

January 8, 2018

Glen Ridge 2017 Year-End Report

Good evening - I would like to welcome everyone to this, the 123rd reorganizational meeting of the Borough Council of Glen Ridge. Tonight we have sworn- in returning Councilor Daniel Murphy and newly elected Councilor Debra Mans. We have also appointed the numerous volunteers who so ably and unselfishly staff our various boards, commissions and committees while also recognizing those volunteers who have completed their service to the Borough.

Let me begin by first extending an official welcome back to Councilor Murphy who is beginning his 5th year on the Council and who will continue to ably and energetically Chair the Parks and Recreation Committee. I am also pleased to welcome Debbie Mans to the Council who will Chair the Community Affairs Committee. I am delighted that you both are willing to serve our community for the next 3 years and I cannot thank you and all of the members of the Council and your families enough for the service you render to the residents of Glen Ridge. You have proven yourselves to be excellent stewards of our community, and have given copiously of your time, energy, and personal talents to maintain and promote the high quality of life and standards of good government that we have all come to appreciate in Glen Ridge. Finally, I think it bears mention that, as of December 31, 2017, the current Mayor and Councilors have served this community for a total of 65 years on this Council.

Tonight, we bid farewell to Councilor Art Dawson who is leaving the Council after 12 years of dedicated service, his first 2 years as Chair of Planning and Development and his last 10 as Chair of Public Works. Art is the consummate volunteer, as demonstrated not only by his Council service, but also by the numerous years he has served as a member of both Kiwanis and the Glen Ridge Educational Foundation. More recently, when asked, he immediately agreed to accept an appointment to the Planning Board. Speaking for the Council, we will all miss Art and wish him great success in all of his future endeavors.

Tonight, we also welcome Debbie Mans to the Glen Ridge Council where she will Chair Community Affairs and also sit on both the Public Works and Parks and Recreation Committees. Debbie is a graduate of the University of Michigan and holds a J.D. degree from Vermont Law School. Since April 2008, she has been Executive Director of NY/NJ Baykeeper, a non-profit organization whose mission is to protect, preserve and restore the ecological integrity and productivity of the NY/NJ harbor estuary. Speaking for the Council, we look forward to working with Debbie in the years ahead.

Next, on behalf of myself and the Borough Council, I wish again to acknowledge and commend the following members of our community who are completing their valued services in the public interest:

Eric Hanan, Shade Tree Commission
Karin Robinson, Library Board of Trustees
Janice Dyer, Library Board of Trustees
Kara Travia, Historical Preservation Commission, and
Thomas Borgers, Planning Board

Finally, it is my pleasure to welcome four new appointees to their new positions:

Art Dawson, Planning Board

Karin Robinson, Planning Board
Tina Sebochs, Shade Tree Commission, and
Anthony Zaza, Cable Channel Citizens Advisory Committee

While 2017 was a particularly busy and challenging year for the Borough Council and Administration, it was also a year of significant accomplishments and progress on many fronts. I will discuss some of these highlights as well as some of our goals for 2018, by municipal department and subject, beginning with Finance and Administration.

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

Borough-Wide Property Revaluation

On March 2, 2017, the Essex County Board of Taxation ordered Glen Ridge to undertake a complete program of revaluation of all property within the Borough for the use of the Borough tax assessor in 2019. The budgeted cost of this revaluation is \$275,000, and it is to be completed by October 1, 2018. The major reasons cited by the Tax Board for this order were:

1. That the rate of assessed value to true value for the Borough of Glen Ridge is 84.05% and there is a wide divergence of ratios, from 61.85%-112.77% as opposed to clustering, and
2. That there has been a ratable loss of \$6.3 million since 2012 due to tax appeals.

Glen Ridge has retained Professional Property Appraisers, Inc. to conduct this revaluation. We want all residents to understand that when the revaluation of their property is completed, the appraiser will provide them with a statement clearly showing them a comparison of what they paid the previous year and exactly what their new tax payment will be as a result of the revaluation, adjusted for any change in rates. You will therefore know to the dollar how much more or less your tax bill will be.

I am certain you can all appreciate that this revaluation could not come at a worse time due to the recently enacted Federal Tax Law which only permits a maximum of \$10,000 in property tax to be deducted from an individual's Federal tax return. If, as we expect, such a provision will have a negative impact on property values, this revaluation may prove to be a total waste of money as we may very well have to conduct another revaluation in a couple of years. Several attempts to delay the revaluation were unsuccessful as the Board of Taxation has directed the Borough to have the revised assessment in place for October 1, 2018.

Regarding the changes in IRS regulations for local property tax deductions, the borough will be exploring all options to allow residents to donate to charitable trusts to fund local government operations.

We are working to finalize the 2018 municipal budget which will be introduced in March. I commend the department heads for their realistic approach to the budget process, as relatively few modifications need to be made to meet our budgetary goals. We will be able to once again keep the increase in the municipal tax levy under 2% while meeting the Council's priorities to provide adequate funding for borough programs and the capital improvement fund.

NJT Station Lease

Our 20 year lease for Borough use of the Glen Ridge train station expired on October 31, 2017. By letter dated December 28, 2017, NJT informed the Borough that it could not, at this time, accept the terms requested by Glen Ridge in its proposal letter to NJT dated May 4, 2017. However, in an effort to maintain a current term, NJT provided Glen Ridge with a First Lease Amendment which extends the previous 20 year lease term by an additional five years beginning November 1, 2017 and extending through October 31, 2022. During this extension period, the rent will remain at \$100 annually. Additionally, the \$250,000 of interior and exterior renovations that we have identified as being necessary for the proper maintenance and up-keep of the building, which will be fully funded by Glen Ridge, in lieu of a higher rental, will not be undertaken until we finalize a long-term lease. However, we expect to install much needed security cameras on the exterior of the station during 2018 to enhance the security and safety of our residents and their property in the area. Finally, we are discussing with NJT the possibility of securing a lease on the vacant land behind the station which would be used for a bicycle parking area and additional green space.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Baldwin Street Development

On November 29, 2017, the attorney for Glen Ridge Developers wrote to Judge Robert Gardner, who is overseeing all Essex County affordable housing declaratory judgment actions, that it and the Borough were close to reaching a settlement of the Builders Remedy lawsuit, filed by GRD against the Borough and its Planning Board on July 27, 2015. GRD stated it was hopeful that a settlement agreement would be approved in a few months. GRD also stated that the parties were very close to reaching agreement on the form of an inclusionary development plan for the Baldwin Street properties. The Borough now anticipates that the inclusionary development plan will be approved by the Council in January or February 2018. Provided that the settlement agreement and inclusionary development plan are approved, GRD and the Borough are discussing whether the inclusionary development plan should be implemented through a redevelopment agreement and financial agreement to be approved in February or March, 2018, with a site plan application hearing before the Borough Planning Board around the same time, and with a fairness hearing scheduled sometime in the spring/early summer, 2018.

Furthermore, the Borough has informed Judge Gardner that, based on mediation sessions, facilitated by his appointed Special Master, Elizabeth McKenzie, the Borough has tentatively agreed to its fair share obligation as determined by FSHC, subject to a percentage reduction to be determined by the Borough and FSHC, and subject to FSHC's acceptance of the Borough's vacant land adjustment, as determined by the Borough's expert, H2M Associates. In addition FSHC has provided a template form of settlement agreement and the Borough and FSHC are currently working through revised drafts of this form of agreement.

In her letter to the Borough dated October 10, 2017, the Special Master recommended that the Baldwin Street litigation be amicably settled by providing GRD the right to construct 98 family rental units (versus the 125 units originally sought), including a set aside of 15 affordable housing units. It is also anticipated that simultaneously with the agreement with GRD, the Borough will agree to a Borough-wide affordable housing fair share plan with FSHC regarding any and all outstanding and prospective fair share housing obligations. If the Borough's fair share plan is approved by the court, the Borough will be entitled to repose from all Builders Remedy lawsuits through July 1, 2025.

I want to take a moment to especially recognize and thank Borough Attorney John Malyska, Borough Administrator Michael Rohal and Councilor Ann Morrow, Chair of the Council's Planning and Development Committee, for the tremendous amount of time, effort, fortitude and wisdom which they have devoted in so capably handling this extremely complicated matter over the past year.

HUMC/ Mountainside Redevelopment Area

After a hiatus of approximately one year, the HUMC/Mountainside Redevelopment project is again moving forward, but with two major changes. First, the footprint of the proposed medical office building has been reduced from the originally proposed 60,000 ft.² to approximately 45,000 ft.². This change will now allow on-site parking for all of the MOB's tenants. Second, both Glen Ridge and Montclair have now, at the hospital's request, designated two redevelopers for the project. Montclair Hospital, LLC, the owner and operator of Mountainside Hospital has been designated as the redeveloper of all of the proposed new off-site parking lots in the redevelopment area and One Bay Urban Renewal LLC, an affiliate of the Hampshire Companies LLC as the redeveloper of the redevelopment tract which encompasses the proposed MOB. We anticipate that a joint meeting of the Montclair and Glen Ridge Planning Boards will be convened in the late winter to review the site plans for both redevelopment areas.

Public Safety

During 2017, the GRPD continued its ongoing programs that are designed to establish and maintain strong community bonding and partnership between the Borough's residents and the Department with an emphasis on programs for young adults. The most successful programs for young adults continue to be:

Lunch with a cop where small groups of 6-7 Third graders have lunch with an officer and get to know him/her on a social as well as professional basis;

Frequent visits by police officers to all of our schools to educate the students on various aspects of safety, i.e. bicycle and pedestrian safety, proper interaction with strangers, drug and alcohol resistance, etc. In 2017, one of the Department's most popular programs was a Forensic Science class for juniors and seniors. Also, during the year, the PD participated in each of the four State mandated fire and crime prevention drills at each of our four schools; a total of 16 such drills.

National Night Out, this past year attracted over 450 participants. In 2017, the Police Department's focus was on attracting High School students to this event, where dating violence was the primary subject for discussion with the teens.

Driver's education where high school students get to experience an Alco Test, and use simulator goggles to experience what they would see and how they would feel if they were driving while impaired by drugs or alcohol. Additionally, they are instructed as to what will happen to their lives if they are arrested for DUI as well as how to get pulled over successfully, irrespective of the circumstances; and

Our continuing bicycle registration program, for both children and adults, which includes photos of the bike, a record of its make, model and serial number, etc. An identification tag, which will

not peel off, is also attached to the bike. Sadly, only 60 bicycles were registered in 2017. Based on the number of bikes reported stolen each year in Glen Ridge, it is difficult for me to understand why every bike in Glen Ridge is not currently registered. At this time, I would like to take a moment to congratulate and commend Officer Michael Medico for his competitive selection as the Crime Prevention Officer of the year by the Essex County Crime Prevention Officers Association as a direct result of his bicycle registration program.

For the adults:

A MEET-UP-SPOT to promote safe and secure transactions in Glen Ridge was designated on Herman Street, in close proximity to the police station and is covered by 24-hour surveillance video. It is our hope that this program will reduce the risk of theft or fraud that can sometimes accompany on line transactions.

Quarterly coffee with a cop which gives residents an opportunity to meet, informally, one-on-one with police officers to discuss any thoughts or concerns they might have regarding the police and public safety.

In addition to the foregoing community/police initiatives, the department continued several of its other initiatives to increase the safety and protection of our residents:

In the area of Crime prevention, the Department continued a program to form joint community policing efforts with police departments in surrounding towns to increase the police presence on border streets in both municipalities. In 2017, the Department instituted its first joint program with Montclair, which was well received by our residents who complained about an increase of crime on their streets and who welcomed the increased police patrols/presence from both municipalities. In 2018, the department expects to expand this joint policing program to include Bloomfield. .

During 2017, the Department assisted in removing 293 pounds of unneeded medications from homes and businesses within the Borough. It also went mobile this year and hosted Take Back at several locations within Glen Ridge.

Finally, in 2017, the Department completed its body worn camera initiative. All patrol officers are now equipped with such cameras.

Goals for 2018 include:

Increasing pedestrian safety within the Borough. During December 2017, the Department installed pedestrian crossing beacons at the train station and on Belleville Avenue at Sherman Avenue, to assist pedestrians in crossing those busy intersections. An education period will take place prior to enforcement;

Seeking CALEA accreditation for the GRPD. This accreditation signifies that the Department meets all of the NJ State Chiefs of Police approved police department policies and procedures and may possibly reduce our insurance rate.

The GRPD staff is now at full complement.

PARKS & RECREATION

Parks and Recreation

During 2017, the Parks and Recreation Department installed fences at both George Washington and Forest Avenue fields, refurbished the Community pool and assisted in the first phase of the Freeman Field House renovation at Hurrell Field. This renovation is a cooperative venture between Glen Ridge and the Freeman Field House Improvement Committee, which was organized to raise funds and to actively participate in this specific project. Currently, the Committee's stated goal is to raise \$100,000 toward the \$200,000 total funding budgeted for this renovation. Notably, after 67 years in existence, the new building plan includes the first-ever girls' locker room in the Freeman Field House as well as a renovated state-of-the-art training room, public rest rooms and a new Community meeting space. Additionally, in 2018, the Hurrell Field track will be upgraded.

Also during 2017, the Borough initiated and completed background checks on all GRAA coaches.

Finally, 2017 was a banner year for all of our Borough races:

The Ashenfelter 8K Classic had 2,045 participants which was a 4.5% increase over 2016, while its companion event, the Tom Fleming Mile, had 642 runners, a 26% increase over the previous year.

The Fitzgeralds Lager Run fielded 1,160 runners which was slightly ahead of last year, while its companion race, the Zeuner Mile, had 94 participants, an increase of 15% over 2016.

These races, combined, achieved a major milestone in 2017 when total proceeds, since inception, topped \$1 million for their respective charities, the Educational Foundation and the Community Fund. Clearly this demonstrates the tremendous power and benefits of volunteerism within Glen Ridge. Councilor Murphy is to be highly commended for his 17 years of tireless work and endless hours committed to the organization and staging of these magnificent events each year and particularly for the fantastic financial results achieved and what such results have meant to the aforementioned charities.

It is with great sadness that we note the passing of both Horace Ashenfelter and Tom Fleming this past year. Both were not only world class athletes but also great contributors to the community.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Shade Tree Commission

In 2017, the Emerald Ash Borer has been a primary focus of the Shade Tree Commission. Native of Asia, the borer arrived in the Midwest in the early 1990s. Since then, it has relentlessly killed tens of millions of ash trees as it sweeps across North America. Most of the Borough's public ash trees are mature, healthy and truly beautiful. Therefore, the Commission, in consultation with the town's arborist, made the decision to treat preemptively against EAB all those public ash trees over 6 inches in diameter that did not have deformities, cavities or structural defects. This year, 28 trees were injected with an insecticide that should prevent infestation for 2 to 3 years. What this means, of course, is that they will

have to be retreated on a regular basis for the next 12 to 20 years, or until a more permanent cure can be found. But, given the current value of these trees and the estimated cost of their removal, the decision to treat them makes sense, not only aesthetically, but also fiscally. Those ash trees left untreated were removed over the summer and replaced during the fall.

The Commission also continues its march towards planting 1,000 new trees in five years. This year 197 new trees were planted, bringing the total number of trees planted since the fall of 2013 to 813. It is important to note, however, that while we are realizing a net gain of trees, we are continuing to lose approximately 100, mostly mature, trees each year.

In an attempt to reduce this attrition, the Commission is launching a systematic zone-pruning program this winter. The Borough has been broken down into four zones. Each year an entire zone will be maintenance pruned with an eye to improving the health of our trees, while better ensuring public safety. Studies show that the cost of not maintaining trees is more expensive than proactively maintaining them.

Despite the Commission's best efforts, however, its ultimate success relies on partnering with residents in caring for our trees. Therefore, it has continued to engage and expand its public outreach program. For Arbor Day, the town's forester, Rich Wolowicz, offered homeowners an evening's crash course on tree care. The presentation was so well attended that it had to be moved from the library to the council room. Similarly well attended was the Commission's October "Old Souls" walking tour of the historic Bloomfield Cemetery. Here, attendees had a chance to view spectacular examples of such unusual species as the dawn redwood, the bald cypress and the sassafras tree.

In 2018, the Commission looks forward to continuing the zone pruning program, planting more trees, and further engaging the public in the preservation and appreciation of our valuable and diverse urban forest.

2018 Road Repaving Program

During 2018, the Borough has identified the following roads for repaving:

Avon Place
Cambridge Road
Dodd Street
Edgemont Road
Herman Street
Linden Avenue between Ridgewood Avenue and the Montclair town line
Old Oak Road
Sunset Avenue, and
Washington Road between Ridgewood Avenue and the Bloomfield town line.

Glen Ridge will also apply, in early 2018 for a \$500,000 DOT grant which, if received by June 2018, will allow us to rehabilitate additional roads.

As we continue to improve our infrastructure, we are also taking the time to digitally map our facilities. As we start to roll out our use of the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software, we will begin inputting our maintenance records on this system. Eventually this will allow us to perform

maintenance and improvements based upon accurate field data. This will also allow our crews in the field to instantly access infrastructure sizing information and maintenance history.

The inventory will also be used to develop asset management plans for the water and sewer utilities. Completion of the plans will allow the Borough to apply for low interest loans and grants from the New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust. The Borough is in the process of applying for funding from the Trust for the replacement of 700 water services and the relining of approximately 12,000 feet of sanitary sewer lines.

The borough is also working with other Essex County communities to develop a Community Choice Aggregation program. The goal of this endeavor is to pool electrical utility purchasing and negotiate power for better energy pricing and improved environmental attributes.

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Welcoming Community Resolution

On April 24, 2017, the Glen Ridge Council unanimously passed a resolution expressing Glen Ridge's commitment to equal, respectful and dignified treatment of all people regardless of their religion, race, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship or immigration status and to be a welcoming community. This resolution, 61-17 is posted on the Borough's website and I encourage all residents to become familiar with it as it defines and reminds us of who we are as a community.

GLEN RIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

2017 was another busy and innovative year for the Glen Ridge Public Library in pursuit of its quest to establish itself as an important educational, cultural and social hub of the community.

The Library and Forest Avenue School jointly implemented the Mini-Makerspace grant that they were awarded, by the New Jersey State Library, in December 2016. The Mini-Makerspace features a 3D printer, Cricut Air 2 cutter and a button maker. In addition to the aforesaid equipment, the Library and School purchased books and 20 different STEAM-based kits that are loaned to the teachers for in-classroom learning and are also used by the Library for programming. Among the subjects the kits incorporate are robotics, coding, engineering, physics and art-based activities, etc. The Glen Ridge Home and School Committee has pledged additional funding to keep this program moving forward. One of the major benefits of this program is that it has given the Library a meaningful opportunity to partner with the schools.

During the year, the Library hosted a "Selected Shorts" gathering at the Women's Club which was jointly funded by a Glen Ridge Film Fund Grant and the Bergen County Cooperative Library System (BCCLS). This program was attended by 300 attendees, at a total cost of approximately \$3500. The "Selected Shorts" series was an art-form conceived by Symphony Space, a performing arts center on Manhattan's Upper West Side, with a simple premise; take great stories by well-known and emerging writers and have them performed by terrific actors of stage and screen featuring stories built around a lively theme, the favorite works of a great author, or a special collaboration. Each "Selected Shorts" event is a unique night of literature in performance.

Another 2017 Library innovation was the leasing of five Wi-Fi hotspot devices at an annual cost of \$120 each. The Library lends these devices to its patrons, free of charge. These devices allow up to 10 wireless

devices to connect to the Internet no matter where the user is located. Needless to say, this innovation has been very well received by the Library's patrons, particularly when they go on vacation.

During the summer, over 440 children participated in the Library's summer reading program resulting in 6,375 books having been read from June–August. Using a simple average, this amounts to 14 1/2 books per child, which is extremely impressive.

Finally, in 2017, the Library's Pop-Up Library at the train station returned with a longer season from June through the end of August. The staff is looking forward to continuing this program again in the summer of 2018.

CONCLUSION

As stated at the outset of this report, 2017 was a challenging year for Glen Ridge. After serving for the past 2 years as Mayor, with the tremendous support of the Council and Borough administration, I am continually reminded of just how privileged I am to work with some of the most committed and passionate people I have ever had the pleasure to be associated with. As a community, we are indeed fortunate to have a council that is comprised of a group of extremely experienced, knowledgeable, focused and dedicated individuals. This team has consistently demonstrated its ability to work effectively and collegially together to advance and promote the interests of the residents of Glen Ridge. We are also tremendously fortunate to have an Administrator, Deputy Administrator, Borough Attorney and Department heads who so effectively oversee every aspect of the day-to-day management of Glen Ridge, assuring that our residents receive all of the services that they have come to expect, as well as assuring that the Borough's infrastructure is properly and timely maintained.

On behalf of the Council and Borough administration, I wish you all a very happy, healthy, prosperous and successful New Year.

At the completion of this meeting, you are all cordially invited to join with us at our annual reorganizational reception which will take place next door at Fitzgeralds.