

MAYOR'S QUARTERLY UPDATE
OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2020

COVID-19 UPDATE

Overview

In the last quarter of the year COVID-19 cases began to rise at a higher rate than in the summer months. In order to get this new wave under control, it's imperative that we wear face masks, limit indoor gatherings, and practice social distancing while in public. Let us each do our part to protect our community. To minimize the spread of COVID-19 during the holiday celebrations, the CDC recommended limiting the number of house guests to allow people from different households to remain at least 6 feet apart at all times. Guests were also asked to avoid direct contact, including handshakes and hugs, with others not from their household.

The NJ Governor's Executive Order #196 has limited the number of individuals at indoor gatherings to 10 persons with exceptions for religious services or celebrations, political activities, wedding ceremonies, funerals, or memorial services. Outdoor gatherings are limited to 25 persons. The governor also released an administrative order which clarified that indoor sports practices and competitions are subject to the indoor gathering limits of only 10 persons. However, a practice or competition can proceed with more than 10 persons as long as unessential people, such as spectators, are not present. With the increase in cases and hospitalizations throughout the state we must remain extra vigilant in following CDC guidelines and those experiencing cold and flu symptoms are encouraged to get tested. The health, safety, and welfare of all our residents is our highest priority. Please monitor the township website saddlebrooknj.us and our social media accounts for updated information.

Testing

Bergen New Bridge Medical Center in partnership with Bergen County is holding drive-thru COVID-19 nasal swab rapid testing at Bergen Community College located at 400 Paramus Rd, Paramus, NJ. You must pre-register to be tested. Please visit our website saddlebrooknj.us or bergencovidtesting.com for dates, times, and registration information.

Vaccination Information

Healthcare workers and emergency responders are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. If you meet the eligibility criteria and would like to be vaccinated, you can register online using the following links: covidvaccine.nj.gov or bergencovidvaccine.com. To view a list of vaccination site locations, visit the nj.gov website. The general public is now also able to pre-register for the vaccine by using the above link. Residents may be immediately eligible for the vaccine based on the answers they provide in the screening.

Building Closures

In order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our residents and employees, town hall was closed to the general public effective Monday, December 14, 2020. Employees are working regular business hours and can be contacted by phone or email. The senior center is closed until further notice but the senior bus service is available for doctor visits only. The Library is currently open with limited services. Please call 201-843-3287 (Ext. 1) or check their website: saddlebrook.bccls.org for operating hours and additional information.

Schools and Recreation

Our public schools are operating under a hybrid model consisting of remote and in-person instruction. Other than a few temporary suspensions of in-person learning, this plan has functioned safely and effectively. Student athletes participated in fall high school and recreation sports programs without any need to shut down or cancel practices or games. High School winter sports were delayed for a month (Nov. 30 – Dec. 30), but were permitted to resume Dec. 31st. All township winter recreation sports have been canceled.

BUDGET

Township Audit – 2019

In accordance with government auditing standards, an audit report of township financial statements for 2019 was issued by independent auditor, Ferraioli, Wielkotz, Cerullo & Cuva, P.A. The report was reviewed and recommendations considered at the December 3, 2020 council meeting. The audit has been posted on the township webpage at saddlebrooknj.us.

Preparation for 2021 Municipal Budget

Business Administrator Peter LoDico and I began scheduling budget hearings with department heads during the month of December. The department heads were instructed to complete budget worksheets for their projected fiscal requirements for 2021. Each department was asked not to exceed the state required spending cap for budget appropriations.

2021 Temporary Budget

Township Business Administrator Peter LoDico and I have reviewed the operational budget requests of township department heads. A temporary budget was prepared and adopted by the township council at the January 7, 2021 reorganization meeting. The temporary budget is 26.25 percent of our yearly 2020 municipal budget. We will be working with our township auditor and chief financial officer to prepare a permanent budget for introduction at the March 2021 council meeting.

GRANTS

Grants Received

Bergen County Community Development Block Grant FY20 (CDBG)

Our grant writer submitted our FY20 priority #1 and #2 CDBG requests, which are Albany Street improvements and barrier free entrances throughout the municipality. The township recently received notice in October that we were awarded \$101,000 for Albany Street and \$75,000 for barrier free entrances for the new municipal complex project.

Fiscal Year (FY) 21 Municipal Aid Grant Program.

Our grant writer 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. The township received notification in late November that our application was approved and the project will receive funds in the amount of \$200,000.

Bergen County Open Space Grant

Our grant writer submitted our 2020 Bergen County Open Space Municipal Park Improvements application in the amount of \$60,000 for Mayhill Street Park (Adjacent to library). This program is designed to supplement local efforts and therefore requires a dollar-for-dollar match from the municipality. On December 10, 2020, the township was approved by the Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund Committee for \$30,000.

CARES ACT—Coronavirus Federal Stimulus Package

The application was submitted by Emergency Management Coordinator, Chief of Police Robert Kugler. On December 24, 2020, the township received a direct deposit of \$56,433 from the Bergen County CARES Municipal Reimbursement Fund.

Pending Grants

FY21 Bergen County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

The FY21 Bergen County CDBG grant period has opened as of October 31 and will close January 29, 2021. CDBG funding is used for a wide range of countywide, regional, municipal, and social service quality of life improvements targeted principally toward low-to-moderate income and special needs residents throughout Bergen County. In working with our grant writer and township engineer, two projects were identified which include Priority #1: Congress Street and Priority #2: Barrier Free Improvements to New Municipal Complex. A resolution will be presented for approval to the township council at the next meeting on 2/2/2021.

Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation

Our grant writer worked 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.

FEMA AFG-S COVID-19 Supplemental Round II

Our grant writer filed an application for this program on behalf of our volunteer fire department. 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. Round II was open strictly to volunteer and combination fire departments; no career departments nor EMS organizations were permitted to apply for this round of funding.

Grant Work / Funding Opportunities

FY20 FEMA Assistance to Firefighters (AFG)

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program is available and will close February 12, 2021. AFG 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 will be applying for a re-application of the department's FY19 proposal for a washer/dryer unit, gear, and other PPE.

New Jersey Transit S5310

Our grant writer is re-applying to the New Jersey 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. NJ Transit administers the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Section 5310 Grant Program in the State of New Jersey. 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.

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.

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.

Grants Denied

Federal Emergency Mgmt. Agency (FEMA) Assistance for Firefighters Grant (AFG) FY19

New Jersey Transit S5310 - FY2019 and FY2018

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Mayor's Youth Group (MYG)

The MYG met on Saturday, September 26th at 10am at the Senior Center. It was the first in-person meeting since February 2020. The primary discussed involved our participation in the township's Halloween Decorating Contest. The group met again via Zoom on Saturday, December 5th at 10am. Discussion included judging the township's Christmas Decorating Contest and MYG members contributing gifts to the Toys 4 Tots campaign and donating food to the Saddle Brook Food Pantry. On Saturday, December 19th members of the MYG brought their donations for the Toys for Tots collection at the Saddle Brook Police Headquarters. Donations of food were also turned over to Pastor Christopher of the First Reformed Church for the Saddle Brook Food Pantry.

Community Partnership Committee

Meetings

Committee members met in-person at 7pm at the Senior Center on Thursday, October 22nd and Thursday, November 19th. The committee also participated in a Zoom meeting on Thursday, December 17th.

Thanksgiving Baskets

On November 21st, Thanksgiving baskets, donated by the Lodi Moose Lodge, were delivered to families in Saddle Brook. A total of thirteen baskets, which included a frozen turkey with all the fixings, were given out to grateful residents in need of assistance during the holiday season. Thank you to the Lodi Moose Lodge #1971 for their generosity and all the charitable work they do in Bergen County and beyond. Special thanks to Emil Sudol, his fellow Moose members, and Garfield Fire Company #4 for packaging the baskets and delivering them. Thank you Pastor Christopher Wolf, Howard Weinberg, and Christine Genuario of our Community Partnership Committee for facilitating the Thanksgiving basket donations.

Christmas Gift Cards

The committee facilitated the donation of gift cards from Walmart in Saddle Brook to needy township families during the winter holiday season. The township appreciates Walmart for their generosity and support of the community.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Township Celebrates Senior Citizens Birthdays with Mobile Bash!

On Thursday and Friday, October 8 and 9, the council and I celebrated birthdays of residents 90 years and over with a mobile bash. Also joining in the festivities were Police Chief Bob Kugler, Senior Center Director Joe Lecce, and Senior Bus Driver Howie Rofofsky. Officials traveled in the town's senior bus escorted by Chief Kugler and visited the homes of each of the celebrants. Thursday was military combat servicemen and Friday was civilian woman who have contributed greatly to the town. Happy Birthday to all!

Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony – Friday, November 27, 2020

Our annual Tree Lighting Ceremony was held at town hall, but due to Covid-19 restrictions, we were unable to have our traditional holiday party afterwards. The ceremony was videotaped and aired on Our Town TV, Ch. 77 Cablevision, Ch. 38 Verizon Fios. The video and photographs were also posted on our township Facebook page and website. Special acknowledgment to our Projects and Activities Committee, specifically Chairwomen Shannon Accomando and Christine Genuario for planning and organizing everything along with Councilwoman Karen D'Arminio. Special thanks to Pastor Christopher Wolf of First Reformed Church for doing opening and closing prayers. A big thank you as well to Recreation Director Andy Gallo for use of his DJ audio equipment and for providing holiday music. Also, Joe Schilp for playing Santa Claus and Thomas Van Winkle for taking photos. Lastly, we appreciated the efforts and assistance of our department of public work and police department employees.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Completed Projects

Kuhn Court and Bell Avenue Water Main

Work commenced on September 14, 2020 and was completed by mid-October. The new main is activated and the road was paved as part of the 2020 Road Program in late November.

2020 Road Program

Work has been completed and our township engineer has authorized payment to contractors for the following street:

- Jamros Terrace
- Colonial Avenue
- Woodcrest Place
- Danna Way
- Taggart Way

Police Building HVAC Improvements

GMT Contracting Corporation was awarded a bid in the amount of \$95,000 for improvement of the HVAC system. The work, which consisted of insulating the piping and duct work, was completed at the end of November.

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. Fencing was erected along the east side of the property and a project rendering sign was posted in the front of that area. The plans should be completed shortly and the work started within the next couple of weeks.

Albany Street:

Our township engineer worked with our grant writer on a FY 2020 Community Development Block Grant application to resurface Albany Street. We received an announcement in late December that the township was awarded grant funds in the amount of \$101,000 toward this project.

Mayhill Street Phase I

Mayhill Street from Leswing Avenue to the Route 80 Bridge was resurfaced using funds in the amount of \$182,653 awarded under the NJDOT Municipal Aid Program. The total amount of the project was \$216,288. The project is mostly completed with the exception of the guide rail on the ramp leading up to the bridge over Route 80.

Howard Street Force Main Rehabilitation

The township is still considering a proposal submitted by our township engineer 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 #1689-20

Amending Chapter 206-29, Article VIII Entitled “Vision Obstruction on Corner Lots

Chapter 206-29 was repealed and it is revised as follows: In any district, plantings, signs or other structures or obstructions to vision, higher than three feet above the existing street grade at the center line shall not be erected, planted or maintained in the required front yard setback. On a corner lot, both yards adjacent to each street, shall be treated as front yards.

Ordinance No. 1690-20

The sum of \$310,000 is hereby appropriated for COVID-19 affected revenue losses and shall be deemed a special emergency appropriation. The amount to finance the appropriation shall be provided for in succeeding annual budgets beginning in 2022 by the inclusion of at least 1/5 of the amount authorized pursuant to this act (N.J.S.A. 40A:4-55).

Ordinance No. 1691-20

The sum of \$490,000 is hereby appropriated for COVID-19 affected revenue losses and shall be deemed a special emergency appropriation. The amount to finance the appropriation shall be provided for in succeeding annual budgets beginning in 2022 by the inclusion of at least 1/5 of the amount authorized pursuant to this act (N.J.S.A. 40A:4-55).

Ordinance No. 1692-20

Amending Chapter 48 Entitled “Affordable Housing”

Whereas, the township council recognizes the need to amend Chapter 48, “Affordable Housing”, of the township code so that the same conforms to the settlement involving the affordable housing litigation presently in the Superior Court of Bergen County.

OTHER

Police Promotions

On Saturday, November 27th, I presided over a promotion ceremony at town hall. Sergeant Doug Habermann was promoted to Lieutenant, and Police Officers Marc Buchak and Christopher Stanton were promoted to Sergeant. Congratulations to all the officers and their families on their well-deserved promotions and best wishes to them in their new supervisory roles. These promotions were necessary to fill vacancies in the department due to retirements.