

# Borough of Dunellen



## 2024 MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL

355 North Avenue  
Dunellen, NJ  
732-968-3033  
[Dunellen-nj.gov](http://Dunellen-nj.gov)

# **BOROUGH OFFICIALS**

## **MAYOR**

**Jason F. Cilento**

## **BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Daniel "Cole" Sigmon, Finance Committee Chair**

**Teresa Alberston, Council President, Finance Committee**

**Crisol-Iris Lantz, Finance Committee**

**Joseph Paltjon**

**Trina Rios**

**Harold VanDermark**

## **BOROUGH ADMINISTRATOR**

**Alex Miller**

## **CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

**Scott Olsen**

## **BOROUGH CLERK**

**Lauren Staats**

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## Message from the Mayor

Dear Finance Committee,

I am pleased to present this enclosed proposal for the 2024 Calendar Year Budget for the Borough of Dunellen. This budget reflects our ongoing commitment to fiscal responsibility, strategic investment, and enhancing the quality of life for all residents.

As we navigate the financial landscape, it's essential to maintain our focus on prudent spending while addressing the evolving needs of our community. The proposed budget aims to strike a balance between meeting essential obligations and investing in initiatives that will propel Dunellen forward.

Key Highlights:

- **Tax Rate Decrease:** Despite facing numerous challenges, we anticipate a \$0.062 tax rate decrease, resulting in a \$68.50 increase in taxes for the average home in Dunellen. This is in line with recent years. This demonstrates our commitment to fiscal discipline and responsible governance despite difficult financial times.
- **Diversifying Tax Base:** With a roughly 12% increase in the tax burden on residents compared to other types of taxpayers, it's imperative to focus on diversifying our tax base through business attraction and commercial development. This will help alleviate the burden on residents while ensuring sustainable revenue streams for the borough.
- **Cost Reduction Efforts:** We have implemented innovative strategies to reduce costs, including lowering healthcare expenses and enhancing efficiency in various departments. These efforts have yielded tangible savings for the borough and will continue to be a priority moving forward. We will continue to explore shared services with other communities that will allow us to realize additional savings.
- **IT Security Measures:** Recognizing the importance of cybersecurity, this budget allocates a significant increase in IT spending to bolster security measures and mitigate future risks. Investing in IT infrastructure is crucial for safeguarding sensitive data, ensuring uninterrupted service delivery, and keeping our insurance costs in check.
- **Utilizing Surplus:** We recommend utilizing a portion of our sewer surplus to balance this year's budget, given the significant sewer connection fees collected in 2023. This decision is fiscally prudent and will help maintain stability in our finances. We are confident in the ability to replenish this surplus in future years.

- **Borough Restructuring:** To enhance overall efficiency, this budget includes initiatives such as appointing a Communications Coordinator to improve transparency and establishing a Department of Community Development to support economic growth efforts. These efforts will result in additional revenue for the borough and improved operations overall.

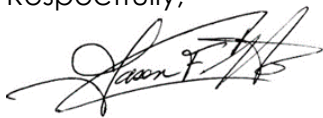
This budget also anticipates several capital projects to ensure that we keep the Borough moving forward. These include:

- **Road Improvement Projects:** We have outlined several road improvement projects, including NJDOT improvements on Second Street, a Middlesex County Mill and Pave program, and a wayfinding project for downtown. These projects aim to enhance infrastructure and improve traffic flow in key areas.
- **Park Improvements:** Gavornik Park improvements, including pickleball courts and playground enhancements, are proposed to enrich recreational opportunities for residents.
- **Safety Improvements:** We are considering embankment and parking lot improvements at the Firehouse to address safety concerns and enhance functionality. We are also recommending traffic safety studies to ensure that the borough develops a truck routing system that prevents 18-wheelers from driving down residential roads, as well as studying key intersections for safety enhancement recommendations.
- **Community Development Initiatives:** Initiatives such as a Special Improvement District analysis and a Maurer House Assessment underscore our commitment to fostering economic development and preserving historical assets within the borough.

In closing, I believe this budget reflects our shared vision for Dunellen's future and sets a solid foundation for sustainable growth and prosperity. I look forward to working collaboratively with the Finance Committee and Borough Council to ensure the successful implementation of these proposals.

If you require further clarification on my proposal, please feel free to reach out to me. I firmly believe that this plan will pave the way for Dunellen's future success, fostering improved efficiencies and a forward-thinking vision for our borough.

Respectfully,



Jason F. Cilento, Mayor

# Introduction

## Borough Profile

The Borough of Dunellen, New Jersey, nestled in Middlesex County, holds a rich history and a vibrant community spirit that makes it a desirable place to live, work and play.

Dunellen Borough was incorporated on October 28, 1887, and has since evolved into a tight-knit community with a unique charm. It was formed as a Borough by an act of the New Jersey Legislature when it broke away from Piscataway Borough based on the results of a referendum held on March 23, 1886. Dunellen's incorporation was confirmed on April 15, 1914. The borough was named for the Dunellen station of the Central Railroad of New Jersey.

With an area covering just one square mile, Dunellen stands as one of Middlesex County's smaller towns, but has much to offer! Dunellen's landscape is a blend of residential neighborhoods and commercial districts. The borough features a mix of housing options, from cozy single-family homes to modern condominiums, providing diverse choices for residents. Commercial areas dot the borough, offering a range of businesses and services to meet the needs of the community. In recent years, the Borough has seen significant redevelopment efforts which help with the viability of our community.

The community spirit thrives in Dunellen, evident through its active engagement in local events and initiatives. Residents enjoy a variety of recreational opportunities, with parks and recreational facilities scattered throughout the borough. These spaces provide venues for outdoor activities, sports, and leisure, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie among residents.

Dunellen Borough offers a blend of history, community spirit, and modern amenities, making it a sought-after destination for individuals and families alike. Its welcoming atmosphere and convenient location contribute to its reputation as a desirable place to call home in Middlesex County, New Jersey.

## Demographics

Population Estimates, July 1, 2022, (V2022)	7,575
Population estimates base, April 1, 2020, (V2022)	7,638
Population, percent change - April 1, 2020 (estimates base) to July 1, 2022, (V2022)	-0.8%
Population, Census, April 1, 2020	7,637
Persons under 5 years	3.8%
Persons under 18 years	25.1%
Persons 65 years and over	12.7%
Female persons	46.4%
White alone	42.6%
Black or African American alone	4.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.0%
Asian alone	9.0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.0%
Two or More Races	13.9%
Hispanic or Latino	45.6%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	37.9%
Veterans, 2018-2022	137
Foreign-born persons, 2018-2022	36.0%
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2018-2022	62.9%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2018-2022	\$360,600.00
Median selected monthly owner costs -with a mortgage, 2018-2022	\$2,615.00
Median selected monthly owner costs -without a mortgage, 2018-2022	\$1,105.00
Median gross rent, 2018-2022	\$1,402.00
Households, 2018-2022	2,446
Persons per household, 2018-2022	3.10

Living in same house 1 year ago, percent of persons age 1 year+, 2018-2022	91.3%
Language other than English spoken at home, percent of persons age 5 years+, 2018-2022	53.4%
Households with a computer, 2018-2022	91.6%
Households with a broadband Internet subscription, 2018-2022	86.5%
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2018-2022	89.6%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2018-2022	32.8%
With a disability, under age 65 years, 2018-2022	5.3%
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years	11.8%
Median household income (in 2022 dollars), 2018-2022	\$86,532.00
Persons in poverty, percent	20.0%
Population per square mile, 2020	7,191.1
Land area in square miles, 2020	1.06

## Dunellen Borough 2024 Valuation

2023 Net Valuation	\$845,663,000
2024 Net Valuation	\$937,674,500
Change	\$92,011,500
Change %	10.88%

2024 Tax List				
Class	Property Type	Count	Value	Average
1	Vacant Land	31	\$5,603,800	\$180,768
2	Residential	1940	\$844,875,500	\$435,503
4A	Commercial	118	\$68,208,600	\$578,039
4B	Industrial	6	\$7,064,200	\$1,177,367
4C	Apartment	13	\$11,922,300	\$917,100

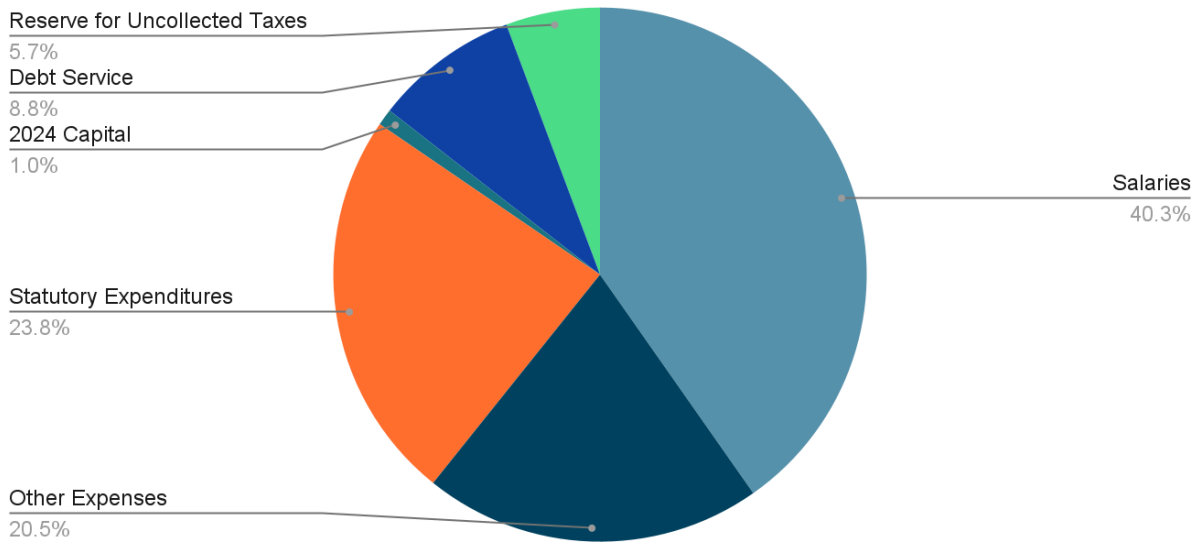
Telephone	\$100
Net Valuation Taxable	\$937,674,500

# Budget Overview & Notes

## Budget Appropriations

Within CAP	\$ 7,866,127
Outside of CAP	\$ 2,396,981
Total	\$ 10,263,108
Increase	5.57%

### 2024 Budget Appropriations



Salaries	\$4,014,643
Other Expenses	\$ 2,044,998
Statutory Expenditures	\$2,370,295
2024 Capital	\$100,000
Debt Service	\$873,216
Reserve for Uncollected Taxes	\$570,000

## Appropriations CAP

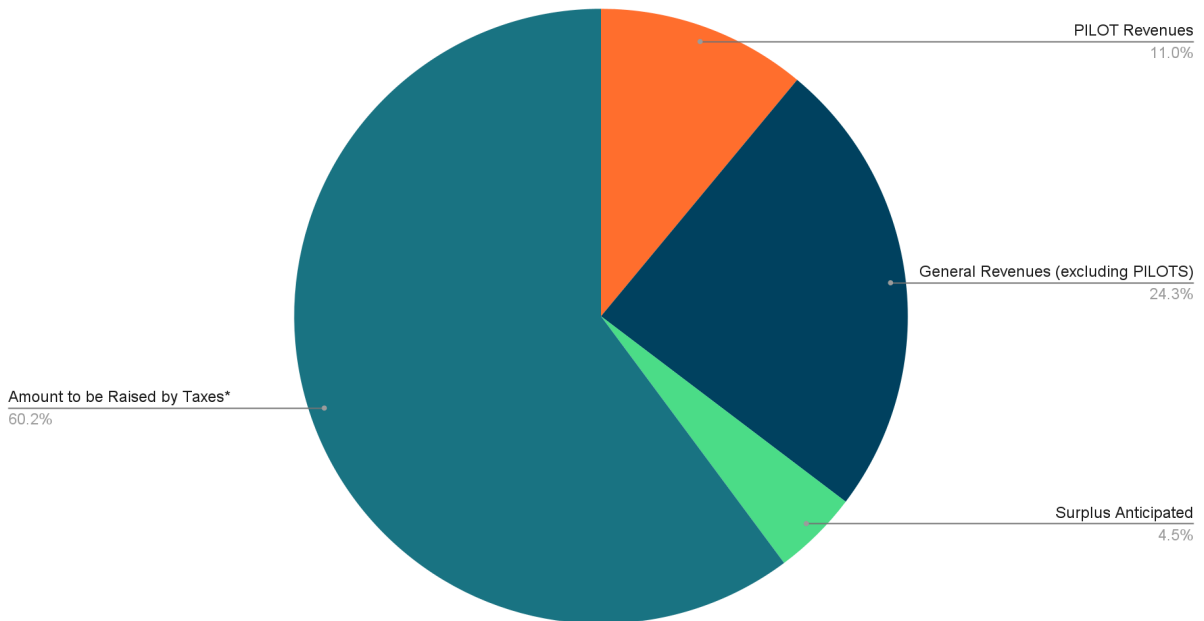
Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:4-45.3, in the preparation of its budget a municipality shall limit any increase in said budget to 2.5% or the cost-of-living adjustment, whichever is less, over the previous year's final appropriations subject to the specific enumerated exceptions.

In Dunellen in 2024 those limitations are as follows:

Maximum Allowable	\$ 7,901,875
Proposed Budget Inside CAPS	\$ 7,856,127
Bank Available	\$ 1,389.50
PILOT CAP Waiver	\$650,000
Amount Under Appropriations CAP	\$45,748

## Budget Revenues

Breakdown of General Revenues



General Revenues (excluding PILOTS)

\$2,417,616

PILOT Revenue

\$1,100,000

Surplus Anticipated

\$450,000

Amount to be Raised by Taxes\*

\$5,986,366

\*This does NOT include the statutory \$299,625 one-third ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ) of a mil calculation for the operations of the library.

## Levy CAP

The law (N.J.S.A. 40A: 4-45.44 through 45.47) establishes a formula that limits increases in each local unit amount to be raised by taxation (tax levy) for each local unit budget. The Tax Cap applies to all school districts and local governments (i.e. counties, towns, villages, and special districts) and is set at the rate of inflation or two percent, whichever is less.

In Dunellen in 2024 those limitations are as follows:

Maximum Allowable Amount to be Raised by Taxes	\$ 6,124,254
Proposed Amount to be Raised by Taxes	\$ 5,986,366
Amount Under Cap	\$ 137,888

## Key Budget Drivers

- It's imperative to highlight that approximately 90% of the expenditures outlined in this budget are tied to contractual or statutory commitments.
- Despite the prevailing trend of escalating healthcare costs in municipalities, our proactive measures have yielded a reduction of nearly 12% in healthcare expenses for 2024, while ensuring our valued employees continue to receive top-notch healthcare benefits.
- The implementation of a more efficient phone system is projected to generate savings of approximately 15% this year, with even greater savings anticipated in subsequent years.
- In anticipation of rising fuel prices, we've factored in a 10% increase in gas expenses for the fiscal year.
- This budget demonstrates a significant investment in Information Technology infrastructure, aimed at bolstering cybersecurity measures to safeguard against emerging threats and mitigate potential future insurance costs. Such enhancements not only make us stronger but also enhance overall operational efficiency.
- With our commitment to public safety, we're proposing the creation of a new position, Police Captain, to further bolster law enforcement efforts, as well as assigning a Detective Sergeant. Additionally, we've accounted for the upcoming retirement of some long-serving officers and are prepared to replace them in accordance with the recently negotiated PBA contract, which aligns police salaries more closely with those of neighboring towns.
- It's important to note that statutory expenses have risen across various fronts, including a 7% increase in the Public Employees Retirement Plan, nearly 6% in the

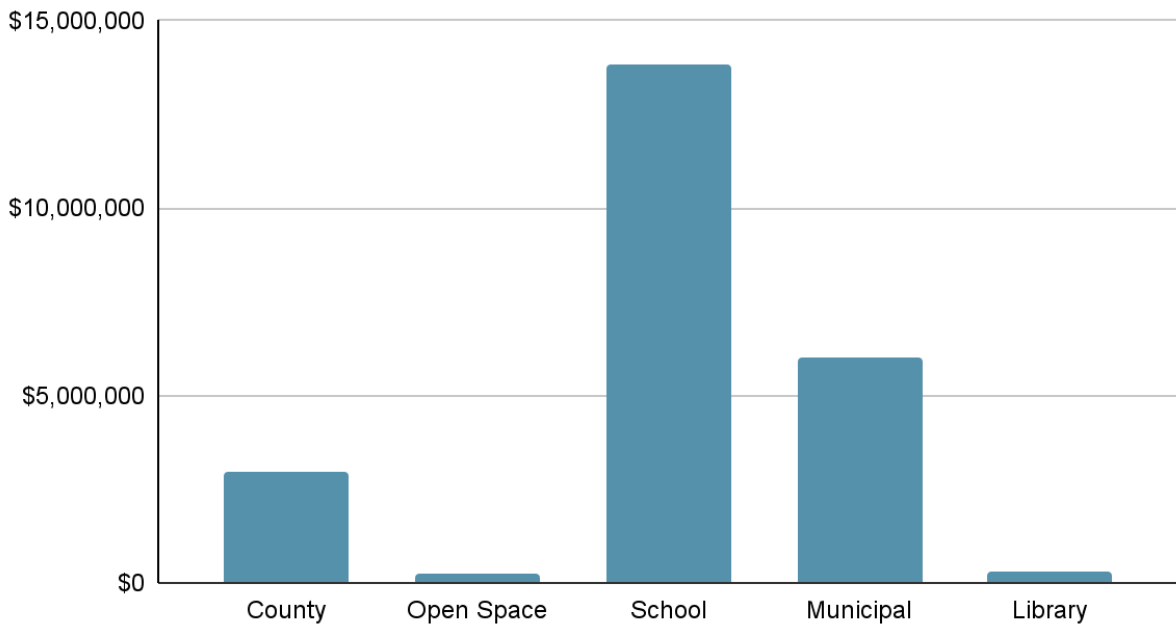
Police & Firemen's Retirement System, and an approximately 14% increase in Social Security contributions.

- Our debt service increases are mainly due to the rebuilding of the firehouse, underscoring the necessity for prudent fiscal management and strategic planning moving forward using additional revenue from future redevelopment and further cost-saving measures.
-

## Tax Breakdown & Tax Levy

The municipal portion of the tax bill is estimated to be only approximately 26% of the overall levy on any individual property. The remainder of the tax bill is attributed to the Dunellen School District, Middlesex County, Library, Board of Health, and Open Space.

### Estimated 2024 Tax Bill Breakdown



2024 Estimate:

County - \$2,970,883  
Open Space - \$262,398  
Schools - \$13,877,991  
Municipal - \$5,986,366  
Library - \$299,625

## Borough Tax Levy

Proposed Borough Tax Rate: \$.638

Tax Rate Difference: -9.57%

Important – This does not mean that residential tax bills will decrease. The true dollar value of the amount of taxes due increases or decreases for the following reasons:

- The assessed value of the property has increased or decreased in 2024.
- Given that the Borough's portion of the tax bill is only roughly 26%, the school and county budgets greatly affect the overall tax rate.

## **How Do Municipal Budget Changes Affect Taxpayers?**

A municipality's general tax rate is calculated by dividing the total dollar amount it needs to raise to meet local budget expenses by the total assessed value of all its taxable property. An individual's property taxes are then calculated by multiplying that general tax rate by the assessed value of his/her particular property. The tax rate is a multiplier for use in determining the amount of tax levied upon each property. It is expressed as \$1 per \$100 of taxable assessed value. This rate is used to compute the tax bill.

In 2024 in Dunellen, a one-cent increase in the tax rate is equal to \$93,767.44 in the municipal budget. This means to change Dunellen's tax rate by a penny we would need to either increase revenue or decrease appropriations by \$93,767.44.

In 2024, the average Dunellen home assessed at \$435,503 will pay \$2,785 in municipal taxes.

# Breakdown of Budget & Department Summaries

**Mayor & Council**  
 Jason Cilento, Mayor  
 Teresa Albertson, Council President  
 Crisol Iris Lantz, Councilmember  
 Joseph Paltjon, Councilmember  
 Trina Rios, Councilmember  
 Daniel Sigmon, Councilmember  
 Harold Vandermark, Councilmember

**Borough Administrator**  
 Alex Miller

*Brianna DeCandia,  
 Administrative Support  
 Specialist*

**Borough Clerk**  
 Lauren Staats

**Administration**  
 Alex Miller, Administrator

**Human Resources**  
 Debra Weaver, HR Manager

**Communications Coordinator**  
 Vacant

**Purchasing**  
 Kelly Cupit, QPA

**Information Technology**

**Financial Administration**  
 Scott Olsen, CFO

**Financial Administration**  
 Debra Weaver, Accounts Payable/Receivable

**Tax Assessor**  
 Dawn Gutschall, Assessor

**Tax Collector**  
 Dawn Hutchison, Collector

**Parks, Recreation & Public Works**  
 Alex Miller, Superintendent

**Recreation**  
 Kelly Seader, Recreation Manager

**Public Works**  
 Richard Herket - Foreman

**Parks**

**Community Development**  
 TBD, Director

**Construction Office**  
 Michael Rossi, Construction Official  
 Clare Acevedo, Tech. Asst. to CO  
 4 Subcode Officials

**Zoning Office**  
 Michael Mullin, Zoning Officer

**Code Enforcement**  
 George Deene  
 Kenneth Baudendistel

**Planning/Zoning Board**  
 Cherron Rountree, Secretary

**Redevelopment/Economic  
 Development/Affordable Housing**

**Municipal Court**  
 Katherine Howes, Judge  
 Theresa Crisafulli, Administrator

**Fire Department**  
 Bill Scott, Chief

**Office of Emergency Management**  
 Homer Mosley, Jr., Coordinator

**Police Department**  
 Dan Smith, Chief  
 Christopher Beenders, Lieutenant  
 5 Sergeants  
 15 Patrolmen (2 Vacancies)

## Department of Administration

The Department of Administration oversees various crucial aspects of the Borough of Dunellen. The Department of Administration handles day-to-day municipal operations, ensuring smooth functioning. Legal addresses legal matters, while purchasing manages procurement under the Qualified Purchasing Agent (QPA). The department also handles insurance affairs and is responsible for public information dissemination through the website, social media, newsletters, and messaging, including the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) profile. Human Resources manages personnel matters, and the Traffic & Pedestrian Safety division focuses on enhancing safety measures. Additionally, liaison with the public library falls under this department, serving as a valuable community resource.

Outline of Department Divisions and Responsibilities:

### General Borough Administration

- o Legal
- o Insurance
- o Engineering

### Traffic & Pedestrian Safety

### Information Technology

### Public Information

- o Website
- o Social Media
- o Newsletter
- o Messaging
- o Diversity Profile

### Human Resources

### Purchasing (QPA)

## Department of Financial Administration

The Department of Financial Administration plays a pivotal role in the Borough's financial well-being. It oversees Accounts Receivable/Payable, Payroll, Tax Assessor, Tax Collector, and Miscellaneous Fees & Licenses. Managing the financial aspects ensures proper budgeting and allocation of resources to various Borough departments, contributing to fiscal responsibility and sustainability.

Outline of Department Divisions and Responsibilities:

### Financial Administration

- o Accounts Receivable/Payable
- o Payroll
- o Miscellaneous Fees & Licenses

### Tax Assessor

#### 2023 Highlights

This year we secured several more years with PPA to do our inspections for the annual reassessment program. Because of this program, we were able to keep our assessment ratio close to 100% (99.83) again despite the market still being aggressive and strong. There were very few appeals at the County or State filed. We did finally settle with Crown Bank after years of negotiation and we do not anticipate that any appeals in the future will go for as many years or give up the revenue of that appeal.

#### 2024 Goals

Continue inspections for the annual reassessment and continue, as always, to keep the records as correct as possible.

### Tax Collector

#### 2023 Highlights

- Set up PILOT billing for 109 units to date.
- Escheated 3 foreclosed outside liens for a total of \$113,000 to the Borough. 9 parcels to Tax Sale(3 redeemed to date).
- Processing all department deposits through the cash window, adhering to the 48-hour rule.
- Created a Special Assessment account for Orange Street municipal repair of sewer lien.

- Balancing cash receipts on a daily basis to the Bank statements.

#### 2024 Goals

- Work with the CFO to take on the 1099 yearly reporting.
- Monthly bank reconciliations and posting of interest to Edmunds on all interest-bearing accounts.
- Continue to resolve sewer billing issues to have all accounts billed/reported properly.
- Foreclose on 2 municipal liens.

#### Potential Revenue Generators and/or Shared Services

- Implement a Tax Search \$10/Cert of redemption, \$50 Multiple redemption request, and \$25 revenue charges.

#### Future Considerations

- Looking to add additional receipt and remote capture machines to have two complete workstations.
- Add credit card processing in the office.

## Department of Parks, Recreation and Public Works

The Department of Parks, Recreation, and Public Works caters to the community's well-being and leisure. The Recreation division organizes diverse programs for youth, seniors, and adults, along with special events, arts and culture initiatives, and the Municipal Alliances. Parks oversees reservations for various facilities, including parks, the senior center, and the firehouse. The Public Works division handles stormwater management, recycling programs, sewer systems, tires, and the Shade Tree Commission, contributing to the overall environmental well-being and aesthetics of the Borough.

Outline of Department Divisions and Responsibilities:

### Recreation

- o Youth programs
- o Senior programs
- o Adult Programs
- o Special Events
- o Arts and Culture
- o Municipal Alliance

### 2023 Highlights

Recreation Summer Camp had our highest enrollment in 10 years. 10 years ago we had 10 kids enrolled, this past summer we had 49 kids. Over 100 basketball players registered. Youth tennis continues to sell out with 35 players each season. Baseball and softball had 88 players registered along with 10 volunteers. We had a total of 622 kids enrolled in all our youth programs and 53 volunteer parent coaches. We hosted 9 town events, 2 senior citizen luncheons (holiday and picnic), as well as monthly pizza parties and monthly days at the movies. Recreation partnered with the Dunellen Public Library to offer four nights of Movies in the Park this past summer; and organized Dunellen Recreation Night at the Somerset Patriots event in June for nearly 80 attendees.

Additionally, Dunellen Recreation implemented 4 new programs last year:

- Adult Pickleball - last year's enrollment was 78 and this year we are up to 111.
- Adult Yoga-which this year maxed out with 15 registrations (free for senior citizens).
- Youth Winter Flag Football with an enrollment of 33 players.

- Spring Open Soccer with an enrollment of 102 players; and 13 Coach volunteers which was our largest program.

#### 2024 Goals

- Increase our program enrollment.
- Add a volunteer picnic day. This will be a day to honor and celebrate our volunteers and it will also entice community members to get involved with different volunteering opportunities the borough offers. It will also connect different committees and organizations.
- Add a Sydney McLaughlin Day.

#### Potential Revenue Generators and/or Shared Services

Shared services with the Board of Education- We share expenses such as utilities, Porter John services, and building and grounds, which offset approximately \$40,000. We also share a few youth sports programs with Middlesex Borough.

#### Parks

- Facilities Reservations - 5 parks, senior center, firehouse

#### Public Works

- Stormwater
- Recycling - Clean Communities/Green Team
- Sewer
- Tires/Shade Tree Commission
- Motor Vehicles
- Buildings and Grounds
- Roads
- Plowing
- Maurer House
- Green Brook Flood

#### 2023 Highlights

This past year, we have expanded our capabilities; we have started to do minor sidewalk repairs, install a new catch basin with stormwater piping, and repair a section of damaged stormwater pipe; all three aspects have saved the Borough approximately \$50,000.

#### 2024 Goals

To continue to expand our capabilities to serve the borough, we have had a discussion with PARSA on minor sewer repairs. This year, we plan to develop a

road service plan and apply hot tar to South Ave, adding more longevity to the street.

Potential Revenue Generators and/or Shared Services

We already have a shared equipment service with Middlesex, and we recently purchased a new jetvac (sewer/storm water truck) that we should have by the fall of 2024. We also share other equipment with Middlesex, they borrow our bucket truck and we use their brine truck to brine our streets. In 2020 we started a shared service agreement with our School District, we share work in the parks and assist with salting the school lots.

## Office of the Clerk

The Clerk's office handles essential administrative functions, such as meeting agendas, Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests, registrar duties, vital statistics, dog licenses, and serves as the liaison for the Mayor & Council.

Outline of Department Responsibilities:

- Meeting Agenda
- OPRA
- Registrar & Vital Statistics
- Municipal Licenses (dog, food, alcohol, massage, etc.)
- Mayor & Council Liaison

### 2023 Highlights

We passed several new ordinances that generated revenue for the borough.

### 2024 Goals

- Update Soliciting ordinance
- Create a Block Party ordinance
- Start using Archive Social
- Implement agenda management software and digitize meetings
- Clean out one of the sheds at the DPW (31 boxes can be destroyed)
- Update E-code

### Future Considerations

- New OPRA laws
- Daniels Law updates

## Department of Community Development

The Department of Community Development focuses on maintaining and enhancing the Borough's infrastructure and community planning. The Office of Code Enforcement, Planning/Zoning Board, and Construction Office (Fire, Building, Plumbing, Electric) work collaboratively to ensure adherence to codes and regulations. The Redevelopment division, including the Downtown Management District, aims to revitalize and improve designated areas within the Borough.

Outline of Department Divisions and Responsibilities:

Office of Code Enforcement

Planning/Zoning Board

Construction Office

- o Fire
- o Building
- o Plumbing
- o Electric

### 2023 Highlights

Provided an essential service to the public with a high quality of professionalism and timely response.

### 2024 Goals

- Continued enforcement of the Borough regulations and Uniform Construction Code Regulations.

### Potential Revenue Generators and/or Shared Services

- Continued enforcement of rental and commercial property registrations and lead compliance registration.
- Continued enforcement of the Uniform Construction Code.

### Future Considerations

Online plan review - digital review within 12-24 months. Full lead compliance by July 2024.

Zoning Office

Redevelopment

Downtown Management Organization

Affordable Housing

Economic Development

## Police Department

The Dunellen Police Department is dedicated to ensuring public safety and maintaining law and order within the borough. Committed to effective policing, the department works closely with residents to address concerns and foster positive relationships. Duties include patrolling neighborhoods, responding to emergencies, investigating crimes, and enforcing traffic laws. The department also provides various community services, such as crime prevention programs, neighborhood watch initiatives, and educational outreach efforts aimed at promoting safety and awareness.

**Please see the enclosed Police Department Budget Request Letter included in this document as Appendix A.**

## **Municipal Court**

The Dunellen Municipal Court serves as the judicial arm of the Borough, handling a wide range of legal matters within its jurisdiction. Presided over by a municipal judge, the court adjudicates cases involving motor vehicle violations, traffic offenses, municipal ordinance violations, and disorderly persons offenses. With a focus on fairness and justice, the municipal court strives to uphold the rule of law while ensuring due process for all individuals who come before it.

## Fire Department

The Dunellen Fire Department is dedicated to protecting life, property, and the environment from the dangers of fire and other emergencies. Composed of trained firefighters, the department provides rapid response to fires, hazardous materials incidents, and other disasters. In addition to firefighting and rescue operations, the department conducts fire prevention education programs and community outreach initiatives aimed at promoting fire awareness and prevention.

### 2023 Highlights

Ongoing rebuild of Fire Department following 2021 fire.

### 2024 Goals

- Re-occupy the firehouse and place new apparatus in service.
- Recruit new members and retain current members.

### Future Considerations

As we reoccupy the newly renovated firehouse, there are several new, unknown ongoing maintenance/testing costs. Although costs are unknown at this time, items such as elevator maintenance and testing, oil/water separator testing, quarterly fire sprinkler testing, annual fire alarm testing, fire alarm monitoring service, annual service of the new HVAC system, annual costs for security access and camera systems, generator testing. There are possibly additional, unknown services that may be required once we occupy.

## Office of Emergency Management

The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) plays a crucial role in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies and disasters within the borough. Working in coordination with local, state, and federal agencies, the OEM develops emergency plans, conducts training exercises, and coordinates emergency response efforts during crises such as natural disasters, severe weather events, and public health emergencies. The office also provides public education and outreach on emergency preparedness and safety measures, empowering residents to protect themselves and their families during times of crisis.

### 2023 Highlights

- OEM and CERT Teams completed approximately 300 hours of training.
- Participated in County-sponsored exercises on Sheltering and Search & Rescue
- OEM was awarded a shelter cache of supplies from the State which was utilized
- at the recent Dunellen Hotel fire. An overnight shelter was established at the
- Senior Center for the displaced hotel residents.
- Sponsored Preparedness and CPR/AED sessions for the community.
- CERT members were activated for numerous community events, parades, and
- fairs and assisted our Police Department.
- Three amateur radio operator licenses were obtained to back-up Emergency Communications.
- OEM received its second Emergency Management Grant Award of \$10,000.
- OEM purchased CERT PPE and uniforms from the grant proceeds.
- OEM purchased an additional TV monitor for the Dunellen EOC.
- OEM purchased 4 handheld amateur radios for our licensed operators.
- OEM purchased other equipment for the EOC (workstation, computer monitor, and shredder).
- OEM received an additional trailer of equipment for CERT Activations. CERT members completed Points of Distribution, Non-Medical Rehabilitation, and Crowd/Traffic Control training as well.
- All the training, exercises, programs, and activations OEM and CERT Teams participated in to help provide the knowledge and experience needed to assist in the event of an emergency.
- OEM and CERT participated in School Reunification (Active Shooter) Training and Drill.

### 2024 Goals

- Continue credentialing OEM and CERT members through training, exercises, and drills.

- Increase residential CERT training and membership on the CERT Team.
- Continue to educate the residents regarding emergency preparedness.
- Continue OEM's and CERT's presence at community events.
- Plan and Implement Dunellen's Emergency Operations Center (priority).
- Update Dunellen's Emergency Operations Plan (due 6/30/2024).
- Strengthen relationships with schools, churches, non-profits, and NGOs.
- Increase youth and student participation in emergency preparedness.
- Assist the schools with their Reunification Plans (a priority for an active shooter event).
- Submit our residential emergency shelter plans to the Middlesex County OEM(priority).
- Submit a third EMMA Grant Application to obtain a third \$10,000 for the Borough's OEM.
- Conduct a 2nd successful LEMC meeting by June 30 (a criterion for the EMMA Grant).
- Conduct a tabletop exercise with first responders and Annex Authorities (for EMMA Grant).

#### Potential Revenue Generators and/or Shared Services

- Obtainment of a 3rd EMMA Grant (\$10,000) for OEM Equipment and Operations.
- Obtain the acceptance of a CERT Mutual MOU for our municipal neighbors.

#### Future Considerations

- Code Red legislation (Cooling Centers)
- Additional State Training Requirements for OEM and CERT

# Capital

In New Jersey, a capital budget does **not** appropriate or authorize the expenditure of any funds. New Jersey's "Local Budget Law" requires each municipality to adopt a capital strategy each year. This is actually a plan and any expenditures will need to be evaluated and approved by the Borough Council prior to moving forward. This plan anticipates future needs but does not fund them.

To fund capital projects, the Borough Council votes to introduce capital ordinances at a public meeting. A notice of the public hearing on an ordinance is published in the newspaper. The public hearing is held, after which the Borough Council votes to adopt (or not) that ordinance. Only then, after input from the public and multiple Borough Council votes, can capital projects move forward.

These capital recommendations are lower than the past couple of years given that Dunellen's debt ceiling is nearing capacity. While a majority of the proposed 2024 plan is going toward road improvements, there is also a notable focus on building improvements and economic development efforts.

Capital Recommendations	\$2,000,000
Total Recommended Appropriations	\$100,000
Total Debt Recommended to be Authorized	\$1,900,000

## 2024 Recommended Capital Projects

The below list of items are to be considered for capital, the total amounts and how much is actually funded is subject to further review from Administration and the Governing Body.

**Borough Hall HVAC and Police Safety Entrance- \$120,000.00** Installation of HVAC on the second floor and the Tax office. Installation of call box and buzz in system outside the police station entrance on North Ave.

**Second Street NJDOT Improvements Phase I- \$760,000:** Between Madison Ave and the Middlesex Border. Repair damaged curbs, mill and pave. Improved pedestrian and traffic safety measures along the road. A grant from Municipal Aid CY22 in the amount of \$619,460. The project needs to be designed and contracted this year for grant funds to be appropriated.

**Middlesex County Mill and Pave- \$350,000:** Shared Service agreement with Middlesex County mill and pave program. Roads proposed to be paved are:

- Third Street from Fourth Street to Mountainview Terrace
- Mountainview Terrace from Third Street to Madison Avenue
- Madison Avenue from Mountainview Terrace to the Green Brook border

The purpose is to complete this section of town after NJAW did work there two years ago.

**Traffic and Truck Route Study- \$37,000:** The purpose is to develop a truck route in Dunellen to prevent 18-wheelers from going down residential roads and to support through ordinance development to enforce. In addition, two intersection studies at South Madison Ave and Walnut St and Prospect Avenue and Walnut St. This will help to see what traffic calming measures can be taken at these two intersections.

**Wayfinding Project for Downtown - \$279,000:** Received a Transit Village grant in CY22 for \$226,000 to help with wayfinding downtown. Wayfinding will provide clear and intuitive directions to help individuals reach their destinations efficiently and safely. The project needs to be designed and contracted this year for grant funds to be appropriated.

**Gavornik Park Improvements - \$1,200,000:** Proposed pickleball courts in Gavornik Park along with new playground. We have contacted the county for a matching grant for the total project. If the county grant does not come to fruition, the borough needs to fund the pickleball courts or we are at risk of losing an \$80,000 grant from the state for recreational facilities. This will help to see what traffic calming measures can be taken at these two intersections.

**Special Improvement District - \$20,000:** Fund a study to explore the benefits of a special improvement district in downtown in order to cultivate economic development.

**Maurer House Assessment - \$40,000:** We currently have \$24,000 in bonds for this purpose which will allow us to execute a full assessment of what needs to be completed in order to open the building for public use.

**Curb improvements - Estimated \$150,000:** NJAW doing Penfield Place and Maple Ave. Repair damaged curbs and replace driveway aprons in the area before NJAW mill and pave the remainder of these roads.

**Embankment and Parking Lot at Fire House - Estimated \$1,000,000:** We have roughly \$330,000 in bonds to improve the embankment for a design CME Associates completed in 2020. We need additional funds to include inflation costs and the parking lot as that was not part of the initial scope of work. We plan to approach MCIA to assist the funding of this project so it does not directly impact our debt ceiling.

**Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) Lights - Estimated \$300,000:** Propose RRFB lights at Madison Ave and First Street and Dunellen Avenue, leading to the High School and Middle School, if bonding capacity or MCIA funding allows for the project to be funded in 2024.