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Mayor Moench to Sever Township Ties to Somerset County Business Partnership

BRIDGEWATER, NJ – Today, Bridgewater Township Mayor Matthew Moench, sent a letter to Somerset County Business Partnership President, Michael Kerwin, to inform him that Bridgewater Township will not be renewing its membership to the Business Partnership and will no longer be an active participant in the organization's activities. This action is in direct response to the Partnership's support for the Center for Excellence development project.

"Bridgewater is a vibrant place that attracts many people and businesses wanting to become a part of our community. We are thankful that this is the case, however, periodically there are projects that can become problematic," **said Mayor Moench in his letter.** "The current leadership of the Partnership seemed to be more interested in assisting a development company's interests than the legitimate concerns of our residents and taxpayers who will live with the significant increase in traffic on roads that are already overburdened. The Partnership's Board may believe such actions are in the interests of their membership, but Bridgewater taxpayers do not need to fund it."

"For many years, Bridgewater Township has been proud member of the Business Partnership," **said Council President Howard Norgalis.** "We applauded and participated in many of the successes achieved by the Partnership. However, over the past several years, our objectives have diverged especially over the Partnership's strident support of the Center of Excellence Development. As proposed, this project is far too large for the site and was inconsistent with the Town Council's development goals for that location. We have pleaded to Partnership leadership to "dial back" their support for COE but our protests seemed to only strengthen their support of the project. Therefore, Bridgewater Township will not be renewing our membership."

"Unfortunately, the Somerset County Business Partnership has decided to try to force a development project on the residents of Bridgewater that we absolutely do not want," **said Council Vice President Filipe Pedroso.** "We want to preserve the character of the town we love."

The development proposal was passed by the Bridgewater Planning Board in December after a series of meetings on short notice to approve the project prior to the change of administration. The Center of Excellence will have to reappear on a subsequent Board agenda to be memorialized. After that time, the Bridgewater Township Council will need to consider whether to approve a Redevelopment Agreement which is a necessary condition of the Planning Board's approval.

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