

MAYOR'S QUARTERLY UPDATE  
APRIL – JUNE 2020

## **COVID-19**

First and foremost, I hope you and your family have been safe and healthy during these trying times. The COVID-19 virus has affected our community with heartbreaking loss and illness, but we are strong and will get through this pandemic together. At the time this quarterly update was written, Saddle Brook had 307 known presumptive positive cases of COVID-19. The vast majority of these residents fully recovered. Sadly, 19 members of our community passed away as a result of complications related to COVID-19. The council and I offer our sincere and heartfelt sympathies to their families and loved ones.

A special thanks to our employees for continuing to provide services for our residents and we especially want to express our gratitude and appreciation to our first responders, police, volunteer members of our ambulance corps and fire department for their dedication and commitment to our community during the pandemic. We have received many generous donations of personal protective equipment and meals for our first responders from town residents and business owners. We cannot thank them enough for their kindness and compassion. I also want to thank and commend all our residents for doing their parts to fight this battle against the COVID-19, especially those who are healthcare and essential workers on the frontline helping all of us through these challenging times.

I have been doing written and video briefings to keep the residents updated with pertinent information and government mandates regarding COVID-19. These briefings can be found on the town website ([saddlebrooknj.us](http://saddlebrooknj.us)), Facebook page ([facebook.com/SaddleBrookTownship](https://facebook.com/SaddleBrookTownship)) as well as Our Town cable television channel 77 Cablevision, channel 38 Verizon Fios. We have also updated our website to include a new section dedicated to COVID-19. There are links, PDFs, videos, and other resources. Check it out and spread the word: [saddlebrooknj.us/covid-19-response/](http://saddlebrooknj.us/covid-19-response/). A big shout out to our website administrator Joe Obiso of JKO Consulting for doing a fabulous job with the upgrade.

## **BUDGET**

### Budget Hearing and Adoption

There was a budget hearing during the council work session on Tuesday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, which was done virtually via teleconference. Township auditor Steve Wielkotch was on the call and available for questions concerning the budget and township finances. The budget was adopted at the regular council meeting (also done virtually) on Thursday, June 4<sup>th</sup>.

## General Information and Highlights

As you may be aware, New Jersey has suffered a tremendous loss of revenue and has taken measures such as extending the state's fiscal year to September 30, 2020. The township, as well as the board of education and Bergen County, adopted budgets prior to this pandemic but the state strongly recommended to each municipality that it send an estimated tax bill for the third quarter (August, 2020), which was sent out to property owners the last week in June. Per state law, the third quarter tax is due August 1, 2020 with a grace period of 10 days. If payment is not received by August 10, interest reverts back to August 1, 2020.

Saddle Brook's municipal budget will have an increase of \$97.00 for an average assessment of \$353,112. The township council and I feel that this budget represents what is needed to maintain services, continue our infrastructure programs such as paving roads, as well as fund the new SLEO's (Special Law Enforcement Officers) that would be assigned to our schools for the safety of our children and school staff. I thank the council and the board of education for their support of this vital program.

We are no exception to a drop in revenue due to the pandemic, but I assure you that the township will do everything it can to keep spending this year to what is necessary as well as helping our local businesses reopen under the “new normal” that we all must live with. Unfortunately, we were not able to have our annual fireworks nor will we be able to have our picnic this year but the council and I look forward to bringing these fun events back next year!

## Senior Tax Freeze

Township senior citizen homeowners, 65 years of age and older, may be eligible for a tax freeze program initiated by the State of New Jersey. For eligibility requirements and additional information, please call the state's regional information center at (201)791-0500.

## Bond Ordinances

### **Ordinance # 1681-20**

A bond ordinance authorizing the improvement of Mayhill Street (Phase I) to appropriate the sum of \$375,000 to pay the cost of the project was introduced and passed. 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. The improvements to Mayhill Street include resurfacing of the roadway from Leswing Avenue to the Route 80 Bridge. Curbs, handicapped ramps and other concrete work will also be done.

## **GRANTS**

### Pending Grants

#### **Bergen County Open Space Grant**

Our grant writer has completed and submitted our 2020 Bergen County Open Space Municipal Park Improvements application in the amount of \$60,000. The township engineer completed the necessary concept site plan and cost estimate to upgrade and remediate the Mayhill Street Park located adjacent to the Saddle Brook Library and is heavily used by preschooler programs at the library. The playground equipment is dangerous and will be replaced. The scope of work also includes the replacing of basketball nets and hoops as well as any torn tennis court netting and various landscaping. This program is designed to supplement local efforts and therefore requires a dollar-for-dollar match from the municipality (\$30,000 match). Formal applications were filed by the June 29<sup>th</sup> deadline.

#### **Fiscal Year (FY) 21 Municipal Aid Grant Program.**

Our grant writer has successfully submitted the our FY21 Municipal Aid grant application on June 11, 2020 in the amount of \$441,109.72 for Mayhill Street—Phase 2. The township engineer secured a cost estimate and roadway data. Photos of roadway conditions were obtained from the site, a map was created, and a resolution was drafted. This program funds a wide variety of transportation infrastructure projects and municipalities may submit up to two applications and rank them based on local priority. Municipalities may apply to Municipal Aid under any of the following 7 categories: Bikeway, Bridge Preservation, Mobility, Pedestrian Safety, Quality of Life, Roadway Preservation, and Roadway.

#### **Bergen County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

Our grant writer initiated, completed, and submitted our FY20 priority #1 and #2 CDBG requests, which are Albany Street Improvements in the amount of \$236,322.24 and Barrier Free Entrances in the amount of \$150,000. The township also submitted a third application for senior programming. Endorsing resolutions for all projects were forwarded to Bergen County. The township currently has eligible zones in census tracts 4 and 5. CDBG funds may be used for roadway or housing improvements within eligible census tracts or for barrier-free improvements/construction to public facilities or for programming for seniors, the disabled, and other assumed low-moderate income populations. All three (3) applications are pending.

## **New Jersey Transit S5310**

Our grant writer completed and submitted FY2019 and FY2018 NJ Transit S5310 applications in the amounts of \$23,775.50 per-application. Final endorsing resolutions were sent to New Jersey Transit, Newark office. The grant writer coordinated with the Bergen County United We Ride transportation office for a letter of support. If awarded, funds will be designated to offsetting costs of our senior bus driver, insurance, fuel, and maintenance costs for the township senior bus service. This grant provides municipalities funds to improve and fully fund programs for the enhanced mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities. Grant categories are Capital Assistance, Mobility Management, and Operating Assistance.

## **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Assistance for Firefighters Grant (AFG)**

The FY19 application was submitted by our grant writer with assistance from Fire Chief Joseph Polizzotti. Our volunteer fire department has requested 18 new sets of turnout gear, face mask fit tester, and an industrial utility washer and dryer unit. The full application request amount is \$120,092.50. A letter of support was received through Congressman Bill Pascrell's office. FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant program provides funding to fire departments for personal protective equipment, self-contained breathing apparatus, training, apparatus, and other firefighting essentials. Application was submitted March 12, 2020.

## **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Assistance for Firefighters Supplemental Grant Program – COVID-19**

This grant was submitted by our grant writer with assistance from Fire Chief Joseph Polizzotti in the amount of \$14,491.65. FEMA requested further clarification and breakdown of costs. A detailed list of personal protective equipment that was purchased for COVID-19 response by the volunteer fire department was forwarded to FEMA. Requested funds would serve to reimburse the department for items such as face masks, gloves, protective coveralls, and disinfectant supplies and equipment. This round of FEMA AFG served as the second round strictly for supplemental funding related to COVID-19 relief. All activities for this solicitation are limited to the purchase of personal protective equipment and supplies to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency. This includes reimbursement for expenditures made since January 1, 2020. Awards have begun to be announced in phases.

## **Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation**

Our grant writer will be working with our police department, volunteer fire department, and volunteer ambulance corps to submit (3) Firehouse Subs grant applications for the fourth quarter of 2020. The fire department will apply for \$8,757.00 in funds requesting a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) compliant washer and dryer unit. In 2020 Quarter 2, our grant writer submitted (3) applications on behalf of the township for police, fire, and ambulance for needed equipment. The fire department applied for \$24,719 to fund purchase of four sets of gear (pants and coat) as well as a SCBA face mask fitter tester. The police department applied in the amount of \$5,861 for vehicle dash cameras and the ambulance corps applied in the amount of \$15,912.32 for a LUCAS chest compression system. Quarter 2 applications have not been awarded and the final Quarter 4 application opens July 1, 2020 and closes August 19, 2020.

## **FY20 United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) COPS Hiring Grant**

Our grant writer completed and submitted this grant application in the amount of \$125,000. A letter in support of the application was received through Congressman Bill Pascrell's office. Chief of Police Robert Kugler is requesting (1) officer to meet its full strength. This USDOJ program provides funding to hire and re-hire entry level career law enforcement officers in order to preserve jobs, increase community policing capacities and support crime prevention efforts. Funding under this program may be used to hire new officers and rehire officers who were laid off or are going to be laid off as a result of budget reductions. The program provides 75 percent of the approved entry-level salaries and fringe benefits of each newly hired and/or rehired full-time officer, up to \$125,000 per officer position, over the three-year (36 month) grant period. Lastly, the application requires applicants to identify a specific crime and disorder problem/focus area and explain how funding will be used to implement community policing approaches to that problem/focus area.

### Grant Work / Funding Opportunities

## **CARES ACT - Coronavirus Federal Stimulus Package**

On Friday, March 27, 2020, the House of Representatives passed the Senate version of the third COVID-19 Supplemental Bill (The CARES Act). This \$2.2 Trillion infusion includes approximately \$340 billion to state and local governments in emergency funding to combat the COVID-19 outbreak plus an additional \$150 billion under the Coronavirus Relief Fund that provides funding to cover the costs incurred because of the public health emergency. Details of the specifics included in this bill are just beginning to emerge at the time of this report. The method of accessing this funding is not yet available. The largest amount of funding for municipal entities is the \$150 billion included in the Coronavirus Relief Fund. Preliminary information is that New Jersey's allocation will be about \$1.4 billion. Very importantly—within a state, only units of government with populations that exceed 500,000 are eligible to receive direct funding

as a portion of the state's allocation. Therefore, it appears that Bergen County will receive direct funding from the State's allocation. Further details on how or how much funding Bergen County will receive are not yet available. Municipalities are being instructed to have a good grasp on all expenses incurred so that when funding is available, they have the backup to be reimbursed from whatever source.

### **CARES - Bergen County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

Our grant writer provided information regarding the specifics on the Bergen County CARES CDBG extension. Funding may strictly be used for responding to, preventing, or relating to COVID-19 as it effects low-moderate income communities or populations such as seniors. The majority of funding is expected to go to non-profits. The needs of our township include hiring of staff to sanitize all municipal buildings and vehicles, a lock box for the municipal building, and various needs of our ambulance corps. Unfortunately most of these costs cannot be requested through this CDBG round of funding. Bergen County has announced that they will launch a grant program to provide relief for municipalities straddled with expenses related to the COVID-19 pandemic and small businesses financially impacted by the government ordered shutdown. The programs will provide direct reimbursement to municipalities for costs associated with health officials, law enforcement, personal protective equipment, and social distancing improvements. Non-essential businesses that were forced to close as a measure to stop the spread of COVID-19 can receive up to \$10,000 in financial relief to cover rent, property mortgage, and utilities expenses.

### **Direct Install - NJ Clean Energy Program**

This program pays up to 70% of energy efficiency upgrades and was created specifically for existing small to medium-sized facilities, Direct Install is a turnkey solution that makes it easy and affordable to upgrade to high efficiency equipment. They will provide free energy assessments and a participating contractor will work with the township to cut our energy costs by replacing lighting, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, and other outdated operational equipment can be replaced with energy efficient alternatives. The program pays up to 70% of retrofit costs, dramatically improving our payback on the project. Entities owned or operated by municipalities, counties, K-12 public schools, and customers located in urban enterprise zones or opportunity zones may be eligible for up to 80% of the cost of the installed measures.

### **United States Department of Justice – FY20 Bureau of Justice Assistance Grant**

This grant has not yet been announced, however our police department is interested in applying for body worn cameras in the amount of \$100,000. Our grant writer is waiting until the solicitation to apply.

## **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

All committee meetings for Mayor's Youth Group, Community Partnership and Flood Mitigation Committee were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

All township events were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Saddle Brook School District did wave parades for all 2020 graduates from the high school and middle school as well as sixth grade and kindergarten classes in celebration of them moving up.

## **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**

### Proposed Municipal Complex – 55 Mayhill Street

The township entered into a contract to purchase 55 Mayhill Street and closed on the property at the end of May. The contract calls for construction plans to retrofit / renovate the existing structure to a much needed civic center and municipal complex that includes municipal offices, court, and fire and ambulance corps. The cost of the project was financed by bonding funds through the Bergen County Improvement Authority utilizing their AAA bond rating. The township hired RSC Architects, Hackensack, New Jersey to work with the contractor's architect to develop detailed construction plans. RSC was selected after the township conducted a request for proposals and reviewed several other architectural firms. The township and contractor will be appearing before the township's planning board on July 28<sup>th</sup> to discuss the project and obtain their agreement to move forward with the project.

### 2019 Road Program

The contract was awarded to 4-Cleanup in the amount of \$466,431.07 and consists of Rosedale Avenue, Madison Avenue, North 6th Street, Evans Place and Oak Avenue. Work began on October 17, 2019 and commenced on March 9, 2020. All work is completed except for a few punch list items.

### 2019 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) - Rochelle Parkway Road Project

The project was awarded to 4-Cleanup at the November 7, 2019 council meeting. A pre-construction meeting was held on February 5, 2020 and work began in April, 2020. All work on this project is complete.

### North Leswing Avenue and South Leswing Avenue Road Projects

North and South Leswing were originally to be funded under the Community Development Block Grant, but was switched with Rochelle Parkway due to eligibility changes. North and South Leswing was done as part of the 2019 Road Program. The Project was awarded to 4-Cleanup for \$248,501.60. Work began June 1. Final paving took place on June 17th. Only punch list items remain.

### Fairlawn Parkway (FY 2018 & 2019) New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJ DOT) Municipal Aid Grant

The New Jersey Department of Transportation approved \$392,000.00 towards this project (FY 2018 and 2019 combined). One bid package was prepared and was advertised for bid on January 17, 2020. Bids were received on February 4 and awarded to the low bidder Marini Brothers on February 6. Contracts have been executed and construction commenced on April 14th starting with concrete work at the Cambridge Avenue end. All concrete and pipe installation work was completed and paving began on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. The project is complete with the exception of a few punch list items.

### Kuhn Court and Bell Avenue Water Main

Bid opening took place on May 28th. The low bidder was John Garcia Construction in the amount of \$231,415.59 which included base bid and alternates. The contracts have been prepared and sent to the contractor for execution. An easement from the Church is still needed in order to loop the water main to Bell Avenue.

### Albany Street for the FY 2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Our township engineer worked with the township grant writer for a grant application to resurface Albany Street for the FY 2020 CDBG funding cycle. The application was submitted prior to the December 6, 2019 deadline. We are awaiting official announcement of the grant award and will move forward with this project once it is received.

### Mayhill Street Phase I - FY 2020 New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJ DOT) Grant

An application for funding under the Municipal Aid Program had been submitted to resurface Mayhill Street from Leswing Avenue to the Route 80 Bridge. Funding awards were recently announced and Saddle Brook received \$182,653 for this project. A proposal for engineering services was authorized and the township engineer has completed the plans and put the project out to bid. The bid opening took place on June 30, 2020.

## 2020 Road Program

The 2020 Road Program consists of Jamros Terrace, Colonial Avenue, Woodcrest Place, Danna Way, and Taggart Way. The road program also includes the installation of a sump collection system for Oxford Ave ahead of paving by Public Service Electric and Gas (PSE&G). Our township engineer has been authorized to commence with the preparation of the bid documents. Additionally, the condition of the sanitary sewers for the roads will be checked and recommendations for repair made. The quote for the sewer videos was awarded to National Water Main Cleaning Company for \$26,024.75. The videos have been received and review by the township engineer is near completion. Recommendation to follow regarding sewer replacement work.

## Police Building HVAC Improvements

Our township engineer was authorized on April 9, 2020 to prepare bid documents for improvements to the HVAC system at the police building. The improvements were outlined in a memo evaluation provided to the township. This project is anticipated to go out to bid in July 2020.

## Howard Street Force Main Rehabilitation

Our township engineer submitted a proposal for engineering services for the rehabilitation of the force main on Howard Street, Lodi, New Jersey. This is in response to three emergency responses that have been needed recently on the deteriorating pipeline.

## **ORDINANCES**

### Veterans Exemption from Paying Township Fees

Councilwoman Florence Mazzer introduced an ordinance amending Chapter 82 of the township code entitled “Fees” to include an addition to Chapter 82-3 D. (7), exempting veterans from said fees. Veteran is defined as an individual who was honorably discharged or released under honorable circumstances from active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States, or presently serving in active duty. The said veteran must provide official documentation showing that they were honorably discharged or released under honorable circumstances from active duty or are presently engaged in active duty. This ordinance was passed on second reading by the township council and took effect upon final passage and publication according to law.

## Banning of Vape Shops Except for Route 46 West Between Outwater Lane and Fifth Street

I introduced this ordinance, which supplements and amends Article I of Ordinance 206 entitled “Zoning” as follows:

- A. Retail electronic smoking device establishments and vape shops shall be permitted on Route 46 West, between Outwater Lane and 5th Street, but shall be prohibited on all other lands or premises in all other zones in the Township of Saddle Brook. This prohibition shall extend 1,500 feet from the driveway of any and all properties in the previously stated permitted area.

This ordinance was passed on second reading by the township council and took effect upon final passage and publication according to law.

## **OTHER**

### Saddle Brook School District Graduations

The township council and I congratulate all the graduates of the Saddle Brook High School Class of 2020 and wish them all the best in their future endeavors. I was happy to be able to share in the excitement of their graduation evening, and I'm proud of each them. I'd like to thank the school district for doing a great job planning and organizing the wave parades for all 2020 graduates from high school and middle school as well as sixth grade and kindergarten classes in celebration of them moving up. Special thanks to the members of the Saddle Brook Police Department for assisting with traffic control and the school custodians for setting everything up for the event. The graduates, their parents, school staff, and neighbors along the parade route cheered and celebrated loudly. Most importantly, they made the best of the situation and didn't let the non-traditional ceremony dampen their spirits. Congratulations again to the graduates on their well-deserved success.

### Wreath Placement – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Line of Duty Death of Fire Chief Don Wilson

On Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, during a private gathering of family and public officials, Fire Chief Joe Polizzotti, Assistant Chief Jason Sibani, and Battalion Chief Glen Walby placed a wreath at the Saddle Brook Volunteer Fire Department (SBVFD) Memorial Monument in memory of late Fire Chief Don Wilson. Chief Wilson died 50 years ago, June 26, 1970, while responding to a fire call. The SBVFD and the township honors his sacrifice and memory not only today but every day.