

STATEMENT FROM MAYOR DAVE FRIED REGARDING 2022 ELECTION

November 11, 2022

"Let me begin by saying thank you to all our men and women in uniform, past and present, on this Veterans Day. Your sacrifice, service, dedication and loyalty to your country and our constitutional democracy has provided the blanket of freedom we all enjoy each and every day.

Needless to say, it has been a long week throughout Mercer County, and especially here in Robbinsville.

Regarding the events of Election Day, here is what we know so far. Either the machine scanners did not work, or the ballots were printed incorrectly and the machines did their jobs and correctly spit them out as invalid. An investigation is reportedly under way, and Robbinsville will join other elected officials across Mercer County to see that the investigation is complete and transparent.

Let me be clear: I am not blaming anyone. Honestly, I do not know how this happened. Pointing fingers without all the facts is not productive. We do know that this is the second straight year the County process did not work as it should have, and I am not happy with much of what I saw.

One of the basic tenets of our democracy is the right to vote, and that every vote will be counted.

As of today (November 11), it appears our District 5 ballots (Library) have been found after having been misplaced. That information was given directly to our Municipal Clerk Michele Seigfried from the County.

Just a quick note about our clerk's office. Michele and her team of Deputy Clerk Kaitlyn Macellaro and Sandy DeLorenzo performed exceptionally under extremely difficult conditions this past week. I cannot thank them enough for their service to our Township. The same goes for our Administration team, led by B.A. Joy Tozzi, each of whom worked all hours of the day and night in the chaotic aftermath of Election Day.

Over in Princeton, they discovered ballots still in their machines. During in-person voting on Election Day, two slots for placing ballots were used. The first was the so-called emergency slot. This was used in the early part of the day because officials had hoped the scanner problems could be fixed before polls closed. As the day went on, that emergency bin became full, and the scanners were removed so the main bin could be used. They discovered Princeton's ballots were still in some

of those containers since both sides were not emptied. It also appears that the documentation of the chain of custody regarding our ballots was quite poor, allowing the ballots to be apparently misplaced for a time.

The courts have ordered all the machines returned to the Mercer County Board of Elections for inspection to ensure there are no more ballots in those machines, including the ones deployed in Robbinsville.

I DO NOT believe there was any type of fraud, and I DO NOT believe there are any conspiracies at work here. I do believe mistakes were made at a time in our nation when it can ill-afford to stumble on Election Day.

We have spent millions of dollars on these machines and ballots, and they clearly did not work as advertised. It is time to reassess and come up with a better system. Those of you who voted early did not seem to have any issues. Perhaps we need to consider moving entirely in that direction. I will be attending all upcoming Mercer County Commissioner's meetings until we have a real and fortified plan. Together, I am hopeful we will produce a solution. Robbinsville has no intention of paying for this process unless real change is implemented.

I have no reason to believe, even with ballots that may or may not still be out there, that our local results will change.

Thus, I sincerely congratulate our three new Board of Education members - Jeffrey Pierro, Raghu Nandan and Peter Oehlberg. I wish each of you the best of luck, and I am sorry your first election was fraught with so much turmoil.

I have always said putting your name on a ballot is one of the most difficult - but potentially rewarding things - a person can do. Although no candidate should have to wait days for results in 2022, each of you earned your rightful place among your other BOE members.

While Ballot Question #1, which sought to combine our Planning and Zoning Boards into a consolidated Land Use Board, did pass, Ballot Question #2 regarding an increase in our Open Space tax to preserve more land and slow development did not. I know times are tough. That is why we put items such as these questions on the ballot. Sometimes we think we know what the residents want, but this process helps us know for certain.

Apologies for the length of this post, but I felt it was important to relay the best information I have at this time.

Have a wonderful weekend. Be kind to one another, please support our newly elected officials and do not forget to thank a Veteran today."