

MAYOR'S MONTHLY UPDATE

March 2016

BUDGET

Update

At a special township council meeting on Wednesday, March 16th, Township Auditor Steven Weilkotz presented the governing body with a summary of our 2016 municipal budget. Due to several unresolved commercial tax appeals, Mr. Weilkotz requested a meeting with township professionals to better understand the township's exposure and liability. It must be noted that some of these appeals date back to 2011 and 2012 and were left unaddressed. As a result of this meeting and a review of the most current data, it was necessary to revise budget numbers.

The 2016 municipal budget was introduced at the April 5th council work session. I commend Mr. Weilkotz, Chief Financial Officer Raymond Carnevale, Business Administrator Peter Lo Dico. Everyone worked very hard to present a good, fiscally sound budget. The proposed budget is down for all line items that fall within the 2% CAP and a total increase of 5.15%. The bulk of the tax increase is due to the commercial tax appeals, which have deeply impacted the ratables of the township. As a result of all these appeals, the increase in taxes on an average home assessed at \$296,125 is \$169.74 for municipal purposes. I look forward to working with the council in formulating a spending plan that is realistic and affordable for our residents.

Increase in Reserve for Uncollected Taxes Percentage

In 2015 the township collected only 97.63% of taxes. This was due to an increase in state and county tax appeals as a result of unfavorable economic conditions in the local economy and real estate markets for 2015. This lower percentage of collected taxes has an effect on the "Reserve for Uncollected Taxes" in 2015. In figuring the "Reserve for Uncollected Taxes" for 2016 the township is requesting consent from the Director of Local Government Services to anticipate 97.74% collection of taxes. This requires a significant increase in the allocation of funds for that budget line item.

GRANTS

Meeting with Grant Writer

Business Administrator Peter Lo Dico and I met with Bruno and Associates on Thursday, March 31st. We are continuing to pursue all available grants that are beneficial to the township.

Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS)

The SRTS Program is a federally funded reimbursement program that was established to provide federal-aid highway funds to State Departments of Transportation for distribution to county and local authorities. The main objectives of the program are to enable and encourage children in grades K-8, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school; to make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age; and, to facilitate the planning, development and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption and air pollution in the vicinity of schools. County, municipal governments, school districts, and schools are eligible to apply to the program. Our grant writer and town engineer will team up to complete the application.

Assistance to Firefighters Grant 2015

This is a federal grant that provides financial assistance directly to fire departments to enhance their capabilities with respect to fire and fire-related hazards. Our grant writer assisted the Chief and Assistant Chief of our Volunteer Fire Department in preparing and submitting the grant application requesting approximately \$188,000 in funding. The town should be receiving notification of final outcome sometime in May 2016.

New Jersey Department of Transportation Municipal Aid Program

The township received notice that we have been selected to receive funding from the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Fiscal Year 2016 Municipal Aid Program for resurfacing Caldwell Avenue in the amount of \$155,500. Our town engineer completed the necessary paperwork and application process to become eligible to receive funding from this program.

Community Development Block Grant

During the month of March, Councilwoman Karen D'Arminio, Business Administrator Peter Lo Dico and I attended meetings hosted by the Bergen County Office of Community Development. The meetings involved presenting and discussing our township's grant proposals to the Central Region Community Development representatives. Block grant funds are provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the Bergen County Office of Community Development. These funds are awarded based on the mission to enhance the development of viable communities by assisting in the provision of decent housing, a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities. The township submitted two applications, one in Public Facilities category proposing a storm drain repair and maintenance program and the other in the Public Service category for reimbursement of salary and wages for our Senior Citizen Center Clerk position. Central Regional Community Development representatives awarded the township approximately \$122,000 at their fund allocation meeting on Monday, April 4th.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

300th Anniversary

Adopt a Spot Banner Program

The 300th Anniversary Committee "Adopt a Spot" banner program in honor of the town's tercentennial has reached its goal. The program, which allowed a business or a person to purchase a banner to replace one of the 60 banners that currently line Market Street, Midland Avenue, Saddle River Road and Pehle Avenue. We have approximately 100 sponsors and have ordered the 30" by 60" vinyl banners that will be affixed to utility poles through November 2016. At the end of the year, the banners will be taken down and presented to the person or businesses, acknowledging them and providing them with a keepsake.

Pancake Breakfast

On Saturday, March 19th the township had a pancake breakfast at Dynasty Buffet on Market Street to celebrate our tricentennial. We had a crowd of around 200 people for this breakfast and were joined by a very special guest, our Congressman Bill Pascrell Jr. All guests received a commemorative coffee mug and tote bag. We thank Dynasty Buffet for preparing a wonderful breakfast for everyone in town! Photos of the event were posted on the township website and Facebook page.

First Reformed Church Service

On Saturday April 2nd the First Reformed Church of Saddle Brook hosted a dedication service for our tricentennial. The service featured presentations, blessings and beautiful choir music. A slide show depicting the story of the church's history was one of the feature exhibitions. Refreshments followed in the Van Wyk Fellowship Hall including a "celebration of 300 years" birthday cake for the township. I want to thank members of the Mayor's Youth Group for helping set up the hall. The service was videotaped and broadcasted on Our Town TV. The video and photographs of the event were also posted on the township website and Facebook page.

Access for All

The Access for All Committee has been formed and has had its first few organizational meetings. The Committee was created by resolution of the Township Council in April, 2015. The Committee's mission is to act in an advisory capacity to the Mayor and Council, address the needs of persons in the community with disabilities and advise for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. This includes proposing measures that will promote an accessible environment within the Township. The Committee is seeking a volunteer who is certified in American Sign Language (ASL). It is expected that the duties will not take more than 1-2 hours per week. Anyone interested in assisting the Committee on one of its initial endeavors can contact Committee Chairman Andrew Cimiluca by email at councilmancimiluca@gmail.com or by telephone at 973-809-2482.

MEETINGS

American Association of Retired People (AARP)

I attended the monthly meeting of our local chapter (3785) of AARP at our Senior Center on Monday, April 4th. After the meeting, members enjoyed themselves with entertainment provided by A Touch of Sinatra. The act featuring Donnie Fararro presented a musical show about the life and music of Frank Sinatra. Everyone loved hearing the funny stories and Sinatra classics, which had them singing along!

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Ambulance Corps. Fish & Chips Dinner

Our Volunteer Ambulance Corps held its Annual Fish & Chips Dinner at the squad building on Good Friday, March 25th between 5-8PM. Our Ambulance Corps was founded in 1952 by members of the Saddle Brook VFW Post 3484. The Corps is a non-profit, 100% volunteer emergency medical services provider. The Annual Fish & Chips Diner is one of their biggest fund raising events. As is customary, there wasn't an empty seat in the house and no one went home hungry. Thank you for attending and supporting our Ambulance Corps.

Easter Celebration

I want to thank Councilwoman Karen D'Arminio and Co-Chairperson Shannon Accomando of our Projects and Activities Committee for organizing the Easter Celebration held on Saturday, March 19th at the Saddle Brook High / Middle School. I also want to thank members of the Mayor's Youth Group and the Saddle Brook Women's Club for their assistance volunteering at the event. It was a very special day with games and activities for the children along with a special visit from the Easter Bunny. The celebration was videotaped and broadcasted on Our Town TV. The video and photographs of the event were also posted on the township website and Facebook page.

Shredding Event

The township held a mobile shredding event on Saturday, April 16th from 9:00AM – 1:00PM in the parking lot of Ed's Tavern, 110 Market Street. This event was open to Saddle Brook residents only and provided an opportunity to recycle unwanted confidential documents. Each person was limited to four bags or boxes weighing no more than ten pounds each.

Little League Parade & Opening Day

The annual Opening Day Parade was held on Saturday, April 16th and kicked off at approximately 11:00AM. The parade route started at Fairlawn Parkway and Schepis, headed south on Fairlawn Parkway to Cambridge Ave, made left turn on Cambridge Ave heading east to Nedellec Field where the opening day ceremony commenced. Retired New York Yankee player Roy White was on hand as a guest speaker. His words to our young players were moving and inspirational. Afterwards, he posed for photos with our players and teams and even signed autographs. His attendance provided a very special moment for our youngsters.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Golden Key and Exempt ID Cards

The township in coordination with Bergen County Clerk John Hogan invite seniors to receive Golden Key Identification Cards and firefighters and veterans to receive Exempt ID Cards on Tuesday, April 26th from 10:00AM – 12:00PM at the Senior Center. The cards entitle recipients to discounts at participating businesses or organizations which offer them.

Operation Take Back

In an effort to combat prescription drug abuse, federal agencies are working with local police to provide a safe means of removing drugs from homes, while simultaneously educating the public about the potential risk of abuse. The New Jersey division of the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is teaming up with Saddle Brook Police Department on Operation Take Back, which allows residents to bring unused prescription medications to drop off locations for safe

disposal. Operation Take Back will take place on Saturday, April 30th from 10:00AM – 2:00PM in the police department lobby.

It should be noted that our police department is awaiting approval for a permanent “Drop Box” to be located in the police department lobby for 24/7 disposal. We are being considered by the DEA and New Jersey Attorney General’s Office as a result of the past years of success of our residents bringing in old and unwanted prescriptions to be properly disposed of.

UPDATE ON SPECIAL PROJECTS

Veterans Field Bathrooms and Concession Stand

The architect has completed preliminary drawings and they have been forwarded for pricing for the structural and mechanical design coordination.

North Fifth Street Water Main

The town engineer is looking to recommend an award at the May township council meeting. He is currently addressing a required New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) permit that was not obtained previously.

Jefferson Street & Fourth Street Water & Roadway Improvements

These documents are complete, however, there is a developer who is about to complete water systems testing that will determine if the developer is responsible for some of the water improvements with the project. The developer’s responsibilities may impact the scope of the project.

William Street Improvements

The township engineer is looking to recommend an award at the May township council meeting.

Municipal Building Generator

The work is approximately 40% complete. The project was briefly stalled waiting for Public Service Gas & Electric (PSE&G) to provide historical electric bills. These bills were provided, but found to not contain all the requested information. The township engineer is requesting the township provide a letter to PSE&G to allow them to work directly with the utility to obtain historical data. The current limited data shows an energy usage peak in March, where the peak should be in the summer when the air conditioning is running.

Fifth Street Drainage

There was a pre-bid meeting on February 5th. The second round of bids was opened and the bids continue to be higher than the cost estimate for the work. The township rejected those bids as well in hope that negotiations with the bidders will result in more reasonable proposals in the future.

LEGAL

Stop Signs on President Street

At the recommendation of Chief of Police Robert Kugler discussion was initiated among the township governing body to consider removing the multiple stop signs along President Street at the intersections of 3rd, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th Streets. The Chief initially suggested this at the February 2nd council work session and the issue was further discussed at the March 1st council work session. An ordinance was introduced at the April 7th regular meeting to remove the above stop signs with the exception of the one at the intersection of President and 8th Street. The ordinance passed unanimously on first reading.

Temporary Immunity Prohibiting Exclusionary Zoning Actions

On April 1st, 2016, Bergen County Superior Court Judge Gregg Padovano issued an order to extend temporary immunity prohibiting exclusionary zoning actions until July 31, 2016. This pertains to the townships Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) obligation.

Ground Lease Option Agreement

At the April 7th township council meeting, the council unanimously voted to extend the ground lease option agreement between the Township of Saddle Brook and Housing Development Corporation of Bergen County for the site commonly known as 15-29 Caldwell Avenue and 32 Hickey Terrace, Saddle Brook, NJ. This is the site which was purchased by the township for senior housing.

OTHER

Women in History Month

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued a Presidential Proclamation declaring the week of March 8, 1980 as National Women's History Week. Keeping with tradition, council members and I recognized four women and one women's organization from Saddle Brook at our March 3rd regular council meeting. These women were commended for their significant contributions to our community. These proclamations were awarded as public acknowledgement to provide visibility to the honored individuals. The women selected are role models for other women to hold in high esteem. The honorees were: Monica Maniscalco – Outstanding Citizen; Sister Jadwiga Zaremba – Education Leader; Joann Brendel – Community Service; Theresa Greco – Community Business Leader. The Saddle Brook Women's Club was recognized as an organization for their exceptional community service, volunteerism and philanthropy.

Autism Awareness Month

About 25 years ago, the Autism Society launched a nationwide effort to promote autism awareness and educate the public about the autism spectrum. The goal of autism awareness is to support individuals and families living with autism and to ensure their acceptance and inclusion in our communities. In support and recognition of Autism Awareness Month the front of town hall has been lit up in blue light. The council and I also wore blue garments at the April 7th regular council meeting. In addition, as the Mayor, I gave a proclamation declaring April 2nd World Autism Awareness Day and April Autism Awareness Month.

Senior Citizen Monthly Newsletter

Our monthly senior center newsletter was created for free by advertisement sales. The company, Liturgical Publications, Inc., handled the process from start to finish by soliciting businesses to advertise. They worked with Senior Center Director Joseph Lecce and my secretary Christine Genuario by creating a template for them to share content. The newsletter includes information on town events, photos, medical / health news, senior center calendar of events, AARP and Senior Club news, recipes and puzzles. There are a few spots for advertisement still available and anyone interested can contact Christine Genuario at town hall, 201-587-2903.