

MAYOR ROBERT D. WHITE
QUARTERLY UPDATE
APRIL – JUNE 2024

BUDGET

Budget Introduction

The 2024 municipal budget was presented to the township council and discussed at the June 20th council meeting. Township auditor Steve Wielkocz was in attendance for the budget introduction. A budget hearing is scheduled for July 18, 2024, during which the council will vote on its approval and adoption. Mr. Wielkocz will also be available to review the budget and respond to questions at this meeting.

General Information and Highlights

The proposed municipal budget introduced will increase by \$251.60 on an average assessment of \$462,533. The proposed tax rate is 2.313 percent. Property owners will receive estimated tax bills for the third quarter of 2024, due August 1st, with a 15-day grace period. Business Administrator Jimmy Homs, Chief Financial Officer Vince Buono, and I assure you that this budget represents our commitment to maintaining services and continuing our infrastructure programs, such as paving roads and improving our parks. It also provides funding for hiring personnel due to retirements. The increase is primarily due to inflationary issues, solid waste and recycling, insurance premiums, pensions, statutory allocations for the library, and contractual salaries.

Senior Tax Freeze

Township senior citizen homeowners who are 65 years and older may be eligible for a tax freeze program initiated by the State of New Jersey. This program is designed to provide financial security and peace of mind to our senior residents. Please call the state's regional information center at (201)791-0500 for eligibility requirements and additional information.

Bond Ordinances

Ordinance 1751-24, passed on June 20, 2024, is a significant step. It authorizes the 2024 road improvement program, appropriates \$940,000 to pay the cost thereof, and provides for the issuance of bonds to finance such appropriation. This ordinance is a key part of our infrastructure development. It also allows the issuance of bond anticipation notes in anticipation of the issuance of such bonds.

Ordinance 1750-24 passed on June 20, 2024, to authorize the improvement of Sampson Street from Market Street to the dead end by Veteran Field. The ordinance appropriates \$265,000 to cover the cost of the improvement. It also allows the issuance of bonds to finance this appropriation and provides for the issuance of bond anticipation notes in anticipation of the issuance of the bonds.

Finance Ordinances

Ordinance 1746-24, entitled “an ordinance to fix water rates and service charges and penalties for the municipal water system of the Township of Saddle Brook was passed at the May 16, 2024, council meeting.

Ordinance 1753-24 was introduced at the council meeting on June 20, 2024, to exceed the municipal budget appropriation limits and establish a cap bank in accordance with the Local Government Cap Law (N.J.S.A. 40A: 4-45.14).

GRANTS

U.S. Department of Justice Community Policing Development (CPD) Accreditation

The grant provides funding for police agencies to improve their ability to prevent crime and create safe communities. The accreditation program offers funding for law enforcement agencies to complete the accreditation process. Law enforcement agencies must ensure that their policies and procedures meet the highest standards to obtain accreditation.

New Jersey Department of Transportation Municipal Aid Grant

The grant aims to provide municipalities with funding to support the implementation of public transportation projects, ensuring safety and accessibility on New Jersey roads. The township plans to apply to enhance Floral Lane.

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Resilient Communities Grant

This program provides grants for public infrastructure projects to address unmet recovery and mitigation needs in areas identified by HUD and the state as "most impacted and distressed" (MID) due to flood-related natural hazards. Eligible applicants are responsible for implementing, operating, and maintaining the awarded projects.

Grant Applications – Submitted/Pending

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.

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.

Applications Denied

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

LRIG funds 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 had submitted a grant application for \$100,000 to cover the costs of Phase 2 improvements at Fifth Street Park, but the application was denied.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Mayor's Youth Group (MYG)

The MYG participated in the township's Easter Celebration on Saturday, March 30th. Members set up a table at the event to recruit new members. A poster board displaying photos of the group's activities was placed on the table. Meanwhile, other members helped collect food for the Saddle Brook Food Pantry at the food drive table. On April 20, 2024, the MYG celebrated Earth Day by participating in a cleanup and planting effort at Tri-Centennial Park to demonstrate our appreciation for the planet.

Community Partnership Committee (CPC) / Access for All

The committee met monthly during the year's second 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 working closely with the Saddle Brook Food Pantry and other civic organizations to organize food collection drives supporting the pantry. 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

The committee aims 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, June 27th, at 6:30 p.m. at the municipal complex. 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.

Little League Opening Day Parade - Saturday, April 13

We had a fantastic time at our Little League Opening Day Parade and Ceremony. Many of us eagerly anticipate the start of town baseball each spring. Thank you to everyone involved in making the event a success, including Little League President Joseph Filan, the executive board, managers, coaches, volunteers, parents, sponsors, and our local police department, DPW, fire department, and ambulance corps for their assistance and participation.

Memorial Day Parade, Sunday, May 26

The township celebrated Memorial Day with our annual parade to honor the men and women who served in our country's armed forces and in memory of those who made the supreme sacrifice. We extend our gratitude to all who participated and assisted with the event. Congratulations to this year's Grand Marshal, Police Officer Joseph Scrafani!

Mayor's Fishing Derby, Saturday, June 15

The Mayor's Fishing Derby at Otto Pehle Lake in Saddle River County Park was a great success. Thanks to all who helped organize the event, including Christine Genuario, the Saddle Brook Volunteer Ambulance Corps, Boy Scout Troop 213, Thomas Van Winkle, Walmart of Saddle Brook, Recreation Director Andy Gallo, and our DPW employees. All participants received trophies; Derby winners received fishing poles and tackle boxes donated by Walmart. Thank you to all involved!

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.

Hobson Avenue

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. Concrete work, milling, and paving were completed in April of this year.

Other Improvements and Repairs

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. The work was completed in late April or early May of this year.

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.

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

Ordinances Adopted

Banning of Airbnb Rentals

Ordinance 1744-24, passed on April 18, 2024, amended Chapter 206, Article IV, Section 206-9 of the Township Code. This amendment bans the short-term rental of residential properties of less than twenty-eight (28) in all zoning districts.

Regulations for Electric-Powered Modes of Transportation

Ordinance 1745-24, passed on May 16, 2024, amended and supplemented Chapter 196, titled "Vehicles and Traffic," regulating the operation and parking of electric-powered modes of transportation.

Special Events Attended

Thursday morning, April 4: I attended a press conference by Congressman Bill Pascrell to announce the acquisition of a \$1,000,000 federal grant to purchase an emergency generator for our municipal complex.

Tuesday afternoon, April 9: I participated in the AARP meeting at the Senior Center and swore in new officers.

Tuesday evening, April 9: I attended a Ramadan celebration at the Saddle Brook Free Public Library.

Saturday morning, April 20: I joined the Mayor's Youth Group for an Earth Day cleanup and planting event at Tri-Centennial Park.

Saturday evening, April 20: I attended the recreation softball opening day eighth-grade ceremony at Veterans Field.

Friday evening, April 26: I attended a pizza party at the municipal complex for the fifth and seventh-grade recreation basketball championship teams.

Saturday afternoon, April 27: I participated in the Saddle Brook Cub Scout Troop 222 Blue and Gold Celebration held in the auditorium of Saint Philip's Church.

Monday afternoon, May 6: I attended the Saddle Brook AARP meeting, where the Saddle Brook High/Middle School chorus performed.

Saturday afternoon, May 11: I attended the installation dinner at VFW Post 3484.

Saturday evening, May 11: I attended the recreation softball Pitch, Hit, and Run competition at Veterans Field.

Tuesday afternoon, May 14: I attended the scholarship presentation ceremony at the Senior Center, hosted by the Woman's Club of Saddle Brook.

Wednesday afternoon, May 15: I attended the Saddle Brook Police Department police memorial service at the old Town Hall, 93 Market Street. Afterward, the township hosted a lunch at the Municipal Complex, 55 Mayhill Street.

Saturday, May 18: I participated in the Saddle Brook High School Softball Home Run Derby fundraising event at Smith Field.

Tuesday afternoon, May 21: I attended a drum circle performance by the Fair Lawn Sunrise Rotary Club for the senior residents at the Senior Center.

Friday afternoon, May 24: I attended the Saddle Brook Police Department's Law Enforcement Against Drugs (LEAD) student graduation party at Veterans Field.

Wednesday afternoon, May 29: I attended the grand opening of Buffalo Wild Wings located at 487 Market Street and presented them with a proclamation.

Thursday evening, May 30: I attended the first of four Saddle Brook outdoor concerts at the municipal complex, which featured Tuned-Up.

Friday morning, June 7: I supported the Saddle Brook police officers as they took part in the annual Special Olympics Torch Run at TD Bank in Elmwood Park.

Sunday afternoon, June 9: I attended the Saddle Brook VFW Post 3484 Freedom Festival.

Wednesday afternoon, June 12: I presided over the wedding of Anand Thakkar and Himari Raja at the municipal complex.

Tuesday afternoon, June 18: I attended the dedication of the Howard Weinberg memorial bench at the municipal complex.

Thursday afternoon, June 20: I attended the end-of-year school crossing guard get-together and retirement party for Crossing Guard Hongsun Kim.

Sunday afternoon, June 23: I attended the Boy Scout Troop 213 Court of Honor barbecue at Saddle River County Park in Rochelle Park.

Friday afternoon, June 28: I attended Sergeant Christopher Stanton's retirement ceremony (walkout) at the Saddle Brook Police Station.

Saturday morning, June 29: I attended a Roman Catholic mass at the Paramus Veterans Home with the Marine Corps League of Saddle Brook members.