

# Town Topics

# Township of Livingston

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Summer 2011

[www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org)

## Township Adopts 2011 Budget

### Preserve & Maintain

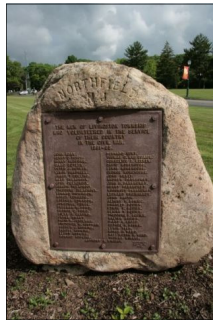
The 2011 Municipal Budget, adopted on May 2, preserves all existing Township services. It also maintains **one of the lowest municipal property tax bills in the county.**

Under the \$41.5 million spending plan, the cost to the average homeowner for municipal services will be \$2,412, an increase of \$45.11 or 1.9%.

The Township's current local property tax bill ranks as the 19th lowest of 22 municipalities in Essex County. Our **average 2011 tax bill is \$201.04 per month.**

*(Continued on page 3)*

Do you know the significance of any of these?



A.



B.



C.



D.



E.

Check your knowledge with **Township Trivia** on page 8, then find the answers on page 7 to see if you're right!

## Long-Term Financial Planning

### A First

In December 2010, the Township Council adopted its first formal long-term financial plan. The plan uses financial forecasting and analysis to identify future challenges and opportunities. Issues like changes in future revenue streams, cost escalation factors, and increasing contingent liabilities can have a huge impact on the Township. Planning for the longer term means we can

more successfully develop strategies to maintain financial sustainability by proactively addressing those issues in advance, rather than reacting to changing circumstances one year at a time.

### Stability

Long-term financial planning is essential to providing a consistent level of services and protecting local residents from volatility in local property taxes.

For several years, the Township has benefited from already having established reserves in order to fund certain costs that can vary significantly from year to year. We used one such reserve to pay the costs associated with higher than normal snowfall this past winter. While other municipalities scrambled to find sufficient funds to cover their expenses, Livingston managed the costs from a

*(Continued on page 5)*

**Inside View:**

The Building Department is an essential piece of any thriving community. Although the zoning, engineering and permitting processes may seem foreign to many residents, they're critical to keeping our homes and buildings sturdy, strong and safe over the long term.

Here's the best news: In Livingston, our Building Department staff members are more knowledgeable and helpful than ever!

**A Busy Spot**

Headed by Martin Chiarolanio, construction Official and Zoning Officer, the Building Department is consistently buzzing with activity. Here, residents, contractors and professionals meet with Township staff to work together on home and business improvement projects.

The Building Department's main function is ensuring that all construction within the Township of Livingston is performed according to the State of New Jersey Uniform Construction Code (UCC). The UCC applies to all municipalities in the State and insures that construction is completed according to proper standards for the safety and security of residents and business patrons.

**Bright & Early**

Whether you're a resident or a contractor, the Building Department's clerical staff is your first stop when applying for construction permits. To accommodate an early start to the day, offices are open at 7:00 a.m. and close at 4:00 p.m. Our knowledgeable staff can answer a range of questions across a variety of topics – starting with the



The walk-up counter at the Building Department opens at 7:00 a.m.

permitting process, and covering cost, review times, zoning, surface grading, property maintenance and signage. The staff can also arrange inspections including building, plumbing, electrical, fire, and property maintenance from residents and contractors, either at the walk-up counter or by phone.

**First Timers**

If you're new to the concepts of zoning, engineering, and permitting, the Department's clerical staff will gladly "walk you through" the application process.

There's a lot of information to understand and a variety of forms and information you'll have to provide. The staff members here are the experts who will help you with all of it. If prior approvals are required (such as from Zoning or Engineering), you must have them before the Building Department can give its approval.

The staff will make sure that you're including all necessary information along with your application. After your application is complete, it's stamped and entered into the Building Department computer system so it can be tracked from start to finish. Once the information is in the system, Building Department staff will complete a review of the application within twenty working days. – And once that review has been completed,



Marty Chiarolanio heads up Livingston's Building Department.

the plans are released for construction, and you're on your way!

**Inspections**

Open permits are scheduled for inspection once the work has been completed. Keep in mind, though, that you'll probably need more than just one inspection at the grand finale, when you want to start using your new space. Inspections must be made periodically throughout most construction to assure that issues like foundations, plumbing and electrical work are completed safely and in compliance with the proper building codes.

**The Clerical Staff**

Carol Visconti is the Principal Technical Assistant to the Construction Official (PTACO). She began working

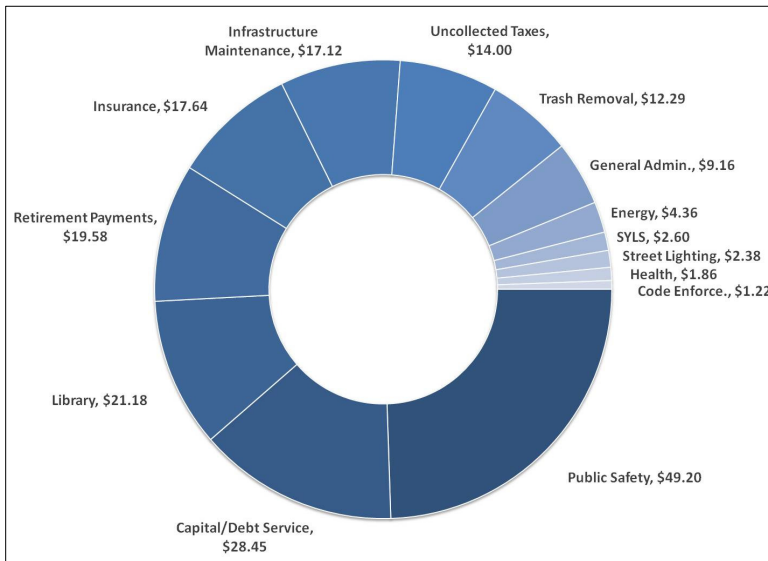


Marty Chiarolanio works closely with Carol Visconti, the "go-to" person for staff members with questions.

with the Township 23 years ago in the Building Department as a part-time clerk typist. Today, she is the

(Continued on page 4)

**Budget** (continued from page 1)



Livingston's average 2011 municipal tax bill is \$201.04 per month, allocated as shown at left.

- Renegotiating our leaf disposal contract in 2010 provided annual savings of \$77,000.
- Changing the Township's banking relationship in 2008 saved \$65,000 per year in recurring costs.
- Performing more financial tasks in-house and updating computer systems have reduced annual audit fees by more than \$30,000 per year.
- A telephone audit conducted in 2009 resulted in \$27,700 of credits.
- Department operating expenditures have been reduced by 3.7% in real dollars between 2006 and 2010, and by 12.8% when compared to inflation. Note: a portion of this also includes mandated and fixed costs.

**Economic Impacts**

Despite several significant challenges, the Township was able to adopt a spending plan that preserves all services for residents – at an affordable cost – while protecting the fiscal stability of the Township.

General economic conditions and persistent tax appeals continue to impact local property assessments and tax revenues. Fixed and mandated costs continue to increase, claiming a higher percentage of limited resources and threatening the continuation of discretionary services. New directives from the State aim to reduce the growth in local property tax levies.

**Creative Measures**

Fortunately, the Township Council and Township staff at all levels have taken actions during the past several years to successfully meet these challenges:

- Local non-tax revenues have increased by 21.4% over the past 5 years.
- Interlocal revenues from shared services agreements increased by 67.1% between 2006 and 2010.
- Staffing levels have been reduced by 20 positions through attrition since 2005.
- Service functions, such as the Public Works and Water Department; the new Senior, Youth and Leisure Services Department; and Information Technology Services, have been reorganized to save more than \$250,000 per year.
- A change in solid waste collection services last year saved over \$522,000 in 2010, and an additional \$856,000 in 2011.

These are just some of the numerous measures taken over the past several years that have put the Township in a position to continue to provide a full range of quality services to residents, despite the downturn in the general economy and new State regulations.

**Under the Caps**

The 2011 municipal budget is \$1.6 million under the new 2% tax levy cap, and \$4.4 million under the 2.5% spending cap and cap bank.

Of the total increase, approximately 1.2%, or \$30.35, is attributed to Township operations in 2011; and an additional 0.7%, or \$14.76, is due to the decrease in total ratables resulting from 2010 tax appeals.

Keep in mind the fact that tax appeals have decreased the tax base. That, alone, has increased our local property taxes by approximately 1.5% over the past two years.



(Continued on page 7)

## Building Department *(continued from page 2)*

Principal Technical Assistant, overseeing all of the Department's office procedures. Carol reports all daily revenue received by the Building Department, generates monthly reports to submit to the State Department of Community Affairs and is the "go-to" person to answer any questions that the staff members may have.

Carol Visconti and Sharon Tunis work together to help keep the Building Department running smoothly.



**Sharon Tunis** is the Technical Assistant to the Construction Official (TACO). She has worked with the Building Department since 2004. Her main responsibility is assisting our residents and their contractors in obtaining building permits.

Having been raised in Livingston and worked in the customer service field for 25 years, this position is a great fit for Sharon. She enjoys being able to help Livingston friends and neighbors in navigating their way through sometimes-confusing construction issues.

**Cathy Jackson** is also a Technical Assistant to the Construction Official (TACO). She came to the Livingston Building Department 2 ½ years ago, with 15 years' experience as a General Contractors' Administrative Assistant. Cathy has gained a whole new perspective of the permitting process while working for the Township, in addition to expanding her scope of knowledge regarding

Cathy Jackson is one of the Department's many friendly and knowledgeable staff members.



building codes in New Jersey. The fast pace and broad range of issues she encounters in helping the residents provides Cathy with a busy and rewarding environment.

**Martin Chiarolanio** has been in the inspection business for 11 years, the past 5 ½ year of which have been as the Construction Official & Zoning Officer with the Township. A carpenter by trade, he has over 22 years' experience in the contracting business and a degree in Construction Technology.

Marty finds that the most satisfying part of his job is working with residents and contractors throughout their projects. From start to finish, his door is always open, and he is happy to address any concerns or questions about the Building Department.

### Scheduling & Info

If you need to schedule an inspection, call 973-535-7953. If you'd like to find out more about the Building Department or access online applications and checklists, visit the Township website at [www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org) and click "Building" in the left column. Or call us at 973-992-5000, Option 4. In the meantime, check out the box "After You Get Your Permit: A Few Basics" on page 5!

## More Options: Tax & Water Payments

### Not Just Checks

Beginning July 15, you can pay your property taxes and water bills with credit or debit cards, or by electronic check! Making payments on-line is secure, fast, and easy. The Township has contracted with Official Payments Corporation to accept payments using the internet. Official Payments already provides this service for the Internal Revenue Service, the State of New Jersey, and numerous municipalities throughout the country.

### Fees

The Township itself does not charge any additional fees for credit card payments or e-checks. However, Official Payments Corporation does charge a "convenience fee": Credit and debit cards: 2.5% for property tax payments and \$5.95 for water bills up to \$600; E-checks: \$3 for payment transactions of \$10,000 or less; \$15 for payment transactions greater than \$10,000.

### Making Payments

You can make internet payments by using the links on the Township's web site, [www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org), and clicking "Tax Office" in the right-hand column.

### Options

Of course, taking advantage of the new payment options is your choice! If you'd rather not, don't worry - the Township will continue to accept debit payments for tax and water bills without a transaction fee. Simply authorize automatic debit transactions from designated checking accounts whenever your payments are due. - Or, if you'd like, you can still pay in person, by mail, or by using the municipal drop box.

To participate in the direct withdrawal program, please download an authorization form from the Township



*(Continued on page 6)*

### Long-Term Financial Planning *(continued from page 1)*

dedicated fund established three years ago. The result: the unusual winter conditions had no impact on our current-year operating budget.

#### Awareness

Perhaps the most important benefit of long-term financial planning is that it makes all decision makers mindful of the enduring impact of today's decisions. For this reason, long-term planning is being introduced into every financial process in the Township, particularly those that affect the annual operating and capital budgets.

#### The Core

Formulating fiscal policies is one of

the core elements of long-term financial planning. These policies function as guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable courses of action in both short-term and long-term decision making. They also establish essential parameters for day-to-day operations. – And although many of the financial policies included in Livingston's long-term financial plan were already well established, they were formalized when the Township Council adopted the official financial plan.

#### Impact

The annual budget has the most significant impact on the Town-

ship's financial position, and linking that budget to adopted financial policies is essential. The 2011 budget fully complies with adopted fiscal policies by introducing new revenues and by ensuring that:

- all revenue and appropriation changes are sustainable;
- an adequate level of surplus is maintained for working capital and emergencies;
- the Water, Sewer, and Swimming Pool Utilities are self-supporting;
- funds are provided to maintain capital assets and infrastructure

*(Continued on page 8)*

### After You Get Your Building Permit: A Few Basics

Our Building Department issues approximately 2,000 construction permits per year, and conducts around 700 inspections per month. That's a lot of inspections!

#### Once you have your permit in hand, here are a few things to remember:

**Q:** How long does it take for someone to come out to my construction site and perform an inspection?

**A:** An inspector will generally be at your site within 1-2 days of your call.

**Q:** Can I pick the time the inspector will come?

**A:** No, you cannot choose what time an inspector will arrive. However, you **can** request that the inspector arrive either in the "AM" (8:00 a.m.–12:00 noon) or "PM" (12:00 noon–4:00 p.m.) With 700 inspections per month, the staff members do their best to try to accommodate!

**Q:** What if I can't be home when the inspector comes?

**A:** If your builder is on the site, or if the work to be inspected is outside and can be easily accessed, you don't have to be there. However,

1. if the inspector has questions and no one is there to answer them, or
2. if the work to be inspected is inside the house, **you may have to reschedule the inspection.** Inspectors **will not** enter a home if no one is there!

**Q:** How can I "speed up" the process?

**A:** Be sure the work that is to be inspected has been properly completed, and keep a copy of your approved construction plan on site and available to the inspector.

#### And... finally! My contractor's work is finished!

**Q:** Once my contractor's work is done, he leaves, and I'm done with the Building Department process, right?

**A:** **Not yet!** Remember to have your final inspection done and get your Certificate of Occupancy from the Township! In fact, your yellow Building Permit card states that you are **not required** to pay your contractor until you receive your final inspection approval and certificate from the town. While this is a small, simple step to complete, forgetting it can lead to headaches later on.

**So... be sure to have your final inspection – it's for your own protection!**

**This year's  
National  
Night Out  
is  
August 2nd!**

**Join the  
Livingston  
Police  
Department  
and  
representatives  
from  
local,  
county,  
state,  
&  
federal agencies,  
the armed  
forces & others  
for  
fun, raffles,  
music & a  
movie!**

**Tuesday,  
August 2, 2011  
5:30-10:00 p.m.  
on the Oval**

**Ordinances**

**Protecting Water Quality**  
 Ordinance 8-2011 creates "Riparian Zones," which protect the water quality of those streams which feed our water supply. These zones create a buffer area, nurturing vital vegetation and plant growth and helping to preserve the aquatic environment. Most important, Riparian Zones cannot be developed and must be maintained in their natural state.

**Outdoor Seating Revision**  
 Ordinance 9-2011 clarifies language in the Township's "temporary outdoor seating" ordinance. It also mandates that furniture, receptacles and equipment be removed within five days after the seasonal permit expires.

**Rights to Appeal**  
 Ordinances 10-2011 and 11-2011 establishes new residential zones for market rate and affordable housing. The Ordinances were adopted by the Council expressly under protest, and only in order to preserve all potential rights to appeal unfavorable decisions recently rendered against the Township.

**Old Road Parking**  
 Ordinance 18-2011 expands parking restrictions during school days on both sides of Old Road. This will help prevent vehicles from blocking the roadway, will allow for safer bus stacking, and will improve access to the school located on the south side of the street.

**Permitted Uses**  
 Ordinance 20-2011 clarifies the uses permitted in the newly-created P-B3 Professional Office District including those retail sales and services that are permitted in the Township's B Central Business District.

**Housing Compliance**  
 Ordinance 21-2011 ensures that the Township is in compliance with its State-imposed obligation to provide low- and moderate-income housing, and to make certain that the units are actually occupied by low- and moderate-income households.

**"Development Fee" Update**  
 Ordinance 22-2011 amends the Township Code to provide updated standards for the collection, maintenance and expenditure of "Development Fees" charged to a developer for the improvement of property. By State law, these monies must used for the sole purpose of providing low- and moderate-income housing. ■

**Payments (continued from page 4)**

website at [www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org). You can also request a form by sending an e-mail to [tax@livingstonnj.org](mailto:tax@livingstonnj.org), or call the Tax Collector's office directly at 973-992-5000, ext. 5121, 5122, or 5123. ■

**Quick Guide: Automated Telephone Attendant System (ATAS)  
Main Number: 973-992-5000**

Department	Press
Township Clerk, Garbage, Recycling, Licensing, Public Records	1
Finance, Tax & Water Collection, Tax Assessment, Purchasing	2
Public Works Roads, Engineering, Planning	3
Building, Zoning, Property Maintenance, Inspections	4
Direct-Dial Numbers	Phone Number
Police Department (non-emergency number)	973-992-3000
Fire Department (non-emergency number)	973-992-2373
Senior, Youth & Leisure Services (SYLS)	973-535-7925
Health Department	973-535-7961
Municipal Court	973-535-7970
Library	973-992-4600

**In an emergency, always dial 911 for immediate help.**

**Township Trivia!** (continued from page 8)

How many did you know?

**Answers**

1. Livingston had recently replaced the street signs throughout the Township and put the old signs up for auction. After 2 rounds of auctions on eBay and one sale of signs in town, we raised approximately \$43,000! That amount represented about 40% of the entire cost of the skate park. (see box, right)
2. In January of 1928, the National Bank opened with assets of \$128,000.
3. Public Service began laying gas pipes under the streets in 1930. By 1932, most residents had access to the service.
4. The street was dedicated to Robert Harp, the first Township Manager for Livingston. He held the position from 1957 to 1985, guiding the Township through a period of incredible growth. (see box, right)
5. Northfield Road is considered to be the oldest road in town. Hundreds of years ago, it was used by the Lenni Lenape Indians as an extension of the Minisink Trail.

6. West Essex Park on South Orange Avenue has its own canoe launch so residents can explore the Passaic River!
7. There were 51 Civil War soldiers from Livingston. Of them, only George R. Harrison perished on the battlefield. In 1913, the Township unveiled a monument honoring these men. Ten veterans who were still alive at that time attended the ceremony. (see box, right)
8. In 1909, motorized buses were brought in to replace the stagecoaches. At the time, the buses were used mainly for sightseeing. (see box, right)
9. The white oak tree, which was plentiful in Livingston, supplied the shoe- and hat-making industries with the bark that was needed to treat leather and felt. Both industries flourished, and many people came here to live and work. In fact, the great majority of shoes worn by soldiers in the Civil War were made in Livingston!
10. The entire 42-acre tract was purchased for one dollar! (see box, right)

**Budget** (continued from page 3)

**The Future**

We're looking forward to 2012 and far beyond!

The Township is continuing to explore ways to increase non-tax revenues and reduce costs. The biggest potential for revenue growth is in shared services opportunities.

We also expect to realize significant annual savings by implementing recommendations that resulted from a 2010 energy audit resulted in a variety of recommendations. Ongoing program-based budgeting efforts will aid in decision-making. Above all, the Township remains committed to its perennial budget objectives of providing high quality services at an affordable price, while maintaining long-term fiscal stability.

**Trivia Photos, Key to Page 1:**

- A. Civil War Veteran's Memorial. (see #7, left)
- B. Street signs for sale. (see #1, left)
- C. Original motorized sightseeing bus. (see #8, left)
- D. Riker Hill Art Park, purchased from the County for only \$1. (see #10, left)
- E. Robert Harp Drive, named for our first Township Manager. (see #4)

**How's Your Water Consumption?**

**Find Out!**

You can now sign up to receive e-mail notifications of your monthly water consumption! This new program can help alert homeowners to unusually high usage due to possible water leaks or other causes. In the past, potential problems only became apparent when a homeowner received a high quarterly water bill. That meant the problem could persist for up to four months before you could take corrective action!

**Monthly Readings**

To implement the new program, the Township will read meters on a monthly basis to record water consumption amounts. By providing more frequent usage data Livingston expects to reduce high water bills and promote conservation. But – don't worry – even though the readings will be monthly, billing will remain on a quarterly basis.

**Sign Up!**

To register for the new notification program, you can:

- e-mail the Township Tax Collector at [tax@livingstonnj.org](mailto:tax@livingstonnj.org), or
- sign up on the Township's web site at [www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org), or
- complete and mail a registration



form, available at the Tax Collector's Office in the Municipal Building at 357 South Livingston Avenue.

# Town Topics

357 South Livingston Avenue  
Livingston, NJ 07039-3994

Phone: 973-992-5000  
Fax: 973-535-7967

Summer 2011

Township of  Livingston

Presort Standard  
U.S. Postage PAID  
W. Caldwell, NJ  
Permit #430


Residential & Business Customer  
Livingston, New Jersey 07039

**Town Topics** is a quarterly publication circulated to all Livingston residents, businesses and Township employees.

## Township Trivia!

The answers are on page 7,  
but give it a try before you peek!

### Questions

1. Recently, when it came time to build a Skate Park, the Township found a novel way to help pay for its completion. How?
2. Livingston has its fair share of banks. What was the first one, and in what year did it open?
3. In what year did Livingston residents finally receive natural gas piped directly into their homes?
4. You've probably driven on Robert Harp Drive. Who was he, and why was it named for him?
5. What road is thought to be the oldest in entire the Township?
6. Livingston has several beautifully maintained parks. One of them even has a canoe launch! Which one?
7. Can you guess how many Civil War veterans were from Livingston?
8. DeCamp stagecoaches were a fairly common sight in the old days. What was the last year that they served Livingston?
9. The white oak tree (right) helped to populate the Township of Livingston. How? 
10. In 1974, the tract of land that makes up Riker Hill Art Park was sold by the Federal Government to Essex County. What was the sale price? ■

### Long-Term (continued from page 5)

in good working order; and

- no necessary operating expenditures are delayed to future years.

We expect to update the long-term financial plan every two years.

You can view the plan adopted by the Township Council in 2010 on the Township website, at

[www.livingstonnj.org/finance](http://www.livingstonnj.org/finance). ■

Visit us online at  
[www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org)

## Town Topics

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