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Message from the Mayor
Jason F. Cilento
March 2024

In this March Message from the Mayor, I share information about Dunellen's recent efforts to save money on health benefits, updates on infrastructure improvements, and encouraging volunteering in Dunellen.

Borough of Dunellen Finding Ways to Save in Healthcare Costs: At the Council meeting on February 20th, the Borough of Dunellen Council approved entering into a strategic partnership with EB Employee Solutions, LLC, operating as The Difference Card, in a proactive effort to optimize taxpayer savings while maintaining high-quality healthcare benefits for Borough employees. The new agreement with The Difference Card offers a unique healthcare MERP (Medical Expense Reimbursement Plan) solution, allowing the Borough to maintain robust employee benefits without increasing employee contributions or reducing their benefit package. This strategic move is anticipated to result in substantial taxpayer savings, with projections estimating savings between \$65,000 and \$131,020 over the next year alone. The Borough anticipates long-term savings of up to \$784,119 over the next five years. This is just another example of the Borough Administration's efforts to find long-term solutions that will help to manage rising healthcare costs. The Borough has also amended its policy to ensure that employees contribute to their health care premiums both while employed and in retirement. By leveraging these innovative solutions, Dunellen is setting an example for municipalities across the region, demonstrating a proactive approach to fiscal management while prioritizing employee well-being.

Kline Place Road Improvements: The anticipated road improvements to Kline Place for which the Borough received NJDOT Municipal Aid grant funds are expected to begin by the start of April. The project's first phase will include the replacement of the sewer main from West Fourth Street to Kennedy Court, a new storm water system consisting of nine new catch basins, and cleanouts installed at each residential property that will be tied into the storm water system. Phase two will include the installation of a new walkway from Kline Place to Columbia Park, the milling and paving of Kline Place, and enhanced stripping. The project is anticipated to be completed this summer. We are happy that we are nearing this long-anticipated infrastructure improvement.

Second Street Road Improvement Project - Phase 1: Dunellen received NJDOT Municipal Aid grant funds in 2023 to make improvements to Second Street from the Dunellen and Middlesex border to Madison Avenue. We are working with our engineers to bid on and contract for this project in 2024. We are designing the project to include the removal and replacement of damaged curbs, the installation of ADA-compliant sidewalk ramps, milling and paving of the road, as well as enhancements in the area for traffic and pedestrian safety measures.

Furthermore, we recently received NJDOT Municipal Aid grant funds to continue improvements on Second Street between Madison Avenue and North Washington Avenue; this section of the project will be anticipated for engineering, design, and construction in 2025.

Center Street Mill & Pave Project: In 2023, the Borough of Dunellen and Piscataway Township entered into a shared service agreement for the milling and paving of Center Street. We began the project last year with improvements to several sections of damaged curbs and the addition of new compliant ADA sidewalk ramps. This project will include the milling and paving of the entire length of Center Street, and it is anticipated that this project will begin in the summer.

Pulaski Street Culvert Project: Middlesex County is working on the removal and replacement of the culvert along Pulaski Street. The newly designed and soon-to-be constructed culvert will be larger in size compared to the previous one, and it is anticipated that it will increase the water flow in the Bonygutt Brook, therefore easing the risk of increased flooding in the area. Additionally, the project will include the installation of new ADA-compliant sidewalk ramps at the intersections of Pulaski Street and South Avenue, as well as Pulaski Street and Walnut Street. The road will also be milled and paved. The Pulaski Street Culvert Project is anticipated to be completed by the end of the summer.

New Jersey American Water Projects:

- **Washington Ave Water Main Replacement:** During the winter, NJAW removed and replaced water mains along North Washington Avenue between First Street and North Avenue. This enhancement provided new water services to each residential and commercial property, as well as replacing all fire hydrants. The final phase of this project will be the milling and paving of this section of North Washington Avenue, as well as a double yellow line from North Avenue to the Dunellen/Green Brook border. We anticipate this project being completed by the end of summer.
- **Penfield Place and Maple Avenue Project:** NJAW is expected to replace water mains along Penfield Place (between South Washington Avenue and Maple Avenue and all of Maple Avenue). Phase I of this project will include the removal and replacement of water mains, the installation of new water services, and the replacement of all fire hydrants. Phase II of the project will include the milling and paving of these sections of roads, which occur approximately 90 days after the sewer main and other services are completed. We anticipate this project being completed by the fall.

Volunteer Picnic Day: There is a reason Dunellen is referred to as the Miracle Mile and the Volunteer Town. Dunellen has over 20 different boards, committees, and commissions that are made up of resident volunteers. Dunellen also has its own volunteer emergency services: the Fire Department, the Rescue Squad, and OEM/CERTs. On April 28th at noon, myself, along with Borough Council and Dunellen Parks and Recreation Department, will be hosting our very first volunteer picnic day! This is our way to celebrate and say thanks to all of our wonderful volunteers, who all make Dunellen a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family. This will be a wonderful opportunity for residents to get to know what volunteer opportunities are available. In addition, we will be hosting a Mayoral Town Hall: Volunteering in Dunellen. On

Thursday, April 25th, at 7:00 p.m. at the Dunellen Senior Center at Columbia Park. At this Town Hall event, representatives from different committees and commissions will be present to display the information they provide for our miracle mile. We hope you can join us on April 28th at noon at Columbia Park to celebrate our volunteers and enjoy some food, music, and good conversation!

Thank you for taking time to read this month's message from the mayor. I am always available to listen to the ideas and concerns of our residents. My Borough cell phone number is (732) 882-4551, and my email is jciento@dunellen-nj.gov.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason F. Cilento". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "C".

Jason F. Cilento, Mayor
Borough of Dunellen