

TOWNSHIP OF MARLBORO

1979 TOWNSHIP DRIVE
MARLBORO, NJ 07746-2299

Mayor

Jonathan L. Hornik

Fall, 2018

SUBJECT: ANNUAL HURRICANE SEASON-TOWNSHIP UPDATE

Dear Neighbor:

Summer flew by. I hope you and your family had time to enjoy the warm weather and to relax a bit. For those of you with children, I trust that school is off to a great start. The end of summer also means that we are in the heart of hurricane season. Recent hurricanes have inflicted major devastation in the islands and the southeastern part of our country, reminders that any storm could take a turn and impact us here in New Jersey. My thoughts go out to those effected by Hurricanes Florence and Michael.

Weather emergencies have presented us with real challenges over the past several years. In addition to Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy, we experienced Halloween and Christmas snowstorms that shut down parts of the State for days. The last several winters have brought us record snowfalls and dangerous ice conditions resulting in seven States of Emergency. This year, following a relatively mild February, March delivered four back-to-back "n'oreasters" with bitter cold, high winds, and snow conditions in as many weeks.

Hurricanes and severe winter weather events cause real and permanent damage to our infrastructure, disrupt our quality of life and adversely impact our municipal budget. The cost of delivering services for extreme weather conditions continues to drive the operating budget -- snow removal costs have increased by more than 400% since 2007. While other towns have scaled back snow removal operations as a cost-saving measure, Marlboro has continued to allocate the resources necessary to address snow and whatever other emergencies Mother Nature sends our way.

Six years have now passed since Superstorm Sandy brought us impassable roads and prolonged power outages. This weather event, more than any other in recent memory serves as an important reminder of our vulnerability in the face of the forces of nature and the need to maintain open lines of communication. Emergencies such as Sandy reinforce how crucial it is to face the hardest challenges by working together -- as a community. It is for this reason that I write to you each year on the anniversary of the Superstorm.

As we approach this anniversary of Sandy, I would like to once again take the opportunity to remind you and your family to be prepared for weather-related emergencies, and to review how we as a united community continue to "Weather the Storms."

DOING MORE WITH LESS

Running municipal operations and responding to emergencies require a great deal of advance planning. Sufficient resources must be ready and available when the need arises. Local government budgets in New Jersey, which must factor in the probability of extreme weather, are funded primarily through property taxes. As you are probably aware, the tax rate and value of your property determine the amount of your tax bill.

Taxes

"Local town services" under the control of the Mayor and Council include police, parks and recreation, snow removal, curbside brush and leaf pickup, recycling and capital improvements. The Township is responsible for

collecting property taxes, but only 17 cents out of every dollar paid goes towards local town services. The School Districts (Marlboro K-8 and the FRHSD) receive 69 cents of every tax dollar and Monmouth County approximately 14 cents. In other words, 83 cents of every tax dollar is levied without any input from your Mayor and Council.

Personnel Costs

Since 2007 the costs for State-mandated items such as pensions and medical benefits have increased dramatically -- by \$3.27 million or more than 59.8%. Yet, items generally set at the local level in the Township's 2018 operating budget increased less than 4.3% over the same 11-year period.

Salaries, health benefits and State-mandated pension payments represent more than 10 of the 17 cents of every tax dollar retained by the Township for local town services. Notably, salary costs have increased just 1.22% since 2008. We have achieved savings by reducing the number of full-time employees by more than 11%, requiring employees to contribute up to 35% of the cost of health insurance, and offering a program to incentivize employees who have alternate coverage to opt out of the Township's insurance plan. In 2017, we negotiated a new base health plan with the two largest unions which will result in a 21% premium savings on every enrollment. We also instituted a merit-based raise program with two other groups, tying raises to higher performance in the workplace. Reductions in the number of paid municipal holidays, wages and paid time off for new employees, and curtailing or eliminating the practice of paying for accumulated sick time at the time of retirement are further examples of the Township's successful efforts to reduce personnel costs.

Yet, our focus is always on serving our residents. Despite implementing necessary and permanent reductions in staff, Township offices remain open to the public, the Registrar, Tax and Water offices continue to schedule evening hours, and inspections take place on evenings and even weekends in order to better serve the public. On-line applications are now accepted in a number of areas, and a convenient 24-hour secure payment drop-box is now available in the lobby of Town Hall.

Sharing Services and Contracting

Reducing the size of government is not a fixed goal, but a process by which we constantly review our service offerings and attempt to deliver them more efficiently. We have dissolved redundant governmental agencies, established separate revenue streams to fund user-based programs, and secured goods and services more cost effectively through purchasing cooperatives and partnerships. The School Districts continue to share in the cost of Resource Officers (SRO) and Security Officers (SSO). These important programs place police officers trained in educating, counseling, and protecting the public in our schools. Matawan remains a partner in the area of animal control services, and our neighbors in Freehold and Manalapan provide court and inspection staff, respectively. The Western Monmouth Utilities Authority (WMUA) supplies Marlboro with snowplow operators and a confined space entry rescue team. Morganville Volunteer Fire Company leases space to Marlboro Recreation for expanded programming for senior citizens. Through the United States Department of Defense, the Township has been the beneficiary of millions of dollars of emergency response equipment at little or no cost to taxpayers.

We continue to look to the private sector to provide services where they can be performed more efficiently. For example, the Department of Public Works (DPW) has had great success contracting out property maintenance and street sweeping operations. DPW continues to contract for snow removal and maintenance of commuter parking lots, freeing up critical resources dedicated to snow removal on our roadways.

The use of shared services agreements and outside contracts help keep the Town budget millions below the State limits ("caps") on both spending and taxes. We continue to seek out these opportunities wherever possible with the goal of maintaining service delivery and responding to natural events and emergencies in the most cost effective and efficient manner possible.

PRESERVING OPEN SPACE

We continue to preserve more acres of open space and farmland in lieu of new residential development. Over the past ten years, the Township has preserved more than 260 acres of land. I am very proud of our record of protecting property from development and in securing outside funding to complete this work. I am pleased to report that Marlboro received another large grant towards the purchase of open space from New Jersey Green Acres in the amount of \$750,000.

Last February, I announced the purchase of Stattel Farm, located at Routes 520 and 79. This acquisition guarantees that 56 acres located on both sides of Route 520 in the center of Marlboro will remain farmland and open space in perpetuity. The purchase of Stattel Farm prevented more than 500 homes from being built, and, notably, was accomplished without current local taxpayer dollars. The Township also recently took ownership of 18 acres of donated land on Route 79 and dedicated this land for open space and recreation.

We remain excited about the future transformation of the Marlboro Psychiatric Hospital property. The State is completing cleanup of 411 acres in preparation for transfer to Monmouth County for residents to enjoy for generations to come. The State is in final stages of utility work and we look forward to preserving this jewel in the center of our community.

I must note that the success of our program is a tribute to the hard work and dedication of the Open Space and Farmland Committee and the Marlboro Council members who remain committed to improving the quality of life in our Town.

BOLSTERING REVENUES THROUGH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We have made a concerted effort to pursue smart development strategies to attract businesses that are useful to our residents and generate new revenues to offset residential property taxes. We formed the Economic Development Committee (EDC) in 2008 with a mandate to make Marlboro more business friendly and attract new enterprises. Since then, we have more than one million square feet of new commercial development and \$100 million in new tax ratables that enhance the quality of life of our residents. For example, we have already welcomed Whole Foods, Osteria, Burger King, Fireside, Aunt Butchies, Cousins, Buffalo Wild Wings, Costco, and Food Emporium, and in the near future, will be announcing the opening of a Ray Catena Range Rover/Jaguar Auto dealership, Aldi's, Chick-fil-A and other commercial establishments that choose to call Marlboro home.

Marlboro's innovative, first of its kind "Shop Marlboro Property Tax Reward Program" has just completed its sixth year in operation, and is being replicated in communities throughout the State. The premise is simple – support local businesses here in Marlboro and save money on your property taxes. Modeled after private-sector reward programs, residents receive a reward in the form of a direct credit against their property taxes, simply by purchasing goods and services in Marlboro. Since its inception, participating merchants have realized \$3.8 million in *Shop Marlboro!* sales, and our residents have saved more than \$228,000 on their property taxes. Residents are choosing to make their purchases in town, and local merchants are reaping the benefits. This win-win situation further enhances our ability to attract new businesses in Marlboro. With almost 50 participating businesses, every homeowner can benefit from this free program.

Our mantra continues to be "Smart Growth" as we continue to generate new, clean, smart commercial tax ratables and support our local businesses, with the understanding that this directly reduces the burden on residential property taxpayers.

INVESTING IN OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

While improving the condition of our existing roadways remains the top infrastructure priority, the Township remains focused on improvements to walkways and traffic intersections to improve vehicle safety and enhance walkability in our community. In this regard the Township has continued to preserve more acres of open

space and farmland in lieu of new residential development, construct sidewalks and complete park improvements at several locations. To meet these goals we continue to aggressively pursue alternative revenue sources to invest in capital projects while continuing to maintain a debt level approximately one-fifth the statutory limit and less as a percentage of our budget than it was in 2003.

Municipal Bond Rating Upgrade

In September, 2017 I was proud to report that Standard and Poor's (S&P) assigned a AAA rating to the Township's credit, the highest rating available to issues of government debt. S&P referenced a number of factors in its rating including a very strong local economy, strong management and budgetary performance and flexibility, very strong liquidity as well as debt and liability position. Previously, in 2015, S&P had upgraded the Township to AA+, making the 2017 upgrade the second in two years. In April of this year, S&P reaffirmed its AAA rating, citing our conservative budgeting, fiscal practices and low debt levels.

Why does this matter? Marlboro's philosophy with respect to an active and managed capital program was validated in this rating review, and we are now able to borrow at the lowest cost possible, saving taxpayer dollars as we invest in the infrastructure.

Roads and Sidewalks

Changing weather patterns have brought more severe weather over the last several years, placing an added strain on our infrastructure. The use of de-icing chemicals in freezing temperatures has accelerated the wear and tear on roadways throughout the State. With low interest rates, Marlboro's debt load well below statutory limits, and a AAA bond rating, we have taken the opportunity to ramp up investment in our infrastructure.

In February I announced a four-pronged Road Repair initiative with the goal of more investment and a commitment to greater transparency in the presentation of information to residents:

- \$5 million allocated to road repair, representing an 87.5% increase over the prior year
- Coordination with the State and County to address roads not under Township jurisdiction
- The launch of new web pages dedicated to road repairs
- A redesigned Pothole Portal which facilitates map-based reporting of road conditions

Under the 2018 Road Repair initiative, with the assistance of \$440,000 in State grants, Greenwood Road from Tennent to Texas and Texas Road from Greenwood to the Aberdeen border will be reconstructed. Design work is underway on improvements to sections of Ryan, Robertsville and Union Hill, and resurfacing work will be completed in 2019 utilizing a \$350,000 State grant award. Improvements to approximately five miles of Marlboro roadways are currently in progress and scheduled for completion by spring of 2019. On Station Road, three drainage culverts owned and maintained by Monmouth County will be reconstructed under a cost-sharing agreement, after which the Township can complete much needed repaving between Briarcliff and Crine Roads. In the meantime, interim improvements to Station Road will be made.

Since 2009, Marlboro has reconstructed approximately 29 miles of local Township streets. This does not include many of Marlboro's busiest roads and intersections, such as Routes 9, 520, 79 and Tennent Road which are under State or County jurisdiction. The Township continues to work closely with State and County officials to address the numerous intersections and roads that run through Marlboro. Of great interest is the State's Route 79 resurfacing project, scheduled for 2021, which will include improvements to several important intersections in Marlboro (more below).

The Township's pedestrian access plan calls for making key locations more accessible, connecting schools, the municipal complex and library, retail establishments and houses of worship via sidewalk. The Township recently applied for State funding for sidewalks on Route 79 between Route 520 and Wyncrest Road at the Henry Hudson Trail.

Traffic Intersections

Several years back I convened a Traffic Advisory Committee of volunteers, engineering and traffic safety professionals to identify local traffic issues and explore potential solutions. TrAC reported back, as expected, that our biggest challenges exist at intersections under the jurisdiction of either the County or the State.

In response to a comprehensive report prepared by the Township and submitted in 2016, we have received confirmation from the State that the Route 79 reconstruction project will result in a complete repaving of the

highway and improvements to numerous intersections, including a combination of ADA upgrades, crosswalks, traffic striping and signal modifications at School Road, Wyncrest Road, Tennent Road, Route 520, Ryan Road and Lloyd Road. These important improvements will be made at no cost to local taxpayers.

In 2017, the Township entered into an agreement with the State and County for improvements to the intersection of Tennent Road and Route 520. While neither of these roads fall under Township jurisdiction, we recognized the critical nature of this location and approved the use of existing local reserves to kickstart the project; currently under design by the State.

The Township is also working with Monmouth County to improve the intersection at Wyncrest Road and Route 520. The County has already modified its traffic signal to provide a dedicated left-hand turn arrow for westbound Route 520 traffic and is in the process of finalizing the second phase of this project, which includes the addition of a separate right-hand turn lane traveling eastbound on Route 520.

Parks and Recreation

In 2018 the Township cut the ribbon on a new turf playing field behind the Marlboro Middle School and completed improvements at several Township parks.

Construction of the new turf field utilized a \$194,000 State grant matched with unexpended balances from completed capital projects and a \$200,000 contribution from the Marlboro Soccer Association. No new local taxpayer dollars were authorized for the project. This is our third turf field, serving more than 2,000 children and adult recreation program participants. The tennis courts at Falson, Hawkins Road and Robertsville parks were reconstructed and a new playground was installed at the Municipal Complex park. Much needed repairs at Nolan Road Park are on the way, the cost of which will be offset by a \$145,000 County grant.

Piggybacking off the success of our Pothole Portal, this year we placed a link to "Report a Park Issue" on the Town website. This system allows residents who use the parks to quickly and efficiently report a park maintenance concern. The Township's capital program calls for continued investment in refurbishing our parks and open spaces, an important component of the quality of life that Marlboro has to offer.

Development

Starting in the early 2000s, housing developers filed lawsuits against the Township under the banner of "Affordable Housing", seeking to force the construction of large-scale high-density housing in our Town through the courts. As mentioned above, one developer submitted an application for more than 500 units at one of the most heavily-trafficked intersections in town. We were not going to let that happen, and it is now the site of the preserved Stattel Farm. On Tennent Road, a developer had proposed to squeeze 250 units of housing on 16 acres of farmland (the Smith Farm) – we preserved that parcel as well. In fact, since I took office in 2008, we have slowed the construction of new large-scale housing projects to a near halt and have preserved more than 260 acres of open space and farmland. We have worked hard and will continue to do so to ensure that the character of our community remains intact.

The issue of "Affordable Housing" in Marlboro and around the State remains unsettled. The State agency designated by law to administer affordable housing laws, the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH), was stripped of its power by the State Supreme Court in 2016. As a result, towns throughout the State have been ordered into court where local planning and zoning determinations are essentially being dictated by judges.

Should housing ever be constructed as a result of a judge's order, I will work hard to ensure that any new opportunities be extended to families just starting out, including police officers and teachers who may work in our Town. Empty-nesters and seniors who wish to remain in Marlboro should have the chance to do so. Our friends and neighbors with whom we grew up should be able to come back home to live, work and raise a family. We also have a collective duty to do more for those who have sacrificed on behalf of our country--veterans should have the opportunity to find a place in Marlboro that they can call home. We will provide additional updates as further information becomes available.

COMMUNITY

Our residents are busy but find the time to participate in local programs and activities and give back to Marlboro. When severe weather strikes or a neighbor needs help, we step up.

Giving Back

I put a call out for volunteers when I was first elected and the response was overwhelming. I recently put out that call again, and it was gratifying that after ten years as your Mayor the response was just as strong. We could not do all we do without our resident volunteers.

It is notable that many of our volunteers get their start while still in their teens. Our Teen Advisory Committee (TAC) is the largest one in town, with over 1,800 registered teenage members who are committed to *Do Good!* in our community. TAC members volunteer at town events, assist various non-profit and commercial organizations in town, and work one-on-one with seniors to provide instruction on everything from navigating the internet to programming their phones. On the other end of the spectrum, our Senior Advisory Committee (SAC) meets on a monthly basis with my office to provide feedback about how to improve our community for senior residents.

The Marlboro Community Garden, under the direction of the Shade Tree Committee offers residents the opportunity to learn about agriculture and plant and grow their own crops. The Garden now boasts more than 100 beds for gardeners. Marlboro's Green Team helps to raise environmental awareness, maintain our Sustainable Jersey certification and organize the Mayor's Bike and Stroll each year to promote bicycling, walking and enjoying the outdoors on the Henry Hudson Trail.

The Municipal Alliance is comprised of individuals from multiple walks of life, from police officers and teachers to medical professionals and community members. This committee interacts with parents and youth and works closely with the schools on issues of drug and alcohol abuse and other concerns affecting our kids.

Other selfless unpaid volunteers staff our land use boards, Recreation and Swim, Open Space and Farmland, Youth Exchange, Historic and Veterans Committees. As I mentioned previously, the number of boards and committees, charitable event organizers and individual volunteers are too numerous to name in a single letter, but I am personally grateful to them all.

Let us remember that our Township relies on volunteers to staff our First Aid Squads and Fire Departments. We are remarkably fortunate to have such a dedicated group of citizens ready and willing to serve the public and quite literally save lives at any time of day or night. While we all hope that we never need the assistance of emergency medical technicians or firefighters, it is reassuring that they are there when we do.

Programs and Events

Marlboro offers a wide array of events that bring our community together throughout the year, from events which honor our veterans and pay tribute to residents who were lost on 9-11 to those which celebrate holidays and highlight our diversity. During the summer, thousands of residents enroll their kids in our camps and join the Marlboro Swim Club. The summer concert series and fireworks display are huge hits, capped off by Marlboro Day in September. The Halloween "Trunk or Treat" tradition was added in the wake of Superstorm Sandy, and we celebrate the winter holidays with a lighting ceremony in December. For 2018, Recreation has added several new programs including Adult Dodge Ball, Winter Recess Mini-Camp and Parents' Night Out.

We have worked very hard to develop affordable programs for our seniors. Physical activity and social programs go a long way towards maintaining the well-being of our senior population. With this in mind, we added a second location and additional classes in 2018 to address the overwhelming demand for health, wellness and strength-training programs.

Beginning this year, we opened up the Township commuter lots for free parking at night and on weekends in order to make taking a trip to the city for dinner or a show as convenient as possible.

In the face of changing weather patterns and extreme conditions, we have maintained our full-service leaf and brush removal and spring clean-up programs. I remain committed to delivering the quality of services that residents deserve in the most cost-effective manner possible, but do ask that everyone adhere to the published collection schedules to keep our neighborhoods beautiful and streets free and clear of debris.

New residents receive a "welcome packet" mailed to their home filled with a wealth of information. Even longtime residents have told us that the "Welcome New Residents" link on the Township homepage is a great resource.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Coordination and planning for emergency scenarios such as power outages to hurricanes, school security to snow events and vehicular accidents, takes place year round.

Police

The Marlboro Division of Police serves the community 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from the dispatchers who answer your call to the police officers who arrive at the scene. Ours is a State-accredited agency, a status which ensures the application of best practices in police response and the ancillary benefit of discounted insurance premiums for the Township. The Division has a proactive, community focus, with numerous programs designed to facilitate communication and protect the public.

For example, you may want to let Marlboro Police know if you are planning to take a vacation - officers on patrol will keep a closer eye on your home during your absence. Residents may also link home alarm systems directly to Police headquarters to ensure the quickest response. The Traffic Bureau, by appointment, will help you install your child's car seat properly.

The Police Division maintains a Special Needs Registry for adults and children, with the goal of improving the response to our most vulnerable citizens during an emergency. The Division also works with and trains citizen volunteer groups which support our residents in times of need, such as the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and the Domestic Violence Response Team (DVRT).

For youth interested in law enforcement, the Marlboro Police Explorers is the largest post in the County. The Division also runs a Youth Police Academy where kids can gain first-hand knowledge of the duties and responsibilities that are required of a police officer.

The Township's On-line Exchange Zone remains open and available in the municipal parking lot. This service provides for a more secure location for the exchange of goods transacted on-line.

It is not a coincidence that the Division's focus on community has garnered Marlboro many awards. Marlboro has been named one of the 50 safest communities in New Jersey for 2014, 2015 and 2016. In 2017, Marlboro was recognized as one of the 100 best places in New Jersey to raise a family, one of only three in Monmouth County. In 2018, Marlboro was ranked #22 in the list of "Safest Cities in America to Raise a Family."

Keeping Schools Safe for Our Kids

Marlboro Police maintain a substantial presence in our local schools. School Resource Officers are specially trained to work in the school environment, where they occupy a unique position to identify trouble before it occurs. In 2018, the Township budgeted for the hiring of an additional officer dedicated to school security and explosives detection. Proposed before the tragic school shootings in Parkland, Florida, repeated violent acts in schools throughout the country have underscored the need to do all we can to keep our kids safe. Today, the Township supplies armed Security Officers under the direction of Marlboro Police to all of Marlboro's public schools.

Water, Power, Fuel and Shelter

We learned from Sandy that local preparation is critical. We cannot wait for outside agencies to act in times of emergency. After experiencing more than a week of power outages, the first step we took after the Superstorm was to enhance the Township's backup power generation capabilities.

In collaboration with the State, several major traffic intersections have been upgraded so that traffic lights can continue to operate without dedicating public safety resources during outages. All gas stations in the Township are now required to have backup generators on site so that they can pump fuel even when the power is out.

The Marlboro Water Utility continues its investment in infrastructure utilizing 75% interest-free financing. The recently-completed Tennent and Harbor Road Water Treatment Plants feature backup generation capabilities, and will ensure a safe, reliable and affordable water supply, reducing reliance on outside water purveyors and safeguarding the continuity of operations during emergencies. It is worth noting that while the Township continues to invest in capital improvements, Marlboro Water customers still pay substantially less than surrounding water suppliers by up to 80% margins.

With a \$250,000 grant from FEMA, the Recreation Center now has full backup generator capabilities, allowing the building to be a place for warming, for charging devices and to act as a shelter if necessary.

On an ongoing basis, the Township continues to work with JCP&L to improve its service, communication, response and commitment to a reliable electricity infrastructure. The Township and JCP&L continue to partner on removing hazardous trees which are the leading cause of power outages.

OPENING UP GOVERNMENT

A great deal of the information referenced in this letter can be found on the township website and has already been released in Township email blasts, social media, "reverse 911" calls and cable channel 77. Whether it is town events or weather emergencies, it is critical that we have as many ways to contact you as possible. We urge every resident to visit the "Communications for Residents" section of our website and register for any and all of the available communications options.

I know how busy everyone is. With this in mind, we constantly work to make more municipal transactions safely and securely available to residents online. Property look-ups, tax and utility payments, various zoning and engineering permits and pet licenses are all available via the Township website. And, if you are so inclined, you can now even stream a meeting of the Township Council!

FINAL THOUGHTS

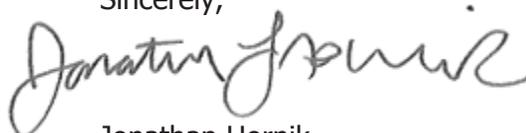
For the year ending December 31, 2017, we have, for the sixth consecutive year, received a perfect independent financial audit. The Township's AAA credit was reaffirmed by S&P in 2018, a rating shared by only 5% of New Jersey municipalities. The independent assessment of an auditor or rating agency highlights a track record of "Weathering the Storms" and continued commitment to planning for the future while delivering high quality services in a cost-effective manner.

But the true story lies beyond the numbers...I attribute our success to consolidating government, attracting new clean commercial rates and outside revenue sources, investing in our infrastructure and opening up government to the family of talented and committed volunteers who live here. Our great community still continues to attract not only new businesses, but new families as well, in large part due to the outstanding schools and quality of life we offer and work hard to maintain.

It gives me a great sense of pride to celebrate successes with the residents, employees, businesses and volunteers of Marlboro. Through hard work, dedication and a commitment to getting things done, we have accomplished much together. I look forward to taking on new challenges and continuing our work to make life even better for all who call Marlboro home.

And, remember during this hurricane season, the key to staying safe is to be prepared and to stay in touch!

Sincerely,



Jonathan Hornik
Mayor