

MAYOR'S QUARTERLY UPDATE JULY – SEPTEMBER 2021

COVID-19 UPDATE

Overview

As of September 23rd in NJ, over 84% of those eligible have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. That means our state has the largest vaccination rate in the nation. The seven-day average for new cases nationally was down 12% from the previous week, and the seven-day average for deaths was up 35% from the previous week. NJ's seven-day average for new COVID-19 cases was up 14% from the previous week, and the seven-day average for deaths was up 35% from the previous week. Hospitalizations in our state were down 5% from the week before.

The good news is that the most recent wave of infections is beginning to show signs of slowing, as more and more Americans receive the vaccine. But the deadly Delta variant continues to drive significant hospitalizations and deaths among mostly unvaccinated individuals. Please consider doing your part to slow the spread by getting vaccinated and joining nearly 5.8 million NJ residents who are already fully inoculated.

All public schools must provide full-day, full-time, in-person instruction and operations for the 2021-2022 school year. The NJ Department of Education and NJ Department of Health developed guidance to achieve that goal. This guidance includes a range of strategies that should be implemented to reduce risks to students and staff from COVID-19 while still allowing for fulltime in-person learning. Prior to the start of the school year, Governor Murphy issued an executive order mandating the use of masks by students and staff. He is also requiring that all teachers and school staff be vaccinated. Those that refuse to get vaccinated must be tested twice weekly. This order goes into effect Monday, October 18th.

Thus far our Township schools have been doing well with no shut downs. Over the last month the Township has been averaging 12-15 new cases per week, mostly unvaccinated individuals, but over the last week, there has been an increase in breakthrough cases involving vaccinated individuals being infected. For the latest on the coronavirus in NJ broken down by state, county and municipality, check the state's website at covid19.nj.gov.

Our Township Offices, Library, and Senior Center are fully open to the public. Now that most COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, the Township has been holding large events and activities. For general information about COVID-19, please visit our Township website at www.saddlebrooknj.us or the state website at www.covid.nj.gov. You can also dial 2-1-1 or call the Toll-Free Call Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Vaccines

As of September 23, 2021, NJ has administered almost 12 million vaccines and fully vaccinated 5,795,162 individuals. The overwhelming number of cases, hospitalizations and deaths in NJ are among unvaccinated people. Vaccination is the only way to stop the spread of this virus. Anyone aged 12 and older who lives, works, or studies in NJ is eligible for a vaccine.

There are two primary ways to schedule a vaccine: You can make an appointment directly with one of the vaccination sites across the state or you can register for the vaccine through the Vaccine Scheduling System at <https://covidvaccine.nj.gov/en-US/>. Learn more about where, how, and when you can get vaccinated at the state's Frequently Asked Questions page at <https://covid19.nj.gov/faqs/nj-information>. You can reach the state vaccine hotline at 855-568-0545 between 8AM & 8PM daily to speak to a trained operator. You may also contact the state online for assistance at <https://covid19.nj.gov/forms/vaccine/vss-feedback>.

On September 22, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the use of Pfizer's COVID-19 Vaccine to be administered as boosters at least six months after completion of the first vaccine series for individuals who are 65 years of age or older and those who are immunocompromised. Booster shots will be administered at any existing vaccine site in NJ. Booster shots will soon be authorized across the state, pending final guidance from the FDA and Center for Disease Control (CDC).

Federal Assistance

Earlier this year, President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan COVID-19 relief package to defeat the virus, energize our economy, and clear our communities to reopen. Hundreds of billions in aid has been distributed to individuals, small businesses, renters, homeowners, and local governments.

In order to continue combatting COVID-19 spread, President Biden has announced additional rules regarding vaccination to slow the spread of COVID-19. President Biden signed executive orders requiring federal employees and federal contractors to be vaccinated by October 15. The President also announced that the Department of Labor is developing an emergency rule requiring all employers with 100 or more employees to ensure their workforces are fully vaccinated or show a negative test at least once a week.

Thanks to the American Rescue Plan's expansion of the 2021 Child Tax Credit (CTC), American families are receiving advance monthly payments of up to \$300 per eligible child. Over 981,000 NJ families, covering more than 1,606,000 children, have received these advance CTC checks. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, families receiving these advance checks experienced significantly less economic hardship and food insecurity. The Treasury Department has partnered with Code for America to develop GetCTC, a streamlined website and smartphone application to assist in tracking and receiving your advance Child Tax Credit payments. Visit getctc.org to learn more and make use of this simple tool.

BUDGET

The tax bills for 2021-2022 are being mailed out the first week of October 2021. The tax bill you received in June was an estimated tax bill covering the August 2021 tax payment. This new bill will be for the balance of the tax year – November, February and May.

The municipal tax rate is \$0.820 cents per \$100 of assessed value. On an average home assessed at \$366,037-- the municipal tax is \$3,001.50, an increase of \$137.86. 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 to maintain fiscal responsibility and is reflected in this tax bill. Like every state, county and local government, the pandemic hit Saddle Brook financially with less revenue received. The Township Council and I, with our departments, held the line on expenditures in 2020 in anticipation of lost revenues and apply that savings as well as federal funds this year to offset some of this loss.

Some highlights of this year's municipal budget include hiring 3 new police officers, maintaining services such as the Special Law Enforcement Officers in our schools, continuing our road resurfacing program and infrastructure improvements for the health and safety of our residents. We are also implementing an online payment program for tax and water. Information will be posted on our website (saddlebrooknj.us).

GRANTS

Pending Grants

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.

Congressional Community Projects Appropriations

To meet the needs of communities in NJ's various congressional districts, congressional offices have accepted community project funding requests for fiscal year 2022. Specific community projects and requests were submitted covering a variety of programs, from housing, to health, to education, to transportation to public safety. An application was submitted for costs associated with the new municipal complex generators and Township water and sewer upgrades.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (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.

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), 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 Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) in the amount of \$105,150.

FY2021 NJ Division of Community Affairs Local Recreation Improvement Grant Program

Our grant writer successfully submitted this grant for \$113,850 for a Splash Park at 55 Mayhill Street. The Local Recreation Improvement Grant is a new state program allowing for local municipalities and school districts to apply for funds to upgrade recreation sites, such as parks, town pools, etc. This is a competitive grant that supports improvement and repair of public recreation facilities including parks and recreation centers.

Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation

Our grant writer completed and submitted the Saddle Brook Volunteer Ambulance Corps 2021 Quarter 3 grant application in the amount of \$15,349 for LUCAS Chest Compression devices. The Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation offers quarterly grants to first responders for life saving equipment up to \$25,000. The application is currently pending. Our Fourth Quarter application was submitted prior to the deadline for acceptance.

2021 COPS Hiring Program (CHP)

Our grant writer successfully completed and submitted an application on behalf of the Saddle Brook Police Department (SBPD) in the amount of \$375,000 to hire three officers over the course of three years after last year's 2020 application went unfunded. Our grant writer assisted with a reapplication to this year's solicitation, applying to hire one officer. The CHP program offers grants to offset the costs of hiring new police officer's salaries and fringe benefits, up to \$125,000 over a three-year grant period.

NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT) FY22 Safe Streets to Transit

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 this 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 are given priority.

NJ Office of Attorney General Bolstering Police Youth Trust Program

Our grant writer successfully submitted this grant on behalf of the SBPD in the amount of \$16,058.00. Requested funding is to offset annual costs associated with the department's Law Enforcement Against Drugs (LEAD) school education campaign as well as the pilot implementation of a one-two week Youth Training Academy for 6th and 7th graders during the summer of 2022. The purpose of the Bolstering Police-Youth Trust Program is to support community organizations and local law enforcement agencies in the development and implementation of innovative community policing initiatives with youth engagement as a priority.

Grant Work / Funding Opportunities

NJDOT - Safe Routes to School

The NJDOT announced the availability of this program, which has a deadline of October 14, 2021. This is a federally funded reimbursement program with the main objectives of enabling and encouraging children in grades K-8, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school and make bicycling and walking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative. Also, to implement projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic. Eligible infrastructure projects must be within two miles of a K-8 school. Collaboration with our public school district is required along with a resolution in support of the project from the Saddle Brook Board of Education.

Fire Station Construction Grants Act

This federal legislation will help construct new fire stations for America's firefighters. The Fire Station Construction Grants Act would authorize \$1 billion in fire station construction grants administered by FEMA for modifying, upgrading, and building fire and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) department facilities, including local fire and EMS stations and fire training facilities. More information is forthcoming and our Township grant writer will be closely monitoring this grant opportunity

FY22 Recreation Opportunities for individuals with Disabilities (ROID)

The ROID grant aims to assist local government entities in meeting their mandates, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, which include municipal recreation and leisure services for the disabled. There are two categories: Comprehensive, which are continuous, integrated programs promoting and providing the least restrictive environment for the individual with a disability and Special Event, which include any short-term recreation activity that lasts only one day or a few days.

Unfunded Grants

FY20 NJ Transit S5310

Our grant writer re-applied to the NJ 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. This grant was not funded.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Community Partnership Committee (CPC) / Access for All

The Committee met in July and September. The group discussed upcoming events, such as National Night Out, the Township Picnic, COVID-19 vaccine updates and testing options. The September meeting focused mostly on the needs of the community post Hurricane Ida. Food donations are always a priority and drop off are at Town Hall, Senior Center, and our Public Library. School representatives provided an update on back to school and transitioning back to full-time classroom instruction. There is a need for middle school uniforms and a drop box has been placed in the lobby at Town Hall for the month of October.

Mayor’s Youth Group (MYG)

The MYG is a group of Saddle Brook children who help out with projects and events in the community and make a positive impact. The youth group participates in various activities and community events throughout the year. The MYG is open to all students living in Saddle Brook in grades 4-12 as of September 2021. Members are not required to be students in the Saddle Brook School district. We meet monthly on Saturdays at Town Hall at 10AM. If you want more information, please check us out on our social media pages – Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Group Outing at Humdingers - Wednesday, August 25th

The members of the MYG had a fun outing at Humdingers in Paramus. This outing was a way to thank our members for all they do to serve our community. The kids enjoyed many activities, including bowling, laser tag, batting cages, and many arcade games. There was also pizza, soda and ice cream for all. Special thanks to my secretary, Christine Genuario, for organizing this outing.

Mayor's Walk – Saturday, August 28th and Township Picnic – Sunday, August 29th

Group members participated in both events and were a big help at the picnic serving food and drinks to our senior citizens.

Flood Mitigation Committee

The Committee met on Wednesday, September 29th at the Senior Center. Some topics discussed included FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS) and National Flood Insurance Program. The Township is in the process of being accepted into the (CRS), which will give us a rating based on various factors that include educating and preparing the community for a flood event. All municipalities start out with a rating of a 10 and as information is submitted and tasks are accomplished and documented, the rating improves. The Township will need to work together with our department heads to gather and document the necessary information to submit to FEMA. As our rating improves our residents will receive a reduction in their flood insurance premiums.

Beginning in October 2021, FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) will begin to offer more equitable and risk informed rates. The new premiums are the result of the program's new pricing methodology. The new methodology uses increased technological and mapping capabilities to determine and communicate a property's full flood risk. In addition, the new rating methodology has exposed inequities in pricing whereby some policyholders have been unjustly subsidizing other policyholders. New policies will be sold using the new methodology, and some existing policyholders may be eligible for immediate premium decreases when their policy renews. Under the previous methodology, all policyholders received annual increases year after year without knowing their full risk rate. While some policyholders will experience a decrease under the new methodology, others will experience an increase that is commensurate with their full risk rate. By statute, most rate increases are capped at 18% per year.

Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission will be cleaning and de-snagging the Saddle River at the request of Senator Joe Lagana and local officials from Saddle Brook, Rochelle Park and Lodi. The Township will work closely with all to ensure this needed work is accomplished. The Flood Committee plans to meet again sometime in November. Anyone interested in participating can contact my office at 201-587-2903 or Business Administrator Peter Lo Dico at 201-587-2909.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

NOTE: MOST EVENTS ARE PHOTOGRAPHED AND RECORDED. THE RECORDINGS ARE BROADCASTED ON OUR TOWN (PUBLIC ACCESS) TV, CH. 77 – CABLEVISION, CH. 38 – VERIZON FIOS. THE PHOTOS AND RECORDINGS ARE ALSO POSTED ON THE TOWNSHIP WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK PAGE.

National Night Out, Tuesday August 3rd

Our Police Department hosted a National Night Out celebration from 6PM-9PM outside at the new municipal complex. National Night Out is an event sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch, which is held annually on the first Tuesday in August. It was a great way to bring the community together to meet and thank our first responders who keep us safe every day. The main purpose of National Night Out is to increase awareness about police and public safety programs. Our Police Department was joined and assisted by members of our Volunteer Fire Department, Volunteer Ambulance Corps and Fire Prevention Bureau. Other local participants included the Woman's Club of Saddle Brook, Boy Scout Troop 213 and the Community Partnership Committee. We also had several representatives from state and county law enforcement and various social service organizations.

Mayor's Walk, Saturday August 28th

Thank you to everyone who came out for the Annual Mayor's Walk around the lake at the County Park. The Walk is part of The Mayor's Wellness Campaign, which is an initiative to improve the health and wellness of residents and business owners by providing nutritional advice and recreational opportunities. The goal is to get people to lead healthier, more active lives and schedule regular check-ups with their doctors. This year the event was sponsored by Ferraro Spina and Rehabilitation in Saddle Brook. Each participant received a free tee shirt to observe the event. Special thanks to Christine Genuario and Andy Gallo for all their assistance

Township Picnic, Sunday August 29th

It was great being able to get together again this year for the Town Picnic! This year was special since we were unable to celebrate last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I want to thank everyone for attending with a special thanks to our Project and Activities Committee led by Council President Karen D'Armino and Chairwomen Christine Genuario and Shannon Accomando. Thanks also to Business Administrator Peter LoDico and Recreation Director Andy Gallo for helping out. I can't thank our sponsors enough for their generous contributions and participation. We could not have had the picnic without their assistance. I also want to thank all the members of our Police Department, Department of Public Works, Volunteer Fire Department and Volunteer Ambulance Corps. We always appreciate the help from our civic organizations, including the Woman's Club, Boy Scouts and Mayor's Youth Group.

9/11 Remembrance Ceremony, Friday September 10th

This year marked the 20th Anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The Township held a remembrance ceremony to honor 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. Thank you to all who attended this special event.

Shredding Event

A free mobile shredding event was held in the parking lot of the new municipal building 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 Manuel Brenya of the Department of Public Works for their assistance. Special thanks to Mayor's Secretary, Christine Genuario, for planning and organizing the event.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Road Resurfacing

Mayhill Street Phase I

NJDOT Municipal Aid Program for resurfacing Mayhill Street from Leswing Avenue to the Route 80 Bridge. The only work item remaining is the replacement of the guide rail on the ramp leading up to the bridge over Route 80. This work must be coordinating with NJDOT which includes modification to the parapet to support the revised guide rail.

2020 Road Program Phase II.

The following roads were resurfaced in June 2021: Finnegan Avenue, McKenzie Street, Weller Terrace and a small portion of West Street. Some punch list items still remain.

Albany Street

The Township engineer assisted with our grant application to resurface Albany Street under the FY 2020 Community Development Block Grant funding in the amount of \$101,000. The project was awarded to Frank Macchione Construction of Rochelle Park, NJ. Work began in July and has been completed minus some punch list items.

2021 Road Program Phase 1:

Phase 1 consisted of Steinway Road, Burgess Drive and George Street. Bids were received and the contract was awarded to AJM of Clifton, NJ on July 1 in the amount of \$263,114.50. Concrete work commenced on August 16th and milling and paving took place at the end of August beginning of September. All work has been completed minus some punch list items.

2021 Road Program Phase 2:

The 2021 Road Program Phase 2 consists of Wilson Street and South Broadway. The project was awarded to Frank Macchione Construction of Rochelle Park, NJ in the amount of \$392,280.58. Concrete work should be starting in early October.

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. The plans are nearly complete and will be forwarded to NJDOT shortly for their review. The plan is to send the project out to bid this fall/early winter for spring construction.

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, fire house and ambulance headquarters. Construction on the new municipal complex began in July 2021. We began updating residents of the construction progress by posing photos on the Township website. There is a special section on the website that documents how the contractors are taking an empty building and transforming it into a municipal complex for our Township. This page will be updated as construction moves ahead.

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 pump stations, one on N. Midland Avenue and the other on Mayhill Street. Efforts will include preliminary design necessary as part of the funding request.

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-1706-21 (July 1, 2021)

An ordinance amending the Township code with the addition of a Chapter 207 entitled “Communication Facilities Right-of-Way Permits” to provide for the regulation of small cell wireless facilities within the municipal rights-of way.

Ordinance-1707-21 (August 5, 2021)

An ordinance amending Chapter 206 of the Township code regulating the operation of specific classes of cannabis businesses within its geographical boundaries

Ordinance-1708-21 (August 5, 2021)

An ordinance amending chapter 206 of the code by revising the AH-6 Affordable Housing Zoning District to facilitate an affordable housing development called Saddle Brook Family Apartments (Block 1401, Lot 18), and amending the Township zoning map and schedule of zoning requirements accordingly.

Saddle Brook Police Department – Scam Alert Seminar - Tuesday, July 20th

The Saddle Brook Police Department presented a Scam Alert Seminar at the Senior Citizen Center. Special thanks to Detective Sergeant Mark Buchak for organizing and instructing the class. Thanks, as well to Officer in Charge Captain James Galbo and Lieutenant Giuseppe Califano for their participation. The presentation was very informative and addressed common phone and in-person scams. Thank you to all that attended this very important class. It was videotaped and is being aired on Our Town TV, Ch. 38 Verizon Fios and Ch. 77 Cablevision.