

**TAX INCREASE FOR 2013
DUE TO THE HUNTERDON ART MUSEUM
NOT REPAYING THE TOWN**

Dear Resident:

After years of negotiation discussions between the Town of Clinton and the Hunterdon Art Museum relating to the Dam and Dike Restoration Project, conversations have come to a halt.

By way of history,

- In 2005, the State ordered the owners of the dam to either bring it up to current safety standards or to remove it in its entirety. The cost for the renovations would have cost the owners of the dam, which include the Hunterdon Art Museum, nearly \$1 million. The Town stepped in to lend their assistance by successfully obtaining a grant from the State in the amount of \$950,000 to cover all the costs of the entire project.
- The Town was required by the State to oversee the project which only consisted of repairs to the dam and dike, to which things were seemingly moving forward smoothly. All but one of the adjoining property owners were satisfied with the work being done; the Hunterdon Art Museum. They were unhappy with several aspects of the construction and design of the work, and requested the scope of work be changed to accommodate their personal desire to expand their property. The Town agreed to make many changes to the scope of the project surrounding the museum as long as the museum agreed to pay their share of the additional work.
 - It should be noted that the reason the Town agreed to the museum's request was that we already had approval from the State Department of Environmental Protection and State Historic Preservation Office to make repairs. If the museum had to obtain approval for the additional work they were requesting, it would have cost tens of thousands of dollars for the various studies required, as well as State permit fees, to which there was no guarantee they would even be granted permission to expand their property. As a result of the Town agreeing to do the extra work requested, the museum realized a significant financial savings while improving their property. This "handshake" deal that the Town undertook with the Hunterdon Art Museum is what a government should do for their residents as it fosters a greater sense of community.
- Fast forward several years; between additional engineering, legal and construction work directly related to the additional work requested by the museum, combined with ongoing litigation with the museum, the taxpayers of the Town are out nearly \$250,000 for a project that was supposed to have zero impact on the taxpayers of the Town!

The Town has expended all of the funds associated with the "extras" requested by the Hunterdon Art Museum and has yet to receive any reimbursement from the museum as they previously agreed to. If the Hunterdon Art Museum does not pay the Town before the end of the year, future municipal budgets will be greatly affected. This includes, but is not limited to the removal of publicly funded trash removal, which would require all residents of the Town to make private arrangements with trash haulers for the removal of their garbage, recycling, vegetative waste and bulk materials.

The Town's sole intention has always been to assist our property owners as best we can. In fact, we even helped the Hunterdon Art Museum in obtaining a loan from the State in the amount of \$450,000 that would allow them to make additional improvements to their property. How was the Town repaid for our generosity in helping the Hunterdon Art Museum repair their dam and dike at no cost, as well as assisting them in getting an additional loan for capital improvements? We were not!

The Hunterdon Art Museum owes the Town money for the work that they requested and are the sole beneficiary of. The Town did all of the work and the museum did not pay. We do not care if they borrow money or pay cash. How they pay is not relevant to the Town. It is evident as shown in their Form 990, which is the annual report that the Museum is required to file each year with the State since they are a non-profit entity, they are financially stable. (Visit the Town's website to view the Form 990)

Taking all of the above into account, the Town wants to publicly make all of this information known as future actions and inactions by the museum may have a direct impact on future property tax bills. We can only hope that the Hunterdon Art Museum realizes the full impact of their actions as it relates to the taxpayers of this community.