

Bridgewater News

WINTER 2010 • PUBLISHED BY THE TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER

Mayor

Patricia Flannery

Township Council

Matthew Moench
Council President

Dan Hayes

Allen Kurdyla

Howard Norgalis

Christine Rose

We're on the web!
www.bridgewaternj.gov

A Message from the Council President

As we begin 2010, we embark on what will be an exciting and challenging year filled with many changes at both the local and state levels. With the election of Chris Christie as our new governor, we now have hope that as we conclude the decade so too do we conclude an era of oppressive unfunded state mandates, damaging housing policies, and tax burdens that are driving New Jersey residents from their homes.

Here in Bridgewater, this year marks the retirement of Councilmen Robert Albano and Michael Hsing, and, with his election to Somerset County Freeholder, the departure of Councilman Patrick Scaglione. This past November, the voters of Bridgewater re-elected Howard Norgalis and selected Allen Kurdyla and Dan Hayes to join the Council. And recently, the Council voted to approve Chris Rose to replace Councilman Scaglione.

Despite the many positive changes at the state level, we can still expect a tough year ahead. We can be comforted

(continued on next page)

Mayor's Message

(For the complete text of the Mayor's State of the Township message, which was presented at the January 4, 2010, Township Council Reorganization Meeting, please visit the Township website.)

It is an honor for me to present my seventh State of the Township Address reflecting on the accomplishments of this past year, and noting the challenges and priorities that face us in the year ahead. I am pleased to say that the State of the Township is strong and we continue to thrive as a community and a leader in the State. But our standing is not without caution, as the lingering effects of the global economic downturn continue to challenge our businesses and our lives each and every day.

Retailers Home Depot Expo, Circuit City, and Linens and Things have closed, the Courier News has closed its printing operation and has a contract to sell their site, and major corporations have announced they will either cut staff or relocate operations out of the Township. I mention these examples first so we can dispense with the bad news and focus on the positive achievements.

Of note for their positive growth, pharmaceutical giant sanofi-aventis has completed upgrades of its research and development site and recently broken ground on a major expansion of its US headquarters here. Financial services leader Goldman Sachs recently completed a project that turned a vacant warehouse site into a thriving commercial use (data storage center) that brings a much more valuable ratable to the Township without the negative impacts of traffic and noise. STS Tire Service is constructing a large warehouse on its site, remedi-

ating a contaminated condition left by its former owner and significantly expanding its current business. Medical device maker J&J Cordis relocated to Bridgewater bringing 300 jobs. Met Life is renovating its facility and will move an additional 250 employees to their Bridgewater campus. Our retail base has seen the addition of the Olive Garden Restaurant, Dunkin Donuts, Easy Pharmacy, and several additions at the Bridgewater Commons. Also, Target, Lord and Taylor, and Old Navy recently completed \$1 million renovations to each of their facilities.

These achievements may not have been possible had we been complacent and allowed businesses to go unassisted. Early in my administration in 2004 it was evident what an important role our commercial properties play in shouldering our property tax burden. The Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDC) and the Economic Development Officer were established to focus on attracting and retaining commercial businesses in our Township and our efforts were recently recognized in NJ Biz. In keeping with this charge, the committee has recently completed a report that outlines recommendations for additional uses in commercial zones along the Route 22 corridor. These recommendations are being reviewed and analyzed by the Planning Board through a series of public meetings where the merits are weighed.

This economic development activity is especially important as the State budget deficit presents particular concern for many NJ municipalities. The further reduction of state aid will severely impact revenues as towns develop their

(continued on next page)

Mayor's Message *(continued)*

budgets for the coming year. Our conservative fiscal policies have enabled us to hold the municipal portion of the property taxes stable for the last several years.

Through a combination of reduced spending, reduction of the workforce, and restructuring of programs we saw a \$7 decrease in the municipal portion of the average taxpayer's bill. In a difficult economic climate this was no simple achievement and it was even more considerable given the fact that Governor Corzine reduced our state revenues over \$800,000 in the last 2 years. I am not optimistic that these revenues will be restored. In the coming months I will be presenting a budget to the Council for consideration that will face innumerable challenges to maintain the current programs.

The economic downturn is not the only challenge that we currently face. The war on terror, though a worldwide battle, affected us directly this past June as Staff Sergeant Andrew Lobosco, who grew up in Bridgewater with his parents and sister, was killed in action during a heroic attempt to hold off insurgents from his forward operating base in Afghanistan. The patriotism and community support shown to the Lobosco family during his funeral services was moving and inspiring, and something I will not forget. Also, Private Allen Carroll of Bridgewater was wounded in the senseless attack at Fort Hood, Texas. I am happy to report that Private Carroll is largely recovered

from his injuries. This young man has displayed a tremendous spirit of duty and courage as his top concern is being able to deploy with his unit shortly. We wish him, and all the members of our armed forces, a safe journey as they continue their work as United States soldiers.

The assistance provided to municipal government by the outstanding volunteers who serve on our many boards and committees is an asset that cannot be measured in cost efficiencies or matrix charts. Their countless hours and lending of their individual talents for the betterment of our community is greatly appreciated. To those of you who are veterans of community service I am delighted to have your wisdom and experience back. For those of you who are joining us for the first time I welcome you and thank you for your commitment to serve your fellow residents. One of the most rewarding tasks as Mayor is to meet with the many volunteers, learn about their backgrounds and areas of expertise, and work with them to improve our community.

It is truly humbling that engineers, doctors, business owners, corporate executives, educators, nurses, lawyers, busy parents, and retirees, to name a few, volunteer their precious free time to serve their local government and become a bigger part of their community.

To all Bridgewater residents, I wish you and your families a happy and healthy new year.

Bridgewater Township to Receive over \$100,000 in State Recycling Grants

The Bridgewater Environmental Commission would like to thank Bridgewater residents and businesses for their outstanding recycling actions. The State of New Jersey will be awarding our Township over \$100,000 in Recycling Tonnage Grant funds, more than any other municipality in Somerset County, for the massive amount of recyclable items collected from our town in 2007. These funds help offset your tax dollars by helping to pay for curbside recycling pick-up by Somerset County. So thank you once again for your excellence in recycling, which goes a long way in preserving nature.

Council President *(continued)*

that here in Bridgewater, we have faced tough challenges before and met them head on. Last year, the Township approved a budget that resulted in a tax decrease for the municipal portion of your taxes. This was done even as the state reduced our municipal aid. Under Mayor Flannery's leadership, the Township Council also approved a COAH plan that protects Bridgewater from costly builder's remedy lawsuits, while protecting the quality of life in Bridgewater. With the national and state economies still uncertain, we know residents are still tightening their own financial belts and Council will do the same with its own budget. Over the course of the next year, the Township will face many pressing issues upon which the Council will be called to deliberate. I am confident Council will meet these challenges with the prudence, good judgment and limited-government approach we have come to appreciate in Bridgewater.

In a time period where our national leaders are seeking to move towards expansive government programs, over reaching governmental controls, and higher taxes, we must remember the words of Thomas Jefferson as he cautioned, "those who are governed best are governed least." Every time government passes another law or regulation, the people lose a little bit more of their freedom. It is our job to protect the people from government. We need to protect the right of every citizen to lead their own lives, free from government intrusion and make sure government supports, not hinders, every person in their own pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness. It is this approach that will lead our Township and our State into the next decade.




PUBLIC SAFETY NEWS

During the week of February 22-28, 2010, the nationally coordinated effort "Rx OTC Awareness Week" will be taking place to educate parents and to help eliminate prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse. DARE is the coordinator behind this mass effort nationwide to offer community education presentations along with prescription and over-the-counter drug drop-off locations in communities across the nation throughout RX OTC Awareness Week.

The following are a few statistics regarding the Rx/OTC drug abuse epidemic:

- Every day, 2500 children ages 12 to 17 try a painkiller for the first time.
- Teens now abuse Rx/OTC drugs more than nearly all others combined.
- 1 in 3 teens reports having a close friend who abuses prescription drugs.
- 1 in 4 teens reports having a close friend who abuses cough medicine.
- 39% of household visitors look in their host's medicine cabinet.
- The majority of children abusing prescription drugs obtain the drugs from their home, or homes of family and friends.
- Teens now abuse prescription drugs more than almost all illegal drugs combined.
- Prescription drug deaths outnumber gun deaths by more than 3-1 every year.



Parents can protect their children by securing all medication in an appropriate locked medicine cabinet. Parents should also talk to their children

about the dangers of taking medication that is prescribed for someone else.

Winter Tree Care from the Shade Tree Board

Watering can and should be performed in the winter any time the temperature is above freezing and the soil is not frozen.



This enables the water to soak into the ground. Once the water is applied, temperatures can drop below freezing without harming the trees. Soil should be soaked to a depth of 6-8 inches every 2-4 weeks. Trees that are less than 5 years old and evergreens are at greatest risk during a winter drought. Pruning is usually done by now but oaks can be pruned until early to mid February. Then, all pruning can resume in mid-July when insect activity has lessened.

In Board news, we say farewell to dedicated member Paul Whalen and welcome our newest member Judith Ambrus. Thank you Paul! And best wishes to both.

TAX ASSESSOR

Formal notifications of property tax assessment values were sent out recently for the year 2010. Keep in mind that this 2010 value is representative of your home value as of October 1, 2009. If you disagree with this value you have the right to file an appeal on the assessment by April 1, 2010. The appeal information is located on the back of the formal notification.

We are available Monday - Thursday from 9am - 5pm, and Friday from 8am - 5pm to answer any of your assessment questions or to provide you with a copy of your property record card. Our phone number is 908-725-6300 ext. 5120 or you can email us at taxassessor@bridgewaternj.gov.

NATIONAL RADON ACTION MONTH

January is National Radon Action Month. Have you tested your home for radon? Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas and is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Radon is found in all homes. In some homes it may reach levels that present a health hazard. Radon gas is invisible and odorless. Only testing will tell you if your home presents a concern. Radon gas testing should be done throughout the year, not just in January.

Radon test kits can be purchased in many hardware stores. For a limited time, test kits will also be available at the Somerset County Health Department for a nominal fee of \$5. For information on test kits, contact the County at (908) 231-7155. For more information on radon, please contact the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Radon Program at 1-800-648-0394 or at www.njradon.org.

Test your home. Protect your health.

POTHOLES

If you should come across a pothole on a Bridgewater road, please report it to our Public Works Department by calling (732) 469-0555 ext. 224 or by e-mailing publicworks@bridgewaternj.gov and give us the location of the pothole so that we can repair it immediately.

E-NEWS

In another of Bridgewater's Green Initiatives and to reduce costs, **this will be the last newsletter mailed to all homes.** Future copies will be available by email. To continue receiving this newsletter and other relevant news items by email, please forward your name, address, and email address to newsletter@bridgewaternj.gov. A limited number of paper copies will be available at locations throughout the Township.



Postal Customer

Bridgewater News

CONSTRUCTION PERMIT APPLICATIONS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

The Code Enforcement Office is pleased to announce that all construction permit applications are now available for download online at the Township website (www.bridgewaternj.gov - go to Government and click on Code under the Municipal Services dropdown menu). You may print out the applications in your home or office, complete them there, and then submit them to us during normal business hours (Monday – Thursday from 9 am-5 pm and Friday from 8 am-5 pm). Please note that you are also required to submit a copy of your contractor’s current license or certification as well as the licenses of any subcontractors (i.e. electrician or plumber). Also online now is the code enforcement permit fee schedule. This change eliminates the need for you to come to the Township offices to pick up your construction permit applications. In addition, we continue to upgrade our computer software in an effort to better track your applications and have answers available when you call with questions.

On another note, with the cold weather here, be sure that your heating system has been checked since last winter to determine if it needs to be serviced or replaced. If you need to replace your heating equipment, permits and inspections are needed. Most heating equipment replacements require plumbing, electrical and fire permits along with a chimney certification. All inspections must be completed before you place the equipment into service. We are here to make sure the equipment is installed correctly and safely. Remember to use licensed and insured contractors who are trained in the specific technologies needed to install your new heating equipment.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at 908-725-6300 ext. 5560 or at srodzinak@bridgewaternj.gov.

Bridgewater United Soccer Club Registration Information

The deadline for registering for Spring In-Town Soccer grades K-8 is Monday, February 22, 2010. If you have previously registered for **both** Fall and Spring soccer, then you do not need to register again. To guarantee your child is placed on a team, please submit registration by February 22. Registration will be considered complete once the online registration process is finalized and payment has been submitted. For complete registration information and to register online, please visit the Township website www.bridgewaternj.gov, click on the Recreation logo, and then click on the Bridgewater United logo. Mail checks to Bridgewater Recreation Department, 100 Commons Way, Bridgewater, NJ 08807 or deliver to the Recreation Department, which is located in a trailer in front of the old police station. Office hours are Monday-Thursday from 9 am-5pm and Friday from 8 am-5 pm. Before or after hours, you may leave the check in the “REC” dropbox located on the trailer.



Be sure to check our website (www.bridgewaternj.gov) in late February or early March for all spring and summer 2010 program information.