

By now, homeowner's in our Borough have received tax bills for 2018-2019. Happily, the total tax rate has dropped from \$1.902 per \$100 of assessed value to a new rate of \$1.878. The main components of the bill, County, Municipal, and School Taxes all have a reduced rate, while the Library, County Open Space and Municipal Open Space taxes remained flat.

Earlier this year, upon the recommendation of the Sewer Committee, the Council approved a reduction in the sewer fee of \$100 per household for 2018.

While we are enjoying the fruits of efficiencies right now, please understand that circumstances could require a higher tax/fee rate in the future. This all depends on the services required by our residents, the valuation of our real estate, and potentially, unexpected expenses.

In the last several months this municipality has made some important strides in the operation of our government.

Most notably, we have a new Borough Administrator who joined us in November 2017. Chris Tietjen comes with a good background in municipal administration and has the full support of the Council in implementing our shared vision of how to manage the town and its facilities.

Nancy Bretzger also joined us as our Borough Clerk. Nancy has years of experience as a clerk and has made many valuable suggestions as to how to streamline our government.

Longtime Finance Department employee Terry Kelly retired and Donelle DeCouto has filled her shoes as Assistant to the Chief Financial Officer. Again, Donelle has years of service with Mahwah and is proving to be a valuable employee.

In our construction department, we've had two retirements. The Council considered a shared service with Bernardsville to staff the department which offered us some valuable advantages. In the end, however, we decided to hire Frank LaGuarina as our Construction Official/Building Sub Code Inspector to head the department. The Technical Assistant to the Construction Official (TACO) is now Ellen Hays. These folks replace our retired employees, Jim Fania and Ruth Spae.

Also, Sarah Jane Noll is now working as our Zoning Officer and Secretary to the Land Use Board (LUB). Sarah Jane has previous experience working in Chester Township in the same role and is already proving effective in dealing with various zoning matters.

Because we have two vacancies in the Police Department, we are in the process of interviewing new candidates for the position of patrolman and hope to make hiring

decisions shortly. In this regard, I would like to express my thanks to the Police Department for effectively dealing with this personnel shortage.

To those who have retired; we wish everyone a good, healthy, and long retirement. To our new employees; thanks for being here and I wish you all success in your new endeavor.

To our readers; please attend public meetings, read the borough website, and don't hesitate to speak or email with any of the Council members or myself.