

Glen Ridge 2018 Year-Mayor's End Report
January 7, 2018

Good evening - I would like to welcome everyone to this, the 124th reorganizational meeting of the Borough Council of Glen Ridge. Tonight we have sworn- in returning Councilors Ann Marie Morrow and Paul Lisovicz, who have already served on this Council for 4 and 12 years respectively. 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 Morrow who will continue to ably and energetically Chair the Planning and Development Committee and to Councilor Lisovicz who will continue to Chair the Public Safety Committee. I am delighted that you both are willing to serve our community for another 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 unselfishly 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, 2018, the current Mayor and Councilors have served this community for a combined total of 60 years on this Council.

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

Daniel Kopec, Historical Preservation Commission
Mark Wright, Historical Preservation Commission
Mary Murphy, Planning Board

Finally, it is my pleasure to welcome three new appointees, Ginny Moriarty, Andrew Grisafi and Gregory Switzer to the Historical Preservation Commission and 2 new appointees, Bernice Clark Bonnett and Deanna Pagano to the Library Board of Trustees.

While 2018 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 highlight some of the foregoing developments as well as some of our goals for 2019, by municipal department and subject, beginning with Finance and Administration.

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

2019 Borough Budget

We are working to finalize the 2019 municipal budget which will be introduced in March. I commend our 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. I believe it is important to briefly note the impact of state aid on the challenges we face in balancing our municipal budget. In 2007, the Borough received over \$580,000 in state aid. However, since 2010 it has only received \$399,000 annually. According to studies by the New Jersey League of Municipalities, if the state follows its existing statutory calculation for state aid, the Borough should receive in excess of \$800,000 in 2019. We, of course, will continue to lobby our legislators for a more equitable distribution of state aid.

Finally, during the period 2008-2010, the Borough's surplus decreased to almost \$zero due to the recessionary economic conditions as well as to the aforementioned decrease in State aid which continues to the present. However, due to revenue enhancements and capping the Borough's expenditures, we were able to build up our surplus or fund balance to currently \$2.4 million, which excluding the school budget, approximates 15% of our operating budget. To put this achievement in perspective, nationally, a 12%-15% fund balance is considered a healthy reserve. As a result of the budgeting measures adopted in past years, the State has now authorized the Borough to affect an internal examination of its own annual budget rather than having to submit it to the State for approval.

Borough-Wide Property Revaluation

The Borough concluded its county mandated revaluation process in November. New Jersey real estate taxation law mandates that all real property be assessed at 100% of market value to ensure an equitable distribution of real estate taxes. This revaluation will take effect in the 3rd Quarter August 2019 tax billing. Briefly, 1,019 parcels (42.8%) of our residents received a property tax increase while 1,363 (57.2%) received a decrease. The average tax impact is -\$114, due to increases in hospital, commercial and Country Club valuations.

Final Point

Last year, I stated that the Borough would explore all options to allow residents to donate to charitable trusts to fund local government operations in order to ameliorate the impact of the recently enacted IRS regulations capping state and local taxes at \$10,000. While the NJ Division of Local Government has adopted regulations for municipalities to create Local Unit Charitable Funds for specific public purposes, the IRS has put us on notice that charitable donations, in lieu of property taxes, are not acceptable to the federal government for income tax deductions.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Hospital Medical Office Building and Baldwin Street Development

In 2018, the Planning Board presided over two large scale development applications. After two years of planning, the Mountainside Hospital Medical Office Building and parking area site plan was approved. Additionally, after four years, the Planning Board heard and approved the finalized site plan for the Baldwin Street Redevelopment Project, while at the same time finalizing a comprehensive agreement with the Fair Share Housing Center. These two new state-of-the-art development projects will become major assets for our community. I would like to take a moment to especially recognize and thank the Planning Board members, Borough Attorney John Malyska, Borough Administrator Michael Rohal and Councilor Ann Morrow, Chair of the Council's Planning and Development Committee, for the unbelievable amount of time, effort, fortitude and wisdom which they have devoted to so capably handling these extremely complicated developments over the past several years.

In preparation for this year-end report, I asked our attorney John Malyska to provide a summary of our recent legal settlements with both Glen Ridge Developers and the Fair Share Housing Center. In response, he provided an excellent 5-page report, as of December 31, 2018, which is an extremely thorough, concise and very readable summary of both of these incredibly complex and interrelated issues. As his report deals with one of the toughest issues (affordable housing obligations) currently facing every municipality in New Jersey I believe it should be read, in its entirety, by all Glen Ridge residents. I have therefore attached it to this year-end report.

In the past year, the Historic Preservation Commission continued to engage the services of a Preservation Consultant to review applications, interface with the public and to consult with the Commissioners. In 2018, the Commission heard 64 cases; 53 applications were approved, 10 were withdrawn and one denial of as-built conditions was subsequently modified and approved.

New Jersey Land Use Law requires that at least every ten years, the Planning Board must provide for a general reexamination of its Master Plan and development regulations and that it shall prepare and adopt by resolution a report on the findings of such reexamination. In 2019, the Planning Board Master Plan Re-Examination Report will be prepared. Additionally, the Planning Board will review the zoning and site plan sections of the Glen Ridge Code. Finally, I have also requested the Borough's right of way ordinance be reviewed and clarified.

PUBLIC SAFETY

During 2018, 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. Also, during 2018, 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.

The Police Department continued its bicycle registration program, for both children and adults, which includes taking photos of the bike, and recording its make, model and serial number, etc. Additionally, an identification tag, which will not peel off, is also attached to the bike. Based on the number of bikes reported stolen each month in Glen Ridge, it is difficult for me to understand why every bike in Glen Ridge is not currently registered.

The Police Department also sponsors a Law Enforcement Against Drugs (LEAD) Program which is taught to 6th graders at the Ridgewood Avenue School. The students are taught about decision making and the consequences of using drugs and alcohol. The program encompasses 8 classes during the year. About 160 children annually participate in this program which is taught by officers certified as LEAD instructors.

For the Adults:

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

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 its Patch to Patch program which forms joint community policing efforts with police departments in Montclair, Bloomfield and East Orange to increase police presence on border streets in all four municipalities. This program has been well received by our residents who have voiced concerns with an increase of crime on their streets and who welcome the stepped-up police patrols/presence in their neighborhoods. Additionally, in 2018 a joint traffic detail was initiated with the Montclair traffic unit on a Glen Ridge Street where residents had filed several speeding complaints.

During the year, the Department hosted several events in its Medication Take

Back program to encourage the proper disposal of medications. It also sponsored an Opioid awareness walk on Bloomfield Avenue to focus on opioid abuse.

Finally, in 2018 the GRPD established a new Traffic Unit within the Department specifically to handle traffic concerns and complaints.

Goals for 2019 Include:

Seeking NJSACOP 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.

Preparation of a Criminal Law course for presentation to students of the GRHS Criminal Law Class.

Training and assignment of a Community Service Officer as a parking enforcement officer. This officer will have full authorization to issue Borough Ordinance parking summonses.

Expanding the Department's Lunch with a Cop program for 7th graders.

PARKS & RECREATION

2018 was an extremely active and successful year for Parks and Recreation.

Looking first at its many programs, the Senior Citizens' Golden Circle enjoyed weekly exercise and art programs, weekly grocery shopping trips, monthly blood pressure screenings and health lecture luncheons, as well as eight field trips. These trips were most often lunch excursions to local restaurants, but also included places like the Newark Museum and Willowbrook Mall.

For our children, programs included Friday Night Recreation at the Ridgewood Avenue school for grades 3-6 which operated at maximum registration for seven of the nine weeks during the winter, a seven-week summer day camp for children ages 5-12 which achieved a 26% increase in revenue over 2017 and the Egg and Pumpkin hunt which attracted approximately 100 children and their families.

Again, this year the Fitzgerald's 5K Lager Run and Zeuner Mile, Ashenfelter 8K Classic and Tom Fleming Mile continued their popularity among both residents and non-residents raising significant funds for the Glen Ridge Community Fund and Glen Ridge Educational Foundation.

On the facility front, the Glen Ridge Community Pool realized an 8% increase in revenue while the Freeman Tennis Court revenue was up 10%.

During the year, we upgraded the lighting system to LED lights at the paddle tennis courts, installed shade structures at the Carteret Park playground and sodded Hurrell Field.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Councilor Murphy for his 18 years of tireless work and endless hours committed to the organization and staging of the aforementioned races and for the tremendous financial results achieved and what these results have meant to the targeted charities.

PUBLIC WORKS

In 2018 we continued our Boroughwide road reconstruction program. We laid 3,400 tons of asphalt and installed 2,000 linear feet of curbing. The following roads were reconstructed:

- Dodd Street
- Sunset Avenue
- Avon Place
- Cambridge Road
- Herman Street
- Edgewood Road
- Old Oak Road
- Linden Avenue
- Washington Street

In 2019 we have identified the following roads for reconstruction:

- Glen Park Road
- Victor Avenue
- Sommer Avenue
- Cross Place
- Willow Street
- Cross Street
- Reynolds Road
- Chestnut Hill Place
- Astor Place
- Maolis Avenue
- Winsor Place
- Appleton Road
- Clark Street

If additional funding from NJDOT becomes available, we also hope to work on:

- Baldwin Street
- Benson Street
- Clinton Road
- Freeman Parkway
- Glen Ridge Parkway
- Sherman Avenue
- Wildwood Terrace
- Glen Ridge Avenue

We also continued our work on our underground infrastructure. In 2018 we brought our water system data into compliance with the 2019 Water Accountability requirements. We digitally mapped our water system, created an asset management plan and formalized our maintenance plan. Additionally, we have begun our Boroughwide program of exercising each watermain valve on our distribution system. This valve exercising program will be completed in 2019.

Our water infrastructure continues to meet all national and state water quality requirements. Moving forward we want to continue to exceed the water quality requirements specified by the state and continue to eliminate all lead water lines maintained by the Borough. Before each street was paved in 2018, all lead services in the roadway were replaced with copper lines prior to paving. In 2019, we will embark on a multiyear Boroughwide program to eliminate all remaining lead line services in the roadway and upgrade several of our fire hydrants.

Along with the analysis of our water infrastructure, we have been mapping and reviewing our sanitary sewer system. In 2015 we relined 8,611 linear feet of our sanitary sewer system with much success. Moving forward in 2019 we will continue our multiyear improvement program by lining an additional 21,850 feet of sewer mains.

As we continue with our infrastructure improvements in 2019, the Borough will also be seeking proposals for refuse and recycling collection. Additionally, our Public Works Department will begin a shared service with the library for custodial services and we will continue our shared service agreement with the Montclair Water Bureau. We will also seek to recertify our silver status with Sustainable New Jersey. We are one of 52 municipalities, out of a total of 565 municipalities in the state certified at this level. Additionally, I will ask the Council to consider eliminating plastic bags for the collection of leaves. Finally, I will also ask our Committee Chairs for a report on the projected capital needs of their departments over the next 5 years.

Shade Tree Commission

Discussions about climate change increasingly emphasize the crucial environmental importance of trees. Trees aspirate oxygen and water, sequester carbon dioxide and pollutants, control and purify stormwater, and provide essential windbreaks and shade. But to do all of this meaningfully, the tree must be mature. So perhaps the highlight of this past year for the Shade Tree Commission has been the inauguration of a regular 4-year cycle of maintenance pruning, designed principally to prolong the healthy lifespan of our older and larger trees, while also ensuring that young and midsize trees reach their maturity with strong branch structures. Dujets, the company which won the maintenance contract, followed meticulously drafted specifications to prune each tree between Belleville and Bay Avenues from Bloomfield to Montclair. The success of this initiative was confirmed during the succession of devastating March nor'easters as not one tree and only one branch of any significance was lost in the entire pruned area.

During 2018, the Commission also furthered its mandate to plant 1,000 trees in a 5-year period. This year, 160 trees were planted, bringing the total to 973. Unfortunately, this year we also had to remove 65 trees, 35 by contractor and 30 by the DPW. The good news is that we ended up the year with a net gain of 95 trees. As in the past, the vast majority of the trees removed were maples. For many years now, these northern hardwood trees have been losing their fight with rising temperatures, accompanied by dramatic swings between too little and too much rain, as well as roadway construction and road salts. Unfortunately, as late as 2010, maples constituted over 60% of all the borough's public trees, forming monocultures on many of its streets. The lesson, however, has been learned. Today, our street trees are chosen from a vast array of species, ranging from crabapples to London planes, each selected for its appropriateness to a specific site. Understandably, the Commission is looking forward to planting its one-thousandth tree in May 2019. But it has no intention of resting on its laurels. Next spring, it also hopes to oversee a comprehensive inventory of the borough's public trees. At the least, it will provide crucial data for monitoring the health and safety of our trees. But the more ambitious goal is to make this inventory internet-accessible to residents, allowing them to become more fully engaged with the rich street-tree arboretum that Glen Ridge has notably become.

Finally, I wish to commend the Shade Tree Commission for their very dedicated and diligent efforts in restoring the Borough's forestry program.

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS & PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The Borough continues to use email, social media, texting and our website to reach our residents. In 2018, the Glen Ridge TV Committee improved the quality of our Council meetings by replacing the sound system in the Council Chambers and installing a new video server. With the upgraded system the sound quality of the meetings has dramatically improved and we can now stream video on Facebook and YouTube.

GLEN RIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

2018 was another busy and innovative year for the Glen Ridge Library in pursuit of its quest to establish itself as an important educational, cultural and social hub of the community; a place for the community to come together, feel welcomed and engaged.

This year started with a significant challenge when the State-provided interlibrary delivery service faltered affecting all public libraries in New Jersey. The Glen Ridge Library and many of the surrounding libraries worked together to keep delivery going for their residents. For weeks, staff and volunteers packed up their cars to make local stops so materials could still move and get into the hands of our patrons. While service has been restored, residents should look forward to mid-2019 when the delivery service comes under the purview of BCCLS. Turnaround times on requested items will rival online retailers providing access to materials like never before.

Programming:

In 2018, over 500 programs were offered to our residents from infants through seniors, with total attendance of 10,000 participants. These programs included literacy and STEAM-based story-times for our youngest patrons, our after school 3:15pm Readers Club for grades 3-8; the Teen Advisory Board; special performances; annual PopUP Library at the train station; lectures; concerts; French Club; cookbook club; and weekly new release movie showings for adults. Finally, due to popular demand the Library is pleased to announce that Selected Shorts will be returning to Glen Ridge on May 16, 2019; please save the date. Clearly, our library has something for everyone.

The Library also saw a record number of children and teens participate in the Summer Reading Program, "Libraries Rock!" A total of 522 children and teens, ages 2 to grade 12, participated and read a staggering 322,384 pages!

Expansion of Digital Offerings:

Starting this year, the Library now offers residents digital access to the NY Times. In addition, residents have an improved platform to access eBooks and digital audiobooks through OverDrive. Tens of thousands of items are available on any mobile device, including Kindles.

Facility Improvements:

In 2018, the Library had its main reading room ceiling painted and damage repaired; tile flooring was added in the children's room office and elevator area; the front door was refinished and painted as were the outdoor benches. The long-standing issue of the elevator lights has been repaired, and the bike rack replaced.

2019 Goals:

The Library Board of Trustees has engaged an architect to develop preliminary ideas that would allow the Library to meet the study and meeting space needs of the community. The Library hopes to take advantage of the NJ Construction Bond Act which financially assists with library construction projects.

Lastly, I wish to acknowledge and highly commend Library Director, Jen Breuer, and her staff for the tremendous job that they do, year after year, in constantly adopting new programs and offerings. As noted above, the results of their hard work and dedication is obvious from the participation of their patrons.

CONCLUSION

As stated at the outset of this report, 2018 was a challenging year for Glen Ridge. After serving for the past 3 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 us at our annual reorganization reception which will take place next door at Fitzgeralds.