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# FRANKLIN



# TIMES

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## 'Local Government 101' Mission and Goal of Municipal Offices: Customer Service for Residents



Residents have requested information on the workings of municipal government—an insider's view of Franklin Township in action. For that reason, various aspects of municipal government will be the focus of articles that have been titled: Local Government 101. If you find these articles helpful and have ideas and suggestions for future articles, call 732-873-2500, ext. 239, or e-mail [joyce.miller@twp.franklin.nj.us](mailto:joyce.miller@twp.franklin.nj.us).

Several years ago Department Heads of the Township's various offices came together to write a Mission Statement and Vision for the Township, as well as mission statements for each of their Departments. They were written and designed to guide the actions and provide a purpose for day-to-day decisions.

Local government is often perceived in a negative light: government and taxes; government and decisions that anger one group while pleasing another; government and politics. But the purpose behind all appearances is singular—to serve the residents. (See the Township's Mission and Vision Statements).

With better service in mind, Franklin has been making changes to its programs and facilities.

### Centralized services—Health Department and Registrar Move to Municipal Building

With Franklin's municipal buildings separated by a couple miles, residents had to travel between locations to obtain permits and licenses and information. The Health Department recently moved to the Municipal Building on DeMott Lane. This places in one hub the Departments needed by residents for their permits and licenses. This is helpful not only the residents' convenience, but speeds communication among staff of Community Development (comprised of Zoning and Planning), Engineering, and Health who need to confer on various applications.

The Township Council approved the *Technical Review Committee*, unique in the State because of the ability to approve minor applications to the Planning Board. More details are shown below.

The Registrar is also located in the Municipal Building, eliminating the confusion when residents would come for marriage licenses and death certificates and be told they had to travel to a facility a couple miles away.

### Technical Review Committee

Franklin Township established a Technical Review Committee (TRC) two years ago to improve customer service. For minor site plans, the TRC has cut down the approval time from three months to two weeks.

The Township Council established by ordinance the TRC to review and approve or disapprove minor site plans that are exempt from the Planning Board's site plan approval. These minor plans are for proposals of less than 5,000 square feet or ten (10%) percent

of the gross lot area. The TRC meets three times a month and includes staff members from planning/zoning, engineering, health, construction, fire prevention and police.

As an example of how it works, one resident submitted an application for the addition of a deck to his house. Once the paperwork was submitted, it took two weeks for the TRC to meet and approve the plan, and the contractor was ready to start building.

Construction Official Vincent Lupo and Township Engineer Thomas Zilinek said that, while other municipalities have review committees, Franklin's TRC is unique in that it has been given the power to grant approvals.

Building on the TRC is the special event permit meetings. Replacing applications for special event permits being forwarded in interoffice mail with comments from each department being e-mailed or sent back to the Municipal Clerk, departments together discuss applications requiring approvals from fire prevention, health, police, code enforcement and recreation.

### 935 Hamilton

The Multi-Purpose Building at 935 Hamilton, is going through a transformation with the space left vacant following the move by the Health Department and Registrar to the municipal building. The Multi-Purpose Building will continue to function as the home of the Community Resource and Services Department. They traditionally provide services to those residents who are income eligible. (See notice about Medical Services Group in this issue). The Health Department clinic services will continue to be held at this location. Well baby clinics and blood pressure screenings are still by appointment only, which can be made calling 732-873-2500 x366.

New services will be added at 935 Hamilton Street in the Fall as a result of efforts of the Franklin Youth Initiative (FYI). FYI is a partnership between adults, teens and service providers aimed at making the Township more responsive to teen and family needs. As a result, the Township and Somerset County have embarked on a collaborative effort to enhance services and make them more accessible for Franklin residents. The Somerset County Youth Services Commission is helping to coordinate services which will include agency representation from Richard Hall Community Mental Health Center, the Somerset County Family Crisis Intervention Unit, Somerset County Probation and Family and

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Franklin Times  
475 DeMott Lane  
Somerset, NJ 08873



**4th of July Celebration**

**Thursday, July 2  
6:00 p.m.  
Municipal Complex  
475 DeMott Lane, Somerset**

**Free Kids Zone with inflatable rides**

**Annual Clothesline Art show  
(details inside)**

**Food vendors**

**Fireworks start at 9:15 p.m.**

**Bring Lawn Chairs**

**For information, call 732-873-1991**  
**Rain date: July 10**