
Press Release

NEWS

Burlington County
Board of Chosen Freeholders
Mount Holly, NJ 08060
Office of Public Information
Phone 609-265-5028/Fax 609-265-5151
www.co.burlington.nj.us



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Ralph Shrom

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(609) 265-5028

RECREATION GRANTS TO BE OFFERED TO ALL BURLINGTON COUNTY TOWNS

Garganio Says Towns May Apply for Grants Up To \$250,000

All of Burlington County's cash-strapped towns would be eligible for County grants up to \$250,000 a year to create and improve local recreation facilities under a new grant program adopted by the freeholders this evening.

Entitled the "Municipal Park Development Assistance Program," and conceived by Freeholder Director Bruce D. Garganio, the grant program would be funded through the County's dedicated Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund.

"The freeholders are providing this grant opportunity at a time when so many of our towns have had to make recreational facilities a low priority because of budget constraints," said Garganio. "We will do everything we can to ensure that the conditions for eligibility are reasonable."

No municipal cost share or "match" is required to receive a grant. However, the funding is exclusively for hard costs, such as construction and repair of facilities, and not for the purchase of equipment or for operational and maintenance costs. Funds may be applied to the acquisition of recreational land.

Deputy Freeholder Director Joseph B. Donnelly said the grant program answers to a need he has long wanted to address – namely, to make more of the County's dedicated open space funds available to small, built-out communities that have no land preservation opportunities.

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PRESS RELEASE: Grant Program – 7/14/10 – Add One

“Every taxpayer in every town pays into the County’s dedicated open space fund,” said Donnelly. “Now every town will have a better opportunity to share in those funds, and benefit directly from them.”

A total \$5 million is being earmarked for the program in the first year. Towns also may make joint applications to develop or improve existing passive or active recreational facilities that are already municipally-owned. At a minimum, 20 grants of \$250,000 will be awarded in the first year.

Grant applications will be reviewed by a committee comprised of Garganio, who oversees the County’s Resource Conservation Department, staff of the Department of Resource Conservation, and the County Engineer.

As an added incentive, freeholders may award municipalities a bonus of 10 percent or more if their projects further the overall goal of the County’s Parks and Open Space Master Plan, such as by creating a trail link or other connection to existing County parks.

Special consideration will also be given to projects that involve the use of in-house resources or volunteers, the use of renewable energy, access to public transportation and hiking and biking trails, water access, and consideration of the needs for the physically and developmentally challenged.

While the timeline for accepting applications and awarding grants has not yet been set, Garganio said every effort would be made to have the program up and running as quickly as possible.

“This in no way will detract from or diminish the success of the County’s farmland and open space programs, or our ongoing park development,” Garganio said. “We have ample funding in the dedicated fund, and we are putting it to work when it is needed most.”

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PRESS RELEASE: Grant Program – 7/14/10 – Add Two

The County has preserved nearly 30,000 acres of farmland and acquired 3,500 acres in open space, most of it for park development. There are currently seven County parks up and running.

The trust fund has a current balance of approximately \$39 million, a portion of which will be needed to settle outstanding bonded indebtedness of \$5.8 million. In addition to land preservation and acquisition, funds are used to maintain and improve County parks and County historic sites.

The dedicated tax rate is 4 cents, and currently generates \$20.7 million per year.

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