

## ***Committee for the Recall of Ellen Ritchie***

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Franklin Township voters angry over the proposed Home Depot shopping center on Route 27 and Bennetts Lane, proposed by Piscataway Developer Jack Morris, have formed a committee to recall Councilwoman Ellen Ritchie, who pushed for the project despite voter outcry”, said Chip Hoever, chairman of The Committee to Recall Ellen Ritchie [[www.RecallRitchie.com](http://www.RecallRitchie.com)].

“Today we have filed our notice of intention with the Township Clerk’s Office as required under State Statutes. We would have filed sooner except the time limits set in the statutes were the only thing holding us back” Hoever said. State law dictates that a recall initiative cannot start sooner than the 50<sup>th</sup> day preceding the completion of the candidates first year of service [NJSA 19:27A-4(b)].

Hoever said, “Ritchie spearheaded this project. This recall is about traffic congestion, over-development, hundreds of new children in our already over-crowded schools, and repeatedly lying to the public.” Hoever cited Route 27 traffic congestion as one of the primary complaints among voters. Hoever’s company manages several condominium associations in the township, some of them right on the Route 27 corridor. “This topic comes up at almost every Association meeting lately and the homeowners are appalled at the idea of increasing the congestion on Route 27. One homeowner said a trip that takes 2 minutes in the evening takes 15-20 minutes during rush hour”.

Earlier this year there were several hearings on the issue and numerous Township residents spoke out against the project. Franklin Mayor Brian Levine and North Brunswick Mayor Francis “Mac” Womac were among those speaking out against the project. Despite the overwhelming objections and only two speakers supporting the project(the builder’s attorney and Ritchie’s partner, Bernie Schrum) the Township

Council accepted the project to meet the township's obligation for affordable housing. "While other options were available to meet those requirements, some of the options mysteriously disappeared in deference to the Ritchie-Morris plan", Hoever said..

A version of the Ritchie-Morris plan includes 644 units of affordable housing to meet the COAH requirements. At those hearings Franklin Township School Board President Eva Nagy noted that the excessive amount of housing proposed for the plan would force the Board of Education to make immediate plans for a new school. She said that even with the new high school going on line this year the schools were still at or near capacity and this project would push that balance over the limits. This will undoubtedly result in increased taxes.

The Bennetts Lane project, now dubbed the Ritchie-Morris project, is not the only factor driving the recall initiative. Hoever said that Ms. Ritchie's ethics are questionable, especially since she has been caught in the middle of several lies, in public.

In particular Hoever referenced Ritchie's threat to a fellow Planning Board member's political career earlier this year. "I sat at the Township Council meeting where Planning Board member Joseph Danielsen made the accusation and she flatly denied it, yet later, in an email to the Democratic Party, she confessed to making the threat and using strong profanity. "We cannot tolerate having her on Council another minute. She has committed an egregious breach of the public's trust", Hoever said. "To prove the point, we have clips of her from the Township's cable TV broadcast viewable on the recall website [www.RecallRitchie.com](http://www.RecallRitchie.com)", Hoever said.

"People are also tired of politicians making campaign promises only to get elected and then forgetting those promises as soon as they take office", Hoever said, referring to Ritchie's campaign literature that vowed to cut traffic congestion, fight to lower taxes, and to take on the big builders to cut uncontrolled building. "Yet this builder is a huge political contributor and Ritchie had her campaign signs plastered on his property on the corner of Route 27 and Bennetts lane", he said.

Hoever stated, "Let's be clear this is not a political party battle, we had the notice of intent signed by a former Republican committee person, a current Democratic committee member and an Independent not particularly interested in politics but interested in the ever increasing traffic in Franklin", Hoever said. "The hundreds of people we have

talked to are of all political affiliations and no one really cares about her party affiliation in this matter.

“Once our notice of intent is certified we are ready to go full bore”, Hoever said. “We have dozens of people throughout the Township ready to go door-to-door in the third ward soliciting signatures, especially in all of the condo associations. Fact sheets, petitions and signs are all printed and we’re ready to go”

This is only the second time in New Jersey history that a recall initiative has been launched against a municipal official, the first being the recall of Bedminster Township Committeeman Kurt Joerger. However before the recall could get up to speed, Joerger resigned his position.

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