



State of the Township Address 2020

Council President, members of the Town Council, Municipal employees, friends, relatives and fellow residents of Mount Olive, as I proudly finish my second term as Mayor of this wonderful Township and begin my third term, I once again thank you for the opportunity to report on the 2020 State of the Township of Mount Olive.

Many have asked me what more I hope to accomplish in the upcoming four years. The most important goal is tax stability. For the eighth year in a row, we will be introducing a budget that will include no municipal tax increase for the residents. To accomplish that, we continue to encourage growth while at the same time limit spending.

Notwithstanding the realization of no municipal tax increases for almost a decade, nothing gives me greater pleasure than the renewed

pride our residents have for this community. As in past years, I often hear from residents and non-residents alike, how wonderful our facilities are like Turkey Brook and/or our High School, and how much our residents love and enjoy Mount Olive.

It is not enough to simply have great facilities though, we also strive to have great programs for our residents. Our award winning Recreation Department is second to none. Once again, through the use of social media, radio, signs and newspapers, Mount Olive residents are always connected to the happenings in Mount Olive. Our communication efforts and successes are still the envy of all of our surrounding towns. Beyond the programs that we run, I have instilled in our Town employees the “can do” attitude when it comes to the needs of our residents. Our municipal departments understand that we work for the taxpayers and in many instances have gone above and beyond to resolve individual homeowner issues.

Of course, all of the accomplishments could not have been achieved without the hard work and support of the Governing Body. We work collaboratively as a team in Mount Olive. I would once again like to thank Joe Nicastro for his leadership in 2019 and look forward to working with him again in 2020. I congratulate Joe on his appointment

to another term, I believe an unprecedented fifth consecutive term as Council President and thank him and the rest of the Town Council for their support and guidance. While I generally get the credit, the successes are equally shared with and earned by the Town Council. So too, I would be remiss by not highlighting the outstanding work and accomplishments of your Department Heads and employees.

Administration

The Administration Department continues to coordinate all aspects of local government and is responsible for the day-to-day operations associated with all municipal activities.

As with any large organization, a significant amount of time was spent on Human Resources, hiring twenty four new employees and processing two retirements. We will continue to look for dedicated individuals to best serve our Township. Additionally, a new contract was negotiated with the Mount Olive Township Police Department which will have a savings impact on future budgets.

Legislatively, we supported policies and made changes to our ordinances to reflect the current environment and we will continue to make recommendations as we encounter issues throughout the year.

Most notably, our franchise agreement with Altice was recently renewed which we were able to negotiate a senior discount, a \$25,000 technology grant and free Wi-Fi at Turkey Brook Park.

Phase I of the Old Flanders Sewer project is near completion, the Gold Mine Hotel was demolished with our eye now on the Blue Bird and we re-negotiated our lease agreement with Centercourt for the continued use of their pool facility.

We are bringing awareness to our 24th District Legislators about the algae blooms at Budd Lake, a new Sister City was entered into with Mount Olive, North Carolina, our council meetings are now live streamed and our website has been updated. Furthermore, our shared services continue to deliver as our contracting towns show confidence in our services by renewing their contracts and adding additional services.

Over \$1.1 million dollars was awarded in grants from Federal, State and County agencies and we will continue to look for additional grant opportunities to help offset our expenditures. Major projects include the rehabilitation of International Drive, the restoration of the Seward House and Old Baptist Church, and the Turkey Brook Park Extension.

Our office continues to support community events by fostering the relationship with the business who have partnered with us through their generous donations and various sponsorships throughout the year.

Finance Department

The Finance Department, which comprises the finance, collection and assessment divisions exceeded operating expectations in 2019. Our projected fund balances in all funds are slated to be higher than last year balances, most notably in our main operating budget.

With respect to the tax assessment division, the Township received over \$1 million in revenue from \$40 million in added assessments and the reverse tax appeal from Toys R Us. We also settled twenty five County tax board judgments which resulted in no refunds. For 2020, our property values are expected to grow by \$52 million or almost 2%. Our state audit of the farm qualified Woodland Management Properties was found to be in 100% compliance with no deficiencies. We have the lowest number of pending state tax appeals in comparison to similar Morris County towns and are near the top in added assessment revenue increases.

In the collection division, we updated our tax website to include links for all available tax relief programs and also created multiple PDF forms. We worked closely with the Township Attorney to prepare and hold an assignment tax sale for the Combe Fill property and were responsible for collecting over \$110 million in property taxes, water and sewer rents. Our tax collection rate is expected to well exceed 99% which we have been able to do since 2014. A successful tax sale also resulted in over \$310,000 in premiums which will return to the Township in five years pending no lien redemptions.

In the finance division, the 2018 audit was completed for the eleventh year in a row with no audit recommendations, along with no recommendations for the LOSAP, JIF and arbitrage audits. The best practice checklist was completed satisfactorily to obtain our final allotment of state aid and we met our continuing disclosure requirements. All non-vested LOSAP accounts were closed resulting in an additional \$23,000 in revenue, banking services have been renegotiated resulting in an additional \$110,000 in interest, our time and attendance solution was upgraded and we were able to obtain reduced rates from our payroll provider by 18%. Finally, our archival storage project was completed, reports were prepared using the new

FAST online module, we continued to assist with the Old Flanders sewer assessment and the annual water/sewer study was prepared.

Police Department

The prevention of crime, crashes, and negative quality of life issues continue to be the focus of the Mount Olive Police Department. To be successful in those endeavors, we need the support of the community. The police department remains committed to maintaining and building those positive relationships by offering and participating in National Night Out, Coffee with a Cop, Keeping Seniors Safe, Touch a Truck, and Law Enforcement Against Drugs.

The Mount Olive Police Department is a community oriented police department that utilizes data driven technology and intelligence to direct resources. The Mount Olive Police Department is committed to following nationally recognized best practices and maintaining accreditation through the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police.

Department of Public Works

In the Roads Department, a successful year of paving was accomplished by resurfacing over twenty roadways, including phase II of International

Drive North. Drainage improvements were also made to six areas prone to flooding.

The Parks, Building and Grounds Department addressed the outdated HVAC systems in the municipal building by replacing four units.

Improvements were made by installing three turf baseball infields and a new concrete pad for the event tent at Turkey Brook Park. Additionally, Lou Nelson and Flanders Park received new playgrounds with ADA accessibility.

In the Water and Sewer Department, engineering plans continue for the installation of water lines in the Pershing Estates Development, the old sewer filtration system at the Cloverhill sewer treatment plant was replaced along with a newly expanded treatment plant office and support was provided for the Old Flanders Sewer project.

The Sanitation Department continued with another successful town wide large item cleanup and will be expanding its services to the Morris Chase Development adding an additional one hundred and eighty properties. The shared service contract with Chester for sanitation pick up was also renewed generating over \$40,000 in gross revenue.

The Fleet Department continues to handle all maintenance issues for township owned vehicles and assists with Fire and EMS vehicle maintenance and up fits as needed. This new service to our volunteer departments was provided as an option to save money and to streamline the maintenance of their vehicles. The Fleet Department has also continued to organize and carry out the township auctions of vehicles, equipment, Police surplus, and obsolete IT equipment to maximize return on investment for the township.

Recreation Department

The Recreation Department held sixteen special events in 2019 with more than seventy thousand attendees, four hundred and thirty one business sponsors and over one hundred and thirty volunteers. Five new events debuted, including Mardi Gras, Seas the Day, Pirate Day, Oktoberfest and Bonfire Boutique. Bubble Palooza 5K Fun Run & Walk won the Morris County Park Alliance Award for Outstanding Program. Other favorite events included Movie Nights, Touch a Truck, Chili Brewfest, Cabin Fever Reliever, Fairy & Pirate Festival, Raiders of the Lost Park Mud Run, Mt. Olive Week Carnival, and the annual Food Trucks & Fireworks.

During the school year, forty nine programs for our youth and adults were held with over two thousand participants. Four summer camp programs were also held which over six hundred children participated.

Between our three aquatic venues, Budd Lake Beach, Pirates' Cove and the Mt. Olive Pool, we had over forty one thousand visitors this summer!

The Recreation Department revamped their on-line registration program, Community Pass, to be easier to navigate and Visa credit cards can now be accepted, in addition to MasterCard and Discover. Instagram and social media videos were added to the marketing plans for events along with E-newsletters being sent out weekly to over eight thousand people.

Health Department

The Health Department submitted their application for National Public Health Accreditation. National Accreditation validates a local health department's commitment to quality improvement, performance management, accountability, transparency, and capacity to deliver the Ten Essential Public Health Services. In this effort, the Department convened a group of approximately thirty local public health, healthcare,

non-profit, religious, business, hospital, and government officials to form the Mount Olive Health Improvement Coalition in order to complete a community health assessment and begin creating a community health improvement plan. They will complete the improvement plan and start implementing improvement strategies in early 2020.

The Senior Transportation program continues to grow. Over the past year staff made over two thousand trips taking our seniors to their medical appointments. This is more than in any previous year and is a 48% increase over last year. They also delivered over twenty five hundred meals to homebound, low-income seniors. Overall, the program saw close to six thousand passengers this past year.

The Health Department continues to coordinate the Township's annual holiday gift program; again this year they distributed gifts to fifty children for twenty two Mt. Olive families. This program is only possible because of the generous donations of our residents and local businesses and churches.

The Health Department began providing public health services to Mine Hill this year. They also continue providing services to Wharton, Dover,

Mt. Arlington and Netcong. Through shared services agreements and fees collected, approximately \$500,000 was generated.

The Health Director received the NJ Local Boards of Health Association's annual Meritorious Service Award for outstanding contribution to public health and the Deputy Director was appointed to the Public Health Licensing Board by the Commissioner of the NJ Department of Health.

IT Department

Mount Olive Township scored higher than average during an overall external network assessment and penetration test conducted by an independent cyber-security company. The testing assessed the security posture of our routers, firewalls, and other security appliances that filter malicious traffic from the internet. The network was evaluated in the same manner that a malicious outside attacker would. The company could not penetrate our firewalls, which demonstrated our network security effectiveness.

The IT department has broadened security awareness to all employees with interactive training, educational courses, and email security guidelines and best practices. Simulated phishing cyberattacks under the guidance of Morris County JIF's Cyber Risk Management Program

were conducted to strengthen email security awareness for all employees. Once the simulations were complete, training courses on how to avoid phishing attempts were developed.

The IT department proactively monitors over two hundred eighty users and groups and over one hundred twenty devices, which includes workstations, servers and tablets. All township data is securely backed up daily and stored in two different cloud locations in the event of a true disaster.

Planning Department

The Planning Department's key accomplishments for the year included the preparation of an "Area in Need of Redevelopment" study and "Redevelopment Plan" adopted by the Planning Board and the drafting of a new overlay zone district ordinance adopted by the Township Council to establish a potential development on the one hundred acre former Combe Fill North landfill. The Department also prepared an ordinance to rezone six vacant acres along Rt. 46 in Budd Lake from R-6 residential zoning to a C-1 commercial designation thus implementing a recommendation in the Master Plan Reexamination Report. The Township Planner assisted the Planning Board in reviewing a number of new development applications approved during the past year including

a new Wawa on Rt. 206; Three T's, a restoration and expansion of long term empty office building for new roofing company; a new Boat House restaurant and apartment to replace existing dilapidated building on Sand Shore Road; Fratelli Beretta's 33,000 sq. ft. addition to their existing facility in the International Trade Zone; 700 International Drive, a new 63,440 sq. ft. bldg.; Revolution Fitness, a new personal training studio on Rt. 206, a new clubhouse building and in ground pool in Village Green; and a new digital billboard on Rt. 206. The Department has begun the initial review process for a proposed 700 unit residential development to be located in the FTZ-4 district zone which will include one hundred affordable units counted towards the Township's affordable housing obligation.

In addition, the Department continued to work with various property owners towards creating a new Highlands Redevelopment District to include vacant land in the Light Industrial zone located at westerly end of Sand Shore Road and properties on the southerly side of Rt. 46 including the Mt. Olive Parkade shopping center to facilitate new development within the Highlands Preservation Area. The Department has implemented the Township's new regulations to register vacant and abandoned buildings and collect fees to ensure compliance with municipal property maintenance code. The Township Planner has and

continues to work with the Open Space Committee and Land Conservancy in creating an updated open space plan. Finally, the Department issued three hundred twenty five Zoning Permits and processed three hundred seventy five OPRA requests.

Construction Department

During the past year, the Building Department has collected over \$500,000, issuing over fourteen hundred construction permits and over one thousand certificates of occupancy.

The department conducted over five thousand inspections and will continue to bring the best possible service to the residents, business owners and contractors of Mount Olive.

Fire Prevention

The Fire Marshal's Office enforces fire safety regulations to every commercial building and business in the Township, along with providing shared services to Chester Borough, Hackettstown and Allamuchy. Over eighteen hundred businesses are inspected annually generating over \$150,000 dollars in annual revenue. New software was also implemented making inspections easier and more efficient for our Fire Inspectors working in the field.

Conclusion

This is only a snap shot of the many achievements and accomplishments our Township Departments and employees have achieved this past year. I will continue to strive to make Mount Olive Township the best place to live, work and raise a family. I consider every member of the community a family member. The pride that you have shown me, the dedication for our community and the support that we have for one another is over whelming.

I know there are still many things upon which we need to improve and promise to do my best to accomplish and make as my priority in the New Year. I look forward to and ask for the resident's support for many years to come. In closing, I would like to thank the Township Council, our Business Administrator and all of our Department Heads and municipal employees for a job well done in 2019. May the New Year bring you good health, happiness and prosperity.

With Gratitude and Appreciation,

Rob Greenbaum

Mayor, Mount Olive Township