

QUARTERLY UPDATE JANUARY – MARCH 2022

COVID-19 UPDATE

After months of encouraging news, our state began 2022 amid an unprecedented rise in cases of COVID-19, driven largely by the highly transmissible Omicron variant. December 2021 had been the heaviest amount of new positive cases in Saddle Brook and statewide since we began keeping track of cases. Thankfully, our vaccines and boosters proved to be safe and highly effective at protecting people from serious illness and death.

Omicron appeared to spread more easily than previous variants and more breakthrough infections were occurring in people who were fully vaccinated. The good news was that Omicron produced milder symptoms and our vaccines did their job protecting us against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths due to infection. Given the increasing presence of the Omicron variant at that time, the township took action to protect the health and safety of our employees and residents by implementing protocols requiring face coverings in township facilities. The senior center was closed for January and all activities were canceled except senior bus rides for doctor visits only.

After experiencing a sharp rise in infections, Covid-19 cases peaked in the middle of January 2022. Cases were down 70 percent over 2 weeks leading into February, hospitalizations were down almost 60 percent, and testing had slowed significantly.

Even though we had made great progress against the Omicron variant in such a short period, it was recommended that residents remain vigilant and everyone was encouraged to get vaccinated and boosted. We also followed CDC guidance and recommended wearing a mask in public indoor settings, regardless of vaccination status. Protocols requiring face coverings in township facilities remained in effect until March 1, 2022.

Governor Murphy lifted the mask mandate inside schools on Monday, March 7th making the wearing of masks optional in all school districts throughout the state. The Governor also provided additional guidance to the schools regarding social distancing and implications for contact tracing. Saddle Brook schools continued with fully stocked sanitation stations in all buildings. The entire staff, students, and parents must be commended for adhering to the Governor's guidelines and working together to have students be able to attend school each day.

BUDGET

Preparation for 2022 Municipal Budget

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 2021 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.

Bond Ordinances

Ordinance-1719-22: A bond ordinance was passed to authorize the 2022 road improvement program, to appropriate the sum of \$1,600,000 to pay the cost thereof, to authorize the issuance of bonds to finance such appropriation.

Ordinance-1720-22: A bond ordinance was passed to authorize the undertaking of various improvements to municipal buildings and property, to appropriate the sum of \$375,000 to pay the cost thereof, to finance such appropriation.

GRANTS

Pending Grants

Department of Defense (DOD): Law Enforcement Support Office (LESO) 1033 Program

01/28/2022: Our grant writer successfully coordinated with our police department to enroll in the LESO 1033 Program. The township authorized enrollment in an endorsement resolution on December 2, 2021. The LESO program facilitates the transfer of certain excess DOD property to law enforcement agencies, providing them with the critical equipment needed to keep communities and officers safe. The only costs incurred by the municipality are for shipping of equipment that cannot be picked up. Available equipment can include but is not limited to vehicles, office furniture, kits, and supplies. Enrollment is ongoing and must be reapproved yearly by the governing body.

FY22 Bergen County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

12/20/2021: Our grant writer successfully submitted two priority applications that consist of Priority #1: a new municipal elevator for \$240,000; Priority #2: Congress Street for \$227,000. The CDBG program 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. It is relative to the annual allocation the Bergen County Division of Community Development receives.

FY22 Assistance to Firefighters Grant

12/15/2021: Our grant writer successfully submitted this application on behalf of the Saddle Brook Fire Department (SBFD) for \$12,959.35. The SBFD has requested turnout gear consisting of dry suits, all-terrain boots, and rugged water wear gloves. This grant focuses on enhancing the safety of the public and firefighters concerning fire and fire-related hazards. This program provides financial assistance directly to eligible applicants for critical training and equipment.

NJDOT - Safe Routes to School

10/14/2021: Our grant writer submitted this grant for \$214,418.77. The proposed project aims to create a safe walking and bicycling environment for students by constructing the Americans with Disabilities Act and bike rack installation, crosswalk installation, reconstruction and improvements to existing crosswalks, detectable warning surfaces, and sidewalk improvements. The inclusion of such improvements aids in minimizing hazards and accidents both vehicular and environmental.

Grant Work in Progress / Funding Opportunities

FY22 Federal Appropriations – Community Project Funding (CPF)

As part of the fiscal year 2022 appropriations process, the U.S. House Appropriations Committee announced a new (CPF) program that allows members of Congress to submit no more than 10 eligible requests to set aside funds within specific federal accounts for certain projects proposed by public institutions, localities, states, Tribes, or non-profits. This application is due shortly.

FY22 Bergen County – Open Space (Park Development)

The Bergen County Department of Parks, Division of Land Management has announced the 2022 Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund Grant Program. The 2022 grant cycle accepts applications seeking aid in four categories: Land Acquisition, Historic Preservation, Floodplain Protection, and Municipal Park Improvements. The township is considering eligible projects and must file a letter of intent shortly.

FY23 NJ Law and Public Safety (LPS) Pedestrian Safety, Education, and Enforcement

All municipalities are eligible to apply for funds to be used for the following: engineering and design of traffic signs; purchasing and installing of traffic signs; educational or training materials or media campaigns concerning pedestrian safety; compensation for law enforcement officers or authorized crossing guards assigned to an intersection, crosswalk or other roadways; personnel or contractual services; and other commodities. This application is due by April 30, 2022.

FY23 NJ Law and Public Safety (LPS) State and Community Highway Safety Grant

Eligible projects must identify a local highway traffic safety problem, supporting statistics, causes, a strategy to solve problems, countermeasures, performance objectives, measurement standards, and a schedule of activities and goals. Projects should address federal priority areas: Alcohol and Other Drug Countermeasures, Police Traffic Services, Traffic Records, Motorcycle Safety, Speed Control, Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety, Roadway Safety, Occupant Protection, and Emergency Medical Services. This application is due by April 30, 2022.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Community Partnership Committee (CPC) / Access for All

The CPC continues to collect food for the Saddle Brook Food Pantry. Drop boxes are located at the town hall and the senior center. The committee has been working with township schools, churches, and individuals to assist with the humanitarian efforts for the people of war-ravaged Ukraine. Many are collecting funds, food, clothing, and other items to assist in this effort. Pastor Christopher Wolf and other CPC members will be attending the May council meeting where township businesses will be recognized for their generosity in donating to various causes and giving back to the community in a variety of ways.

Mayor's Youth Group (MYG)

The MYG meet on Saturday, February 12th, and swore in new youth group officers. Tyler Pozzi will serve as our President, Madeline Girgenti as Vice President, and Eva Shah will serve as Secretary. Congratulations to all our officers and we look forward to a great year ahead! Members of the MYG will be helping at the Township's Easter Celebration on Saturday, April 16th, and will also be participating in an Earth Day event and clean-up at Tri-Centennial Park on Saturday, April 23rd.

Flood Mitigation Committee

The committee will be meeting again on Wednesday, April 27th and all town residents are welcome to attend. If you're interested in joining our committee, please contact my office at 201-587-2903 for more information. The township has joined with other municipalities in our area to discuss ways that we can work together to help mitigate flooding in the towns along the Saddle River. A petition was filed by the group requesting that the federal government step in and assist us to mitigate the flooding problems before more disasters occur. Please check out the petition, and if you agree that federal assistance is needed, please sign it. The petition can be found online at <https://chnng.it/gCmNmDtN>.

We have still awaiting a response to our application to be included in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) Community Rating System (CRS) and National Flood Insurance Program. The township is awaiting acceptance into the CRS, which will give us a rating based on various factors that include educating and preparing the community for a flood event. If our rating improves our residents will receive a reduction in their flood insurance premiums

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.

Fire Department Installation Dinner – Saturday, February 12th

It was an honor to swear in our new Fire Chief Jason Sibani and Assistant Fire Chief David Mielnicki at the fire department installation dinner. Congratulations to both of them and thank you to outgoing Chief Joseph Polizzotti who did a tremendous job in 2020-2021. New firefighters and officers were also installed and welcomed into the department. Thank you to all our volunteer firefighters for the outstanding service they provide to our community. The members of the township council also attended the dinner to show their appreciation and support for the members of the fire department and their families.

Women in History Month

Every year the township council and I celebrate by recognizing women from town who have made significant contributions to the community. Each woman has played an important role in serving the public and giving back to the residents of Saddle Brook. The selection process was based on the recipient's contributions in one of four specific categories. These categories included Outstanding Citizen, Community Service, Government Leader, and Educational Leader. This year's recipients were: Francis Abate – Outstanding Citizens; Paula Bernstein and Barbara Macko – Community Service; Hayley Traverso and Victoria Torbic – Government Leader; School Superintendent Toni Violetti – Educational Leader. Congratulations to all the recipients and their families

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Mayhill Street Phase 2

The township was awarded \$200,000 from the FY 2021 N.J. Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Municipal Aid Program to resurface Mayhill St. the Route 80 Bridge to Market St. Our township engineer has prepared bid documents and the project is scheduled to go out to bid in April of this year. This project also includes paving the new municipal complex parking lot.

2021 Road Program Phase 3

The township engineer is wrapping up plans for a contract to resurface Garden Street and Kenwood Court as part of Phase 3 of the 2021 Road Program. This project is scheduled to go out to bid in April and should be awarded in May.

Hobson Avenue Water Main Replacement

Our township engineer submitted a proposal for engineering services for the replacement of the water main on Hobson Avenue. Plans have been prepared and the services are to be connected to a newly installed water main on Midland Avenue as part of the first phase of the Grande Project on Van Bussom Avenue and an extension of that water main to connect additional services. These service connections currently connect to Garfield's water main. Plans will include resurfacing Hobson Avenue after the water main installation is complete.

2022 Road Program

The township uses criteria for choosing streets to be resurfaced. After inspection and careful consideration by the township engineer and DPW Superintendent Robert Hicswa, streets will be chosen that are most in need of repair. Schepis Avenue and Graham Terrace will be included along with four or five others as part of the 1.6 million dollars 2022 road program. Surveying and planning preparation for the remainder of the roads will be ongoing.

Municipal Complex – 55 Mayhill Street

The project is in the construction phase of retrofitting/renovating 55 Mayhill Street (formerly Home Depot) into a much-needed civic center and municipal complex that includes municipal offices, court, firehouse, and ambulance headquarters. Construction began in July 2021 and is on schedule for a September 2022 completion. We began updating residents on the construction progress by posting photos on the township website. There is a special section on the township website that keeps residents updated with the ongoing construction, which includes photos and a description of the work being done.

Other Projects

Cambridge Avenue – New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Grant Funding

The township received grant funding from the NJDOT to pave Cambridge Avenue. Since the township is awaiting word on the Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) grant, which includes sidewalks and ADA ramp work on Cambridge Avenue, the township engineer has recommended that we put off paving until the spring of 2023 so funds can be maximized should the township be awarded funding under the SRTS program.

Police Building Heat, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Improvements

Our township engineer has confirmed that as of April 1, 2022, the township is part of the Omnia Co-op, which the township plans to use to order the HVAC parts and equipment to replace the rooftop unit that currently handles HVAC for the first floor. The township engineer will be ordering materials for the project shortly.

Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure Improvements

Our 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. The effort will include the preliminary design necessary as part of the funding request.

OTHER

Grand Openings

On Saturday, January 29th I attended the grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony for Grumpy's Eat Big, 522 Saddle River Road. On Wednesday, March 16th I attended the grand re-opening of Fast Twitch Performance and Recovery, 224 Midland Avenue. It's an exciting time when a new business opens in town and it's always a pleasure welcoming them to the community. Congratulations and best of luck to Grumpy's Eat Big and Fast Twitch Performance and Recovery.

Lunch Donated to Senior Citizens

On Wednesday, February 16th, the Fair Lawn Sunrise Rotary provided lunch for the members of our senior citizen center. Our seniors were treated to sandwiches from Family Affair Italian Deli in Fair Lawn. Council President Flo Mazzer, Councilwoman Karen D'Arminio, Recreation Director Andy Gallo, and I attended the lunch and thanked the Fair Lawn Sunrise Rotary members for their kindness and generosity.

Saddle Brook High School Middle School Chorus Performed at the Senior Center

On March 7th, the Choraleers, a select choir of students from Saddle Brook High / Middle School, performed at our local AARP meeting at the senior center. They did an awesome job entertaining the crowd with a variety of songs led by Choral Director, Malcolm Couden. Our seniors were very appreciative and raved about the show. At the meeting, Council President Florence Mazzer, Councilwoman Karen D'Arminio, Supt. of Schools Toni Violetti, and High School Principal Donald Meisch. A big thank you to Mr. Couden and the Choraleers!

Saddle Brook High School Graphic Arts Class Recreating Township Seal

On Wednesday, March 16th, I visited Mrs. Dawn Massa's graphic design class at the Saddle Brook High School to talk about and consider a project where the students design a new township seal. Superintendent Toni Violetti and Principal Donald Meisch attended the meeting to give their input. I was very impressed with the level of student engagement and participation. The students were inquisitive and asked thought-provoking questions. We are hoping the class can create a new seal that more accurately represents the current times yet still captures the history of the township. The township is putting confidence in Mrs. Massa and the students to come up with a new design that will be pleasing to all concerned!

Felicia Conti's 100th Year Birthday Celebration

On Saturday, March 26th, the township did a drive-by birthday parade for resident Felicia Conti's 100th Birthday. Members of the Saddle Brook Police Department, Volunteer Fire Department, and Ambulance Corps drove past Felicia's home with lights and sirens to celebrate with the birthday girl and her family. Councilman Dave Gieriek and I stopped by to drop off gifts and offer well wishes. Felicia, who turned 100 on March 23, 2022, moved to Saddle Brook from Bronx, NY 21 years ago. Thank you to all who participated and helped to make Felicia's party a joyful event.