



COUNTY OF MERCER

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Hon. Michael Markulec
Mayor
Hopewell Township
201 Washington Crossing-Pennington Rd.
Titusville, NJ 08560

April 7, 2010

Dear Mayor Markulec,

I am writing in response to your request for an update on the status of the Jacobs Creek Bridge project. On February 3, 2010, Mercer County submitted to the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Phase 1A of its Archeological Survey, which examined documents to ascertain the historic significance of the existing bridge and the site of the proposed new bridge. On March 3, 2010, the State Historic Preservation Office requested an addendum to Phase 1A of the survey, which Mercer County provided.

Since the submission of this addendum, the State Historic Preservation Office has not communicated with the County. Mercer County has made repeated attempts to determine what findings and/or opinions the State Historic Preservation Office may have regarding the Phase 1A to no avail. As of the date of this letter, Phase 1A was submitted 63 days ago, and the addendum was submitted 35 days ago.

While awaiting the State Historic Preservation Office response, we have learned:

- The State Historic Preservation Office has met on numerous occasions with residents of the area near the existing bridge
- The State Historic Preservation Office has solicited the assistance of those residents in its review of the County's submissions related to the archeological survey
- The State Historic Preservation Office advised those residents that it would issue its comments on the County report within 30 days from receipt of Phase 1A. While it was also our understanding the County would have received the office's official comments within the 30-day period, that deadline has long past.

Since the original date of submission of Phase 1A of the Archeological Survey, the State Historic Preservation Office has never met with County staff to discuss its findings nor has the State Historic Preservation Office requested County assistance in its review of this report.

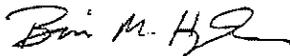
In fact, the State Historic Preservation Office has made repeated excuses as to its inability to issue its opinion.

Today, I contacted NJ Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin, and a DEP Assistant Commissioner, Amy Cradic, to inquire why the report has not been finalized with comments and returned to Mercer County. While I have yet to speak to Commissioner Martin, I did speak with Ms. Cradic, who informed me that Dan Saunders, Acting Administrator of the Historic Preservation Office, was called away due to a family emergency and that we should have the report in hand on Monday April 12, 2010. While I do not wish to take a family emergency lightly, unfortunately, this is only the latest in a series of bureaucratic postponements by this office, which is preventing the County from advancing this critical project. Multiple calls to the State Historic Preservation Office inquiring about the status of our report dating back to March 24 have been met with excuses that are unsatisfactory.

The County has desired a review by the State Historic Preservation Office that is unbiased by any party with an interest in the project and that would be based on the facts uncovered by the independent archeological firm hired by the County to perform this survey. The County has made every attempt to conduct the Jacobs Creek Bridge project in an open and transparent manner in addition to real world concerns of expediency. But the process since the County submitted Phase IA of its survey to the State Historic Preservation Office has indicated to us that this State office is not operating with the same priorities.

I wish I could advise you that we have made real progress with the State Historic Preservation Office, but, regrettably, I cannot do so. If and when we receive comments from this office, we will forward them to you. Until that time, please know that the County will continue to proactively manage this completion of the survey in order to move forward with the construction of a safe bridge and other elements of this project that will properly protect and celebrate the history of the original structure.

Sincerely,



Brian M. Hughes
County Executive

Cc: Hopewell Township Committee
Paul Pogorzelski, Township Administrator
Annette C. Bielawski, Municipal Clerk
Bob Martin, Commissioner, NJDEP
Amy Cradic, Assistant Commissioner, NJDEP