

MAYOR ROBERT D. WHITE
QUARTERLY UPDATE
JANUARY – MARCH 2026

BUDGET

Preparation for the 2026 Municipal Budget

Business Administrator Jimmy Homsy and I have held budget meetings with department heads, who were instructed to complete budget worksheets for their projected fiscal requirements. Each department was asked to adhere to the state-required spending cap for budget appropriations.

2026 Temporary Budget

Township Business Administrator Jimmy Homzi and I have prepared a temporary budget for 2026, which the township council adopted at the January reorganization meeting. The temporary budget accounts for 26.25 percent of our total 2025 municipal budget. We will collaborate with our township auditor and chief financial officer to prepare a permanent budget for introduction during the second quarter of 2026.

GRANTS

Grant Applications – In Progress

Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation Grant

The Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation enhances the lifesaving capabilities of local heroes by providing essential equipment and educational resources to first responders. The township applied for pagers for our volunteer fire department. The anticipated award date is May 2026.

ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grant 20026

ANJEC offers grants to New Jersey environmental commissions for projects that advance stewardship and community involvement in parks and other preserved spaces. The 2026 Grant cycle marks the program's 13th year. ANJEC will accept applications from environmental commissions for grants of up to \$1500 each for local stewardship projects.

Bergen County Open Space Grant 2026

The Bergen County Department of Parks has announced the 2026 Open Space Trust Fund Grant Program. Applicants can seek funding in three categories: Land Acquisition, Historic Preservation, and Municipal Park Improvements. All Bergen County municipalities and qualified nonprofits are invited to apply.

Grant Applications – Submitted/Pending

N.J. Department of Community Affairs Local Recreation Improvement Grant (LRIG) – Fiscal Year 2026

The LRIG is a competitive grant program that supports improvements to recreational facilities, including parks and community centers. Funds are allocated to cover costs for playground and facility updates, including project development, equipment purchases, and environmental remediation. The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs administers the program, with a maximum award of \$75,000. The township has applied to improve the Fifth Street Park Playground.

Sustainable Jersey and Public Service Gas and Electric (PSE&G) Sustainability Grants

The PSE&G Foundation is funding the Sustainable Jersey Grants Program to support local sustainability initiatives in New Jersey municipalities that participate in the program. Eligible applicants must have a Green Team that meets the required standards. The funding cycle will offer grants of \$20,000 and \$10,000 for larger projects, as well as \$2,000 grants for smaller projects or for supporting Green Teams. The number of grants awarded will depend on the quality of the applications, with a focus on \$2,000 awards.

Bergen County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Fiscal Year 26-27

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 funding for improvements to Miller Street.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Mayor's Youth Group (MYG)

The MYG held a meeting on Saturday, February 28. The group's participation in the upcoming Parent Partnership Workshop at Saddle Brook Middle High School on Monday, March 16, was discussed at the meeting. On Thursday, March 26, group members came to the municipal complex for a tour, and I spoke with them about the mayor's role in the township.

The group met again on Saturday, March 28. The group's role in supporting the Township's Easter Celebration on Saturday, April 4, including assisting the Community Partnership Committee in organizing a food drive at the event, was discussed. Additionally, the group discussed plans to honor Earth Day with a cleanup and planting effort on Saturday, April 25, at Tri-Centennial Park to show appreciation for our planet.

Community Partnership Committee (CPC) / Access for All

The CPC met on Thursday, February 26, and discussed several topics, including our participation in the school district's Parent Partnership Night on Monday, March 16. Parent Partnership Night is a collaborative community event that connects families with school resources, support services, and community partners. Members of the CPC, the Mayor's Youth Group, and the Green Team participated in the event and distributed literature explaining their groups and purposes.

The CPC also met on Thursday, March 23, to discuss the Community Solar Program, the Out of the Darkness Walk, increasing volunteerism, recruiting members, sensory-friendly spaces, and promoting the CPC in the community. The township had purchased CPC T-shirts and distributed them to all members.

Green Team / Flood Mitigation Committee

The Green Team and the Flood Committee typically meet on the last Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Senior Center. They held meetings on February 25 and March 25. On January 27, at 6:30 p.m., Green Team Chairman Steven Mariconda gave a presentation on light pollution at the Sustainable New Jersey Bergen Hub meeting at Rutherford Borough Hall.

Additionally, the Green Team collaborated with the Saddle Brook Library to host a Winter Seed Sowing presentation on Saturday, February 7, at 10:30 a.m. The presenter was a master gardener from Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Chairman Mariconda has worked with the township grant writer to apply for a \$2,000 environmental project to build a native plant pollinator garden at the library, plant trees throughout the township, and build compost bins. Notifications of grant awards are expected in June 2026.

The Green Team also participated in an NJ Maker's Day event hosted by the Saddle Brook Library on Saturday, March 21, at 10:30 a.m. Maker's Day celebrates culture, creativity, and STEM/STEAM learning. It connects residents with libraries, schools, museums, and businesses through hands-on activities such as 3D printing, robotics, crafting, and gardening.

Team member Gale Sikorski has been spearheading our Flood Committee's initiatives. She has been engaging with our County, State, and Federal elected representatives to discuss flood mitigation and has arranged for the United States Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a study of the Saddle River. Thanks to Gale's dedication and persistence, Congresswoman Pou's office recently issued a press release announcing that the Army Corps will conduct a three-year study of the Saddle River.

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 3

Swearing in Fire Chief Herman Wenzel and Assistant Fire Chief Gary Gilfoy to their assignments was a great honor. Congratulations, and thank you to them for their outstanding work. New firefighters and officers were also sworn in and welcomed to the department. We extend our gratitude to all our volunteer firefighters for their exceptional service to our community. The township council members attended the dinner to express their appreciation and support for the fire department members and their families.

Ramadan Celebration, Saturday, February 7

Thank you to Sahar Salem and the Eid Committee for organizing the Ramadan ceremony—warm greetings to our Muslim friends, neighbors, and colleagues during this blessed month. Ramadan is a time for reflection, self-discipline, and spiritual growth, fostering unity through prayer, fasting, and charity. It reminds us of the importance of kindness and understanding that connects us all. As the crescent moon shines, may it bring light and peace to everyone observing. Happy Ramadan Mubarak to all who celebrate!

Celebrating Black History Month, February 19 Council Meeting

Black History Month is celebrated every February in the U.S., honoring the achievements of African Americans. This year, the township recognized first responders for their courage and leadership, which inspires confidence among Black Americans and all communities. During the council meeting, several individuals were honored for their service.

Lieutenant Robert Littlejohn, Officer Najee Anderson, and Officer Christopher Reece of the Saddle Brook Police Department; Vice President Eric Holloman and Second Lieutenant Travis Swaby of the Saddle Brook Volunteer Ambulance Corps; Firefighter Khaleel Thomas of the Saddle Brook Volunteer Fire Department; and Manuel Brenya of the Saddle Brook Department of Public Works.

Women in History Month – March 19 Council Meeting

At the Township Council meeting, I honored five remarkable women from Saddle Brook to celebrate Women's History Month. They were recognized for their outstanding contributions across various fields. Congratulations to them and their families for their significant impact on the community! Thank you for your tireless efforts and unwavering dedication.

Tracey Bouzoumita (Community Service) – Saddle Brook Volunteer Ambulance Corps; Amanda Fragale (Business Leader) – Moxie Salon and Beauty Bar; Semina Majeed (Education Leader) – Saddle Brook Library; Angelina Pallotta (Outstanding Citizen) – Saddle Brook Resident; and Camille Tritto (Outstanding Citizen) – Saddle Brook Resident

Free Information Session, Solar Landscape, Tuesday, March 24

On March 24, the town held an information session with Solar Landscape, a New Jersey company focused on rooftop solar. The program allows residents to benefit from solar savings without installing panels on their homes, whether they rent or own. Subscribers enjoy a guaranteed 31 percent discount on the solar credits applied to their PSE&G bills for 20 years, with no enrollment or cancellation fees. About 100 residents attended the session, which was recorded for broadcast on Our Town TV and social media.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Parks

Kern Place Park

The Township submitted a grant application to Bergen County Open Space for the replacement of the play equipment and safety surface, and for the installation of a sidewalk. Our engineer provided an engineering proposal and prepared plans. The township has selected the structure, and the engineer worked with the vendor, MRC Recreation, to obtain a price to construct the improvements under a co-op. Work began on March 23rd and is expected to be completed before the end of April, provided the weather allows placement of the safety surface.

Fifth Street Park

The Township has received a grant from the New Jersey Division of Community Affairs to construct a basketball court. Additional funding has been provided, and we are moving forward with the project. Our engineer has completed the site survey and base mapping and is preparing the bid documents. The bid is planned to go out in late fall or early winter 2026 to prepare for spring 2027 construction.

Spray Park

Our engineer prepared plans for a spray pad off Sampson Street next to Veterans' Field. The engineer worked with the vendor, Commercial Recreation Specialists (CRS), to develop a layout that was provided and approved. The equipment was purchased under a co-op and delivered to the site in mid-February. The project was bid, and the award was made to Adamo Construction on March 19.

Mayhill Street Park Phase II

The project to resurface four tennis courts and two basketball courts was put out for bid in July 2025, but the bids exceeded the township's budget and were rejected. To stay within budget, the project was revised to remove the basketball courts and convert one tennis court into two pickleball courts. The revised project was rebid on August 1, 2025, and awarded to the low bidder, Picerno Giordano, for \$284,005. Asphaltting was completed in November, with color coating and line striping scheduled for early spring 2026.

Roadway Improvements

Third Street

The Community Development Block Grant funds this road project. Our engineer has begun work and has prepared the construction plans. The project involves installing drainage basins and piping in front of Engine Company #2 firehouse, as well as milling and paving the street from Outwater Lane to Capital Street. The contract was awarded to AJM Contractors on November 13, 2025. Construction began the first week of December 2025 with the drainage improvements; however, milling and paving have been postponed until April 2026.

Tree Streets Water Main Improvements

Our engineer received authorization to begin planning on September 18, 2025. The project will extend the water main along Maple, Spruce, Larch, and Pine Avenues, connecting to the main on Schepis Avenue to improve water quality for residents. PSE&G will repave these streets in spring 2026. The project was awarded on December 18, 2025; work commenced in March 2026 and was completed on March 25, including successful system testing. The remaining work includes replacing lead service lines.

Tree Streets Concrete Improvements

Our engineer was authorized to start work on September 18 and is currently preparing plans. The project includes replacing damaged concrete curbs and reconstructing curb ramps at the Schepis Avenue crosswalks, with the Wilson Avenue end already completed. PSE&G is expected to pave these streets in spring 2026. The project was awarded on February 19, 2026, and construction is expected to begin in April, subject to weather.

Floral Lane

Floral Lane is funded by the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) for 2025 and 2026. The engineering proposal was submitted and authorized on September 25, 2025. Surveying and base mapping are complete, and bid documents were sent to NJDOT in January 2026. The engineer is addressing NJDOT's comments. Work is expected to begin in the summer, coordinated with PSE&G's gas main replacement on Floral Lane.

South Street

South Street is funded by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the 2026 funding year. Our engineer was authorized to prepare the bid documents on February 19, 2026. The field survey has been completed, and they await base maps before preparing the bid documents. Construction is anticipated for early to mid-summer 2026.

New Municipal Building Roof Replacement

The project to repair a leak in the front vestibule area was awarded to the low bidder, Sky Construction, on July 17, 2025. Work began in December 2025 and was completed in January 2026, except for punch list/closeout items.

Blue Acres Demo Project

The Town received funding from New Jersey's Blue Acres program to acquire and demolish two properties. The engineer has prepared bid documents and will oversee construction. After consulting with Green Acres and the New Jersey Historic Office, it was determined that the buildings at 200 Saddle River Road, in a historic district, can be demolished. The Town can proceed with the demolition of structures at both 200 Saddle River Road and 15 Riverview Place.

Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure Improvements

Our engineer assisted our grant writer in securing 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 (EPA's) Community Grant. They are currently working with the grant administrators on paperwork to kick-start this project and will need to resubmit a proposal once the scope of work is established.

Miscellaneous Engineering

Tax Maps

The tax maps need to be updated and converted to a geographic information system (GIS) format. Our engineer has been authorized to complete this work, which is currently in progress. The updates have been submitted to the Tax Assessor's Office for review. Once we receive their feedback, the engineering team will make the necessary adjustments and submit the revised maps to the State Division of Taxation.

Stormwater Mapping

The town engineer proposed GIS mapping of stormwater facilities, as required by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), using road survey data and field verification to address flooding. The township received a \$25,000 grant and authorized a \$54,950 budget for the work, collaborating with the Department of Public Works to complete the mapping by December 31, 2025. NJDEP then requested a Watershed Inventory Plan, with a draft due by January 1, 2026. A \$29,000 proposal for this plan has been approved, and the draft has been submitted to the state.

PSE&G Gas Main Replacement Projects 2024 and 2025

The 2024 and 2025 projects are nearing completion, and our engineer has met with PSE&G to compile a list of roads to be paved for both projects. The town engineer met with Township Administrator Jimmy Homsy and Public Works Superintendent Robert Hicswa to determine where to apply the paving credits. The town engineer also met with PSE&G to finalize the paving list. PSE&G anticipates paving the roads in May 2026.

PSE&G Gas Main Replacement Project 2026

PSE&G has notified the town of its intent to perform another gas main replacement project in 2026, with work expected to begin shortly. This will cover the area from Floral Lane to Alberta Drive and from Fairlawn Parkway to North Midland Avenue.

OTHER

Redevelopment of Old Town Hall, 93-95 Market Street

During the Township Planning Board meeting on January 21, 2026, the Board approved a redevelopment agreement with Manor at Saddle Brook LLC. This agreement allows for the construction of an apartment building on the site of the former Town Hall and Police Station located at 73 and 93 Market Street. The property was sold for \$1.6 million, and the developer plans to build 60 new apartment units, including nine affordable housing units to meet state-mandated obligations.

Redevelopment of Old Town Hall, 93-95 Market Street (Continued)

The project will consist of a two-and-a-half-story building with a maximum height of 41 feet and no vehicle access from Harrison Avenue to minimize traffic impact. It includes underground parking with over 200 spaces, including 40 dedicated to the police department and visitors.

Additional features encompass a landscaped buffer with large arborvitae plantings, a digital sign, and the relocation of the police monument to the police station. With the property returning to the tax rolls, it is expected to generate annual revenue of \$300,000 to \$350,000.

The developer is a reputable professional with a proven track record in quality construction, ensuring adherence to municipal standards and neighborhood expectations. This redevelopment signifies a substantial investment in the community and a balanced approach to growth.

Township Ordinances Adopted

(Adopted March 5, 2026)

#1796-26: Amending and supplementing Chapter 206, “Zoning,” Article VH, “Affordable Housing Overlay Districts,” establishing three new overlay housing zones and modifying the zoning map to reflect the new affordable housing zones.

#1797-26: Amending the affordable housing set-aside of the AHOZ-1, AHOZ-2, AHOZ-3, and AHOZ-4 overlay zones.

#1798-26: Deleting and replacing Articles II “Municipal Housing Liaison” and III “Affordable Housing Requirement” of Chapter 48 “Affordable Housing” to update the township’s affordable housing ordinance in accordance with the December 2025 uniform housing affordability controls.

#1799-26: Deleting and replacing Article I, “Mandatory Set-Aside and Replacement of Fees,” of Chapter 48, “Affordable Housing,” to update the township’s development fee ordinance in accordance with the Dec. 2025 N.J.A.C. 5:99 regulations and the amended Fair Housing Act.

(Adopted March 19, 2026)

#1800-26: Amending and supplementing Chapter 58, entitled “Animals.” The ordinance was amended as follows: Volunteer Fire Department and Ambulance Corps members shall be exempt from all license and regulation fees and all local additional fees.

#1801-26: Amending and supplementing Chapter 87, entitled “Fees,” by creating Article IV, “Exemption of Fees,” to exempt members of the Volunteer Fire Department and Ambulance Corps from all local fees.

Special Events Attended

Sunday afternoon, January 11: I attended the Skip Bailey Junior Wrestling Tournament at Saddle Brook Middle High School.

Saturday morning, January 17: I attended the Opening Day for Saddle Brook Angels Basketball at the Municipal Complex Recreation Center.

Saturday evening, January 24: I attended the Saint Philip's Church Aloha Dinner Tricky Tray fundraiser in the church auditorium, 488 Saddle River Road, Saddle Brook.

Saturday morning, February 7: I attended a Winter Seed Sowing Seminar at the Saddle Brook Library. The library and the Saddle Brook Green Team sponsored the event.

Friday evening, February 13: I attended the Junior Wrestling Dinner at the Saddle Brook VFW Post 3484, 44 Market Street.

Sunday morning, February 15: I attended a mass at the First Reformed Church of Saddle Brook on Ackermann Avenue and presented a plaque marking the church's 125th anniversary.

Friday afternoon, February 27: I attended the Retirement "Walk Out" for Captain Douglas Habermann of the Saddle Brook Police Department, 63 Market Street.

Monday morning, March 2: I participated in Read Across America and read to young students (K-3) at Long School, Smith School, and Franklin School.

Saturday afternoon, March 14: I attended the Saddle Brook Angels' end-of-the-season pizza party at the Municipal Complex Recreation Center.

Sunday afternoon, March 15: I attended the Chicken Bingo event at the Saddle Brook Senior Center, 8 Caldwell Avenue.

Saturday morning, March 21: I attended a pancake breakfast fundraiser by the Saddle Brook Volunteer Fire Department, Company #2, at Applebee's Restaurant, Garfield, N.J.

Thursday evening, March 26: I attended a recreational basketball pizza party to honor the 5th- and 7th-grade championship teams and the recreational spirit leader mini national and global championship team. Team members received recognition certificates from the Council and me.

Monday evening, March 30: I attended an end-of-the-year pizza party for the recreation wrestling program at the Saddle Brook Volunteer Fire Department, Hook and Ladder Company.