

# **EXHIBIT S**

## Doblin: Mahwah's line in the sand over an eruv

**Alfred P. Doblin**, Editorial Editor, @AlfredPDoblin Published 2:59 p.m. ET Oct. 26, 2017 | Updated 4:11 p.m. ET Oct. 26, 2017



(Photo: Kevin R. Wexler/NorthJersey.com file photo)

On Thursday, Mahwah Mayor Bill Laforet said, “[The Township Council] has had a complete reckless disregard for the consequences.” Township Council President Robert Hermansen, also on Thursday, said, “This is all the mayor’s doing.” This is going to be expensive.

The state Attorney General’s Office on Tuesday [filed a nine-count lawsuit \(/story/news/new-jersey/2017/10/24/nj-sues-mahwah-alleging-discriminatory-ordinance-against-orthodox-jews-over-eruv/792345001/\)](#) against the town and its governing council because of its plan to effectively ban eruvs and restrict public park use – both the state alleges are intended to discriminate against Orthodox Jews.

What started as an “eruv war” has escalated into something bigger, with wide-reaching anti-Semitic implications. Now there’s no going back. The mayor and the Township Council are at war.

**EDITORIAL:** [Mahwah officials now have the eruv fight they wanted \(/story/opinion/editorials/2017/10/24/editorial-mahwah-got-fight-they-were-asking/795793001/\)](#)

**LAWSUIT:** [New Jersey sues Mahwah over eruv, alleging discriminatory ordinance \(/story/news/new-jersey/2017/10/24/nj-sues-mahwah-alleging-discriminatory-ordinance-against-orthodox-jews-over-eruv/792345001/\)](#)

**MORE ON ERUV:** [Murphy slams 'anti-Semitic' rhetoric around Mahwah eruv \(/story/news/2017/10/20/murphy-slams-anti-semitic-rhetoric-around-mahwah-eruv/786169001/\)](#)

Laforet told me, “There’s a case to be made for the seven council members to resign” because they are responsible for continuing to pursue town ordinances designed to keep Orthodox Jews out of Mahwah. Laforet wanted the council to put on hold all ordinances related to limiting the use of town parks or challenging the extension of an eruv into Mahwah.

An eruv is a religious boundary – usually marked by plastic strips or wire – that allows Orthodox Jews to perform certain tasks outside their homes on the Sabbath and on religious holidays. They are barely noticeable unless someone points them out. In Mahwah, the Bergen Rockland Eruv Association received permission from Orange & Rockland Utilities to put PVC piping on its utility poles. The Mahwah Council contends the association needed its approval and that the piping violates its signage ordinance. Hermansen reiterated on Thursday that this has nothing to do with keeping out Orthodox Jews, but adhering to “the rule of law.”

He does not see any connection between fighting the eruv and adopting a restrictive-use park ordinance. Yet context is everything. The comments in public meetings, exchanged through emails and over social media are dripping in anti-Semitism.

Mahwah residents – or at least the ones coming to public meetings – are not concerned about park overuse by everybody. They are fighting back against a perceived future infiltration of Orthodox Jews and an irrational fear that their public schools will change for the worse, zoning laws will be ignored and their tax base will diminish.

The state Attorney General’s Office did not weigh into Mahwah’s eruv battle lightly. In a statement Tuesday, state Attorney General Chris Porrino said, “In addition to being on the wrong side of history, the conduct of Mahwah’s Township Council is legally wrong, and we intend to hold them accountable for it.”

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In response to me Thursday, Porrino in a statement said, "It is our sworn duty as law enforcement officers to stand up and push back against hateful and discriminatory conduct, particularly when it might not be popular to do so, and regardless of whether it is driven by race or religion. That duty to stand up and push back is perhaps heightened further when the alleged wrongdoers are influencers, such as teachers or college professors, or public officials, who themselves are expected to honor the rule of law and set an example for others to follow. It is our sincere hope that local leaders will heed our warnings, recognize what the law requires of them, and act accordingly."

Given Hermansen's comments Thursday, that seems unlikely.

Mahwah is not alone in fighting an eruv; Upper Saddle River and Montvale are trying to block an eruv as well. But Mahwah has pushed on all fronts as community fears spiraled out of control. Even Democratic nominee for governor Phil Murphy slammed Mahwah in an opinion piece for the Jewish Standard last week, citing the anti-Semitic rhetoric at public meetings.

Hermansen told me Murphy was reacting out of politics, that Murphy just wants Laforet's support. Derek Roseman, a spokesman for the Murphy campaign, denied that in an email. "This is about standing up for common values, plain and simple," Roseman wrote. "It is about standing against division and sending a strong message that anti-Semitism will never have a home in New Jersey. To say that doing so is based on politics is not only ridiculous on its face, but offensive to everyone who rejects this type of thinking."

As I have said before, this will not end well or cheaply. Laforet wants the entire council to resign. Hermansen wants the mayor to go. And Porrino wants Mahwah to answer for its actions in court.

Advocates for the park restrictions and the eruv ban should note the irony: All this effort to keep Orthodox Jews out of Mahwah, when it was the state Attorney General who was going to come knocking on the door.

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