

# Veasy, Cooper, and Hansen's *Affordable Evesham Plan*

**JACLYN VEASY, HEATHER COOPER, and PATRICIA HANSEN** have released their *Affordable Evesham Plan* for Evesham Township. The *Affordable Evesham Plan* is a guideline for what Jaclyn, Heather, and Patricia will work to achieve while in office, with input and help from their Republican Councilmates. They will seek out efficiencies, common ground between entities, and local reforms in order to **save taxpayer money while increasing service quality and building economic and financial resiliency**.

Their plan has five main goals:

- 1. Provide a new style of leadership that has been lacking for the past decade. Building relationships with other entities in the township, surrounding towns, and Burlington County** can help our government and other entities be flexible, efficient, and save taxpayer dollars.
  - **Partnering with the school district, county, and other entities** to evaluate resources and find areas where [shared services](#) agreements can be made
  - **Identify areas of savings** such as comprehensively sharing administrative services including human resources, accounting, purchasing, and other areas that every government entity has; increasing the sharing of equipment, maintenance costs, and personnel between entities and other towns; pooling together equipment, manpower, and maintenance costs to handle expensive emergencies and weather-related events like snow, fallen trees and limbs.
- 2. Examine the government contract and bid process and ensure that it is allowing for the most competition possible** without favoring any particular bidder.
- 3. Reform how the Township approves development projects and reaches tax abatement agreements.**
  - **Conduct a stricter, defined and more comprehensive [cost-benefit analysis](#) of new developments and redevelopments** that capture an accurate picture of future costs for the various taxing entities; Increase transparency for projects and tax abatement agreements; Update the Township Code to modernize and enshrine best practices for analyzing and approving developments.
  - Development plans should include a **better examination** of the impact of [historical preservation](#), [open space and recreation](#), and other [environmental and sustainability impacts](#). Reseat the Historic Preservation Commission to access our historic resources or integrate its roles and responsibilities into a merged Zoning & Planning Board or a newly-formed Economic Development Commission.
  - With any subsidy, such as a [PILOT \(payment-in-lieu-of-taxes a/k/a tax abatement\) agreement](#), the Township should, at the least, engage in discussions with the school and fire districts regarding **sharing revenue** to cover their costs, which could reduce their need to increase taxes to cover for expenses associated with any new development or residents.
  - Identify ways to **further streamline the government bureaucracy and development process** to reduce paperwork, legal, and administrative costs; **Examine the feasibility and potential cost-savings from merging the Zoning and Planning Boards** and streamlining the approval process.
  - Explore the possibility of creating a **Neighborhood Investment Fund** that could receive a percentage of all fees and PILOT agreement revenue. Those funds could be **reinvested into infrastructure, parks and recreation, and other improvements that benefit surrounding neighborhoods**. Funds might also be

(continued)

able to be used for maintaining and rehabilitating abandoned and vacant properties and/or to subsidize affordable housing.

#### 4. **Develop a Long-term Infrastructure Maintenance Plan**

- Include roads, dams, bridges, culverts, storm drains, sidewalks, bike paths, traffic management, and [Complete Street](#) plans.
- The Long-term Infrastructure Maintenance Plan should **plan out our greatest needs for the next 5 and 10 years, and seek out public input.**
- Identify areas where preemptive maintenance and improvements could **offset more expensive future costs.**
- Seek out **innovative, leading technology and design ideas** that could lessen the maintenance demands and allow the municipality to be more proactive and preemptive with maintenance.

5. **Study the feasibility and impact on taxpayers of a municipal charitable trust**, following [legislation passed by the New Jersey Legislature and signed by Governor Murphy earlier this year](#), that could **give property owners the ability to receive a property tax bill credit for a charitable donation.** This tax deduction could help taxpayers paying more than \$10,000 in State and Local Taxes (SALT) increase their deductions to compensate for the SALT deduction limit from the 2017 Federal Tax Reform law.

Beyond their five main points, Jaclyn, Heather, and Patricia believe that it is important to **leave all options on the table** in order to save taxpayer money while maintaining service levels. **Projects and ideas should seek out citizen involvement and input**, especially when we need to question what features or history we are willing to sacrifice for something new or different.

Jaclyn, Heather, and Patricia believe that our municipal government should be **fully transparent** so that all citizens can see exactly where their municipal property taxes are being spent. The Township can embrace a **proactive savings plan for smaller expenses** that the township incurs each year ([savings by a thousand cuts](#)); and reward municipal departments for identifying ways to save money or coming in under budget at the end of the year.

**Protecting our local environment and seeking out ways to preserve our natural resources**, mitigate flood risks, and reduce pollution can save taxpayer dollars in the long run. Preserving open space not only increases the desirability of property around the preserved open space; it also incentivizes developers to invest in and repurpose existing properties instead of building on new, cleared land. Jaclyn, Heather, and Pat will study and embrace ideas from the Evesham Green Team, Evesham Environmental Commission and Pineland's organizations to **create economic and environmental sustainability policies that will increase our town's economic resiliency, quality of life, and business environment.**

By becoming more efficient and modernized, our township can begin to **offer better services and facilities for seniors, veterans, and youth.** The aforementioned policy changes would also affect the relationship between the township and business community - instead of heavy-handed meddling, our town and businesses can form strong partnerships and together provide better benefits to our entire community.

Finally, Jaclyn Veasy, Heather Cooper, and Patricia Hansen want to make it explicitly clear that they desire to create a **more efficient government while still delivering the services and resources that residents rely on.** Addiction and substance abuse services, youth and leadership development, LEAD programs in the schools, public safety and police presence for our town, garbage collection and leaf cleanup, and partnership programs such as the free Uber rides and all of our community celebration events should not have to be cut or disappear following a change in Township leadership.