

# TOWNSHIP OF MARLBORO

1979 TOWNSHIP DRIVE  
MARLBORO, NJ 07746-2299

## Mayor

Jonathan L. Hornik

Fall, 2014

### **SUBJECT: SUPERSTORM SANDY 2<sup>nd</sup> ANNIVERSARY – TOWNSHIP UPDATE**

Dear Marlboro Resident:

As we near the second anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, I am grateful that Mother Nature cooperated allowing us to enjoy a beautiful summer with no major weather events. That was not the case this past winter when, by the beginning of March, more than 62.9 inches of snow fell in Marlboro as compared to the average of 28 inches. The Farmer's Almanac is predicting another cold winter and above average snowfall so I am taking this opportunity to remind you and your family to be prepared for weather-related emergencies.

In addition to ensuring that we can reach you in times of emergency as explained below (see "Opening Up Government"), we are enclosing the Township's "Plan and Prepare" brochure so that you and your family can be proactive.

I do not need to remind anyone that weather emergencies have become much more frequent in recent years. These events cause damage to our properties, disrupt our quality of life and affect our municipal budget. That said, we have worked hard to limit the impact of these events on local government spending. Despite \$1.0 million in one-time emergency budget expenditures for Superstorm Sandy and \$800,000 for this past winter, the Township's 2014 operating budget remains at nearly the same level it was eight years ago.

I know that I repeat this same message over and over, but it continues to prove itself year after year and gives me a great sense of pride. Our community's response to these difficult circumstances highlights how we, as a town, come together and even excel in times of adversity. I attribute our success in "weathering the storms" to consolidating government, attracting new clean commercial ratables and outside revenue sources, investing in our infrastructure and opening up government.

## **MARLBORO TOWNSHIP DOES MORE WITH LESS**

### **REDUCING SPENDING**

For every dollar paid in property taxes, approximately 17 cents goes to local government to fund services such as police, parks and recreation, snow removal and capital improvements. During the same period the costs for State-mandated items such as pensions and benefits have increased by \$2.83 million or 51.89%, yet, absent one-time hurricane response and snow removal expenditures, the Township's operating budget is less than one percent higher than it was in 2007, eight years ago.

**Cooperative Purchasing** The Township continues to seek out cooperative and bulk purchasing arrangements which reduce costs. The continuing joint bid for energy supply between the Township and the Board of Education is saving taxpayers more than \$1.0 million over four years. In addition, we continue our shared service agreements with the Marlboro Board of Education for custodial services and have recently executed agreements for the provision of school resource officers and roofing repairs. We continue to share costs with surrounding towns for police training and animal control services which ultimately reduce costs to the taxpayer.

**Reducing Personnel Costs** Labor costs including salaries, health benefits and State-mandated pension payments represent more than 60% of our budget. Since 2008, we have reduced the number of full-time employees by 13%. Administrative employees were furloughed in 2009 resulting in a reduction in payroll costs. At the same time, we have instituted new work schedules which have allowed offices such as registrar, tax and water to remain open during evening hours, and inspections to take place six days per week in order to better serve the public.

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All employees are now subject to mandatory health insurance contributions. An in lieu of health insurance incentive payment has been established to encourage those with dual coverage to opt out of the Town's program. The Township has reduced the number of paid municipal holidays and vacation time. For new employees, wages and paid time off have been reduced, and the practice of paying for accumulated sick time at the time of retirement has been curtailed or eliminated. I am also proud to announce that we will begin re-opening certain administrative offices on Fridays, beginning with the Building Division this fall. Details will be forthcoming.

## **BOLSTERING REVENUES THROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Economic Development Committee (EDC) was formed in 2008 and given a mandate to market Marlboro for new businesses. Since then, we have attracted over 716,000 square feet of new businesses which has resulted in more than \$1.4 million in new revenue to the Township. In 2014, we welcomed Whole Foods, Ulta and Petco into the new Marlboro Commons on Route 9 as well as a number of other commercial and retail establishments.

By now, most of you are aware of the nationally acclaimed "Shop Marlboro Tax Reward Program". Launched in 2012, residents receive a direct credit against their property taxes when purchasing goods or services from participating Marlboro businesses. The premise is simple - buy at home and save money on your property taxes. The program is modeled after private-sector reward programs. The difference is that these rewards directly offset your property taxes!

In the second fiscal year ended in April, 2014, participating merchants realized more than one million dollars in *Shop Marlboro!* sales and Marlboro residents saved over \$64,000 on their property taxes; more than triple that was saved in the first program year. Residents are choosing to make their purchases in town, driving more customers to local merchants and further enhancing our ability to attract new businesses. With over 50 participating businesses, almost every resident should be able to benefit from this free program.

We will continue our efforts to generate new, clean and smart commercial ratables and support our local businesses, knowing that this directly reduces the property tax burden on our residents and enhances the quality of life in our community.

## **INVESTING IN OUR INFRASTRUCTURE**

At the same time as we reduce the size of our government, we continue to plan for the future. During a period when many municipalities and even the State of New Jersey have received downgrades, the Township has maintained its Aa2 bond rating. A strong rating, historically low interest rates, and the aggressive pursuit of alternative revenue sources has enabled the Township to invest in important roadway, drainage and recreation improvements throughout town while maintaining a debt level less than one-fifth the statutory limit established by the State. Additionally, budgeted debt service remains at its lowest level since prior to 2003. Still we continue to invest in capital projects which improve our infrastructure and quality of life. In a time of historically low interest rates, it makes financial sense. It is also a necessity if we wish to maintain our competitiveness, preparedness and our reputation as the premier place to raise a family and locate a business.

## **ROADS AND SIDEWALKS**

Road reconstruction remains the #1 priority in our capital program. We have completed numerous critical road projects, including Union Hill Road, Hartman Lane at Route 18 and 520, School Road East, Vanderburg Road and a number of secondary roadways. Robertsville Road was resurfaced and improved with replacements to the gutters, curbs, and ADA compliant ramps between Topanemus to the Freehold border. This year we are paving substantial sections of Amboy Road and Texas Road. We have added sidewalks at Texas Road and Route 9, and will begin construction to connect a patchwork of sidewalks along the north side

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of 520 and Wyncrest from the Municipal complex towards what will become Marlboro's new downtown on Route 79. More on that in the next section.

Potholes following any winter are expected, but this past winter's severe weather took an enormous toll on roads throughout New Jersey. This past April, we launched an online Pothole Portal allowing the residents who drive our streets every day to provide information and help to direct our resources to those areas most in need. The link to report potholes is permanently on the Township homepage. To date, over 500 potholes have been reported on line and thousands have been filled. We know that many of our roads still need a substantial amount of work.

### **DOWNTOWN MARLBORO**

Frequently on the wish-list for Marlboro residents is a "town center". The Council adopted a form based code zoning plan and authorized walkway and lighting improvements for Route 79 (Main Street) from School Road West to Buck Lane. Sidewalks will allow residents to safely bike or walk. The groundbreaking was celebrated on October 14 and was an exciting first step that marks the beginning of our Marlboro Village Center, which will be pedestrian friendly and a magnet for new local businesses.

### **WATER**

When the Township dissolved the Marlboro Township Municipal Utilities Authority (MTMUA), it also inherited the commitment to maintain a safe, reliable and affordable water supply for its customers. The dissolution of the MTMUA immediately allowed the Township to free up \$5 million in capital reserves, and obtain much more favorable financing for capital projects. The Township secured a 75% interest free loan to construct the Tennent Road treatment plant which will treat up to 1.5 million gallons per day in order to meet periods of peak demand. The new plant, which will also feature full emergency generation capabilities, will help ensure adherence to all applicable federal and state safe drinking water standards so that customers continue to receive the highest possible quality drinking water. We anticipate that this facility will be completed by the end of 2014.

The Township is in the process of obtaining favorable financing terms for the replacement of the 40 year old Harbor Road Water Treatment Plant which remains the backbone of the Water Utility.

While the Township continues to invest in the water infrastructure to ensure a safe and reliable water supply, *Marlboro Water customers still pay 10% to 45% less than surrounding water suppliers.*

### **RECREATION**

Recreation facilities are an important component in our quality of life for residents of all ages. In the past several years, a new turf field was built without any new taxpayer dollars, the walking path surrounding the municipal center was replaced and repaved, and will soon be marked for distance so that residents can track their mileage while exercising in a safe and enjoyable environment.

This year, the recreation center indoor basketball courts were resurfaced and repaired, and new playgrounds will be installed at both the Municipal Center and the Union Hill ballfields. The tennis and handball courts at the Marlboro Country Park (by the Swim Club) were recently refurbished and we have just submitted a grant application for funding to bring tennis back to Nolan Road Park.

The Recreation Department remains committed to an annual capital improvement program that ensures the high quality of parks and recreation facilities that so many residents enjoy with their families and friends.

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### **OPEN SPACE & FARMLAND PRESERVATION**

In 2014, using only the dedicated 'one penny open space tax' supplemented by more than \$1 million in matching grants, we have preserved more than 80 acres of open space, forever protecting undeveloped land throughout the town.

### **MARLBORO STATE HOSPITAL**

After years of negotiation, Marlboro, the State of New Jersey and Monmouth County reached an agreement in 2013 so that the old hospital property will forever be preserved for open space and recreation. Our Town Council took the critical step of protecting the land in 2008 to ensure that no further residential development would take place. The State has begun demolition and will ultimately turn it over to the County to maintain parks and recreation for Marlboro residents to enjoy.

### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

When I took office in 2008 Marlboro was given a mandate by the State: "Build 1,691 Affordable Housing Units in Marlboro". This was not in the best interest of our Township, and we refused to capitulate. Through our continuing efforts and challenges to the State and residential housing developers, Marlboro's obligation has been reduced to just 121 units.

### **BRUSH AND LEAVES**

Changing weather patterns and extreme weather conditions over the past few years have had a significant effect on our leaf and brush removal programs, resulting in delays and raising public safety, stormwater and even snow removal concerns. With yard waste in the street nearly all year, we have also noted that landscapers and others are taking advantage of Marlboro's robust program, leaving material which may not even originate here to be removed on our taxpayers' dime. On a side note, I will add that seeing yard waste in our streets all year really diminishes the appearance of our neighborhoods. I promised to address these issues following the winter of 2013-14 and will be updating our program to be released in the Public Works Recycling Calendars for 2015, to be mailed to your home in December.

The primary changes will involve separating leaf from brush pickup and implementing new standards for placing brush at curbside. I remain committed to delivering the quality of services that residents deserve in the most cost effective manner possible, and keeping our community safe and beautiful.

### **OPENING UP GOVERNMENT**

As you have heard me say before, if you want to volunteer and have the best interests of all Marlboro residents at heart, we have a spot for you. Please visit the new 'Volunteer' link on the Town home page for information about the many opportunities to get involved and join the hundreds of residents who take time away from their businesses and families to join us in moving Marlboro forward.

We continue to open up government and increase communication with our residents. The town website, Facebook, Twitter, channel 77, and email blasts are all utilized to publicize town programs, meetings and events. All township committee meetings and budget workshops are publicized and open to the public. In times of emergency, these communication methods, along with "reverse 911" calls alert and inform residents.

It is during these times, when power failures cause communication disruptions, it is important that we have as many ways to contact you as possible. We urge every resident to please visit the "Communications for Residents" section of our website and register for any and all of the available communications options.

Our Teen Advisory Committee (TAC) is the largest committee in town with over 1,500 teenage members who are committed to "Do Good" in our community. This outstanding group gives back to the community by volunteering at town events, from Marlboro Day to Blood Drives. They work one-on-one with members of our

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senior community on how to use the internet and program their phones. Membership is open to all teens ages 13 to 18; simply visit the TAC page on the town website to register.

Our senior citizens are an important part of our Township and their numbers have been growing. For that reason, the Township has worked very hard to keep programs free or at a low cost for our seniors. Our senior programs fill the calendar with special events, classes and activities. Our Senior Advisory Committee (SAC) meets on a monthly basis with a representative from my office to provide feedback and engage in discussions about how to improve our community.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

On March 20, 2014, after a process lasting several years, the Marlboro Division of Police was awarded state accreditation with the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police (NJSACOP). This recognition is an important milestone and acknowledgement that our Police Department meets the standards and requirements set forth by the NJSACOP, and confirms that the Division utilizes best practices in all critical areas of police work. This designation is also a financial benefit, rewarding the Township with a reduction in its annual insurance premiums. I do not believe it is a coincidence that Marlboro was named as one of the 50 safest places to live in New Jersey by Safewise.com. We were ranked 28<sup>th</sup> in the State and 1<sup>st</sup> in Monmouth County, and we proudly display the 'Safest Communities' badge on our website.

We are very proud of our schools and Marlboro is consistently ranked among the highest performing school systems in the State. This year, Marlboro High School, part of the Freehold Regional High School District, was ranked 9<sup>th</sup> overall in the top 100 High Schools in New Jersey, 1<sup>st</sup> in Monmouth County. Newsweek named Marlboro High School as 109<sup>th</sup> in the Nation. We offer our congratulations to Superintendent Sampson, Principal Boylan, the faculty and the students. Go Mustangs!

For the year ending December 31, 2014, we have received yet another stellar report from the Township's independent auditors. While this document highlights the progress we have made on the financial side, it is my practice to try and look "beyond the numbers". Without question, this document reflects positively on our track record of "weathering the storms", and commitment to planning for the future while delivering high quality services in the most cost effective manner possible.

Recently I was named by an on-line website as New Jersey 'Mayor of the Year'. I was honored to receive this recognition on behalf of our town and am grateful that so many took the time to vote. This designation is a tribute to our residents, employees and hundreds of volunteers who make Marlboro the place we want to call home.

Finally, please join me in welcoming more than 850 new Marlboro residents to our community. Each new family receives a welcome packet with a wealth of information about the Township. Even longtime residents have told us that the 'Welcome New Residents' link on the Township homepage is a great resource. The opportunity to reach out to new residents reminds me of how proud I am to be a lifelong resident of this community. I thank you for all that you do as citizens and for continuing to make Marlboro your home and a premier destination for families and businesses.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Hornik  
Mayor