

QUARTERLY UPDATE
APRIL – JUNE 2022

COVID-19 UPDATE

The country has made great strides to slow the spread of COVID-19. Thanks to the incredible progress made in vaccinations, treatments, and testing, COVID-19 no longer controls our lives. Our communities have reopened, and our schools are back in session. Every statewide mask mandate in the country has been lifted. However, we must stay vigilant due to rising cases, driven by the continued spread of the Omicron variant and sub-variants. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that Omicron represents most of all new COVID-19 infections, with the northeast being the hardest-hit region. Over the last three months, New Jersey has seen an uptick in cases. However, hospitalizations and deaths remain low.

We must all remember that the best way to protect ourselves and others is to stay up-to-date with vaccinations and boosters and get tested when potentially exposed or sick. Private insurance and Medicaid do cover at-home tests for free. Available vaccines are safe and highly effective at protecting people from grave illness and death. Booster shots provide optimal protection, especially against the Omicron variant. Vaccinated and boosted people are 41 times less likely to die of COVID-19 than unvaccinated individuals. Residents five and older are eligible for a vaccine, and fully inoculated residents ages 12 and over are eligible for a booster dose at any vaccine location across the state. Anyone 50 and older is eligible for a second booster dose at least four months after their first booster shot.

New Jersey continues to be among the nation's most-vaccinated states. More than 6.94 million residents have received their initial course of vaccinations, and more than 7.8 million have received a first dose since vaccinations began in December 2020. Over 4 million people in the state eligible for boosters have received one.

FOR GENERAL INFO. ABOUT COVID-19, TESTING, AND VACCINES:

- <https://www.covid.nj.gov>
- <https://www.co.bergen.nj.us/covid-19-information-links>
- Dial 2-1-1 or Toll-Free Call Center 1-800-222-1222
- Vaccine Call Center 1-855-568-0545

BUDGET

Budget Hearing and Adoption

There was a budget hearing during the council meeting on Thursday, May 3, 2022. Township auditor Steve Wielkott was present at the meeting and was available for questions concerning the budget and township finances. The budget was adopted at the regular council meeting on Thursday, June 2, 2022.

General Information and Highlights

Saddle Brook's municipal budget will increase by \$98.76 for an average assessment of \$408,000. The township council and I feel that this budget represents what is needed to maintain services, continue our infrastructure programs such as paving roads, as well as continue to fund the Special Law Enforcement Officers (SLEO3) that are assigned to our schools for the safety of our children and school staff. It also provides funding for hiring personnel in the police department and DPW due to retirements. The increase is primarily due to a \$500,000 increase in solid waste and recycling costs.

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

GRANTS

Grant Applications – Submitted/Pending

FY22 New Jersey Department of Transportation – Municipal Aid

06/29/2022: 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. This application was submitted for \$458,663 for improvements to Alberta Drive.

United States BJA – Bulletproof Vest Partnership

06/27/2022: The purpose of the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act of 1998 is to protect the lives of law enforcement officers by equipping law enforcement officers with armor vests. The Act authorizes \$25 million annually for three years, with the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), U.S. Department of Justice, responsible for administering the program. Eligible jurisdictions may request funds to help purchase one vest per officer per fiscal year. Federal payments will cover up to 50 percent of each jurisdiction's total vest costs. Our police department has requested eight vests for \$4,708.

Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund

05/26/2022: 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 in four categories: Land Acquisition, Historic Preservation, Floodplain Protection, and Municipal Park Improvements. The township has filed a letter of intent to improve Mayhill Street Park for \$192,000.

Bergen County Community Development Block Grant COVID-19

05/06/2022: The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) authorized the allocation of funds to respond to the effects of COVID-19. The CARES Act made available 5 billion dollars in Community Development Block Grant Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) funds. This will be the third round of allocations distributed by the County of Bergen, and the township has requested \$40,400 for COVID-19 relief reimbursement.

United States Department of Defense (DOD) – 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 specific excess DOD property to law enforcement agencies, providing them with the critical equipment to keep communities and officers safe. The only costs incurred by the municipality are shipping 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.

FEMA – 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.

Grant Work in Progress / Funding Opportunities

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs – Recreational Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs funds governmental entities to develop or expand recreational programs for individuals with disabilities within their communities. The township is interested in pursuing this grant opportunity, and the application must be submitted by 08/05/2022.

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs – American Rescue Plan Firefighters Grant

This competitive grant supports local and regional fire department firefighters by ensuring they have proper fire protection, cleaning, and sanitization equipment. Ensuring that firefighters are adequately protected against the COVID-19 virus, and the strain of emergency fire requests is vital given the current stress on communities confronting the pandemic. Access to funding to purchase the appropriate gear, clothing, and equipment is critical for those fire departments with limited operating budgets and large numbers of volunteers. The township is interested in pursuing this grant opportunity, and the application must be submitted by 08/13/2022.

T-Mobile – Hometown Grant

In April 2021, T-Mobile announced Hometown Grants, a \$25 million, five-year initiative to support the people and organizations who help small towns across America thrive and grow by providing funding to kick start important new community development projects. Hometown Grants are given every quarter to up to 25 small towns. They are awarding up to 100 towns a year with project funding up to \$50,000, focusing on revitalizing community spaces in towns with 50,000 people or less. The township is interested in pursuing this grant opportunity, and the application must be submitted by 09/30/2022.

Grants Awarded

FY21 New Jersey Department of Transportation – Municipal Aid

This program provides municipalities with transportation-based grants to supplement their transportation programs. The township submitted the grant application on 06/23/2021 and was awarded \$216,000 to improve Cambridge Avenue by Helen I. Smith School.

FY22 Bergen County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Two priority applications were submitted on 12/20/2021, Priority #1: a new municipal elevator for \$240,000; Priority #2: Congress Street paving 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. At the central region's allocation meeting, it was recommended that Saddle Brook receive approximately \$277,000 in community development funding to be split evenly for both projects.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Mayor's Youth Group (MYG)

Members of the MYG helped at the Township's Easter Celebration on Saturday, April 16th, and participated in an Earth Day event and clean-up at Tri-Centennial Park on Saturday, April 23rd. The MYG met on Saturday, May 21st, and discussed our participation in the upcoming Township Picnic on July 2nd. Members were recruited to help bring food to the seniors at the picnic, which goes 12-4 pm.

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 different causes, including the collection of funds, food, clothing, and other items to help those in need. Pastor Christopher Wolf and other CPC members attended the May 5, 2022, council meeting where township businesses were recognized for their generosity in donating to various causes and giving back to the community in multiple ways.

Flood Mitigation Committee Meetings, Wed. 4/27/2022 and Wed. 6/29/2022

Meetings are held at the senior center starting at 6:30 pm, and all town residents are welcome to attend. Topics of discussion at the meetings included flood-prone areas of the township, the status of the township's application to join the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Community Rating System program, and the erosion taking place at the north end of Otto Pehle Pond.

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. The group filed a petition requesting that the federal government step in and assist us in mitigating the flooding problems before more disasters occur. Please check out and sign the petition if you agree that federal assistance is needed. The petition can be found online at <https://chnng.it/gCmNmDtN>.

Congressman Bill Pascrell helped pass the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022, authorizing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to work on water resource projects to build and study new flood management, harbor navigation, dam, levee, and ecosystem restoration projects throughout the nation. At Congressman Pascrell's request, the measure includes several northern New Jersey priorities in the legislation, including \$69,900,000 for wastewater and stormwater management.

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.

Little League Opening Day Parade - Saturday, April 16th, 11 am

We had excellent weather and a great time at our Little League Opening Day Parade and Ceremony. Many of us look forward to the beginning of spring and the start of town baseball. I want to thank Little League President Mark Annunziato, his executive board, along with all the managers, coaches, volunteers, parents, and sponsors for all they do to support the program. Thanks also to our police department and DPW for assisting with detouring traffic and the fire department and ambulance corps for participating in the parade.

Easter Celebration – Saturday, April 16th, 12-2 pm

The Easter Celebration was held at the Saddle Brook High School gym. It's always a great opportunity to bring families with young children together for a fun-filled afternoon. There were games, an Easter egg patch, a face painter, and photos with the Easter Bunny. Thank you, Councilwoman Karen D'Arminio, Councilman Shannon Accomando, and Christine Genuario of our Projects and Activities Committee for organizing the event. Thanks also to the Mayor's Youth Group members for helping set up and work the games. Special thanks to our Easter Bunny, Thomas Van Winkle, and Rafael Gonzalez of Enlacosa for videotaping and taking photos of the celebration.

Memorial Day Parade, Sunday, May 29

The township celebrated Memorial Day with our annual parade in honor of the men and women who served in our country's armed forces and in memory of those who made the supreme sacrifice. The weather was perfect, and everyone enjoyed the festivities. Thank you to the following: Cmdr. Lou Verile and Romaine Sinniger VFW Post 3484 parade committee, Cmdr. Robert Paterson and Jamros-Baker-Schneider American Legion Post # 415, Parade Gold Sponsors, and Grand Marshal Joseph Polizzotti. Special thanks to former Saddle Brook Mayor Louis D'Arminio, Assemblywoman Lisa Swain, Assemblyman Chris Tully, and Bergen County Clerk John Hogan for their participation. Also, Thomas Van Winkle for joining in the parade and taking photographs. Finally, we appreciated the efforts and assistance of the S.B. Volunteer Fire Department and Honor Guard, S.B. Volunteer Ambulance Corps, S.B. Police Department, and SB. Department of Public Works.

Mayor's Fishing Derby, Saturday, June 18

The Annual Mayor's Fishing Derby was held at Otto Pehle Lake in Saddle River County Park from 9 am to 12 pm. The weather was beautiful, and the kids had a great day of fishing. Thank you, Christine Genuario, for supervising registration and helping organize the event. Also, the Saddle Brook Volunteer Ambulance Corps members for standing by in case anyone needed medical attention. Special thanks to resident Matt Benus for his assistance in identifying and measuring the fish caught. We also appreciate Thomas Van Winkle for taking photos and the attendance and efforts of Recreation Director Andy Gallo and our DPW employees assigned to the event. All participants received trophies, and Derby winners received special gifts (fishing poles and tackle boxes) donated by Walmart of Saddle Brook. Special thanks to Walmart for their kindness and generosity.

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 prepared bid documents, and the project went out to bid and was awarded to Frank Macchione Construction for \$573,810. This project also includes paving the new municipal complex parking lot; work is slated to begin this summer.

2021 Road Program Phase 3

Our township engineer was authorized to prepare bid documents and construction management for a third phase of the 2021 Road Program. The project includes resurfacing Garden Street and Kenwood Court. The project was bid and awarded to Frank Macchione Construction for \$171,362. Work is tentatively scheduled to commence in the second week of July.

Hobson Avenue and Midland Avenue Water Main Replacement

Our township engineer has been authorized to prepare plans for this water main project which consists of the replacement of the main on Hobson and the connection of services to a newly installed water main on Midland Avenue as part of the first phase of the Grande Project on Van Bussom Avenue, and 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. Preparation of bid documents is ongoing.

2022 Road Program

The township engineer has been authorized for the 2022 Road Program, which consists of Skillman Terrace, Spindler Terrace, Graham Terrace, Schepis Avenue, North Boulevard, South Boulevard, and Adrianna Street. Surveys are in progress, and the bids were broken into two phases. The first phase consists of Skillman Terrace, Spindler Terrace, Graham Terrace, and Schepis Avenue, while Phase II will consist of North and South Blvd and Adrianna Street. Phase I plans are complete, and the bid opening was conducted on June 30th and awarded to 4 Clean Up Inc. for \$733,440. Phase II plans are ongoing.

Cambridge Avenue Road Improvements

The township engineer has submitted a proposal for improvements to Cambridge Avenue, partially funded by the FY22 NJDOT Municipal Aid Program. Work will not commence until the township receives word on a Safe Routes to Schools Grant, which includes sidewalk work along Cambridge Avenue adjacent to Helen I Smith Elementary School. The township engineer will prepare the plans but will wait to go out to bid until the word is heard on the Safe Routes grant announcement. It is projected that the township will prepare the bid documents in the fall of 2022 and go out to bid in the winter of 2022. The job should start in the spring of 2022.

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 started updating residents on the construction progress by posting photos on the township website. A special section on the township website keeps residents updated with the ongoing construction, including pictures and a work description.

Other Projects

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. Efforts will include the preliminary design necessary as part of the funding request.

Police Building HVAC Improvements

Our township engineer has prepared construction documents to replace the rooftop unit that handles HVAC for the first floor. Plans are complete, and a work order has been submitted to order the equipment under the Omnia Co-op, which the township joined as of April 1. The township has received a quote from Omni Co-op and will be ordering materials for the project shortly. We are waiting for Trane Technologies to evaluate the system and recommend temporary fixes until the new unit arrives.

OTHER

Ordinances Passed

Ordinance # 1718-22 was passed at the April 6th council meeting supplementing chapter 206 of the township code regulating the operation of specific classes of cannabis businesses within its geographical boundaries

Ordinance # 1721-22 was passed at the June 2nd council meeting. This 2022 calendar year ordinance authorizes the township to exceed the municipal budget appropriation limits and establish a cap bank (N.J.S.A. 40a: 4-45.14).

Township Website Enhancement

Several critical accessibility improvements that have been made to the township website. It now has a translation tool visitors can use to change the text into their language. A software program called a widget was installed that enables anyone to make the website content easier to see, read, and understand. This includes a text reader, control of blinking, change of text colors, size, and font. A virtual key, keyboard navigation, and a description of all images. Special thanks to Joe Obiso and JKO Consulting for their advice and implementation of these improvements.

Businesses Recognized at Council Meeting

Four township business members received special recognition at our township council meeting on May 5, 2022. The recipients were Eugene Pate, store manager of Acme Supermarket; Nitin Parikh, store manager of Dollar General; Peter Ferraro, owner/operator of Ferraro Spine and Rehabilitation Center; and Jack Slater, manager of Walmart. The township is fortunate to receive overwhelming support from many local businesses. Those being recognized stand out by playing a vital role in making Saddle Brook the great town it is. The meeting was an opportunity to thank them for contributing every year to help make all of our events and activities successful.

Special Events Attended

04/27/2022: Grand Opening for Greater Bergen Realtors and Multiple Listing Service, 405 N. Midland Avenue from 12-6 pm.

05/12/2022: Saddle Brook Police Memorial Service, Town Hall, 93 Market Street, from 12-1 pm.

05/14/2022: Installation of Officers, Romaine Sinniger VFW Post 3484, Auxiliary, and Riders, 44 Market Street from 2-4 pm.

05/15/2022: Eagle Scout Court of Honor Troop 213 of Saddle Brook, VFW Post 3485, 44 Market Street, from 5-8 pm.

06/06/2022: Installation of Officers, AARP Chapter 3785 of Saddle Brook, Senior Center, 8 Caldwell Avenue, from 12-1 pm.

06/11/2022: Rescue Truck Wet Down, Saddle Brook Volunteer Fire Department, Engine Company # 1, 16 Cambridge Avenue from 3:30 – 9:30 pm.

06/18/2022: Cub Scout Pack 222 of Saddle Brook Blue and Gold Banquet, Saint Philip's the Apostle Church Auditorium, 488 Saddle River Road, from 2-6 pm.

06/26/2022: John Schloman 50th Anniversary of Service Dinner, Saddle Brook Volunteer Ambulance Corps, VFW Post 3484, 44 Market Street, from 6:30-10:30 pm.