

MAYOR ROBERT D. WHITE
QUARTERLY UPDATE
JANUARY – MARCH 2024

BUDGET

Preparation for the 2024 Municipal Budget

Township Business Administrator Jimmy Homsy, Chief Financial Officer Vincent Buono, and I have been meeting with all department heads to review their annual budget requests. The township council adopted a temporary budget of 26.25 percent of our yearly 2023 municipal budget. We have been working with our auditor, Steven Wielkottz, to prepare a proposed permanent budget for the township council members to review.

GRANTS

Available Grant Applications in Progress

FY24 Bergen County Open Space

The Bergen County Department of Parks is currently accepting applications for the 2024 Open Space Trust Fund Grant Program. This grant cycle is open to all municipalities in Bergen County. It provides aid in four categories: Land Acquisition, Historic Preservation, Floodplain Protection, and Municipal Park Improvements. The township will be seeking funding for the Fifth Street Park.

New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety Pedestrian Safety, Enforcement and Education Fund Grant Program (PSEEF)

Grants from this fund will provide municipalities with programs intended to reduce or eliminate pedestrian safety problems at intersections, crosswalks, and roadways. Such programs may permit municipalities to pay overtime salaries for police officers to increase patrols at locations with pedestrian problems. The township can apply for a maximum of \$30,000 in funding.

New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) - Safe Routes to School FY 2024

Our grant writer has initiated a reapplication of this grant program. The proposed pedestrian safety improvements in school zones will be applied under the FY25 NJDOT Pedestrian Safety Improvement Program.

Grant Applications – Submitted/Pending

New Jersey Dept. of Community Affairs Local Recreation Improvements Grant (LRIG)

LRIG funds will support the expenses of upgrading community centers, playgrounds, pools, fields, walking or bicycle trails, rail trails, multi-sport courts, and recreational facilities. Our grant writer has submitted a grant application for \$100,000 to cover the costs of Phase 2 improvements at Fifth Street Park.

PY24-25 Bergen County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

The town applied for CDBG funds of \$160,000 to resurface Third Street. Project details include roadway resurfacing, replacement of curbing, new drainage grates, and ensuring that sidewalks are ADA-compliant.

New Jersey State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP)

This federal grant program funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security aims to improve cybersecurity in state and local governments. The SLCGP is administered by the NJ Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness through its NJ Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Cell. The overall goal of the SLCGP is to make state and local government organizations more resilient to cyber threats. Notification is expected within the next 30 – 90 days.

New Jersey Office of Attorney General (NJOAG) Body Armor Replacement Fund

This program has awarded grants to local, county, and state law enforcement agencies to purchase body armor for eligible officers. Our grant writer assisted our police department in submitting 39 bulletproof vests for replacement. There is a 50 percent reimbursement for vests purchased by the township. Notification is expected within the next 30 – 90 days.

Grants Awarded

FY 2023 Appropriation Requests and Congressionally Directed Spending

The United States Senate Committee on Appropriations accepts requests from Senators on their funding priorities. This is an important way that Senators can advocate for programs critical to the nation, their constituents, and their states. Our grant writer and engineer worked together and applied for \$1,462,000 to replace the Seventh and Eighth Street water main and municipal infrastructure projects. The town received a \$1,000,000 grant for a municipal complex emergency generator to provide backup power for the entire building.

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Firefighter Grants

The township was awarded \$40,000 for 40 sets of turnout gear for our volunteer fire department.

PY 23/24 Bergen County Community Development Block Grant

The township was awarded \$143,000 for drainage improvements and paving Sterling Place and Orchard Lane as part of our 2024 road improvement program.

Bureau of Justice Assistance Bulletproof Vest Partnership Program

Our police department received a 50% reimbursement of \$15,225 to purchase bulletproof vests.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Mayor's Youth Group (MYG)

The MYG met on Saturday, February 10th, and again on Saturday, March 16th. Several items were discussed, including our participation in the Township Easter Celebration on Saturday, March 30th. The members had set up a table at the event to recruit new members. A poster board with photos of the group's activities was displayed at the table. Other members stepped up at the food drive table to help collect food for the Saddle Brook Food Pantry. On April 20, 2024, the MYG plans to honor Earth Day with a cleanup and planting effort at Tri-Centennial Park to show appreciation for our planet.

Community Partnership Committee (CPC) / Access for All

The committee met monthly during the first quarter and continued discussing ways to help community residents. The number of members attending meetings has increased over the last six months. Our message has reached a larger audience, spreading awareness, increasing membership, and inspiring support for our cause.

We are dedicated to helping township residents in need. Whether you need help with outside projects, financial questions, accessing services, parenting, mentoring and tutoring, transportation, food, or just a visit from time to time, Community Partnership is reaching out to you. If you need assistance or have questions, please visit saddlebrooknj.us or call our HELP phone line - 201-587-2912. Leave a message for the coordinator, and you will receive a timely response.

Flood Mitigation Committee

On Wednesday, February 28th, I attended a meeting by Lodi Mayor Scott Luna with the United States Army Corps of Engineers to request assistance with the recent flooding events along the Saddle River. Representatives from neighboring towns were present, seeking all possible aid.

The committee's purpose is to engage with key stakeholders and residents to discuss and review potential flood mitigation projects and education programs for the community. We are working towards finding possible solutions to mitigate flooding and increase flood awareness among the residents.

The committee met on Thursday, March 28th, at 6:30 p.m. at the municipal complex. Two Saddle Brook residents attended and spoke about flooding in their neighborhood. The committee had a productive discussion on how to take a proactive approach to tackle the issue of flooding in our town. By exploring various strategies to mitigate this problem, we can ensure that our community is well-prepared for any eventuality and safeguard our homes and streets.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

NOTE: Most events are photographed and recorded. The recordings are broadcast 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, January 6th

Swearing in Fire Chief David Mielnicki and Assistant Fire Chief Herman Wenzel was a great honor. Congratulations, and thank you to them for doing an outstanding job. New firefighters and officers were also installed and welcomed into the department. Thank you to all our volunteer firefighters for their exceptional service to our community. The township council members also attended the dinner to show their appreciation and support for the members of the fire department and their families.

Ambulance Corps Installation Dinner – Friday, February 23rd

This year, the dinner was held at Macaluso's Banquet Hall in Hawthorne. During the event, I administered the oath of office to the corps officers, and the members received awards for their years of service. Harry Reid was given special recognition for his 65 years of service to the Corps. All members deserve tremendous praise for the remarkable job they do for the township. They embody the spirit of volunteerism by giving so much of themselves to help others in need.

Women in History Month – Thursday, March 21st

At the Township Council meeting, I honored five incredible women from Saddle Brook who have made outstanding contributions to the community in celebration of Women's History Month. These women were recognized for their achievements in various categories, including Outstanding Citizen, Business Leader, Community Service, and Public Safety. They serve as an inspiration and role models for other women to look up to.

The honorees were Rachel Adams-Duffy for Outstanding Citizen, Halina Strzepek for Business Leader, Sharon Evanchuck and Dawn Pallotta for Community Service, and Eileen Pinto for Public Safety. I want to congratulate them and their families for their remarkable achievements. They have made a real difference in the community and touched the lives of others. Thank you to each of them for their hard work and dedication to improving the world.

Easter Celebration, Saturday, March 30th

I want to express my gratitude to all the residents who attended our Easter Celebration, especially those who generously donated to our food drive for the Saddle Brook Food Pantry. This event is always much fun, particularly for the children, and it brings members of our community together to celebrate. We are deeply grateful for all the support we received and would like to acknowledge the individuals and groups who contributed to the success of this event. First, we would like to thank Shannon Accomando and Christine Genuario of our Project and Activities Committee, Mayor's Youth Group Liaison Thomas Van Winkle, and all the members of the Youth Group. We also sincerely thank the Saddle Brook Woman's Club members for bringing goodies. Lastly, we thank Rafael Gonzalez of Enlacosa for videotaping and taking photos.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Road Resurfacing

2024 Road Program

The scope of work generally includes the upgrades of stormwater inlets, the installation of curb ramps, concrete curb replacement where in poor condition or missing, drainage structure improvements, milling, and resurfacing. The work includes paving the following:

- Lincoln Avenue and Van Orden Street (From Liberty Street to Pehle Avenue)
- Nightingale Road (From Bell Avenue to Cambridge Avenue)
- Elm Avenue (From Schepis Avenue to Wilson Street)
- Ash Avenue (From Schepis Avenue to Wilson Street)
- Dyer Place (Off Saddle River Road)
- Sampson Street (From Market Street to the dead end by Veteran's Field)
- Sterling Place (Off Saddle River Road)
- Orchard Lane (Off Saddle River Road)

Sterling Place and Orchard Lane received funding from the Community Development Block Grant program for 2023/2024. Sampson Street received funding from the New Jersey Department of Transportation Local Aid Program for 2024.

Alberta Drive (NJDOT Municipal Aid Funded 2022)

The project was awarded to Frank Macchione for \$388,722.96 on August 17, 2023. Concrete work began in late August and was completed in mid-September. Since there have been some gas main leaks on Alberta, Public Service Gas (PSE&G) was contacted to see if they would replace the gas main before the township milling and paving the road. Accordingly, milling and paving were put off until sometime in 2024 to provide PSE&G with the opportunity to plan for this replacement.

Other Improvements and Repairs

Hobson Avenue and Midland Ave Water Main Replacement

This project involved replacing the water main on Hobson and connecting services to a newly installed water main on Midland Avenue. The plan also included resurfacing Hobson Avenue after the water main installation. Montana Construction was awarded the project for \$982,350.00 on August 17, 2023. Construction began on October 10, 2023, and most of the water main work was completed in the fall. Concrete work, milling, and paving will be performed in the spring of 2024.

Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure Improvements

Our town engineer was crucial in supporting our grant writer to secure funding for the Mayhill Pump Station, Midland Ave Pump Station, and the force main improvement projects. Thanks to the Environmental Protection Agency's grant, the town secured approximately 1.3 million dollars in funding. Last year, the town engineer provided a proposal that outlines the preparation of bid documents, construction management, and grant management, which will be essential for the successful implementation of the projects.

Hutter Street Storm Sewer Rehabilitation

The township received approximately \$50,000 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to repair the storm sewer that runs from Floral Lane to Graham Terrace, behind the houses on the eastern side of Hutter Street. This storm sewer had developed sinkholes, which were repaired on an emergency basis last year. In February 2023, the National Water Main Cleaning Company videotaped the line to assess the damage. Several issues were found, including a significant root intrusion, eroded pipe, and debris. The project went out to bid, and Spinello Companies won with the lowest price of \$233,000. The work is expected to commence in the spring of this year.

Westminster Place Air Relief Valve Replacement

An air relief valve on Westminster Place is crucial to the sanitary sewer force main. It needs to be replaced, along with the chamber and air relief assembly. The town engineer has provided a proposal for the work, which includes a cost estimate.

OTHER

‘Notify Me’ Notification System

‘Notify Me’ allows residents to sign up for email and text notifications from the township. This new program will enable us to send timely notifications to the residents about events, weather, construction, garbage and recycling pick up, emergencies, etc. Residents' information will never be shared with anyone, and you can opt-out anytime. To sign up, residents must go to the township website. <https://saddlebrooknj.us/saddle-brook-notify-me-signup-form/>

Eagle Scout Court of Honor – Saturday, January 27th

Congratulations to Jeremy Caraballo and A.J. Stanchfield of Saddle Brook Boy Scouts Troop 213 for attaining the rank of Eagle Scout. I attended a Court of Honor Ceremony held at the Elmwood Park Elks Lodge to induct both young men as Eagle Scouts. Congratulations to their proud parents, friends, and troop. All the best to Jeremy and A.J. in their future endeavors.

Ramadan Ceremony – Saturday, March 9th

The township recently held our first-ever Ramadan celebration at the municipal complex. Both council members and community members participated in this event, learning about Ramadan and Muslim culture. Unfortunately, the crescent moon could not be lit at the municipal complex due to inclement weather. For the Muslim community, the event symbolized acceptance and recognition of their growing presence in Saddle Brook and North Jersey. It was also an opportunity to share and celebrate their faith with the broader community.

Saddle Brook Police Department ‘Coffee with a Cop’ – Saturday, March 16th

This program was held at Dunkin’ Donuts, Market Street. It was an excellent way to strengthen the bond between the community and our police department. Engaging in casual conversations over coffee created a welcoming environment, fostering positive interactions and building trust. Special thanks to Captain John Zotollo and all the officers participating in this valuable community outreach program. Thank you to Dunkin’ Donuts for their generosity and support, which made this program possible.

Special Events Attended

Wednesday evening, January 3rd: I attended the Saddle Brook Board of Education reorganization meeting at the Saddle Brook Middle/High School.

Thursday evening, January 4th: I participated in the township reorganization meeting held at the municipal complex.

Sunday afternoon, January 14th: I attended the Skip Bailey Junior Wrestling Tournament at Saddle Brook High/Middle School.

Wednesday evening, January 17th: I attended the Bergen County Commissioners meeting with Councilman David Gieriek at One Bergen County Plaza in Hackensack.

Saturday afternoon, February 17th: I celebrated Rita Trainor's 100th birthday at VFW Post 3484 in Saddle Brook, 44 Market Street.

Saturday afternoon, February 17th: I attended a junior cheerleading tournament sponsored by Saddle Brook High School Competition Cheerleading Team. The tournament was held at Saddle Brook High/Middle School.

Saturday evening, March 2nd: I attended an Operation K9 fundraiser by VFW Riders at Post 3484, 44 Market Street in Saddle Brook.

Monday morning, March 4th: I participated in Read Across America at Long Memorial, Helen I. Smith, and Franklin Elementary School.

Monday morning, March 8th: I participated in Saddle Brook High School Career Day.

Sunday afternoon, March 10th: I attended Chicken Bingo at the Saddle Brook Senior Center.

Thursday morning, March 14th: I presided over a police officer swearing-in ceremony at the municipal complex.

Sunday afternoon, March 24th: I attended the grand opening ceremony for Made in the Dominican Republic Restaurant, 188 Floral Lane in Saddle Brook.

Friday evening, March 30th: I attended the Fish and Chips Dinner hosted by the Saddle Brook Volunteer Ambulance Corps at the municipal complex.

Saturday afternoon, March 31st: I attended Lieutenant Scott Habermann's retirement ceremony (walkout) at the Saddle Brook Police Station.