



Frenchtown Sun

A Frenchtown-Focused Civic Newsletter

Frenchtown Advances Affordable Housing While Preserving Character

For decades, the borough has consistently embraced its responsibility to provide diverse, accessible housing options. Rather than viewing state affordable housing mandates as a bureaucratic hurdle, Frenchtown has historically approached affordable housing as an opportunity to strengthen the community from within.

In late June, in keeping with this long-standing commitment, the borough entered into a Consent Order and Final Certificate of Compliance and Repose approved by the Superior Court of New Jersey memorializing that Frenchtown met its Fourth Round affordable housing obligation (note: the Fourth Round housing obligation refers to the 10-year statewide affordable housing cycle—2025-2035—mandated by legislation enacted in 2024). The Certificate of Compliance is a major milestone that secures the borough's affordable housing adherence while pioneering creative solutions tailored specifically to Frenchtown's unique character.

At its June meeting, the [continued on page 7]



Photographer: Paul Serra

Frenchtown Elementary School Will Celebrate Alumni and Community at Centennial

On Saturday, September 26, Frenchtown Elementary School (FES) will commemorate its centennial. Alumni and members of the community are invited to attend the festivities, which will feature the opening of the time capsule behind the building's cornerstone, remarks by local leaders and a presentation on a forthcoming history book by local historian Rick Epstein. The celebration is free and open to the public. More information can be found at <http://www.frenchtownschool.org/article/3005260>. To support the celebration, commemorative merchandise is available for purchase online at FES Centennial Gear: <https://spcustomgear.store/frenchtowncentennial/store.html?eid=476196>.

In recognition of this historic milestone, *The Frenchtown Sun* met with two FES alumni—Wayne “Wink” Hummer (Class of 1962) and David “Dave” Gano (Class of 1961)—to celebrate their more than 75 years in the borough and their rich history with the school.

At 79 years old, Wink Hummer has lived in Frenchtown his entire life. He grew up on 3rd Street and married his wife, Ruth, in 1973. After renting a home on 2nd Street, the couple bought their current home on 4th Street in 1978.

Wink has five brothers, all of whom went through the Frenchtown school system. At the time, students attended kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade at Borough Hall before moving [continued on page 7]

About *The Frenchtown Sun*

The Frenchtown Sun is published monthly by the Borough of Frenchtown to provide its residents with local news and community updates.

The content of *The Sun* is guided by the editorial team of Ted Brandston, Randi Eckel, Rick Epstein, John Gattuso, Jeanne Herb, Amelia Rodriguez and Maria Whelan. John Dougherty serves as the Borough Council liaison.

The Sun is delivered monthly free of charge to all Frenchtown Borough residents. An online edition is available at www.frenchtownsun.net.

Borough residents can request postal delivery or contact the editorial team at newsletter@frenchtownboro.com or mail *The Frenchtown Sun*, 29 Second Street, Frenchtown, N.J. 08825.

Updates from Borough Council

At its monthly meeting on July 1, Borough Council discussed the installation of flashing beacons at the Kingwood Ave. crosswalk in July, and a \$200,000 grant in the recently approved New Jersey state budget to support improvements to the interior of Borough Hall. Additionally, the Council:

- Authorized Collier's Engineering to issue a Request for Proposal for a contractor to install a half-pipe skateboard ramp at Borough Park and to undertake necessary improvements at Borough Park to facilitate installation of the ramp. The expectation is that the equipment will be installed by the end of 2026; a rendering of the ramp is below. Several Frenchtown residents attended the meeting and offered their appreciation for the work of the Council to advance the installation of the skateboard ramp using county grant funds.
- Approved several events sponsored by the Frenchtown Business and Professional Association including Riverfest on September 6, the Witches Dance and Zombie Crawl on October 24 and Santa on

the River on December 6. More information about these events can be found on the FBPA website: <https://lovefrenchtown.org/>. Additionally, the Council approved the Sojourn Stopover of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania at Sunbeam Lenape Park on August 9.

- Appointed Neil Palmer to the borough's Environmental Commission. Resident Barbara Bristow serves as Acting Chair of the Commission. Other members include: Kyle Johnson, Pete Palac, Chris Szeplaki and Armin Zomorodi; Ted Brandston serves as the Planning Board's liaison to the Commission. The Council also had a first reading on an ordinance that would establish additional alternate members to the Environmental Commission; the draft ordinance will have its second and final reading at the Council's August meeting.
- Approved a grant application to the New Jersey Department of Transportation for funds to address road resurfacing, road draining, and pavement improvements on roads on Third, Fourth and Fifth Streets.
- Appointed Patrick Keelen to the borough's Shade Tree Commission. Other members of the Shade Tree Commission include chair Geoff Stanly, Mark Loos, Melissa Allen and John Mizin.
- Authorized a Fire/EMS grant application towards the purchase of an ambulance by the Milford-Holland Rescue Squad which serves Frenchtown.
- Had a first reading of an ordinance that would appropriate approximately \$62,000 from the borough's Capital Improvement Fund for an upfit of a currently-owned police department vehicle to make it "patrol ready," and renovations for Borough Hall. The renovation funds were requested prior to the \$200,000 appropriation in the state budget and can be returned if not needed.



Meet Lions Club President Albert Giarretta



ALBERT GIARRETTA has served as a member of the Frenchtown Lions Club for 30 years and as its president for the past four.

Celebrating its 90th anniversary in 2026, the club remains a vital non-profit service organization in the greater Frenchtown area. The Lions raise funds to provide holiday gifts for families in need, host the annual Easter Egg Hunt and present community service awards to 8th grade and graduating high school seniors. Additionally, the local chapter supports the International Lions Club and raises funds to help prevent eye diseases.

Al is also widely recognized as the proprietor of the Frenchtown Pharmacy at 20 Race St., where the business has been located since 2014. He opened the pharmacy in 1978 at 19 Bridge St., later moving it to 9 Kingwood Ave. in 1985. A registered pharmacist in New Jersey, Al graduated from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science. He moved to Kingwood in 1975, where he raised his three children.

More information on the Lions Club can be found on the club's website. The club is always welcoming new members; anyone interested can get in touch at frenchtownlionsclub@gmail.com.

Local Students Make DVRHS Honor Roll

Delaware Valley Regional High School published their Marking Period 4 Honor Roll. Frenchtown students include:

DISTINGUISHED HONOR ROLL: Amelia R. Rodriguez (Grade 9)

HONOR ROLL: Hope Devon Dermody (Grade 9) and Vincent Felice (Grade 12)

Meet FBPA President Morgan Taylor



MORGAN TAYLOR is the President of the Frenchtown Business & Professional Association, a position that she has held for more than 3 years.

The FBPA, also known as Love Frenchtown, is a volunteer run, member-supported, non-

profit organization dedicated to supporting local business and enriching the Frenchtown community. Mobilizing through town events, downtown beautification efforts, strong relationships with other community interest groups and expressing a voice in local government, the FBPA is an active part of civic life in the borough.

Morgan is a native of Hunterdon County and graduated from Delaware Valley High School. In 2011, Morgan's mom, Dawn Taylor, opened Country Chic, a new and recycled boutique at 47 Bridge St. A few years later it was passed onto Morgan, and she has been the proud owner ever since.

For more information about the FBPA, visit its website at: <https://lovefrenchtown.org/>

Reminder to sign up for Constant Contact

Residents are encouraged to sign up to receive Constant Contact notices from the borough at: https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/zNyK2m8?__cf_chl_f_tk=0ux5VBT37b51eofSE1hVc6TqsAEcCVCKNfDspPQUqbk-1783028677-1.0.1.1-2gEY_DGV05RB_JMulzgn82JvTpBVx77Rq5ufVt7a57.

Constant Contact provides residents with critical information about what's happening in the borough, including emergency situations and natural disasters. Residents are also encouraged to subscribe to the borough's YouTube channel where recordings of all Borough Council meetings are posted; residents can subscribe at: <https://www.youtube.com/@FrenchtownLive>.

Community Calendar

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

Borough Council Meeting, 7 p.m., Borough Hall, 29 Second St.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6

Clam Night at the American Legion, 5 p.m., 510 Harrison St. *Burgers are also available. Come early—they sell out fast!*

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9

Lenape River Sojourn, X a.m., Sunbeam Park

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11

Environmental Commission Meeting, 7 p.m., Borough Hall, 29 Second St.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16

Breakfast at Darcy Lodge, 8—11 a.m., 39 Everittstown Rd., \$12 per person ages 13+, \$7 per person ages 6-12, children under 5 eat free; all-you-can-eat buffet

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18

Frenchtown Super Seniors Ice Cream Social, 12—1 p.m., Frenchtown Presbyterian Church, 22 Fourth St. *Everyone 50 and over is welcome. Registration is required; please call 908-237-0465*

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20

Clam Night at the American Legion, 5 p.m., 510 Harrison St. *Burgers are also available. Come early—they sell out fast!*

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22

Frenchtown Farmers Market, 10 a.m.—2 p.m., Sunbeam Park

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25

Board of Education Meeting, 6:45 p.m., FES Library, 902 Harrison St.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26

Planning/Zoning Board Meeting, 7 p.m., FES Library, Borough Hall, 29 Second St.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29

Hunterdon County Electronic Waste Recycling Day, 9 a.m.—1 p.m., Hunterdon County Complex, Rt. 12 Raritan Twp.

SAVE THE DATE:

- **Riverfest, Sunday, Sept. 6, 11 a.m.—7 p.m.**
- **Frenchtown School's Centennial Celebration & Community Day, Saturday, Sept. 26**

Music, Games and Murder Mystery at the Hunterdon County Senior Center

This month, the Hunterdon County Senior Center will put on their annual Guitar Jam Showcase, a musical concert by the Center's own talented Senior Guitar Jam members.

Call or stop by the Senior Center to pick up passes for Senior Day on August 20th at the Hunterdon County 4H and Agricultural Fair.

Regular, ongoing fitness and social and recreational classes continue at the Senior Center, including bocce and cornhole, played in the outdoor courts.

September 20-26 is Falls Prevention Awareness Week, and the Center will have a special presentation on September 11th. Exercise workshops to stay active and thereby reduce the risk of falls will also be offered at the Center.

The Master Gardeners will do a presentation on native bees.

Lectures on history and other events to celebrate our nation's 250th will continue through the remainder of the year.

October will bring an exciting Murder Mystery Theater to the Senior Center as well as the Senior Dance Showcase, an annual celebration and performance of all the dance classes offered at the Center. All are welcome to attend the Dance Showcase.

For these and other programs at the Senior Center, visit the Senior Center website <https://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/495/Senior-Center> or call us at 908-788-1359.

Membership to the Senior Center is free; you must be a resident of Hunterdon County and 60 years of age.

Spotlight: Frenchtown Fire Department

Residents may have seen the Frenchtown Fire Department (FFD) supporting members of the community throughout the borough, including, most recently, during the July storm that caused significant tree damage and power outages in the area.

The FFD typically responds to 125-150 calls each year and there are currently 12 volunteers on the FFD roster.

Firefighting operations in the borough operate under a model that is intended to separate emergency operations from business or fundraising administration. Under this model, the FFD chief manages all on-scene emergency operations, training protocols, apparatus readiness and equipment procurement. The Union Fire Company, an independent, non-profit organization, manages facilities, organizational bylaws, finances and membership. Additionally, Frenchtown participates in a county-wide mutual aid agreement that includes municipal fire departments throughout Hunterdon and Bucks Counties. This agreement ensures a reciprocal system where Frenchtown and neighboring departments automatically dispatch extra firefighters, specialized equipment and emergency personnel to support one another whenever required.

The origin of Frenchtown's dual model dates back to 1866. The department and the Vigilant Hose Company were established with 55 members, a hand pump fire apparatus and a hose cart with 500 feet of leather hose. After the Vigilant Company's engine failed to operate during the 1878 fire that destroyed 25 homes and businesses downtown, the company disbanded.

In 1888, Borough Council members and citizens formed a committee to reestablish fire protection and on September 12, 1888, the Union Fire Company was formed, and the borough swore in fire department officers that day.

The firehouse structure located at 31 Second St. was purchased by the Union Fire Company in 1923 (the library occupies the original firehouse space).

Today, FFD volunteers must join both the fire department as well as the independent Union Fire Company. All volunteers must complete more than 200 hours of training.

The borough provides workers' compensation insurance and the borough's annual budget includes



a line-item appropriation to the independent Union Fire Company of \$26,000. The budget is spent directly on fire new equipment, equipment replacements, vehicle repairs and maintenance, training, materials and supplies. The Union Fire Company hosts fundraisers such as the recent Coin Drop; the proceeds of which go directly to the FFD budget. It costs \$7000 to equip a single firefighter with basic gear; the FFD must provide an annual accounting of use of borough funds to the Borough Council. Additional budgetary line items pay for the utilities, fuel and insurances. The ownership of the fire trucks, life-saving equipment, and gear is split between the Union Fire Company and the Borough depending on how the assets were purchased.

Long-time Frenchtown resident, Mike Atheras, currently serves as the fire chief of the FFD. Chief Atheras is a retired member the New York City Fire Department and a former rescue specialist with New Jersey Task Force 1 Urban Search and Rescue. He was raised in Frenchtown and attended both Frenchtown Elementary and Delaware Valley Regional High Schools. Chief Atheras joined the FFD in 1988 and served as chief from 1996-2000. He took on the role again in January 2026.

Chief Atheras encourages residents to call 911 for emergencies rather than the FFD's direct number, 908-996-4423, which is not monitored 24/7. Calling 911 ensures an immediate dispatch of the FFD alongside mutual aid partners.

Residents who are interested in becoming a volunteer member of the FFD can complete the application at:

<https://frenchtownfd.org/applications>.

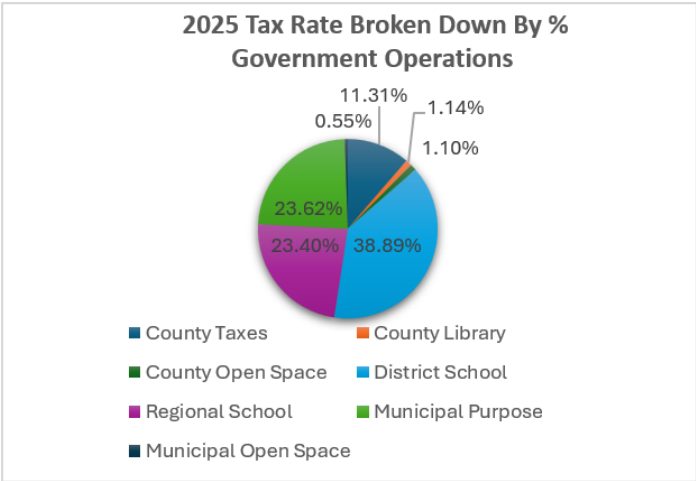
Residents who would like to be informed about operations of the independent Union Fire Company, can use the contact page at the FFD's website:

<https://frenchtownfd.org/>.

FES and DVRHS 2026 Budget Overview

In 2025, approximately 38% of Frenchtown’s property taxes funded the borough’s contribution to Frenchtown Elementary School (FES) and more than 23% went to Delaware Valley Regional High School (DVRHS) (see figure below). While figures are not yet available for 2026, the two schools’ budgets are now finalized.

In New Jersey, public school districts cannot raise their property tax levy by more than 2% over the previous year without having available Statutory Spending Growth Limitation Adjustments or through voter approval.



FRENCHTOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

FES’s total operating budget for the 2026/2027 school year is \$3,237,340, with 40.5% going to classroom instruction, 9.8% to facilities management, 7% to administrative costs, 0.9% to transportation, 23.9% for employee benefits and 17.9% for specialized student support services (which includes the school nurse, speech therapy, etc.). The FES 2026 budget reflects a 1.69% increase in total spending from the previous year, which equates to a 2.0% increase in the property tax levy, matching the state 2% cap.

FES’s budget equals spending of \$34,208 per student, compared to the statewide average of \$28,822.

The district’s small student enrollment of 102 students provides a smaller student/teacher ratio and more individualized instruction. Per student administrative cost at FES is \$2,069 per pupil, below the \$2,172 state average for K-8 schools with less than 400 students according to the 2025 Taxpayers’ Guide to Education Spending.

Most of the increase over the 2025 budget is due

to health benefit premium increases and specialized instructional support lines. Local property taxes contribute 80.4% of the total 2026/2027 budget, with state aid contributing 11.6% towards the total budget. This state aid represents a \$28,919 increase from the 2025/2026 budget. Other sources of funds come from federal grants (\$87,570) and state pre-school grants (\$486,855).

DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

DVRHS’s total operating budget for 2026/2027 is \$20,835,788, with 28.3% going to classroom instruction, 9% to facilities management, 6.2% to administrative costs, 7.2% to student transportation, 21.9% for employee benefits, 13.8% for specialized student support services (guidance, health services, extra-curricular activities, etc.), 7.9% in tuition and 5.7% for athletic and co-curricular programs.

DVRHS’s budget involves spending \$27,497 per student, compared to the statewide average of \$29,978. This cost-efficiency is noteworthy given the district’s smaller regional high school enrollment (approximately 660 students in grades 9-12), which typically drives up per-pupil overhead costs. Per-student administrative cost at DVRHS is \$2,185 per pupil, below the \$2,238 state average for grade 9-12 regional high schools.

The DVRHS 2026/2027 budget reflects a 0.71% increase in total spending from the previous year. This equates to a 5.49% increase in the local tax levy. A majority of this increase goes toward health insurance premium increases, special education tuition and transportation. Local property taxes paid for 82.5% of the total 2026/2027 budget, with state aid contributing 7.1% towards operations. This state funding allocation represents a \$83,000 increase from the 2025/2026 budget. Other sources of funds come from federal grants and tuition from out-of-district students.

Wild Fern Brewing Adds Second Location

Wild Fern Brewing, located at 62A Trenton Ave., announced earlier this summer that the business will open a second taproom at 6 Coryell St. in Lambertville.

Construction is underway for the new location along the D&R canal with no official opening date at this time.

Affordable Housing: ECHO Units, New Development Inclusion and Rehabilitation

[Continued from page 1] Borough Council adopted the final Implementing Ordinance and Resolution required to execute its updated Fourth Round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan (HEFSP).

By submitting these local enforcement laws to the New Jersey Superior Court, the borough satisfied its requirements under the state amended Fair Housing Act for the 2025–2035 cycle. The Certification formally secures the borough's long-term immunity from developer-driven “builder’s remedy” lawsuits, protecting Frenchtown from high-density developments that may not fit the community’s scale.

Affordable housing in New Jersey is designed for low-and moderate-income households—often including working professionals who form the backbone of a community, such as teachers and first responders. Because the cost of living in Hunterdon County is higher than in many other parts of the state, local income eligibility levels are adjusted upward to reflect the regional reality.

While the state originally assigned Frenchtown a new construction obligation of 22 units, the borough successfully submitted a vacant land adjustment demonstrating that Frenchtown lacked developable land to absorb new high-density developments because of local environmental constraints such as steep slopes and flood plains. As a result, the state recognized a Realistic Development Potential (RDP) of zero for new construction. This crucial adjustment allows the borough to focus its energy on implementing innovative, small-scale housing solutions that honor the borough’s existing neighborhoods in keeping with its small-town, historic character.

To meet its remaining affordable housing obligation—including an 11-unit rehabilitation goal—the Borough Council and the Planning/Zoning Board designed a plan that looks inward rather than outward. Instead of relying on high-density development that could alter Frenchtown's historic feel, the HEFSP introduces several forward-thinking initiatives funded by developer fees (not municipal property taxes):

- The ECHO Unit Pilot Project: Frenchtown is introducing a pilot program for Elder Cottage Housing Opportunity (ECHO) units. These small, temporary, modular homes can be placed in the side or backyard of an existing single-family property.

Partial funding for up to 5 ECHO units offers a flexible, compassionate option for residents to keep aging family members close by while preserving neighborhood aesthetics.

- Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning Set-Asides: To ensure future growth blends naturally into the community, new residential developments will be required to integrate a percentage of affordable units directly into the development, maintaining the borough’s cohesive small-town aesthetic.

- Local Neighborhood Rehabilitation Incentives: Dedicated funding will help up to 11 local property owners repair and update older, sub-standard units. This channels financial support directly to current households, preserving Frenchtown’s historic architectural charm while ensuring safe, code-compliant housing for neighbors of all income levels.

To fully back these innovative programs, the borough has also formalized the necessary state-required frameworks, including a structured Spending Plan for the developer-funded affordable housing trust fund, an Intent to Bond Resolution to serve as a financial backstop, updated Zoning Ordinances aligned with the borough’s local scale, and an Affirmative Marketing Plan to guarantee fair access to these opportunities.

The complete HEFSP and supporting documents are available for review on the borough’s website.

Two FES Alumni Share Their Stories

[Continued from page 1] to the Frenchtown School building, which housed 3rd through 8th grade.

Wink loved his experience at FES and fondly recalls his favorite teacher, Mr. Puperwinkle, who taught 1st and 2nd grade.

Unfortunately, in the 3rd grade, Wink contracted scarlet fever, causing him to miss six months of class. Following his illness, his mother requested that the school hold him back a year to catch up.

Later in middle school, Wink became a three-sport athlete, playing basketball, baseball and tackle football. After graduating from Frenchtown in 1962, he entered his freshman year at DVRHS. Keeping up the tradition, Wink and Ruth’s daughter and son also graduated from FES and attended DVRHS.

Dave Gano has lived in Frenchtown for 77 years, moving to the borough at just [Continued on page 8]

Looking Back at 100 Years of FES, Two Alumni Return Ahead of Celebrations this Fall



Dave Gano and Wink Hummer, approx. 5 years old (left); Wink Hummer and Dave Gano in front of FES in 2026 (right)

[Continued from page 7] one year old.

Like Wink, Dave attended kindergarten through 2nd grade at Borough Hall and graduated from FES in 1961. He lived in various homes on 2nd and 3rd Streets until he was 38. He married his wife, Mel, in 1978, and they purchased their 8th Street home in 1981. Dave represents one of three generations of his family to attend FES—both of his daughters and his

father went through the school system.

Dave played baseball and the tuba throughout middle school, frequently hauling the heavy instrument back and forth between home and school. He fondly remembers competitive recess games of kickball and dodgeball behind the school, back when the yard had no playground equipment.

Always a Terrier! —Amelia Rodriguez

Frenchtown Sun

29 Second Street
Frenchtown, NJ 08825

A Frenchtown-Focused Civic Newsletter

