

Accomplishments of Mount Olive

2023 Accomplishments

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. Capital projects are back on track, staffing levels have been maintained and major private developments are underway.



As with any large organization, a significant amount of time was spent on human resources, hiring and training twenty-five new employees in various departments. In addition, three new contracts with the Mount Olive Township Police Departments were negotiated and the Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual was updated in accordance with our employment practices liability program. As we enter 2024, succession planning will be evaluated as many senior leadership roles are approaching retirement.

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. Next year will bring significant changes as we conclude the legislative review of our code book and implement the numerous updates.

While not as busy as prior years with capital improvements, much was still accomplished in 2023. Turkey Brook Park saw improvements with the rehabilitation of the tennis courts which are now striped for pickle ball along with resurfacing several parking lots. An outdoor fitness gym was also installed at Flanders Park and EV Charging Stations are now available at every public facility.

Long standing problems continue to be improved at Budd Lake with aquatic lake treatment as the season concluded with minimal algae blooms. In addition, the Township continued with a long-term project in the Cloverhill Development related to removing overgrown shade trees and replacing damaged sidewalks. The mitigation of the PFOA in the Pinecrest water system also took a major step forward as the DEP approved our permit and the treatment filtration system has been ordered. A national settlement litigation has been joined in order to recoup expenses associated with mitigation.

Our shared services continue to deliver as our contracting towns show confidence in our services by renewing their contracts and adding additional services. In 2023, a new shared service was started with Washington Township for plumbing subcode services bringing our total revenues to over \$700,000.

Over \$4.1 million 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 funding for a new Health Center, a purchase of a sanitation truck, and the disbursement of State aid for Health Department funding.

Finance Department

The Finance Department, which comprises the finance, collection, and assessment divisions, expects to approximate, if not increase, our healthy fund balances at the end of 2023. Moving into 2024 we are working diligently to keep property taxes as flat as possible and to maintain our utility budgets with no increases.

In the finance division, the 2022 audit was completed for the fifteenth year in a row with no audit recommendations. We also had no recommendations for the LOSAP audit, the JIF audit, and the arbitrage audit. We completed the best practice checklist satisfactorily to obtain our final allotment of state aid, nearing \$100,000, and we met our continuing disclosure requirements. We renegotiated our bank relationship to maximize interest and were able to take advantage of the healthy interest rates in the market to realize almost \$1.4 million in interest earnings. We implemented a time and attendance system upgrade through Kronos and a HR/ACA/Benefits upgrade through ADP allowing for computerized preparation and filing of the annual 1095 forms. We completed the annual COAH report, UCC report, accumulated absence report and fixed asset inventory. We also recently completed a \$4.2 million note sale which resulted in a premium to the Township of over \$40,000 with our AA+ rating. Finally, we migrated to a new budget preparation program to improve efficiency and provide more transparency to the public.

With respect to the tax assessment division, the Township billed over \$600,000 in revenue from added assessments. We resolved all County tax appeals resulting in zero refunds. For 2024, our property values are expected to grow by \$18 million. We continue to have the lowest number of pending state tax appeals, in comparison to similar Morris County towns.

In the collection division, we were responsible for collecting over \$118 million in property taxes, water and sewer rents and sewer assessment. Our tax collection rate will exceed the 2023 collection of 99.41%. We said goodbye to Rose Barsanti who retired after serving the Township well for 28 years and welcomed Judith O'Brien to the role of Tax Collector.

Police Department

The Mount Olive Township Police Department remains steadfast in our dedication to our community and to our [Mission](#). In addition, we remain committed in our endless pledge to preserve and emulate our Core Values: *Professionalism, Respect, Courtesy, Integrity, Dignity and Accountability*. The Mount Olive Township Police Department continues to put forth great effort into building and maintaining relationships with the community and providing police services in a manner that provides for a positive impact on quality of life within the Township.

In 2023 the police department recognized and sought to improve upon the services and resources available to people facing daily challenges with mental health crisis. Through great communication, effort, and teamwork we were able to secure funding through the Federal BJA Connect & Protect Grant which will be utilized to implement a joint response to calls by police and mental health clinicians.

The Police Department continues to maintain its own Communications Center. Callers to our dispatch center speak with highly trained, knowledgeable, and certified Communications Officers who are familiar with the community. This ensures prompt response by all emergency responders to critical incidents and routine calls for service. In addition, walk-in residents get to speak with a Dispatcher in-person 24/7/365 to address their concerns. This year the department upgraded the Communications Center's 911 and radio systems to begin the transition to be in compliance with the State's new NexGen 911 system. The Police Department is also in the process of seeking our first NJSACOP PSAP Accreditation for our Communications Center.

To date our [Support Services](#) Division has processed four hundred and nine (409) firearms permits and forty-five (45) concealed carry permit applications. Support Services is also responsible for maintaining several programs and initiatives aimed to connect with the community to build trust and legitimacy. For example, we continue to provide college students seeking a career in law enforcement with [Internship Program](#) opportunities. In addition the department maintains a [Ride-Along Program](#) for high school students who show an interest in policing. The police department continues to sponsor and participate in several community events, programs, and initiatives such as [National Night Out](#), [Coffee with a Cop](#), Bag for Hunger, Pack the Cruiser, Touch a Truck, George Ottavina Fishing Derby and [Keeping Seniors Safe](#). The police department also partnered with the Morris County Prosecutor's Office to host two DEA National Prescription Drug Takeback Days.

The police department maintains an excellent partnership with the Mount Olive Township School District and continues to collaborate with school administration and leadership to enhance safety, security and training for all school personnel and providing a dedicated Mount Olive Township Police Special Officer in the MOHS during school hours. Our [LEAD](#) officers also completed lessons in all four of our elementary schools throughout the year and many of our officers volunteered to read books again at several schools' Read Across America events.

The New Jersey Attorney General mandated the implementation of Body Worn Cameras in all NJ Police Departments. The Mount Olive Township Police Department is in full compliance with this requirement and all front-line uniformed police officers are presently equipped with body worn cameras. Of particular note, funding for this equipment was sought and acquired from state grants by the department for the purchase of each officers' initial units.

The Mount Olive Township Police Department continues to maintain its capability to respond to and investigate all incidents, offenses, and crimes. The Investigation Division investigated two hundred and one (201) cases. From January through November 30th, 2023, Mount Olive Police Officers made two hundred thirty (230) arrests; Thirty-four (34) of these for DWI and Six (6) for drug offenses. Officers conducted six thousand one hundred and sixty-two (6,162) motor vehicle stops, issued nine hundred and ninety-one (991) citations, and responded to eight hundred sixteen (816) traffic crashes.

Department of Public Works

In the Roads Department, another successful year of paving was accomplished by resurfacing over twenty-six (26) roadways and improved drainage in areas prone to flooding.

The Parks, Building and Grounds Department continued to address the original HVAC systems in the municipal building by replacing two units and is preparing for a new HVAC system in the Fleet Maintenance Garage.

In the Water and Sewer Department, engineering plans continue for the installation of water lines in the Pershing Estates Development and PFAS mitigation in the Pinecrest Water system. The Carlton Hills Water System and Cloverhill Sewer Treatment Plant were also rehabilitated.

The Sanitation Department continued with another successful town wide large item cleanup and had a successful first year of a shared service agreement with picking up sanitation for the Borough of Netcong.

The Fleet Department continues to handle all maintenance issues for township owned vehicles and held a successful public auction bringing in over \$80,000 in revenue.

Recreation Department

The Recreation Department was focused on the theme of *Inspire* by offering fourteen events, which included a concert in the park series and the following new events: Non-Profit Day, the George Ottavina Memorial Fishing Derby and the Any Who's Winterfest. Programs for children and adults also increased and included science, engineering, art, dance, fashion design, music, sports and much more. Summer brought camps in sports, music, film and a new Fun4All program series that included Slime Week. The Pirates Cove Splashpad continued to be popular with visits from over 36,000 guests. Administration also was awarded a grant for Flanders park

to add some intergenerational, inclusive activity centers, which will be installed in 2024.

2024's theme for events and programming is *Together!* Together, we all make our community stronger, inspiring, and fun, bringing out the best in each other. This year, we will all be working and playing together to make Mount Olive the best!

Health Department

The Health Department continues to be a leader among local health departments in the County. The Department applied for and received over \$700,000 in grant funding in 2023. With this, the Department continues to strengthen its resources; increasing its ability to respond to the needs of the community, as well as emergent public health threats. These resources have allowed the Department to link at-risk populations with services, institute a home-bound vaccination program, administer over 300 vaccinations, increase educational outreach, and disseminate over 6,100 disease prevention tools. Grant funding has also allowed the Health Department to return to their National Accreditation efforts. National Accreditation will ensure that the Department employs best practices in its delivery of service to the community and allow the Department to stay competitive in the public health space. The Health Department also initiated Lead-safe inspection and Flavored Vaping enforcement programs. The latter allows the Department to address the increasing presence of vaping units suspected of containing cannabis oil, resulting in the issuance of summons and fines.

IT Department

The IT department strives to promote security awareness among all employees through interactive training, educational courses, email security guidelines and best practices. To strengthen email security awareness, the township utilizes, at no cost, Morris County JIF's Cyber Risk Management Program. The program allows us to mitigate risk, enhance resilience & lower insurance premiums through various practices, such as simulated cybersecurity phishing attacks and mandatory online training.

Turkey Brook Park has recently upgraded its system to approximately 50 cameras, ensuring public safety and enhancing law enforcement surveillance. The cameras now provide coverage for many areas of the park, including maintenance garages, park fields, concession stands, exterior bathrooms, tot lots, park entrance/exit ways, and parking areas.

As part of our efforts to improve communication reliability, we recently installed a secondary fiber optic line dedicated to VoIP and internet services. The new redundant fiber line ensures that if one component or pathway fails, another is readily available to take its place, minimizing downtime and maintaining service and public safety for the residents of Mount Olive.

Planning Department

The Department prepared reports for 19 development matters for the Planning Board in 2023 bringing in a total of \$16,585 in application fees. Action by the Planning Board in 2023 included approval of a new residential development known as Continental Crossing with 494 residential units of which 394 will be market units consisting of single-family detached homes and townhomes. The remaining 100 units will be designated for low and moderate-income households distributed in eleven, two-story buildings. These affordable units will be credited towards the Township's affordable housing obligation. Phase I is expected to begin in 2024.

Approvals were granted to demolish the former BASF complex and construct a 585,000 sq. ft. warehouse facility at this location. A second warehouse facility just under 200,000 sq. ft. was also approved and is now under construction at the intersection of International Drive and Continental Drive.

A new 19,000 sq. ft. Kia sales and service facility to be built on vacant tract at the corner of Rt. 46 and Harris Lane and a 6,900 sq. ft. expansion for Johnson Dodge/Chrysler were also approved in 2023.

ITC Crossings shopping center, now known as The Gardens, received approval for a new restaurant building for Chipotle and Panda Express.

An amendment to the Township's master plan was prepared by the Township Planner with the Planning Board to propose a new R-8 zone district. The amendment was adopted in April; the ordinance to create the zone was enacted this past December. The new zone will enable the redevelopment of the former Cobblestone nursing home site with seven single-family dwellings, all of which will qualify for credit towards the Township's affordable housing obligation.

The Planning Department issued 294 Zoning Permits, collecting \$12,000 in related fees. Enforcement of the Township's zoning ordinance and property maintenance regulations resulted in the issuance of 70 violation notices. All were resolved except three which required Municipal Court action. All three ended with guilty pleas and fines imposed.

The Planning Dept. addressed 417 Open Public Record (OPRA) requests and processed a total of 38 Vacant, Abandoned and Foreclosed property registrations which generated \$23,750 in fees.

Construction Department

During the past year, the Construction Department has collected over \$690,000, issued over 1,300 construction permits and conducted over 4,800 inspections with the continued goal of bringing the best possible service to the residents, business owners and contractors of Mount Olive.

Fire Prevention

The Mount Olive Township Fire Marshal's Office enforces all NJ State Fire Codes for commercial and residential structures in the Township. The Fire Marshal's Office has completed over 1,800 Non-life and Life Hazard Use business inspections, and 665 residential inspections generating over \$306,000 in annual revenue.

The Fire Marshal's Office continues to provide services to Chester Borough, Hackettstown, and Allamuchy Township through our shared service agreements.

New fire safety programs will be rolled out for 2024 that would include Fire safety lectures and the Emergency Services Event to be held at Turkey Brook Park.

For 2023, the Fire Marshal's Office responded to more than 340 emergencies consisting of 58 fire investigations and 282 calls providing support to the Volunteer Fire & EMS Services.

Library

This past year was a stellar year for the library! We increased our programming for both kids and adults, expanded our offerings in our maker space room and had our best circulation numbers in 9 years with checkouts reaching nearly 150,000 items! Our "All Together Now" Summer Program was a great success, and we are closing out the year with our first ever Holiday Reading Raffle! All you need to do is check out a book for a chance to win!

The Friends of the M.O. Library generously provided funding in the amount of \$10,166 which supported our adult and children's summer reading programs, the museum passes for the community's use, Holiday programs as well as new window treatments for the Quiet Room. These monies were generated from their book sales throughout the year, membership dues, donations, and various fund-raising events.