

**\*\*\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\*\*\***

## **SMALL TOWN POLITICS AT ITS WORST**

LITTLE SILVER, NJ – “Don’t rock the boat.” “Wait your turn.” “Keep the status quo.” While running for Mayor of his hometown Rick Brandt, a 30-year-old community volunteer who has spent his entire adult life serving others in his community, has heard these disenchanting phrases over and over again from the political juggernaut that seems driven to maintain the way things are. He has collided head-on with this during his campaign to seek the Republican Party’s nomination on June 4<sup>th</sup>’s Primary Election for Mayor of Little Silver. Brandt has higher hopes for his hometown.

Unaware of the dark underbelly of politics that existed in the quaint community of Little Silver, where Brandt was born and raised, this newcomer to the political arena in January launched a well-intentioned, wholesome Mayoral campaign for the June 4<sup>th</sup> Primary Election that focused on positive messages of community outreach. Over the five-month journey Rick, who works a full time job and volunteers for the town every spare moment he can, dedicated his weekends toward a promise to walk to every single home in the town to offer an opportunity to listen to every resident. On Memorial Day he reached his goal – the 2,298<sup>th</sup> home. While he didn’t get to meet with every single resident, his commitment to try to spend quality time with and to hear from every resident possible had been accomplished! Along the way Rick documented the first-ever in-person town-wide survey to collect real data for how the town should proceed now knowing what was important to each person of the community. In a document which will soon be released on his campaign’s website [www.RickBrandtUSA.com](http://www.RickBrandtUSA.com), and—if he is elected Mayor—will serve as a guide to help make decisions for Little Silver, this survey is the start to Rick’s unprecedented initiative to improve communication significantly in his hometown. As a further testament to his commitment, Brandt has pledged to re-walk the entire town again to build on the conversations prior to the November General Election should he win Tuesday’s Primary Election.

Unfortunately, over the last five months, Rick was saddened to discover that in his wonderful small town there exists an underbelly of darker, manipulative, and unscrupulous political behavior. As Rick campaigned on a virtuous platform of collaboration and bringing people together, he has repeatedly come across incidents that have included, but not been limited to, the repeated harassment of business owners by the local GOP Republican Chairman (some video of which can be found here: <https://youtu.be/zFjyh3CJ1fw>), the direct intimidation of both residents and businesses from current and former Councilmen, and the one-by-one banishment of Brandt from the organizations Rick has so tirelessly given years of service to.

- It began in the winter when Rick was suspended from the Little Silver Volunteer Fire Department for having posted a picture to social media without written consent—a draconian measure for such a small issue. In a sad but deliberate effort, his opponents’ network of good ol’ boys justified their overly punitive action by citing a selectively enforced rule buried in the bylaws. Of course, Rick was never provided the bylaws and this action was never before enforced against the dozens of other members who Rick had seen taking to social media for years with far more egregious images. Nor has it been enforced since as members continue to share photos of themselves in uniform. Brandt does not dispute that he broke the bylaw in question, albeit unwittingly and should have suffered an appropriate punishment. A stern warning should have sufficed. A month-long suspension was too much, in his opinion, and a six-month suspension is extreme and cruel, in addition to being completely without precedent. Graduating from the Monmouth County Fire Academy was one of the proudest days of Brandt’s life, and he looked forward to serving the town as a first responder for years to come, and still does. Of note, on March 11<sup>th</sup> the Little Silver Volunteer Fire Department President’s employer was awarded a \$57,902.00 contract from the Borough of Little Silver a week after Rick was suspended.
- A month later, Rick Brandt was removed from the position of Shade Tree Commissioner for the Borough of Little Silver. Despite serving admirably in this position since 2015, he was removed by the current Mayor, who he is challenging in this June 4<sup>th</sup> Primary Election. This decision went against the current Mayor’s prior promise that he would not take this action when Rick Brandt had met with him, one-on-one, to share his intentions to run for Mayor.

- As President of the Little Silver Charitable Foundation, an organization that created Little Silver Day and Taste of Little Silver and has contributed donations to the LSF, LSEMS, the Garden Club, the PTO, and awarded scholarships to Little Silver graduates, Rick Brandt and the foundation's board members were suddenly met with vigorous opposition from elected officials when planning their spring street fair food festival for the town's businesses and residents this year. Is it any wonder the overwhelming amount of business owners in town support Brandt? He tirelessly works on their behalf, while the town stymies these initiatives at every turn! The hurdles far exceeded ones in previous years prior to Rick announcing his candidacy, Brandt observed. And as noted earlier, many businesses who agreed to (and in some cases, asked to) put up signs supporting Brandt's candidacy, were met with threats of boycott and worse until they were forced to relent and take down the signs, a move Brandt fully supports, as he wouldn't want anyone's livelihood threatened over a small-town Mayoral election.
- In May, Brandt was invited to participate in an 8<sup>th</sup> grade school video production project at Markham Place Middle School, where he himself had graduated from in 2003, that was focusing on the community's Mayoral primary election where students asked to interview Rick regarding his vision and initiatives. Rick was told the project would air on the school's own social media pages and the teacher overseeing the project took several pictures of Rick on set with the students during the interview. In the days to follow Rick was banned from school related activities by the Superintendent because the pictures taken by *their Markham Place School teacher* appeared on Rick's media sites. The posting of the pictures were captioned with a thank you to the students and the school for the opportunity to participate in their project, and was shared as all campaign related images have been shared on Rick Brandt's pages. For example, other postings to Rick's media sites include a 'Meet the Candidates' event in May where Rick and the current Mayor both met with a community of townhome residents in a townhall format.
- A day after the Superintendent banned Rick from school events, he received notice from the Little Silver Borough Attorney that the Mayor and Council had decided to remove him from the Little Silver Recreation Committee because of the decision made by the Superintendent of Schools earlier that week. The Recreation Committee that Rick has donated thousands of hours to over the years. This very same day, a woman identifying herself as the Superintendent of Little Silver Schools called a Little Silver business and threatened the business owners because they were displaying Rick Brandt lawn signs. One must wonder what the School Superintendent has invested in the current administration, to care so much about campaign signs at a privately owned business. Of course, this is the same Superintendent who in 2016 cost the town and district \$290,000 in the settlement of a sexual harassment lawsuit (<https://www.redbankgreen.com/2016/09/little-silver-suit-settled-for-290k/>).

Viewed together, the vindictive pattern of behavior is clear. There is a concerted and consistent effort by those in power to remain in power, at any cost, even to the lengths of attempting to destroy a man in Brandt who has done nothing but help the town and everyone in it. Within a five month span of running a strictly positive campaign, highlighting the improvements Rick envisions for the town of Little Silver and always trying his very best to set a great example for the next generation and for what local politics should be all about, he has been offed one-by-one systematically from committees and organizations he had previously proudly committed his life to. In addition to the aforementioned organizations, others such as Lunch Break and Two River Little League (in both cases where he has served for years as a dedicated volunteer) have been pressured by certain community members to have Rick minimize his role of service with these non-profits. The Recreation Committee and Two River Little League have been particularly cruel, as Brandt this past fall raised nearly \$5,000 to help local members of the Little Silver-based youth travel baseball team, the Jersey Shore Thunder, afford to attend a tournament in Cooperstown, NY. To say nothing of Lunch Break, for whom Brandt has raised \$15,000 just this past year and nearly \$50,000 all-time, to help eradicate hunger in our community and to help those of us who need the most, get what they most need.

Incredibly, in a two-square mile town his campaign has had over *two hundred lawn signs stolen and vandalized* in just a few weeks. The lengths that current and former elected officials and Borough employees among others in Little Silver have gone to in slinging mud and personally disparaging a caring young man is truly remarkable. This has the masses wondering why these "leaders" are going to such extremes to exploit a legitimate candidate who has always given himself for the greater good of the community. It is one thing to support a friend, a colleague or a boss; it is entirely another thing to viciously attack another human being. The attacks consist of unrelenting social media nastiness, planted articles on fake news websites, and constant bullying that has apparently become a given for all levels of political contests. But when a candidate receives an email telling him that he should die, as has happened to Brandt, when is it too much?

There is ever-mounting tension festering in America and has somehow crept into what was once a small little sleepy town along the Jersey Shore now controlled by extremely motivated politicians and their sycophants. A few things the challenger in this primary is proud to have done in the face of all this adversity are: to continue to be a voice of reason, to insist to his supporters to always be constructive (not negative), and to personally never engage with the trolling internet anger. Chief among the things he is proud of is never mudslinging or going negative by pointing blame at the current Mayor for his missteps in office or for recruiting the town's first ever cell phone tower, which fractured the community two years ago. He also hasn't blamed the Mayor for the despicable actions of his cronies, (even though he does wish the Mayor had asked them not to get so personal, and had asked them to instead promote what they see as the Mayor's good qualities, rather than what they see as Brandt's negatives). Many have wanted him to do these things, to respond in kind "negatively", but that is not his way. After all, he has supported the Mayor in the past, worked with him, called him a friend. He acknowledges that the Mayor has done good things for the town in the past and has served it admirably to the best of his abilities. But Brandt also believes he has fresh new ideas that can build upon what past leaders have accomplished. He has chosen to, in the face of this unyielding deluge of negativity, instead actually be positive thru-and-thru and endure every step of the way – literally every step, having now walked to thousands of homes in Little Silver throughout this grassroots campaign making the effort to hear from every resident in-person, as well as through several electronic surveys to create inclusivity which so many in Little Silver are seeking. As you drive through the quaint town of Little Silver in these final campaign days of this June 4<sup>th</sup> Primary Election you will see the still-standing, not stolen (yet) lawn signs bearing the name of the candidate Rick Brandt; the candidate that has maintained his composure and stands for many as a symbol of hope for this small town, and for our country that we all can prevail and lead with positivity – not hatred or intimidation. It's a David-vs.-Goliath battle, one man of principles and vision, against an entire political machine bent not on his defeat, but on his destruction. On Tuesday, registered Republican and unaffiliated voters in Little Silver, New Jersey will walk into the booth to select the path they want for their community's future.

**CONTACT INFO:**

Email: [Rick@RickBrandtUSA.com](mailto:Rick@RickBrandtUSA.com)

Phone: (908) 675-7646

Website: [www.RickBrandtUSA.com](http://www.RickBrandtUSA.com)

