



Township of East Brunswick

BRAD J. COHEN
MAYOR

July 5, 2022

Dear Residents,

I hope that everyone is having a wonderful and relaxing summer. I'm writing the morning after the township's annual Fourth of July Fireworks celebration. A hearty thank-you to the Department of Parks and Recreation and our East Brunswick Police Department for providing such a great event to our residents and those from surrounding communities, without a hitch.

I understand that inflation, gas prices, supply chain delays, and labor shortages are affecting many of us as we emerge from the Pandemic. But history has shown that these problems are beyond one person's control and will improve over time. On the home front, we have so many things for which we should be grateful and appreciative. Let me take this chance to make you aware of a few of these accomplishments.

Property Taxes – As most of you know, the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) approves all budgets from the township, county, and public school system. Once approved, the township is charged with billing for all these services and sending such payments back to the different agencies. The township's share of your bill is about 20% of the total. That having been said, we expect that despite the record level of inflation around us, your total tax bill this year should remain about the same as last year. We await the final numbers from the DCA, which is why you received an estimated tax bill about two weeks ago. This level of financial control is due to the hard work of this office, your Township Council, and the Board of Education.

Redevelopment – Kudos to the Redevelopment Agency for their continuing efforts to move the process of redevelopment to the point where we are happy to announce that the redeveloper for the Route 18 properties (EB Urban Redevelopment – Russo Development) recently purchased the old Gap and Wiz complex. They expect to close on Office Max the end of this month and the remaining properties in this phase shortly thereafter. You have likely seen the protective fencing installed around the properties as we expect demolition in the next few weeks. Plans for this first phase will be before the Planning Board this summer and expect construction by the end of the year or early 2023. This very high-end project will feature luxury apartments and retail areas on the first floor or directly on Route 18 frontage. There will be new roads to help with traffic, outdoor theatre, walking paths, and a dog park as well.

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The property on Tices Lane (old Wonder Bread Factory) is well on its way. The area will feature apartments, retail, townhomes, walking paths, widening of Tices, reworking of the Renee Road intersection, stormwater improvement, and the township Municipal Ice Rinks at the back (behind Lowes).

The financial agreements on both projects will provide significant revenues to the tax base and will have a stabilizing effect on property taxes here in the township. Additionally, some of the tax appeals on these properties have been dropped or absorbed by the developers. The township has already committed to earmark some of these funds to the construction needs of the Board of Education. This will be completely predicated on a township wide (all stakeholders) review and involvement in all aspects of such a project.

Roads – each year since taking office, the township has committed \$2-4 million towards our Road Pavement Program. This is exclusive of the record levels of state and federal grants we have received in the past six years. With about 180 miles of township roads and an estimated cost of paving at \$500,000 per mile, we are making progress by prioritizing our efforts to the worst roads first. Clearly, busy roads, main arterial roads, roads near houses of worship and schools are prioritized over side streets and cul-de-sacs. In addition, we are also cognizant of the PSEG work schedule and will not repave a road that is on the docket for such service improvements until after they have completed their work.

We have also been fortunate to have received upwards of \$6 million in state and federal grants to repave several of our very big roads. These include Dunham's Corner Road, Old Stage Road, Rues Lane, Riva Avenue, Fern Road (summer 2022), Whitehall Road (summer 2023), Edgeboro Road, and the concrete portion of Dunham's Corner Road (TBD). We have applications waiting for approval for other roads, including Tices Lane. Expect the Department of Transportation to start the long-needed Route 18 repairs late this fall with an expected completion date of August 2026. This level of grants is unprecedented in the history of this township. A big thank you goes to our Department of Planning/Engineering/Construction and our representatives in the State Assembly and Senate. Finally, a big thank you goes to Governor Murphy as he has been a big supporter of this and other state aid and grants to our township.

Grants- While mentioned above, we have been the recipient of many grants over the past six years. Since taking office, this total is now close to \$25 million. Besides the road grants mentioned above, we have received grants for repairs and a new roof on the Senior Center, Repairs and Security Upgrades at the Municipal Buildings, expansion of the Community Arts Center, a bike and walking path from the Community Arts Center/Heavenly Farms to Crystal Springs Water Park, multiple Library Grants, and several others - including \$3 million in the 2023 NJ State Budget for our Municipal Ice Rinks. These grants and many others, all help to pay for needed budget items that would otherwise be paid through your property taxes.

Parks and Recreation – I hope that folks have had the opportunity to enjoy the wealth of programs put on by our Department of Parks and Recreation. So far this season we have seen the Fishing Derby, Art Sculpture Reveal, Kite Flying, Ramadan Celebration, Memorial Day Program, Acoustic Mondays, and the Fourth of July Spectacular. The department has also been instrumental in helping the EB Arts Coalition and the Library put on many of their programs. Please look to the Department Web Site for a complete listing of programs as there really is something for everyone and it changes each year.

As for the parks – please come out and enjoy Crystal Springs Water Park as it is truly worthy of its recognition as the best public water park in the state. There are opportunities for swimming lessons for all ages. There are weekly day camps for youth with varied interests from drama to sports to coding. Please visit our well-maintained parks and some of our new ones – Beaverdam Park and Tamany Park.

Business – While known for our top-ranked public schools, our location, our safety, and our diversity – these all help to make East Brunswick a great location for businesses. We have seen businesses continue to invest in East Brunswick before, during, and after the pandemic. These are in a wide variety of industries, and they all speak to the attraction of East Brunswick for commerce. There are multiple factors that play a role in this phenomenon, but our location at the center of the state and our highly educated workforce plays a big role in attracting investment in our community.

While I could go on forever, suffice to say that we have so much to be proud of here in East Brunswick. I believe that this is all due to responsible and visionary leaders, a top-notch municipal staff, and an engaged community of residents and businesses. Please feel free to reach out if you have a particular interest and have the time to get involved in our community. I have always said that if the table is full and there is still interest – we just need to get a bigger table. I thank each of you for your contribution and have a safe and enjoyable summer.

Respectfully,

Brad J Cohen, Mayor