



This Week at NJ21st: Bonds, Floods, and a Free Press Under Fire

Confidence in Council Fading With last-minute document dumps, blocked Zoom access, and nameless press releases, community confidence in what many see as a coalition government unable to hold itself accountable is falling. Buried deep in a multi-page, unattributed release — which read more like a desperate CYA essay than communication — residents discovered that a controversial \$3.5 million bond will likely not be covered by FEMA, meaning Berkeley Heights families will foot the bill.

In a *Community Voices* article, one resident describes an uncomfortable exchange with the mayor, where both they and a Connell representative corrected the Township on affordable housing — leaving the resident to ask: “Do they even know what they’re doing?”

Finally, John follows up on the turf field, pointing to the possibility that willful disregard for community rights — not simple ignorance — is why the deal has gone silent and going sideways.

Building Blind Using 2024 DCA permit data, we examine which communities are on housing development overdrive. We connect these findings with school enrollment data and flood maps to illustrate the potential impact on families and students living there.

Plainfield Making Progress? We wrap up our three-town analysis of municipal compliance with the Union County Hazard Mitigation Plan. Our dive into Plainfield's documents shows some effort — including one detailed project — but with other flood risks untouched and a 2026 revisit fast approaching, major gaps remain as flooding risks continue to grow.

Still No Answers on New Testing As a follow-up to our coverage of New Jersey's adaptive testing rollout, we publish our email to the U.S. Department of Education outlining concerns and unanswered questions about the state's race to implementation. We also explain why clarity matters — for families navigating uncertainty, and for students who will feel the direct impact.

Answers to the \$60 Million Question We match **OPRA documents received from Berkeley Heights** to the \$60 million price tag repeatedly cited by Township representatives — separating reality from speculation. This breakdown ensures taxpayers are better informed as the Township seeks to increase rates.

Free Press Under Fire Jersey City has played favorites with fawning news outlets and *The Jersey City Times* took a stand — going to court over what it sees as violations of its constitutional rights. This case could have a lasting impact on journalistic access statewide. In our editorial, we express support for *The Jersey City Times* and explain why defending a free press matters for every New Jersey community.

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