



**Post 391**  
**The American Legion**  
**Department of New Jersey**

June 30, 2020

**TO:** Mine Hill Mayor Sam Morris  
Mine Hill Council President Fred Willis  
Mine Hill Councilman David Bloom  
Mine Hill Councilman Bret Coranato  
Mine Hill Councilwoman Debbie Giordano  
Mine Hill Councilwoman Kristine Kanzenbach

**SUBJ:** Tax Appeal vs American Legion Post 391

My name is Brian Bergen and I am the Registered Agent in charge of Post 391. I was duly appointed by the Department of New Jersey to handle all matters regarding Mine Hill Post 391. In November of 2019 I was appointed to lead a committee to investigate allegations of wrongdoing by the Post leadership. At the conclusion of the investigation, it was the responsibility of my investigative committee to take necessary actions to include appointing new leadership with the intent of re-establishing the Post. I am required to provide periodic updates to the Department of New Jersey and upon conclusion of our work provide recommendations to the Department of New Jersey specific to the future of Post 391.

I am submitting this letter on behalf of American Legion Post 391 to express our extreme disappointment in the lack of professionalism and common courtesy by the Mine Hill Mayor and Council in the hasty decision to file a tax appeal against our property. It is unconscionable that this action would take place without providing the American Legion notice and allowing us to address the council prior to a vote. Our members, the Veterans in your community, deserve more respect.

In February 2020 our investigation was derailed as a direct result of interference by Mayor Sam Morris. Mayor Morris was informed by a member of the Post, not in a leadership position, that the American Legion Post 391 building was listed for sale. Without consulting any formal American Legion leadership, Mayor Morris took it upon himself to contact the authorities and allege fraud. This allegation was forwarded to the Morris County Prosecutor's Office and an investigation began. In order to avoid interfering with a formal criminal investigation, we paused our investigation to allow the prosecutor's office to determine what action, if any, they decided to take in regards to this matter.

In March 2020 our State was hit with a global pandemic. On March 21st 2020, Governor Murphy implemented a "Stay At Home Order" which was not lifted until June 9th 2020.

On June 17th, 2020 the members of the Investigative Committee met and determined actionable next steps to begin the process to transfer the post back to the membership.

On June 19th, I was informed by a member of the press that Mine Hill had voted the previous night, June 18th to file a tax appeal against American Legion Post 391. No notification was provided to the American Legion of this pending action.

Our membership is made up of the men and women who answered the call when others did not. At a minimum, we deserve the common courtesy to give us a chance to speak on our own behalf before taking action against our organization. There are nearly 2 million members of The American Legion, making it the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization. The American Legion has more than 12,000 posts in communities throughout the United States. This type of poor treatment is not something we commonly see, and we are disappointed to see it here in Mine Hill.

I formally request that you repeal this action and allow the American Legion to make our case to the Council before voting on it again.

For God and Country,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Bergen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brian Bergen  
Registered Agent, Post 391  
Vice Commander, Morris County American Legion  
973-202-0634  
[bberg117@gmail.com](mailto:bberg117@gmail.com)