



Stephen Dalina Takes Oath as Mayor

Stephen Dalina has been appointed as mayor of Monroe Township.

Mayor Dalina and his family have been active members of the Monroe Township community for more than two decades. He was elected councilman at-large in 2011 and served as council president from 2017 through 2019.

A special election will be held in November to elect the candidate who will fill the unexpired term of the late Mayor Gerald W. Tamburro, who passed away on December 30.

“Taking on the responsibilities of Mayor during a national pandemic certainly presents unique challenges and I am fighting every day to get increased quantities of the coronavirus vaccine to Monroe as soon as possible,” Mayor Dalina said. “I take this very seriously and I will make sure

our voice is heard. I am extremely thankful to our municipal staff, as well as the township’s emergency responders and volunteers, who continue to assist residents during the lingering pandemic.”

“Beyond the pandemic, transparency, collaboration and civic dialogue in my administration are paramount,” he added. “One of my top priorities, and a way to aid transparency, is to engage with more community members and get them involved in their local government.”

It is imperative that we all work together toward the betterment of Monroe Township regardless of political affiliation. Mayor Dalina said he wants to see as many active participants in township government as possible.

He took the oath of office during the council’s January 20 meeting, pledging to continue to fulfill



the objectives that Mayor Tamburro established when he was re-elected in November 2019.

In his remarks, Mayor Dalina expressed appreciation to his family for their support, as well as offered a special acknowledgment to his late father, Stephen “Pete” Dalina, who served on the

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The Monroe Township Library, 4 Municipal Plaza, is set to reopen on March 17 for grab-and-go service.

Monroe Residents Give Back During Pandemic

There are countless stories of good deeds in Monroe over the past year. While it is impossible to feature each of the many residents who have made a difference during this pandemic – big or small – the Monroe News is highlighting just a few individuals who have selflessly helped others.

Kim Molarz

It has been a tradition in the Mayor’s Office and the Monroe Township Police Department to set up a holiday tree each October with the names of local children in need.

Throughout the holiday season, municipal employees and visitors would pull ornaments with names off the tree, located in the Mayor’s Office, and provide gifts for those children.

The program, guided with input from the school nurses at the township schools, helped ensure that all children in Monroe would have a happy holiday season, despite the many challenges at home.

2020 was an extremely difficult year for many Monroe families, which is why more than 100 names appeared on the tree. Together,

employees and others donated more than \$8,000 in gift cards and other items to help out the children.

One of those employees was Kim Molarz, a transportation dispatcher at the senior center.

“With concerns about COVID and so many people losing their jobs, it is important that the kids don’t suffer,” Molarz said.

During the weeks preceding the holiday, Molarz and her daughters would continually drop by the Mayor’s Office to pull more and more names of children off the tree,

doing much more than their part.

“If it wasn’t for kind-hearted people like Kim and her daughters, we wouldn’t have been able to provide gifts for so many of these children,” said Eileen Biennas, executive assistant to the mayor. “There was such a demand this year, and Kim’s family truly stepped up. We are so appreciative of their generosity.”

Molarz said she brought home one of the ornaments and asked her 24-year-old daughter if she

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TOWN HALL

1 Municipal Plaza • Monroe Township, NJ 08831
www.monroetwp.com

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mayor:

Stephen Dalinasdalina@monroetwp.com

Council President:

Miriam Cohenmcohen@monroetwp.com

Council Vice President:

Elizabeth Schneidereschneider@monroetwp.com

Council Members:

Terence Van Dzuratvandzura@monroetwp.com

Leonard Baskinlbaskin@monroetwp.com

Charles Dipierrocdipierro@monroetwp.com

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Township Main Number(732) 521-4400

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Construction Office(732) 656-4585

Court Administrator(732) 521-4020

Township Engineer(732) 605-9440

EMS & First Aid (non-emergency) (732) 521-1880

Health Department(732) 521-4400 ext. 192

Environmental Protection .(732) 521-4400 ext. 118

Monroe Township Library(732) 521-5000

Utilities Department(732) 521-1700

Office of Senior Services(609) 448-7140

Parks Department(732) 723-5000

Police (non-emergency)(732) 521-0222

Public Works(732) 656-4575

Recreation(732) 723-5000

Recycling(732) 656-4575

Tax Collector(732) 521-4405

Township Clerk(732) 656-4573

Traffic Safety(732) 521-0222 ext. 126

Transportation(609) 443-0511

From the Mayor's Desk

We Won't Stop Pushing for Vaccine Until All Monroe Residents Have Access

As I write this, there have been more than 2.5 million doses of vaccine administered in New Jersey, while the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine has begun rolling out to aid in this historic effort to combat a global pandemic.

Administering more vials of vaccine is certainly a cause for celebration – both in medical innovation and complex logistics. But too many eligible people in Monroe are still not vaccinated, nor have they been successful in scheduling an appointment through a complex and inefficient state scheduling system.

Like many of you, I am trying to be patient by recognizing that there are still not enough vaccines to serve the people of Monroe. It is an unfortunate fact – despite all the promises we all hear from Trenton and Washington.

I am still calling for

improvements to the state's complicated vaccine distribution system, which has been maxed out since January. My staff and I are on the phone with the state often, demanding the improvements that will ensure every Monroe resident can get vaccinated in a reasonable time period.

We are not sitting on the sidelines. Together with the Township Council, my staff and hundreds of Monroe volunteers are stepping up to help those seniors who do not have access to technology or family support in this effort. I am proud of Monroe. As we always do, neighbors are helping neighbors, and we are making a difference for our most vulnerable.

We will continue to fight for an increased local supply and continue to connect our residents who are in need with Monroe volunteers who can help



Mayor Stephen Dalina

them secure appointments.

If you are a senior or other individual without access to technology or family support and need help navigating the complex state system, please call my office at 732-521-4400 ext. 114 to be matched up with a volunteer. Anyone interested in joining our volunteer team, please e-mail us at volunteer@monroetwp.com

I know these are frustrating days for all of us – but the Township Council and I will continue to fight for our residents. It will require diligence and perseverance – which are two key traits that Monroe residents rightfully demand from their leaders. ■

Terence Van Dzura Sworn-In As Township Councilman At-Large



Councilman Terence Van Dzura

Terence “Terry” Van Dzura has been appointed as Councilman At-Large of Monroe Township filling the seat vacated by Stephen Dalina who was sworn-in as Township Mayor in January.

Van Dzura is a 25-year resident of Monroe Township. Through the years, he has been actively

involved in coaching youth sports, including softball and basketball. His son and daughter graduated from Monroe Township High School. He presently serves as Chairman of the Monroe Township Planning Board.

A special election will be held in November to

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Mayor Requests Planning Board to Begin Public Review of Master Plan

The Monroe Township Planning Board, with the support of Mayor Stephen Dalina, is reopening the municipal master plan this year.

Originally slated for 2020 – but curtailed because of the public health crisis – the Township will launch a full public engagement and community-wide program to obtain valuable input.

“We are committed to a thorough review of Monroe’s master plan that includes providing an opportunity for our community to weigh in on the future of our Township,” explained Mayor Dalina. “This is an opportunity for us to fur-

ther explore ways to control development, invest in traffic improvements and gain momentum on our march toward 50% preserved open space in the Township for our residents and our future.”

The Township will be reopening and updating the following elements of its master plan: including the land use plan, transportation plan and parks, open space plan and recreation plan.

“As part of this process, we will evaluate the current state of our state Supreme Court-ordered affordable housing requirements, which comprises 96 percent of the

future housing growth in our Township over the next five or more years,” Mayor Dalina said. “Monroe was originally faced with a much greater number of court mandated affordable units, but we were successful in reducing that amount by more than half.”

Mayor Dalina said the Master Plan review will focus on municipal land use zoning, road and transit improvements. It will set a vision for future open space acquisitions, as well as new parks and recreation planning.

The Mayor and Planning Board will be announcing this spring a



comprehensive public outreach campaign for the master plan, including community-wide surveys, public workshops and other aggressive ways to solicit community input.

All relevant documents will be posted on the municipal website, MonroeTwp.com, for public review as the process move forward. ■

Van Dzura Sworn-In *Continued from page 2*

elect the candidate who will fill the unexpired Councilman At-Large term of Stephen Dalina who was appointed Mayor on January 20.

He was nominated by Council Vice President, Elizabeth Schneider, who referred to Van Dzura as “fair but firm” in his dealings with planning board applicants.

Van Dzura took the oath of office during the council’s regular meeting on February 1, pledging to listen to residents while making decisions in the best interest of the Township. “We may not always agree, but I will always listen,” he said. During his

comments, Van Dzura thanked Mayor Dalina and Council for the honor.

Van Dzura has been a licensed New Jersey attorney since 1981. He is a former judicial law clerk and served as assistant Middlesex County prosecutor for three years. Van Dzura has served as an arbitrator for the Middlesex County Superior Court and also has served as the municipal prosecutor for the Township of Edison and Carteret Borough. He is general counsel to a number of local homeowners’ associations.

Throughout his law career, Van Dzura has handled all aspects of

personal injury claims and workers compensation matters. In addition to being a successful business and real estate attorney, he has vast experience with criminal jury trials and municipal court cases.

Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Van Dzura became a member of Trial Lawyers Care, which assisted 9/11 victim families on a pro bono basis.

Van Dzura attended Woodbridge High School

and is a 1978 graduate of Rutgers University. He earned his law degree from the New England Law in Boston and currently practices from his office in East Brunswick. ■

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Dalina Takes Oath of Office *Continued from page 1*

county commissioner board for 19 years and was director in 2009. “My dad is always in my heart and I carry his guidance and wisdom with me every day of my life,” said the mayor, noting his brother, Rick, and his nephew, Kevin, have also been inspired to serve the public in elected office in Middlesex County.

As state, county and local officials focus on vaccinations, Mayor Dalina said, a main objective of his office is to ensure Monroe residents are aware of all local opportu-

nities to receive these vital inoculations.

“My initial goal will be to fight to get increased quantities of the coronavirus vaccine to Monroe as soon as possible,” Mayor Dalina said. “Right now, I’m very concerned about the limited number of vaccines coming from the federal and state stores.

Mayor Dalina said another top priority will be to reach out to various constituents in the township, from leaders of boards and commissions,

to department heads, to the Board of Education to state officials who represent and serve Monroe. “I want to engage in these important conversations and foster inclusivity, as we all work toward a common goal,” the mayor said.

The new mayor has been heavily involved in volunteer service for Monroe. He formerly served as chairman of both the Monroe Township Zoning Board of Adjustment and the Recreation Advisory Board. He is a past member of the Monroe Township Base-

ball Association Executive Board, serving as League president in 2007 and 2008, the former president of the Rutgers Club from 2005 to 2010, and previously served as secretary, treasurer and president of the Northern New Jersey Chapter of the Association of Records Managers and Administrators.

As a Council liaison, Mayor Dalina currently sits on the Monroe Township Library Board, the Citizens Review Board as chairman, the Affordable Housing Commission as chairman and the Recrea-

tion Advisory Board.

Mayor Dalina, a Woodbridge native, moved to the third ward with his wife, Susan, and two children in 1998. He is the director for Rutgers University’s Business and Administrative Services, and he served as a part-time lecturer in the School of Communication at Rutgers. He earned his bachelor of arts degree from Rider University and has a master of library science degree from Rutgers. ■

Giving Back *Continued from page 1*

would be interested in helping. Much to her surprise, her daughter not only picked out her own ornament but had two of her friends select ornaments as well.

“It was a pleasure to help the kids enjoy their holidays,” Molarz said, “I wish we could do more, I would have done the whole tree if I could.”

Janet Baptista

The Monroe Township Mayor’s Office issued a request for volunteers to grocery shop for people who could not venture out during the thick of the pandemic. One resident, Janet Baptista, was quick to rise to the occasion, helping out an elderly man in town.

“There are still so many unknowns when it comes to COVID,” Baptista said, “Knowing that at least one

person didn’t have to venture out, taking their life into their hands just to buy groceries, was reassuring.”

The township provided the names and phone numbers of people needing assistance and let the volunteers call and coordinate their schedules. These “little lifts” to help neighbors and strangers in town made all the difference for dozens of people who participated.

“We made sure to follow all social distancing protocols,” Baptista said. “He left money outside and let me know what he needed. When I returned, I left the items at the step and rang the bell. It was a super easy way to give back to the community.”

“I could tell he was really thankful.”

Baptista offered a lesson to others who are wondering how they can make a difference during this lingering pandemic.

“Don’t be afraid to reach out,” she said. “There is always somebody out there to help you in Monroe, no matter what your needs are. It is that special kind of town.”

Santhosh Shankar

Last April, Santhosh received a WhatsApp message that would change his life and the lives of hundreds of others.

The message stated that a father and daughter, both doctors and frontline workers, were infected with COVID-19 and needed blood plasma transplants from people who recovered from COVID-19.

Shankar volunteered to

connect recipients to the right plasma donor. What started as helping just one family blossomed into helping hundreds.

“I am an IT professional working 8 hours daily and do volunteer work from 5 pm till midnight,” Shankar said. “At the height of the pandemic, I used to work at least 14 hours a day, including weekends, just coordinating and talking to various donors. My family supported me a lot in this project.”

Overseas Volunteers for a Better India (OVBI) and the India-US Forum of Monroe Township (IFM) helped Shankar connect donors to receivers. OVBI sponsored and built the website for plasma requests and donations while IFB helped raise awareness about plasma donation in



Monroe and surrounding areas.

The initiative that Shankar set forth has helped save the lives of more than 200 people in New Jersey, New York, Florida, and Georgia.

“We have received cards from people saying, ‘you saved me’ or ‘you’re an angel,’” Shankar said. “Thank you to all who donated: Your small act of kindness gave others a second chance to live.”

If you or someone you know is interested in donating plasma, please visit: <https://www.overseasvbi.org/covid19plasma/> ■

Monroe Remembers a Dedicated Community Servant

Mayor Gerald W. Tamburro, who served in elected office in Monroe for 19 years and dedicated decades of his life to public service, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, December 30, surrounded by family. He was 84.

Mayor Tamburro, always service-oriented, prepared and loyal to his community, was elected as second-ward councilman in November 2001. He went on to serve as council president for eight years before being elected mayor in 2015 and re-elected in 2019.

“The mayor was a tireless and passionate advocate for Monroe Township residents and served the township with love and pride,” said Council President Miriam Cohen.

Mayor Tamburro – always well-dressed in a suit, tie and polished shoes – became involved in public life shortly after moving to the Greenbriar adult community in 1997.

The mayor often spoke of his years of military service and its lasting effect. He kept an old Army-issued foot locker, where he stored his shoe polish. He valued and honored all veterans and made it a point to personally thank veterans whenever possible.

His close friend was former Monroe Mayor Richard Pucci, who always appreciated Mayor Tamburro’s intelligence, extreme punctuality and



Mayor Gerald W. Tamburro

focus on serving the community at-large.

“There was not a day when we wouldn’t speak,” Pucci recalled. “We had an outstanding, open-door relationship. Jerry was very special to me. He was a great public servant, and with his career in banking, he was very detail-orientated, especially when it came to finances. His advice was exceptional. He kept a close watch over the town, with plenty of integrity, which is what you need to do as mayor.”

Mayor Tamburro served as vice president of commercial lending for the National State Bank of Elizabeth and as president of a community bank in New Jersey. Tamburro also earned a graduate degree from the Stonier Graduate School of Banking at Rutgers University.

Mayor Tamburro was married for 60 years to the late Carole (Lombardo) Tamburro. They raised six children in a seven-bedroom home in East

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Monroe Township Ranked Among Safest Cities in America

Mayor Stephen Dalina and Chief Michael Biennas introduced five new members of the Monroe Township Police Department as the Township once again ranks among the safest cities in the state and country.

As a testament to the dedication and professionalism of its police department, Monroe Township earned top rankings in the Safest Cities and Towns in

America 2021 Report by MoneyGeek, a personal finance technology company. According to the report, Monroe Township ranked 10th safest city in America and fourth safest city in the New Jersey.

“The safety of our residents, businesses and visitors is a cornerstone to the wonderful quality of life we enjoy here in Monroe. We welcome the new class of recruits,” said Mayor

Stephen Dalina. “I am truly thankful to our men and women in blue who work tirelessly every day to keep us all safe. This recognition year after year is a testament to their hard work.”

The ranking is based on analysis of FBI standardized crime statistics and population data. Review the full report at [https://www.moneygeek.com/living/safest-](https://www.moneygeek.com/living/safest-cities/small-cities-and-towns-in-america/#full-data-set)

[cities/small-cities-and-towns-in-america/#full-data-set](https://www.moneygeek.com/living/safest-cities/small-cities-and-towns-in-america/#full-data-set).

The Monroe Township Police Department comprises 66 sworn officers. The Department consists of a detective bureau, a juvenile/youth services bureau, a domestic unit, a traffic safety bureau and has an officer assigned to senior citizen crime prevention.

“The Monroe Town-

ship Police Department is committed to keeping crime rates very low. We are thankful to Mayor Dalina and Township Council for allocating the appropriate resources toward that mission,” said Chief Michael Biennas. “This new class of recruits joins a department of highly dedicated law enforcement professionals. We wish them all well in their new roles with the department.” ■

MTPD Introduces Five New Police Officers



Officer Richard A. Diaz is a 2012 graduate of Monroe Township High School. He earned his associate’s degree in criminal justice from Brookdale Community College in May 2015. He then earned a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice from New Jersey City University in May 2019. Prior to his employment with the Monroe Township Police Department, Officer Diaz worked at the Monroe Township Department of Public Works as a road equipment operator. Officer Diaz graduated from the Cape May Police Academy on July 2, 2020.



Officer Heather M. McClain is a 2004 graduate of South Brunswick High School where she was a varsity basketball player. Officer McClain attended Centenary College from 2004 to 2006 and later graduated from The University of Scranton in 2008 with a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice. She began her career in law enforcement as a 911 dispatcher at the Camden County Sheriff’s Office in Woodbine, GA. Prior to attending the Cape May Police Academy she worked as a Monroe Township Police Department 911 dispatcher. Officer McClain graduated from the Cape May Police Academy on July 2, 2020.



Officer Jake D. Lloyd graduated from Manchester Township High School in 2017. Officer Lloyd earned an associate’s degree in criminal justice from Ocean County Community College in 2019. Officer Lloyd received his NJ PTC SLEO II certification from the Ocean County Police Academy in May 2019. His law enforcement career began when he was hired by Toms River Police Department as a SLEO I where he served from April 2018 to September 2018 for seasonal help. Prior to going to the Cape May Police Academy he worked at Mantoloking Police Department as a SLEO II for seasonal help. Officer Lloyd graduated from the Cape May Police Academy on July 2, 2020.



Officer Martina Stewart is a 2014 graduate of Marlboro High school where she was a four-year varsity athlete in soccer and two years in lacrosse, leading both teams as Captain. Officer Stewart then attended Brookdale Community College from fall 2014 to spring 2016. She then transferred to Willington University where she earned a B.S. in business management in the spring of 2019. During her college years she continued to play soccer at both Brookdale and Willington University. Officer Stewart graduated from the Cape May Police Academy on July 2, 2020.



Officer Benjamin N. Ostner is a 2007 graduate of Freehold High School. Officer Ostner attended Centenary University from August 2007 to May 2008. He then attended the College of New Jersey from August 2008 to May 2012 and studied at American College of Education. Officer Ostner graduated with a B.S. and master’s degree, majoring in history, special education and educational administration. He was employed at the Monroe Township High School as a special education teacher from July 2012 to October 2019 and he was employed by New Brunswick High School as their varsity wrestling coach from November 2017 to October 2019. Officer Ostner graduated from the Cape May Police Academy on July 2, 2020.

All Monroe Police Now Equipped with Body Cameras

The Monroe Police Department has outfitted each of its 49 uniformed patrol officers and supervisors with body-worn cameras.

“Monroe has one of the best and most professional police departments in Middlesex County and our state. Our MTPD officers work tirelessly each day to forge strong community relationships,” said Mayor Stephen Dalina. “The new body worn cameras will serve as a valuable tool for our officers, not only in gathering information but also in evaluation and training.”

Each officer received their body camera following training.

Every uniformed patrol officer is now using a body-worn camera in his or her daily operations.

“We are taking a progressive and comprehen-



Officer Jeffrey Paglio

sive approach to fortifying our commitment to public safety,” said Chief Michael J. Biennas. “Body cameras, in combination with dashboard surveillance, have proven benefits to police operations, including increased transparency and corroborating evidence. I want to thank Mayor Dalina, members of Township Council and Monroe residents for investing in this state-of-

the-art equipment.”

Visual and audio recordings from body-worn and dashboard cameras will help the Monroe Township Police Department provide a dependable evidentiary record, enhance the accuracy of police reports and court testimony, protect officers from false accusations, and assist in supervision and training. ■

Renovations are Completed at EMT Headquarters

Monroe’s Emergency Medical Services Headquarters Station 2, at 2 Municipal Plaza, recently underwent a much-needed renovation.

The First Aid and Rescue Squad has both volunteer and paid members. In one year, the paid crew of full-time and per diem/part time Emergency Medical Technicians answers nearly 7,000 emer-

gency calls.

The Township’s medical responders and health professionals have trained more than 2,850 people who are now EMTs, firefighters, police officers, school nurses or provide services for adult communities and nursing facilities. The training includes everything from CPR and basic first aid, as



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Parker Remembers Mayor Tamburro

By Roberto Muñiz

When I think of the passing of our friend, Mayor Gerald W. Tamburro, I think back on one of the most satisfying days of my career.

It was March 11, 2015, when we joined together at Parker at Monroe to celebrate its long-awaited grand opening on Schoolhouse Road with a ceremony, tours and a luncheon.

Among the many dignitaries in attendance was Mayor Tamburro, who had been so instrumental in helping Parker open this campus for the benefit of township residents. He had a big smile and a warm greeting for all of us.

I can still vividly recall Mayor Tamburro, immaculately dressed as always, standing in front of the 142 other guests and reading a proclamation from the township, welcoming Parker to the Monroe community. He spoke of how Parker is a leader in the transformation of long-term care to person-directed living, where residents have choice, dignity, self-determination and purposeful lives. He concluded that Parker at Monroe is an ideal fit for his community.

While we appreciated receiving many letters of congratulations that day from such dignitaries as former Gov. Chris Christie and Rep. Frank Pallone, I will never forget Mayor Tamburro’s personal commitment to this project. His attendance at our big event, and the reading of the proclamation, further under-scored his passion for public service and for always doing what he believes is in the best interest of Monroe residents.



Mayor Tamburro and Parker President & CEO Roberto Muñiz stand among dignitaries.

Library Receives \$248,640 State Grant to Enhance Safety



The Monroe Township Library is proud to be an inviting and friendly cornerstone of the community.

The Monroe Township Library is receiving a \$248,640 matching grant through the New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act (LCBA).

“The Library is a cornerstone of learning and engagement for Monroe Township and plays an ever-increasing role in our resident’s lives – particularly as we find new ways to safely engage in this COVID pandemic,” said Mayor Stephen Dalina.

The Monroe Township

Library was selected as one of 38 grant recipients out of 129 applications. The Township will match the funds received through the LCBA for a total of \$499,280 toward safety and operational improvements at the Library, including updates to the HVAC system and fire safety and prevention equipment.

“I’m thrilled to be able to upgrade two systems that will make a tremendous impact on the com-

munity’s use of the library, providing both comfort and safety for all residents using the Monroe Library,” added Library Director Leah Wagner.

“This grant will help us improve the Library facility as we continue to expand programs and reach more residents in a safe and responsible manner,” said Mayor Dalina who, as a councilman at-large, served as liaison to the Library board. ■

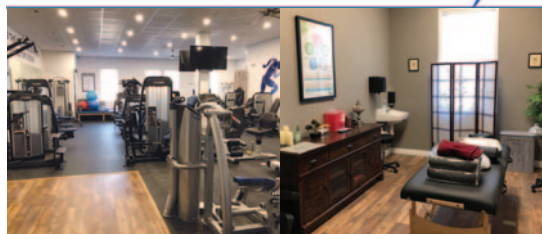


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Monroe Unveils New Recreation Department Website – MonroeRec.com

As Monroe eagerly looks forward to a post-pandemic world, the Monroe Recreation Department has been revamping its infrastructure, deploying the latest communication tools to ensure all residents are aware of the many free and low-cost programs available through the township.

Most recently, the department unveiled a new, dynamic website, which can easily be viewed across all platforms, from smartphones, to tablets to

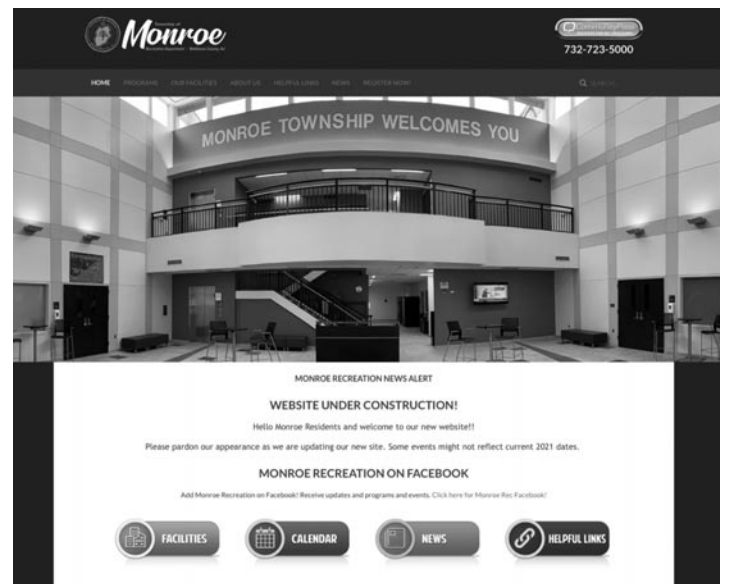
desktop computers.

“The end goal of this redesign was simple: To create a single gateway that can allow residents to access the information they need from whatever technology they are using,” Mayor Stephen Dalina said. “As an individual who teaches communication courses at Rutgers University, I know the importance of a modern website, using the latest software.

“I’m confident that the

many residents who use our recreation services will notice a substantial difference in the web experience, which I hope will encourage them to fully partake in what we have to offer, as well as to spread the news to their family and friends in Monroe,” the mayor added. “All are encouraged to explore the many programs our recreation department offers.”

Please visit MonroeRec.com ■



A new, dynamic website has been designed for the Monroe Recreation Department, making it easier for residents to access numerous programs and services.

Monroe Receives \$609K in State Grants for Upgrades on Two Major Township Roads

Monroe Township is getting a \$609,250 boost in municipal aid to support roadway improvements on N. State Home, Lower Matchaponix, and a section of Spotswood Gravel Hill Road adjacent to the project.

These well-used municipal roads need to be repaved. With the grant support, Monroe officials will begin the design process. It is expected that Monroe will have to contribute about \$425,000 for the total project.

Monroe Mayor Stephen Dalina and Township Council said the township has been very successful in securing state funding for its infrastructure work, based on a strong working

relationship with the state Department of Transportation (DOT) and state legislators representing the township. The Mayor thanked the 14th Legislative District for their ongoing support of the Township’s roadway maintenance and repair needs.

“We are proud to report that the Township has secured \$3 million since 2016 in state money to upgrade our roadway system,” Mayor Dalina said. “This is work that needed to be done, and the Council and I can move forward with limited impact on our taxpayers. We attribute the progress to our ongoing ability to reach out for support and effectively advocate for what our community needs.”

Mayor Dalina noted the state has more than doubled its municipal local aid to Monroe since 2016.

Monroe recently received grants for upgrades to Spotswood and Ellingham Avenues, a major section of Monmouth Road, Daniel Road and 10th street, and School House Road. Two other projects with state support are being designed: The Camelot neighborhood off School House Road and Costco Drive.

The DOT’s municipal aid program is very competitive, Mayor Dalina said, adding the department received 635 applications from 549 municipalities, requesting more than \$342 million. There was \$161.25 million available, supported

by the state’s gas tax.

“This grant program is a shining example of what can happen when we invest in our transportation system,” said Assemblyman Daniel Benson, chair of the Assembly Transportation Committee, who represents Monroe. “By renewing the Transportation Trust Fund four years ago, we created a path to provide towns with resources to make improvements to local roads and

bridges with the goal to increase safety and provide a better quality of life.

“While upgrades to major highways are always important, it’s road projects at the local level that impact drivers on a daily basis,” he added. “These state grants help ease the burden on Monroe’s property taxpayers while investing in the road infrastructure we use every day.” ■



Employee Corner



Rich Morris
Deputy Director of EMS

Richard “Rich” Morris was promoted to Deputy Director of EMS in 2020 and is responsible for managing the daily operations of the department. Rich started in Monroe EMS as a volunteer in 2000, before moving to Per Diem in 2002 and then full-time in 2003. In 2010, he took on the role of EMS Supervisor before becoming project manager in 2016. Rich’s progression through the EMS Department is a culmination of years of dedication and experience.

Rich grew up in Monroe Township and graduated from the high school in 1999. He went on to pursue an associate’s degree in Criminal Justice at Middlesex County College. Rich is always looking for opportunities to continue his education in Emergency Management or Healthcare Administration.

“Being able to work in Monroe Township for such an essential department that gives back to the community I grew up in is what I love most about my job,” Rich said. “With the support of the community, the administration and Council, we have been able to produce one of the largest and most reputable municipal EMS systems in the state. We have some of the most dedicated and talented EMS providers that I am honored to work side by side with.”



Kevin McGowan
Regulatory Affairs Manager,
Utility Department

Kevin McGowan joined the Monroe Township team in February 2020 as the Regulatory Affairs Manager for the Utility Department. He previously worked as an attorney in both government and private practice. Kevin served as a Deputy Attorney General, in the New Jersey Attorney General’s Office, investigating and litigating health care fraud and insurance fraud cases, and served as General Counsel to the New Jersey Real Estate Commission. During his time in private practice, Kevin handled land use matters and insurance litigation. He graduated with a bachelor’s degree from Rutgers University, and a law degree from Seton Hall Law School.

He works to maintain the Township’s compliance with all rules and regulations from the Department of Environmental Protection. Kevin also assists the administration with the development and implementation of various Township policies.

Kevin is a proud resident of Monroe, moving to town in 2013 with his wife Chelsea. They have three children: Ashley, Alexa, and Andrew. “It’s a

real pleasure to use my background and experience to serve the community where I actually live and where I am raising my own family,” Kevin said. “My colleagues at the Utility Department and across the Township really welcomed me with open arms and showed me the ropes. This is a terrific place to work.”



Samantha Rampacek
Tax Collector

Samantha “Sam” Rampacek joined the Tax Department as the Tax Collector in March of 2020. She is a New Jersey Certified Municipal Finance Officer, Certified Tax Collector, and Qualified Purchasing Agent. Sam graduated from Wagner College in 2013 with degrees in accounting and management. Prior to working with Monroe Township, Sam was the Comptroller for South Brunswick Township.

“So far working in Monroe has been a wonderful experience,” she said. “I truly love coming to work every day and enjoy work with and learning from my colleagues.”

Sam lives in Jamesburg with her husband Chris and has lived in Jamesburg all her life. In her spare time, she enjoys hiking, gardening, kayaking, and generally being outdoors. ■

Monroe Seeks Volunteers to Help Seniors Navigate Vaccine Appointment System

In the absence of an effective state telephone hotline, Mayor Stephen Dalina and the Township Council are seeking volunteers, who along with many Township Employees, will be matched with a specific senior or other individual – without access to technology or family support to help navigate the state’s COVID-19 Vaccine Appointment System.

While we all recognize the vaccine shortage is very real, we must work to ensure our most vulnerable residents have an equal chance in the State’s complicated vaccination process.

We do recognize that it may take a volunteer weeks or months to help just one resident in need find an appointment – but that support, communication and effort is invaluable and we need to expand it.

“Monroe residents have always risen to the occasion to help those in need in our community. Now is the time to help if you can,” said Mayor Stephen Dalina.

The Township is asking that any residents who wish to volunteer to help a senior email volunteer@monroetwp.com with their name, address, and phone number.

Residents with scarce resources who need assistance are invited to contact Eileen Biennas in the Mayor’s office at 732-521-4400, Ext. 114. ■

Want to Grow a Tree?

The Shade Tree Commission is giving out free seedlings to residents on **April 24** at the DPW yard, 76 Gravel Hill Spotswood Rd. from 9-11 a.m. There is also a drive-by pick up program at the Library, 4 Municipal Plaza, from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. that day.





Wayne Horbatt

The *Monroe News* caught up with Department of Public Works Director Wayne Horbatt to learn how the town responds to winter storms and spring cleanups.

Following a 24-year career with the United States Navy, Wayne Horbatt started with the Monroe Township Department of Public Works in 2000 as superintendent and was promoted to director three years later.

Monroe News (MN): What's the manpower needed during challenging weather?

Horbatt: For each snow-storm we deploy two 16-man crews in two 12-hour shift (32 total workers).

A Q&A with DPW Director Wayne Horbatt

When needed, this crew is supplemented with 10 Monroe Township Utilities Department operators working two 12-hour shifts of five drivers operating five trucks per shift.

We also work with an independent contractor who operates two tandem trucks for rural and industrial areas.

MN: Have there been pandemic-related challenges?

Horbatt: Yes. By splitting the crews into shifts to limit exposure to the COVID-19 virus, our trucks must be decontaminated following every shift.

We also stagger incoming shifts by 30 minutes so crews don't intermix. The split shifts also prevent driver fatigue during plowing runs that may last through the day and night.

MN: How long before a storm do you need to prepare?

Horbatt: We monitor the weather through the National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration. We generally are preparing three to four days before the snow starts falling.

We need to put fuel in all vehicles and equipment. We make sure there is adequate salt in the dome and that our calcium chloride tank is filled. We also ensure there is adequate liquid brine applied to roads a day or two before a storm.

All staff is notified that they will be called on the first or second shift.

MN: What's your go-to equipment during a storm?

Horbatt: Without question, it is our front-end loader. Without it, you can't load salt onto trucks. And, of course, I could not do this job without a great staff.

MN: How long on average does it take your team to clean up a winter storm?

Horbatt: Every storm is different. Some storms deliver wet, heavy snow that is hard on equipment and difficult to move compared to a light, fluffy snow that is easy to move.

Temperature and duration of a storm are important factors. For example, colder conditions freeze what's on the ground, making the snow and ice nearly impossible to move.

I monitor ground temperature with an infrared gun. A warm ground core temperature helps snow melt quicker. Very cold

temps work against you. It also can be harder to clear after existing snow accumulations.

MN: What is your biggest challenge in snow removal?

Horbatt: Residents will sometimes blow their snow into the street and don't move their parked cars from the roadways, making it difficult to clear the entirety of the roadway.

As a matter of procedure, we do one initial pass through the middle of the road in each neighborhood, then we come back and try to do curb to curb.

MN: Any tips for residents to ease the process?

Horbatt: Here's one: Don't duplicate efforts by shoveling the end of your driveway too soon. After the first pass, we must return to clear the rest of the road. This is when driveway aprons end up plowed in. I've yet to find a piece of plow equipment that can prevent snow piling up at the end of driveways. Unfortunately, plowing-in driveways is unavoidable.

MN: Luckily, warm weather is coming. What is the Township doing to clear the debris/trash on the roadways and in open spaces?

Horbatt: We have plans to organize a spring cleanup program that will include Township employees and volunteers. We are coordinating volunteer

groups, civic organizations, and the community at large to coordinate a Township-wide clean-up this spring as part of our Clean Sweep Monroe initiative.

Contact Clean Communities coordinator Joe Slomain at 732-656-4575 to join us!

MN: After the long winter, how can residents dispose of household debris?

Horbatt: We begin scheduling appointments for bulk pick-ups in mid-March for collections in April. More information is available on the DPW tab of monroetwp.com

MN: Where is the DPW yard located and what are the hours for bulk drop-off?

Horbatt: You'll find us at 76 Gravel Hill-Spotswood Road, Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 9 am - 2:45pm and Saturday 8 - 11:30am. Residents can schedule a bulk pickup in mid-March by calling 732-656-4575.

MN: What items are accepted?

Horbatt: Our recycling guide at monroetwp.com provides detailed information regarding materials accepted at the yard. Residents should call with any questions. Office hours during the pandemic are Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 9am - 2:45pm. ■



Monroe Residents Saving 12% on Electric Bills This Winter Through Township Program

In Fall 2019 the Monroe Township Council locked in the lowest fixed electric rates to date for the Monroe Township Community Energy Aggregation (MTCEA) program by approving a contract with Constellation New Energy (CNE) for Round Four of the MTCEA. The contract with CNE began in December 2019 and runs for a 24-month term that ends in December 2021.

“Monroe Township is a pioneer in New Jersey when it comes to municipal energy aggregation and leveraging bulk purchasing to guarantee lower energy rates for our residents,” said Mayor Stephen Dalina. “The MTCEA program saved residents approximately \$13 million in the first six years of the program under Rounds One through Three and participating residents are seeing even more savings now. Our residents can expect to see a reduction of more than \$250 over the life of the MTCEA Round Four contract for a typical household — more for those using large quantities of electricity or living



in all-electric homes.”

As the lowest bidder, CNE proposed a set price of \$.08395/kwh for the duration of a two-year contract. This rate, which took effect in December 2019, represents an approximate 12 percent savings off the prevailing JCP&L tariff price during winter months when consumption, particularly for all-electric households, is at its height.

The Township’s energy agent, Gabel Associates, assisted the Township in the procurement of the contract with CNE to provide Monroe Township residents with electric generation services through the MTCEA program. The program will once again go out to public bid later this year for Round Five of the MTCEA when it will be reauthorized for

2022 and 2023.

Established in 2013, the MTCEA program is conducted under State law and in accordance with the State Board of Public Utilities’ regulations.

Current participation is approximately 15,000 households. With the harsh and cold winter we are experiencing so far this year, and electricity usage in all-electric up homes up significantly as compared to last winter, individual residents living in all-electric homes are currently seeing savings of as much as \$30-40 per month, or in some cases even more, during these peak winter months.

Residents seeking additional information should contact program coordinator Harold Klein at 732-521-4400, ext. 135. ■

Monroe Seeking Volunteers for Township Boards and Commissions

In an effort to get more community members involved in Monroe Township government, newly appointed Mayor Stephen Dalina, in cooperation with Township Council, is encouraging residents to apply for current and future openings on Township boards, commissions and advisory councils.

“The Township Council and I would like to see more residents sharing ideas, implementing programs and planning for the future of our great community. What better way to get involved than to join one of our various boards and commissions,” Mayor Dalina said.

“Our residents have a wide variety of valuable skills and experiences that would greatly benefit us all,” he added. “We are thankful to those who give of their time in service to these important groups.”

The Township of Monroe is accepting volunteer applications for appointments to various boards and commissions, including: Americans with Disabilities Act Committee, Affordable Housing Board, Commission on Aging, Cultural Arts Commission, Environmental Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, Human Relations Commission, Library Board of Trustees, Open Space & Farmland Preservation Commission, Planning Board, Recreation Advisory Board, Shade Tree Commission, Sustainable Jersey — Green Team Advisory Committee, Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Residents are invited to visit monroetwp.com to view a list of boards and commissions. Those interested can send the downloadable form located at the bottom of the boards and commissions page of the Township website for their area of interest.

Submissions may be sent to the Municipal Clerk by mail to Town Hall at 1 Municipal Plaza, by email at preid@monroetwp.com or by fax to 732-521-3190.

All submissions will be retained for a maximum period of one year from the date of filing. ■

Intersection Improvements Underway in Monroe

Improvements at the intersection of Matchaponix/Pergola – Spotswood Gravel Hill Road are preparing to resume as the snow melts and Spring weather returns.

Following unprecedented delays impacting the production of poles and signal heads in addition to work stoppages and COVID-19 quarantines across the nation, contractors are resuming

work on stalled construction projects including this one.

Prior to the winter hiatus, the general contractor was able to complete the storm drainage, road widening and concrete improvements (sidewalks, curbs and ADA crosswalk ramps). Utility improvements with water and sanitary sewer were also completed with the coop-

eration of the Monroe Township Utilities Department.

Looking ahead, the traffic signal, controls and equipment are anticipated this month following unprecedented COVID-19 production delays. Despite the production delay the traffic signal bases and layout are completed and the site is ready for the traffic lights to be installed. Once the traffic lights are installed final paving and site restoration (grading and landscaping) will round-out the planned upgrades. These improvements will make this intersection safer for both pedestrians and motor

vehicles.

Residents should be aware that once the traffic lights are installed there will be an extensive testing period, including time periods when the lights will be on a “flash mode.” Please use caution driving

though this area and follow all posted signs as construction moves towards conclusion.

Any questions or concerns can be directed to the Monroe Township Engineer’s Office at 732-605-9440. ■



Monroe Remembers *Continued from page 5*

Brunswick. The couple moved to Monroe in 1997 in retirement.

When Mrs. Tamburro passed away May 28, 2019, Mayor Tamburro shared his own love story with the community, saying he fell in love early and was married at 23 – the couple’s sole possession at the time was a Hi-Fi phonograph. “From there, we somehow built an incredible life together,” Mayor Tamburro recalled, at the time, noting her delicious struffoli cookies.

Mayor Tamburro particularly loved the holidays; it was the perfect time to be with extended family. Christmas would bring together a family of more than 50 people, in

which Mayor Tamburro would be surrounded by nine grandchildren, countless nieces and nephews, and three great-grandchildren.

“It was a blessing beyond words to see,” the mayor had said.

Mayor Tamburro will be remembered for his signature holiday toast, in which he would point to each and every person in the room to underscore their importance. The toast originated from his father-in-law, Anthony Lombardo, a World War I veteran who lived to 101.

It said, in part: “Good health to all who’ve gathered here; That’s you... and you.... And you...To

loyal friends and family dear; That’s you...and you...and you... But most of all, a thousand friends. Like you...and you...and you.” ■

Save the Dates...

Volunteers Needed for Community Clean-up

Saturday, March 27, 9-11am

Volunteers will park at Danny Ryan Field. Litter will be picked up from N. State Home Road. The road will be closed to traffic during the clean-up. This event will be cancelled in the event of severe weather.

Earth Day Clean-up

Saturday, April 24

Locations to be determined

Groups of 15 or more volunteers may apply for Clean Communities grants. Learn more by contacting Clean Communities Coordinator Joe Slomian at 732-656-4575 or JSlomian@monroetwp.com.

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Or get in the swing of Monroe Township Girls Softball, with a season running from April to June. There will also be playoffs and championships.

There are league for pre-kindergarten through high school. Uniforms are included in the fee. Come on out! Players and volunteers needed. Register at MonroeSoftball.net

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