

# South Harrison Township



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October 19, 2020

From the Office of the Mayor:

It's been a while since my last post and I wanted to reach out and give everyone an update on our town and what lies ahead as we close out a very challenging year.

2020 has been a year for the record books and one that can't come to an end soon enough! We've all been put through a lot; from lock downs and stay in place, school closings, virtual learning, and missed milestones; like senior trips, proms, graduations, spring sports, weddings, funerals, and unprecedented rain events, etc... Life is still very different today as we strive towards getting back to normal. Schools are doing the best they can and we are faced with a new set of learning obstacles with hybrid schedules and virtual platforms, many are still working from home, and we continue to grapple with how to move forward safely with each passing day.

South Harrison Township hasn't missed a beat through all of this. The Township Committee and all of our dedicated employees have done a great job providing all the necessary services to our residents. Our Construction Office remained open through it all to keep projects moving forward and contractors working. The Township Committee continued to meet in compliance with the recommended protocols and conducted business as usual. I believe it is important to provide some insight on recent activity within the Township.

As you are all aware by now, last year we entered into a shared service agreement for 24/7 Police coverage with Woolwich Township. The transition was seamless and the level of service and feedback so far has been very positive. COVID caused our Police Department, as well as most others, to limit officer exposure to the public unless absolutely necessary for a period of time. This meant a decline in traffic stops. Recently this has been rolled back and a stronger traffic enforcement presence is back in force.

We had several issues with recreational vehicle (dirt bike) activity in developments and smaller lots. After much discussion and feedback from public testimony we amended our Township Ordinance in hopes to keep these activities on larger lots as to not disrupt residents on smaller lot residential developments.

Trash collection within the Township has been an ongoing issue as many of you are aware. Quite frankly, the trash collection service has been a struggle and I personally met several times with senior Waste Management representatives to resolve the ongoing issues. We are still under contract with them until December 2021. This contract is very favorable to our town financially since Waste Management owns our recycling and they are now paying to dispose of all recyclable material. Please continue to call or email any disruptions in service to our Municipal Clerk so it can be relayed to their dispatch for corrective action. We are already working on solutions for much better service and new trash and recycling containers once this contract expires.

As some may be aware, our volunteer Fire Company fell victim to poor leadership and inappropriate social media behavior. This situation was handled swiftly by myself and the Township Committee, subsequently leading to their suspension from service. Special thanks are in order to our neighboring towns, Harrison and Woolwich, for picking up our coverage, at no cost, to help us through this transitional period. Since the suspension, leadership and membership changes have been made. We now have a new Fire Chief, Bill Michaels, who is a resident of our Township. Chief Michaels has been working very hard to get our Fire Department back up and running and with a resurgence in qualified members returning, I expect them to be back in service very soon. Thanks for your dedication to our town Chief Michaels!

With respect to roads and infrastructure, we were successful in receiving a DOT Freight Impact Grant which should be sufficient to resurface the entire stretch of Vestry Road, which is failing. At our last committee meeting we approved the funding for a traffic study on Marl Rd in hopes of obtaining similar funding.

Fiscally, South Harrison is in a good position and it's a tribute to our responsible Committee Members.

As I look forward to our future I see promise in new opportunities. One of which I've already started discussions on and I'm very excited to have the support of 3 other towns Mayors and Fire Chiefs willing to develop a pilot program to consolidate Fire services and equipment. If we are successful this will serve as a model for other rural/suburban towns to follow.

Regarding Commercial rateables, South Harrison Township benefits from several commercial businesses: Landscape, upholstery, commercial golf supply, largest cold storage/freezer facility, solar field, very large produce farm and cold storage, largest haunted attraction, winery, new South Jersey Gas pressure regulating station, and the biggest of all GCIA (County Landfill). All are clean rateables, meaning they don't require any municipal services like retail/strip centers. The most important commercial business in town is our farming community. This group of farmers feeds the community while maintaining our rural landscape.

I am proud of our town and honored to serve as your Mayor. I will continue, along with our Committee Members, to maintain our unique character and to look ahead for opportunities to benefit our community.

Best wishes and continued health to all.

Joseph M Marino  
Mayor, South Harrison Twp.