

# Rockaway Township Report



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[www.rockawaytownship.org](http://www.rockawaytownship.org)

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## Mayor's Corner: Election Address 2024



I would first like to thank you for your confidence and trust in electing me Mayor of our great town for the next four years. I am looking forward to working with the Township Council and our staff to make decisions that best meet the Township's needs, continue to build upon established relationships with our Federal, State and County legislators, seek and attain alternate funding opportunities, maintain property taxes, improve upon existing services and add new ones that meet the changing needs of our Township. As we embrace the start of a New Year, I would like to celebrate the successes that have laid the critical foundation upon which we will build, as we strive to make our plans realities in 2024.

Managing the Township requires specific skill sets within each department, and working with the Township Council and staff, I am proud

to highlight many of the accomplishments of 2023. The Township continued to face unprecedented economic challenges including increased costs for health care benefits, pension contributions, contractual obligations, goods and services and supply-chain issues. Despite this, we managed to deliver excellent, comprehensive municipal services while keeping the municipal tax rate stable.

The Departments of Administration and Finance work closely together to ensure the Township maintains its fiscal integrity and strong financial standing, which recently resulted in a favorable interest rate to support the Township's capital program. Further adding to the Township's financial stability was the implementation of the reassessment program. Since its inception, the program has enabled the Township to decrease the number of successful tax appeals, saving thousands of taxpayer dollars.

Attaining and sustaining other sources of revenue, such as grants and shared services agreements, has enabled the Township to deliver superior services without an increased cost to our taxpayers. The Division of Health has received and

managed over \$1.46 million in Federal pass-thru grant funding during the last year, and provides revenue-generating public health services to three additional area municipalities.

Without an increase to operating costs, the Division of Health has expanded its services to reach residents with compromised habitability, aid residents in completing low-income housing applications and assist those facing food insecurity. During the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing through its endemic status, the Division has investigated and mitigated 8,225 positive COVID cases to date.

The Department of Engineering, which also oversees the Divisions of Planning and Construction, procured over \$433,000 in NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT) grant awards for years 2023 and 2024 to rehabilitate ~3,400 feet of roadway, including drainage improvements to Richard Street and Reservoir Road, respectively.

The Department has designed and managed multiple municipal projects, including the newly installed Peterson Field project,

*(continued on page three)*

## Winter Safety Reminders

Winter weather is here, and we would like to provide some safety tips for residents who wish to enjoy the many outdoor activities our area has to offer. Please be safe!!!

### **In General...**

- Check the forecast. Weather can change quickly, so be prepared for anything. Carry backup clothing and supplies.
- Use the proper equipment. Be sure everything is in proper working condition before leaving home.
- Wear the proper attire. Use clothing and gear designed for the activity. Don't wear loose items that can be snagged or caught in equipment or machinery.
- Stay focused; commit 100% of your attention to the activity and the terrain. Rest when you are tired and hydrate often.
- Avoid alcohol. Don't drink before or during any outdoor activity. Alcohol cools the blood and decreases body temperature. It increases fatigue and impairs judgment.

### **Skiing & Snowboarding**

- Stay on runs that are appropriate for your level of ability. Ski-run ratings can vary dramatically by area.
- Ski or snowboard in control at all times; maintain the ability to stop to avoid people or objects.
- Obey all posted signs and warnings. Do not cross ski area boundary lines.

- Do not ski or snowboard alone. Stay where others can see you in case you need assistance.
- Wear a helmet. Most ski areas require them; some rent them. Use goggles rather than sunglasses.
- Take breaks, stay well hydrated and avoid alcohol. Don't overdo it.

### **Sledding**

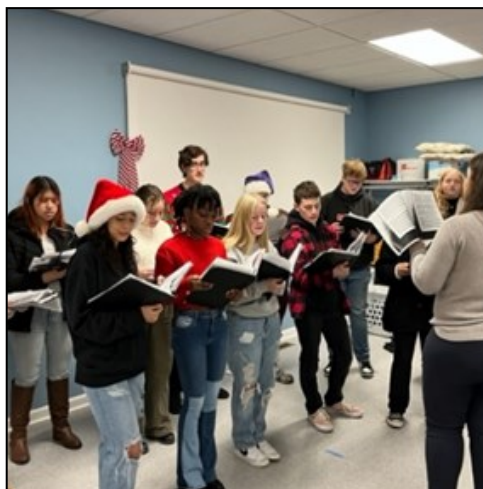
- Never use roads unless they are blocked off from traffic.
- Avoid sledding directly into wooded areas, onto ice or into water.
- Be aware of sledders at the bottom and those returning up the hill. Wait until the path is clear before starting.

### **Ice Skating**

- Skate in areas that have been approved and posted for ice skating.
- Avoid skating alone; stay where others can see you. Children should never skate unsupervised by adults.
- Remember that ice thickness is never consistent on lakes and ponds, and always beware of thin areas.
- Never skate after dark in dark areas.



## Holiday Cheer in Rockaway Township



From left: Mayor Joe Jackson and Susanne Jackson tell Santa Claus what they want for Christmas at the November 30, 2023 annual Tree Lighting and Christmas celebration; the Morris Hills Madrigal Choir provides Christmas carols at the November 30, 2023 Tree Lighting and Christmas celebration; Rabbi Herson of the Chabad Center of Northwest NJ leads the annual Menorah Lighting and Hanukkah celebration at the Park Lake Gazebo on December 11, 2023.

## Mayor's Election Address 2024 *(continued from page one)*

Senior Center renovations supported by Federal pass-thru grant funding, and the Queens Road water main replacement, which will include final paving and drainage improvements upon completion of gas main replacement. Projects in progress include the rehabilitation of Telemark Park, the Lake Ames Dam rehabilitation, restoration of the Egberts Lake walking path and rehabilitation of the Mount Hope Pond Dam.

The Engineering Department also recently submitted an application to the NJDOT for its Safe Routes to School grant. The grant would provide for safe pathways to Copeland Middle School and Stony Brook School by adding sidewalks and crosswalks along adjacent roadways, as well as a path between the two schools.

The Department also received four applications in 2023 from commercial anchors that plan to begin or have begun construction in the outer ring area of the Rockaway Townsquare Mall. Further, the Township welcomed its first cannabis retailer, Holistic Re-Leaf, due to open soon.

The safety of our residents is a top priority, and the Township recently hired four new patrol officers and will replace officers as needed upon staff retirements to ensure successful police operations. In 2023, the Rockaway Township Police Department (RTPD) responded to 25,087 calls for service, conducted 12,081 property/business/school checks, handled 1,435 medical emergency calls, conducted 1,254 motor vehicle stops, arrested 1,356 persons, issued 1,156 motor vehicle summonses and conducted 448 radar/traffic enforcement details throughout the Township.

Community outreach and connection to our residents, businesses and visitors is essential to building a trusting relationship with our police officers, and during 2023, the RTPD attended, supported and/or participated in sporting and recreation programs, Township celebrations, LEAD programs, and charity and religious events. Annual body armor and DWI grants were received to support the purchase of bullet proof vests and to ensure our roadways are safe during holidays throughout the year.

Rockaway Township is one of the few municipalities in the State with a Fire Department that is fully staffed by 100% volunteer firefighters. The Department responded to 501 calls in 2023, the most in the Department's 88-year history. Training, regulatory requirements, and equipment and vehicle maintenance and replacement are essential to ensuring the continued delivery of fire

prevention services to the public. To offset operational expenses, the Fire Department actively seeks grant funding and procured a \$42,000 grant and recently submitted to the State for another grant in the amount of \$75,000.

Our municipal infrastructure requires proactive management for safety and cost containment. Last year, the Township paved, cape sealed or micro-surfaced 48,654 feet of its roadways, cleaned and restored 431 catch basins, installed 405 feet of new drain line, rehabilitated the Green Pond storage tank, implemented a GIS system, began construction of the well 10 pumphouse, reduced water loss from 26% to 18%, upgraded the water distribution system by installing variable frequency drives (VFDs), resulting in electrical efficiencies, and kicked off the Queens Road water main replacement project. Public Works, Parks and Utility crews also always stand ready to address inclement weather conditions to ensure resident safety.

Municipal government is also responsible for creating opportunities that fulfill our citizens' well-being, which are often provided by the Division of Recreation. The Township prides itself in providing many programs and services, and encourages residents to enjoy the benefits of these many services. Our preserved open spaces provide for leisurely walks, meet ups with family and friends, and opportunities to relax and enjoy the Township's natural beauty. For those seeking more active programs, the Township provides a multitude of sports and recreational programs for all ages, a summer camp program and playgrounds.

For our less mobile residents, the Township is very proud of its Dial-a Ride program, which provided over 10,000 rides to residents for medical appointments in 2023. In addition, the Township sponsors events that bring our community together, like Rockaway Township Day, holiday celebrations, the annual senior picnic and so much more.

In closing, the Township is beginning 2024 with a strong financial standing, a master plan that allows for continued economic growth, and an Administration and governing body that is committed to making Rockaway Township an even better place to live and work. I wish all residents a New Year filled with happiness, health and prosperity.

As always, I am honored to be your Mayor.

Joe Jackson  
Rockaway Township Mayor

## Mayor's Special Recognition

Mayor Joe Jackson wishes to congratulate the following individuals on their employment with Rockaway Township, and wishes them fulfilling careers with Rockaway Township.

- Nelson Hernandez-Bernal, Department of Public Works
- Patrick Iafelice, Department of Public Works

- Brock Nienhouse, Police Department
- Brett McCaffrey, Police Department
- Frances McCormick, Police Department

Mayor Jackson also wishes to congratulate the following employees on their retirements, and thanks

them for their years of dedicated service to our residents!

- Lieutenant Peter Lyasko, Police Department
- Sergeant Marci Greenberg, Police Department
- Rick Bunnell, Department of Public Works



## Tips for Preventing the Flu & Other Respiratory Illnesses

Winter 2024 is already proving to be very active in terms of influenza and other respiratory illnesses in our community. The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year, but good health habits like covering your cough and washing your hands can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses. The tips below will help you to protect yourself and others from flu and help stop the spread of germs.

### Get vaccinated

- The seasonal flu vaccine protects against the influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season. There are several flu vaccine options for the 2023-2024 flu season.

### Avoid close contact

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick, too.

### Stay home when you are sick

- If possible, stay home from work, school and other activities when you are sick. This will help prevent spreading illness to others.

### Cover your mouth and nose

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Flu and other serious respiratory illnesses are spread by cough, sneezing or unclean hands.

### Clean your hands

- Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

### Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth

- Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

### Practice other good health habits

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

### Preventing Flu at School

- Find out about the plans your child's school, child care program or college has if an outbreak of flu or another illness occurs, and whether flu vaccinations are offered onsite.
- Make sure your child's school, child care program or college routinely cleans frequently touched objects and surfaces, and that they have a good supply of tissues, soap, paper towels, alcohol-based hand rubs and disposable wipes onsite.
- Ask how sick students and staff are separated from others and who will care for them.

### Preventing Flu at Work

- Find out about your employer's plans if an outbreak of flu or another illness occurs and whether flu vaccinations are offered onsite.
- Routinely clean frequently touched objects and surfaces, including doorknobs, keyboards and phones, to help remove germs.
- Make sure your workplace has an adequate supply of tissues, soap, paper towels, alcohol-based hand rubs and disposable wipes.
- Train others on how to do your job so they can cover for you in case you or a family member gets sick and you have to stay home.
- If you begin to feel sick while at work, go home as soon as possible.

Following these guidelines will help reduce the spread of germs and will help lower the risk of illness to you and your family. Residents with questions may call the Rockaway Township Division of Health at 973-983-2848.

## Recognizing Local Businesses

Supporting our local shops and services is important on a number of levels. Following are the local businesses that Mayor Jackson wishes to recognize under his *Support Local Businesses* initiative:

### Blue Titan Fitness & Self Defense

Dr. Glen Katz, owner

*Offers cross-fit and Krav Maga classes seven days a week, as well as onsite physical therapy and chiropractic services.*

27 East Main Street, Rockaway

973-528-7473

### Abe's Bagel House

Abe Obeidallah, owner

*Offers bagels, baked goods, sandwiches, salads, wraps and more, with online ordering available.*

399 Route 46, Rockaway

973-315-6374



*Dark Lake Spooktacular, an annual collaborative Halloween celebration cosponsored by Rockaway Township and Rockaway Borough, was held on October 28, 2023. The event was attended by an estimated 3,500 happy residents.*

## Update from the Division of Recreation

*Dark Lake Spooktacular* was held on a beautiful evening at Park Lake on October 28, 2023, once again resulting in a wonderful collaboration between Rockaway Borough and Rockaway Township in hosting a fun event of trick or treating for the community. The turnout included a great number of residents of all ages, with smiles all around.

The Township's *Annual Christmas Tree Lighting* was held on November 30, 2023 at Park Lake, followed by refreshments, crafts and entertainment at the Rockaway Township Senior Center. Many thanks to the Morris Hills Madrigal Choir for entertaining residents, and to Santa Claus for meeting with Township children.

On December 11, 2023, the Township held its *Annual Menorah Lighting*, which was led by Rabbi Herson and Rabbi Baumgarten of the Chabad Center of Northwest New Jersey. The celebration was moved to Park Lake this year, where a new menorah was erected, in addition to

the Township's existing menorah, which will remain at the Municipal Building. Those in attendance at the menorah lighting enjoyed potato latke and donuts, helping to warm everyone from the cold weather. A Rockaway Borough Fire Department ladder truck was present to help drop gelt (chocolate coins) from the air for the children in attendance.

As always, the Division of Recreation would like to thank those who continue to help with our Meals on Wheels program. If not for the help of our wonderful volunteer drivers, the program would not run so smoothly. The Township is always seeking additional volunteer drivers for its Meals on Wheels program, which provides nutritious food to homebound Township residents who are unable to cook for themselves.

The Meals on Wheels program, which is part of the Morris County Nutrition Project, has volunteers who drive in permanent positions one day per month, and also uses substitute drivers to work on an as needed basis. Meals are distributed

from the Rockaway Township Municipal Building, 65 Mt. Hope Road, between 9:30am and 12:00pm. For more information regarding how you may become a part of the Meals on Wheels program or to fill out an application, interested Rockaway Township residents should contact the Division of Recreation at 973-983-2839.

In an effort to best serve our seniors, the Division of Recreation collaborates with the Division of Health year-round to provide an adult exercise program. The program takes place on Tuesdays at the Senior Center and includes six-to-eight-week sessions that start approximately every two months. If you or someone you know has interest in the adult exercise program, join us by reaching out to the Division of Recreation at 973-983-2841.

The Division of Recreation encourages residents to check the Township website for individual sports programs and upcoming spring registrations.

# Public Works Winter Tips

### Plowing Policies

With winter upon us, here are some tips to avoid snow plowing rage!

- Park cars off the street
- To minimize multiple shoveling commitments, don't clear driveways near the street until plowing is complete
- *Don't shovel driveway snow onto the street – This is a violation of Township Ordinances and creates a hazard*
- *Don't shovel sidewalks onto street – this is also a violation of Township Ordinances and creates a hazard*
- *Per Township Ordinance, residents have 24 hours to remove snow from sidewalks in front of their home*
- If you wish to file a claim for damage to your vehicle caused by Township equipment, you must have a police report

Avoid towing and impound charges: Township Ordinance 7-6.3(a,b) imposes temporary parking prohibition when snow

has fallen and accumulated, at which point an emergency shall be declared until the snow has ceased and the streets have been plowed sufficiently. Any unoccupied vehicles may be towed and impounded at the owner's expense. Please cooperate with plow crews by parking off the roads until plowing is complete. This will ensure safe, clean streets.

To report an ice condition, call 973-983-2891. To report a snow or ice related emergency off hours, please contact the Rockaway Township Police Department at 973-625-4000.

### Street Lights

Street lights are maintained by Jersey Central Power and Light (JCP&L). As a courtesy, the Township can report a street light outage to the utility company if you provide us with the exact street address. Outages and street light issues may also be reported directly to JCP&L by dialing 800-662-3115 or by visiting [www.firstenergycorp.com/service\\_requests/report-lighting-problem.html?form](http://www.firstenergycorp.com/service_requests/report-lighting-problem.html?form) and completing their on-line form.

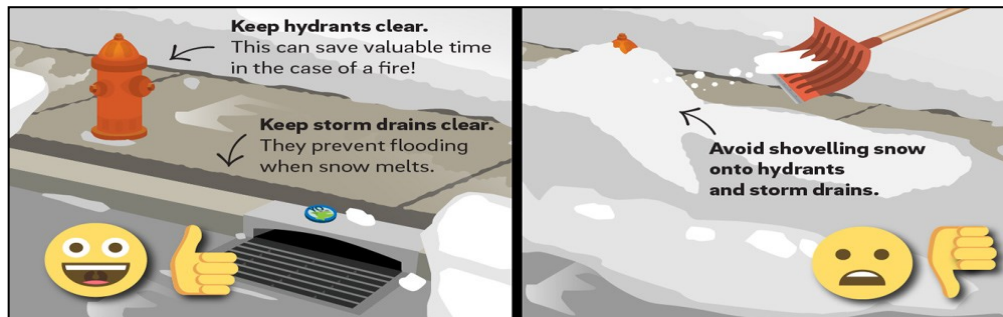
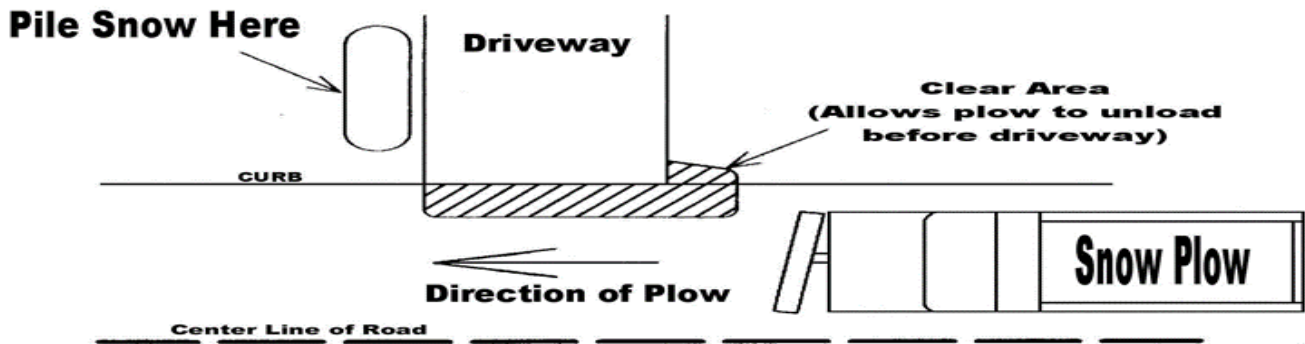
## Proper Shoveling: Driveways, Sidewalks & Fire Hydrants

With winter here, the Rockaway Township Department of Public Works asks for your assistance in keeping our streets, sidewalks and fire hydrants clear of snow. Residents are reminded to shovel

snow away from the street and fire hydrants when cleaning sidewalks, and to help neighbors who are elderly, handicapped or who have medical conditions. Please use the following

guidelines when determining where to shovel snow when cleaning your driveway, or when clearing sidewalks and fire hydrants. The Department of Public Works thanks you in advance for your help!

## Driveway Plowing Policies



## Update from the Tax Collector

First quarter 2024 property taxes are due February 1, 2024. The last day for payment is February 12, 2024. Please contact the Tax Collector's office if you need to know the amount due.

Residents in need of *Senior Freeze* (property tax reimbursement) assistance may call the State's hotline at 1-800-882-6597. If you require assistance with New Jersey's ANCHOR/*Homestead Credit* program, you may call the State's hotline at 1-888-238-1233. If you have any questions in reference to the above items, please feel free to contact the Tax Collector's office at 973-983-2822. Please note that annual sewer maintenance bills will be mailed in late May 2024 and are due in June 2024.

### Payment Information

Residents may now make partial tax payments online through the Township website. Any partial payment must be *enough to cover all interest due* at the time of payment. Any credit left will go toward the oldest principal balance. Please also allow two business days for the payment to process and for the account to be updated. If you have questions or are unsure about how to make a payment, please call the office.

For homeowners using their bank's website to generate a payment, please be aware that these are not electronic transfers between banks. Payments are in the form of material checks that are mailed to the Rockaway Township Municipal Building, so *please allow enough time for the check to arrive*. Your payment is processed effective the date of receipt, and interest is charged accordingly. When using your bank's website for payment, we ask that you:

- Please review the account information and update if necessary.
- Please do not use Rockaway Township as your payor, but instead, be more specific. Please use Rockaway Township Tax Collector, Rockaway Township Sewer Maintenance and Rockaway Township Municipal Utility.
- Please provide as much information as possible so payments are applied correctly.
- Payments cannot be held for over 24 hours, so please make sure date of payment is appropriate or it will be returned to you.
- If you are making partial, blanket payments, please reach out to the office so we can note your account. This will better ensure payments are applied correctly.

## Your 2024 Governing Body

**Mayor**  
Joe Jackson

**Council President**  
**At Large Council Member**  
Howard Kritz

**Council Vice President**  
**At Large Council Member**  
Adam Salberg

**Ward 1 Council Member**  
Mary Noon

**Ward 2 Council Member**  
Jack Quinn

**Ward 3 Council Member**  
Douglas Brookes

**Ward 4 Council Member**  
Jonathan Sackett

**Ward 5 Council Member**  
Emanuel Friedlander

**Ward 6 Council Member**  
Rachael Brookes

**At Large Council Member**  
Pawel Wojtowicz

## Township Government Reorganizes on January 2



From left: Senator Anthony M. Bucco swears in Joe Jackson for a four-year term as Mayor of Rockaway Township; Mayor Jackson swears in reelected Council Members Pawel Wojtowicz, Adam Salberg and Howard Kritz; Mayor Jackson swears in Adam Salberg as Council Vice President and Howard Kritz as Council President, with assistance from Township resident Lillian Sweet.

## Residents Help Make the Township Glitter on Clean Up Day



The Township held its Fall Clean Up Day on Saturday, October 21, 2023. Several dozen volunteers braved a cool, grey morning to clean up the Mt. Hope Pond and Lake Ames areas. Left: John Ferrante, Daniel Cruz and Mark Patalive of E2 Project Management collect waste in the woods near Lake Ames. Right: Cathy and Ed Mariani, Karen Yacavino, Alyssa Miller and Valerie Kuglin clean up the beach, trails and woods surrounding Mt. Hope Pond. Participating groups were eligible for New Jersey Clean Communities mini-grants and Township promotional items for their efforts.

## Holiday Gift Drive a Success

The Rockaway Township Division of Health began their second annual food and gift card campaign to alleviate the financial burden some residents face during the holiday season. Due to the increased need in our community, the drive expanded to collect not only food and gift cards, but also the donation of toys. The campaign, which had the full support of Mayor Joe Jackson, was organized by the Township’s Local Health Outreach Coordinator and Program Development Specialist, Brittany Bernstein. The Township partnered with Brenda Budd Dunn, Municipal Alliance Committee Coordinator, to distribute goods to underserved families of the Rockaways through the Holiday Wishes program.

Donations were collected between November 9, 2023-December 12, 2023., and thanks to the generosity of our community, the Division of Health collected over 250 pounds of non-perishable food, 87 toys and \$400 in gift card/check donations. Many gift cards were received, including a significant donation from the Rockaway Township Police Athletic League (RTPAL).

The Division of Health wishes to thank everyone that made generous donations to our first annual food/gift drive. Your gifts are helping many families during the holiday season. Additionally, we would like to thank Brenda Budd Dunn and the Holiday Wishes program for their hard work and dedication to our residents.

## Remove Snow Before You Go

The Rockaway Township Police Department wishes to remind residents that all ice and snow is to be removed from your vehicle before driving, particularly from the hood, windows and roof. *It’s the law in New Jersey!*

Motorists who fail to remove snow and ice face fines of \$25 to \$75 for each offense, regardless whether the ice and snow is dislodged from the vehicle. If flying ice or snow causes property damage or injury to others, motorists face fines of \$200 to \$1,000 for each offense.

So...Remember to remove ice and snow before you go!



Police Chief Martin McParland and Captain Robert Scherr recognize Sergeant Marci Greenberg on her November 30, 2023 retirement. Sergeant Greenberg spent 25 years serving the residents of Rockaway Township.

# Recycling News from the Department of Public Works

## Holiday Makeup Schedule for Recycling

Residents on recycling Route A are advised of a very *important update*: New in 2024, recycling holiday makeup days are scheduled for *the Friday before your usual Monday pickup*. For a copy of your schedule, including makeup days, go [here](#), click on the 'My Schedule' tab and input your home address. From here, you may view your current month, and you may click on 'Get a Calendar' to view and print the entire annual schedule on a page. We strongly encourage all residents to sign up for important alerts—click 'Get a Reminder' to sign up for reminders and alerts, such as cancellations or postponements.

## Curbside Recycling

Curbside recycling is single stream (no sort) recycling. If you bring your materials to either of the recycling centers, the materials must be source-separated (cardboard separated from cans and bottles, newspaper and junk mail). Plastic bags are *not permitted* in single stream collection, nor are they accepted at either Township recycling center. Weight restrictions are in









effect for single stream recycling. Please use either a toter style recycling can with the bar on the back, filled to capacity (preferred) or if you opt to use regular style receptacles, they may weigh no more than 50 pounds each (including can). Additionally, please make sure your recycling is free of garbage, Styrofoam and plastic bags. All cans must be labeled. Failure to follow these procedures may result in your can being rejected. It will be stickered accordingly to reference why it was not collected.

## Label All Cans

Residents are reminded to label all receptacles before placing at the curb. The Township has 'Recycling' and 'Vegetative Waste' stickers available for your convenience. Because various collections are held on the same day (garbage, recycling, etc.), there are multiple cans at curbside. Please label your receptacles to ensure proper collection. If you would like labels mailed to you, please call 973-983-2891. To make a request, include your name and address, and a packet will be sent to you.

# From the Fire Department: Put a Freeze on Winter Fires

**Home fires occur more in winter than in any other season.  
As you stay cozy and warm this winter, be fire smart!**

 <p><b>Half of all home heating fires</b> occur in December, January and February.</p>	 <p>Heating equipment is involved in <b>1 in every 6</b> home fires and <b>1 in every 5</b> home fire deaths.</p>	 <p>Keep anything that can burn <b>at least 3 feet</b> from any heat source like fireplaces, wood stoves, radiators or space heaters.</p>
 <p>Keep portable generators <b>outside, away from windows, and as far away</b> from your home as possible.</p>	 <p>Install and test carbon monoxide alarms <b>at least once a month</b>.</p>	 <p>Plug only <b>1 heat-producing appliance</b> (like a space heater) into an electrical outlet at a time.</p>
 <p>Have a qualified professional clean and inspect your chimney and vents <b>every year</b>.</p>	 <p>Store cooled ashes in a tightly covered metal container, and keep it <b>outside at least 10 feet</b> from your home and any nearby buildings.</p>	