
TOWNSHIP OF FRANKLIN
TOWNSHIP MANAGER
MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Township Council
FROM: Kenneth W. Daly, Township Manager
SUBJECT: Township Manager's Annual Report: 2005
DATE: February 24, 2006 (Updated March 31, 2006)

At the beginning of 2005, Township Council set three major goals for the Township Manager for the year:

- Improve the Township's business planning.
- Improve how the Township measures its activities and results.
- Improve public access to the Township and its services.

This report will begin with a summary of activities and accomplishments under each of these headings and then provide an overview of other areas of Township activity during calendar year 2005.

Business planning. The following has been accomplished in this area:

- In the FY 2006 budget workbooks, all departments defined their lines of business and developed preliminary measures of activity and outcome for each line, as well as rough estimates of how much of their budget goes into each line of business.
- For the FY 2006 budget, a benchmarked plan for expansion of police staffing levels was developed and used by Township Council in its budget deliberations, resulting in the decision to add 10 new police officers to the force during FY 2006.
- Also during the FY 2006 budget process, a planning methodology was developed for Council to use in assessing and choosing multiyear fiscal strategies, particularly with respect to property taxes and use of surplus. As a result of these deliberations, Township Council took a major step towards real stabilization of municipal property taxes over the long term. The policy embodied in the FY 2006 budget is that the Township will set a definite percentage by which the municipal property tax levy will increase with each half-year billing cycle. (Since the public library receives 1/3 of a cent per \$100 valuation, its levy is based on changes in assessments and, therefore, has to be treated separately for this policy to work.) This policy will give taxpayers a known increment on which they plan their own

But by far the greatest and most beautiful part of wisdom deals with the proper ordering of cities and households,
and that is called moderation and justice.

-Plato, Symposium 209a

中庸其至矣乎

budgets, at least as far as municipal taxes are concerned. It will also set a fiscal constraint on township programs and services, requiring reallocation of resources to higher priority lines of business and away from lower priority activities, i.e., business planning.

- During the second half of 2005, the Planning Board, Township Council, and staff were deeply involved in preparing the Housing Element of the Master Plan and the Fair Share Plan for the Township of Franklin to meet its Third Round COAH affordable housing requirements. The spending plan included in this document provides a first step towards the business plan that will be required for the actual implementation of this significant increase in the Township's affordable housing efforts.
- At its retreat in January 2005, Township Council directed that studies be prepared concerning two potential lines of business: solid waste and public transportation. The grant-funded agreement with Rutgers University, School of Planning and Public Policy to do the public transportation study was approved by Township Council at its March 28, 2006 meeting. At the Township Council retreat on February 26, 2006, the Township Engineer presented an outline and timetable for a plan on solid waste as a line of business. At that meeting, Township Council directed staff to focus on a business plan for monthly bulk pick-up for Township residents. Recommendations on both these lines of business will be discussed during the FY 2007 budget process.
- In March 2005, the Township Engineer's office completed a comprehensive survey of the conditions on all municipal roads in the Township. This survey included numeric ratings of the condition of the roads, written descriptions of pavement conditions, measures of traffic volume, recommendations on maintenance and when resurfacing should occur, along with estimates of the cost of resurfacing. The Township Council's Public Works Committee used this survey to rank roads in terms of those in poorest condition and highest traffic volume to make recommendations to the full Council for the FY 2006 capital improvements program for roads. These recommendations are incorporated in the FY 2006 capital budget. The Public Works Committee is continuing to use this survey for preparation of the six year capital program, beginning with FY 2007.

Performance measurement. As indicated above, departments now include performance measures related to their lines of business in their budget presentations.

Public access. Four measures of progress on this goal are worthy of mention.

- The Township received the award for Best Overall Entry in the 2005 Municipal Public Information Contest in recognition of the quality of our newsletter, web site, TV channel, and other targeted information efforts.

- In the first half of 2005, departments in the municipal building undertook a trial period of expanded hours in the morning and evening. After measuring customer usage of these hours, we now have access to all departments in the municipal building from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm, including Fire Prevention and Construction Code, which used to close at 3:30 pm.. We have also extended the hours for fire prevention inspections to 6:00 pm on Tuesdays and 5:00 pm on Thursdays.
- During the Elizabethtown water outage in the summer of 2005, we quickly mobilized the Township's TV station, web site, and voice mail to get information to the public about what was going on, as well as reaching out to the media to give them information specific to Franklin's situation. Based on past experience with the time it takes to generate a large number of phone calls, we did not use the automated emergency call system.
- City Connections, the Township's web master, advises that Franklin Township has more people (413) signed up to receive notice of updates on our web site than any of its many other municipal customers.

Other major Township initiatives

Neighborhood quality of life. During 2005, Franklin Township devoted significant resources to deal with and get results on quality of life issues in a number of neighborhoods. In the Somerset area, as a result of persistent Township enforcement against environmental and other violations, a company ceased operations and is selling its assets. In the southern section, the Township had to spend more than \$50,000 in legal fees to get a court order and enforcement of compliance on another violator who was degrading the neighborhood. Township staff are coordinating and following up systematically on complaints of trash, dilapidated buildings, and other code violations that blight neighborhoods and reduce property values. Violators who ignore court summonses are now being arrested when they are located in Franklin Township. There is much more that needs to be done, but the present number of staff available for this enforcement leaves the Township in a reactive mode, responding to complaints. Plans for addressing this issue were discussed during Township Council's annual retreat on February 26, 2006, and will be considered during deliberations on the FY 2007 budget. On the positive side, the Township's Housing Coordinator, April Harbstreet, has increased the pace of our home rehabilitation program, using CDBG and Affordable Housing Trust Funds so that not only are conditions of the houses improved, but also affordable units are added to our inventory.

Economic development. The most important piece of news concerning the Township's economy and tax base is that Metlife has purchased 300 Davidson Avenue and will be moving more than 1,000 employees into that 425,000 square foot facility. Not only does this news remove the threat of a large decrease in the Township's commercial tax base, it also means many more customers for local businesses who have been suffering since Merrill Lynch and AT&T vacated their buildings on Davidson Avenue. Similar good

news is expected on 290 Davidson Avenue within the coming year. When Rutgers University completed its report on the Township's economy and economic development strategies, it was noted that Franklin Township lacks retail services at the scale one might expect of a community of our size. During the past year, the two Stop & Shop stores in Franklin have moved into expanded superstore facilities, and a ShopRite has been approved for Elizabeth Avenue near the intersection of New Brunswick Avenue. Continued growth in the pharmaceutical area was highlighted by the opening of the new Rasi Labs facility on Roosevelt Avenue. Development to complement and support our hotel industry was marked by the opening of The Palace, a world-class event facility, on Davidson Avenue. On Hamilton Street, the creation of the Special Improvement District, funding of the Neighborhood Preservation Program, the façade improvement grant program, and other initiatives are now having an impact on the appearance and vitality of this important commercial corridor. The opening of new restaurants on Hamilton Street (C.T. Barbeque, Awujoh, DeIsland Breeze, joining Caribbean Palace, Brasas Paisas, and Sophie's Bistro) also supports our hotel industry so that less visitors (and residents, for that matter) have to go outside Franklin for dining opportunities.

Public infrastructure. Because of the time it was taking for the State Department of Environmental Protection to test and take action on the contamination of ground water in the Franklin Park area, in 2004 Township Council authorized a Township-financed program to hook up residents to the public water system. Since then the Health Director has declared a Zone of Involvement in which all residents must connect to public water at public expense. Township capital funds have been appropriated, 24 houses have been connected to public water in addition to those connected through the State Spill Fund, and the Township contractor has commenced installation of the new water mains required. Once these mains are finished this Spring, contractors will connect individual homes to municipal water. Through the assistance of Assemblyman Upendra Chivukula, the State has declared its own CKE area within which they will reimburse the Township for connection costs. The time it is taking for the State to process the contract for this reimbursement, however, may decrease actual reimbursements because the Township is proceeding expeditiously.

During 2005, progress was made on three major facilities in the municipal complex on DeMott Lane. The new addition to the Franklin Township Library is done. Library operations have moved out of the old section, which will now be renovated to complete this important project during 2006. The modular expansion of the Municipal Building was installed in late 2005. Because PSE&G is just now at the end of March making the improvements to provide gas service for this addition and the new animal shelter, the Community Development Department (construction code, planning, and zoning) is expected to move into this area in April 2006. The contract for the construction of the expanded animal shelter was finally awarded in 2005, after four previous bids came in over budget. Site work on the animal shelter facility is now under way with completion expected this summer.

Thanks. My thanks this year to my assistant, Janie Dong, are not a perfunctory repetition of the gratitude expressed in previous annual reports. Without her assistance in helping the public when I'm tied up on other projects, residents may have experienced delays in getting their issues resolved. Instead, Mrs. Dong spends many hours listening to people's problems and making sure that they receive the best assistance the Township can provide. I cannot thank her enough on behalf of the many people she helps.