

GLEN RIDGE 2022 YEAR-END REPORT
January 4, 2023
Mayor Stuart K. Patrick

Good evening and welcome to the 128th reorganizational meeting of the Borough Council of Glen Ridge.

As has been previously stated, we are very pleased by the decisions of both Councilors Hughes and Laws to continue to dedicate their time and experience to continue to help make Glen Ridge the great place it is to live.

Finally, I would like to take a few minutes to briefly review some of our 2022 departmental highlights and 2023 goals and objectives.

Parks & Recreation

In 2022 we saw the completion of the renovations to the Glen Ridge Community Center. Additionally, we returned to in person Senior citizens events and the rental of the community center. Interest in Borough Recreation programming is at an all-time high. Registration for all summer programs such as the Community Pool, Freeman Tennis Courts and Summer Day Camp not only rebounded but exceeded pre-COVID numbers.

Improvements to maintenance plans and programs for our natural grass fields will continue to be a focus. Councilor Rich Law has worked tirelessly to improve the protocols and implementation on how we care for our fields and we will continue to build upon his efforts in 2023.

Public Safety

In 2022 we returned and expanded upon in-person community policing initiatives including such programs as National Night Out, the Bicycle Rodeo, the Santa Parade, School Safety Drills, Chief-for-a-Day, Home Security Surveys, GRHS Classroom Presentations, Lunch with a Cop, and Child Safety Seat Installations. Our National Night Out event had a record number of attendees this year.

Public Safety will continue to maintain and expand upon Community Policing initiatives. In 2023 the Committee will examine implementing the Take Me Home Program, a community policing program aimed at helping our most at-risk residents. As part of the program, residents can voluntarily register their loved ones with the Glen Ridge Police Department, which will help officers locate that person in the event they go missing or come into contact with law enforcement.

Addressing traffic concerns and pedestrian safety will be one of the primary focuses for 2023. The Borough will be conducting a comprehensive pedestrian safety and traffic analysis of the Borough. Additionally, Public Safety along with our staff will continue to work with the County of Essex in improving and upgrading the County traffic signals and pedestrian crossings.

Public Works

Our Director is always looking for recycling opportunities. In 2022 we established a rechargeable battery drop off. He should also be congratulated for making 2022 an injury free year for the DPW staff.

In 2023 we anticipate more price swings and supply chain issues. Maintaining and replacing our vehicle fleet continues to be a challenge. Our staff however has done a great job in keeping our fleet up and running.

Our street improvement program will continue in 2023, but at a more limited scope due to the price increases in materials. We will also be focusing on our water infrastructure and will begin implementing many of the improvements required by the state's water quality standards.

Finance & Administration

In 2022 we had a tax collection rate of 99.2%. In most areas we also saw a recovery in revenues from the funds most seriously impacted by COVID.

Finance and Administration is preparing for the fiscal challenges that lie ahead in 2023. Many of our main cost drivers are dramatically increasing. Health care has increased over 20% and liability insurance has increased by 12%. Substantial increases in water rates are also anticipated. In 2023 the Finance and Administration Committee will finalize labor contracts with both our CWA and PBA Unions.

We will be relying heavily on this committee to explore grant and loan opportunities as well as studying the careful use of our surplus to navigate this challenging fiscal year.

Community Affairs

In 2023 we will be redesigning our website. We will also be implementing new constituent response software. We will also continue to explore further opportunities to utilize technology to improve our residents' experience when conducting business with the Borough

Our Clerk will be cleaning up and making recommendations on many of our ordinances. She will also continue managing our highly successful Toys for Tots collection as well.

Planning & Development

We are all very excited about the Greenway Project which, when completed, will comprise nine miles of linear park that will run through Glen Ridge. We will work diligently to establish close and continual communication with NJDEP to ensure our concerns and comments are heard and to keep our residents updated about the development status of the project.

In 2023 we will also finalize the design of our Safe Routes to School project along Ridgewood Avenue in front of the High School.

Library

The Library's new Director, Tina Marie Doddy, oversaw the successful completion of the outdoor pick up lockers. The lockers will be coming online this year. Additionally, the staff was trained in CPR and the use of the automated external defibrillator.

This year the Library hopes to continue to implement physical improvements in its building to enhance the user's' experience. The Director will continue the work of the Library's EDI Task Force and to complete an Inclusive Services Assessment.

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