

QUARTERLY UPDATE
OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2022

COVID-19 UPDATE

At the end of December 2022, the seven-day average for confirmed coronavirus cases in New Jersey was 2,167 per day, up 25 percent from the previous month. The statewide rate of transmission was 1.0. When the transmission rate is 1.0, cases have leveled off at the current numbers, while anything above 1.0 indicates the outbreak is expanding.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Bergen County was considered a high risk of contracting coronavirus. The statewide positivity rate for Covid-19 tests conducted was 16.36%. The CDC considers positivity rates above 10% to be high. New Jersey's statewide positivity rate is substantially lower than its peak of 40.83% on January 1, 2022, during the height of the Omicron variant.

More than 7.1 million people who work, live or study in New Jersey have reached fully vaccinated status. More than 8 million have received the first dose since vaccinations began in the state on December 15, 2020. More than 4.3 million people in the state eligible for boosters have received one.

There has been a total of 2.47 million reported confirmed COVID-19 cases in New Jersey since it announced its first known case on March 4, 2020. Numerous cases will likely never be counted, including at-home positive tests that are not included in the state's numbers. The state has reported 35,576 COVID-19 deaths — 32,460 confirmed fatalities and 3,116 probable ones.

BUDGET

Township Audit – 2021

On September 6, 2022, independent auditor, Public Accountants Wielkottz and Company, LLC, issued an audit report of township financial statements for 2021. The report was reviewed, and the township council certified the audit at the November 10, 2022, council meeting. The audit has been posted on the township website at www.saddlebrooknj.us.

Bond Ordinances Number 1727-22

Authorizing the making of various public improvements and the acquisition of new additional or replacement equipment and machinery for the township to appropriate the sum of \$985,000 to pay the cost thereof.

Preparation for the 2023 Municipal Budget

Interim Business Administrator Maureen Ruane and I will schedule budget hearings with department heads in early January 2023. The department heads were instructed to complete budget worksheets for their projected fiscal requirements for 2023. Each department was asked not to exceed the state-required spending cap for budget appropriations.

2023 Temporary Budget

Interim Business Administrator Maureen Ruane and I have reviewed the 2022 operational budget requests of township department heads. We prepared a temporary budget for 2023, which was adopted by the township council at January 2, 2023, reorganization meeting. The temporary budget is 26.25 percent of our yearly 2022 municipal budget. We will work with our township auditor and chief financial officer to prepare a permanent budget for introduction at the March 2023 council meeting.

GRANTS

Grant Applications in Progress

U.S. Environment Protection Agency – Clean Water State Revolving Fund

This revolving fund provides loans and other authorized assistance to water systems for eligible infrastructure projects. As water systems repay their loans, the repayments, and interest flow back into the dedicated revolving fund. These funds may be used to make additional loans.

N.J. Department of Consumer Affairs – FY 2023 Local Recreation Improvement Grant

Due 01-23-2023: This is a competitive grant that supports the improvement and repair of public recreation facilities, including local parks, municipal recreation centers, and local stadiums. Ensuring public access to community facilities is imperative, particularly for those residents with limited or no other access to quality outdoor space or private recreational opportunities. This grant has a \$100,000 maximum award.

N.J. Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program

Due 03-01-2023: The Green Acres Program was created to meet New Jersey's growing recreation and conservation needs. It protects environmentally sensitive open spaces, water resources, and other significant natural and historic resources, and provides parks for New Jersey residents and visitors to enjoy. Green Acres partners with, and provides grants and loans, to qualifying county and municipal government agencies that work to further these same goals. This grant has a \$100,000 maximum award.

United States Department of Defense (DOD) – LESO: 1033 Program

01/28/2022: 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.

Grant Applications – Submitted/Pending

Bergen County Community Development Block Grant 2023

12-13-2022: An application was submitted for road improvement on Sterling Place and Orchard Lane for \$143,000.

Bergen County Community Development Block Grant Un-programmed Funding

11-02-2022: An application was submitted for resurfacing Washington Street and Blanche Street for \$231,644.

T-Mobile – Hometown Grant

T-Mobile announced Hometown Grants 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. Our grant writer submitted the application on behalf of the township for \$50,000.

Grants Awarded

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. This application was submitted for \$458,663 for improvements to Alberta Drive. The township was awarded \$225,680.

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. 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 requested eight vests and was awarded \$4,708.

Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund

05/26/2022: 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 and was awarded funds in the amount of \$144,447.

Grants Denied

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 was the third round of allocations distributed by the County of Bergen, and the township had requested \$40,400 for COVID-19 relief reimbursement.

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 Saddle Brook Fire Department has requested turnout gear consisting of dry suits, all-terrain boots, and rugged wear gloves.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Mayor's Youth Group (MYG)

In the month of October, the MYG participated in the Senior Halloween Party and the Annual Trunk or Treat event. The group ended the year with a holiday pizza party and afterward were bused around town to judge the homes registered for the Holiday Home Decorating Contest. For the New Year, the group plans on meeting in January and voting for new officers and will review the calendar of events for 2023.

Community Partnership Committee (CPC) / Access for All

The committee met monthly during the fourth quarter and discussed ways to help residents in the community. Pastor Christopher Wolf and I attended our local American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) meeting on October 3rd and spoke to the seniors about the goals of the CPC. The committee partnered with Dollar General to collect toys for needy families in town. We continue to help collect food, clothing, and personal hygiene products for the Saddle Brook Food Pantry located at the First Reformed Church.

Flood Mitigation Committee Meetings

The committee met on Wednesday, December 28th, and discussed our township's application with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community Rating System. Also discussed was utilizing the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) for floods and other natural disasters, nonstructural measures that DPW can take to reduce the impact or consequences of flooding, and the feasibility of purchasing a high-water rescue vehicle for flooding incidents. We continue to search for ways to actively address the ongoing flooding problems along the Saddle River and other areas of concern.

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.

UNICO Street Fair – Sunday, October 2

I want to thank Saddle Brook UNICO for hosting another great street fair and helping bring our community together for a day of entertainment and socializing with friends and neighbors. Food, and merchandise vendors, local businesses, and civic organizations provided information, amusements, and rides for children.

Senior Halloween Party – Thursday, October 25

The Saddle Brook seniors had a great time at their Annual Halloween Party at the VFW. Most of the seniors dressed in costume, and it was a nice night of fun, music, dancing, good food, and treats. The night also included a costume contest with gifts and prizes for the winners. It was a great way to welcome the fall season and prepare for a happy, spooky Halloween!

Trunk or Treat – Saturday, October 29

The township council and I want to thank all who attended and volunteered at the Halloween Trunk or Treat, held outside at the new municipal building construction site. The event was well attended and a fun-filled afternoon of trunk-or-treaters dressed in amazing costumes.

Holiday Tree Lighting and Party – Friday, November 25

The town hosted the annual Tree Lighting Ceremony at the new municipal complex. We truly appreciate Mr. Frank Ortega and the High / Middle School Band for their attendance and outstanding performance. A big thank you to Pastor Christopher Wolf of First Reformed Church for delivering prayers. Special thanks to Joe Schilp & Joan Ramsey as Santa & Mrs. Claus and our fire department for transporting them from the North Pole.

Senior Holiday Party – Monday, December 12

Our Saddle Brook Senior Club members had a holiday party at the Venetian Banquet Hall in Garfield. They enjoyed delicious food and a fun afternoon of dancing and laughing with friends. Special thanks to Senior Center Director Joe Lecce for his hard work in planning and organizing the event. Special thanks to Nina from Teri's Florist for donating flower centerpieces.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Municipal Complex – 55 Mayhill Street

The construction phase of retrofitting/renovating 55 Mayhill Street into a municipal complex with township offices, a civic/recreation center, and headquarters for the Volunteer Ambulance Corps and Hook and Ladder Fire Company is (99%) complete. Mainly punch list items remain, and we expect the building to be turned over to us with the required certificate of occupancy by February 1, 2023. Residents were periodically updated on the construction progress with photos posted to a special section of the township website.

Mayhill Street Phase II

The township was awarded \$200,000 from the FY 2021 N.J. Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Municipal Aid Program to resurface Mayhill St. from the Route 80 Bridge to Market Street. The project was bid on and awarded to Frank Macchione Construction for \$573,810. This project also included paving the new municipal complex parking lot. Work began in September 2022 and was completed minus punch list items at the end of November 2022.

2021 Road Program Phase III

The project, which included resurfacing Garden Street and Kenwood Court as part of Phase III of the 2021 Road Program, is completed.

Hobson Avenue and Midland Avenue Water Main Replacement

Our township engineer has prepared 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.

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. The survey and the preparation of the plans are complete. The job should start in the spring of 2023.

2022 Road Program

The 2022 Road Program consisted of Skillman Terrace, Spindler Terrace, Graham Terrace, Schepis Avenue, North Boulevard, South Boulevard, and Adrianna Street.

Phase I, Skillman Terrace, Spindler Terrace, Graham Terrace, and Schepis Avenue were bid and awarded to 4 Clean Up. The project was completed minus punch list items except for Schepis Avenue, which had to be postponed until the spring of 2023. The delay was caused by Public Service Gas and Electric unexpectedly scheduling the replacement of underground gas mains.

Phase II consisted of North and South Boulevard, and Adrianna Street was awarded to AJM Contractors. The project commenced in October 2022 and was completed minus punch list items in December 2022.

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 two rooftop units that handle HVAC for the first and second floors. Plans were completed, and two rooftop units and materials were ordered under the Omnia Co-op. We are still awaiting their arrival.

OTHER

Town-wide Garage Sale – Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 8 and 9

This was the second year that the township held a town-wide garage sale. Participants were required to register by September 30th. There was no registration fee, and the event was advertised on the township website, Facebook page, and digital sign board. A list of all participating addresses was made available online for all patrons interested in attending.

Grand Opening New Municipal Complex, 55 Mayhill Street – Saturday, October 15

Elected officials, the project management team, and township residents were invited to the grand opening of our new municipal complex from 12-4 pm. Guests were treated to lunch and tours of the facility. It was an exciting day for all to witness the completion and opening of this long-awaited project.

Paper Shredding Event – Saturday, November 12

The town has been doing an annual paper shredding event for the last several years. It's a service offered to municipalities and paid for by the Bergen County Utilities Authority. The event for residents only was well attended.

Home Decorating Contests (Halloween and Christmas)

The township again hosted our Annual Halloween and Christmas home decorating contests. Participants were asked to register with the township and display their home decorations and lights during a specific period so members of the Mayor's Youth Group could view and judge them. Photographs of each home entered were posted on the township's Facebook page and website. The top three contestants received a gift certificate from the township.

Speed Humps

Saddle Brook's primary concern is the safety of all residents. That is why in 2020, we took the proactive step of installing permanent speed humps in a limited number of locations to reduce speeding. In early December 2022, additional speed humps were installed in the following locations: Fairlawn Parkway between Wilson and Schepis; Fairlawn Parkway just south of Graham; Wilson Street between Ash and Maple; and Lanza Avenue by Franklin School. Many residents have asked for a speed hump on their block. We are in the process of preparing a request policy that is fair and transparent that also educates residents about New Jersey's compliance standards for installing speed humps on municipal roadways.

Special Events Attended

Friday evening, October 7: Hindu Festival of Navratri at the Excelsior Banquet Hall.

Saturday morning, October 8: UNICO Columbus Day Ceremony, Welcome Road Circle.

Sunday morning, October 16: Out of the Darkness Suicide Prevention Walk, Saddle River County Park.

Sunday afternoon, October 16: Challenger softball game, Nedellec Field.

Sunday afternoon, October 23: Chicken Bingo, Saddle Brook Senior Center.

Sunday evening, October 23: Saddle Brook Volunteer Fire Department 50th Anniversary Charles Cerone Sr. and Frank Kasetta at the Fiesta Banquet Hall, Hasbrouck Heights, N.J.

Friday morning, October 28: Officiated the swearing-in ceremony of new Saddle Brook police officers, James Latrella and Thomas Genuario.

Saturday evening, October 29: Saddle Brook Volunteer Fire Department 50th Anniversary Joseph Schilp and Raymond Abel at the Fiesta Banquet Hall, Hasbrouck Heights, N.J.

Sunday afternoon, October 30: Drums from Heaven benefit fundraiser at VFW Post 3484.

Saturday afternoon, November 5: Saddle Brook Angels Program 10th anniversary party at Saint Philip the Apostle Church auditorium.

Saturday evening, November 5: Saint Philip the Apostle Church Stewardship Awards Ceremony.

Friday afternoon, November 11: VFW Post 3484 Veteran's Day Ceremony at VFW Circle, Mayhill Street.

Friday afternoon, November 18: Unveiling of a bronze plaque in remembrance of military veterans at Greater Bergen Realtors, 405 N. Midland Avenue.

Wednesday morning, November 23: Officiated the swearing-in promotional ceremony of newly promoted Saddle Brook Police Sergeants Robert Littlejohn and Joseph Camilleri.

Tuesday afternoon, December 13: Members of the Saddle Brook Police Department and I visited resident Colin Stern at his home to present him with the proceeds from a fundraiser established on his behalf. Colin is a Saddle Brook High School student diagnosed with leukemia, after being in remission for several years.

Thursday afternoon, December 22: Township holiday party and retirement celebration for Patricia "Pat" Brantner, at Que Pasta Restaurant. Pat was presented with a plaque for her dedicated years of service to the township.

Friday afternoon, December 23: Township crossing guard holiday party and retirement celebration for Robert "Bobby" Weber, at the Golden Pub. Bobby was presented with a plaque for his dedicated years of service to the township and the children of the community.