



"Crossroads of the
American Revolution"

The Town Crier



2023- Q2

Hopewell Township Newsletter

From the Mayor- Woolsey Park Bandshell Update

In the coming weeks, you will see construction at Woolsey Park. Work will start on the Woolsey Park Bandshell, with a completion date of fall.

Back in 2021, Hopewell Township received a grant from the State of New Jersey for a bandshell, thanks to the work of State Senator Shirley Turnery and Assembly Members Anthony Verrelli and Verlina Reynolds-Jackson. The \$500,000 grant covers construction and landscaping.

Hopewell Township's Director of Community Development and Township Engineer Jim Hutzelmenn and members of the Woolsey Park Advisory Committee then started working on the project. A site to the right of the memorials was selected, and bandshell types with the appropriate design context were researched. Finally, a Request for Proposal for design of the structure and site was issued.

Everyone thought we were ready to break ground, but an unexpected challenge occurred. The Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission raised a permitting issue that required some additional work on the plan. Thanks to Mr. Hutzelmenn, that issue has now been resolved and construction can begin.

"We've cleared all the hurdles, and we're ready to move forward," said Mr. Hutzelmenn.

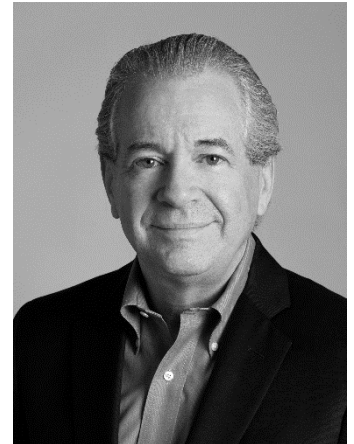
Due to delays with obtaining construction materials, the lead time for delivery of the bandshell has pushed the groundbreaking until later in the summer. At that time, the site grading will begin and a foundation poured. Once the bandshell is delivered from the manufacturer, it will be assembled on the foundation.

While construction is underway, a small part of Woolsey Park will be fenced off for protection of the public.

"We are coordinating with the construction team to ensure that there is minimal interference to park users, especially to participants in our summer camps," said Karin Poveromo, Hopewell Township's Director of Recreation and member of the Woolsey Park Advisory Committee. "We look forward to making plans to use the bandshell next year."

"All of us on the Woolsey Park Advisory Committee have been happy to work on this project," said Woolsey Park Advisory Committee Chair Russ Graznow. "The bandshell will make Woolsey Park an even better place for our residents."

This project would not have been possible without the help of many people. In addition to Senator Turner, Assemblyman Verrelli, Assemblywoman Reynolds-Jackson, Mr. Hutzelmenn, Ms. Poveromo and Mr. Graznow, many thanks are in order for the other members of the Woolsey Park Advisory Committee, including Dave Gerard of Hopewell Township's Public Works Department, Jim Gambino, Chris Pazdan, Carol Lipson, and Mike Chipowsky.



**2023 Budget
Results in
Lower Taxes**

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Michael Ruger, Mayor, mruger@hopewelltp.org

Police Department Happenings

Chief of Police Jim Rosso was promoted to lead the Hopewell Township Police Department in May of 2022. At his one-year anniversary, we'd like to share some of the Department's accomplishments and initiatives from this first year, along with some exciting things coming up for the HTPD.



First and foremost, under his leadership and that of Lieutenant Louis Vastola, the Department has been re-accredited by the New Jersey Association State Chiefs of Police (NJASCP), an independent credentialing body designated by the US Department of Justice. In March, Chief Rosso and Lt. Vastola went before the NJASCP Commission for a

review and question and answer session from the panel of Chiefs. The review examined all aspects of the Department's policies and procedures, management, operations, and support services.

After the review, the Hopewell Township Police Department received re-accreditation status, a recognition of law enforcement professional excellence achieved by less than half of Law Enforcement agencies in New Jersey. Chief Rosso notes, "Accreditation is a highly sought after recognition of excellence and adherence to the best practices in the Law Enforcement community, one that we have been able to maintain for the last 7 years. I am exceptionally proud of all of the men and women of the Hopewell Township Police Department, who strive each and every day to provide this level of service, professionalism, and commitment to the Hopewell Valley Community."



Further, the Department has been actively involved in many community events this year. In 2023 alone, the Department held two open houses for the wider Hopewell community to meet members of the Department, along with people interested in becoming Hopewell Township Police Officers.

Members of the Department also participated in:

- The Hopewell Valley Senior Fair
- A Department-run Baseball and Softball Clinic for kids, along with attending the Hopewell Valley Baseball and Softball Association's Opening Day festivities
- St. Baldrick's Day at Bear Tavern School
- Lunch with star students at Stony Brook Elementary School
- HVRSD Superintendent "Rebuilding Community" engagement event
- Hopewell Valley Central High School Teen Wellness Day
- Daisy Troop 71065 "Be Courageous and Strong" Daisy Petal badge
- Lunch with students at Timberlane Middle School

To celebrate these achievements, remember all law enforcement officers who have lost their life for the safety and protection of others, and to thank the officers in the Hopewell Township Police Department for the work they do every day, we celebrated the start of Police Week at the May 15th Hopewell Township Committee meeting. The Department Honor Guard presented the flags of the United States and New Jersey, and a proclamation was read honoring the members of our Department who serve and protect the residents of Hopewell Township every day. Police Week was celebrated nationally from May 14-20, 2023.

Coming up, the Department will again celebrate Pride Month this June by selling specially-designed patches to show support for the LGBTQ+ community. Proceeds will benefit the Triad House in Ewing, which is a 24-hour residential group home for youths in the LGBTQ+ community who are experiencing emotional and behavioral challenges. Sergeant Alexis Mirra, the Department's LGBTQ liaison, also will be attending several Pride events during the month of June, including the Asbury Park Pride parade on June 4th.

Finally, this year we celebrated the retirements of Patrol Officer Brian Dendis, Lieutenant William Springer, and Lieutenant Frank Tulko. Patrol Officer Dendis and both Lieutenants served proudly for 25 years, and their service and leadership will be deeply missed. Congratulations to all and best wishes for a happy and healthy retirement.

For more information and current happenings in the HTPD, visit the Department on Facebook (HopewellTwpNJPolice) and Instagram (hopewelltwppdnj).

Courtney Peters-Manning, Deputy Mayor, liaison to the Police, cpeters-manning@hopewelltwp.org

Working hard to support our local economy

Did you know that new jobs have a multiplier effect on the local economy?

Data shows that every new job created in the local economy contributes to increased local spending and services required, ultimately indirectly creating even more jobs. Data from sources like MIT show that in certain high tech industries this multiplier effect can be as high as 5 indirect jobs created for every 1 new job.

In this vein, the Hopewell Township Committee has been hard at work supporting and growing our local economy. We recognize that our Township businesses large, small, and everything in between are an important part of the fabric that makes our community unique and are a critical part of our local economy.

In support of this, the Township's recently formed *Tourism & Economic Development Advisory Committee* has hit the ground running in a variety of ways. This group of volunteers, comprised of local business owners, non-profit leaders, and others, is working hard behind the scenes in conjunction with the Township Committee and many other volunteer boards and commissions.

Specifically, the *Tourism & Economic Development Advisory Committee* is focused on two broad areas - "Main Street and Tourism" and "Environment" - that recognize our Township's distinct strengths and opportunities.

"Main Street and Tourism" seeks ways to support our incredible local small businesses who contribute so much to the Township's special character. One simple way of buttressing these businesses is to drive awareness of them as well as initiatives and events that bring potential customers into town. Doing so not only helps these businesses grow, but also shows what an incredible place

Hopewell Township is for others to grow a business.

Coupled with this is tourism and a recognition of the singular opportunity that exists with the coming 250th anniversary of Washington's historic crossing of the Delaware River. Nonetheless, there are so many tourism opportunities in Hopewell Township beyond historic (or heritage) tourism like the 250th anniversary, including agritourism and ecotourism among others given our bucolic, welcoming atmosphere.

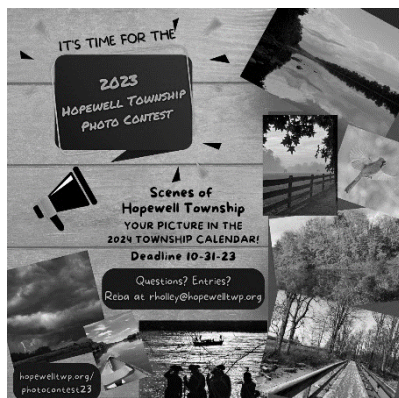
In addition, the *Tourism & Economic Development Advisory Committee* is focused on the broader "Environment" and advising on ways to foster business growth. This can be critically important as evidenced by the successful growth of the Township's Innovation Campus, which has attracted numerous pharmaceutical and medical companies. Furthermore, this type of economic clustering growth not only contributes great jobs to our local economy, but also increases commercial rates, which reduces pressure on the residential tax burden. That's great news for residents!

Overall the Township Committee, the *Tourism & Economic Development Advisory Committee*, and so many other volunteer committees and commissions are hard at work supporting our local businesses and the broader economy.

And we'd all love to hear from you! If you have any ideas or initiatives you believe the *Tourism & Economic Development Advisory Committee* should support, please reach out to me at dchait@hopewelltp.org.



David Chait, Hopewell Township Committee Member



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Hopewell Township's 2023 Budget Results in Lower Taxes

I am happy to announce that Hopewell Township's 2023 municipal tax rate will decrease by -0.7% vs. last year. Yes, you read that headline correctly!



We have been disciplined in our spending choices, keeping the Township's levy increase below the 2% NJ cap, and our efforts to diversify and broaden the tax base are working.

This past year, the Township's ratable base increased by 2.7%, as our efforts to attract new investments in our community like BeiGene, and to improve home values, are bearing fruit. This has resulted in a reduction in the municipal tax rate, while still supporting fair raises for our employees and covering the rising costs of healthcare, fuel and other goods and services.

Our team at the Township has worked together to get the best value out of every dollar. Here's one simple example – our new double-axle Public Works vehicles allow us to carry two times more salt, brush, and leaves versus traditional Public Works trucks. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, so here is a side-by-side visual of the new double-axle truck vs. a traditional Public Works truck:

This added capacity results in fewer total trips, less fuel, and a reduction in the hours per task.

We expect to see significant additional gains in the years ahead. These gains not only help lower municipal taxes, but also reduce Township residents' share of School, County and Fire District taxes. Our new Tourism & Economic Development Advisory Committee is working to attract the right balance of new Main Street businesses as well as larger corporate investments like PTC Therapeutics and BeiGene in Hopewell Township.



Additionally, monies recouped from the Woodmont and Lennar projects will be used to fund new projects for Township residents. Last year, we secured over \$2 Million in rollback taxes from Woodmont and Lennar, which we are utilizing to bolster our Surplus balance (now over \$11 Million dollars), and to fund the direct purchase of important projects across Hopewell Valley.

This includes the replacement of our aged Turf Field at Twin Pines, the purchase of a new Police SUV, and preservation and upgrades at the historic schoolhouse at the corner of Scotch and Washington Crossing – Pennington Roads. Importantly, this latter funding will trigger additional private investment into the preservation of this community landmark.

While this is great news for 2023, our work is not over. We will continue our efforts towards responsible budgeting. One focus area will be reducing the Township's debt - approximately 1-in-4 dollars in this year's municipal budget goes to paying off prior year capital purchases and other Township obligations. We have also successfully negotiated new shared service agreements, including a recent agreement with the Boroughs on Health & Animal Control and are shifting employees to new health coverage which delivers competitive benefits at lower cost. New labor agreements with our union partners cement these gains.

Looking ahead, we expect to begin seeing significant new revenues from our PILOT agreements with BeiGene, Lennar and Woodmont in fiscal years 2024 and 2025. The revenues from these agreements and our ongoing efforts to reduce spending, we hope to make further progress on taxes in the years ahead.

It's gratifying to see this progress and I want to take a moment to thank my fellow Committee Members and recognize hard work by our Township team and our professionals over the past six months.

Kevin D. Kuchinski, Township Committee Member and Finance Liaison, kkuchinski@hopewelltp.org

Hopewell Township Recognizes Month of May as Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month

Hopewell Township and the Township Committee knows how important it is to recognize and celebrate the diversity of our community. As a part of this, the Committee endeavors to recognize heritage months at our regular meetings to bring light to this important diversity.

As a part of this, May was Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month, a time to acknowledge the struggles and accomplishments of generations of AANHPIs. Hopewell Township is proud of its tradition of embracing diversity and inclusion and making our town a welcoming place for all and I am honored to be part of this community.

To kick off the celebration and announce our town's official observation of AANHPI Heritage Month, the Hopewell Township Committee read a proclamation during its May 1st Committee meeting. The proclamation recognizes the dedication and contributions of AANHPI communities who have shaped our country ever since the first Japanese immigrants arrived in May 1842. The AANHPI community has started new businesses, created innovations in science, technology, and the arts, and honorably served in uniform to protect our nation, just to name a few contributions.

The AANHPI community is made up of unique cultures from all over Southern and Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Western Asia, The Indian subcontinent, and the Pacific Islands. AAPI community is comprised of forty-five distinct ethnicities and more than one hundred language dialects. AANHPIs

make our nation and local community more vibrant through their diverse cultures, languages, and religions.

According to the most recent census, approximately 12.4% of Hopewell Township residents identify as AAPI or AANHPI. The AAPI population is growing faster than any other ethnic group both nationally and in Hopewell Township. The contributions of AANHPI individuals, staff members, and residents who serve on Hopewell Township boards and commissions are invaluable. Their diverse perspectives enrich our community and help us continue our tradition of inclusion.

Local organizations in Hopewell Valley organized several events to celebrate AAPI culture in May. The Hopewell Branch of the Mercer County Library, for example, planned activities for children and adults throughout the month. Hopewell Valley Regional School District (HVRSD) and Hopewell Valley Education Foundation hosted New York Times bestselling author, Jean Kwok, to discuss her book *Searching for Sylvie Lee*. And Culture Connections, a student group at Hopewell

Central High School, conducts activities throughout the year to help students at HVRSD learn about other cultures from all parts of the world and build stronger cultural competence.

I hope Hopewell Township residents continue to join me and the fellow Hopewell Township Committee members in recognizing and celebrating the important contributions AAPIs have made to our community and continuing to embrace the diversity of current and future residents. We Are Stronger Together!



Uma Purandare, Hopewell Township Committee, upurandare@hopewelltpw.org

Be Aware of the Risk of Identity Theft



You may have noticed that there has been an uptick in identity theft crimes recently. This is a problem nationwide, and everyone needs to be aware. Sgt. Joseph Maccaquano of the Hopewell Township Police Department shared this important information on how to protect yourself.

What is identity theft? It's when someone uses your personal information for fraud or other crimes. It's most commonly used for theft.

There are a variety of methods used to steal someone's identity. Here are some common ones-

- Skimming – small electronic devices used to swipe credit cards to obtain personal information
- Phishing – e-mails sent from what appears to be a legitimate financial institution that requests account information and passwords
- Pretexting – phone calls received from what seem like legitimate financial institutions requesting personal information

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You can guard your identity by using preventative measures.

- Use private WiFi connections and updated anti-virus software on personal computers
- Always review billing and banking statements carefully
- Review credit reports regularly
- Do not provide social security numbers for anything unless you absolutely have to
- Never give out personal information on unsolicited phone calls, e-mails, mail, or other contact
- Shred, don't just throw away, credit card and other unsolicited offers you receive

If, despite all your efforts to protect yourself, you find yourself a victim of identity theft, there are a few steps you should take.

- Contact Hopewell Township Police and file a police report. Call 609-737-3100 or visit the PD at 201 Washington Crossing-Pennington Rd, Titusville.
- Report the incident to the three credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, TransUnion)
- Contact your creditors to flag or close your accounts, or to replace stolen cards
- Monitor your bank statements and keep a file documenting all financial losses due to the crime
- If a driver's license is stolen, report to the DMV
- If a passport is stolen or lost, contact the US State Department
- If your social security number was used fraudulently or the card is lost or stolen, contact the Social Security Administration

If you are uncertain whether a contact or request is fraudulent or not, always assume it is. Call the organization directly and ask if the information is needed and why.

More information, including contacts and more resources, can be found in the New Jersey State Police Identity Theft - Victim's Reference Guide, <https://www.nj.gov/njsp/tech/identity.html>



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