

Township of Bensalem

Joseph DiGirolamo
Mayor



June 6, 2018

The Honorable Daryl D. Metcalfe
Chairman-State Government Committee
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
144 Main Capitol Building
PO Box 202012
Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: State Government Committee Public Hearing
Delaware River Basin Commission

Dear Chairman Metcalfe and Committee Members:

I was born and raised in Bensalem Township and have served as its Mayor for the past 24 years. I recall a time when it was mostly farmland. I've witnessed Bensalem grow from a small town of less than 5,000 residents to its current population of over 60,000.

Bensalem is the gateway from Philadelphia to Bucks County's countryside and its many attractions. Situated at the crossroads of major highways that includes Interstate 95, the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and U.S Route 1, Bensalem Township is a very desirable location for business and industry. One of the largest employers in the township is PARX Racing. This facility opened in November 1974 as Keystone Racetrack. Over the years, it has expanded to include gaming and grown into a 250,000-square foot operation. As its physical footprint expanded, so has its need for infrastructure improvements. PARX Racing is currently approved by the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) for water withdrawals of more than 10million gallons per month. PARX is just one of several entities in Bensalem Township that hold dockets with DRBC.

Development of the waterfront continues to be a major initiative. It is the area where I was raised, and have been ambitiously working on plans for some time. While there is only a finite amount of waterfront, there are a variety of uses competing for waterfront access, including residential, commercial, recreational, and industrial uses.

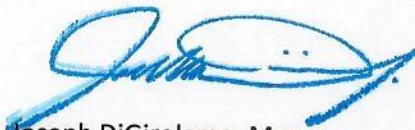
In 2012, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in its study: Accessing the Tidal Delaware, identified Bensalem as one of the 17 priority opportunities in the region. A few years ago, we laid out what some called a "bold and ambitious" long-range development plan for 675 acres along Bensalem's Delaware River waterfront. The project would include several kinds of residences, stores, restaurants, office buildings, a marina, a technology center and many other features. All would be connected with walking paths and bicycle trails, and the vision also includes plenty of space for public access to the river.

An initiative of this magnitude is going to take cooperation from local, state, federal government and their respective agencies. As you are aware, the Delaware River Basin Commission was created in 1961, when concurrent compact legislation ratified by Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Congress became law. The Delaware River Basin Compact describes the powers and duties of the commission, and over the past half a century the DRBC has put into place various programs to carry out its responsibilities, which relate to water supply, pollution control, flood protection, watershed management recreation, regulation of withdrawals.

Bensalem Township has benefitted from DRBC's oversight as it has allowed industry to coexist with protected open spaces and a clean river making our waterfront desirable and ripe with opportunity to revitalize and rejuvenate an area of our township.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments as they relate to your upcoming hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joseph DiGirolamo". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Joseph DiGirolamo, Mayor