

Borough of Wood-Ridge

PAUL A. SARLO
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CHRISTOPHER W. EILERT
Administrator

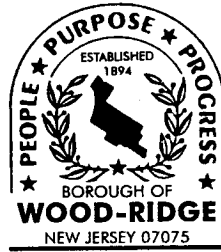
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May 21, 2007

Dear fellow Wood-Ridge resident:

I am writing as your Mayor to address issues regarding the Wesmont Station redevelopment project that were raised in this past Sunday's Record article, which, unfortunately, either left out or misstated many important details.

Everyone realizes that the Curtiss-Wright complex has burdened our community for decades. The Curtiss-Wright legacy includes millions of dollars in tax appeals which are still being paid off by Wood-Ridge tax payers and a blighted complex with polluted soil and ground water. The Wesmont Station redevelopment was undertaken to alleviate this burdensome legacy and transform the site into something that would be an asset to our community.

Since day one of the redevelopment process, cleaning up the environmental pollution on the site has been the top priority of the Wood-Ridge Mayor and Council and the redeveloper, Somerset Development. To date, the redeveloper has spent over \$10 million dollars of his own money in cleaning up the environmental pollution on the site. Let me be clear, no Wood-Ridge taxpayer dollars have been, or will be, spent on this environmental clean-up.

To ensure that the environmental clean up is done correctly and thoroughly, the Borough hired a leading environmental engineering firm, Hatch Mott MacDonald, to independently monitor and verify every aspect of the clean up performed by the redeveloper. Additionally, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is closely overseeing the entire clean up. The redeveloper, not the borough, is paying all the bills from Hatch Mott MacDonald and the DEP.

Today, the Wesmont Station redevelopment site is much cleaner than when Curtiss-Wright sold it nearly six years ago. Many parts of the site have already been cleaned up and approved by the DEP. There are still some areas that require more clean up and the redeveloper is continuing to clean them up under DEP supervision. The ground water contamination on the site is located under the factory. The factory is not part of the redevelopment area and no homes will ever be built there. Furthermore, the groundwater contamination is being treated according to DEP standards. It is also important to note that ground water contamination does not pose a risk to residents because our water comes from the United Water utility system, not private wells drilled into the ground.

This clean up has been a much larger effort than anyone originally anticipated. Everyone hoped that the first phase of construction would have begun earlier this year. However, more time is needed to properly clean up the environmental pollution on the site to ensure that it is safe. Homes will not be built until the New Jersey DEP signs off on the clean up and issues a final permit. Furthermore, the borough will not issue building permits until we are satisfied that the site is safe for residential use. This delay in construction, although disappointing, is necessary in order to continue the environmental clean up and ensure that the site is safe. I think we can all agree that ensuring the safety of future residents of Wesmont Station is far more important than sticking to phasing timelines or construction schedules.

When we embarked on this redevelopment effort, we knew it wouldn't be easy. However, we knew that if we worked together, Wood-Ridge would finally be free of this contaminated property which has blighted our community for far too many years. Our residents had the vision and intelligence to understand that Wesmont Station offered us a once in a life time opportunity to eliminate a financial and environmental burden from our community. Those who oppose this project, as depicted in the Record article, would prefer that this site remain contaminated and dormant. Those of us who live in Wood-Ridge know that this is not an acceptable option.

We must continue to persevere to see this project to completion. Yes, it will take time and patience. But the end result will be worth it. Our community will have a beautiful new neighborhood which will provide our taxpayers with long term property tax relief. We will all take pride in the new school, athletic fields, parks and train station that will be a part of Wesmont Station. Most importantly, we will be able to take pride in knowing that by sticking together, we made our beloved town of Wood-Ridge a stronger, safer and more prosperous community.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul A. Sarlo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "S".

Paul A. Sarlo
Mayor