

Readington Keeps PR Firm; Paying Up To \$300 Per Hour

READINGTON TWP. — The contract with CN Communications, the public relations firm hired to help craft the township's official message regarding the purchase of Solberg Airport's open space and development rights, has been renewed.

The Township Committee unanimously agreed to continue using the Newark firm at its current rate of \$300 per hour for principals, \$250 per hour for vice presidents and directors and \$150 per hour for account managers on Sept. 5.

The township originally contracted with CN Communications in December through Connell Foley, its legal counsel for the airport matter. In April, the committee publicly hired the public relations firm under a separate contract for up to \$40,000.

Between the two contracts, the township has paid CN at least \$79,993, according to bills submitted by the firm since January.

Mayor Gerard Shamey said the contract will "continue on an as-needed basis" and envisions the

committee "using them more sparingly" than during the months leading up to the May \$22 million bond referendum that provided officials funding for a possible purchase. "We clearly had to rely on them heavily during the campaign, and it was money well spent," he said. "We reserve the right to call on them if need to get the message out to the public."

Tony Cicatiello, a principal in CN Communications, said his firm's services will continue to benefit residents as negotiations continue with the Solberg family. "This committee wants us to make as much information as public as possible," he said. "The need to put together cogent educational materials will (continue to) be essential."

"If a development comes out and we need assistance in putting together a letter, we will call on them," Mayor Shamey said. "But, as we move into negotiations with the family, the township and attorneys, I see a much more limited role with them."