

Township of Hopewell

SPRING - SUMMER, 2004

REPORT

Volume 3, Issue 1

2004 TOWNSHIP BUDGET

The proposed 2004 municipal budget is \$15.7 million, an increase of \$682,000 over the 2003 budget of \$15.04 million. 2004 spending increases in the budget were limited to 4.5%, cutting the rate of spending increases in the previous two years by more than half (9.6% increase in 2002 and 9.8% increase in 2003.)

To the extent possible, departmental spending was held at 2003 levels. State mandates and contractual requirements caused some mandatory spending increases for which offsetting reductions could not be found. Examples are the public works and white collar union contracts and new storm water regulations.

While spending was reduced by 2% for the budget category General Government, spending for three other large categories, Public Safety, Streets and Roads, and Legal increased substantially (8% for Public Safety, 16% for Streets and Roads, and 50% for Legal.) These three categories make up about \$590,000 of the total \$682,000 (or 86%) of the total spending increase from 2003 to 2004. The increase in Debt Service

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TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETINGS HAVE CHANGED

The Township Committee has moved its regular meetings to the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month. The starting time is still 7:00 p.m. Agendas for the meetings are posted the day before the meeting on the Township web site: HopewellTwp.org, and are posted on the bulletin board in the lobby of the Municipal Building. The agenda packet is sent to the library. All regular meetings of the Township Committee are televised live on cable Channel 95. The tapes of the meetings are shown on Channel 95 at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

A new type of "working" meeting has been established and it takes place at the Municipal Building at 5:00 p.m. on the first Monday of the month (or Tuesday, if Monday is a holiday). This meeting focuses on reviewing agenda items and issues to determine when they are ready to be listed on the agenda for action at the regular meeting. The schedule for all Township Committee meetings can be viewed by clicking on the "Calendar" at web-site listed above. All Township Committee meetings and Township board, committees and commission meetings are open to the public.

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spending was held to \$32,000 or about 1%.

On the income side, state aid increased just over 1%, offset by a reduction in revenues generated by Township operations of 1.8%. Budgeted grants dropped from 2003 to 2004 by almost 90% while interest income was reduced by 21%. Grants usually come sporadically during the year and not necessarily before the budget is introduced.

The 2004 budget was designed to use less surplus to protect future years against tax rate inflation. Total surplus used is \$2.5 million or \$709,000--22% less than used in the 2003 budget. Basically, increases in mandated and contractual spending, along with the decision to restore the recommended reserves, necessitate a 6.5-cent increase in the municipal tax rate. This is an increase from 30 to 36.5 cents per \$100 dollars of valuation. The impact of this municipal tax increase is as follows:

Assessed <u>Value</u>	Tax Increase <u>Impact</u>
\$200,000	\$130
\$300,000	\$195
\$400,000	\$260
\$500,000	\$325

2004 Hopewell Township Budget Summary

Budget Category	2003 Budget	2004 Budget	\$ Difference	% Difference
General Government	\$2,499,962	\$2,446,451	-\$53,511	-2.1%
Street and Roads	\$1,297,604	\$1,508,177	\$210,573	16.2%
Public Safety	\$2,743,010	\$2,996,333	\$253,323	9.2%
Health and Welfare	\$248,140	\$299,341	\$51,201	20.6%
Insurance	\$196,000	\$311,000	\$115,000	58.7%
Employee Benefits	\$1,673,000	\$1,782,674	\$109,674	6.6%
Legal	\$311,664	\$467,913	\$156,249	50.1%
Legal & Snow Storm Charge	\$138,335	\$186,000	\$47,665	34.5%
Master Plan Sp. Def. Charge	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$0	0.0%
Planning & Zoning	\$343,022	\$325,944	-\$17,078	-5.0%
Engineering	\$105,000	\$90,000	-\$15,000	-14.3%
Interlocal Agreements	\$780,145	\$811,573	\$31,428	4.0%
Grants	\$491,976	\$55,418	-\$436,558	-88.7%
Capital Improvement Deposit	\$100,000	\$106,000	\$6,000	6.0%
Solid Waste & Recycling	\$99,000	\$154,000	\$55,000	55.6%
Other Expenses	\$183,196	\$172,119	-\$11,077	-6.0%
Debt	\$2,398,959	\$2,431,373	\$32,414	1.4%
Reserve for Tax Collection	\$1,337,169	\$1,484,061	\$146,892	11.0%
Total Township Budget	\$15,046,182	\$15,728,377	\$682,195	4.5%

COUNTY ORDERS PROPERTY REVALUATION

On March 10, 2004, the Mercer County Board of Taxation approved an order for the Revaluation for Hopewell Township to be implemented for Tax Year 2006. The order specifies that the revaluation be for all properties so that each property bears its “full, equal and just share of the taxes”.

The County Board of Taxation has the responsibility to review the uniformity and accuracy of property assessments in each Mercer County municipality in accordance with established standards set by state statute. The County has determined that overall, the ratio of assessed property value to true value has decreased to 72% throughout Hopewell Township. The revaluation order directs the Township to bring all properties up to 100% of true value by 2006.

The Township Tax Assessor has recommended a plan to comply with the revaluation order and the Township will be requesting proposals, or bids, from qualified revaluation firms. The Township Committee is mandated to appropriate the necessary funding for the revaluation project.

Property owners will be contacted as part of the revaluation process. First, the revaluation staff will be making an appointment with the property owner to inspect the property. After this, the owner will receive a notice of the new assessed value. The property owner may arrange for a meeting to discuss the new value. More information will be available over the next few months. The last municipal wide revaluation took place in 1995.

What is a Revaluation?

A revaluation is a program undertaken by a municipality to appraise all real property within the taxing district according to its full and fair value.

What is Meant by Full and Fair Value?

Full and fair value is the price at which the tax assessor believes a property would sell at a fair and bona fide sale by a private contract on October 1 of the pretax year. The sale must be between a willing buyer and a willing seller.

POLICE DEPARTMENT FORMS NOW ON-LINE

Go to HopewellTwp.org and select “Forms” to print out:

- Alarm Registration Form
- Business Registration Form
- Home Security Check Form
- Police Department Employment Application

RECENTLY ENACTED

Pet Waste Removal on Public or Private Property Requirements Adopted

This addition to the animal control ordinance was adopted by the Township Committee in March to protect the public's health, safety and welfare by preventing needless health hazards caused by pet wastes on land within the Township. Any person owning or in charge of a pet which soils, defiles, defecates or commits any such nuisance is responsible for immediately removing all waste deposited by their pet, in a sanitary manner. Accumulation of pet waste upon private property is not allowed if it emits a noticeable odor, attracts insects or rodents and/or becomes a source of pollution.

In the event of a violation on private property, a complaint is only to be filed by the owner of such property. In the event of such a violation occurring on public property, thoroughfare, walkways or parks, a complaint may be filed by any witness to such an act. A property owner may enforce this section by filing a complaint in Municipal Court.

State bans cell phone use while driving July 1, 2004

This new law signed by the Governor applies to non-emergency use of hand-held cell phones. Enforcement by State or local law enforcement officers is to be accomplished only as a secondary action when the driver has been pulled over for a traffic violation or another offense. The penalties for violations may range from \$100 to \$250. No motor vehicle points or automobile insurance eligibility points would be assessed for a violation of this law. The law is effective July 1, 2004.

Tax Deductions and Exemptions

There are property tax deductions and/or tax exemptions which are allowed for the following citizens by State law:

1. Seniors fulfilling specific eligibility requirements.
2. Veterans who are 100% disabled or their surviving spouses.
3. Veterans who have been honorably discharged and served during time of war.

If you think that you might qualify for either of these deductions, contact the Tax Assessor's office at 737-0605 and you will be given the proper forms to complete and file.

Reduce your sewer bill with a second meter

ELSA sewer service area residents are paying the sewer bill based on their water usage. The charge is currently \$9.60 for every 1,000 gallons of water that is metered. Those who use a substantial amount of water for swimming pools or watering shrubbery and the lawn may want to consider investing in a second meter to measure outside water usage. Once a second meter is installed, the outside water usage flow can be deducted from the total flow on which the sewer billing is based.

Purchase of the water meter and installation of the second meter after obtaining a plumbing permit from the Township Construction office can total \$200 to \$300 depending on the plumbing required. However the first 20,000 - 30,000 gallons of water not billed can cover these costs. Those interested may obtain the application for the permit by calling the Construction Office at 737-0612.



2004 Road, Sidewalk, Traffic Calming and Drainage Program

CHIP SEAL

- Bayberry Road
- Church Road
- Dunwald Lane
- Fiddlers Creek Road
- Goat Hill Road
- Harbourton Pleasant Valley Road

- Hopewell Amwell Road
- Mine Road
- Minnietown Road
- Mountain Church Road
- Stony Brook Road
- Valley Road
- Van Dyke Road

OVERLAY

- Apache Drive
- Blackfoot Road
- Cherokee Drive
- Cheyenne Drive
- Diverty Road
- Sioux Road
- Skyview Road
- Van Dyke Road (from 654 to 518)
- Skyfield Drive
- Scotch Road (from Pennington-Titusville to 546)

SIDEWALKS

Dublin Road Sidewalk Extension

Independence Park Pathway

TRAFFIC CALMING

Denow Road

DRAINAGE

Indian Village

MEETING ON 2004 ROAD PROGRAM

Considering residents as stakeholders in any public works capital improvement project, the Township Engineer invited affected residents to review and offer input on the projects listed in the 2004 Capital Program this year. After receiving questions and comments, an informational meeting was held. The affected residents who attended had the opportunity to review each project and any changes made as a result of input received. The result was a success in that several paving projects were deferred until proper drainage could be installed. Design changes were made in the balance of projects that potentially saved taxpayers thousands of dollars in construction costs.

Hopewell Township Wastewater Advisory Committee Presents a New Proposal for Wastewater Management

On Tuesday, May 18, 2004 at the Hopewell Valley Central High School, a special meeting was held so that the Wastewater Advisory Committee could make a presentation of various alternatives for wastewater management. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Environmental Science of Rutgers University, the Stony Brook Millstone Watershed and the Township Engineer, Bond Counsel and Attorney took part in the presentation.

In summary these points were covered:

- Groundwater Quality Improvement
- Aquifer Recharge
- Use of Alternate Technologies
- Best Practices for Septic System Maintenance
- Well Water Testing

The Wastewater Advisory Committee's proposal suggested that a new "Environmental Utility" be created within the Township. All homeowners with septic systems would be participants in this new utility and would be required to pay an annual fee. In return, the Township would take responsibility for the cleaning, maintenance and repair of each septic system. A substantial subsidy would be available for septic replacements. The goals of the proposal are to improve groundwater quality; to allow continued use of well water; to relieve homeowners of the burden of septic maintenance, repair and replacement; to provide a means by which the Township can collect accurate data about the condition of each septic system; and to more clearly determine whether sewers are appropriate for a neighborhood. Residents with sewers would not be subject to the to the new utility fee.

If you are interested in learning more about this proposal, please check cable Channel 95 for the video of the presentation that will be shown on upcoming Sundays at 7:00 p.m.

Hopewell Township Employees Recognized

Hopewell Township Employees of the Year

These employees were nominated for outstanding performance on the job during 2003:

Peter Van Hise, Public Works General Foreman
Michael Toth, Patrol Officer
Robert English, Environmental Health Specialist

Mercer Vicinage Service Quality Improvement Committee Award

Elaine Smith, Assistant Deputy Court Clerk, received
the Certificate of Recognition for assisting a soldier assigned to Iraq.

Spring & Summer Services

Free Mulch and Compost

Free mulch chips and limited amount of compost are available across the road from the range at the Hopewell Township municipal complex. First come, first served!

Freon Appliance Pickup

Appliances with freon are collected on the last Thursday of the month. The cost is \$20.00 per appliance. This is a non-refundable fee. The collection dates are as follows:

May 27, 2004
June 24, 2004
July 29, 2004
August 26, 2004
September 30, 2004

Brush and Bulky Waste Collection

In June, the Hopewell Township Public Works Department will be conducting the final collection of brush and bulky waste for the summer. Collection will resume in September, 2004. To schedule pick up of bulky waste or for questions, call the Public Works Department 737-4310 between the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Residents must schedule their final bulk waste pickup by calling the above number. If this is the FIRST pickup after September 1, 2003, there will be no charge. If not, the charge is \$10 per pickup.

No phone call is required to schedule brush collection. Simply put out brush near the curb or drainage ditch. It is illegal to place it in the street.

Brush and Bulky Waste Pickup Schedule

- Zone 1 Monday, June 7, 2004
- Zone 2 Monday, June 14, 2004
- Zone 3 Monday, June 21, 2004

DO NOT place any brush or bulky waste out for collection in July and August.

Collection will resume in September.

- Zone 1 Tuesday, September 7, 2004
- Zone 2 Monday, September 13, 2004
- Zone 3 Monday, September 20, 2004

Hopewell Township Report is a newsletter issued by Hopewell Township, 201 Washington Crossing-Pennington Road, Titusville, NJ 08650.

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Comments, corrections, questions, stories or reports? Volunteer Reporters are welcome. Contact Chris Smeltzer at 737-0605 or by mail: 201 Washington Crossing - Pennington Road, Titusville, NJ 08560

or by email: mail@HopewellTwp.org



201 Washington Crossing - Pennington Road
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2004 Township Committee

Vanessa Sandom, Mayor

David Sandahl, Deputy Mayor

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