

MAYOR ROBERT D. WHITE
QUARTERLY UPDATE
JULY – SEPTEMBER 2024

BUDGET

Budget Adoption

The 2024 municipal budget was presented to the township council and discussed at the June 20th council meeting. A budget hearing occurred at the July 18 council meeting, during which the council voted to approve and adopt the budget. Township auditor Steve Wielkocz attended both meetings, reviewed the budget, and responded to questions from the council members and the public.

General Information and Highlights

The approved municipal budget will increase by an average of \$242.28 based on an assessment of \$462,533 and a tax rate of 2.306 percent. Property owners received estimated tax bills for the third quarter of 2024, and the fourth quarter bills were mailed out at the end of September with payment due November 1, 2024, with a ten-day grace period. Our finance team assures you that this budget reflects our dedication to maintaining services and continuing our infrastructure programs, such as road paving and park improvements. It also includes funding for hiring new personnel due to retirements. The increase is mainly due to inflation, solid waste, recycling costs, insurance premiums, pension contributions, statutory allocations for the library, and contractual salaries.

Finance Ordinance #1753-24 Passed on July 18

Exceeding Municipal Budget and Cap Bank

In the budget for the calendar year 2024, the township's final appropriations were increased by 3.5%, totaling \$739,783.03. Any amount authorized above this total not included in the final budget will be retained as an exception to the final appropriation and can be used in either of the following two succeeding years.

Bond Ordinance #1754-24 Passed on August 1

This ordinance authorizes the improvement of Cambridge Avenue. It appropriates \$400,000 to secure a state grant and authorizes the issuance of bonds to finance this appropriation. Additionally, it provides for the issuance of bond anticipation notes in anticipation of the bond issuance.

Bond Ordinance #1758-24 Introduced

This ordinance authorizes public improvements and the acquisition of new or replacement equipment for the township, including communication systems, vehicles, and a fire engine. It appropriates \$2,545,300 for these costs, allows for a down payment, and permits the issuance of bonds and bond anticipation notes to finance the appropriation.

GRANTS

Grants Awarded

FY24 Bergen County Open Space

The Bergen County Department of Parks awarded Saddle Brook \$80,000 from the 2024 Open Space Trust Fund Grant Program. The grant will be used to construct walkways and a parking lot, install site fencing, and install lighting at Fifth Street Park.

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

The town was awarded CDBG funds of \$123,000 to resurface Third Street. Project details include roadway resurfacing, replacement of curbing, new drainage grates, and ensuring that sidewalks are ADA-compliant.

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

This program has awarded Saddle Brook Police Department \$4,999.01 to purchase 39 bulletproof vests for eligible officers. There is a 50 percent reimbursement for vests purchased by the township.

Grant Applications – Submitted/Pending

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 Housing and Urban Development (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.

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. To obtain accreditation, law enforcement agencies must ensure that their policies and procedures meet the highest standards.

Available Grants Being Considered

FY25-26 Bergen County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

The main aim of CDBG funding is to strengthen and enhance community resilience. These grants often provide resources for upgrading municipal infrastructure, such as repaving roads, improving sewer and drainage systems, enhancing playgrounds and parks, and making public buildings more accessible with features like curb cuts for individuals with disabilities. The township is collaborating with our engineer to develop a project.

New Jersey Board of Public Utilities Clean Fleet & It Pay\$ to Plug In

The Clean Energy Program aims to achieve a clean energy future. Through the Clean Fleet EV and EV Charging Program, municipalities are eligible for incentives to purchase battery electric vehicles. It Pay\$ to Plug In provides grants to offset the cost of purchasing and maintaining electric vehicle charging stations. The program is designed to expand New Jersey's growing electric vehicle infrastructure network, allowing residents, businesses, and government agencies to purchase and drive electric vehicles.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Mayor's Youth Group (MYG)

The MYG participated in the Town Picnic on Saturday, August 24th. Members assisted by serving food to senior citizens, which was greatly appreciated. Thank you to everyone who took part! Township youths entering grades 4-12 are welcome to join the MYG. Anyone interested in registering can call Christine Genuario at the Mayor's Office at 201-587-2903.

Community Partnership Committee (CPC) / Access for All

The committee met monthly during the third quarter of the year and continued discussing ways to help community residents. We continue to work 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 works with local, county, state, and federal officials to explore various strategies to mitigate this problem to ensure 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.

Township Fireworks Display, Wednesday, July 3

The annual fireworks display is a favorite for residents, young and old. The fireworks are ignited at Saddle River County Park by Otto Pehle Pond. Thank you to our emergency services personnel from the Fire Department, Fire Prevention Bureau, Office of Emergency Management, Police Department, Ambulance Corps, and Department of Public Works.

Summer Concerts

The township held four summer outdoor concerts in the municipal complex's parking lot, 55 Mayhill Street. Recreation Director Andy Gallo and Assistant Director Diane Bonner planned and organized both concerts.

National Night Out, Tuesday, August 6

National Night Out was canceled due to weather and was not rescheduled.

Township Picnic, Saturday, August 24

It was great meeting again for the Town Picnic at Saddle River County Park this year! I want to thank everyone for attending and give special thanks to our Project and Activities Committee. Thank you to all township employees for helping out, especially members of our Police Department, Department of Public Works, Volunteer Fire Department, and Ambulance Corps. We always appreciate the help from our civic organizations, including the Woman's Club, Boy Scouts, and Mayor's Youth Group. Finally, I can't thank our sponsors enough for their generous contributions and participation. We could not have had the picnic without their assistance.

9/11 Remembrance Ceremony, Wednesday, September 11

The township held a remembrance ceremony to honor the memory of those who lost their lives on 9/11. Thank you to everyone who took time out of their busy schedule to attend. Thanks to Pastor Christopher Wolf of First Reformed Church of Saddle Brook, vocalist Lidya Diaz, Frank Ortega and the Saddle Brook High School Middle School Marching Band, and Saddle Brook Boy Scout Troop 213. At the ceremony, we paid tribute to the members of our Police Department, Volunteer Fire Department, and Volunteer Ambulance Corps for the countless hours they spent keeping us safe.

Shredding Event, Saturday, September 28

A free mobile shredding event took place in the municipal complex parking lot from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Residents brought their unwanted documents containing personal information to be safely and securely destroyed. Thank you to Recycling Coordinator Joan Ramsey and Perry Festa from the Department of Public Works for their assistance, and special thanks to Christine Genuario for planning and organizing the event.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

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)

Concrete work, including curbs and aprons, has begun on Lincoln Avenue, Van Orden Street, and Nightengale Road. The other streets should be completed by the end of the year.

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 commenced in late August of 2023 and was completed by mid-September. Due to recent gas main leaks in Alberta, Public Service Gas (PSE&G) was contacted to determine if they could replace the gas main before the township mills and pave the road. However, this will not happen. Milling and paving are scheduled to be completed by the end of this year.

Completed Projects

Hobson Avenue

This project involved replacing the water main on Hobson and connecting services to a newly installed water main on Midland Avenue. Hobson Avenue was resurfaced after the water main installation. The work was completed between April and July of this year.

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. The work was finished in early May of this year.

Emergency Repair of Forced Main Sewer Line

In the first week of August, the forced main sewer line developed a leak on Howard Street in Lodi, necessitating an emergency repair. After evaluating the issue, Township Engineer Robert Klein and DPW Superintendent Robert Hicswa contacted J. Fletcher Creamer to handle the repair. A section of the pipe was replaced for \$276,000.

Other Needed Repairs

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

Rat Problem

Residents in the northern part of town have reported rat sightings. To control the issue, everyone must help. A successful rat control program depends on community cooperation, as rats do not recognize boundaries. Property owners are responsible for hiring licensed pest control professionals if rats are found on their property. The township has taken action by updating permit requirements for construction and demolition, increasing property inspections, amending the garbage ordinance, and implementing procedures for handling rodent reports. We have posted a notice about rat control measures on the township website and social media. We encourage all residents to participate in these efforts to help combat the rat problem.

Public Service Gas and Electric Gas Main Replacement Program

Public Service Gas and Electric (PSE&G) is modernizing its aging gas pipes to ensure a safe, reliable gas system for the future. PSE&G is currently replacing gas mains in the following streets: Adriana, Ash, Boulevard N, Boulevard S, Elm, Harrop, Grace, Jefferson, Larch, Lanza, McKenzie, Miller, Outwater, Pine, President, South, Spruce, Wilson, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 7thN, 8th, 9th, 46E, 46W

Here are the phases of our modernization program:

****Phase 1: Dig Trench****

They dig trenches primarily in road surfaces to lay new pipes while minimizing disruptions. At the end of each day, they fill the trenches and ensure you can access your driveway.

****Phase 2: Install New Pipes****

They aim to avoid digging on private properties, but if they must, they will restore any disturbances after installing the service line. Grass will be repaired, and any openings will be patched.

****Phase 3: Connect Services****

A PSE&G technician will need access to your home to connect the new service line and gas meter. This may involve relocating the gas meter outside. Expect a brief gas service interruption of about four hours, during which we will reconnect and relight all appliances. Let them know if you require landlord approval for access.

****Phase 4: Restore Roads****

After completing the work, they will restore grass areas and patch any openings. Temporary road repairs will be done until the project settles, generally taking 45 to 90 days. The final restoration may take longer due to various factors. PSE&G will then repave roads according to local regulations.

Ordinances Adopted

#1752-24 Stormwater Management (Passed July 18)

This Ordinance amends the stormwater management rules at New Jersey Administrative Code 7:8, establishing minimum standards for minimizing stormwater pollution and maintaining the integrity of the state's waters. Federal and State laws allow municipalities to implement stricter standards than the statewide minimum.

#1755-24 Prohibited Parking on Congress Street (Passed August 15)

Section 1: 196-35 has been amended to include the following parking regulation: No parking is allowed between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. on Congress Street. This restriction applies to the easterly side from the northern dead end to 240 feet south and to the westerly side from the northern dead end to 360 feet south. This regulation is in effect Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Ordinances Introduced

#1756-24 Handicapped Parking (Passed September 19)

Township ordinance, Section 1, Chapter 106, was amended to permit handicapped parking in front of 24 Bella Vista Avenue.

#1757-24 Tax Maps (Introduced September 19)

In accordance with N.J.S. 40A:4-53 (Chapters 48, 46, and 38), \$135,000 was appropriated to prepare tax maps and GIS. This appropriation is classified as a special emergency appropriation as defined by N.J.S. 40A:4-53 and N.J.S. 40A:4-55. The funding for this appropriation will be accounted for in future annual budgets by including at least one-fifth of the authorized amount in accordance with N.J.S. 40A:4-55.

#1759-24 Garbage Collection (Introduced September 19)

Section 100-4, titled "Regulations Concerning Collection," states that all garbage, paper, and other refuse or waste materials must be placed in appropriate plastic or galvanized metal containers. These containers must have a lid, which should always be kept securely in place. When the containers are placed on any public street or area for collection and disposal, they must meet these requirements.

Special Events Attended

Tuesday afternoon, July 9: I attended Rita Vissa's 102nd birthday party at the Senior Center.

Saturday morning, July 13: I attended a "Coffee with a Cop" event hosted by the Saddle Brook Police Department at Starbucks on Market Street.

Thursday evening, July 19: I presided over two police department promotions at the Township Council meeting. Rebecca Rivero was promoted to lieutenant, and Irving Gutierrez was promoted to sergeant.

Tuesday evening, July 23: I attended the Colombian Independence Day ceremony at One Bergen Plaza County Building. Township Councilwoman Sarah Sanchez was honored during the event.

Sunday afternoon, August 4: I attended the 'Chicken Bingo' event at the Senior Center.

Friday afternoon, August 9: I attended the graduation ceremony for Bergen County Police Academy Class #132 at Bergen Academies in Hackensack, NJ. Congratulations to the Saddle Brook Police Officer recruits Oskar Rusek, Nicholas Genuario, and Phoenix Marchesani.

Friday morning, September 6: Attended the grand reopening of Acme Supermarket, Mayhill Street.

Saturday morning, September 7: Attended the Saddle Brook Angels program opening day at Avon Park.

Sunday afternoon, September 6: I attended "Soccer Day," hosted by the Saddle Brook Recreation Soccer Association at Veterans Field.

Sunday afternoon, September 15: I attended the Mount Virgin Church car show at the Municipal Complex, 55 Mayhill Street.

Tuesday afternoon, September 17: I attended the grand reopening of Burger King, 439 Market Street.

Thursday afternoon, September 19: I attended the Siwa Oasis Aesthetics grand opening at 350 Market Street.

Thursday evening, September 19: I presented retired Police Chief Robert Kugler with a plaque at the Township Council meeting, honoring his 40 years of service to Saddle Brook, 30 of which he served as Chief of Police.

Sunday afternoon, September 29: I attended the UNICO Street Fair on Market Street between Mayhill Street and Westminster Place.