

COUNTY OF OCEAN
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TOMS RIVER, NEW JERSEY 08754-2191

Frank Sadeghi
Commissioner



(732) 929-2002
Fax (732) 505-1918

May 3, 2024

Congressman Chris Smith (NJ-04)
33 Washington Street
PO Box 728
Toms River, NJ 08754

Dear Congressman Smith:

I am reaching out to express my full support for the restoration of the historic Manitou Park Schoolhouse in Berkeley Township, now part of Toms River. As a commissioner committed to the preservation and celebration of our community's history, I believe in the importance of revitalizing such a significant landmark and support their application for \$1 million through FY25 Community Project Funding.

Established in 1929, the Manitou Park Schoolhouse is not just a building; it is a beacon of our educational history and a reminder of our nation's progress through eras of segregation and civil rights advancements. This structure is uniquely connected to our shared heritage, marking significant social, educational, and architectural milestones. It also served a crucial role up until 1996 as the headquarters for OCEAN, an organization focused on combating poverty and promoting social causes.

Unfortunately, the schoolhouse has suffered from extensive weather-related damage over the years, exacerbated by numerous hurricanes and tropical storms. Thanks to initial funding from the New Jersey Historic Trust and the Neighborhood Preservation Program, the first steps toward its rehabilitation have been taken, addressing critical issues like asbestos and initiating necessary design work.

However, much more needs to be done to restore this historic edifice fully. I strongly advocate for additional support through congressional appropriations community project funding. Such backing would not only help preserve this emblematic structure but also boost local tourism and provide educational opportunities that highlight our rich history.

I am writing to urge your consideration and support for this cause. On behalf of the Berkeley Township leadership and our community, I am committed to seeing the Historic Manitou Park Schoolhouse restored to its former glory and utilized as a vibrant center of learning and cultural celebration.

Thank you for your attention to this significant matter. I am eager to witness the fruition of this restoration project, confident that it will greatly benefit our community and beyond.

Sincerely,


Frank Sadeghi
Commissioner



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

9TH DISTRICT LEGISLATIVE OFFICES
620 WEST LACEY ROAD
FORKED RIVER, NJ 08731
(609) 693-6700

CARMEN F. AMATO, JR.
SENATOR – 9TH DISTRICT
SenAmato@njleg.org

May 2, 2024

Congressman Chris Smith (NJ-04)
33 Washington Street
PO Box 728
Toms River, NJ 08754

RE: Support for Manitou Schoolhouse Project

Congressman Smith:

As a current Senator and former Mayor of Berkeley Township, I write to you today as a staunch supporter of the Township of Berkeley's ongoing efforts to renovate the historic Manitou Park Schoolhouse, a cherished landmark located in what is now known as Toms River. As a dedicated public servant deeply committed to preserving our state's rich cultural heritage, I believe it is crucial to support such significant projects and support their application for \$1 million through FY25 Community Project Funding.


Constructed in 1929, the Manitou Park Schoolhouse not only symbolizes the evolution of public education in New Jersey but also serves as an important reminder of our nation's journey through segregation and the broader civil rights movement. This building, the sole structure in the township linked to such pivotal historical events, stands as a testament to our social, educational, and architectural progress. Until 1996, it also played a vital role as the headquarters for O.C.E.A.N., Inc., an organization dedicated to addressing poverty and advancing social initiatives.

Despite its historical significance, the schoolhouse has been subjected to the ravages of time and nature, enduring severe weatherization and structural damage from hurricanes and tropical storms. Recognizing its plight, initial efforts have been made through the New Jersey Historic Trust and the Neighborhood Preservation Program to commence restoration, including essential asbestos remediation and design upgrades.

The need for further repair is both urgent and necessary. Considering this, I advocate for the allocation of congressional appropriations community project funding to ensure the building's complete restoration. This support would not only preserve a critical piece of our historical fabric but also enhance local tourism and educational opportunities. Once again as the former Mayor of Berkeley Township who initiated and began this project and its leadership, I am fully committed to the restoration of the Historic Manitou Park Schoolhouse. We are confident that with the necessary funding, this landmark can continue to educate and inspire future generations about the strides we have made as a society.

Thank you for considering this vital initiative. I look forward to the successful realization of this project, which will undoubtedly enrich our community and state.

Sincerely,



CARMEN F. AMATO, JR.
Senator – 9th District

Jerry Bollettieri
260 Butler Boulevard
Bayville, NJ 08721

April 12, 2024

Dear Mayor Amato:

I was recently made aware of the Township of Berkeley's decision to apply for funding to repair and renovate the historic Manitou Park Schoolhouse, located in the historic Manitou Park (now Toms River). Please allow me to extend my staunch support. As a resident of Berkeley, I am aware of the rich culture and history the Township boasts. Built in 1929, this schoolhouse serves as a historical landmark of public education within the state of New Jersey. In fact, it is the only building in the Township that has such ties to segregation and the much larger civil rights movement within the United States during that time. It is a clear testament to how far we have come both socially and educationally, as well as architecturally. It even maintained a significant purpose as a headquarters for OCEAN until 1996, an organization that help address poverty and other grassroots missions. While it has since been abandoned, the building is part of Berkeley's unique history and it must be preserved so that others can continue to learn about its significance and see how far we have come.

I understand that the Manitou Park Schoolhouse is in dire need of saving due to weatherization over the years, as well as the hazard it now poses since its materials are primarily asbestos. The damage this building has endured is both externally and internally, making the need for repair to be eminent. In order to help protect this historical building and eliminate the hazard it poses, since it remains in an area that is populated, applying for funding is the perfect fit to restore the building both externally and internally, while serving a rich purpose.

I strongly support the repair of the Historic Manitou Park Schoolhouse and have no doubt that the Township of Berkeley will utilize this facility to promote the Township's history while promoting tourism as well, all the while maintaining the building to the utmost respect. I thank you for your time and look forward to hearing the success of this proposal.

Sincerely,



Jerry Bollettieri

29 April, 2024

Congressman Chris Smith (NJ-04)
33 Washington Street
PO Box 728
Toms River, NJ 08754

Congressman Smith:

The Township of Berkeley has spent close to a decade planning the renovation of the historic Manitou Park Schoolhouse, located in the historic Manitou Park (now Toms River). Please allow me to extend my staunch support. As the Mayor of, and a proud resident of Berkeley Township, I am aware of the rich culture and history our town boasts. Built in 1929, this schoolhouse serves as a historical landmark of public education within the state of New Jersey. In fact, it is the only building in the Township that has such ties to segregation and the much larger civil rights movement within the United States during that time. It is a clear testament to how far we have come both socially and educationally, as well as architecturally. It even maintained a significant purpose as a headquarters for OCEAN until 1996, an organization that addressed poverty and other social missions. While it has since been abandoned, the building is part of Berkeley's unique history, and it must be preserved so that others can continue to learn about its significance and see how far we have come.

I understand that the Manitou Park Schoolhouse is in dire need of saving due to weatherization over the years. Initial investments have been made through the New Jersey Historic Trust and Neighborhood Preservation Program—including design elements and asbestos remediation. The damage this building has endured is both externally and internally, between withstanding various hurricanes and tropical storms and nearly a century of mere existence, the need for repair to be eminent. To help protect this historical building that stands in a highly populated area, applying for funding for congressional appropriations community project funding is the perfect fit to restore the building both externally and internally, while serving a rich purpose.

As Mayor of Berkeley Township, I write on behalf of our administration and leadership, in strong support of this endeavor to repair of the Historic Manitou Park Schoolhouse and I have no doubt that the Township of Berkeley will utilize this facility to promote the Township's history while promoting tourism as well, all the while maintaining the building to the utmost respect. I thank you for your time and look forward to realizing the success of this proposal.

Sincerely,



Mayor John A. Bacchione

P.O. Box B

627 Pinewald-Keswick Road, Bayville NJ 08721

jbacchione@berkeleypark.org