

MAYOR'S QUARTERLY UPDATE
JULY – SEPTEMBER 2020

COVID-19

I want all our residents to be assured the township is taking all precautions to keep you as safe as we can during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been a strenuous time for all and we hope you and your family have been staying safe during this crisis. 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 316 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.

Over the last quarter, Governor Murphy has been reopening New Jersey's economy in phases and we have gotten back to some semblance of normalcy. Our public schools opened on time in September using a hybrid model consisting of remote and in-person instruction. So far this plan has been functioning safely, effectively, and efficiently. Student athletes participated in fall high school and recreation sports programs without any need to shut down or cancel practices or games.

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. 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), Facebook page (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.

BUDGET

The fourth quarter tax bills for 2020-2021 are scheduled to be mailed out the first week of October 2020. The tax bill that was received in June was an estimated tax bill covering the August tax payment. This new bill will be for the balance of the tax year – November, February and May.

The municipal tax rate is \$0.811 cents per \$100 of assessed value. On an average home assessed at \$353,112 the municipal tax is \$2,864.00, an increase of \$96.99. This is the portion of the bill that is controlled by your municipal government. The other portions of your tax bill are the County of Bergen, Board of Education, and our library. Under these trying times, the township council and I continue to make every effort for fiscal responsibility and is reflected in this tax bill. For the safety of you and our employees, we are not yet fully open to the public. As such, we have encouraged residents to make every effort to pay taxes by mail, but if you must pay in person, there is box in the entrance to town hall to drop off your payment.

As the state reopens, we are hopeful to resume traditional township celebrations and work within the state guidelines to provide activities that are fun yet takes into account the pandemic. Please check our website for updates – saddlebrooknj.us or our local Our Town TV- channel 77 on Optimum and channel 38 on FIOS.

GRANTS

Grants Received

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

This is a supplemental funding opportunity under the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG). Our grant writer with assistance from Fire Chief Joseph Polizzotti submitted for a grant in the amount of \$14,491.65. A detailed list of personal protective equipment that was purchased for COVID-19 response by the volunteer fire department was forwarded to FEMA. Our fire department received a grant award in the amount of \$8,087.29 for various PPE reimbursement for items such as face masks, gloves, protective coveralls, and disinfectant supplies and equipment. A second round of Assistance for Firefighters Grant Supplemental Program is expected to be released later in the year. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program – COVID-19 Supplemental (AFG-S) is a supplemental funding opportunity under the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG).

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 for Mayhill Street Park (Adjacent to library). 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).

Fiscal Year (FY) 21 Municipal Aid Grant Program.

Our grant writer has successfully submitted our FY21 Municipal Aid grant application on June 11, 2020 in the amount of \$441,109.72 for Mayhill Street—Phase 2. 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.

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. 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. 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.

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, a face mask fit tester, and an industrial utility washer and dryer unit. The full application request amount is \$120,092.50.

Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation

Our grant writer will be working with our police department, volunteer fire department, and volunteer ambulance corps to submit three Firehouse Subs grant applications for the fourth quarter of 2020. The fire department will apply for \$8,757.00 in funds requesting a washer and dryer unit. In 2020 Quarter 2, our grant writer submitted three 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. The first quarter round of 2021 is opening November 1st and all our police, fire, and ambulance are encouraged to apply.

Grant Work / Funding Opportunities

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.

Center for Tech and Civic Life (CTCL) Safe Elections

The CTCL has expanded our COVID-19 Response Grant program to all U.S. local election jurisdictions. Backed by a generous \$250M contribution, CTCL will provide grants to local election jurisdictions across the country to help ensure you have the staffing, training, and equipment necessary so this November every eligible voter can participate in a safe and timely way and have their vote counted. CTCL provides funding to U.S. local election offices to help ensure they have the critical resources they need to safely serve every voter in 2020. Election offices can use the funds to cover certain 2020 expenses incurred between June 15, 2020 and December 31, 2020. These include, but are not limited to, the costs associated with the safe administration of elections.

Recreation Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities (ROID).

ROID is an annual grant program offered through the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJCA). ROID exists to help promote recreational programming in the form of trips, events, accessible sports, or other activities for disabled persons living in New Jersey. ROID assists local government entities in meeting their mandates, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, to include individuals with disabilities into their municipal recreation and leisure services. Programs will be funded under two the categories of Comprehensive Grants and Special Event Grants.

GameTime Grants for Playgrounds

GameTime Grants for Playgrounds offers three-levels of matching grants for playground equipment. These grants are best suited for municipalities with a shovel-ready project, looking to install playsets. To qualify for up to 100% matching grant, list price of the qualifying playground system must exceed \$50,000, and payment in full must accompany your order. For play systems with a list price of less than \$50,000 with payment in full, grants are available with matching funds up to 85%. For play systems that exceed \$15,000, and purchased with credit terms, matching funds are available up to 70%. All applications must be validated by the project administrator.

New Jersey Transportation Alternatives (NJTAP)

TAP provides federal funds for community based “non-traditional” surface transportation projects designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of the nation’s intermodal system. Surface transportation includes transportation both by land and water. TAP activities are a means of more creatively and sensitively integrating transportation facilities into their surrounding communities. What distinguishes TAP activities from other worthwhile quality-of-life and environmental activities is their potential to create a transportation experience beyond normal expectations. The township will work with our grant writer to determine if we have any eligible projects.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Mayor’s Youth Group

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the number of participants in our group, the Mayor’s Youth Group did not meet during the third quarter of this year.

Community Partnership

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the number of participants in our group, the Community Partnership Committee did not meet during the third quarter of this year.

Flood Mitigation Committee Meeting

Meeting - Thursday, July 30th

Committee Chairman, Councilman David Gierak, stated that the Department of Public Works was up-to-date with cleaning and maintenance of our storm drains and catch basins. He also advised the posting of flood information on the township website will include the flood plain protection guidelines. I explained that the town will be requesting a meeting with the County Parks representatives to discuss ways to alleviate flood issues in the township.

Virtual Zoom Meeting with Bergen County Officials – Wednesday, August 12th

Councilman Gierak, Business Administrator Lo Dico, Township Floodplain Manager Monica Mianecki, and I participated in a virtual meeting with Bergen County officials. County Executive Jim Tedesco addressed concerns regarding the Saddle River with the towns of Lodi, Maywood, and Rochelle Park also in attendance. The County Executive decided to appoint an individual who will meet with each municipality along the river and identify areas of concern. A plan will be formulated to address these flood concerns. The objective is to work together to mitigate and alleviate flooding along the river.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

All township events and activities, except for a 911 remembrance ceremony (listed below), were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

911 Remembrance Ceremony 6:30PM at Town Hall

On September 11, 2020, the 19th anniversary of the terrorist attacks, we honored the memory of those who lost their lives that tragic day and especially thanked our township employees and our police department. We are also very grateful to the members of our volunteer fire department and volunteer ambulance corps for the countless hours they spend keeping us safe. During this health crisis, I can't thank enough all our first responders and essential workers. They have done a phenomenal job under dire circumstances.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Completed Projects

Work was completed on the following projects and our township engineer has authorized payment to contractors:

- 2019 Road Program – Paving of Six Local Streets (Rosedale, Madison, North Sixth, Madison, Evans, Oak)
- 2019 Community Development Block Grant - Paving Rochelle Parkway
- North Leswing Ave / South Leswing Ave Road Paving

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 department 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.

The township met with municipal employees and representatives from our fire department and ambulance corps to obtain their input and determine needs. The township and contractor appeared before the township's planning board on July 28th to discuss the project and ensure compliance with township zoning ordinances. Approval was given by the Planning Board to move forward with the project. The project's construction plans are almost completed and we are on track to break ground at the end of November 2020

Kuhn Court and Bell Avenue Water Main:

Bid openings took place on May 28th and the low bidder was John Garcia Construction in the amount of \$231,415.59. The bid included the base bid and alternates. Work commenced on September 14, 2020 should be totally completed in early October.

Albany Street:

Our township engineer worked with our grant writer on a FY 2020 Community Development Block Grant application to resurface Albany Street. We are awaiting announcement of grant awards and a proposal will be prepared and submitted once the awards are announced.

Mayhill Street Phase I

An application for funding for FY 2020 under the NJDOT Municipal Aid Program has been submitted to resurface Mayhill Street from Leswing Avenue to the Route 80 Bridge. Funding awards were recently announced. Saddle Brook received \$182,653 for this project. The project was awarded to 4-Cleanup on July 2 in the amount of \$216,288.95. The project is mostly completed. Concrete work is complete and the road has been repaved. The only work item remaining is the replacement of the guide rail on the ramp leading up to the bridge over Route 80.

2020 Road Program

The 2020 Road Program consists of Jamros Terrace, Colonial Avenue, Woodcrest Place, Danna Way, and Taggart Way. The sanitary sewers were videotaped on these streets and were found to be in good condition with no sections in need of replacement. Bids were received on July 30th and the project was awarded to 4-Cleanup on August 6th in the amount of \$859,547.75. Work is anticipated to begin in October 2020.

Howard Street Force Main Rehabilitation

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

ORDINANCES PASSED

ORDINANCE 1687-20

This is an ordinance amending Chapter 206 entitled “Zoning” in order to add a new section entitled, Affordable Housing Overlay Districts. Chapter 206 was amended by adding the following new section: Chapter 206, Zoning Article VH, Affordable Housing Overlay Districts 206-9.51. The main objectives of the overlay zones are intended to allow greater flexibility of development alternatives, especially attractive higher density residential development in appropriate areas of the township.

ORDINANCE 1688-20

This is an ordinance amending Chapter 206-9.43.1 - Affordable Housing Residential District, Chapter 206-9.43.1 was repealed and substituted in its place with an AH-5 Affordable Housing Residential District.

OTHER

Free Mobile Shredding – Saturday, September 19th

A free mobile shredding event was held for residents at 55 Mayhill Street from 9AM-1PM. Residents were able to bring their unwanted documents containing personal information to have safely and securely destroyed. Thank you Recycling Coordinator Joan Ramsey and Perry Festa of the Department of Public Works for their assistance. Special thanks to Mayor’s Secretary, Christine Genuario, for planning and organizing the event.