The TAVI Times

Bringing Local Journalism Back to Our Community

A Community Service of The Allentown Village Initiative

October 12, 2026 - Volume VI, Issue X

US Navy's "Rhode Island Sound" Returns

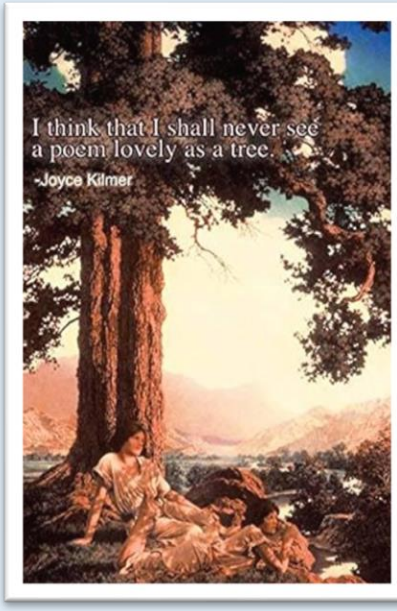
TAVI hosts free concert October 18th in Allentown High School

TAVI is honored to welcome back to Allentown "Rhode Island Sound" – the U.S. Navy's acclaimed contemporary ensemble on Sunday, October 18, 2026 beginning at 3 pm in Allentown High School. Established in 1974, the band last visited Allentown as part of TAVI's "Allentown Arts" series in 2024. This time, the band will bring its classic rock, rhythm and blues and top 40 hits to the stage of Allentown High School's auditorium.

Rhode Island Sound was featured on July 4th on the deck of the USS Nimitz in New York Harbor, and will perform on October 18th as part of TAVI250, celebrating America's Semiquincentennial. Whether performing for Sailors or civilians, Rhode Island Sound embodies the pride and professionalism of the US Navy wherever they go! Bring your family, friends and neighbors for this unforgettable musical experience. The concert is free. Allentown High School is located at 27 High Street, Allentown, NJ 08501. We'll see you there at 3 pm on Sunday, October 18th!

It's Tree Time!

TAVI250 prepares for October planting



Last call for a TAVI250 tree to plant in your yard this fall. TAVI is offering 25 free trees to Allentown and Upper Freehold homeowners to plant in their yards as a celebration of America's 250th birthday. Tree distribution and planting will take place the week of October 19th. Planting assistance is available. With minimal care, the trees will grow to provide shade and beauty to your property. Visit https://www.allentownvinj.org/tavi250-trees.html to sign up for your tree today. ***Plant a tree and give a gift to our community for generations to come!***

The Data on Data Centers –

Is there one coming to a neighborhood near you?

Development pressure on Upper Freehold farms continues, with the prospect of data centers being added to the list of possible construction which would transform this still-rural community. To date, 93 of New Jersey's 565 municipalities have banned building data centers in their towns, including Howell, Neptune, Red Bank and Holmdel in Monmouth County. While finding a site for a data center in Allentown could be a challenge, the open expanses of Upper Freehold's farms may provide more enticing opportunities for developers. To date, the Township has not taken up any measure to restrict data center development. During the Township Committee's October 2nd meeting Committee member Steve Alexander said Upper Freehold lacked the infrastructure to support a data center; Mayor Stan Moslowski confirmed there is no plan for building a data center in Upper Freehold.

According to the Data Center Map (https://www.datacentermap.com/usa/), there are 5,427 data centers in the U.S., more than in any other nation (Germany is a distant second with 529, China has 449). Sixty percent of U.S. data centers are concentrated in ten states, including New Jersey, which currently has 66 data centers.

While they have been around for decades, data centers are at the center of the technology debate now because of the role they play in artificial intelligence. Data centers store data and run the software behind the services needed to send an email, stream a show, tap a credit card at checkout and back up a photo. They also make it possible for AI to answer the questions we "google" with increasing frequency. All of this uses computers which consume energy – as much as a small city -- and generate heat which must be cooled, using even more energy, and for larger data centers, up to a million gallons of water per day. In the end, the "cloud" storing your files is really just a giant windowless building – some as large as several million square feet – probably run by one of three companies: Amazon, Microsoft or Google. The "big three" are projected to spend about $700 billion on AI infrastructure, a/k/a data centers, in 2026.

In May 2026 Governor Mikie Sherrill announced a "comprehensive plan" for data center development in New Jersey which required proposed projects to disclose the amount of energy and water which would be consumed. In addition, a "Fair share" law creates a rate structure specifically for large-scale data centers to ensure data centers pay for the energy they consume as well as for the energy grid upgrades they require. The plan also encourages – but does not require – Community Benefit Agreements (CBA's) between developers and host communities.

CBA's would specify how the development would address impacts like light, noise, and pollution while making "meaningful community investments." The State said municipalities confronted with data center development proposals should seek input and help, but stopped short of requiring public hearings and disclosure, saying only that consultation with residents and community groups is "strongly encouraged for purposes of transparency." https://www.nj.gov/dca/dlgs/lfns/2026/2026-13.pdf

Upper Freehold Rezoning for Warehouses/Data Centers?

Kerris Tree Farm, rezoned for possible development, is ready for the 2026 season.

Recent re-zoning and a zoning reclassification proposal in Upper Freehold may have some wondering if the Township's long-held "Country Code" is being supplanted by a drive for ratables from new industrial development. Upper Freehold's current master plan and zoning include only 130 acres as a "General Industrial" area bounded by Sharon Station Road and County Route 526.

Until recently, a larger Research, Office and Manufacturing (ROM) zone encompassed about 650 acres along County Route 524 bounded by Interstate 195. At its September 3, 2026 meeting the Township Committee approved renaming the ROM zone as the Commercial-2 district and rezoned approximately 55 agricultural acres adjacent to the newly renamed ROM area as Commercial-2 areas. The rezoned properties include the popular Keris Christmas Tree Farm as well as an adjoining 23-acre horse farm.

Upper Freehold Mayor Stan Moslowski said there was no specific development or developer in mind for the rezoned areas. He noted that, since the Township lost over $1 million in potential tax revenue when the Stein property was purchased by Monmouth County and preserved, Upper Freehold "needs some commercial development options." Committee member Steve Alexander said "Homes alone will kill this town. We can't have just houses." Alexander said Upper Freehold has the most preserved land in Monmouth County and the second most in the State (*Upper Pittsgrove in Salem County is first*). Approximately 64% of Upper Freehold's 47 square miles—10,021 acres -- is permanently preserved farmland. Mayor Moslowski also pointed out that data centers are not an approved use under the Township's zoning regulations and would require a variance to be built anywhere in Upper Freehold.

Another proposal pending before the Planning Board and Township Committee would allow "cluster" development in the new Commercial-2 zone, increasing the density of commercial and industrial development, but setting aside larger areas as buffers. One parcel being considered for such development is the current Westhaven Farm on County Route 524, which also borders Interstate 195. It is unclear when the Township will consider the proposal.

OPERATION GRATEFUL GHOSTS & GOBLINS

A project of
the Allentown High School National Honor Society
History Honor Society and Leo Club
With the support of The Allentown Village Initiative

As a special thank you to all of the Main Street residents for hosting HUNDREDS of children on Halloween, please help us say THANK YOU by donating treats!

Treat drop-off location is Allentown Public Library, 16 South Main Street

Treats can be candy, popcorn, pretzels and/or non-food treats like stickers, pencils, etc. (Nut Free candy appreciated) PLEASE DROP OFF BY OCTOBER 26th so we can distribute it! For more information call (609) 208-9991

ALL DONATIONS ARE GREATLY APPRECIATED!!!

Property Taxes – An Overview

Some Property-Tax Basics

According to the NJ Division of Taxation, the average Upper Freehold home in 2025 was assessed for $781,113 and paid $14,435 in property taxes.

No one enjoys paying property taxes, but most people realize that is how local governments and school districts pay for the things they need. What is likely most vexing for taxpayers is not so much the concept, but the rate and amount by which taxes rise, as well as whether there is perceived waste within the system (and also maybe the fact that no one is very good about explaining the process to them).

In New Jersey, your local municipality, county, and school district create separate budgets based on the amount of money they think they need in a given year. The portions of those funds they derive from local property taxes is determined and represents their respective *tax levy*. After calculating the individual *tax rate* (tax levy/total assessed value of taxable properties) for each taxing entity, the County Tax Board merges the rates into a single *General Tax Rate*. The tax collector for the municipality where you live uses this general rate to produce a *tax bill*, based on the assessed value of your property, which you then receive for payment on a quarterly basis.

Typically, the portion of taxes dedicated to schools is, by far, the largest portion. In the case of Upper Freehold Township, approximately 75% of tax dollars goes to the school district. In the case of Allentown Borough, the figure is approximately 61%. These percentages can vary dramatically over time, however, depending on the nature of the spending within the taxing entities and whether ratables (such as a warehouse) are part of the equation.

The Current (and Likely Future) Situation

How each municipality spends its tax dollars differs for a variety of reasons, and each can undoubtedly find ways to economize to a greater extent, but the bottom line is still that the school district will continue to consume the lion's share of property tax dollars. So, any outrage should be focused on the district, right? Well, it's a little more complicated than that. Apparently, the cost of educating a student in the Upper Freehold School District is actually less than the state average. That doesn't mean that the cost isn't high. It is high and relates specifically to a number of fixed operational costs, including transportation (busing students to and from school), federally and state-mandated special education and services, state-mandated costs related to universal preschool, and healthcare premiums and other benefits. These costs increased as a result of the S2 school funding law, whereby the state reduced its share of funding, thus necessitating an increase in local tax levies.

What's a Municipality/School District to Do?

As with any budget, there are *fixed costs* and there are *discretionary costs* that municipalities and school districts must consider. The fixed costs are just that – they are costs that need to be incurred. And the discretionary costs are just that – they are costs that someone needs to determine should be incurred or not. Presumably, there are responsible parties who are reviewing those costs within each taxing entity.

As an additional aid to budgeting, under *New Jersey's Uniform Shared Services and Consolidation*

Continued on next page

Property Taxes *(continued)*

Act, both goods and services can be shared between counties, municipalities, and a school district, which should help to reduce or limit increases to their respective budgets and tax levies (and, so, property taxes). Examples of things that can be shared include: *operations and facilities management* (heavy-equipment and fleet sharing, snow plowing and landscaping, bulk-fuel purchasing, and mechanic services), *technology and infrastructure* (shared fiber networks and broadband, shared IT support, and emergency-alert services), *public safety and health* (school resource officers and emergency medical services), *administrative and professional services* (cooperative purchasing, joint insurance funds, and shared professionals), and *recreation and community spaces* (athletic-field and gym reciprocity and public-access television). Not all of these potential shared services are likely to be appropriate in the case of Monmouth County, Allentown, Upper Freehold, and the school district. There are already some services being shared between the county, the municipalities and/or the school district (e.g., some health clinics and services, municipal court, municipal building-code enforcement, athletic field maintenance, and IT support services), but, here too, presumably, there are responsible parties within the taxing entities who are reviewing the feasibility of additional shared services and looking for additional cost savings.

It has been suggested that it might be helpful if the county, municipalities, and school district were each (or jointly) to issue a yearly report to residents showing what proposed expenses they have chosen to eliminate from their respective budget (at least for the current year) and why, as well as what shared services they have elected to adopt and the prospective cost savings from each since this type of transparency would increase both the rigor of the budget-preparation process and the confidence taxpayers have in it.

Then, there is the impact ratables can have on property taxes *(see The Last Word" on page 10)*...

Exercising Your Right to Vote

TAVI250
A celebration of America's 250th Birthday

Editor's Note: Following is the tenth installment in TAVI's 12-part series ("civics refresher") outlining our form of government and discussing duties that are critical to supporting it.

Last time, we wrote "Running for office is an excellent way to demonstrate your support for our political system, to clarify your views both for your own benefit and for that of others, and to engage with your fellow candidates and the voting public. If running for office is not for you, then, after careful consideration, support a candidate who reflects your values and who you think will bring thoughtfulness and integrity to public office." Well, now that you have decided which path you will take, it's important that you follow through and actually vote, either for yourself or someone else because, apparently, voter turnout in the United States (the world's model democracy) tends to be lower than in many other countries – approximately 60% for presidential elections and 40% for midterm elections. Turnout for strictly local elections is even lower (15% to 27%), although you might think it would be higher because those elections more directly relate to local concerns (after all, they say "all politics is local").

Interestingly, voting seems to have reached its peak (approximately 80%) in this country in the mid-to-late 1800's, despite the fact that 2 subsequent constitutional amendments (the 19th and 26th, respectively, gave women and younger individuals the right to vote, as well). Apparently, being a member of a political party back then entailed joining clubs, wearing matching uniforms, and marching in parades with lit torches. Today's party getups seem pale by comparison. The reasons for today's relatively low turnout are many, but apathy and disengagement are 2 important ones. When voters think that casting their votes has little impact on how well they are able to live their lives, cynicism sets in, and voting seems like a waste of time. If you are not running for office yourself, how you choose a candidate to vote for becomes critical. Voters have different goals (even within the same political party), but choosing a candidate who shares your vision and who you believe is a person of integrity is fundamental because, once in office, you will be relying upon them to fulfill your needs and address your concerns. Vetting a candidate as thoroughly as possible is an essential part of the election process and an obligation we have both to ourselves and to each other.

The American Bar Association (a nominally nonpartisan organization) has formulated a number of proposals that it believes could increase the percentage of individuals who routinely vote in American elections. Their view is that "Robust participation by eligible voters imbues election results with greater integrity and creates a self-reinforcing loop encouraging even greater voter participation." To that end, they have suggested the following. Not everyone will agree with all of these suggestions, but their primary goal is to address the current historically low voter percentages, which are a concern to many and, if not addressed, could continue to erode our democracy:

Automatic voter registration
No-excuse absentee voting/extended early voting (currently offered by 29 states)
Voter-education programs on college campuses (younger individuals are some of the least likely

Continued on next page

Vote *(continued)*

to vote)
Increased number of polling locations
Designation of Election Day as a federal holiday
Other proposed measures that could also have the effect of increasing voter turnout include:

Independent redistricting commissions
Nonpartisan election administrations (several states have passed laws that could enable partisan interference in the voting process)

Whatever your views, do yourself, your fellow citizens, and our democracy a favor and get out and vote the next time you have the opportunity (Election Day this year is Tuesday November 3). But do your homework first.

Sources: https://fairvote.org/resources/voter-turnout/ https://nonprofitvote.org
https://americanhistory.si.edu/explore/stories/they-marched-torches-getting-out-vote-1840-1900
https://americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/election_law/american-democracy/our-work/improving-participation-democratic-processes/
https://gpillsbury.com

RIDING HIGH FARM NEEDS YOU!

At Riding High Farm our horses help people discover confidence, strength, and joy through equine-assisted learning for adults and children with special needs. We're looking for caring volunteers to join our team and make a difference—because together, we help change lives. 🌟
13 yrs and older. No experience needed
Monday, Tuesday and Friday 9-2
Weekdays 3:30-8:00
Weekend 8:30-2:00
You schedule yourself for your availability - we are flexible!
www.Ridinghighfarm.org
(609) 649-4136 text only

Riding High Farm
145 Route 526
Allentown, NJ 08501

THE ALLENTOWN VILLAGE INITIATIVE (TAVI) PRESENTS

Who lies there?

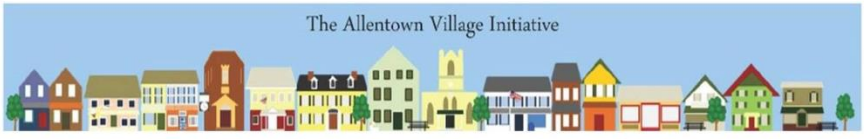
Visit with our town's founders this Halloween
An Historic Trick-or-Treating Experience

Saturday,
October 31, 2026
2- 5 pm

The Old Burying Ground
Lakeview Drive,
Allentown, NJ

Meet Revolutionary War veterans, the "Mad Hatter," businessmen, farmers and other men and women who rest in Allentown's oldest graveyard

(The Old Burying Ground is behind Heavenly Havens Ice Cream – turn at the corner of Main Street and Lakeview Drive. For more information call (609) 208-9991)



BINGO BINGO BINGO BINGO

B I N G O

$1,000
★ IN CASH PRIZES ★

MONEY BINGO

The Allentown Redbird Band Parent Association is proud to present MONEY BINGO night at Allentown High School

Fee includes admission and 10 regular games
Special Games and 50/50 will be for sale the night of.
5 Special Games will be played throughout the night! $5 a piece.
More regular games available for purchase as well!
Only 250 seats available!!!

OCTOBER 15 2026

7:00PM SHARP
DOORS OPEN AT 6:00PM

ALLENTOWN HIGH SCHOOL, NJ
IN THE CAFETERIA

$25 in advance
$30 at the door (while tickets last)

Must be 18 or older. No students are allowed to participate. No alcohol allowed.

Scan the QR code or
AllentownHighSchool.Ludus.com to purchase tickets

DROP-IN PUMPKIN PAINTING

All Ages Welcome!

Come paint a pumpkin just in time for Halloween.
All supplies will be provided.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27 FROM 4:00 - 6:00 PM

Monmouth County Library - Allentown Branch
16S Main St. Allentown, NJ 08501 - 609-259-7565
MonmouthCountyLib.org - @MonCoLibrary

AUCTION ITEMS NEEDED

Online Holiday Auction

Donate an item. Save a horse.

Trips • Gifts • Jewelry • Art • Antiques
Home Decor • Barn Items • Gift Certificates • and More

Item ideas shown

Seeking donated items for our
November 14–19, 2026 auction

HAVE SOMETHING TO DONATE?

SRFOffice2@gmail.com

ADOPTAHORSE.ORG
Benefits Standardbred Retirement Foundation

HOPE
FIRE COMPANY

HALLOWEEN PARADE AND COSTUME CONTEST

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31ST

PARADE KICKOFF
6PM
AT SOUTH MAIN AND ALLEN DRIVE

COSTUME CONTEST
TO FOLLOW AT
PETE SENSI PARK

The Last Word - Editorial

The Ratables Chase –

Upper Freehold Still Appears to Be in the Running

What seems to stir people's emotions most when talking about potential ways to reduce property tax increases? Ratables. Those typically large properties such as warehouses, sometimes purpose-built, sometimes built on speculation, that can pay a local government large sums of tax dollars. We've all been through those discussions over the past couple of years with respect to the Stein property (though those discussions lacked some critical features described below). Some folks are unequivocally against things like warehouses and data centers. Some folks think they could be acceptable so long as they are not situated in their own backyard and have the potential to lessen tax increases over time. But, like it or not, if planned and executed the right way (taking into account both the financial arrangements and a reconciliation of the pros and cons associated with their construction), they can help limit tax increases. If planned and executed the wrong way, they can have disastrous consequences.

The potential *pros* include transfer of a portion (in some cases, a large portion) of the responsibility for tax payments from homeowners to the ratable(s), job creation and economic activity, and relatively low demand for municipal services (technically, the often-cited pro that warehouses don't raise the cost of sending students to the local schools because they don't add to the student population is only true if no one living locally who gets a job at the warehouse has children). The *cons* include increased traffic, noise and light pollution, and environmental, health, and safety concerns. And, in some cases, other concerns such as loss of community character and historical assets. In the case of the aforementioned Stein property, nearly all of the pros would have accrued to Upper Freehold Township (and the school district, which would have received roughly 9.5 million of the projected 13 million in ratable taxes over a 10-year period), and all of the cons to Allentown Borough. A warehouse constructed on the Stein property might have been financially advantageous to Upper Freehold, but it definitely would have been unfriendly and, in many ways, deleterious to Allentown.

Some communities choose the ratables route to take advantage of the pros just outlined; some take advantage of an alternative route, such as farmland preservation, to maintain their character and prevent issues associated with ratables, with the hope that they will be able to do that and still raise the taxes they need without creating an undue burden for homeowners. Upper Freehold has traditionally valued and taken pride in the fact that it was able to preserve, in concert with Monmouth County, significant amounts of farmland. After all, it has the Country Code it likes to tout. But the township is increasingly torn between the desire to stay semirural and the need to pay its bills. Now, apparently, the Township Committee has reached the point where it feels it no longer can have its cake and eat it, too (actually, it came to that realization awhile ago with the Stein property), so are attempting to take another bite of the apple by rezoning a section of the township to the north of Rt. 195 near the Amazon facility. Other sections of the township could be considered for future rezoning, as well. But don't expect to hear much about its actions from the Township Committee. It tends to keep things close to the vest. If you're a township resident, seriously consider all of the issues involved (see the accompanying

Continued on next page

Ratables Chase *(continued)*

article on property taxes because taxes will inevitably continue to rise without additional countermeasures being taken), but, this time around, be sure that you also require the township to prepare a document such as a *Community Impact Assessment* for public review (even if it says it's not obligated to do so). That document provides all of the relevant financial information and attempts to reconcile all of the pros and cons of a warehouse (or similar ratable) before it is approved and built, but was not prepared with respect to development of the Stein property. Then, make your feelings known to the township committee about what you are willing to accept and what you are not. We need and deserve transparency, and the township committee needs to stop thinking they owe us nothing of the kind.

Join TAVI –

Martha & Jeff Ploshay (*left*) at TAVI's Fall Festival table, sharing news of TAVI's many upcoming projects and events. If you have a passion for our community, then TAVI needs you! We are a small but dedicated group of volunteers. To know us is to love us!

Contact Martha at ploshay@juno.com or Mike McCormick at mccormicknj@aol.com for more information.

The TAVI Times – *The return of local journalism to our community*

The TAVI Times exists to report local stories you are not likely to see elsewhere. Please send us your local news as well as information about the events and activities which make Allentown and Upper Freehold a great place to live. News, events and activities are free -- TAVI is a small band of volunteers which happily serves our community free of charge. If you are a small business owner, please consider supporting TAVI's many community service projects by purchasing ad space in this monthly publication, now reaching over 3,000 households in the Allentown-Upper Freehold area.

Contact Mike McCormick at **mccormicknj@aol.com** for more information.

The Allentown Village Initiative (TAVI)

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Donations are always gratefully accepted

https://www.allentownvinj.org/donate.html

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