

## **Former Stanhope mayors come out against Hopatcong development**

STANHOPE—Two former Stanhope mayors, Brian McNeilly and Michael Bender, addressed the council recently regarding a Hopatcong building project whose developers are seeking to buy a portion of Stanhope's sewage allocation for a proposed 662 unit adult community.

"This development has no benefit for Stanhope. It gives us nothing, and it will affect the quality of every resident in town," said Bender in asking the local council not approve the request to sell the unused sewer allocation to the developer. "They are going to destroy our town with that amount of traffic."

Stanhope's contract with the Musconetcong Sewage Authority requires that each of the member communities be billed for 100 percent of the allotment, whether it is used or not.

Stanhope's sewer allocation is 541,000 gallons per month; last year, actual usage was 373,000 gallons per month. In addition, the community is billed for 75 percent of the authority's operating expenses.

"There is a direct correlation between the increased sewer rate and the fact that we own more gallonage than we use," said Stanhope Mayor Diana Kuncken. "We believe that we have 100,000 gallons that we do not use, we do not need."

According to Kuncken, an analysis conducted to determine Stanhope's future needs, which included the possibility of an area now zoned for industrial changing to mixed use still left the borough with unused allocation.

"After having done an engineering analysis, the council still feels there are gallons we will not need," she said.

Kuncken blamed a recent increase in sewer fees to the amount of sewer allocations the borough is required to purchase.

"The increased sewer rate is directly related to the fact that we own more gallonage than we use. The cost is based on our contract and money must come from charging our sewer customers."

Any sale of gallonage must also be approved by the other members of the authority, and Netcong sent a letter to the authority stating an interest in purchasing 30,000 gallons. As a standing member, Netcong would have priority on the gallonage.

Kuncken acknowledged that traffic is an issue saying.

"The other side of the coin is the traffic issue. We are concerned about the amount of traffic coming through Sparta and Brooklyn Roads from that

development. We are approaching that issue with the Borough of Hopatcong, and we will let our feelings be known in regard to traffic impact," she said.

The mayor acknowledged that the council is still studying the request.

"The governing body is still exploring its options," said Kuncken.