



DOWNTOWN TOMS RIVER

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Downtown Toms River
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October 18, 2019

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Dear Candidate for Mayor Jonathan Petro-

I am writing you on behalf of our Board of Directors of the Downtown Improvement District (BID). At our most recent meeting on October 2nd, a motion was made unanimously to send a letter to both you and your campaign team to clarify some recent news, Facebook posts, as well as campaign literature regarding the redevelopment of the waterfront in Downtown Toms River. We would like to note that the characteristics of the redevelopment of the Downtown as well as the anticipated development plans have been reported inaccurately by your Team. In addition, your literature alleging “high rise” apartments being considered in Downtown is equally false and misleading.

It is important to note that we met with your Economic Development Committee of the Chamber of Commerce on September 4th, 2019. You were present at this meeting along with the other members of the Board of Directors. After the presentation was made by the proposed redeveloper- Capodagli Property Company, you did not express any concern or issues with the proposed project. I am at a loss why you now have chosen a political forum to espouse your concerns about the proposed development of Downtown Toms River.

I am also sure you are aware that the BID and its members include both Councilman Turnbach as well as Mayor Kelleher, who have been very involved with the Redevelopment Plan as proposed and as has been discussed for well over a year. As President of the Chamber of Commerce you should also be aware that the Chamber is represented at the BID meetings and at no time was it brought to my attention or the BID’s attention that you, personally, had issues with the plan. I find your most recent statements regarding Downtown both disingenuous and misleading.

We would like to provide you with some clarifying facts:

- 1) Regarding: Impeding the view of the riverfront-
We believe the redevelopment plan enhances the view and capitalizes on the views by allowing taller buildings further away from the waterfront. The proposed residential building, which include both retail and parking will be approximately 4 to 6 stories, with 2 levels parking and 4 levels residential, NOT 10 stories as has been stated by your campaign. They will be no taller than some of the most recent building approved in Downtown. The architectural features will also blend in to the Downtown motif.

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2) Regarding: A “call” for a river-walk, restaurants, stores, and a parking garage- We could not agree more! The Capodagli Property Company, the only developer to respond to the township’s RFP, has made a proposal which includes the above amenities. In addition, it includes a space for TR School's Poseidon Laboratory, a kayak launch, an amphitheater, and an outdoor rooftop lounge. All these plans by the way were shown to your Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee this past September.

3) To, respectively, counter your point: "It starts with business and not residents." "People that live here spend the most here, followed by those that work here, followed by those who visit/travel-through here." This is the formula the BID likes to follow and has since this mantra was delivered to us by Jody Alessandrine (a previous-director of the BID) and reiterated by the experts at the ICSC (International Council for Shopping Centers). Our businesses want more people that sleep in their homes but live on Main Street. Without the sufficient demographics to meet their standards, high quality retailers are not even looking at Downtown TR.

Although there may be Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, and other political affiliations on our Board of Directors, we are consciously non-partisan and neutral on matters that do not relate to the quality of life and commerce in the downtown district. It is important that I emphasize the current bi-partisan support for Downtown progress has not always been in place. There have been various opportunities squandered by politicians, business-people, and government officials over the years. Bad luck has played a role, too- recessions, fires, hurricanes... all negatively affected downtown commerce. But now, many believe- the planets have aligned - and we must work diligently on a united front to see this effort through.

As you know, our door has always been, and will always be, open to you. As a candidate for Mayor, previous-chairman and active member of the GTRCC, employee of a Downtown company, and resident of Toms River- you belong in the conversation and not outside of it. Please embrace our invitation and make you opinions heard by our Board and professional staff. So far, your only interest appears to be in the Campaign literature that has been disseminated.

Additionally, I have included herein a copy of a press release our Board sent out in August regarding our public and overwhelming support of the waterfront redevelopment plan authored by the Toms River Township Planning Department and adopted unanimously by the Township Council in 2017.

I understand that you are vying for the Mayorship of Toms River but please do not use inaccurate facts in espousing your position. I invite you to attend our meetings at any time, if you want the facts of what is occurring Downtown. The many volunteers and members of the BID, who have devoted many hours of their time to this organization, deserves your support not your misleading criticism.

Robert C. Shea, Esq.
Chairman, Toms River Business Improvement District

CC: Toms River Township Mayor & Council