

MAYOR ROBERT D. WHITE
QUARTERLY UPDATE
OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2024

BUDGET

Township Audit

In September 2024, independent auditor Public Accountants Wielkocz and Company, LLC, issued an audit report of township financial statements for 2023. The report was reviewed, and the township council certified the audit at the October 17 council meeting. The audit will be posted on the township website at www.saddlebrooknj.us.

Emergency Ordinance #1757-24

On October 17, an ordinance was passed authorizing a special emergency appropriation of \$135,000 for tax maps and a geographic information system (GIS).

Bond Ordinance #1758-24

On October 17, a bond ordinance was approved to authorize various public improvements and the acquisition of new, additional, or replacement equipment and machinery. This includes new communication and signal systems equipment, new vehicles, a new fire engine, and other necessary apparatus and equipment. The ordinance appropriates \$2,545,300 to cover these costs, makes a down payment, authorizes the issuance of bonds to finance this appropriation, and allows for the issuance of bond anticipation notes in anticipation of the bond issuance.

Preparation for the 2024 Municipal Budget

Business Administrator Jimmy Homsy and I will schedule budget hearings with department heads in early January 2025. The department heads will be instructed to complete budget worksheets for their projected fiscal requirements. Each department will be asked not to exceed the state-required spending cap for budget appropriations.

2025 Temporary Budget

Township Business Administrator Jimmy Homzi and I have prepared a temporary budget for 2025, which was adopted by the township council at the January 2, 2025 reorganization meeting. The temporary budget is 26.25 percent of our yearly 2024 municipal budget. We will work with our township auditor and chief financial officer to prepare a permanent budget for introduction during the first quarter of 2024.

GRANTS

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 applied for \$190,000 to enhance Floral Lane. A disposition letter is expected to arrive soon.

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. The decision regarding the application will be made sometime in 2025.

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

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding aims to enhance community resilience by upgrading municipal infrastructure. This includes repaving roads, improving sewer systems, enhancing parks, and making public buildings accessible for individuals with disabilities. The township has requested \$227,773 for improvements to South Street and expects a decision by mid-2025.

FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)

The primary objective of this grant is to support fire departments and independent emergency medical service organizations in meeting their firefighting and emergency response needs. Since 2001, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) has equipped first responders with vital gear, vehicles, training, and resources to safeguard the public from fire and related dangers. Our grant writer applied for \$173,475 to purchase portable radios, personal protective equipment, coats and pants, and gas meters for our volunteer fire department. The anticipated award date is in 6 to 8 months.

Available Grants Being Considered

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.

Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation Grant

The Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation aims to enhance the lifesaving capabilities of local heroes and improve the communities they serve. This mission is achieved by supplying lifesaving equipment and educational resources for prevention to first responders and public safety organizations. The township plans to apply for pagers for our volunteer fire department in January 2025.

N.J. Department of Community Affairs (NJDCA) Local Recreation Improvement Grant

This is a competitive funding opportunity to enhance public recreational facilities like parks, municipal centers, and stadiums. Grant funds will support upgrades to community centers, playgrounds, pools, walking and biking trails, multi-sport courts, and other facilities. They will also cover costs for project development services, equipment purchases, and environmental remediation needed to prepare sites for use. The application is due January 31, 2025.

Grant Applications Denied

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.

Federal Appropriations

Our application for the water main replacement was denied for the Seventh and Eighth Streets.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Mayor's Youth Group (MYG)

The MYG met on Monday, October 28, to discuss upcoming events the group would participate in. These events included the Senior Halloween Party, Trunk or Treat, and the Halloween Decorating Contest. The group concluded the year with a holiday party and judged the homes participating in the Holiday Home Decorating Contest on the same night. Thank you to everyone who has been involved! Township youths entering grades 4-12 are welcome to join the MYG. Anyone interested in registering can call my office at 201-587-2903.

Community Partnership Committee (CPC) / Access for All

The committee met monthly during the year's fourth quarter 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.

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

At the Thursday, October 24 meeting, I presented Pastor Christopher Wolf of the First Reformed Church with a plaque recognizing his contributions to the CPC. Ten years ago, he approached me with a plan to assist residents in establishing this important committee. Under his leadership, we provided essential support, including food collections for the Saddle Brook Food Pantry and Christmas gifts for underprivileged children. Pastor Christopher will conclude his pastorate at the end of this month to begin a new role as a full-time chaplain at Christian Health in Wyckoff, NJ. We are grateful for his service and wish him the best in his new position.

Flood Mitigation Committee

The committee met on Tuesday, October 22, to discuss and review potential flood mitigation projects and education programs for the community. Our goal is to identify practical solutions to reduce flooding and enhance flood awareness among residents. We collaborate with local, county, state, and federal officials to explore various strategies to prepare our community for potential flooding and protect our homes and streets. We are currently seeking to recruit new residents to become members.

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, September 29

I thank Saddle Brook UNICO for hosting another fantastic street fair. This event truly brought our community together for a day of entertainment and socializing with friends and neighbors. Food and merchandise vendors, local businesses, and civic organizations offered valuable information, amusements, and rides for children.

Trunk or Treat – Saturday, October 26

The township council and I thank everyone who attended and volunteered at the Halloween Trunk or Treat event in the municipal complex's parking lot. The event was well attended and featured a fun-filled afternoon with trunk-or-treaters dressed in amazing costumes. Thank you again for your support!

Senior Halloween Party – Tuesday, October 29

The Saddle Brook seniors enjoyed a wonderful time at their Annual Halloween Party held at the VFW. Most attendees dressed in costumes, contributing to an evening filled with fun, music, dancing, delicious food, and treats. The event featured a costume contest, offering gifts and prizes for the winners. It was a fantastic way to welcome the fall season and prepare for a happy, spooky Halloween!

Holiday Tree Lighting and Party – Friday, November 29

The town held its annual Tree Lighting Ceremony at the municipal complex. We greatly appreciate Mr. Frank Ortega and the High/Middle School Band's attendance and outstanding performance. Thank you to Fr. Bruce Janiga of Saint Philip the Apostle Church for delivering the prayers. We extend special thanks to Joe Schilp and Joan Ramsey for portraying Santa and Mrs. Claus and our fire department for transporting them from the North Pole.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

2024 Road Program

Projects Completed

The following roads have been resurfaced, which included upgrades to stormwater inlets, the installation of curb ramps, the replacement of damaged or missing concrete curbs, improvements to drainage structures, and the milling and resurfacing of the roadway.

- Lincoln Avenue and Van Orden Street (From Liberty Street to Pehle Avenue)
- Nightingale Road (From Bell Avenue to Cambridge Avenue)
- Dyer Place
- Sampson Street (From Market Street to the dead end by Veteran's Field)
- Sterling Place

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.

Projects Not Completed

The following roads were not completed and will be finished in the spring of 2025.

- Orchard Lane
- Elm Avenue
- Ash Avenue

Alberta Drive (NJDOT Municipal Aid Funded 2022)

The project was awarded in 2022. Concrete work began in late August 2023 and was completed by mid-September. Due to recent gas main leaks in Alberta, Public Service Gas (PSE&G) was contacted to see if they could replace the gas main before the township began milling and paving the road. However, this replacement will not take place. Milling and paving are now scheduled for completion in the spring of 2025.

Other Needed Repairs

Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure Improvements

Our town engineer assisted our grant writer in securing funding for the Mayhill Pump Station, Midland Ave Pump Station, and 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. Community cooperation is essential to address this issue effectively. Property owners must hire licensed pest control professionals if rats are found on their property. The township took action by updating permit requirements, increasing property inspections, amending the garbage ordinance, and implementing procedures for rodent reports. Information about these measures has been posted on the township website and social media. Since implementing these measures, sightings of rats have significantly decreased.

Public Service Gas and Electric Gas Main Replacement Program

Public Service Gas and Electric (PSE&G) is upgrading its aging gas pipes to create a safer and more reliable gas system for the future. The company is replacing several gas mains throughout the entire township. This work will continue into 2025 and is expected to be completed by mid-year.

Ordinances Adopted

#1757-24 Tax Maps

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

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.

#1660-24 Redevelopment Plan for Municipal Property at 73 and 93 Market Street

This ordinance allows for adopting a redevelopment plan that identifies the Market Street properties as in need of rehabilitation. Previously, a resolution authorized the township planner to conduct a study, which recommended this course of action. Additionally, the ordinance empowers township officials to implement the plan and its associated terms.

Ordinances Amended

#1661-24 Amending and Fixing of Salary and Wages of Township Employees

#1662-24 Amending Chapter 34 "Police Escorts"

#1763-24 Amending Chapter 67 "Brush, Grass, and Weeds"

#1764-24 Amending Chapter 106 "Handicapped Parking"

#1765-24 Amending Chapter 133 "Noise"

#1766-24 Amending Chapter 149 "Peddling and Soliciting"

#1767-24 Amending Chapter 157/9 "Sanitation"

Special Events Attended

Tuesday morning, October 1: I administered the oath of office to our new Chief of Police, John Zotollo, at the Municipal Complex, 55 Mayhill Street.

Friday afternoon, October 4: I attended a photo opportunity at Mayhill Street Park. Bergen County officials presented the township with a ceremonial check for \$138,808 from the Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund. The grant will fund the improvement of Kern Park, located adjacent to Victor Field.

Thursday evening, October 10: I attended the 100th Anniversary Celebration for Washington School, 225 Market Street.

Saturday afternoon, October 13: I attended the dedication of the Babe Liberty Field, formerly Nedellec Field, 639 Saddle River Road.

Saturday evening, October 19: I attended Saddle Brook Recreation Football and Cheerleading “Senior Day” at Veterans Field, 20 Sampson Street.

Saturday evening, October 19: I attended the Drums from Heaven Halloween Spooktacular by Tommy Hayes at VFW Post 3484, 44 Market Street.

Friday evening, October 25: I attended the Saddle Brook Woman’s Club Tricky Tray at the Three Saints Church, 474 Outwater Lane, Garfield.

Sunday afternoon, October 27: I attended the anniversary celebration for the volunteer fire department, honoring Edward Ceccacci for 50 years of service and Andy Gallo for 25 years at Macaluso’s in Hawthorne.

Friday evening, November 1: I attended a sensory-friendly car show at the Municipal Complex, 55 Mayhill Street. Legacy Empowerment Group, Saddle Brook Angels, and Saddle Brook Recreation collaborated on the event.

Sunday afternoon, November 3: I attended a “No Surrender Community Event” at the Municipal Complex located at 55 Mayhill Street. The Saddle Brook Recreation Department sponsored the event in honor of Manny Scarangella, the township's former recreation director.

Monday morning, November 11: I attended the VFW Post #3484 Veterans Day ceremony at the Veterans Monument, Saddle River Road and Mayhill Street.

Tuesday evening, November 11: I attended the grand opening of the Falcon’s Nest, a recreation wrestling room built at Veterans Field, 20 Sampson Street.

Saturday morning, November 30: I attended a Catholic Mass for veterans at the Paramus Veteran’s Home at 1 Veterans Way, Paramus. The Saddle Brook Marine Corps Detachment conducted the Mass.

Tuesday evening, December 3: I attended the High School National Honor Society induction ceremony in the Saddle Brook Middle/High School auditorium, 355 Mayhill Street.

Tuesday afternoon, December 10: I attended a 100th birthday party for Senior Club member Angie Karcich at the Senior Center, 8 Caldwell Avenue.

Thursday evening Township Council meeting, December 19: I presided over the promotions of Saddle Brook Police Captains Douglas Habermann and Giuseppe Califano at the Municipal Complex, 55 Mayhill Street.

Friday afternoon, December 20: I attended a Saddle Brook Crossing Guard winter break holiday and retirement party for Pat Drummond at the Golden Pub, 335 Market Street.