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Message from the Mayor
Jason F. Cilento
March 2023

In this March Message from the Mayor, I share information about the Strongest Town Contest, volunteering in Dunellen, the NJRPA award for the late Laura Ruskuski, newly enacted ordinances, and more.

Dunellen and the Strongest Town Contest: Dunellen was one of 16 towns in the United States (and the only town in New Jersey!) to be invited to participate in the national Strongest Town Contest, which is offered through the Minnesota based non-profit organization Strong Towns. The annual March-Madness style contest spotlights and celebrates communities that are continuously becoming more resilient and prosperous through bottom-up action. During the initial Sweet Sixteen round of the contest, Dunellen faced off against Brattleboro, a 32 square mile town in southeast Vermont. People from around the country were asked to read about both towns and cast their votes for a winner. While our competitor won more votes and advanced to the Elite Eight round, we were humbled by the invitation to participate in this competitive contest. The Dunellen community is becoming stronger by adopting efficient processes and strengthening commitments that build enduring resilience and long-term prosperity. During the initial nomination process for the contest, it was asked, “What is your favorite thing about Dunellen?” It was an easy answer: the people. The contributions of the residents, business owners, municipal staff and supportive organizations show the love they have for this small town - they go above and beyond in supporting the community’s goals. We wish the remaining contestants the best of luck in their journeys and look forward to learning who will be named 2023’s Strongest Town, which will be announced on April 14 at www.strongtowns.org.

Volunteering in Dunellen! Many of Dunellen’s accomplishments can be attributed to the dedication, enduring effort and expertise of the countless volunteers who serve our community. If you are interested in becoming involved, now is the time to take the first step. Complete the Dunellen Borough Volunteer Application! There are two ways to apply: complete a paper application, which is available at the Clerk’s Office in Borough Hall; or apply online at www.tinyurl.com/DunellenVolunteerApplication. Based on your area of interest and skills/qualifications, applicants will be considered for appointments to vacant seats on Borough committees, commissions and boards. For more information, please email me at: jcilentto@dunellen-nj.gov.

Volunteer!

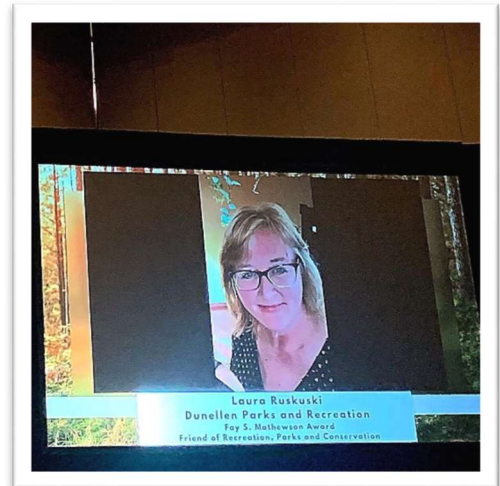


New Jersey Recreation and Park Association

Honors Laura Ruskuski: The late Laura Ruskuski (top picture) was awarded the Fay S. Mathewson Award at the 2023 New Jersey Recreation and Park Association's annual conference in Atlantic City on March 15. Her children Alex and Kate Ruskuski, mother Joan Bayer, and dear friend Dina Fornataro-Healey (bottom picture) were present to accept the award, which recognizes a "friend of recreation, parks and conservation." It is given to those who have an established a record of rendering outstanding service supportive of recreation, parks, or conservation. As a long-time member of the Recreation Commission, Laura's dedication to the health and wellness of the people of Dunellen was unwavering. She was an active supporter in each and every Recreation event over the years. Jim Brennan, Chair of the Recreation Commission, reflected on Laura's legacy and stated simply, "Dunellen is better because of Laura."

Newly Enacted Ordinances: Following are some recently enacted ordinances:

1. **2023-01. Amended Chapter 269, Traffic.** Intended to limit idling of vehicles to three minutes in most circumstances in order to limit noise and noxious gas fumes. Owners of properties in non-residential areas where trucks often idle are affirmatively directed to post prohibition signs.
2. **2023-03. Amended Chapter 26, Fire Department.** Revises the Code section covering the Dunellen Fire Department, modernizing it for language and changed circumstances.
3. **2023-04. Supplemental Firehouse bond.** Authorizes \$4,500,000 to cover additional needed costs to rebuild the Firehouse that burnt down in October 2021.
4. **2023-05. Amended Chapter 217, Property Maintenance, adding a new section for Lead-Based Paint Inspection.** Based on a New Jersey State requirement, this ordinance authorizes inspections for lead in rental dwelling units constructed before 1978 (with certain exceptions). Lead is a highly toxic metal that may cause a range of health problems, especially in young children. When lead is absorbed into the body, it can cause damage to the brain and other vital organs, like the kidneys, nerves, and blood.
5. **2023-06. Bond ordinance for purchase of 264 New Market Road.** \$950,000 is authorized to acquire St. Luke's Lutheran Church for possible use as a new Borough Hall. The funds will be used for the purchase of the building and property and for associated expenses such as title search, structural examination, building inspection and an environmental assessment.



6. **2023-07. New Chapter 130 to the Dunellen Municipal Code, “Business and Insurance Registry.”** Based upon a New Jersey State requirement that all businesses carry \$300,000 of liability insurance, this Code Chapter will also require businesses and property owners to register their businesses with the Municipal Clerk. This will enable the borough to more accurately know the kinds of businesses in town which will greatly assist the Administrative Offices and the Dunellen Downtown Management Organization in promoting our downtown.
7. **2023-08. New Chapter 270, “Vacant and Abandoned Properties and Storefronts.”** Abandoned buildings and vacant storefronts are a blight on our community. This new Code chapter will require property owners and businesses to register their vacant properties or empty storefronts and through the annual registration fee for such vacant/abandoned properties encourage the owners to rent the storefront or rehabilitate the property and put it back on the market.
8. **2023-10. Amended Chapter 96-14. Hours of Sale for alcohol.** Currently, restaurants and social clubs such as the American Legion, Knights of Columbus, or Veterans of Foreign Wars, could not serve customers on Sundays until 12:00 noon. This amended ordinance now enables such establishments to serve alcohol at 10:00 a.m. on Sundays. This will enable them to host brunches and parties earlier in the day which will promote business and economic development in downtown Dunellen.

DPW Yard New Hours: For your convenience, the DPW Yard and Recycling Center on Hall Street will remain open until 6 PM on Wednesdays from April through mid-November.

Kline Place Road and Sewer Improvement Project: CME Associates, which serves as the Borough’s engineer, continues work on the design of road and sewerage system improvements on the project.

		Monday	7 AM-2 PM
		Tuesday	7 AM-2 PM
		Wednesday	7 AM- 6 PM
		Thursday	7 AM-2 PM
		Friday	7 AM-2 PM
		Saturday	8 AM-2 PM
		Sunday	CLOSED

PSE&G Street Paving Project: The PSE&G mill and pave project is anticipated to begin the week of April 10, weather permitting. The streets scheduled for improvements are: 800 block of First Street; 800 block of Dunellen Avenue; 700 & 800 blocks of Front Street, 200 block of Orange Street and Front Street from Madison Avenue.

New Jersey American Water Project: The NJAW water project is scheduled for the summer and includes the removal and replacement of water mains, water services and new fire hydrants on the following streets: North Washington Avenue (from First Street to North Avenue); Penfield Place (South Washington Avenue to Maple Avenue); and Maple Avenue. NJAW will mill and pave the affected streets approximately 60-90 days after the work. More information will be announced in the coming months.

Thank you for your time in reading this month's Message from the Mayor. I am always available to listen to your ideas and concerns. My Borough cell phone number is (732) 882-4551 and my email is jcilento@dunellen-nj.gov.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason F. Cilento", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jason F. Cilento, Mayor
Borough of Dunellen