

MAYOR ROBERT D. WHITE  
QUARTERLY UPDATE  
OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2023

**BUDGET**

Township Audit

In September 2023, independent auditor Public Accountants Wielkotz and Company, LLC, issued an audit report of township financial statements for 2022. The report was reviewed, and the township council certified the audit at the council meeting on November 2, 2023. The audit has been posted on the township website at [www.saddlebrooknj.us](http://www.saddlebrooknj.us).

Preparation for the 2024 Municipal Budget

Business Administrator Jimmy Homsy and I will schedule budget hearings with department heads in early January 2024. The department heads will be instructed to complete budget worksheets for their projected fiscal requirements for 2024. Each department will be asked not to exceed the state-required spending cap for budget appropriations.

2024 Temporary Budget

Business Administrator Jimmy Homzi and I have prepared a temporary budget for 2024, which was adopted by the township council at the January 5, 2024, reorganization meeting. The temporary budget is 26.25 percent of our yearly 2023 municipal budget. We will work with our township auditor and chief financial officer to prepare a permanent budget for introduction in the first quarter of 2024.

**GRANTS**

Available Grant Applications in Progress

**NJDOT - Safe Routes to School FY 2024**

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) advances projects that enhance safety, renew aging infrastructure, improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and support new and alternative transportation opportunities. Our grant writer initiated a reapplication to the FY23 Safe Routes to School grant program as it was determined that our proposed project would not meet the \$350,000 minimum application threshold. The proposed pedestrian safety improvements in Saddle Brook school zones will be applied for under FY25 NJDOT Local Aid-Pedestrian Safety Improvements or Bikeways as suggested by the NJDOT Local Aid Resource Center.

## Grant Applications – Submitted/Pending

### **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.

### **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.

### **New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Resilient Communities Program (RCP)**

The RCP is designed to fund unmet recovery and mitigation needs for public infrastructure projects that will help the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and state-identified most impacted and distressed areas become more resilient to current and future flood-related natural hazards. The township applied to supplement the congressionally directed spending award for the pump stations, as the grant award would not cover the total project cost. Through Community Project Funding (CPF), Congressman Bill Pascrell's Office has awarded the township \$1,393,682 for sewage rehabilitation and improvements through the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Funding will be used to provide required maintenance, repairs, and replacements for sewage pumping stations and a gravity sewer interceptor system owned and operated by the township.

### **New Jersey Office of the Attorney General Body Armor Replacement Fund**

The Body Armor Replacement Fund Grant Program is established to award grants to local, county, and state law enforcement agencies for the purchase of body armor for their 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

### **FY23 Congressional Appropriations – Community Project Funding (CPF)**

Through (CPF), Congressman Bill Pascrell’s Office has awarded the Township of Saddle Brook \$1,393,682 for sewage rehabilitation and improvements. Funding will be used to provide required maintenance, repairs, and replacements for sewage pumping stations and a gravity sewer interceptor system owned and operated by the township. Our grant writer will assist with applying to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and draw down allocated funds.

### **Bergen County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) FY 2023**

Eligible CDBG grants include municipal infrastructure upgrades such as road repaving, sewer and drainage improvements, playground and park upgrades, handicapped-accessible curb cuts, and public building access upgrades. The township has been awarded \$160,000 to install a basketball court at Fifth Street Park.

### **New Jersey Department of Transportation Municipal Aid FY 2024**

The Municipal Aid program is a competitive program intended to provide municipalities with transportation-based grants to supplement their transportation programs. Annually, the Municipal Aid Program is funded at \$140 million from the Transportation Trust Fund (TTF). The township has been awarded \$231,000 to resurface Sampson Street.

### **Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund FY 2023**

The 2023 grant cycle welcomes applicants seeking aid in four categories: Land Acquisition, Historic Preservation, Floodplain Protection, and Municipal Park Improvements. All Bergen County municipalities and qualified non-profit organizations are invited to apply. Through our grant writer, the township has submitted an application for improvements to Kern Street Park and awarded \$138,800.

### **United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) Bulletproof Vest Program**

The federal Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act of 1998 established the Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP). A USDOJ initiative, the BVP provides funding for reimbursement of allowable body armor purchases to eligible law enforcement agencies. The grant requires a 50 percent match by the township, and the Saddle Brook Police Department has requested 29 vests and was awarded \$15,225.

### **New Jersey State Legislative Appropriations 2023 – Public Facilities Improvements**

Through our District 38 legislators, the township has been awarded \$775,000 in funding for installing a splash park, improvements to Fifth Street Park and Mayhill Street Park, and placement of an emergency generator at the Senior Citizens Center.

## COMMITTEE UPDATES

### Mayor's Youth Group (MYG)

During the fall, the MYG met on Saturday, October 14, and Saturday, November 18. New officers were elected and sworn in at the November meeting. The MYG members participated in the senior Halloween party, annual trunk or treat, and Halloween decorating contest. 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. Thank you to all the members who attended and participated in these events. Township youth entering grades 4-12 are welcome to join the MYG. Anyone interested in registering can call Christine Genuario of the Mayor's Office at 201-587-2903.

### Community Partnership Committee (CPC) / Access for All

The committee meets monthly on the last Thursday at 6:30 p.m. at the municipal complex. The committee membership has increased during 2023. In the fourth quarter, the committee continued to discuss ways to reach out and help community residents. The CPC assisted in collecting and delivering food and hygiene products for the Saddle Brook Food Pantry. The committee also partnered with Dollar General to collect toys for needy town families for the winter holidays.

### Flood Mitigation Committee Meetings

The committee has scheduled its next meeting for the end of January 2024. The meetings occur at the municipal building at 55 Mayhill Street, starting at 6:30 pm. The committee and the township engineer have been investigating the reasons behind flash flooding in low-lying areas during heavy rain periods. This issue appears to have worsened over the past few years. Recently, we have televised the drainage pipes on Schepis Avenue and Fairlawn Parkway, and the lines were clear and free of blockages. We are taking necessary steps to mitigate this flooding problem and working closely with the Office of Emergency Management Coordinator, Thomas Dickman, to better prepare our township for such situations. Our focus is on emergency responses to flooding incidents, and we are coordinating with our local emergency responders from police, fire, and ambulance services. Additionally, we are considering using volunteers from our Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) for floods and other natural disasters and purchasing a high-water rescue vehicle for flooding incidents. We are actively searching for ways to address this issue and become better prepared and vigilant.

## 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.**

## UNICO Street Fair – Sunday, October 1

I want to thank Saddle Brook UNICO for hosting another excellent 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 – Tuesday, October 24

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 28

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. 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 24

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 and Fr. Bruce Janiga of Saint Philip the Apostle 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.

## **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**

### Road Resurfacing

#### **Cambridge Avenue Road Improvements**

This project received funding from the New Jersey Department of Transportation's (NJDOT) Municipal Aid Program for 2022. The project was awarded to Frank Macchione in early March for \$359,567.18. Concrete work started on March 20, 2023, from Woodcrest Place to Fairlawn Parkway. The project is complete and in the close-out phase.

## **2023 Road Program**

The roads selected were Strathmore Terrace, Van Luyn Terrace, Kern Place, Hutter Street, and Avon Lane. The bid opening occurred on July 13, 2023, and was awarded to 4-Cleanup on July 20 for \$588,938.20. Work commenced on September 7, was completed in November 2023, and is currently in the punch list phase.

## **Alberta Drive (NJDOT Municipal Aid Funded 2022)**

The project was awarded to Frank Macchione for \$388,722.96 on August 17th. 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 the spring of 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 water main project consisted of replacing the main on Hobson, connecting services to a newly installed water main on Midland Ave as part of the first phase of the Grande Project on Van Bussom Ave, and extending that water main to connect additional services. Plans included resurfacing Hobson Ave after the water main installation. The project was awarded to Montana Construction for \$982,350.00 on August 17, 2023. Construction commenced on October 10, 2023, with most of the water main work completed in the fall. Concrete work, milling, and paving will be performed in the spring of 2024.

### **Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure Improvements**

Our town engineer assisted our grant writer in finalizing funding for improvements to the Mayhill Pump Station, Midland Ave Pump Station, and the force main. The town received approximately 1.3 million dollars in funding from the Environmental Protection Agency's grant. Our town engineer provided a proposal on July 13, 2023, which includes the preparation of bid documents, construction management, and grant management.

### **Hutter Street Storm Sewer Rehabilitation**

The township received approximately \$50,000 in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) money to rehab the storm sewer that runs from Floral Lane to Graham Terrace, behind the houses on the eastern side of Hutter Street. This storm sewer was the subject of sinkholes that were repaired on an emergency basis last year. In February 2023, the National Water Main Cleaning Company videotaped the line so that repairs could be determined. Issues were found, including a significant root intrusion, eroded pipe, and debris. There was a September 2023 grant deadline to complete this work, but the town received an extension from FEMA until April 30, 2024. The project went out to bid, and bids were opened on August 26, 2023. The bids were rejected on September 21, and the project was rebid on October 12, 2023. The low bidder was Spinello Companies for \$233,000; work should commence in the spring of 2024.

## **Westminster Place Air Relief Valve Replacement**

An air relief valve on Westminster Place is part of the sanitary sewer force main, critical to its operation, and requires replacement. To do so, the chamber and air relief assembly must be replaced. The town engineer provided a proposal and cost estimate for this work and awaits authorization.

## **OTHER**

### Township Shredding Event – Saturday, October 7

A free mobile shredding event was held in the parking lot of the new municipal building from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Residents could bring their unwanted documents containing personal information to be safely and securely destroyed. Thank you, Recycling Coordinator Joan Ramsey and Manuel Brenya of the Department of Public Works, for their assistance. Special thanks to the Mayor's Secretary, Christine Genuario, for planning and organizing the event.

### Town-Wide Garage Sale, October 20, 21, and 22

A town-wide garage sale was held from Friday, October 20, to Sunday, October 22, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. There was no fee for this registration. The event was advertised on the township website and Facebook page. A list of all participating addresses was available online on the township website.

### Halloween and Christmas Home Decorating Contest

The township 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 that members of the Mayor's Youth Group could view and judge them. Photographs of each home entered in the contest were taken and posted on the township's Facebook page and website. The top three contestants received a gift certificate from the township. Congratulations to the winners!

### Saddle Brook Police Department 'Coffee with a Cop' – Saturday, December 8

This program was held at Starbucks and 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. Also, I thank Shirley, Starbucks's manager, for her generosity and support, which made this program possible.

## Special Events Attended

**Monday afternoon, October 2:** I attended the AARP meeting at the Senior Center, 8 Caldwell Ave.

**Wednesday afternoon, October 4:** Saddle Brook Library, 340 Mayhill Street, held a Flu Shot Clinic sponsored by Acme of Saddle Brook.

**Friday afternoon, October 6:** Hosted a town hall meeting at the Saddle Brook Senior Center to discuss the StayNJ program featuring New Jersey Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin, Senator Joe Lagana, Assemblywoman Lisa Swain, Assemblyman Chris Tully, and community members.

**Sunday morning, October 14:** Participated in the 'Out of the Darkness' suicide prevention walk at the Saddle River County Park, 760 Saddle River Road.

**Tuesday evening, October 16:** I attended Parent Partnership Night at the Saddle Brook Middle/High School, representing the Saddle Brook Community Partnership Committee along with Pastor Christopher Wolf of the First Reformed Church.

**Sunday afternoon, October 22:** I attended the Drums from Heaven fundraiser at VFW Post 3484, 44 Market Street.

**Tuesday night, October 24:** Attended a flag retirement ceremony held by Saddle Brook Boy Scout Troop 213 at VFW Post 3484, 44 Market Street.

**Thursday night, October 26:** I attended the 'Meet the Board of Education Candidates' event at the Saddle Brook Middle/High School Media Center, 355 Mayhill Street.

**Friday evening, October 27:** Attended the Saddle Brook Woman's Club Halloween Tricky Tray at VFW Post 3484, 44 Market Street.

**Saturday evening, November 4:** Attended Saddle Brook Junior Soccer Halloween party at VFW Post 3484, 44 Market Street.

**Sunday afternoon, November 5:** Attended Chicken Bingo at the Saddle Brook Senior Center, 8 Caldwell Ave.

**Saturday afternoon, November 11:** I attended the Veterans Day ceremony at VFW Circle, Mayhill Street. Afterward, I attended a World War II monument unveiling ceremony at VFW Post 3484.

**Tuesday afternoon, November 14:** Officiated the marriage of John Vitovic and Joy Bardakjy at the municipal complex, 55 Mayhill Street.



**Sunday afternoon, November 19:** Attended the 40th Anniversary of the ordination party for Fr. Bruce Janiga of Saint Philip the Apostle's Church. The party was held in Saint Philip's Auditorium, 488 Saddle River Road.

**Sunday evening, November 19:** Attended Rocco Rufrano's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of service for the Saddle Brook Volunteer Fire Department at the Fiesta in Hasbrouck Heights.