



June 2022

Dear friends and neighbors,

Thankfully, the weather has been in our favor this past week, and everyone seems to be out and enjoying it.

This past Monday we held our Memorial Day parade and Remembrance Service at Oakes Park. It was nice to see how the many that joined us in honoring our fallen soldiers. On Saturday our Police, Fire, Ambulance, and DPW departments held a "Touch a Truck" day in the NVOT parking lot. The many children that attended had an opportunity to meet with our EMS and DPW workers and climb in and around all of their vehicles. Sunday was our "Hooked on Fishing" tournament at Bonnabel Park hosted by the Environmental Commission. Anyone 16 and under was able to fish for free and get to win a prize. It was a fine day for fishing and there where at least 44 would-be fishermen signed up for the annual event.

On a much more important note, while sitting down this morning to write my Mayors Message I found that I had received the following email from a dear friend which troubled me greatly. I share with you her letter and my response.

I am a 92-year-old woman that has lived in Old Tappan for most of my adult life and am writing as I am very concerned about the recent proposal to demolish the Gerrit Haring House located on Old Tappan Road. My husband was on the Old Tappan Planning Board for many years, and I am confident that he would join me in my opposition to the demolition of the Haring House. He was born in Old Tappan in 1928, raised in Old Tappan and returned to Old Tappan after serving in the Korean War, to buy a house and to raise his family. I have lived in the same house for over 65 years and have never regretted our choice to live here until recently. It is overwhelming to see the number of large building projects that have been initiated or proposed in the past couple of years. The impact of these projects will greatly affect the traffic, the environment, and the schools of Old Tappan in addition to the quaintness that this town was once known for. Money does not always need to be the driving force behind the decisions that are made. In 2016, the Old Tappan Master Plan, noted the Gerrit Haring House to be a premium asset to the town. Why now, in 2022, does the council feel the proper thing to do is to demolish this historic building and replace it with a large building that will occupy the only remaining open space in Old Tappan. The booklet, Old Tappan Centennial 1894 - 1994, depicts this town to be so rich in history, which adds to the quaintness. Why is it acceptable to erase some of this history? I ask, that you please forbid the council in moving forward with the destruction of the Gerrit Haring House.

Since receiving her email, the Mayor & Council have received quite a few more regarding the same issue. Seems there was a flyer sent to many of our residents stating that this historic house was planned for destruction. This concern, albeit incorrect, must have arisen from a comment made at a recent Planning Board meeting. It was mistakenly reported that the Mayor and Council had no interest in preserving our historic Gerrit Haring House located at 244 Old Tappan

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Road. This property is the subject of an application which is presently before the planning board.

The following is my response the above-mentioned email:

Dear [REDACTED]

To your primary point, the council has made no such suggestion that the Gerrit Haring house be demolished. Hearings regarding the development of the property are currently before our planning board and the saving of the Haring house is a focal point.

Having lived here nearly all of my life, I too have seen how this town has changed from a farming community to what it is today. Unfortunately, money "is" the driving force that causes change. Farmers sold their land when it became more profitable to sell than farm which in turn saw the advent of developments. The 1980's ushered in the townhome/condominium projects as a result of NJ State Law and the Council on Affordable Housing. Today, we continue to struggle with applications where the courts have supported the developers. So, money is driving force which lines the pockets of the property owners who sell to those who seek to re-develop and make a profit.

I'm sorry for the regrets you express but I think that Old Tappan is still a great place to live in spite of the changes that have taken place through the years, and which continue today.

Sincerely, John

On another note, ground has been broken at the site of the New Concepts for Living at Old Tappan Road & Washington Avenue. Work continues at the Enclave Townhome/Condominium project as does the Central Avenue project. The borough applied for and received a \$350,000 DOT grant for drainage issues related to Fred Street. Drainage work is about begin on Perry Street which is also supported by a grant. Finally, our annual road repaving program will begin over the summer months and will address a number of streets which are in need of repair.

Have a happy and safe summer.

Sincerely,

John M. Kramer

Mayor
Borough of Old Tappan