

## BRIDGEWATER, NJ TO AXE 5 STATE WORKERS



In line with the township's budget crisis, Bridgewater, NJ axed about five municipal staff to cut its cost and generate savings. The affected employees include one employee in Bridgewater's planning department, one in the clerk's office, one in the tax office and two employees from the department of public works. The layoffs were made before the New Year to avoid having to pay benefits for the removed workers for the entire of 2011. Howard Norgalis, incoming Township Council President, said that the municipality was saddened to layoff workers especially at the start of the year. However, the move was necessary. "We hate to seem like Scrooge at the end of the year, but it's a financial necessity. It's unfortunate to have happen this time of year. Personnel represent the biggest component not only for salaries but for benefits. These are very difficult financial times." The outgoing Council President, Matthew Moench, added that they are now looking for other solutions to mend the pressing budget crisis.

The Bridgewater's financial setback is blamed on a surge of the township's healthcare bills. In December, Bridgewater, which is self-insured for medical expenses, incurred over \$260,000 worth of healthcare bills, a cost beyond its average amount between \$60,000 and \$70,000 per month. The township is expected to pay the price tag worth \$100,000 in 2011.

Moench said that they were surprised with the amount but the healthcare bill needs to be settled at any costs. "That particular one was unexpected. That one was just above and beyond what was expected. It's going to be part of next year's budget." Moench revealed that the municipality is now negotiating with various union groups to minimize the layoffs.

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