



*"Crossroads of the
American Revolution"*

2022- Q3

The Town Crier

Hopewell Township Newsletter

From the Mayor- Tax Rate Decreases in 2022



Inflation is hitting all of us hard right now. Hopewell Township is not immune to record-setting fuel prices, increasing medical expenses, and the rising costs of materials. Yet, despite these financial challenges, homeowners in Hopewell Township saw a 2% DECLINE in the total property tax rate in 2022, the first decline since 2007. The dollar amount of the decrease will

depend on a home's assessed value, but for reference, for a home valued at \$500,000, total property taxes will go down by \$330.

The tax rate is impacted by several factors. The tax levy (i.e., the amount of money that needs to be raised by property taxes to support the budget) is set by each governing body. It is important, and it is often the sole focus of attention when it comes to property taxes. However, also critical is the number of commercial taxpayers in the Township (often referred to as "ratables"). The responsibility of attracting and retaining these ratables here in Hopewell Township falls to the Hopewell Township Committee.

Because of rising costs for things like healthcare, materials, and fuel, and the need to give fair raises to employees, it is nearly impossible to implement a tax levy decrease, especially in very responsible, lean budgets like the municipal budget in Hopewell Township. In fact, this year, the total tax levy went up for the school district, and marginally for the municipality. However, when there are more commercial taxpayers to help absorb an increase, less of it will fall to residential taxpayers. When

commercial entities pay an increasing portion of the total levy, even if the levy increases, the tax rate will go down, and residents pay less in taxes. That is what happened in Hopewell Township in 2022.

The Hopewell Township Committee has been working hard over the last several years to bring more commercial ratables to the Township and to improve the health and value of existing commercial and residential properties. You may have read my article in the last Town Crier about the revitalization of the former Bristol Myers Squibb site, now known as the Princeton West Innovation Campus. Attracting these new tenants and pharmaceutical companies to Hopewell Township is a key component of our plan to help reduce property taxes in Hopewell Township. It takes careful planning and negotiation to attract new businesses while also protecting our environment and open space. The Township Committee and dedicated Township professional staff have been working for years to make this a reality for taxpayers.

While this is great news for 2022, our work certainly is not over. We will continue to look for creative ways to reduce property taxes for Hopewell Township residents, while still meeting the needs of our residents and treating our employees fairly in the face of rising costs. This long-range planning includes continuing to reduce debt, finding new sources of municipal revenue like PILOT agreements and cannabis receipts, and continuing to attract new commercial ratables to the Township to reduce our dependence on residential property taxes. We are on a positive, responsible fiscal path in Hopewell Township, and we will work hard to stay on this path and keep property taxes moving in this positive direction.

Courtney Peters-Manning, Hopewell Township Mayor
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Taking Steps to Enforce Weight Limits on Route 579

Trucks weighing more than four tons are prohibited from traveling on County Route 579 (also known as Bear Tavern Road, Trenton-Harbourton Road and Harbourton-Rocktown Road) except for local deliveries. As the road is often used as a shortcut to Hunterdon County and points north, there is a temptation to skirt the restrictions.

There have been an increasing number of complaints about truck traffic on Route 579. “The Police Department has seen an increase in stops of trucks,” said Hopewell Township Police Chief James Rosso.

“The number of traffic summonses officers have issued to overweight trucks on County Route 579 has nearly doubled when comparing the first 9 months of 2022 to 2021.” Chief Rosso noted that when asked, drivers say they were following their GPS directions. He added that Ewing Township is also experiencing increased truck complaints.

The Police Department, Township staff, and the Township Committee have worked together to review ways to limit overweight truck traffic. We are approaching the problem in three ways.

First, the Township is pursuing improved signage. Chief Rosso met with the Mercer County Department of Transportation and as a result the County Engineer will prepare a plan for placement of new truck restriction and enforcement signs at four locations. These are Bear Tavern Road in Ewing near I-295, Washington Crossing-Pennington Road (eastbound and westbound) before the intersection of Route 579, Lambertville-Hopewell Road (eastbound and westbound) before the intersection of Route 579, and Harbourton-Rocktown Road southbound before the intersection of Route 579. In addition, a sign will be

placed on Route 579 directly across from Janssen Pharmaceuticals, directing truck traffic southbound towards I-295.

Second, Committee Member David Chait reached out to GPS providers to see if they could be a part of the solution. Chief Rosso met with the County’s Geographic Information Systems specialist who handles digital mapping and provides roadway information to GPS providers. The specialist will confirm that commercial GPS providers have the roadway restrictions for Route 579.



Third, Chief Rosso met with local businesses, including Janssen Pharmaceuticals, and asked them to remind their drivers of the weight restrictions on Route 579. All have agreed to do so.

“These mitigation measures will not completely solve all of the overweight truck traffic, but it will hopefully reduce the volume of trucks,” said Chief Rosso. While the mitigation efforts are being put in place, the Police Department will continue increased patrols on Route 579 and will use the sign board to remind truckers of the restrictions.

Michael Ruger, Hopewell Township Deputy Mayor, mruger@hopewelltwp.org

“No Knock” Ordinance Protects the Safety and Privacy of Township Residents and Businesses

New “Do-Not-Solicit” registry allows Township residents to opt out of commercial peddling and solicitation activities and helps prevent fraud.



The Hopewell Township Committee is always listening to the concerns of Township residents and we strive to be as actionable and responsive as possible. The most recent example of this is the recent “No Knock” ordinance adopted in September.

During the summer, we saw an increase in resident outreach regarding door-to-door commercial sales, also

known as commercial peddling or solicitation. In response, the Township Committee, in conjunction with Police Chief Rosso and our hardworking Township Professionals, introduced a “No Knock” ordinance that addresses these concerns and further protects the safety and privacy of Township residents and businesses.

There are several components to this ordinance, which address both resident and business concerns.

First and foremost, this ordinance establishes a Hopewell Township “Do-Not-Solicit” registry that allows Township residents and businesses to opt out of commercial peddling and solicitation activities. Once on the registry, no

commercial peddlers or solicitors are allowed to knock on your door. Furthermore, this ordinance establishes financial penalties for failure to comply.

Residents and businesses are also able to obtain a sign that can be placed in your primary entrance that indicates you are on the registry. As a note, however, a sign is not needed. Simply adding yourself to the registry ensures no one can solicit at your home or business.

The ordinance also provides an updated framework for how commercial peddlers and solicitors obtain permits with the Township. This includes several safety measures, such as background checks and fingerprinting, as well as set hours and additional rules.

There are exemptions to this ordinance. They include charitable organizations, religious purposes, political



candidates, exempt firefighters, and honorably discharged military personnel, each of which has its own separate licensing procedure.

The ordinance was introduced at the September 6th Township Committee Meeting and fully adopted at the Township Committee Meeting on September 19th.

Overall, this ordinance protects Township residents and businesses from potential fraud and protects your safety and privacy, while also providing a clear path for businesses to operate within the Township.

We are grateful to residents who have spoken up on this issue. We encourage residents and business owners to reach out with any concerns you have about issues regarding Hopewell Township.

David Chait, Hopewell Township Committee Member, dchait@hopewelltwp.org

Fighting to Keep Hopewell Township Green & Affordable

I've talked in previous newsletters about the Committee's efforts to make Hopewell Township more affordable and the actions we're taking now and for the future to lower taxes. This work culminated in a 2% decrease in the overall tax rate this year for Hopewell Township residents.

Today, I'd like to share our progress on another front – Keeping Hopewell Township green. Our Township is flanked by rich farmlands, the Sourland Mountains to the north, and the federally designated Wild and Scenic Delaware River to the west. This gives rise to the rural character and sense of place cherished by residents and admired by visitors.

To protect the natural resources of the Township, including limited groundwater and critical habitat for threatened and endangered species, we have worked together with non-profit land preservation groups, the County and State to preserve open space and farmland across Hopewell Valley for future generations. This includes acquiring land contiguous to other

protected lands so that we can create trail linkages, and creating space for both active and passive recreation. Since 2004, we have increased the total Open Space and Recreation Areas (including conservation easements and preserved farms) by 54% to 16,400 acres at the end of 2021. This includes preserving 1218 acres of open space and farmland in just the last three years! And lands dedicated to recreation, open space and conservation now total 43% of the Township.

But our work to protect the environment and the Township's rural character does not stop with preservation. Hopewell Township has also put in place ordinances that: 1) protect stream corridors with enhanced vegetated buffers that improve water quality; 2) require the replacement of trees when existing trees need to be removed; and 3) limit development to areas of the Township where there is access to sewer infrastructure and sufficient water resources. Over the past year, we also passed new Storm Water Management guidelines that will help reduce run-off during big storms

like Hurricanes Henri and Ida and promote groundwater recharge. These guidelines include enhanced limits on non-pervious pavement coverage as well as next generation approaches for capturing storm water. Additionally, our Environmental Commission and Planning Board thoroughly review proposals for new construction, and focus on enhancing environmental and ground water protections.

In the years ahead, we will build on this foundation as we continue our efforts to keep Hopewell Township green and affordable.

Kevin D. Kuchinski, Township Committee Member and Financial Liaison, kkuchinski@hopewelltwp.org



Hopewell Valley Senior Center Has a Lot to Offer



The Hopewell Valley is a caring & compassionate community. The Senior Center serves as a gathering place for seniors to meet and greet their long-time neighbors and make new friends. The Hopewell Township Committee and staff are dedicated to making every effort to keep our seniors engaged in activities.

The Senior Center offers interactive activities, card games, and Mahjongg. They offer a variety of health, fitness, and wellness classes multiple times a week, such as Healthy Bones and Chair Yoga. Classes like Artist's Choice or flower arranging classes help initiate or enhance individuals' artistic skills. Birthday Breakfast and Coffee with the Cops are some social activities offered at the center. In addition, informational lecture series and book discussions are available. The computer technology learning classes are offered in collaboration with neighboring townships for a nominal fee, and transportation is provided.

The Hopewell Valley Senior Center is also a location for Mercer County's nutrition program for the elderly. Research has shown that healthy eating and exercises play a critical



role in preventing and reducing common chronic conditions such as hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes. The Hopewell Valley Senior Center provides access to healthy meals and an opportunity for social connection, which supports older adults' physical, mental, and social well-being. On average 10 to 20 meals are served to individuals from Monday-Friday at 11:20 am. A qualified nutritionist specifically plans each meal to provide balanced nutrition. Any individual who is at least 60 years old and their spouse (regardless of age), any Mercer County resident with a disability, anyone volunteering in the program, and the personal care aides of program participants can take advantage of this service. To participate in the program, residents must register by calling 609-989-6650. The suggested donation is \$1 per meal. Research has shown that healthy eating and exercise play a critical role in preventing and reducing common chronic conditions such as hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis and helps encourage active aging.

Please visit Hopewell Township's website for more details: <https://www.hopewelltwp.org/SeniorServices> or call or call Senior Services Coordinator Ms. Randi Malkiewicz at 609-537-0236 to take advantage of the activities offered at the Senior Center!



I encourage all eligible community members to visit the Hopewell Township website to take advantage of the activities offered at the Senior Center!

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



RULES:

Hopewell Township residents only

Images can be from anytime in 2022

No more than 6 pictures per person

Due by 10-31-22 to rholley@hopewelltwp.org

Questions? Call 609-537-0261

Deadline is October 31!

Chip Sealing & Micro Paving Extends Road Life and Saves Tax Dollars

Hopewell Township is responsible for maintaining over 144 miles of roads. This year the Township has appropriated over \$4.5 million for repair and maintenance. We are always looking for ways to ensure that our roads are well maintained while balancing costs. Chip sealing and micro paving are two pavement preservation techniques that play a key part in Hopewell Township's road maintenance strategy. These technologies extend the pavement life-cycle without major reconstruction and thus are cost-efficient means to extend the life of this valuable asset. Nearly six miles of road can be chip sealed, and four miles of road micro paved for the cost of milling and paving one mile.

Hopewell Township uses three pavement maintenance methods. The most expensive is milling and paving. Milling and paving operations include removing 2 inches or more of the road surface and paving it to its original grade. Subbase repairs and drainage work are done simultaneously since milling and paving life expectancy is 15- 20 years. Milling and paving operations can cause several days of traffic disruptions and cost around \$15.73 per square yard.

There are more cost-effective alternatives. The first alternative is chip sealing, which consists of spraying a thin film of heated liquid asphalt on the road surface, followed by applying small stone aggregate, also known as chips. The chips are compacted with rollers for maximum adhesion, and the loose stones are removed with a street sweeper. Chip sealing costs roughly \$2.75 per square yard and creates a durable road surface that lasts 3-5 years. Traffic disruption is minimal, and vehicles can travel on the new surface in as little as 15 minutes.

Micro paving is another cost-effective alternative like chip seal regarding the liquid asphalt and stone aggregate application, and the process last 3-5 years. They differ because the asphalt has additives that aid in "breaking" or drying the surface. Chip sealing relies on the sun to break the emulsion, while the additives in micro paving cure the asphalt emulsion. Therefore, micro paving is favored on shady roadways and roads that require rapid curing. The additives bring micro paving costs in at approximately \$3.75 per square yard. With either technique, any major defects in the road base are corrected with select full depth repair prior to the surface treatment. From that point on, the treatments differ.



The Township's 144 miles of road require deliberate planning and budgeting for safe, dependable transit. The road's average condition will also be maintained at a higher service level. Low-volume roads with minimally distressed pavement are the best candidates for chip sealing and micro paving. They preserve the road surfaces from additional deterioration, seal cracks created by New Jersey's freeze and thaw cycles, and add protection from water intrusion as well as sun oxidation.

Chip sealing and micro paving lengthen a road's expected life cycles by treating the surface while it is still in useable condition. Also, the treatments do not require utility adjustments or milling, further reducing costs. Chip sealing and micro paving are not intended to replace milling and overlay. They are cost-saving methods to extend pavement life while allowing Hopewell Township to maintain more miles of roads annually.

George Snyder, Township Administrator and Director of Public Works, gsnyder@hopewelltwp.org

Recycling is Good for Our Community and the Earth!

There is a robust recycling program in Mercer County! Every two weeks, on alternate Tuesdays, Mercer County Improvement Authority (MCIA) sends trucks to collect our recyclables. Recycling reduces waste by converting materials into new items. Best practices in waste reduction include the three pillars of reduce, reuse, and recycle. Together these reduce the loss of potentially valuable materials and keep reusable materials out of our landfills. All these actions contribute to environmental stability.



Here in Mercer County we are "single stream." That means that all our recycling can be mixed together- no sorting is necessary! In your buckets you can place paper, cardboard, books, glass, cans, milk and detergent jugs, juice boxes/ cartons, and any #1 or #2 plastic. The number is found in a triangle with arrows, usually on the bottom of the container. Look carefully- sometimes it's hard to find. If you have more recycling than fit in your can(s), you can put it out on the road in a recyclable cardboard box.

Any non-recyclables that make it into the stream can ruin an entire batch of recycling. So be careful! Some of the items that are not allowed but are sometimes found in recycling bins are pizza boxes (not even if it looks perfectly clean!), plastic bags, plastics #3- #7 (including yogurt containers!), and some types of paper, like paper towels, napkins, tissue paper, and waxed paper. If any of these items are in the recycling, the trucks cannot pick it up and may skip your house entirely. More specific information can be found at <https://www.hopewelltwp.org/199/Curbside-Recycling>.

Lately, due to staffing and weather issues, some recycling stops have been missed. If your recycling wasn't collected, please leave it out. MCIA will usually come the following day. If it is still not collected the next day, you can call MCIA Recycling at 609-278-8086. You can also call our Recycling Coordinator, Joy Arena in Public Works, at 609-537-0250, with questions or concerns.



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