



Frenchtown Sun

A Frenchtown-Focused Civic Newsletter

New E-Bike Requirements May Cause Speed Bumps for Riders

This summer, the state of New Jersey began implementing new e-bike rules for all residents and visitors. All e-bike owners and renters should become aware of the new requirements.

Firstly, what is an e-bike? The law defines “e-bike” as both low-speed electric bicycles with a motor that only provides assistance while pedaling up to 20 miles per hour (mph) as well as motorized bicycles equipped with either a helper motor or an electric motor.

New Jersey requires that you must be at least 15 years old to operate an e-bike and have an e-bike license or a valid driver’s license. An individual may not apply for nor receive a motorized bicycle license if their driving privileges are suspended or revoked.

All e-bikes, including low-speed ones, must be registered with the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (NJMVC). Visit <https://www.nj.gov/mvc/vehicletopics/ebike.htm> to make a NJMVC appointment, complete e-bike registration materials and learn [Continued on page 3]



Photographer: Paul Serra

Frenchtown Mourns the Loss of Rick Epstein, Historian, Author and Founder of *The Sun*

It is with the heaviest hearts that the editorial team of *The Frenchtown Sun* shares the loss of one of our founders, Rick Epstein.

The Frenchtown Sun was born out of a desire for more local news and Rick joined early conversations to develop our current newsletter iteration. He named *The Sun* and provided editorial content and suggestions up through our June issue, shortly before his passing.

The only one of us with editorial experience—and extensive experience at that—Rick was our guiding light. He would (very gently, as was Rick’s way) chide us for “spinach” content—pieces that lacked a human-interest element or intriguing hook. At every editorial discussion, we find ourselves

asking, “What Would Rick Do?” His wisdom and guidance continue to provide support for *The Sun*.

On page 7, readers will find Rick’s obituary. While it details his amazing, adventurous life, it is hard to capture the spirit, humor and kindheartedness of a man who gave so much to Frenchtown—from his early years as a local reporter to his walking tours and history books. Rick’s last book is in support of the Frenchtown Elementary School Centennial, held later this month at FES, and covers the history of the school and its students.

As a community, we mourn and celebrate Rick who gave so much to this town. We encourage readers of *The Sun* to celebrate the life and legacy of Rick by being curious, thoughtful and kind.

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 August 5, Borough Council conducted the following items of business:

- approved an ordinance to revise the Borough Code to allow the Environmental Commission to have two alternative positions;
- approved a capital ordinance for various borough improvements, including costs to upfit a vehicle currently owned by the borough to make it “patrol ready” for the Police Department, a new vehicle for day-to-day operational use and renovations to Borough Hall;
- authorized the preparation and submission of grant applications to the Large Foundation of Flemington, NJ and the Astle-Alpaugh Foundation to fund the operations of Age Friendly Frenchtown;
- received several bids for the Pump Station and Department of Public Works (DPW) facility generator project. Power and Prestige Inc. in Newton, NJ will be awarded the contract;
- appointed Carole Pepe as a part-time, as needed, library assistant and authorized the acceptance of a student volunteer to perform volunteer services for the borough;
- acknowledged that the DPW erected a new flagpole outside Borough Hall with financial support from the Fargo Family Foundation;
- shared that the town administrator and borough engineer had a pre-construction meeting with Comcast. Comcast will be installing three structures around the borough, in the right of way on Hawk St., Maple Ave. and Railroad Ave. to bring fiber connectivity to Frenchtown;
- announced that street sweeping is tentatively scheduled for September 1 from 7 a.m. – 9 a.m.

Parking will be restricted briefly on Race St. and Bridge St. No vehicles need to be moved in the residential areas;

- announced that tax bills are now available online although paper copies are also available at Borough Hall if you have not received your mailed copy. The State of New Jersey was late in providing the borough approval, so tax bills were sent out late. There will be an extension until September 4;
- shared two items from the Police Department: 1) in late July, a large group of motorcyclists rode into town, one individual was arrested and his vehicle was impounded and 2) there was a dog bite incident off the river path near the Harrison Square apartment complex; the dog was leashed and the person received proper medical attention on the scene.

Shade Structure Will Provide Respite from Sun at Kingwood Dog Park

The Kingwood Dog Park, an off-leash dog area located at 178 Horseshoe Bend Rd. in Horseshoe Bend Park, will have a shade structure erected for dogs and their human companions to enjoy a break from the sun in the coming months.

The Kingwood Township Parks & Recreation Board committed \$800 to the structure, along with promising to handle the permitting and installation. Generous local residents raised an additional \$1,500 to ensure there is enough funding for the project.

While the date for the installation is not yet set, there is hope that it will bring residents back to the park who no longer use it due to health and safety concerns.

Meet Del Val BOE Rep Tom Loughlin



TOM LOUGHLIN has represented Frenchtown on the Delaware Valley Regional High School (Del Val) Board of Education (BOE) since January 2024. Located on Senator Stout Rd. in Frenchtown, Del Val serves Alexandria, Frenchtown, Holland, Kingwood and Milford. The nine-member, publicly elected BOE oversees the school's budget, curriculum, policies and personnel decisions. Current challenges facing Del Val include an ever-challenging budget, artificial intelligence, cell phone use and declining enrollment. The BOE is focused on maintaining academic and holistic student excellence while keeping strict oversight of the budget.

Tom is the only candidate who filed a petition with the Hunterdon County Clerk for the single Frenchtown seat in the November 3 election for the three-year term that starts in January 2027. As the Frenchtown representative, Tom represents the community's interest while fulfilling the duties associated with the BOE.

Tom has lived in Frenchtown since 2021 with his wife Brooke. Having retired from a career in non-profit management, his expertise in high-performance governance translates well to his leadership role within the BOE. Tom and Brooke moved from Summit, NJ, where he served on the Summit Education Foundation and raised two daughters.

These River Rats Go the Distance

If you spot a group of smiling runners along the river path, you are likely encountering the River Rats Running Club.

Formed 7 years ago, the club welcomes novice and experienced runners from the Delaware River region—from Lambertville/New Hope to Riegelsville and beyond. Founded by William Semon and run by a dedicated Board of Directors, the club also recently achieved official nonprofit status to promote and support safe and organized physical fitness in the region.

Members pay \$35.00 in annual dues. Alongside regular meetups on Thursday evenings, Saturday and Sunday mornings, members participate in races together; recently more than 25 members raced together at the Quadzilla 15k Trail Race at Trexler Nature Preserve.

Frenchtown residents interested in joining the club can contact riverratsrc@gmail.com.

The River Rats are hosting the inaugural Mischief on the River 5k presented by Spanner Tree & Shrub Care, Inc. race on October 11 with proceeds benefiting River Rats Athletics. Registration for the race is open to all runners and can be found at www.riverratsrc.com/motr5k.

New E-Bike Restrictions Require License

[Continued from page 1] more about the e-bike license process. Motorized e-bikes—not low-speed ones—are required to have insurance coverage and owners should secure insurance prior to NJMVC registration.

If you are looking to rent an e-bike in New Jersey, you must be at least 16 years old. Renters are not required to be in possession of a driver's license or an e-bike license. Out-of-state visitors who bring their own personal e-bikes into New Jersey must comply with the state's rules. This means they must be at least 15 years old, carry a valid license from their home jurisdiction, register the bike with the NJMVC and get insurance for a motorized e-bike.

The state law requires all e-bike riders aged 17 and under to wear helmets. However, several New Jersey municipalities have instituted more stringent e-bike requirements, including additional helmet regulations. Riders are encouraged to review local municipal e-bike rules before visiting. Visit <https://njbikeped.org> for detailed guidelines.

Community Calendar

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

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

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

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

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

RiverFest, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m., Bridge St. & Sunbeam Lenape Park, *A street-fair celebration of life on the river featuring two main stages for live music and performances, 50+ art vendors, food trucks and local food vendors, Wild Fern beer tent, Frenchtown Vikings and more! Follow the Riverfest Facebook page for updates or visit lovefrenchtown.org. Bridge Street will be closed for the duration of the event to host local vendors and provide a safe experience for visitors. A bus shuttle will be transporting visitors from Frenchtown Field to the downtown throughout the day. Visitors are encouraged to take advantage of the parking at Frenchtown Field and at Kathee's General Store.*

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

Hunterdon County's 25th Anniversary Commemoration of 9/11 and Memorial Dedication at Hilltop Reserve, 8 a.m., 214 Thatcher's Hill Rd., Flemington, NJ, *The event begins at 8:30 a.m. but please arrive by 8. All are welcome.*

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

- Hunterdon County Shredding Event, 8:30 – 11:30 a.m., County Complex, 314 Route 12
- New Jersey Clean Communities 9th Annual Delaware River Cleanup, Start time depends on location, Various locations, *For more information register or visit: delawarerivergcp.org.*

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

- 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.
- Frenchtown Together, in partnership with Rivertown Bridges Community Group Potluck, 6:30 – 9 p.m., Frenchtown Presbyterian Church, 20 4th St.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

Frenchtown Elementary School Board of Education Meeting, 6:45 p.m., Frenchtown Elementary School, 902 Harrison St.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

- Frenchtown Farmers Market, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., Sunbeam Lenape Park
- Frenchtown Elementary School Centennial Celebration, 3 – 6 p.m., Frenchtown Elementary School, 902 Harrison St., *There will be food, live music and games. Rick Epstein's newest book Terriers Forever: A Souvenir of Frenchtown School's Centennial will be available for purchase.*

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

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

Chess Club Gathers at Bridge St. Café

A Frenchtown chess club is forming and extends an invitation to anyone of any experience level.

Drop by the Bridge Street Café on Thursday mornings from 10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. or email Michael at mjfld2@gmail.com to join a list for notification of alternate days and times.

Falls Prevention, Chamber Music at Hunterdon County Senior Center

September 20-26 is Falls Prevention Awareness Week. Falls can be prevented by removing home hazards, practicing balance exercises and regularly checking medications and vision. More information regarding Falls Prevention can be found at the Council on Aging website:

<https://www.ncoa.org/older-adults/health/prevention/falls-prevention/>.

In addition to its regularly scheduled fitness and social recreational programs and classes, the Hunterdon County Senior Center has several interesting specials in September: Abe and Mary Todd Lincoln in conversation, a chamber music event transporting the audience back to the 18th century and more!

Italian and Spanish language classes will resume after a summer break. For these and other programs, visit the Center's website:

<https://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/495/Senior-Center> or call the center at 908-788-1359.

The Sun Requests Reader Feedback on Newsletter; Please Fill Out Survey Online

We are pleased to celebrate the sixth issue of *The Frenchtown Sun* this month. Since April, *The Sun* has published with the support of the Borough Council and funding from the borough's Age-Friendly grant through the New Jersey Department of Human Services. Mailed to every borough resident—with additional copies placed at key locations throughout town—this initial six-month run served as a pilot effort to gauge local interest in a dedicated news and features publication.

The response to *The Sun* has been overwhelmingly positive. As our initial grant funding for this pilot effort concludes, *The Sun* has received a generous grant from the Fargo Family Foundation, allowing us to continue publishing over the coming months (read more about the Fargo Family Foundation on page 7). We are

tremendously grateful for the support of the Fargo Family Foundation to enable continued publication of *The Sun* for several forthcoming months.

During this time, our editorial team will collaborate with the borough to determine next steps for *The Sun*.

To ensure our future model meets the needs of Frenchtown's residents, businesses and community leaders, we need to hear from you. Please take a few moments to complete our brief anonymous survey to help us better understand your interests and priorities.

You can find the survey link at:

frenchtownsun.net/surveyfrenchtownsun.net. Or fill out the page below and bring it to Borough Hall. **We would appreciate your feedback by September 30.**

1. What is your age?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| ☐ 18–24 | ☐ 55–64 |
| ☐ 25–34 | ☐ 65–74 |
| ☐ 35–44 | ☐ 75+ |
| ☐ 45–54 | ☐ Prefer not to say |

2. Which best describes you?

- ☐ Frenchtown resident (homeowner)
☐ Frenchtown resident (renter)
☐ Local business owner or employee but not Frenchtown resident
☐ Neighboring community resident. Please tell us your municipality: _____

3. How do you typically read *The Sun*? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Home delivery
☐ Read a copy in town. What location? _____
☐ Online at frenchtownsun.net
☐ Other (please specify): _____

4. How much of each monthly issue do you typically read?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Read most or all of it | ☐ Skim through it |
| ☐ Read a few articles | ☐ Rarely read it |

5. How often should *The Sun* publish?

- ☐ Monthly or twelve issues a year
☐ Bimonthly or six issues a year
☐ Seasonally or four issues a year

6. If physical delivery to your mailbox was no longer available, how likely would you be to read *The Sun* online or pick up a copy in town?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Very likely | ☐ Not very likely |
| ☐ Somewhat likely | ☐ Unlikely if not delivered |

7. How would you rate the usefulness and quality of the following types of content? (Scale: Excellent / Good / Fair / Poor / N/A)

- ☐ Local government & borough news _____
☐ Business highlights & community profiles _____
☐ Community calendar _____
☐ Features on local history & culture _____
☐ Features on environment & nature _____
☐ Senior activities at the Senior Center _____

8. How important is it for Frenchtown to have a local community news publication?

- ☐ Important ☐ Not important
☐ Somewhat important

9. Would you be interested in making a donation to *The Sun* to support its ongoing operations?

- ☐ Yes. Please provide your email address: _____
☐ No.
☐ Not at this time. Please provide your email address: _____

11. What do you like most about *The Sun*?

12. What topics or types of stories would you like to see included in future issues?

13. Do you have any comments, suggestions, or feedback for *The Sun*?

Wendy Louise Baker Remembered & Honored with Headstone Ceremony



On July 24, artist Andrew Sullivan delivered the gravestone he designed in collaboration with Cella Costanza for Frenchtown Cemetery's Jane Doe, Wendy Louise Baker. After driving the headstone across the country from California, Andrew was welcomed at the cemetery by Timothy Downing Brown, President of the Cemetery's Association, and Susie Swider, Trustee, who met Andrew to accept and place the gravestone.

A small ceremony and moment of silence was held to dedicate the gravestone in Wendy's honor. In his remarks at the ceremony, Timothy Downing stated, "Today Wendy Louise Baker has come home to our hearts and minds. She has a beautiful gravestone that heralds her place in humanity. We can remember her now. Thanks to Andrew, Frenchtown Cemetery's Jane Doe is forever more Wendy Louise Baker."

For those who want to honor and remember Wendy Louise Baker, you can visit the grave at the cemetery. The gravestone reads:

1975-1991
Wendy Louise Baker
TO YOU ON SPIRIT'S
GOLDEN THREAD
MAY OUR LOVE REACH

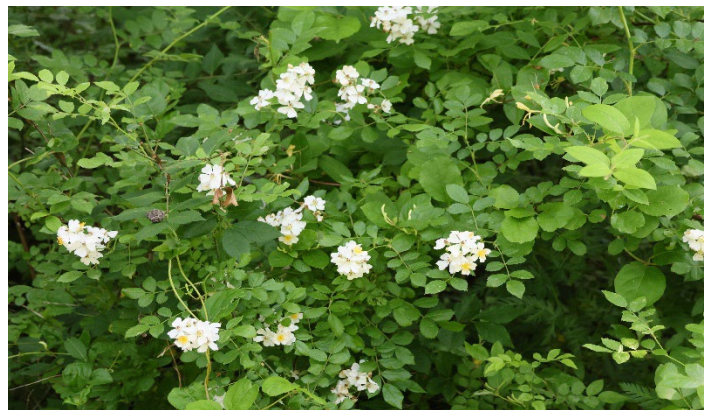
You Won't Be Able to Buy These Plants

On January 20th, the New Jersey Invasive Species Management Act (NJISMA) was signed into law after more than 20 years of planning and discussion among scientists, environmental organizations, the NJ nursery industry, land managers and other

stakeholders. This new act lists 30 invasive plant species (currently) that are now illegal to propagate, import/export, sell, or advertise—in other words, no one will be able to buy and plant these species in NJ anymore.

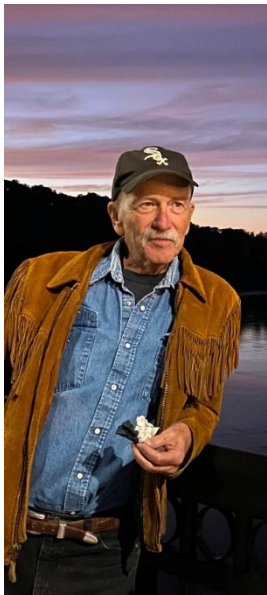
Invasive species degrade ecosystems by outcompeting native vegetation, changing soil chemistry, increasing erosion and devastating wildlife habitat—some invasive species, such as Japanese Barberry, actually make areas more likely to harbor large numbers of ticks, making them a significant health risk to humans. A 1996 federal executive order defined invasive species as "alien species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health," making this invasive species management act good news for New Jersey. In fact, the passage of NJISMA brings New Jersey up to speed with neighboring states (most of which have had lists of prohibited invasive species for many years) and creates the state's first comprehensive framework to tackle harmful invasive species now, and in the future as the list of species evolves over time. Some of the species on the current banned list are well known problems in our area, such as Callary Pear, Tree of Heaven, Porcelain Berry, Running Bamboo, Japanese Hop, and Multiflora Rose. Other invasive species which have been commonly used in landscapes in recent years are also on the list and may come as a surprise to some people—Norway Maple, Mimosa, English Ivy, European Privet, and Chinese Silver Grass, to name a few. These, too, can spread rampantly and cause ecosystem devastation.

To see the full list of currently banned species or for more information, visit the NJ Invasive Species Strike Team information page <https://www.fohvos.info/invasive-species-strike-team/info-center/>. Or view a complete list of species with pictures at thefrenchtownsun.net. —Randi Eckel



Rosa multiflora, an invasive found in Frenchtown.

In Memoriam: Rick Epstein



Rick Epstein, 75, of Frenchtown died at home on July 20.

Born in Syracuse, NY, Rick was raised in Lawrence Township and graduated from Lawrence High School in 1969 and from Syracuse University in 1973 with a bachelor's degree in journalism.

He held his dream job as editor of the *Delaware Valley News* in Frenchtown from 1977-1984. After becoming a parent, he worked as a managing editor at the *Somer-*

set Messenger-Gazette in Somerville, the *Green Brook-North Plainfield Journal* and the *Highland Park Herald*. He spent six years as a copy editor at the *Central New Jersey Home News* before coming to the *Hunterdon County Democrat* in 1995 where he was managing editor for many years. Rick contributed reporting and photography through 2015. Instead of entering retirement, Rick worked as a full-time library aide at Delaware Valley Regional High School from 2016-2025, where he also gave presentations to the journalism and history students, and photographed school activities for his write-ups on the school's social media channels.

He was the author of two books on local history: *Frenchtown: Fires, Floods, Fads & Felonies! A Newspaperman Tells the Story of a River Town* (Palmetto 2023) and *More Frenchtown: When You've Read Frenchtown and Want More!* (Palmetto 2025) published with funding from the Fargo Family Foundation. He enjoyed sharing stories of local history on his Frenchtown walking tours. Rick was also the author of *Rookie Dad; Adventures in Fatherhood* (Hyperion 1992) and *The Right Number of Kids* (McKenna Publishing Group 2003). His funny-dad column appeared in more than 150 parenting publications in the U.S., Canada and Australia.

A memorial service will be held in Frenchtown later this autumn. To make a memorial donation in Rick's honor, consider mailing a check to the "Delaware Valley Historical Society and Museum Inc." at P.O. Box 173 Frenchtown, NJ 08825 (or, donating to Delaware Valley Historical Society via PayPal) or dropping off a check or donation of food

to Frenchtown's Open Door United Methodist Church Food Pantry at 16 3rd St., Frenchtown, NJ 08825.

Del Val Student Journalism Award Named for Rick Epstein

Delaware Valley Regional High School's journalism program instituted the first ever "Rick Epstein Excellence in Scholastic Journalism Award" and gave the first accolades to Gianna Roberts, Abigail Eckert and Juliana Findeis of the Class of 2026. Rick was present at the June Senior Awards Ceremony and was invited to the stage to award the students with journalism program advisor Brian Smith.

History Spotlight: The Fargo Family Foundation



For over a century, the Fargo family name has been deeply rooted in Frenchtown. As chronicled in Rick Epstein's local histories, *Frenchtown* and *More Frenchtown*, the family's legacy in the borough began with patriarch Clarence B. Fargo. Professionally, Clarence operated a printing and publishing business in Frenchtown, running a mail-order flower-seed and bulb business out of a commercial building on Bridge Street, alongside his work documenting local history. Beyond his business ventures, Clarence was an active community member who engaged deeply with the local area, eventually authoring the foundational *History of Frenchtown* in 1933.

The family's deep commitment to civic life extended proudly through [Continued on page 8]

The Fargo Family: Generous Pillars of Frenchtown's Past & Present

[Continued from page 7] the generations. Clarence and his wife raised three daughters—Edith, Marion, and Marjorie—who lived in the family's Frenchtown home for over a century.

Throughout their lives, the family remained dedicated to local development and community well-being. The Fargo sisters were especially committed to supporting the local community, contributing generously to local churches, emergency service providers and animal shelters, with a particular focus on the welfare of women and children.

To honor their father and ensure their lifelong dedication to the region endured, the sisters established the Fargo Family Foundation. Today, the Foundation continues to enrich the Frenchtown community by awarding grants that improve the quality of life for both people and animals throughout the Delaware Valley. From Clarence's early preservation of our town's stories to the foundation's ongoing philanthropic impact, the Fargos remain an indelible part of the fabric of Frenchtown.

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