



# Borough Council Mid-Year Review

August 14, 2023

# Progress Toward Achieving Goals

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Goal 1: Fiscal Responsibility

Goal 2: Infrastructure & Services

Goal 3: Community Stewardship & Development

Goal 4: Openness, Responsiveness & Engagement

Challenges

# Fiscal Strength

- ✓ Unanimous adoption of fiscally responsible 2023 budget
- ✓ 3rd straight year of municipal tax rate decreases
- ✓ Healthy fund balance and cash reserves
- ✓ Successful audit of 2022 finances
- ✓ Significant federal, state & county grants providing taxpayer relief:
  - \$288,000 American Rescue Plan funds towards Fire Dept vehicle purchase
  - \$125,000 NJ DOT grant for Morris Avenue paving
  - \$70,000 NJ Local Recreation Improvement Award for Boulevard Trolley Path
  - \$30,500 Morris County grant for Station property renovation
  - \$4,000 NJ Clean Fleet grant towards Police SRO vehicle purchase
- ✓ Settlement of multi-year Police & Public Works union contracts
- ✓ Finance policy and best practices review, including revised Reserve for Uncollected Taxes policy to keep more \$\$\$ in taxpayer pockets
- Continuation of multi-year effort to settle long-standing tax appeals to protect Borough finances



# Infrastructure & Services

- ✓ Addition of new quarterly curbside Bulk Trash collection services
  - ✓ Elimination of Green Bag program
  - ✓ Increased support for the Mountain Lakes Public Library, including Makerspace program
  - ✓ Significant investment in Police & Fire vehicles, equipment & facilities
  - ✓ 2023 co-op road paving projects
  - ✓ Robust recreation programs making use of improved beach facilities
  - ✓ Support for traditional and new community events, including Art Fair and PBA Block Party
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- Tennis Court Re-Build Project to be completed in August
  - Borough Hall & Public Safety Facilities project nearing completion
  - Water Meter Replacement project 75% complete
  - Morris Avenue paving (Powerville to Fanny) scheduled for 2023
  - Sunset Dam Project expected to break ground in Fall 2023
  - Review of efficiency, safety and other upgrade improvements to Recycling Center, including expansion of Recycling Center hours



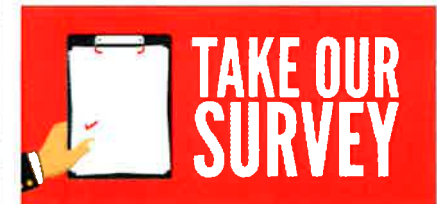
# Community Stewardship & Development

- ✓ Completion of Bathymetry Study to guide long-term planning for the health of our lakes
- ✓ Initial Phase of the Station property historic renovation is complete – Construction Documents phase of the project is getting started
- ✓ Veterans Housing project is a welcome addition to our community and supports implementation of the Borough's Affordable Housing Plan
- ✓ Adoption of Commercial Landscaping Hours ordinance in response to community concerns
- Review of land use ordinances for consistency, clarity and efficiency
- Initial public discussion regarding the utility of opting into the Highlands Regional Master Plan



# Openness, Responsiveness & Engagement

- ✓ Outreach to Federal, State & County levels of government on issues of importance, including securing grants to support Borough priorities and provide taxpayer relief
- ✓ Collaboration with Mountain Lakes School District on tennis court re-build project
- ✓ Borough-wide resident survey regarding Commercial Landscaping Hours
- ✓ More than 160 residents serving as Borough volunteers, including over 40 young people serving as Student Committee Members and Junior Volunteer Firefighters
- ✓ Transparent budget process and quarterly review of financials – all information shared with the public and reviewed at public meetings



# Challenges

Like municipalities across New Jersey, the Borough of Mountain Lakes is facing challenging market conditions with a three-year period of high inflation, supply chain disruptions, and a tight labor market.

During the 2023 budget process, this resulted in cost increases in several necessary budget line items, including solid waste collection, group health insurance, police pension, vehicle fuel expenses, and lakes maintenance.

The impact of these market pressures is also seen on bids being received by third parties for Borough projects, including Sunset Dam, our Borough Hall & Public Safety Facilities, and road paving and sidewalk improvements.

Supply chain disruptions are also causing procurement and project delays.

The Borough is not alone in navigating these market conditions. Municipalities across New Jersey are confronting similar challenges:

<https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/global-supply-chain-issues-impacting-construction-projects-in-hackensack/>

<https://patch.com/new-jersey/maplewood/bridge-opening-delayed-until-summer-maplewood-due-supply-chain>

<https://www.northjersey.com/bergen-nj-towns-supply-chain-issues-delays-covid%>

[https://www.70and73.com/news/why-construction-of-mount-laurels-emergency-medical-services-hq-on-route-73-is-on-hold/article\\_8fc6b1ee-cfe0-11ed-a58d-4b808140f967.html](https://www.70and73.com/news/why-construction-of-mount-laurels-emergency-medical-services-hq-on-route-73-is-on-hold/article_8fc6b1ee-cfe0-11ed-a58d-4b808140f967.html)

# **Thank You!**

**It's been a busy year in the Borough with significant work getting done and more work ahead...**

**THANK YOU to our Borough employees, professionals and dedicated volunteers for your contributions to our community.**



# **Council Discussion**