



BOROUGH OF DUNELLEN

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Message by the Mayor Jason F. Cilento September 2020

First, I would like to begin this monthly message by welcoming back the students, educators, administrators, and school staff to the Dunellen School District. We had all hoped that this school year would find us greeting everyone in-person, but with the continued concern of COVID-19, we recognize and respect the Board of Education's decision to continue remote learning. Dunellen's teachers are professional educators and I have faith in their ability to make sure our students receive a quality and consistent education during these unprecedented times. I do believe the Board of Education's decision to go remote during the first marking period was made with the students' and their families', as well as the educators', administrators' and staffs' health in mind. I wish them all a great school year, starting this September 8th.

Second, I would like to update you on some of the projects that are taking place in the Borough and where we are at with them at this time, as well as the most updated voting information for the November 3rd General Election.

The Railroad Culvert Project

In 2010, the Federal Emergency Management Administration redrew the flood maps that set the flood plain elevations for Dunellen. In consequence, many additional properties were placed in a flood zone. We believe that their data and methodology was incorrect and that an injustice has been perpetrated on the property owners of Dunellen. Though the Borough argued for three years that FEMA was wrong, even enlisting the help of our congresspersons, we were unable to prevail.

In consultation with our engineers, the Borough determined that the best course of action would be to address the downstream flow of water in the various tributaries of the Bonygut Brook that run both above ground and within pipes through Dunellen. Over the past decades, silt has caused the water to rise in all the brooks, occasionally overflowing onto adjacent properties and inhibiting the passage of the water. When the water rises above the point where the stormwater pipes discharge into the brooks, there is nowhere for that water to go and it then backs up into the street. That is the source of the localized flooding at some of our intersections such as Prospect Avenue and Grove Street, Whittier Avenue and New Market Road, and near the Fire House. Because of various New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection regulations, we are prohibited from undertaking major dredging in these brooks.

With this situation in mind, we have instituted three culvert projects. Culverts are the pipes that go beneath roadways and carry the brook water underground. Two of the projects, the South Madison Avenue Culvert Project and the Pulaski Street Culvert Project are being done by Middlesex County

and are in the advanced planning and permit stages. The third project is a Borough project called the Supplementary Railroad Culvert Project or the Railroad Culvert Project.

This project generally consists of the construction of supplementary twin 72" diameter storm drainage culverts crossing the NJTRANSIT Raritan Valley Line including reinforced concrete headwalls, a reinforced concrete junction chamber with 72" flexible flanged end check valves, the installation of a pre-cast 12 foot by 4 foot box culvert, and other related improvements.

The Borough of Dunellen has received a grant through the NJDEP Office of Engineering and Construction for the improvements. To date, the design of the project has been completed; all permits have been acquired; approvals have been received from NJ Transit for occupancy of the Railroad Right of Way; and the Borough has successfully acquired all necessary easements for the construction of the project with the exception of one.

This drainage improvement project is anticipated to provide significant alleviation to the flooding conditions in this area of Dunellen, and the Borough is anxious to implement these improvements as soon as possible. The Borough intends to bid the project and commence construction as soon as the remaining easement is in place and the funding for the project is secured.

The Borough successfully obtained an easement from one commercial property owner whose land will be affected by this project. However, to date, we have not yet gained an easement from the other commercial property owner whose property is needed for the completion of this project. Thus, we have undertaken a formal appraisal of the value of acquiring the referenced easement, which appraisal shall be forthcoming in the near future. Ultimately, whether we are able to negotiate with the commercial property owner, or undertake litigation, in order to obtain the easement in question, we hope to have the easement in the immediate future so that we can then move forward with this much-needed culvert project.

Based upon the successful completion of all three culvert projects, and the consequent enhanced flow of Bonygut Brook tributary flow downstream, we will then have our engineers do a study of the flood plain elevation and submit our data to FEMA with a request to redraw the Dunellen flood maps.

Redevelopment:

Art Color: There have been a lot of moving parts related to the Art Color development, now known as Dunellen Stations. The developer has been working on planning the sewer infrastructure which has required multi-party stakeholders to be involved. They are currently working on water provisions for the proper piping throughout the property and for the North Washington Avenue pump station. In addition, the Borough is working on an ordinance for police and traffic safety enforcement for the premise. While it may look as though the property remains empty, a lot is happening to ensure the project begins construction and the benefits of the development assist in the Borough's revitalization.

Capital Projects:

Grove Street: At a Special Council Meeting held on August 26th, a contract was awarded to JADS Construction for the paving and road improvement of Grove Street from New Market Road to Prospect Avenue. This part of the project will begin work in the very near future, and we are in discussions with both our engineers and Middlesex County to pave the section of Grove Street from

Prospect Avenue past Gertrude Terrace and on to the intersection at Madison Avenue where Grove turns into South Avenue.

Railroad Avenue: At the July 6th Council Meeting, a contract was awarded to Stilo Paving and Excavating to undertake an emergency repair of a broken sewer line under Railroad Avenue. This work should begin soon.

South Madison Avenue: All plans for this project are complete and we are now awaiting approval from the New Jersey Department of Transportation. Once we receive that we will bid the project. We hope for an autumn start date.

November 3rd General Election:

Due to Governor Phil Murphy's Executive Order No. 177, there will be some significant changes for our General Election on November 3rd. There will be a single polling place at Lincoln Middle School. All registered voters will be sent a mail-in ballot. These ballots can be returned by mail or can be dropped off in one of about 20 drop-boxes throughout Middlesex County. These locations will be on our web site and posted on for public view at the Clerk's Office when they are determined. The mail-in ballots can also be returned to the Lincoln Middle School polling place. At the polling place, the only machine will be for disabled voters. All other voters will be able to vote by Provisional Ballot. If you have received a mail-in ballot, but choose instead to vote by Provisional Ballot, you can do that. The voter registration deadline for the General Election is October 13th (21 days before the election). Voter applications can be obtained at the Clerk's Office or on our website: http://www.dunellen-nj.gov/departments/municipal_clerk/elections.php

Please know that I and the Borough Council are always here to listen to your comments and concerns as well as answer any questions you may have about the Borough of Dunellen. All council meetings are held in the Municipal Council Chambers, on the first and third Monday of the month, located at 355 North Avenue, Dunellen. Meetings commence at 7:00 p.m., unless otherwise noted. Information on these meetings can be found on our Borough website: www.dunellen-nj.gov or you can call our Borough Clerk/Borough Administrator's office at (732) 968-3033, ext. 3 for more information on meetings.

Thank you for your time in this matter.

Yours very truly,



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