compiled by Remsa and the county.

But optimism has returned with the downtown revival and the light-rail transit system set to open in 2002. With Remsa's backing, Riverside officials thought it would be a good time to address the affordable-housing needs by filling vacant structures.

Gary F. La Venia, the township administrator, said the affordable-housing proposal is one small piece of Riverside's revitalization efforts. The process, he cautioned, will take some time.

"No one has ever done this before," **La Venia** said. "This is new to us. But we'll be working toward that goal. We're going to move forward in a reasonable period of time. It could take a year or two years. It's not going to be a 10-year project."

It is a housing plan that the Council on Affordable Housing, created by the state legislature to assure that townships abide by fair-housing regulations, looks upon favorably.

The controversial 1975 Mount Laurel decision gave rise to affordable-housing requirements. The historic New Jersey Supreme Court ruling stated that municipalities have a "constitutional obligation" to provide affordable housing.

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There are many choices. Towns zone for a mix of market-value and affordable units, or transfer half of the housing obligation to other municipalities in a state-approved agreement, or gut and rehabilitate units for adaptive reuse.

Shirley Bishop, executive director of the council, said that towns across the state are becoming "much more sophisticated" than in the past at looking at affordable-housing options. Riverside, she said, is one of those towns.

Townships such as Riverside are looking for options that meet their needs and for ways to best use existing, possibly underutilized housing as opposed to zoning, she said.

"COAH doesn't say do this, this or this," she added, referring to the Council on Affordable Housing. "COAH offers the town options and lets the town select."

*Internet Research
La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Philadelphia Inquirer, The (PA)

September 30, 1999

NJ RAILROAD BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

PLANNERS ENCOURAGE GROWTH AT RAIL STOPS THEY HAVE A \$100,000 GRANT TO HELP BURLCO TOWNS STUDY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALONG THE COMING LIGHT-RAIL LINE.

Author: *Juan C. Rodriguez, INQUIRER SUBURBAN STAFF*

As plans progress for a \$604.5 million light-rail commuter line between Trenton and Camden, Burlington County and federal planners are encouraging communities along the 34-mile route to make the most of the railway by cultivating economic growth near the planned stations.

Burlington County planner Mark Remsa and John Ward, a planner for the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, are approaching four Burlington County towns that will have rail stops to make sure the planning and zoning ordinances accommodate businesses and housing near the stations.

Remsa and Ward are using a \$100,000 federal grant to study potential development around the stations in Florence, Burlington City, Riverside and Delanco. Trains have been part of the history of the towns, which all have industrial lines running through them, Remsa said.

"These towns grew up with the rail," he told the Burlington City Council on Tuesday. "We want to help the four municipalities to capitalize on the light-rail plan."

Remsa and Ward plan to review each of the communities' master plans to identify local ordinances that could impede development near the stations. They also will determine what improvements need to be made to spur economic growth and make the stations more conducive to foot traffic.

The planners suggest businesses such as restaurants, convenience stores, dry cleaners and bakeries, as well as apartment buildings and mixed-use housing developments within a half-mile of the stops.

"They just enhance the viability of the light-rail," Ward said. "They make it more attractive for communities to create town centers around train stops."

Ward and Remsa will consult with municipal steering committees. However, it would be up to the communities to decide what types of development will occur near the stations.

Ward asked the Burlington City Council to form a committee of three to five community members, government officials and business people to develop the plans.

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Rick Iovine, president of the Burlington City Council, said having the agencies study the plans near the city's two planned stations could help give the city access to additional low-interest loans and federal and state grants.

"What I hope they would do is point us in the right direction," Iovine said. He said working with the planners was "like hiring a consultant without paying for it."

The Riverside Township Committee and Florence Township Council also are forming committees to work with Ward and Remsa. Ward and Remsa have not yet approached Delanco.

Gary LaVenia, Riverside Township's administrator, said the township was relying on its train stop to be a vital part of a renovation of the township's business sector, which includes refurbishing Main Street.

"This is going to add to that, we hope," **LaVenia** said.

NJ Transit officials said the economic-development plans in the four communities would play a key role in the light-rail's success.

"It is helpful to us to know that people in the communities are in the process of making rail stations a functional part of the community," said Charles Ingolia, a spokesman for NJ Transit. "It can only enhance the development and generate ridership."

Construction of the line has yet to begin. This summer, NJ Transit awarded a \$604.5 million contract to Bechtel Infrastructure Corp. of Gaithersburg, Md., and ADtranz of Pittsburgh to begin building it.

NJ Transit is reviewing a work schedule submitted by the contractors that describes how the line will be built and when, Ingolia said. He would not give details of the schedule but said that once NJ Transit approves the schedule, the contractors would have three years to complete the work.

*Internet Research
La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Philadelphia Inquirer, The (PA)

December 6, 1998

RUEHMLING RETIRES AFTER SERVING RIVERSIDE 51 YEARS

Author: *Jan Hefler, INQUIRER SUBURBAN STAFF*

William H. Ruehmling, now 81, figured it was probably time to retire after 51 years of municipal government service, but the community's first township administrator wasn't about to quit midstream.

Despite his 11-year-old battle with Parkinson's disease, Ruehmling waited until his five-year term on the sewerage authority - his last official appointment - ended recently.

Ruehmling has held nearly every supervisory position in the small township - mayor, township administrator for 15 years, treasurer, school board secretary, welfare director, and sewerage authority chairman and treasurer, all beginning when he was elected as a township committeeman in 1947.

But more important than his string of posts, local officials recall how much grant money he obtained for township projects and his dedication to the community where he was raised. At a meeting last week, the Township Committee established a \$500 scholarship fund in his name to be awarded to a graduating middle school student who best demonstrates public service.

“Bill was energetic and knowledgeable about so many things,” said Robert Renshaw, a former mayor and township committeeman who served 20 years. “When we went to the [Burlington County freeholders] to get community development grants, we got out our handkerchiefs and cried about how badly we needed the money. And we got about \$190,000 one year to put in a parking lot for our business district. That's how Bill would do almost anything for the township he loved.”

Renshaw estimated that Ruehmling coaxed nearly \$1 million in grants from the county freeholders over the years.

Gary LaVenia, who replaced Ruehmling 12 years ago as township administrator, also heaped praise on his mentor. “He had retired and he didn't have to come back, but he was here day to day giving me so much help. He was a true friend and a true asset to the township,” **LaVenia** said.

Ruehmling was unavailable for an interview because of his health. But his daughter, Kathryn Robinson, one of his four children, said he enjoyed working for the residents of Riverside. “He is a kind, easy-going person who got a lot done,” she said.

His wife, Stella, said Ruehmling got into public service, reluctantly, when he needed a job after serving as a lieutenant colonel with the U.S. Army. “He said he didn't want to go into politics because he didn't know anything about it. But once he got involved, he loved it,” she said.

Internet Research

La Venia. Gary

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

But serving Riverside from different posts apparently was not enough. He also was past president of the state Municipal Finance Officers Association and a member of the state League of Municipalities. "Every day he ate lunch at his desk. That was him. He was too dedicated to go out," said Deborah Crowe, township treasurer, who worked with him 27 years.

Internet Research
La Venia. Gary

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Philadelphia Inquirer, The (PA)

March 15, 1987

RIVERSIDE TWP. FAVORS PURCHASE OF A COMPUTER

Author: *Charlie Frush, Inquirer Staff Writer*

Riverside Township officials have tentatively approved the purchase of a \$36,000 computer system to replace their aging bookkeeping system.

The Unisys computer system would be used to track tax and utility records and billings, to compute budgets and maintain general ledgers and payroll records, and to perform general record-keeping and word processing, said **Gary La Venia**, the township's administrator since last July.

"I'm excited that we're moving into the computer age," said **La Venia**. "It's going to be a big benefit to the administrative staff."

La Venia said he would use the new computer, along with Michael Chacchio, the township clerk; Patricia Collingsworth, the assistant tax collector; Lois Doerre, the bookkeeper-cashier; Deborah Crowe, the treasurer, and a clerk- typist yet to be hired.

All would undergo training on the system and in the use of various software that would be used on the five terminals the township would purchase.

La Venia said he had previous experience on the IBM PC computer while with his former employer, the Burlington County Health Department.

Employees who work on the first floor must now go up to the second floor of the town hall to use the Burroughs L9000 system, which keeps track of tax records.

Doerre said she was "looking forward to doing our work downstairs and not having to go upstairs to do our posting. It was very inconvenient for us."

The new system, **La Venia** said, "is going to improve our efficiency and make record-keeping easier. We feel that it's going ease the burden on each individual employee by increasing efficiency and having information at our fingertips."

For the first year, he cautioned, the township would continue to back up the computer with the old system. "We have to use the current system and the new system to make sure the new one is working properly. These things don't happen overnight."

Purchase of the computer system would be made through an ordinance appropriating \$36,000 from the capital surplus fund. The ordinance was introduced Feb. 23 and is scheduled for a public hearing and final reading tomorrow.

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Because the computer system would be purchased through a state contract, the township did not have to advertise the purchase for public bidding. Supplies purchased through state-endorsed programs are sold to municipalities at a discount.

Although no bidding was involved, **La Venia** said the township still "tried to get the biggest bang for our buck. We looked at a lot of different systems, and we came up with a system that offers all we wanted for the best price available."

The township hopes to have the computer system operating by the end of April, **La Venia** said. "As the software packages come in, we will learn one at a time," he said.

Word-processing, which can be used for correspondence and creating files, would probably be the first one tackled, "because it's the easiest," he said.

"Then we'll evaluate what will be second and design a training schedule and move on until the system is completely in place," he added.

*Internet Research
La Venia. Gary*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Philadelphia Inquirer, The (PA)

June 19, 1988

SENSE OF HERITAGE HELPS COMMUNITY EVOLVE FROM WITHIN

Author: *Charlie Frush, Inquirer Staff Writer*

In the 1930s and 1940s, shoppers could barely find room to squeeze past one another on Saturdays in front of the stores in downtown Riverside because the sidewalks were so filled with people, according to Howard J. Rendfrey's memory.

Riverside was booming then, said Rendfrey, a lifelong resident who has operated a gas station at Fairview Street and River Road since 1958.

"We had five- and 10-cent stores," he said. "We had about 15 grocery stores. We had 11 service stations in this town at one time. Now we have only two." The theaters are gone, too.

Rendfrey's son, Howard Jr., said, "It has become a deindustrialized town. Retail businesses cannot compete with the malls."

Like many of Burlington County's older river towns, Riverside, population 7,820, has little room for new development and is looking within itself to remain vital.

With 28 percent of its citizens qualifying for the title "Senior Citizen," Riverside is a settled community that concerns itself with making life pleasant for its aging population, restoring its primary historic structure, and, of course, looking for a place to park.

"The amount of developable land is extremely limited," according to **Gary LaVenia**, the township administrator. "I would say the township is 99 percent or more developed."

Still, there's nothing to prevent rehabilitation of the old, and that's what the Watch Case Office Complex partnership hopes to do with the historic factory building at the corner of Pavilion Avenue and River Road.

The Philadelphia Watch Case Co. Building, as it is officially entered on the National Register of Historic Places, was completed in 1908 by Theophilus J. Zurbrugg, an industrialist who had moved his manufacturing facilities to Riverside from Philadelphia and employed as many as 1,000 people, turning out 6,000 watch cases a day. Today, Zurbrugg Memorial Hospitals, named for the founder, Theophilus J., is Riverside's largest employer, with more than 500 employees.

The seven-story watch case building and its one-story tower have been described as good examples of beaux-arts classicism. The Watch Case complex, which included some long-gone factory buildings and the Pavilion Hotel, built in 1852 by a developer as a destination for summer excursions, went through a succession of owners. The main building fell into disrepair until 1985 when rehabilitation was begun on the second and third floors.

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The new owners - a partnership of Wayne Lippincott, of Lippincott Engineering of Delanco and Riverside, and Joseph Bossen, of Bossen Lumber and Millwork, Cinnaminson - are scheduled this week to settle their purchase of the property from Riverside Metal Company.

Bossen, the project manager, said he and Lippincott expected to spend at least \$3 million and possibly twice that much in renovating all seven floors, one at a time. They hope to attract professional tenants, and Lippincott has already moved in about two-thirds of his approximately 100 employees, Bossen said.

The building also has another tenant - a broker of commercial cleaning supplies - and can accommodate a total of seven to 14 tenants.

"We're hoping we'll be able to attract people from this side of the (Tacony-Palmyra) bridge who are tired of going across the bridge," Bossen said.

Lippincott and Bossen's plans also call for tearing down part of the Pavilion Hotel, the four-story stucco structure at the rear of the Watch Case factory, to put in a parking lot.

"It's not structurally sound. It's not salvageable," said Bossen, who also wants to acquire land across Pavilion Avenue for more parking space and create a total of about 675 spaces for the new office complex.

But parking has always been a thorny issue in the town.

Several years ago, when the streets were refurbished with federal funds, the township had to switch to parallel parking, which irked some. The township's attempt to ease the parking squeeze by paving a lot owned by the Riverside Fire Company for public use during the day stirred the ire of others.

As for the rest of downtown Riverside, **LaVenia** said, the merchants are "doing OK."

"The stores right now are filled. We do have some vacancies on Scott Street, but Pavilion Avenue is doing rather well. It's busy. For the most part, the stores along Scott and Pavilion do attract a clientele that keeps them going. There's a lot of service industries located on Scott Street," he said.

And the once-popular Kessler's Department Store, which closed down its operation near the corner of Scott and Pavilion last year, is being considered as a site for a new restaurant, according to Mike Chacchio, township clerk.

But merchants aren't the only ones doing well. "The quality of residential life in Riverside is good," **LaVenia** said.

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La Venia. Gary

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"Up to 28 percent of our population is senior citizens. I think this community offers them the opportunity to shop for most of what they need right within town. We have the Thriftway (supermarket) located right at the edge of town. . . . We have furniture stores, we have card shops, we have pharmacies, there's activities for the seniors," he said.

"We have three separate senior citizens clubs. We have a number of eating establishments in town. I think this community offers everything a senior citizen would need."

Filling part of the residents' needs is Zurbrugg Memorial Hospitals.

The hospital had its beginnings on Feb. 12, 1915, with a staff of four physicians in Theophilus J. Zurbrugg's former home at Taylor and Franklin Streets. The original section of the current hospital opened in 1935.

For the long range, **LaVenia** remains optimistic about Riverside's future.

"I think the business community in Riverside can do well. I think it's important that a person wanting to locate in Riverside research a little bit to find out what type of entity would do well in an environment such as this. With the right store located here, he's going to do well."

So will the residents, **LaVenia** believes.

The new tax rates have just been struck, and Riverside, **LaVenia** thinks, still offers a lower municipal tax rate than surrounding communities.

Compiled By: Sean Baenziger
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