

Richland Village The Little Town That Could!



By Chuck Chiarello
Mayor, Buena Vista Township
League Executive Board Member



The Cape May Seashore Lines big red historic diesel locomotive pulls into Richland Village with several vintage Budd passenger cars attached.

All Aboard!" I'm happy to announce that the trains have returned to Buena Vista's Richland Village and brought with them redevelopment, ratables and excitement! Thanks to a great deal of hard work from the Township Committee and the expertise gained through the New Jersey Mayors Institute on Community Design we've achieved our goal of establishing a railroad themed village in Buena Vista Township.

Our redevelopment concept was to add streetscape (sidewalk, lights, and benches) to a half mile stretch of US Route 40 and bring back the railroad. The township acquired various properties and the goal was set to rehabilitate Richland, which had seen little or no changes during the past 75 years.

About Richland

Richland was once our center of commerce, and though limited, it was and is the closest thing to a downtown area that our small, rural community had. Railroad tracks heading north and south plus another set of tracks traveling east and west crisscrossed in Richland. At one time, farmers purchased feed stored in a grain tower located next to the tracks and shopping was done at the now 100-year-old Richland General Store. Several clothing factories opened during war times and eventually closed. Today, thousands

BETWEEN THANKSGIVING AND CHRISTMAS THEY CAME IN DROVES TO RIDE THE SANTA EXPRESS WITH THE FAMILY AND TAKE A TRIP BACK IN TIME — IT WAS A HIT!

of cars a day pass through Richland on US Route 40 (Harding Highway) with almost no reason to stop.

Bringing Activity to Richland

To date, the township has purchased six properties with Economic Development funds or grants. The next key step was to reach an agreement with the Cape May Seashore Lines Railroad to provide regular scheduled excursion train service between Richland Village and Tuckahoe in Upper Township, Cape May County. We also convinced the Patcong Valley Model Railroad Club to move to Richland Village, following the loss of their longtime home in Egg Harbor Township.

At this point no sidewalks were done, no model trains were running and no real train had run except for a special appearance at our Ground Breaking Ceremony held on November 23, 2004. However, we knew that things were starting to happen!

Groundbreaking and Early Progress

During 2004, the Township Committee spent a great deal of time looking at properties, seeking grants and explaining to the community that something could really happen in Richland Village.

On Groundbreaking Day a large tent was set up next to the Richland General Store and about 200 people came to look at old pictures and listen to how our link with the past might make our community a unique place to visit. Our congressman, state legislators, area mayors and the Township Committee gathered under the tent as a big red historic diesel locomotive from the 1950's pulled into town across the street with several vintage Budd passenger cars attached. The train was blowing the whistle and carrying Santa Claus for this special occasion. It was a grand day for the township and the encouraging words from those assembled certainly gave hope that something special was happening!

So, we broke ground and continued acquiring property. We now owned

11 different parcels covering 68 acres of ground. The township became the lead investor in Richland Village based on the advice of our planner Peter Karabashion. This was done so our dream of a railroad themed village would take shape in the fashion that we wanted it to.

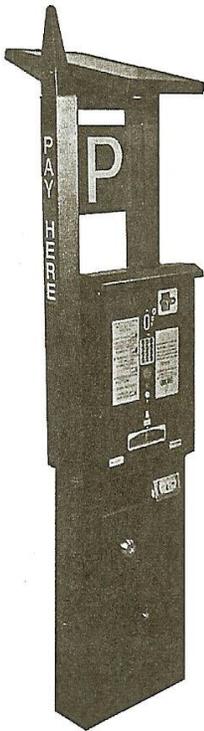
From Dream to Reality

In March of 2005, I attended a conference in Newark sponsored by Downtown New Jersey, an organization devoted to helping revitalize downtown areas. While there I learned about the Regional Plan Association's (RPA) New Jersey Mayors Institute on Community Design. I approached RPA and asked if I could be considered for next year's Mayor's Institute so that I could share my ideas on Richland Village. The program only accepted six communities per year and they were full for 2005. As luck would have it, a few days later I received a call saying one of the towns had dropped out and they were interested in the preliminary ideas I had shown them for Richland Village.

From June 23 to 25 I attended the New Jersey Mayors Institute at Princeton University. I learned ideas from other towns but most importantly I was able to share the Richland Village Project with a panel of experts from areas including planning, transportation, Smart Growth and more. Each town was given several hours to discuss and answer questions about their project. A written report was issued after the Institute finished which offered direction and suggestions.

As the summer of 2005 progressed, work finally got started and the red brick stamped sidewalks, railroad-style street lamps and benches appeared. By August of 2005 an agreement had been reached between NJ Transit and the Cape May Seashore Lines to operate a train on Saturdays between 10 am and 6 pm starting in October. We no longer had any railroad sidings left in Richland so we could only operate the train on the main track which limited our operating times.

During the month of September, we



Information is King...

... and Metric Parking's pay by space, networked internet browser based systems provide that information whenever and wherever you want.

The Metric Parking Wireless space management product is a numbered space application. All pay Stations are programmed to accept payment for any space. All machines are solar powered, with bill acceptor, dual printers, 10,000 ticket capacity, and incorporate wireless data transfer (GPRS). All pay stations communicate space information in real time to the central server. The central server incorporates a reporting package including all revenue and machine status information in real time.

Our system enables your customers to **pay or add time** to any parking space at any of your system's pay stations regardless of network status. No need to return to the original parking area or place the receipt on the dash.

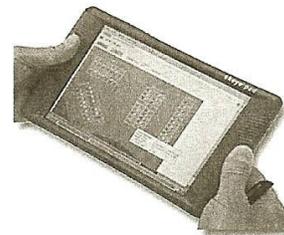
Enforcement personnel view the status (in real time) of all spaces in your entire town, paid or unpaid via a wireless internet connection to your Metric Enforcement Web Pad. No need to check dashboards or individual meters.

Please contact Metric Parking today for the latest information regarding Multi Space parking systems.

Metric... The Smarter Meter for Less that Does More.



2540 Route 130, Suite 114 • Cranbury, NJ 08512
Tel 609-395-8570 • Fax 609-395-8541 • www.metricparking.com





The Richland Village Train Station is pictured on October 8, 2005 ready for the first run of excursion passenger train service between Richland and Tuckahoe.

moved a 1920s guest house four blocks to the railroad tracks. It was renovated in three weeks by our Public Works Department into a close replica of the original train station. A guard shack was also constructed from scratch. The railroad crossing across from the Richland General Store now resembled how the same crossing looked around 1936.

All Aboard!

On October 8, 2005 the first train rolled into Richland Village in the pouring rain with several hundred dignitaries and local residents standing by in excitement! No train had stopped in Richland since September 28, 1935.

For the first time in 70 years people were able to get on a train and take a 30 mile roundtrip from Richland Vil-

lage to Tuckahoe in historic luxury rail coaches. The price was \$10 for adults and \$5 for kids 12 and under.

Every Saturday for the rest of 2005 the train ran and people came. Between Thanksgiving and Christmas they came in droves to ride the Santa Express with the family and take a trip back in time — it was a hit!

In November of 2005 Buena Vista



Municipal Public Works Superintendents:

Take a look at the Association of Environmental Authorities.

AEA...we are not for authorities only.

If you are a municipality with significant infrastructure investments in water, wastewater and solid waste facilities and services, then you need to belong to AEA. We focus on the trends, the issues, the pending regulations and the proposed legislative changes that effect how you deliver services to your citizens. Check us out on the Internet at

www.aeanj.org

Find out what other municipal superintendents have to say about their membership in AEA...

Call 609-584-1877 for more information

Township won the "Innovation in Governance Award for Smart Growth" from the New Jersey League of Municipalities and the State Department of Community Affairs for the Richland Village Project. The award was given during the Annual League Conference in Atlantic City.

2006 and Beyond

Because of various delays, it took until August of 2006 to get the train running for its second year. That did not stop progress because the township began improving the various properties it had purchased. Areas that were once eyesores, began getting positive comments from community members and in the media.

By February 2006, the Township completed the public hearing process for a Redevelopment Plan for Richland Village and sent it to the Pinelands Commission to review. By September of 2006 the review was complete and the approvals were received. Redevelopment Proposals are expected to be received by summer 2007.

Between 2004 and 2006 over \$2,000,000 in grants were received for the Richland Village Project from various agencies. The Township looked everywhere for resources: USDA, DCA, DEP, CRDA, NJDOT and straight through the alphabet. A Smart Growth Grant (DCA) was received for Richland Village that helped with the Redevelopment Plan. The U. S. Department of Agriculture's Farmers Home, now known as Rural Development, helped build our first parking area next to the Richland General Store. NJDOT funded the Streetscape Phases I, II & III. DEP helped establish a new park called Saw Mill Park on a 1.7 acre site that the township purchased which features a 225+ old giant oak tree. CRDA (casino funding) helped with the renovation of an old clothing factory that the Township acquired to become the home of the Patcong Valley Model Railroad, which opened in December of 2006.

CRDA also helped fund a new railroad siding in Richland that is expected to be built by summer 2007. The siding will allow trains to park off the main track and service can originate in Richland Village instead of starting out in Tuckahoe as it does now.

The year 2006 turned out to be an amazing year in moving Richland Village along. In October Saw Mill Park was opened along with a new 9/11



Photo courtesy of J.D. Griffin

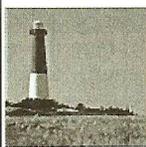
Kids of all ages and especially grown up ones enjoy the Patcong Valley Model Railroad which features hundreds of miles of track, beautiful scenery and a project that is constantly being worked on. It is a highlight of Richland Village.

Memorial. The park features a real Pennsylvania Railroad caboose and a children's play train along with a beautiful gazebo plus the giant oak tree which is lighted at night. The first weekend in December saw the opening of the Patcong Valley Model Railroad. Between December 2006 and January 2007 Patcong received over 4,000 visitors. Their 3,000 square foot building was once a World War II clothing factory which had seen better days. Today it looks like a restored railroad freight depot building. The lobby of the Patcong Building was designed by yours truly and built by our Public Works Department to resemble the Atlantic City Train Station I remem-

bered as a child. It is now the Buena Vista Township Visitors Center.

The Cape May Seashore Lines train running from August to December 23rd (only on Saturdays) drew over 5,000 riders. A deli, a restaurant and a tavern have opened so far. Several additional stores are under construction, as well as a major gourmet restaurant. This has all happened without the Redevelopment Plan even going out for proposals. If you're looking for a great outing, plan to ride the train in Richland Village, and visit the little town that could! ▲

Mayor Chuck Chiarello is a 16-year elected official serving as mayor for the past 13 years. He is a member of the League's Executive Board.



**Guide Your Savings to a Brighter Tomorrow...
Join a HIF!**

Take Advantage of:

- * Benefit Customization
- * Choice of Networks with Affordable Premiums
- * Average Net Increase over last 3 years of 7.85%
- * Over \$7.9 Million in Dividends paid in the last 10 years
- * A \$19 Million Fund Surplus as 11/30/06

Contain your Health Insurance Costs with a Health Insurance Fund (HIF)

NOW ACCEPTING HIF MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

Benefit Pathfinders Associates, Inc.
Tel. 732-349-9000 * Fax 732-349-9118
www.BenefitPathfinders.com
Email: info@BenefitPathfinders.com
Main Office: Toms River
Local Offices: Cherry Hill - Park Ridge - Marlton