

MAYOR'S QUARTERLY UPDATE JANUARY - MARCH 2021

COVID-19 UPDATE

Overview

The latest data shows the COVID-19 continues to have an impact on Bergen County with many towns having seen spikes in cases during this second wave. The impact of the disease is reflected in the state Department of Health's most recent report which has Bergen County in the "orange zone". Being in the "orange" zone, means infections are at a rate of 10 to 25 cases per 100,000 people (10-25% of pop.) "Yellow" means the county has a rate 1 to 10 cases per 100,000 people (1-10% of pop.). When the overall activity is at the "orange" level, we must be more vigilant in preventing the spread of the disease. Stricter guidelines are put in place, for example school districts have to take more serious steps, such as quarantining or even shutting down if a child shows symptoms of COVID-19.

Even though more people are being vaccinated and many restrictions are being lifted or minimized, we must not let our guards down. COVID-19 is still a serious threat and we must do all we can to defeat this terrible pandemic. To help protect yourself and others from COVID-19, please follow the three important steps - wash your hands, stay at least six feet away from other people, and wear a mask.

Vaccination Information

New Jersey is rolling out COVID-19 vaccines step-by-step to serve all adults who live, work, or study in the state. Currently, vaccines are available to specific eligible groups based on availability and individual risk. If you are eligible and are having trouble getting a vaccination appointment, please call my office at 201-587-2903. Bergen County residents 75 and older are able to make vaccination appointments over the phone by calling 201-967-4070. All Bergen County seniors ages 60+ are eligible for a free ride to their vaccination appointment. To schedule a ride, seniors can call the Bergen County Division of Community Transportation at 201-368-5955. Saddle Brook residents that cannot find or afford transportation can call the Senior Center (201-845-4594) for a ride to their vaccination appointment. If you do not have internet access or an email address, you need to call the N.J. COVID-19 Call Center at 1-855-568-0545 to register for the vaccine.

Testing

Testing is available to all county residents at no out-of-pocket cost, regardless of health insurance status. Residents must schedule their test through an online portal which can be reached at BergenCOVIDTesting.com. Identification is necessary so please bring your driver's license or any credible form of identification. If you have health insurance, please bring your card with you. The County of Bergen and Bergen New Bridge Medical Center remind all residents that mobile testing is only one way to get tested. COVID-19 nasal, saliva, and antibody testing are also available by appointment at Bergen New Bridge Medical Center. To make an appointment please visit newbridgehealth.org/covid-19-testing/ for more information.

Township Facilities

The Municipal Building is now open for public access Monday – Friday 8:30am to 4pm and all visitors must wear a face covering. The Library is also open to the public Monday – Saturday at 10am and all patrons are required to wear face coverings. Closing time differs depending on the day of the week, so please call 201-843-3287 or check the Library website (saddlebrook.bccls.org/) for hours of operation. We are asking that you limit your time in the Library to no more than 30 minutes. The Senior Center will be opening with a maximum of 25 individuals beginning May 1st. The senior bus service has been operating for the last several months and is currently available for doctor visits only.

Schools and Recreation

Our public schools are operating under a hybrid model consisting of remote and in-person instruction. Since September 2020, there have been some temporary suspensions of in-person learning due to COVID-19 infections and quarantines, but for the most part this plan has been functioning safely and effectively. Student athletes will be participating in spring high school sports programs. All township spring recreation sports are permitted to play.

BUDGET

Preparation

Township Business Administrator Peter LoDico and I have met with all department heads to review their annual budget requests. A temporary budget was adopted by the township council, which was 26.25 percent of our yearly 2020 municipal budget. Mr. LoDico and I have been working with our professionals to prepare a proposed permanent budget for the township council members to review.

Introduction of Proposed Budget and Hearings

Due to the Federal American Rescue Plan, which provides COVID-19 pandemic relief to local governments, Township Auditor Steven Wielkottz has recommended that the governing body wait to present and adopt the 2021 budget. The township will be receiving approximately 1.3 million dollars, but the federal government has not yet provided guidelines as to how those funds can be utilized. These guidelines are expected shortly and once the township has a better understanding of the relief program, we will present a proposed budget to the township council. We anticipate this budget being lean, but we will maintain essential services. We will continue funding capital improvements for our road program and updating water and sewer infrastructure. Once the budget is introduced, there will be a public hearing to allow tax payers an opportunity to provide input / feedback. Township Auditor Steve Wielkottz will be present and available at the hearing for questions concerning the budget and township finances.

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 N.J. For eligibility requirements and additional information, please call the state's regional information center at (201)791-0500.

Bond Ordinances

Ordinance #1697-21 – Introduced and Passed on 1st Reading 4/1/2021

This ordinance authorizes the TOWNSHIP'S 2021 ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, to appropriate the sum of \$1,700,000 to pay the cost thereof, etc.

Ordinance 1698-21 - Introduced and Passed on 1st Reading 4/1/2021

This ordinance authorizes the IMPROVEMENT OF MAYHILL STREET (PHASE II.) in, by and for the Township of Saddle Brook to appropriate the sum of \$480,000 to pay the cost thereof, etc.

GRANTS

Pending Grants

FY21 Bergen County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

In working with our grant writer and township engineer, two projects were identified which include Priority #1: Congress Street in the amount of \$227,000 and Priority #2: Barrier free improvements to the new municipal complex in the amount of \$260,000. A resolution was presented and approved at the township council meeting on 2/2/2021.

FEMA AFG-S COVID-19 Supplemental Round II.

Our grant writer filed an application for this program on behalf of our volunteer fire department. Round II. was open strictly to volunteer and combination fire departments. The application was in the amount of \$22,091.05 for a washer/dryer, 450 gloves, 450 masks, germicidal wipes and sanitizers, as well as protective coveralls. The items were categorized from reimbursements to immediate use PPE and future response capabilities.

FY20 FEMA Assistance to Firefighters (AFG)

Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program is one of three grant programs that constitute the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) focus on enhancing the safety of the public and firefighters with respect to fire and fire-related hazards. The Saddle Brook Volunteer Fire Department re-applied for the department's FY19 proposal for a washer/dryer unit, gear, and other PPE in the amount of \$105,150.

FY20 New Jersey Transit S5310

Our grant writer re-applied to the N.J. Transit 'S-Rides' grant program to offset the cost of procuring a new senior bus for the Saddle Brook Senior Center, which provides a multitude of transportation services for seniors including for recreational, medical, nutritional, and other purposes. The intent of this program is to improve mobility for seniors and people with disabilities by providing financial support through programs planned, designed, and carried out to meet the transportation needs of these populations.

FEMA Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S)

Our grant writer submitted this grant application on behalf of our fire department in the amount of \$9,350 for a smoke alarm installation and home inspection project for Saddle Brook senior citizens. The objectives of the FP&S Program are to provide critically needed resources to carry out fire prevention education and training, fire code enforcement, fire/arson investigation, firefighter safety and health programming, prevention efforts, and research and development. This application is pending, awards are expected in May, 2021.

Grant Work / Funding Opportunities

FY21 NJOAG Body Worn Cameras Grant

The N.J. Office of the Attorney General Division of Law and Public Safety has released the guidelines and application for the FY21 NJOAG Body Worn Camera Grant Program. The Body-Worn Camera Grant Program is designed to provide eligible law enforcement agencies with state funding to aid in purchase of body-worn cameras, ancillary equipment and storage. The township will be applying for funding and the applications are due via email by April 30, 2021.

Congressional Community Projects Appropriations

The annual federal budget process for the next fiscal year is underway in Washington, DC. To meet the needs of our communities in New Jersey's various congressional districts, congressional offices are accepting community project funding requests for fiscal year 2022. This year, specific community projects and requests may be submitted covering a variety of programs, from housing, to health, to education, to transportation to public safety. Our grant writer is assisting us with appropriations special request applications for costs associated with the new municipal complex generators and township water and sewer upgrades.

Park Development/Acquisition NJDEP Green Acres

This funding program offered through the NJDEP was established to help municipalities fund the acquisition of open space for recreation and conservation purposes, and the development of outdoor recreational facilities. Funding assistance is available for park development projects that result in increased public use and enjoyment of outdoor recreation areas. Eligible park development projects include a whole host of outdoor activities. Any project that receives Green Acres funding must become permanent open space and open to every resident of N.J.

FY22 Municipal Aid—NJDOT

The Municipal Aid program is a competitive program intended to provide municipalities with transportation based grants to supplement their transportation programs. Funding is available through state aid to municipalities and counties for local transportation improvements. The projected deadline for submitting the application for fiscal calendar year 2022 is June 30, 2021.

FY22 Safe Streets to Transit—NJDOT

The goal of this program is to promote increased usage of transit by constructing safe and accessible pedestrian linkages to transit facilities. Examples of the type of eligible work which can be funded under the Safe Streets to Transit Program include: Intersection safety improvements; Safety enhancements for pedestrian access to transit stops; Traffic control devices that benefit pedestrians; Traffic calming measures; Pedestrian signals and push buttons at key intersections; Pedestrian oriented lighting; and Major sidewalk reconstruction. Projects within a half-mile radius of a transit facility will be given priority.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Community Partnership Committee (CPC)

The CPC has been meeting monthly via Zoom. As a reminder, the mission of the CPC is to serve as a forum to discuss township issues and provide residents in need, with resources, referrals, and guidance to obtain the help they need to improve their quality of life.

Spring Holiday Baskets

Saddle Brook High / Middle School Teachers partnered with Pastor Christopher Wolf of the First Reformed Church of Saddle Brook to make gift baskets for local residents in need. The High / Middle School Service Learning Organization, with the help of staff and students from Franklin and Washington Schools, built 45+ baskets to bring smiles to many faces during the spring holidays. Thank you to all who helped and contributed to this project.

Special thanks to members of the Saddle Brook VFW Post 3484 Riders for assembling and donating Easter baskets for families served by the Saddle Brook Food Pantry at First Reformed Church. Your compassion and willingness to collaborate with others to assist those in need in our community is most admirable.

CPC & Access for All - Letter to the Community

As unprecedented, challenging, and sorrowful as 2020 was, it's in times like these that we also discover qualities and strength in greater supply than ever before. We write to share our appreciation and admiration for the residents, leaders, businesses such as Acme Food Market and Walmart, emergency service personnel, teachers, school administrators, students, senior citizens, clubs and associations, faith communities, and social service agencies of Saddle Brook Township - who together demonstrated the best in the worst of times. Through the Saddle Brook Community Partnership, we all worked together to inspire, coordinate, and enable compassion, concern, generosity, help, prayer, food, supplies, transportation, hope, and other assistance for those in need. Since many of our challenges continue here in 2021, we remain committed to the power of collaboration and partnership; and we invite more members of the Saddle Brook community to join this noble effort; as well as to continue to seek help. For more information about volunteering or assistance, please call the hotline, 201 587-2903 or visit - saddlebrooknj.us. Again, thank you for helping to make Saddle Brook a compassionate and united community to live, work, and serve. Robert White, Mayor and Christopher Wolf, Pastor of First Reformed Church.

Mayor's Youth Group (MYG)

The MYG has been meeting monthly, most times remotely via Zoom. Members met in person at town hall on Wednesday, February 3rd to make Valentine's Day Cards for our local seniors. The cards were included in the monthly Senior Center Newsletter mailed to our senior club and AARP members. Thank you to Christine Genuario for organizing the gathering. Thank you as well to the members who attended and used their creativity to spread messages of love.

The MYG also assisted with the Township's Easter Drive-By Celebration at Veterans' Field on Saturday, March 27th. Thank you to all the members who volunteered their time to give out Easter gift bags to the children. Special thanks to Christine Genuario and Shannon Accomando, for their assistance in organizing this event and to our Easter Bunny, Thomas Van Winkle.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Women's History Month

Women's History Month offers an important opportunity to highlight women who have made vital contributions and have helped improve our community. This year, I acknowledge and thank all the women in our community who have gone above and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic. In our current moment of crisis, women continue to lead and demonstrate strength, courage, and hope. From vaccine researchers to public health officials to the countless frontline heroines, we salute all the women here in Saddle Brook and across the country who are working tirelessly to help defeat COVID-19.

Easter Bunny Drive-by Celebration

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we held our annual Easter celebration outdoors on Saturday, March 27th in the parking lot of Veterans Field. Parents, with their children aboard as passengers, drove their vehicles through the parking lot where they stopped at two stations and received gift bags and bunny rabbit ears. I appreciate Shannon Accomando and Christine Genuario for their effort and hard work organizing the event. Thank you to the members of the Mayor's Youth Group and the Women's Club for volunteering to assist. Special thanks to our Easter Bunny Thomas Van Winkle. The event would not have been a success without the assistance of these individuals and groups. Photos and a video of the event can be found on the township website and Facebook page. The video can also be viewed on YouTube and public access cable television, Ch. 38 Verizon Fios, Ch. 77 Cablevision.

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, 2020. 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. We have completed the planning phase and are waiting on various permits including one from the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection. We anticipate construction to start sometime in April 2021.

Road Resurfacing

2020 Road Program

The 2020 Road Program consisted of Jamros Terrace, Colonial Avenue, Woodcrest Place, Danna Way, and Taggart Way. All work is complete except for punch list work which is anticipated for later in the spring.

Mayhill Street Phase I.

Saddle Brook was awarded \$182,653 under the FY2020 NJDOT Municipal Aid Program to resurface Mayhill Street from Leswing Avenue to the Route 80 Bridge. The project was awarded to 4-Cleanup on July 2, 2020 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. The township engineer has been coordinating this work with NJDOT which includes modification to the parapet to support the revised guide rail.

2020 Road Program Phase II.

The following roads are anticipated to be resurfaced this spring: Finnegan Avenue, McKenzie Street, Weller Terrace and a small portion of West Street. Engineering services were completed and the project went out to bid on March 25, 2021.

2021 Road Program

The 2021 Road Program consists of Wilson Street, South Broadway, Hobson Avenue, Steinway Road, Burgess Drive and George Street. A proposal for engineering services has been approved and survey work began in the middle of March 2021. The project should go out to bid later in the spring and work completed in the summer.

Albany Street

The township was awarded \$101,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding to resurface Albany Street. The township engineer has been authorized to conduct a survey and proceed with designing plans. Engineering work was scheduled to start in the middle of March 2021.

Mayhill Street Phase II.

An application for funding for FY 2021 under the NJDOT Municipal Aid Program has been submitted to resurface Mayhill Street from the Route 80 Bridge to Market Street. The Township was awarded \$200,000. The township engineer has been authorized to proceed with preparation of the bid documents. Survey work started in the middle of March 2021.

Other Projects

Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure Improvements

The township engineer has submitted a proposal to assist the township in obtaining funding for this project along with improvements to the Midland and Mayhill pump stations. Effort will include preliminary design necessary as part of the funding request.

Police Building HVAC Improvements

In April of 2020, our township engineer was authorized to prepare bid documents for improvements to the HVAC system at the police station. Bids were received in July 2020 to insulate pipes and ducts. The project was awarded to GMT Contracting Corporation in the amount of \$95,000 and the work was completed in the fall 2020. In accordance with the contract, a report was submitted by the township engineer detailing existing problems with the HVAC system along with a quote from Trane Heating and Air Conditioning Systems to perform the recommended repairs.

Hobson Avenue Water Main Replacement

A proposal for engineering services has been submitted by our township engineer for the replacement of the water main on Hobson Avenue. Our engineer will commence with preparation of plans once authorized.

OTHER

Ordinances Passed

Ordinance No. 1695-21 – Passed on 2nd Reading 4/1/2021

In accordance with N.J. law, the township adopted new requirements for the design of stormwater control. This ordinance will assist the township in revising its municipal stormwater control ordinances to reflect amendments to the stormwater management rules pursuant to the N.J. Administrative Code adopted on March 2, 2020.

Ordinance No. 1696-21 – Amending Chapter 196, Sect. 34 Entitled “Vehicles and Traffic, Schedule I: No Parking”

Whereas, the township council recognizes the need to amend the aforementioned ordinance by eliminating the parking space directly south of the existing Finnigan Avenue apron/curb cut on the west side of the street. Said space shall be designated “no parking”, and the no parking area will extend a distance of 25 feet in a southerly direction from the end of the apron.

Ambulance Corps. Members Recognized

On Monday, January 18, 2021, The Saddle Brook Volunteer Ambulance Corps. acknowledged John Schlomann for 50 years of service and Jessica Sanchez for becoming a lifetime member serving 10 years with the Corps. On behalf of the township, we congratulate and are grateful to John and Jessica for their commitment and dedication to the residents of Saddle Brook and the Corps. We thank all our volunteer emergency responders for keeping us safe and for their exceptional service to our community.

Police Department Retirements

Congratulations and best of luck to Captain Christopher Mamone, Lieutenant Victor Van Dyk, and Sergeant John Tritto on their retirement from the Saddle Brook Police Department. The officers did their final walkout and radio sign out from police headquarters on Monday, March 1. We thank all of them for their dedicated years of service and wish them a happy, healthy, and prosperous retirement.

VFW Post 3484 Honoring Betty Breedveld

March 20, 2021 was Betty Breedveld Appreciation Day at VFW Post 3484 of Saddle Brook. As a respiratory therapist, Betty has met the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. She has sacrificed her own well-being to ensure quality care for sick and dying patients. Through it all Betty has shown courage, compassion, and dedication to her patients. The township thanks Betty and appreciates all she has done as a healthcare worker to keep us safe.