MAYOR'S MONTHLY UPDATE
January 2017

BUDGET

Budget Preparation

Township Business Administrator Peter Lo Dico and I have met with all department heads to review their annual budget requests. A temporary budget was adopted by the township council at the January 3rd reorganization meeting. The temporary budget is 26.25 percent of our yearly 2016 municipal budget. Mr. Lo Dico and I have been working with the township auditor and chief financial officer to prepare a permanent budget to be introduced at the March 2017 council meeting.

Rolling Reassessment

Township tax assessor Arthur Carlson attended our township council caucus meeting on Tuesday January 31st to provide an update on the rolling reassessment program currently underway. The township governing body selected this program on the recommendation of our tax professionals to alleviate burdensome commercial tax appeals that have drained township finances. Updating assessments each year will ensure that property taxes are accurate, fair and in line with current market trends. There will no longer be steep property tax changes or 'tax shifts' that result from long periods of time between revaluations. Maintaining tax assessments at 100% of true market value will reduce the number of tax appeals, which have resulted in hundreds of thousands of dollars being refunded in contested tax appeals since 2010 due to outdated assessments.

This first year all township properties are being reassessed with an estimated completion date of March 3rd. Township property values have gone up, with the average home now valued at $325,000 up from $290,000. This does not necessarily mean that your property taxes will rise solely on the higher assessment. Assessments are merely a base used to apportion the tax burden, the tax rate must first be calculated before your annual tax payment can be determined. The tax rate is based on the principle that all property owners pay their fair share of the tax burden, so if the rate were to go down, some could see a decrease in their property taxes.

Grants

Little League Funding

Our grant writer applied for two grants to obtain funding for our Little League program. The first was for $20,000 to improve the conditions at Nedellec and Victor fields. The second is for $10,000 to start a girls' softball program, which would allow girls to participate in Little League sanctioned tournaments. The grant writer worked with Business Administrator Peter Lo Dico and Little League President John Tuohy to obtain photos, cost estimates, application signatures and letters of support. The applications were submitted on January 30th. Announcement of awards are pending.

Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)

The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant opened on January 9th and is due on November 10th. The grant writer is working with Fire Chief Thomas Dickman to complete the application. The township is seeking to recruit 15 new members. As an all-volunteer firefighting community, we can apply for funds to run a recruiting campaign for new volunteers. There is no limit and no contribution needed.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Community Partnership – Wednesday, January 25th

Students from Saddle Brook High School attended the Community Partnership meeting to discuss details about the S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) Festival scheduled for June 5th. This year, Mr. Weinberg's students are designing the festival to include activities for senior citizens in our town. They are creating entertaining and educational stations that seniors can engage in. It is a wonderful way to bring members of our community together and provide students an opportunity to showcase their talent.

The committee discussed the types of calls for assistance received on our newly established telephone hotline and website help button. Recruitment of committee members was also a topic of conversation. The next meeting is Tuesday, February 21st at the senior center.

Mayor's Youth Group

2016 Holiday Decorating Contest Winners

At the February 2nd council meeting, Thomas Van Winkle, Mayor's Youth Group Liaison to the Mayor and Council, presented certificates and gift cards on behalf of the township to the winners of the annual holiday decorating contest. Congratulations to the winners. All of the contestants that participated did a great job decorating their homes. The Mayor's Youth Group enjoyed judging the contest and seeing all of the efforts residents put into making their homes beautiful and festive for the holidays.

Upcoming Meeting

The Mayor's Youth Group will be meeting at 12:00PM on Saturday, February 18th at town hall.

Access for All Meeting – Wednesday, February 1st

The committee will be making a request to the school district to have students participate in a contest to design an Access for All logo. The committee also discussed utilizing the Bergen County Sheriff's Department for the issuance of identification cards for individuals with special needs. Identification is especially important for the personal safety of those with special needs, and in particular, those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Those with ASD may be effectively non-verbal or have trouble communicating, so having alternative ways to share personal identification can be very useful. The committee is also considering having an event at the Saddle Brook Library with a presentation by an author who puts on an interactive show aimed at young children with special needs. Also, a Family Fun Day for special needs children and their families was discussed. Lastly, the committee decided to meet every other month rather than monthly. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 5th at 7PM at the senior center.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Fire Department Installation Dinner – Saturday January 7th

It was an honor once again for the second year to administer the oath of office to Fire Chief Thomas Dickman and Assistant Fire Chief Christopher Sloma at the Saddle Brook Volunteer Fire Department installation dinner. New firefighters and officers were also installed as well. The township council and I thank all our firefighters for their service to the residents of Saddle Brook, keeping us safe and protecting life, limb and property. We also thank their families for their support in allowing their loved ones to volunteer and give so much of themselves for the good of others.

Ambulance Corps. Installation Dinner – Saturday January 28th

It was an honor attending the Saddle Brook Volunteer Ambulance Corps installation dinner last night. I had the privilege of swearing in new officers and presenting proclamations to Gene Egan – 40 years as Corps Chaplain and Harry Reid – 60 years of service to the Corps. Some members received certificates for length of service and number of calls made in 2016, while others were given life-saving and meritorious service awards. Congratulations to all! Council members and Business Administrator Peter Lo Dico were on hand as well to show their appreciation and support for the ambulance members and their families. A videotape of the installation dinner will be broadcasted on Our Town TV, Channels 77 – Cablevision and 38 – Verizon FiOS. The video and photographs of the event will also posted on the township website and this Facebook page.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Women in History Month

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter declared the week of March 8, 1980 as National Women's History Week. As in past years at our March township council meeting (3/2/17), I will pay tribute to women from Saddle Brook who have made significant contributions to our community. The recipients will be recognized in specific categories of achievement, including Outstanding Citizen, Community Service, Government Service, Education Leader and Civic Group. These awards are public acknowledgement of success and excellence and provide visibility to the honored individuals. The women selected are role models for other women to hold in high esteem.

UPDATE ON SPECIAL PROJECTS

CDBG Drainage Improvements/Liberty Street

A recommendation for award was submitted by the township engineer.

North 5th Street Water Main

This project has slowed slightly due to weather, but the patching of trenches continues as weather permits.

Veteran's Field Concession Building

The township engineer's office has met with the representative of the bonding company and will be coordinating the re-start of construction.

Jefferson Street & 4th Street Water & Roadway Improvements

The developer of a residential subdivision has started work. Following clearing, the developer will install the new water system and test the pressure/flow. The test results will determine if the developer will be required to replace a portion of the water main in Jefferson Street. Following this determination, the township's project plans will be revised and the project will be bid. The township engineer continues to work with the applicant to verify compliance with state regulations with respect to the new storm water discharge into the railroad ditch. The applicant's engineer is working through the NJDEP processes to move the project forward.

Municipal Building Generator

The installation of the new municipal message board changed the conditions in the utility closet. The contractor has submitted an "extra" to replace the control cabinet that was found to be rotted, as well as to re-arrange the work to allow for the controls for the message board. The township engineer and contractor have adjusted the design and are finalizing the details accordingly.

County Curb Ramp

This work is complete and documentation has been sent to the County of Bergen for reimbursement.

2015 Water and Roadway Project – Part A

The 9th Street portion of this project is complete and now going through the "punch list" phase. The township engineer's office responded to reports of the road being narrower than original. A review of the original survey found the original roadway to be the same or narrower than the final condition. The issue appears to be that parking on lawns is no longer possible and people give more distance to the curb than to a pavement edge. The police department is considering the option of establishing "No Parking" areas to ensure sufficient space for the passage of emergency vehicles.

2015 Water and Roadway Project – Part B

The water service construction portion of the Wilson Street and Third Street projects are nearing completion, but the contractor has indicated that he has had issues with equipment freezing and had to stop work for the season. The contractor has been put on notice that he has not met the time constraints of the contract.

OTHER

Ordinances

Crane Operator Ordinance

The township council and I are still considering introducing an ordinance that would require a permit for use of crane for the removal of trees. The operation and use of cranes can present serious safety concerns. The proposed ordinance would assure that cranes are properly inspected and that operators are licensed in accordance with state law and have the required insurance.

Water Rates

An ordinance was introduced by title only to amend and supplement the prior ordinance to fix and revise rates and prices to be charged for the use of water and establish rules and regulations for the distribution, supply, use and protection of said water and penalties for the violation of certain said rules and regulations. The revisions are based on an increase granted to Suez Water, the township's water provider. The ordinance passed on first reading.

Repairs to Sanitary Sewer Force Main

A bond ordinance authorizing the undertaking of various repairs to the sanitary sewer force main to appropriate the sum of $325,000 to pay for the cost thereof was introduced and passed on first reading. The ordinance authorizes the issuance of bonds to finance such appropriation and to provide for the issuance of bond anticipation notes in anticipation of the issuance of such bonds.

Fire Truck Resolution

The township council authorized the awarding of a bid in the amount of $907,563.32 for the purchase of a fire apparatus from Pierce Fire and Safety Services.