

MAYOR'S MONTHLY UPDATE JULY, 2015

RE-DESIGN OF TOWNSHIP WEBSITE UPDATE

The township website re-design is complete and the department page layout is approved. JKO Consulting is building the website framework on a secure test server. Letters were sent out to approximately 20 community and civic organizations asking for their contact information and content. The Township of Saddle Brook is eager to have comprehensive information from all local organizations so residents can come to the website and get the information they are looking for.

BUDGET UPDATE

At the August 4th council work session, the council and I discussed the 2015 budget and the 2014 audit with Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Ray Carnivale. Regarding the budget, the total increase on the municipal side was \$93.00 on a house assessed at 300K. Other tax increases based on the same comparison included \$168.00 for the school district, \$21.00 for Bergen County and \$3.00 for our public library. Tax bills were mailed out on Monday, August 10th and are due by Thursday, September 10th. There will be no interest charges until the new grace period ends.

Volunteer Fire Department - Fire Chief Douglas Habermann requested new turnout gear for all fire fighters and one fire truck be replaced. The fire truck, Engine 3 from Hook & Ladder Fire Company, is 23 years old and in a state of disrepair. This information was communicated to council members at the August 4th work session and an agreement was reached to purchase the required turnout gear with funds from our 2015 budget and to bond for a new fire truck as a capital expense.

Road Program – As mentioned in previous reports, the council and I are committed to doing infrastructure (water, sewer and other utilities) under the roads before resurfacing them. The township engineer will concentrate on replacing the infrastructure this year and begin paving streets next year. A bond ordinance providing for the 2015 roadway and water main improvement project appropriating \$1,500,000 was passed on first reading at the August 6th regular council meeting.

GRANT WRITER UPDATE

Business Administrator Peter Lo Dico and I had our first meeting with our grant writer, Bruno & Associates. We discussed available grants that the township is eligible to receive. We are most interested in grants relating to drainage, water, sewer, road repairs and other infrastructure. There are also several public safety grants for emergency responders including police, fire and emergency medical service equipment. We have a second meeting scheduled for Tuesday, August 18th.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

School Liaison - Councilman Accomando and I met with school officials on Monday, July 6th. The agenda included discussion about use of Washington School for recreation Monday – Friday from 6:00pm-10:00pm. We are negotiating and hoping to come to a suitable agreement. Some other topics were reestablishing Student Government Day, partnering with the township and the Chamber of Commerce for Career Day at the high school and having officials from the Bergen County Clerk's Office conduct a presentation on voting rights to juniors and seniors. Application forms will be available for any eligible student interested in registering to vote.

300th Anniversary - The 300th Anniversary Committee will hold its first meeting on Wednesday, September 9th at 7:00pm at town hall.

UPDATE ON SPECIAL PROJECTS

Council President Mazzer and I are planning to call for a special meeting prior to the September council meetings to discuss, and hopefully come to a determination, as to how the township is going to proceed on the construction of a township salt shed and the bathrooms and concession stand (Phase 2) project at Veterans Field. We also want to move forward with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant curb cuts on sections of Midland Avenue. The township will be fully reimbursed for the expenditure by County of Bergen. Upon completion of the curb cuts, Bergen County will begin paving those sections of Midland Avenue.

CONCERT & INDEPENDENCE DAY FIREWORKS CELEBRATION

The township's annual fireworks celebration was held on Friday, July 3rd at our Saddle River County Park. Prior to the fireworks, one of our favorite local bands, The Willies, played a live concert in the park by the pavilion. We had beautiful weather and there was a great turn out for both events. On behalf of the township, I thank the Saddle Brook V.F.W. Romaine-Sinniger Post # 3484 for once again sponsoring our fireworks celebration. I also want to acknowledge the following local businesses for their generous donations, which help make this and other holiday events possible: Roman Catholic Church of Korean Martyrs, Saddle Brook Dinner, J.P. Patti Tecta America, Studio 205, Wal-Mart, Spencer Savings Bank and Columbia Bank. I also want to thank all of our emergency services personnel including the Fire Department, Fire Prevention Bureau, Office of Emergency Management, Police Department, Ambulance Corps and the Department of Public Works. Special thanks to the Bergen County Parks and Recreation Department for their assistance and cooperation.

NEW OFFICERS JOIN THE SADDLE BROOK POLICE DEPARTMENT

I appointed three new police officers during a swearing in ceremony at town hall on July 13th. The new officers, Joseph Scrafani, age 29, Peter Romero, age 27, and Timothy Parisi, age 30 are Saddle Brook residents. They were the top three candidates on the Civil Service Commission eligibility list. These new hires bring a once understaffed department up to a total of 31 officers. The three officers started the 115th police recruit class at the Bergen County Law & Public Safety Institute in Mahwah on July 24th and are scheduled to graduate on December 18th. Congratulations and best wishes to the new police officers and their families.

<http://cliffviewpilot.com/3-new-saddle-brook-police-officers-sworn/>

INTRODUCTION OF AMENDED TOWING ORDINANCE

The township towing ordinance had not been revised in 15 years. Of special mention was revisions for the towing and storage rates/fees, added sections for "larger vehicle classification tows" and "extra special services" rendered by the owners. Chief of Police Robert Kugler submitted a report with his findings and recommendations for amendments to the existing ordinance (Chapter 191) of the municipal code. The revisions were discussed at the August 4th council work session and passed on 1st reading at the August 6th regular council meeting.

RECREATION

Recreation Director Joseph Setticase and I met with the recreation commissioners of the upcoming fall sports on Friday, July 24th to distribute and discuss field / facility use schedules and to review recreation policies and procedures. We are also meeting with all recreation commissioners on Wednesday, August 12th to issue and assess rules and regulations for use of the newly turfed Veterans Field and various other related topics such as code of conduct, fund raising activities, safety training certification and background checks for coaches. Director Setticase and I are also meeting with and requesting proposals from security companies for a video surveillance system (cameras and monitoring devices) for Veterans Field. A report with findings and recommendations will be forwarded to the council for their consideration.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE

The township received a proposal from Maser Consulting P.A. for professional planning services to assist the township in achieving constitutional compliance with its affordable housing mandate. The fees will be paid with funds from the township's special Coalition on Affordable Housing (COAH) account. Our contract with Maser Consulting was caused by the U.S. Supreme Court's March 10, 2015 ruling that COAH had failed to act, and as a result, the Courts assumed jurisdiction over the Fair Housing Act. The Order divides municipalities into one of three categories – those that achieved Third Round Substantive Certification, those that filed or petitioned and those that had never participated in the COAH process. The Order allows “participating” towns to file for a Declaratory Judgment during a 30-day window (June 8 – July 8) to alert the Court that the township wished to comply with its constitutional mandate to provide affordable housing. The assigned judge will review the filing and either confirm constitutional compliance or grant up to five months to update the township's Housing Element and Fair Share Plan (HEFSP) to comply with the March 10th Order. The judge will review the revised HEFSP and if the plan satisfies the Court that the constitutional obligation has been met, Saddle Brook will receive the judicial equivalent of substantive certification and the accompanying protections from builder remedy lawsuits.