

Agency shoots down Cherry Hill-Merchantville merger attempt

BY JULIE SHANNON • COURIER-POST STAFF • DECEMBER 17, 2010

[Print this page](#) [E-mail this article](#) [Share](#) [Type Size](#) **A A A**

[Recommend](#)

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

0

1 | 2 [Next Page](#)

The state Department of Community Affairs has formally declined an effort to study whether Merchantville and Cherry Hill can consolidate municipal services.

In a letter sent to officials of both towns -- as well as the grass-roots group seeking the merger -- the state said proper procedures were not followed in seeking the study.

The consolidation plan was initiated by a Merchantville group, Merchantville Connecting for the Future, after continued hikes in property taxes and reductions in municipal services.

The DCA said Monday the application Merchantville and Cherry Hill sent does not meet state application requirements.

RELATED

- [Cherry Hill Photo Gallery](#)
- [Merchantville Photo Gallery](#)

A group of Merchantville residents sent a petition to the DCA, while Cherry Hill submitted a resolution to undertake a consolidation study.

But the law requires the same method of application from each community -- either resolutions from each municipality or a petition circulated by a representative committee of voters from both towns, Lisa Ryan, spokeswoman for the DCA, said in September, when the applications were submitted.

The Merchantville group based its work on a 2007 law -- the Local Option Consolidation Act -- that allows residents to initiate consolidation. The law calls on residents to collect signatures of registered voters equal to at least 10 percent of votes cast in the most recent Legislative election, or gain the consent of governing bodies.

Merchantville Connecting for the Future collected more than enough signatures in Merchantville and gained the support of Cherry Hill officials, but the DCA didn't buy it.

"It was overlooked," said Bob Stocker, member of Merchantville Connecting for the Future, of the legislation.

"The interpretation is just really narrow. The legislation says these laws are to be interpreted as liberally and flexible as possible, so to me, that means you should be able to mix and match.

"The whole purpose of the legislation is to allow citizens to make an end run around the bureaucrats that are against it."

1 | 2 [Next Page](#)

In Your Voice | [READ REACTIONS TO THIS STORY](#)

Photo Gallery

Thumbnails from: [Cherry Hill Photo Gallery](#)



Click a thumbnail to view image and all 13 images in the gallery.

Related Stories

- [State denies Merchantville-Cherry Hill consolidation plan](#)
- [Cherry Hill picks new school board member](#)
- [Museum offers toy suggestions for letter to Santa](#)
- [Water main breaks on Cherry Hill road](#)
- [Magic Shop has illusions, gags for all ages](#)

Related Topics

- [Places - Cherry Hill, NJ, Merchantville, NJ](#)

Contextual linking provided by Topix

EMAIL ALERTS

Subscribe to our **Breaking News** newsletters.
[View a sample](#)

» [Go to newsletters page.](#)

More News Headlines

In advance of police layoffs, Guardian Angels scout Camden (26)

County dispatcher who guided birth meets young family (2)

South Jersey high school star soccer player killed in car head-on crash (1)

House sends tax deal to Obama unaltered

Latest Headlines

Agency shoots down Cherry Hill-Merchantville merger attempt

BY JULIE SHANNON • COURIER-POST STAFF • DECEMBER 17, 2010

[Print this page](#) [E-mail this article](#) [Share](#) [Type Size](#) **A A A**

[Recommend](#)

Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

0

[Previous Page](#) [1](#) | [2](#)

(2 of 2)

Merchantville Mayor Frank North said the towns would continue to discuss the process.

"When you have two things that are not matched, and you're going in a different direction, you have to bring it back on track," he said.

Legislation was introduced in the state Senate last week that ensures the Local Finance Board will not reject an application when one municipality obtains approval by petition and another obtains approval by resolution.

Gina Genovese, an advocate of municipal mergers and founder of Courage to Connect New Jersey, has been on board with Merchantville Connecting for the Future since it started a petition to conduct a study in June.

RELATED

- [Cherry Hill Photo Gallery](#)
- [Merchantville Photo Gallery](#)

"It would clearly spell out that some towns can petition by the people and some towns can do resolutions by their governing bodies," said Genovese. "It will formally allow citizens and local officials to work together for consolidation."

Cherry Hill Chief of Staff Dan Keashen said township officials are cautiously optimistic a consolidation study can happen.

"We're going to be in touch with the DCA and Mayor North and see exactly what that means for the process and where we go from here," he said.

Stocker called the DCA's decision just a "speed bump" and said he feels optimistic at this point.

"We're weighing our options right now, whether we want to organize a petition in Cherry Hill or if we're going to talk to legislators about changing the legislation, or filing an appeal," he said.

"This is about working together, not about drawing a line in the sand," said Genovese.

"It's about the state, the local government and the citizens working together. That's foremost in our minds and that's the course we will take."

Reach Julie Shannon at (856) 486-2920 or jshannon@gannett.com

[Previous Page](#) [1](#) | [2](#)

In Your Voice | [READ REACTIONS TO THIS STORY](#)

Photo Gallery

Thumbnails from: [Cherry Hill Photo Gallery](#)



Click a thumbnail to view image and all 13 images in the gallery.

Related Stories

- [State denies Merchantville-Cherry Hill consolidation plan](#)
- [Cherry Hill picks new school board member](#)
- [Museum offers toy suggestions for letter to Santa](#)
- [Water main breaks on Cherry Hill road](#)
- [Magic Shop has illusions, gags for all ages](#)

Related Topics

- [Places - Cherry Hill, NJ, Merchantville, NJ](#)

Contextual linking provided by Topix

EMAIL ALERTS

Subscribe to our **Breaking News** newsletters.
[View a sample](#)

» [Go to newsletters page.](#)

More News Headlines

In advance of police layoffs, Guardian Angels scout Camden (26)

County dispatcher who guided birth meets young family (2)

South Jersey high school star soccer player killed in car head-on crash (1)

House sends tax deal to Obama unaltered

Latest Headlines