



NEWSLETTER

March 2024 ISSUE#: HV001

Mercer We the People of Hopewell Valley is a steady source of news to heal the accelerating erosion of our fundamental freedoms nationally and locally.

FIRST EDITION – Mercer We the People is launched today, with the first edition “of Hopewell Valley” to be a steady source of news and to heal the accelerating erosion of our fundamental freedoms nationally and locally.

Embrace our First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Source: <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/primary-sources/bill-of-rights>

Kind regards,

Publius Bonhomme Richard, Editor

Kind regards,

HOW TO CONTACT US:

Publius Bonhomme Richard, Editor

Email us at: info@mercerwe.com

What's your favorite spot in Hopewell Valley?

Send us a photo, let us know why, and we may share.

Bald Pate: a year-round refreshing overlook.
Photo courtesy of Editor



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Election Integrity

Local School Board Election Results Challenged in Court by Candidate

By Mark Demo

Pennington, NJ – Mark Austin, a candidate in the recent Hopewell Township School Board election, has filed a legal petition in the Superior Court of New Jersey, challenging the results of the November 7, 2023, election due to alleged irregularities and malfunctions on Election Day.

The petition, originally filed pro se by Austin, contests the election results based on claims of “malconduct” as outlined in New Jersey Revised Statutes 19:29-1,2,3. This statute provides grounds for contesting an election if there is sufficient evidence to challenge the result due to this factor. Mr. Austin is now represented by King, Moench & Collings LLP.

Austin’s complaint details several serious issues that occurred during the November 7th election. The issues are well documented by Hopewell Township’s own Municipal Clerk in an email to Jill Moyer, Chairwoman of the Mercer County Board of Elections as well as multiple declarations by election day challengers who observed the issues first-hand.

These issues include poorly trained poll workers, equipment failures involving electronic poll books, smart card encoders, ballot marking devices, and voting machine tabulators. The complaint also mentions staffing issues at polling precincts, voter confusion over new voting technologies and many people who just left the polls before voting because they were disgusted with the chaos they were confronted with.

Paul Adezio, the County Clerk’s Attorney has responded by attempting to have the case dismissed based on Mr. Austin’s “failure to state a claim”. Key to Mr. Austin’s case is his ability to obtain the data from the November 7th General Election to analyze and demonstrate to the Court that the election should never have been certified.

At the same time the County Attorney’s office, who manages the release of data requested via OPRA, has slow-walked Mr. Austin’s request for election information and placed a \$5,000+ price tag on obtaining data.

The original trial was set to begin on January 18th however Mr. Austin filed a motion to ask the judge to compel the County to provide the data at no cost and to delay the start of the trial until after he receives the data and has had proper time to analyze the information. The trial date was extended to February 15th when Mr. Austin obtained legal representation. A new trial date was set for March 7th but was again delayed now until April 18th as the County continues to withhold vital information that will enable Mr. Austin to either validate his claim or withdraw it. Why won’t the County provide the information?

To help financially support Mr. Austin in pursuing a new election please go to: <https://www.givesendgo.com/electionchallengemarkaustin>

If you experienced an issue when voting in Mercer County this last election and would like to report it, please click here to send an email to the Mercer County Election Integrity project.

Tabulating machines throughout the entire county failed to work on Election Day, November 8, 2022.

Complaint filed by Dana Wefer, Esq. February 14 2024

On November 8th, 2022, every voting machine in Mercer County failed. One brave candidate sued the county to obtain the data and prove that the November ‘22 General Election should never have been certified. Analysis of the data bears this out - however the County certified the election, then moved on to spend millions on new voting machines only to have them create further chaos during the November ‘23 General Election.

A group of concerned Mercer County citizens are suing the County. Please consider supporting your fellow citizens and make a donation to this campaign to help defer their legal expenses which have already been significant. Fundraising site: <https://www.givesendgo.com/GBQ2S>

- February 19 2024: David Clements with Guest Dana Wefer 6PM EST: 19 February 2024 David Clements with Guest Dana Wefer 6PM EST
- February 26 2024: [centraljersey.com](https://www.centraljersey.com) article: These voters were disenfranchised



MERCER COUNTY ELECTION INTEGRITY

- ◆ No Chain of Custody for cast ballots at close of Election Day, due to ballots not being read by Nov 2022 voting machines
 - ◆ ALL of the machines in the 2022 General Election in Mercer County failed on Election Day
 - ◆ Citizens were denied the right to vote when their provisional ballots were rejected because they "voted by machine".
- No One Voted By Machine Nov 2022 Election Day

Join [facebook.com/groups/mercercitizens](https://www.facebook.com/groups/mercercitizens)
Email us: mcei1776@protonmail.com

Please follow the good work by the
Mercer Citizens for Election Integrity (MCEI).

Follow Us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/groups/mercercitizens

Email to get involved:
mcei1776@protonmail.com

Pilots and School Referendum

Pilots and the School Referendum

By Dufresne

Over the past several years, the Hopewell Township Committee has passed PILOTs (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) on every new affordable housing development.

PILOTs were originally designed to assist disadvantaged communities in NJ to attract developers to help township with their redevelopment efforts.

Each PILOT provides developers with a 30 year tax break. What does that mean? It means that fewer dollars arrive to pay for our various governmental entities: Hopewell Township government, our Schools, the County government, and the Fire District.

More important than that, the dollars that do come are distributed in what may seem to residents to be an unconventional and certainly a very different way.

When there are no PILOTs, the distribution of the dollars from the new developments would go primarily to the School District (roughly 56%), to Hopewell Township (roughly 16%), to the County (approximately 23%), and to the Fire District (5%). Those percentages can change year-by-year when each of those governmental entities pass their own budgets, but the distribution has been remarkably stable over decades.

With a PILOT, the Township gets 90% of the new tax revenue. The County gets the remaining 10%. The Schools and the Fire District get nothing. New students require teachers, classrooms, books, and the like. New developments must be served by the Fire District.

That's why so many towns avoid PILOTs, and why so many Hopewell Township residents are unhappy with the Township for passing them. Hopewell Boro and Pennington Boro have even sued Hopewell Township over the PILOTs. That litigation is still pending.

PILOTs that do not involve developments with school children, 55+ developments for example, may be fine. But in this case, there are thousands of residents, many with children, and the School District is legally required to make sure that they raise the money they need to educate all of the children in the district.

The School District and the Township hired a demographer to study the impact of the PILOTs. When they passed their recent PILOTs, the Township assured residents that there were excess seats in the schools and that no new building would be required. That makes no sense in light of the details in the Referendum, which includes expansion at Toll Gate Grammar, a new wing at Bear Tavern Elementary and new support there for the building of a second floor.

Does the School Board now believe that the demographic study was wrong and that the School District must upgrade its facilities? These are the kinds of questions that should be asked and answered.

Some residents have argued that the Township's PILOTs stole money from the School District. Passions are aflame, but that charge is actually not accurate. The Township simply reallocates the tax revenue and then forwards by law the relevant revenue to the School. In a PILOT, that revenue allocated to the School District (and to Fire District) changes to zero, and the Township therefore duly forwards none of the PILOT revenue to the Schools and to the Fire District.

The Township has promised to forward voluntarily some monies to the School District and to the Fire District, but we have no information about that despite the fact that local citizens have asked the Township government for those details.

Is there a connection between the recent PILOTs and this School Referendum? Quite possibly. It's just one of the many questions that should be asked, and why there needs to be a joint public meeting between the Hopewell Township Committee and the School Board as soon as practicable.

Education

What's happening in Hopewell Valley public schools?

By The Wall of Ed

A recap of recent HVRSD School Board Meetings

Proposed \$87.5 Million Dollar Referendum

Hopewell Valley Regional School District (HVRSD), which serves approximately 3,400 students in Hopewell Township, Hopewell Borough, and Pennington Borough, has presented an \$87.5 million referendum to residents at recent school board meetings. This presentation was presented to the public at the November 13th, January 22nd, and February 20th HVRSD Board of Education meetings by architect planners Fraytak Veisz Hopkins Duthie, P.C. (FVHD), an outside company, that the school district has paid to help with the planning of the referendum. [Click here to view their most recent presentation.](#)

The referendum is scheduled to go before the voters on September 24, 2024 during a special election at an added cost to taxpayers. It was explained that the cost of a special election was \$30,000 in 2015. This decision was made by the Board of Education and Dr. Treece to keep the referendum vote separate from the highly-contested presidential election Robert Colavita explained, "so that the community comes out to vote for our projects and does not have a knee-jerk reaction to vote down our referendum." Furthermore, he explained, "September is a standard time for school districts to have elections because it is a non-partisan organization and this separates it from partisan politics." The new cost of adding a special referendum election in September 2024 was not calculated nor provided. An option to move the question to the November 2024 ballot was not offered nor was a value associated to this proposal.

The final cost estimate of the referendum may vary depending on state approval and financial support. If the referendum passes, the school district would borrow money in the form of bonds that taxpayers would be responsible for paying back over the next 20 years. Preliminary estimates are that the average tax impact would be in the range of \$500 to \$575 per household per year for the next 20 years. That figure is based on the average home value and could increase or decrease depending on your home's assessed value.

The projects presented include improving building integrity, indoor environment improvement/ HVAC, safety and security, site improvements, and space for students. Additional space will be added in the form of two new wings at Toll Gate Grammar and Bear Tavern Elementary, and also with the preparation of the Bear Tavern site for a future second floor. FVHD found that the 1,756 new housing units will bring Bear Tavern above capacity, therefore an additional space will be needed at that school. See slide 35 of the FVHD presentation for more information. However, in the past the Township Committee has reassured us that the new housing units will not affect school enrollment.

Another project that is included in the referendum is the addition of two turf fields at Timberlane Middle School. Athletic director Tripp Becker reasoned that reducing the cost of lawn mowing and field lining with turf would save money and time. He also mentioned the upkeep of a turf field is minimal and conducted only twice a year in the fall and spring. He does not account for the many other fields that still remain un-turfed and would still need mowing, nor replacing the turf when at end-of-life. He did not provide a projected return on investment. You can hear his presentation right around the 47 minute mark of the recorded meeting [here](#). The turf proposal can be found on Page 14 of the slide deck.

In March of 2022, the Township Committee unanimously voted to adopt the ordinance that approves the long-term tax exemption for the Hopewell Parc development and accepted the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) money that is expected to deliver \$387 million in revenue. PILOT arrangements are a bad deal for school districts and taxpayers. According to the New Jersey Education Association, the statewide union for educators, municipalities should share payments received in lieu of property taxes with school districts and urges the public to support bill S 984.

Currently, there is no requirement for the township to give any PILOT money to the school district that could help to offset the financial burden that school district incurs on behalf of property redevelopment. Residents have questioned the school board and the superintendent if the Township could offer them any portion of these funds. The superintendent remarked nothing has been allocated to the district but they have been meeting regularly to discuss. The Township Committee and the Mayor have also been questioned by residents if they would be willing to earmark some of the PILOT funds for the school district to pay for the predicted cost related to population influx expected to impact Bear Tavern Elementary School, as discovered by FVHD. You can listen to public comments, particularly on the February 5th Township Committee meeting [here](#).

School Calendars for the next 3 years are approved

The most notable changes to the calendar are the movement of the parent-teacher conferences from before the Thanksgiving holiday to the week of the NJEA Teacher's conference in early November. The schedule for that week will now be 3 half days and then 2 full days off.

There was also discussion about our district's use of E-learning days. These days are built into the calendar and allow our district to have 182 instructional days versus the 180 days that the state mandates. Students learn from home on these 2 days and they can be utilized as emergency closure days.

Random Drug Testing Policy

One resident spoke about the current Random Drug policy citing many reasons including it being ineffective, having the capacity to increase drug use in schools, and risking false positives and negatives. He suggested the policy be revisited and abolished.

Additionally, he asked that the board reallocate the funds towards harm reduction, expanded counseling programs, and distribution of a particular nasal spray or other evidenced based drug policies. You can find his direct comments and the boards response by watching the video beginning at the 1:25:15 mark.

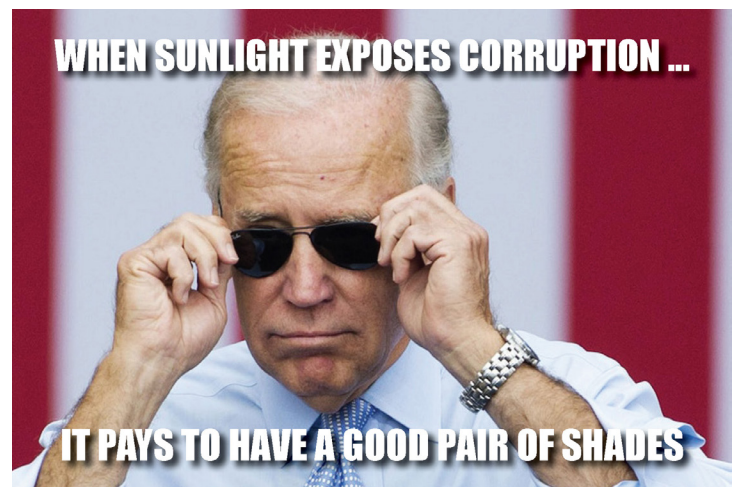
If you are interested in learning more about what happens at our district's school board meetings, the agendas and recordings can be found on the board's website here.

The next HVRSD Board of Education meeting is on March 18, 2024 at 6:30pm at the Board Office at 425 S. Main St in Pennington.

If you would like to hear more about what happens at our Township meetings, please find meeting recordings here.

TruthBTold

Meme courtesy of TruthBTold



At the Movies

Let My People Go

Produced by Professor David Clements

MUST WATCH MOVIE!

The films synopsis states: "Let My People Go" is a modern-day deliverance story that presents two overlapping narratives of America's enslavement. The first form of slavery is invisible, and achieved by the deep state's use of proprietary "black box machines" and rigged election software, where perception is altered, and swamp candidates are selected rather than elected. The second form of slavery focuses on the real-life consequences of the hundreds of thousands of Americans that gathered and protested the stolen Nov. 3rd election, many of which are imprisoned today.

PLEASE SHARE – Download free digital copy, view trailer and learn more at Let My People Go Movie or live stream for free at rumble.com

We the People of Interest

Jon Edwards on Chess Magazine

Our local Jon Edwards wins the 32nd World Correspondence Championship

It has been nearly 40 years since an American last emerged victorious in the World Correspondence Chess Championship, but GrandMaster (GM) Jon Edwards has succeeded by winning the 32nd edition. While not a little remarkable, Jon Edwards holds another lesser known title: owner of the largest chess stamp collection in the world.

Congratulations to Jon!

New York Times article: [Why Correspondence Chess Is Still Popular Among Elite Players](#)

communitynews.org article: [Hopewell resident Jon Edwards ascends to rare heights in chess world](#)



Editor's Notes:

- Jon recently won the 32nd World Correspondence Chess Championship.
- Jon is the third American to win the World Correspondence Chess Title and just the 14th American to earn the title of Correspondence Chess GrandMaster.
- Jon is the second World Chess Champion from NJ. The first was Wilhelm Steinitz in 1890.
- Jon also participated on the American team in the 21st Correspondence Chess Olympiad... they finished in third giving him a Bronze Medal! Note: if not already aware, Chess is recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as a sport and the chess federations are affiliates.

Questions and answers:

How many chess matches did you play?

There were three rounds in the World Championship. The preliminary round required that I finish in the top 2 of 15 players. That result qualified me for the Candidates, which also required that I finish in the top 2 of 15 players. That result qualified me for the final round, which I won outright... making me the 32nd World Champion in October, 2022. I am still the reigning champion. All of the games in each section were played at the same time... which meant that I often was playing 20-30 games at the same time.

On average, how long (in days) did it take to complete a match?

Not in days... in years!

On average, each match lasts 1 ½ years. The entire event took 12 years, start to finish. Several games in the World Final lasted more than three years each.

The correspondence chess Olympiad is the slowest sport in the entire Olympic movement. Start to finish lasted 8 years.

How many chess boards did you have setup at home?

No. All of the on-going and completed games are stored in ChessBase, the software used by all chess professionals. I wrote the definitive books about the software, ChessBase Complete.

What countries were your opponents from?

Primarily all of the countries in throughout Europe, including Russia and Germany. In the Olympiad, the Final round involved 13 different countries. The US was the only non-European country in the Final.

What was one of your most favorite/memorable chess "move"?

I found a theoretic novelty, what chess players call a TN, essentially a key new move in a known position, against the reigning Russian correspondence champion while winning the prestigious Spanish Masters three years ago.

Anything else of interest to share?

Just that 17 of my private students have been accepted at Princeton, Harvard, or Yale.

The Semiquincentennial

July 4, 2026, will be the 250th anniversary (semiquincentennial) of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. This anniversary creates a great opportunity to educate Americans, and indeed the world, about the unique nature of the American system, the revolutionary roots of its origin, and the history of the unique leaders who came together to declare their independence, establish a moral basis for freedom, and launch a nation defined by its exceptionalism.

The 1776 Opportunity: A 2026 Year-Long Celebration:
Please read this Dec 13 2020 article by Newt Gingrich: [THE 1776 OPPORTUNITY: A 2026 YEAR-LONG CELEBRATION](#)

New Jersey Signers of the Declaration of Independence:

Did you know that three of the five NJ Signers of the Declaration of Independence have their gravesites in Mercer County? They are John Hart, Richard Stockton and John Witherspoon. Go find out, pay a visit, and say a prayer of gratitude, as well as continued blessings for our great country!

