



*"Crossroads of the American Revolution"*

# The Town Crier

*Hopewell Township Newsletter 2021*

## From the Mayor, 2021 in Review



As the year closes, I would like to look back on this year of recovery of our health and economy.

Stretched and tested due to COVID-19, our Health Department added new employees: Horacio Hernandez, Outreach Coordinator, and Shawn Tackacs, our new part-time Public Health Nurse. As case numbers continue to drop, we hope to resume our focus on routine health screenings and educational programming in 2022. We

encourage residents to schedule any healthcare services they may have neglected during the pandemic (colonoscopies, PAP smears, etc.). Doctors saw steep declines this past year in preventative screenings. We know that early detection saves lives.

In 2021, we, as taxpayers, had to absorb the devaluation of the Bristol Myers Squibb property and the resulting loss of tax revenue for both municipal services and the Hopewell Valley Schools. Fortunately, the BMS Campus will soon be filled with new pharmaceutical companies. We are pleased to welcome both PTC Pharmaceuticals and Beigene to the community. These new additions will have a positive impact on our tax bills.

In March, we strengthened stormwater regulations for the Township, which focus on green infrastructure and mitigating stormwater runoff. With the increasing frequency of large storm events, these measures are critical to protecting our environment and the lives and property of Township residents.

In September, the Township Committee created a new use in our Valley Resource Conservation zone that allows for the cultivation and associated processing/manufacturing of cannabis. Responding to changes in state law, the zoning change allows for one business in Hopewell Township, which must be located on a 50-acre minimum lot, and on a State or County Road within 2 miles of an interstate interchange. If the State awards a Hopewell Township applicant a license, the Township will collect a 2% tax on receipts from sales from this new business. As all legal cannabis sold in New Jersey must be grown in New Jersey, this has the potential to be a huge windfall for Township taxpayers.

Our police department will continue to move towards community policing. Our Police Director, Bob Karmazin, is working to find additional ways to support our community by meeting with different constituencies and building relationships. Both Hopewell Night Out and the Junior Police Academy returned in 2021 and were huge successes. The department has new initiatives- Operation Blue

Angel, Hopewell S.A.F.E, Project Medicine Drop, and home security checks. Our police have raised money and supported the larger community in multiple ways. Some of the recipients of their hard work were refugees from Afghanistan, Womanspace, Breast Cancer Awareness, Capital Health Cancer Center, the Pediatric Unit at Capital Health, and the LGBTQ+ community. We are all proud of the heroism that our officers demonstrated during the storms and, of course, the work our officers do on behalf of the community every day.

This fall, we were surprised by some wonderful news. With funds from the American Rescue Plan, the State awarded Hopewell Township a \$500,000 grant to build a new bandshell in Woolsey Park. We will enjoy the benefits of live performances for years to come. Then we learned that PennEast canceled their pipeline project. This was a victory for everyone who lives in Hopewell Township. It was also a victory for the open space we have so carefully preserved. Thank you to all the people in Hopewell Township and beyond who fought for many years to protect our environment from this project.

As we close 2021, I wish you and your families a healthy and happy 2022. Be well.

**Julie Blake, Hopewell Township Mayor**

## Hopewell Valley Senior and Community Center Update



The dream of a community center began when a group of Valley residents advocated for a new senior center. Plans and locations were chosen, but it never happened. Now it is finally coming to fruition. The location is behind Shoprite on the Zaitz tract and will be built with the developer of that site as part of their affordable housing agreement. In addition to others, the Hopewell Valley YMCA is going to partner with us to manage fitness and child care and will move their offices, teen center, and camp programs to the site.

I have truly loved my conversations about this project. We are excited to bring together groups and organizations which comprise the fabric of the community. A meeting recording and information can be found at [www.hopewelltwp.org/594/Senior-Community-Ctr](http://www.hopewelltwp.org/594/Senior-Community-Ctr).

**Kristin McLaughlin, Hopewell Township Committee Member**

# Be In The Know

Start with our website, [www.HopewellTwp.org](http://www.HopewellTwp.org). Sign up to receive News Alerts by email or text. Click the “Notify Me” button on the homepage, register, and choose Home- Hopewell Twp News. You can also receive messages about meetings and calendar events.

Join the Hopewell Twp Police emergency list by registering for the Swift911 program. Info at [www.HopewellTwp.org/Swift911](http://www.HopewellTwp.org/Swift911).

We are active on social media. Follow us and have announcements show up in your notifications.

- Facebook @HopewellTownshipNJ
- Instagram @hopewelltownshipnj
- Twitter @TwpofHopewellNJ
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/hopewelltwp>
- YouTube <https://bit.ly/HopewellTwpYouTube> (please like this channel so we can personalize the title)

We send out releases to local press, including MercerMe and centraljersey.com. You can find Township news on their sites and social media.

Articles of interest, written by staff and elected officials, can be found in Hopewell Valley Neighbors. This free publication is printed and mailed to all Valley residents monthly.

If you search all the above resources and still need more information contact any of the departmental staff by phone or email. The staff directory by department is [www.hopewelltwp.org/directory.aspx](http://www.hopewelltwp.org/directory.aspx). If you prefer to speak to someone, call our Communications and Outreach Manager, Reba Holley, at 609-737-0605. She can also be contacted at [info@hopewelltwp.org](mailto:info@hopewelltwp.org).



## Be in the Know

Sign up for Notifications!

- Navigate to [www.hopewelltwp.org](http://www.hopewelltwp.org)
- Sign in or create an account by clicking at the top right of the homepage.
- Click on the Notify Me button
- Choose email or text notifications (or both!) - be sure to scroll down and choose Home-Hopewell Twp News
- Click confirm in the email or text you receive to enable the notifications
- You're done!

## Hopewell Township's Health Department Works for You



Public health has been in the spotlight these past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But in reality, public health focuses on the entire spectrum of health and wellbeing, and your local health department has always been there, performing daily surveillance for communicable diseases, providing guidance to families, and investigating sources to prevent community outbreaks. The Hopewell Twp Health Department's ongoing mission is to ensure healthy people live in a healthy environment, and we work in multiple arenas, such as public health nursing and education, social support outreach, environmental protection, animal control, and vital statistics, to achieve that goal.

These have been unprecedented times and we encourage any resident facing economic hardship, food insecurity, loss of health insurance, or other challenges to contact us for support. The secondary effects of the pandemic may be felt for years. It is crucial to schedule routine healthcare check-ups and screenings that may have been delayed. COVID-19 infection rates are on the rise again, due to new variants and the colder weather forcing people inside. We encourage everyone age 5 and up to get vaccinated, and for adults to get a booster shot. We also recommend that everyone receives a flu shot.

Community wellness must include a healthy environment. Our environmental team routinely visits restaurants, swimming pools, childcare centers, and youth camps to ensure safe operations. Septic system and well installations are witnessed to ensure compliance with state and local standards. The busy real estate market has caused a large volume of septic system repairs or alterations, and well testing under the NJ Private Well Testing Act. This law is expanding, and testing for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) is now required.

Beyond routine inspections, reach out for guidance about maintenance for private septic systems and wells. Well water should be tested annually for coliform bacteria, nitrates, total dissolved solids, and pH levels. These parameters are important indicators of the integrity of your well and any changes in local conditions. If you have any treatment devices installed, be sure they are regularly serviced.

Finally, free rabies vaccination clinics are held in November and January of each year, to protect domestic pets and their owners from the threat of the fatal rabies virus. All dogs and cats must be licensed by January of each year. Applications are available on our website. As with Health Departments all over the country, while the pandemic response has been a priority focus, our team remains committed to protecting and maintaining the wellbeing and quality of life of the entire community. The Health Department can be reached Monday-Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm at 609-737-0120. Please contact us if you have any health or environmental concerns.

**Dawn Marling, Health Officer**

# Citizen Volunteer Opportunities



Most Hopewell Twp residents know about the Township Committee, as at least one member is elected every November. Residents may also be familiar with the Planning Board, whose duties include reviewing planned development, and the Zoning Board of Adjustment, which considers variances from zoning ordinances.

There are several lesser-known but important volunteer committees and commissions who contribute their time to work on issues that affect everyone in the Township:

- Affordable Housing Committee
- Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Board of Health Advisory Committee
- Citizens Equity Advisory Committee
- Deer Management Advisory Committee
- Environmental Commission
- Historic Preservation Commission
- Open Space Advisory Committee
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee
- Senior Advisory Board
- Woolsey Park Advisory Committee
- Youth Advisory Board

If you are interested in volunteering, contact Municipal Clerk Laurie Gompf at [lgompf@hopewelltwp.org](mailto:lgompf@hopewelltwp.org) or (609) 537-0276. Many committees have space available.

For more information about any of the committees, visit the “Government” section of the Township’s website at [www.hopewelltwp.org/27/Government](http://www.hopewelltwp.org/27/Government).

## **Michael Ruger, Hopewell Township Committee Member**

## Fighting for More Effective and Efficient Government

Over the next month, the Township Committee will kick off its 2022 Budget process. Our goal is to deliver the services our residents need at the lowest possible cost.

We will start the Budget process by reviewing each department’s capital needs for 2022. This includes everything from our road maintenance and repair program, new vehicles and equipment for Public Works, the Police and other departments, and further long-term investments in the community.

Our goal has been to limit each year’s capital expenditures such that we create less new debt than we pay off. Five years ago, we also enacted a policy to only capitalize purchases that had a useful life of 5 years or more. These changes are important, as Township debt service currently accounts for approximately 1-in-4 municipal tax dollars, which is more than we spend each year for our Public Works and Police departments combined.

As a result of these efforts, we have reduced Hopewell Township’s debt by over 20% since 2014, which has also lowered annual interest costs.

## Don’t miss....

There’s so much going on in Hopewell Township!

Plan to join the Township Committee the first week of January for their reorganization meeting (date and time TBD). At this meeting the newly elected committee member will be sworn in, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor will be chosen and sworn in, and planning for the new year will begin. Township officials will be appointed and reappointed. Liaison assignments for the members of the Township Committee will be decided. Don’t miss this very important meeting!

Did you know that we have a LOT of activities



More recently, the Township Committee shifted its process such that the capital budget is developed and approved by February, well before the May adoption of the full budget. This small change in timing not only enables us to accelerate our road projects, but also saves residents money as we are able to get bids and lock in contractors earlier in the season, when they are less busy. In 2020, this strategy, along with lower oil prices, resulted in savings of \$1.8 million dollars compared to our initial construction cost estimates, representing a reduction of approximately 25%.



In future communications, I will share additional actions we are taking to deliver more effective and efficient government. In the interim, please feel welcome to attend one of our Budget planning meetings in January through March – notice will be provided on the Township website and also publicized at Township Committee meetings.

## **Kevin D. Kuchinski, Hopewell Township Committee Member**

for Seniors? Join Randi Knechel and the Valley community for weekly activities which include Bridge, Art, Exercise, and Mahjongg. We also have trips and activities year round. Be sure to know what’s going on—sign up to receive the Senior Spirit newsletter at <https://bit.ly/HVSeniors> or contact Randi at 609-537-0236 or [rknechel@hopewelltwp.org](mailto:rknechel@hopewelltwp.org).



Our Recreation Department is always bringing fun and exciting events for all ages! They offer a wide variety of community trips, family trips, senior programs, youth & teen programs, summer camps and community events. More information can be found at [www.hopewelltwp.org/recreation](http://www.hopewelltwp.org/recreation), emailing [lconant@hopewelltwp.org](mailto:lconant@hopewelltwp.org), or by calling 609-737-3753.

# New Jersey's Single-Use Bag & Straw Ban Will Make a Difference

On November 4, 2020, New Jersey enacted P.L. 2020, c. 117 to place restrictions or total elimination of the distribution of plastic straws, paper or plastic single-use carryout bags, and polystyrene food service containers. Whether you're a proponent, opponent, or indifferent, you may still wonder if the law will have any real impact. Let's take a brief look.

## How big is the plastics problem? Why enact a ban on single-use plastics?

While many environmental organizations have raised awareness, here are just a few US government-cited impacts.

- From US EPA reports, since the creation of plastics in 1960, the US has consumed nearly one billion tons. Of that, the vast majority (about 780 million tons) has been sent to landfills, but another 80 million tons (1.6 billion pounds) was simply dumped into the environment. In 2018 alone, over 800,000 tons of US plastic were single-use bags
- Over 90% of all plastics produced do not biodegrade in nature. Formal studies have shown that:
  - Bisphenol A (BPA), a primary plastic constituent, has been detected in 95% of the US population, and
  - 17% of marine species ingesting or entangled by plastics are threatened or near-threatened.

## What will NJ's ban do?

The ban will incrementally implement restrictions on several single-use items over the course of the next two and half years, consisting primarily of the following:

- The first component in effect since November 4, 2021, requires establishments to only provide plastic straws upon request.
- The next and most significant component, effective May 4, 2022, prohibits most retailers and restaurants from providing single-use takeout bags, the majority of which are made from plastic and paper.
- By May 4, 2024, the NJ DEP will provisionally prohibit most retailers and restaurants from providing polystyrene foam food containers, typically used for takeout food.

## Meet George Snyder, Township Administrator and Director of Public Works



George Snyder serves Hopewell Township as Administrator and Director of Public Works. He came to the Township in 2017, and took on the additional duties of Administrator in 2021. He believes work is much more meaningful when contributing to the team in such a way that both the organization and community are improved. George says he is grateful to be a part of the Hopewell Township community. The history of the region are meaningful to him, and he enjoys contributing to the wealth of activities the area has to offer.

During 34 years of service in municipal government, he has earned certifications in Public Works Management, Recycling Coordination, and Sustainable Resource Management. He is committed to environmental stewardship along with sustainability.

As Administrator he brings his personal mission of providing first class service and implementing best management practices, while always keeping fiscal responsibility in mind. Strong leadership, ethical decision making, accountability, communication, and transparency are what keeps the Township on track, and to which the entire Hopewell Township team aspires. As Director of Public Works, in 2022 he looks forward to completing the

walking path that will connect the Lawrence Hopewell Trail to a parking lot along Carter Road and also getting started planning the bandshell in Woolsey Park.

George lives with his wife along the Jersey shore. They are almost empty nesters, having raised three children and a rescue dog. In his spare time he volunteers with the Hopewell Valley Veterans Association and 9/11 Memorial, at church, and plays guitar in a classic rock band and at church. Feel free to contact George at [gsnyder@hopewelltwp.org](mailto:gsnyder@hopewelltwp.org).

## How much will the ban reduce?

Once the takeout bag component is implemented, New Jersey will effectively eliminate 2.43 pounds of plastic and 2.91 pounds of paper per person each year. That results in the following annual reductions at the local, county, and state. This amounts to a total annual reduction of approximately 1.85 billion bags per year (see this article for the basis of estimate).

Jurisdiction	US Census Pop. 2020	Estimated Annual Reduction of Plastic Takeout Bags (Tons)	Estimated Annual Reduction of Paper Takeout Bags (Tons)
Hopewell Township, NJ	17,491	19.61	25.98
Hopewell Borough, NJ	1,915	2.15	2.84
Pennington Borough, NJ	2,531	2.84	3.76
Mercer County, NJ	387,340	434.33	575.31
New Jersey State	9,288,994	10,415.9	13,796.72

## Conclusion

Assessing the environmental impacts of legislation is often quite difficult given the scarcity of reliable information. Lack of clear and objective data can lead one to conclude the impacts are simply too insignificant to matter, or perhaps lose hope. However, as shown in this article, the annual plastic consumption across the US is near a plateau and may decrease in the near future. More encouraging, the impacts of just this one law in one state will make significant improvements at the local and state levels with benefits felt beyond our borders. Looking forward, we can build on this law to pursue additional reductions at all levels of government and commerce to help improve our quality of life and the health of our environment.

## About the Author

**Paul Kinney** is a Hopewell Township resident with a background in software technology. He is a member of the Hopewell Green Team and an alternate member of the Hopewell Township Environmental Commission. This article represents his personal views and does not necessarily imply any endorsement by these organizations.

More information can be found at [bit.ly/NJPlasticBan](https://bit.ly/NJPlasticBan) (case sensitive).

# The Municipal Clerk

Laurie Gompf is the Municipal Clerk for Hopewell Township. She became the Clerk in 2010. After joining the Township in 2006 as the Deputy Township Clerk, she earned a Registered Municipal Clerk certification from the state and a Certified Municipal Clerk designation from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks.



The Municipal Clerk is the oldest of public servants in local government, along with the tax collector. The profession traces back to before Biblical times and is mentioned in many historical documents.

Today the Clerk is one of the most important and exacting positions in municipal government. The responsibilities are diverse, encompassing myriad state statutes and serving all levels of government. Due to the complexity of the role, legislation was enacted to define the "core" duties of the office. These include:

- Secretary to the municipal corporation and custodian of the municipal seal and all minutes, books, deeds, bonds, contracts, and archival records of the municipal corporation.
- Secretary to the governing body, prepare meeting agendas, be present at all meetings of the governing body, keep the proceedings of meetings, retain the original copies of all ordinances and resolutions, and record the minutes of every meeting.
- Chief administrative officer in all elections held in the municipality.
- Chief registrar of voters in the municipality.
- Administrator of applications and issuance for licenses and permits.
- Coordinator and records manager for local archives and their retention.

In addition to the statutory responsibilities, the Clerk's office also performs other duties, such as notary public services, receiving and processing Open Public Records Requests (OPRAs), maintaining landlord-tenant registrations and foreclosure notices, and filing bargaining unit contracts.

Over the years, Municipal Clerks have become the hub of the government, the direct link between the residents of their community and their government. The Clerk is the historian of the community, for the entire recorded history of the town and its people is in his or her care. To reach your Municipal Clerk, email [lgompf@hopewelltwp.org](mailto:lgompf@hopewelltwp.org) or call 609-737-0605 x6620



# The Tax Collector

Tax Collectors have been around since at least 6000 BCE in what is now Iraq. Records of organized tax collection exist from ancient Egypt. Taxes were generally consumption taxes, poll taxes, or tariffs on imported goods; real estate tax was temporarily imposed only during times of war. As land increased in value, so did the dependence on real estate tax as a means of revenue. Payment was made in material, crops, or labor. Money was rarely used.

In New Jersey, municipal Tax Collectors are bound to follow state statutes. These statutes dictate when taxes are due, how the billing, collection, reporting, and enforcement are handled, and the determination of the amount to be billed.

The amount of tax charged to each property is determined by the assessed value of the property times the tax rate, which is the same for all. The Township Assessor sets these values. The Collector can answer your questions regarding the amount of tax billed, payment history, etc., but cannot answer questions regarding how your property was assessed.

Tax payments are due the first of February, May, August, and November, which is the same for every municipality in the state. The only difference between municipalities is the grace period date, which may be up to 10 days after the billing date.

Interest and penalties are capped by state statutes as well, though municipalities may set different rates. Balances are charged interest. At the end of the year, if delinquent balances and interest exceed \$10,000, the municipality may impose a penalty.

"In this world, nothing is certain but death and taxes," said Benjamin Franklin in 1789. And he was right.

Mary Kennedy-Nadzak has been Hopewell Township's Tax Collector since 2008. Before joining the Township team she worked in banking and government. She has a degree in Business Administration and obtained her Certified Tax Collector license in 2001. She is a member of the Tax Collectors & Treasurers Association of NJ. She can be reached at 609-737-0605 x6450 or [mkennedy@hopewelltwp.org](mailto:mkennedy@hopewelltwp.org).

# Hopewell Township Welcomes Historic Salem Oak Seedling

Hopewell Township has always prided itself on its rural character and commitment to sustainability and open space. And we love our trees! We are an official Tree City USA, a program of the National Arbor Day Foundation, one of 3,400+ communities across the country.

We are excited to announce that an important historical tree is coming to Hopewell Township. On June 6, 2019, the iconic Salem Oak Tree crashed to the ground after an estimated 565 years on this earth. It

was a sad moment for all. In addition to having been named a Millennial Landmark Tree by the America the Beautiful Foundation, in 2016 it was declared the largest White Oak in the state. Before it fell, it stood 103 feet tall, with a circumference of 22 feet, 4 inches, and a crown that spanned 104 feet.



This magnificent tree will live on, however, through a program by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, which gifted one Salem Oak seedling to each of the state's 565 municipalities. Our seedling was accompanied by a certificate authenticating its lineage and will be included in a website showing all the locations of the Salem Oak "babies."

Hopewell Township's Salem Oak seedling is currently being cared for by Master Gardener and EC Chair Nora Sirbaugh. It will be planted in Woolsey Park and celebrated for Arbor Day on Saturday, April 30, 2022, at 10am. Mark your calendar now!

**Courtney Peters-Manning, Hopewell Township Deputy Mayor**