

Rockaway Township Report



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www.rockawaytownship.org

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Mayor's Corner



Spring has sprung and there is no better time to come out and enjoy the Township's many open spaces. Our sports programs are underway and the Division of Recreation has been hard at work planning recreational opportunities for all ages. With the warming weather, I encourage residents to take advantage of our parks, lakes and other natural resources.

I am committed to Rockaway Township's support of programs that enhance well-being and am happy to inform residents that on behalf of the Township, I have joined the Mayor's Wellness Campaign (MWC). The MWC is a statewide community health initiative that provides tools and strategies for Mayors and community leaders to help residents achieve healthier lifestyles and to improve overall wellness. The Division of Health recently conducted a successful pilot walking challenge with staff and are working to expand this into a

community-wide event in the near future. I am also working with the Division of Health to develop an original, exciting project that will provide tips and resources for healthy eating to residents. More information on both of these initiatives will be provided in the coming weeks and months.

Fiscal responsibility is an integral part of well-being and I am proud to have once again provided a budget to the Council with a zero percent municipal tax increase for the averaged home assessed at \$437,620. The 2024 budgeting process takes much effort and I would like to thank my Administration for their hard work, as well as our Council members for taking the time before the budget hearing to give the document a comprehensive review. The Council's advance work led to insightful questions and productive conversations, which resulted in the final 2024 budget document.

This year's budget includes the hiring of three additional police officers, which is integral to the Township's public safety mission of serving and protecting Township residents, business owners and visitors. The budget's capital program includes annual roadway and drainage rehabilitation, park improvements, infrastructure maintenance and upgrades, and the purchase of a new aerial fire truck, to name just a few of its components.

To best understand the distribution of property owner tax dollars, the example below represents how many cents in every tax dollar are allocated to support municipal services.

For a summer evening of fun, festivity and camaraderie with neighbors and friends, mark your calendars for August 6. We will be celebrating National Night Out. All are welcome to enjoy the entertainment, food, planned

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Tick...Tick...Protect Yourself Against Lyme Disease

As Spring is here, and as outdoor activities increase, Rockaway Township residents are reminded to protect themselves against tick bites.

What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is a tickborne disease that has been bugging New Jersey residents since 1978, when it was first found in the State. While Lyme disease is now known to occur in the United States, Europe and Australia, most cases are found in the northeastern states. Although many species of ticks are found in New Jersey, only the Deer (Black Legged) Tick and the Lone Star Tick are known to transmit the disease, with the Deer Tick being the most prevalent. Female Deer Ticks are about 1/4 inch in length and are black and brick red in color. Males are smaller and all black.

What are the signs and symptoms of Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is often difficult to diagnose because it has numerous symptoms. The most common early symptoms of Lyme disease include a rash that resembles a bull's eye (*erythema migrans*), fever, headache, fatigue and muscle/joint pain. If not promptly treated, other progressive

symptoms may develop in some patients. Early detection of Lyme disease and prompt antibiotic treatment is critical and usually prevents more severe health problems.



When the larva or nymph feeds on an infected animal, the tick picks up the spirochete, carries it through the next stage, and transmits it to the host the next time it feeds. Humans may get Lyme disease when an infected tick begins to take blood and passes on the spirochete to them. *Infected deer ticks generally must feed for at least 12 – 24 hours* before they can begin to transmit the Lyme bacterium, so frequent self-examination and removal of ticks is useful in preventing the disease.

How are ticks involved in Lyme disease?

Ticks spread Lyme disease by transmitting the spirochete (a type of bacterium) that causes the disease.



If bitten by a tick, what do I do?

Using small forceps or tweezers, grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible and apply firm and steady backward pressure. Never try to remove the tick by burning it or smothering it with noxious chemicals. These methods do not work and may cause injury to the skin. After the tick is removed, avoid infection by applying antiseptic to the wound. You may call the Morris County Rutgers Cooperative Extension office at 973-285-8300, and can make an appointment to have your tick identified by specialists under a microscope. If you develop symptoms, contact your physician.

How can I avoid being bitten by a tick?

Take the following steps to reduce exposure when outdoors:

- Wear light-colored clothing
- Wear long pants tucked into socks
- Avoid tall grass and shrubby areas
- Remove brush from your property
- Keep grass mowed
- Thin out low shrub vegetation
- Apply tick repellent (with *permethrin* or DEET) according to directions
- Perform 'tick checks' every few hours

Wildlife & Litter: Something to Bear in Mind

Due to the presence of wildlife and Rockaway's significant amount of preserved open space, the Division of Health periodically receives calls regarding bears and other animals getting into residential garbage. Household garbage, especially that containing putrescible (food) waste, is attractive to wildlife and is often easily obtainable. Black bears, in particular, will eat a wide variety of items including human food, garbage, pet food and birdseed. Given a bear's potential to cause property damage and provide a nuisance to residents, it is important to place garbage and other refuse in suitable receptacles with tight fitting lids.

The Division of Health recommends several other techniques in preventing the attraction of wildlife to your waste:

- Store garbage containers near the *inside* wall of the garage or basement, or in a secure shed.
- Wash garbage containers with a disinfectant regularly.
- Place garbage at the curb for collection in the *morning*.

- Remove bird feeders between April 1 and December 1, when bears are most active.
- Do not place meat or sweet foods with home compost.
- Clean outdoor grills thoroughly after each use.

Consider purchasing a bear-resistant trash container. You may find information on such containers [here](#) or [here](#).

Finally, please be reminded that food is an attractive nuisance to many forms of wildlife, including bears, deer, raccoons, squirrels, etc. Outdoor feeding is a violation of the NJ Public Health Nuisance Code, and the feeding of black bears in particular is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 for each offense. Please follow the tips above to prevent unwelcome encounters with wildlife.

The Rockaway Township Division of Health maintains educational brochures regarding bears and various other wildlife. Should you have any questions, please feel free to visit the Division of Health at 973-983-2848.

Timely Tips from the Tax Collector

Second quarter 2024 property taxes are due May 1, 2024. The last day for payment is May 10, 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 available in late May and are due in June 2024.

Payment Information

Please be reminded that you 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 (check) 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.



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.

- Nicholas Kopich, Department of Public Works
- Michael Fernandez, Department of Public Works
- Scott Bruseo, Department of Public Works
- Derek Simmons, Department of Public Works
- Melanie Betancur, Division of Health
- Steven Widuta, Division of Health

Mayor Jackson would like to congratulate Stephanie Cicchetti of the Tax Division on her retirement. Thank you, Stephanie, for many years of dedicated service to our residents!

Mayor Jackson also wishes to recognize the following Township employees and departments for their recent accomplishments:

- The Department of Fire, which successfully applied for a \$50,000 Assistance to Firefighter Grant through the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, for the purchase of a large diameter hose and turnout gear.

- Health Officer Peter Tabbot, who earned the Certified Public Manager credential.
- The Division of Health, Administration Department and Engineering Department, for their successful application to Morris County for a \$50,000 Community Development Block Grant to improve access and ADA compliance at the Township's Municipal Building.



Come one, come all: Residents are invited to the Township Library's Spring Festival from 12pm - 4pm on April 21. Enjoy food, games, live music, face painting and more! Rain date of April 28.



Registration for the Township's Summer Recreation Program and Mount Hope Pond opens on May 1st. Residents may check the Township website or the article on page eight of this newsletter for more information!

Update from Public Works

Recycling Calendars

Recycling calendars, flyers and useful information are available on the Township website. Calendars are available [here](#). Click on the 'My Schedule' tab and input your home address. Here, you can view or print your personalized collection calendar as well as sign up for collection reminders and service interruption alerts.

Not sure how to dispose of something? Click the 'Waste Wizard' tab and enter the material you are looking to dispose of. Click on the 'Facilities' tab for information about our locations and hours of operation. For additional information, click on the 'Print Flyers' tab to learn about single stream recycling, hazardous household waste drop off events and Rockaway Township's bulk cleanup and vegetative waste collections. Full printouts of the bulk and recycling calendars are also available in the Municipal Building lobby, as well as informational flyers and stickers to label your receptacles.

Holiday Makeup Schedule

New for 2024 – Route A only – Recycling holiday makeup days are scheduled for the Friday BEFORE your usual Monday pickup. For a copy of your schedule, including makeup days, please visit [the recycling webpage here](#). Click on the 'My Schedule' tab and input your home address. From here, you can view the current month and click on 'Get a Calendar' to view and print the entire year on one page. We strongly encourage residents to sign up for important alerts and reminders, such as cancellations or postponements, by clicking on 'Get a Reminder.'

Single Stream Recycling

Curbside collection of recyclables is 'single stream' or 'no sort.' This means you may put cans, bottles, newspapers and cardboard out together. For large quantities of cardboard, you may also breakdown smaller boxes and place them in one large box (three maximum). Recyclables may be put in toter style cans (preferred), filled to capacity, or in regular garbage receptacles no heavier than 50 pounds each. Please label all recycling cans – stickers are available at the Municipal Building – to ensure proper

collection. Recycling collection crews appreciate your cooperation in this matter. *Please note that recyclable collection at our two recycling centers is NOT single stream and must be separated into commingled (cans and bottles), cardboard and newspaper.*

Leaf, Brush & Grass Collection

Leaf, brush and grass collection resumed on April 1 and runs through December 31. These materials are collected weekly – please visit [our recycling webpage](#) and input your address for the collection schedule. Please remember to place materials at the curb by 5:00am on the designated day. Yard waste must be in either brown biodegradable bags or standard garbage cans with a lid labeled 'Vegetative Waste.' Stickers are available at the Rockaway Township Municipal Building or can be mailed to residents.

Please note that landscape barrels are *not* accepted. Receptacles may be no heavier than 50 pounds each, with three receptacles maximum (for grass). Brush must be tied and bundled in lengths no greater than four feet (4'), no heavier than 50 pounds per bundle and with branches no greater than six inches (6") in diameter. Grass and leaves may be mixed.

Grass: Cut It and Leave It

Grass Clippings are a major part of New Jersey's municipal solid waste stream, and like other highly recyclable materials – such as aluminum and steel cans, glass bottles and jars, paper and certain plastic bottles – the recycling of grass clippings helps reduce the amount of waste being collected for disposal. As a New Jersey resident, you are already reducing the amount of waste to be landfilled by recycling a variety of materials. You can also easily recycle the clippings generated each time you mow your lawn, and save time and money by doing so. *What Can You Do to Help?* It's quite simple. Remember to simply leave your grass clippings on the lawn when you mow. Grass clippings leave a natural and healthy fertilizer for a growing lawn.

(Continued on page five)

What's Happening

APRIL

- 13th Annual Spring Clean Up & Tree Seedling Giveaway *
Mt. Hope Pond, Egbert's Lake & Parks Lake
9:00am - 11:00am (free T-shirts and promotional items)
- 21st Rockaway Township Public Library Spring Festival
Rockaway Township Municipal Complex Parking Lot
12:00pm - 4:00pm (Rain date of April 28, 2024)

MAY

- 1st Summer Recreation Registration Opens (ongoing)
Online registration through Community Pass:
<https://register.communitypass.net/reg/>
- 1st Mount Hope Pond Registration Opens (ongoing)
Online registration through Community Pass:
<https://register.communitypass.net/reg/>
- 27th Rockaway, Marcella, Denville Memorial Association
Memorial Day Parade (Main Street, Rockaway Borough)
11:30am
- 27th Memorial Day
Rockaway Township Municipal Building Closed

* Pre-registration required for some Township events. Please check www.rockawaytownship.org for more information.

Hoverboard Fire Risk

The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is advising consumers to immediately stop using Evercross EV5 hoverboards because they pose a risk of fire. The CPSC received one report of a fire, resulting in substantial damage to a residential building in May 2023.

The hoverboards are manufactured by Jinhua Smart Electric Technology Co., Ltd., and are black, blue or pink, with 'Evercross' printed across the front. The hoverboards were sold online from July 2021 to the present, and were sold for between \$180 and \$300. Evercross has not agreed to recall these hoverboards or offer a remedy to consumers.

The CPSC urges consumers to immediately remove the battery packs from the hoverboards and dispose of them following local hazardous waste disposal procedures. Never throw lithium batteries in the trash or general recycling. Instead, take them to your local battery recycler or hazardous waste collection center. Report product incidents at www.SaferProducts.gov.



Update from Public Works

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Bulk Collection/Cleanup Week

Please see the aforementioned schedule for bulk collection dates. This collection is for bulky items that would not generally be placed at the curb with your regular household garbage. Items may include, but are not limited to: mattresses, box springs, couches, toilets, hot water heaters, dressers, end tables, etc. The collection is intended for disposing of a few pieces per month, not for emptying a house when moving – please consider obtaining a bagster or dumpster if you are cleaning out a house. Items must fit into the hopper of a garbage truck and must be able to be crushed. Items that are *not* acceptable include televisions, automotive parts, paint and building materials (i.e., lumber, sheet rock, tile, etc.). If you have a question regarding bulk collection, check the Waste Wizard [here](#) or call 973-983-2891.

Spring Has Sprung!

As temperatures warm, you may notice some minor damage created as a result of snow plowing. If you notice that your asphalt berm has been damaged, please contact the Township's Department of Public Works and leave your name and address and extent of the damage. A supervisor will assess the damage and your property will be placed on a list to be repaired as soon as weather and material permit.

Street Sweeping

Every Road in Rockaway Township will be swept one or more times, as necessary, over the course of the spring, summer and fall months. Roads are swept systematically, generally starting with areas surrounding bodies of water, to prevent runoff into our waterways and natural resources. Please be assured that your road will be swept. Given the size of the Township, there is unfortunately no way to effectively provide residents with advance notification of a sweeping schedule. If your property permits, please park vehicles off road to allow the road to be swept in its entirety.

Dangerous Road Conditions

Please remember that our residents are the eyes and ears of the community. Should you see a dangerous road condition such as a pothole, collapsing storm drain, downed street sign or tree/branch in the road, please contact the Department of Public Works at 973-983-2891, or call the Police Department after 3:30pm and on weekends at 973-625-4000, to report these conditions. The Department of Public Works sincerely appreciates your notifications, thus enabling us to provide safer roads.

Easter Holiday Donations

Mayor Joe Jackson and the Rockaway Township Division of Health partnered with Holiday Wishes of the Rockaways to collect food, candy, toys and gift cards to spread Easter joy throughout our community. The community showed its deep support for those in need by making generous donations at the

Township’s Municipal Building. Donations included five large bags of nonperishable foods, two large bags of Easter candy, cash and large stuffed animals.

Mayor Jackson and the Division of Health extend their deepest gratitude to those who contributed

and made Easter celebrations extra special this year for those in need. Mayor Jackson and the Division of Health will next partner with Municipal Alliance Committee Coordinator Brenda Budd Dunn during late summer for the Back to School campaign for school supply donations.

PAL Challenger Program Pairs with Community Partners

The Rockaway Township PAL (Police Athletic League) Challenger Program partners with local teams to help our athletes with special needs reach their full potential on the field, court, gym and playing arena. Student volunteers from Morris Hills, Morris Knolls and Morris Catholic High Schools, as well as other individuals from the community, help make this event a fulfilling, joyful and collaborative experience.

Children and young adults with developmental/intellectual disabilities from Rockaway Township and surrounding towns are invited to join this free program, which offers participants basketball, soccer, softball, flag football, weightlifting, fitness classes, social outings and special events. For more information about the PAL Challenger Program, email pal.rockawaytownship@gmail.com.



Rockaway Township Police Officers Kevin Miller and Robert Parks run a dribble and pass drill with Rockaway Township PAL Challenger Athletes on February 24.



Sergeant Tim Taffin takes a shot on February 10 while PAL Challenger Athletes cheer him on.

Auto Theft Car Safety Tips

-  Always lock your vehicles
-  Secure your key fobs in a safe place
-  Secure your garage door openers
-  Secure all access points to your residences
-  Invest in home security systems
-  Close and lock all windows and doors when not occupied
-  Never leave valuables in your vehicle



Public Service Announcement

Fun and Festivity at the Annual Easter Festival



Scenes from the Annual Easter Festival (left to right): The Parraga children enjoy fun and festivity at the March 23 event, which was held at Birchwood Elementary School; Division of Health Clerk Cathy Vonk and Recreation Supervisor Sue Gaeb take a momentary break from their work at the festival, which featured games, crafts, prizes and an appearance by the Easter Bunny; Mayor Joe Jackson and Susanne Jackson celebrate with the Easter Bunny.

Clean Up Day: Help Make the Township Glitter

Mayor Joe Jackson and the Rockaway Township Council are pleased to announce Rockaway Township Spring Clean Up Day, to be held in conjunction with the New Jersey Tree Recovery Campaign's free distribution of tree seedlings to residents. Both events take place on Saturday, April 13, from 9:00am to 11:00am at Parks Lake, Mt. Hope Pond and Egbert's Lake.

All residents, youth groups, scouting groups, families and other community organizations are invited to help remove litter. Participants will receive T-shirts and promotional items, and non-profit groups are eligible for mini-grants for their participation. Volunteers will meet at their assigned location and will receive gloves and bags to facilitate cleanup. Children under 18 years of age must be under parental supervision.

Free tree seedlings will be available to Rockaway Township residents as part of the New Jersey Tree Recovery Campaign. This multi-year program helps communities replace trees.

The seedlings, available on a first come, first served basis, include instructions regarding proper storage, care and planting. Residents should plant the seedlings within two days after pickup to prevent the roots from drying out.

Pre-registration is required for the cleanup. At the time of registration, participants will be assigned to the Mt. Hope Pond, Park's Lake or Egbert's Lake location. If you would like to register yourself, your family or an organization for the Annual Spring Clean Up, please contact the Rockaway Township Division of Health at 973-983-2848 by April 10, 2024. For a list of all seedling distribution locations across the state, visit www.rockawaytownship.org.



Litter impacts our quality of life, and is harmful to our environment and wildlife. Participate in Township cleanups, while educating others about litter prevention.

To become involved, call 973-983-2848

or email:

csileno@rockawaytownship.org

Recreation Programs: Underway and in the Works

Recent & Current News

The Rockaway Township Division of Recreation hosted a Rutgers University SAFETY certification course for the Township's volunteer coaches on March 14. The program was very well attended, with 46 seeking certification. Please contact the Division of Recreation at 973-983-2841 for information regarding future courses.

In February, the Division was excited to work with local PTAs in holding a multi-generational event for Township residents, entitled Students and Seniors Board Games. Township residents of multiple generations convened to have fun while challenging one another with their favorite games. The Division is looking forward to holding such events more frequently for many future afternoons full of fun and smiles.

The Division of Recreation's spring sports programs are underway. Opportunities for Township residents include baseball, lacrosse, soccer, softball and track. For more information regarding seasonal sports programs and upcoming opportunities, please check the Township website regularly.

The Annual Easter Festival was held on Saturday, March

23 at Birchwood School. Despite inclement weather, many residents made it to the event, filling the school gymnasium for fun and festivity. The Division of Recreation wishes to thank the Township staff, Morris Hills High School students, scouts and others who gave of their time to make this another very successful community event.

The Township's adult exercise program continues, with sessions currently taking place at the Township Senior Center. The next scheduled session of senior exercise begins in May. Please check the Township website for more information.

Upcoming Programs & Events

The Division of Recreation is busy readying for upcoming programs and events. Preparations are underway for the Township's Summer Playground Program and for the beach season at Mount Hope Pond, and residents can expect plenty of fun in the sun this summer.

In addition, the Gazebo Summer Concert Series will begin on Sunday, July 7, and will continue each Sunday through August 25. Please check the Township website and Facebook page for details in the coming weeks.

Police Raise Funds to Benefit Cancer Research

Members of the Rockaway Township Police Department recently raised funds amounting to \$15,000 for the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Officers raised funds by participating in the department's 'Pink Patch' program and the department's annual 'No Shave for Cancer Awareness' program, held from November 2023 to March 2024. Community members also supported the

effort by purchasing the Police Department 'Pink Patches' that officers buy and wear on their uniforms in October, recognizing Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Many thanks to all of the Township police officers and residents who took part in this effort to support cancer awareness and who made a significant sum of donations possible.



2024 Polling Locations Change

Rockaway Township, in conjunction with the Morris County Board of Elections, has made the following changes for the 2024 election cycle:

Old Polling Location	*NEW* Polling Location
White Meadow Lake Country Club	Christ Church, 140 Green Pond Road
Katherine D. Malone School	Christ Church, 140 Green Pond Road
Dennis B. O'Brien School	Fox Hills, One JFK Circle
Catherine A. Dwyer School	Senior Center, 19 Mount Hope Road

These changes were made, in part, at the behest of the Superintendent of the Rockaway Township School District. Additionally, Township Clerk Everett Falt received feedback from the Morris County Board of Elections regarding requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Further, the Township Clerk's office received a large volume of requests to return the Dennis B. O'Brien polling site to the Fox Hills location.

'We made the changes taking the totality of the circumstances into consideration. We felt the change was prudent and necessary in anticipation of/preparation for the large volume of voters for the 2024 Presidential election cycle,' stated Mr. Falt. 'By consolidating the White Meadow Lake Clubhouse and Katherine D. Malone School locations into one much larger polling venue, we will be better able to pool resources and will have an enhanced ability to deploy staff to minimize delays in voting, thereby ensuring that every resident in the Township has access to the ballot box.'

Mayor's Corner

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activities and so much more. National Night Out is a community-building event that promotes strong police-community partnerships and builds neighborhood camaraderie, making our neighborhoods safer, more caring places to live and work. It also provides a great opportunity to bring police and neighbors together under positive circumstances. Our lives have become so scheduled that we often do not take the time for self care, which is so important to our well-being. The building of community spirit and wellness has been and continues to be my priority.

I look forward to seeing you and hearing from you at upcoming Council meetings and events, as we work to build on our successes. Please consult the Township website and social media platforms for more information regarding times and dates of Township meetings and functions. There are many projects and services that I plan to bring to fruition, and your input is welcomed and appreciated. As always, I am honored to be your Mayor.

Joe Jackson
Rockaway Township Mayor



Senator Anthony Bucco of the 25th Legislative District swears in Joe Jackson on January 2, 2024, for his term as Mayor, with assistance from Susanne Jackson.