
CROSS ROADS

© PUBLISHED BY THE OAKLAND COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
SPONSORED BY THE BOROUGH OF OAKLAND AND THE OAKLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Winter, 2011
VOL. 14, No. 1

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

The past few years have been extraordinarily tough as we all experienced the worse economic recession since the "Great Depression."

After enduring one of the most difficult winters in recent history and with signs that the economy is finally turning a corner, spring brings a sense of renewed hope for all of us. But we still have a long way to go. For those of us who are entrusted with the responsibility of representing your interests on the governing body, we continue the challenging work of building a better community despite the economic challenges we face. We need to persevere and not lose sight of the community we are now and can be in the future. As the year continues:

We remain committed to redeveloping the Borough's downtown. I am actively engaged in high level discussions with the State to bring sewers to our downtown without which we will not realize our vision of a revitalized town center.

We are committed to promoting affordable housing for families and seniors. Plans are very close to being submitted for our first affordable housing developments in our downtown that will include affordable senior units.

We continue to promote a "Green Oakland" to make us a sustainable community now and into the future. The Oakland "Green Team" has been meeting monthly formulating actions and plans that will gain the Borough distinction as a certified "Sustainable New Jersey" community by this coming fall. Please contact me if you wish to become part of this important volunteer effort.

And most important, we continue to adopt responsible municipal budgets to keep taxes down. Thanks to the hard work of the governing body led by Council President DiPentima, this year's Fiscal 2011 Budget includes significant budget savings that once again serve to reduce the tax burden on the taxpayers of Oakland.

I look forward to the warmth of spring ahead and working with all of you to build a greater "Oakland".



REASSESSMENT UPDATE

The municipal-wide Reassessment of all real property in the Borough is now complete. The goal of a Reassessment is to ensure all property owners pay their fair share of the tax burden based on the actual market value of their property. The Borough retained an outside company, Appraisal Systems, Inc., to perform all the property inspections. The Tax Assessor AND Appraisal Systems then jointly analyzed the data and determined the valuation formulas and adjustments.

All of the new assessment figures are posted on Appraisal Systems website at www.asinj.com. This website also has a Tax Impact Worksheet, which provides a "preliminary estimate" of the anticipated tax liability for 2011 on any property after the new assessment data is input. Since the actual new tax rate will most likely not be determined until sometime in June, please be advised that this document is not official and is only provided as a means to get a reasonable estimate of what the tax impact might be.

Property owners can contact the Assessor's Office at any time to inquire about their new assessment and request a copy of their Property Record Card to see what data was taken into consideration in determining the assessment. Typically, the deadline for filing appeals with the Bergen County Board of Taxation is April 1st. However, with a recent law change, this year the appeal deadline is May 1st for all Revaluation or Reassessment districts, such as Oakland. If you have any additional questions, please contact the Assessor's Office for assistance.

DO YOU THINK PUMPING YOUR SEPTIC TANK IS A WASTE OF MONEY?

Most people wouldn't consider ignoring routine maintenance on a fireplace or a car. A build-up of ash will eventually leave no room for wood in the firebox, and creosote in the chimney can ignite, causing costly fire damage to the home. A build-up of dirt in the engine's oil will eventually cause it to become so thick that the engine will seize, requiring replacement of the car's most costly component.

A septic tank is no different. Raw sewage is discharged from your house to your tank, where the liquids (effluent) and solids are separated by naturally occurring bacteria. The bacteria in the tank break down the solids, and the remaining residue settles to the bottom forming a layer of sludge. The accumulating sludge must be periodically pumped along with the effluent contained in the tank. If the sludge is allowed to build up, the solids will remain suspended in the effluent which will flow to and clog the pit/field, causing raw sewage to back up into your house. Replacing your failed system will cost an average of

\$15,000 to \$25,000, so does spending a few hundred dollars every three years to pump your septic tank still seem like a waste of money?

Protect your home's most valuable asset and make arrangements today to have your tank(s) pumped. "Guidelines on How to Save Money on Septic Maintenance" and a current list of Licensed Septic Pumpers and Licensed Septic Contractors may be obtained from the Oakland Health Department and are posted on the Board of Health webpage at www.oakland-nj.org, accessible 24/7. They can also be found in Borough Hall's rear vestibule. For a "Homeowner's Guide to Septic Systems", go to <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/dwq/pdf/septicmn.pdf>

Be aware that repairs may only be done by a Licensed Septic Contractor, and not all pumpers are licensed contractors. Do not be pressured by pumpers to have repairs done on the spot. Though you may be told it will save you money, it may ultimately cost you more than necessary!

....The Oakland Board of Health

Burns Honored For Service To Community

At the February 9 Borough Council meeting, Mayor John Szabo and the Council recognized former Councilmember Donald Burns for his 21 years of service. Even though he no longer serves on the Council, Mr. Burns still continues to contribute to Oakland by volunteering on several town commissions and other community efforts. Thanks Don for your many years of involvement and ongoing efforts to make Oakland such a great place to live!

Pictured from R-L: Mayor Szabo with Don Burns, Burns' wife Jean, and daughter Marla.



Recycling Pays Off

In 2010 Oakland received \$88,896.00 from Green Sky Industries in Clifton, NJ. The money was from the sale of our mixed paper and cardboard along with the commingled containers.

In 2010 Oakland Received a Clean Communities grant of \$21,938.47.

We also received \$26,755.79 in 2010 from the State of NJ Recycling Tonnage Grant Fund. The tonnage fund is now the \$3.00 per ton tax on all garbage going to NJ transfer stations or landfills. Oakland will receive all this tax money back at a minimum. The Recycling Enhancement Act also adds money to this grant based on the amount of materials municipalities and counties recycled.

Adding these three amounts up, the total amount of money received from Oakland's recycling program is:

2010 = \$137,590.26

2009 = \$134,915.21

2008 = \$130,586.21

2007 = \$ 65,372.75

2006 = \$ 21,838.48

Oakland Building Department

The Oakland building department is located at the lower level in the rear of the municipal building. If you are planning to do any construction, please call this office to see if permits are required. Sheds, decks, and various work may require zoning and/or building permits. Please check with us first. We will be happy to answer any of your questions at 201-337-1644. Please remember, New Jersey State law requires that you "Call before you dig" anywhere. The number to call is 1-800-272-1000.

Homeowners are reminded to make sure all work receives final inspections from the Building Department. NJ Consumer law requires that final inspections be made before final payment is made to the contractor. Making sure that final inspections are made by the Building Department is your assurance that all work meets code. To schedule inspections, call Gail Bowitz at 201-337-1644.

A Continued Certificate of Occupancy (CCO) is required whenever a home is sold or there is a change in tenants. This office has applications for Continued Certificates of Occupancy. Call Ralph Porrino at 201-337-9616 for information or to schedule a CCO inspection.

This winter has been exceptionally cold and snowy. A new ordinance in town requires that any property owner, who has a fire hydrant on their property, must remove snow and vegetation in front of and around the hydrant for a five foot area. Keeping hydrants clear will ensure that the Oakland Fire Department is not delayed in responded to a fire at yours or your neighbor's house. Let's all keep our town safe and prepared for emergencies.

The Borough of Oakland reminds all residents that there is a Property Maintenance Code in the Borough. Experience and observations have shown that a lack of maintenance of real property may lead to progressive deterioration and loss of property values. Property Maintenance will ensure the desirability of residential and nonresidential uses, neighborhoods will be enhanced, and the general health, safety and welfare of all residents will be protected. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Call Michael Tabback at 201-405-7710 for Property Maintenance questions or issues.

Dan Hagberg- Construction Official

Gail Bowitz- Technical Assistant to Construction Official

Michael Tabback- Zoning Official / Building Inspector

Oakland First Aid Squad needs Volunteers to help with staffing shortage!

The Oakland First Aid Squad needs volunteers to cover ambulance shifts. The Squad has a shortage of volunteers to staff ambulances both during day and night shifts. Oakland residents or employees of Oakland businesses over the age of 16 may join. Anyone interested can schedule a tour of the Squad and receive an application by calling 201-337-7385.

Volunteers are required to complete their New Jersey EMT certification within one year of joining the Squad. The EMT class is held at various times during the year at the Law and Public Safety Institute in Mahwah. Classes usually run two nights per week and a few Sundays. Prospective members, who have completed their application to the Squad, will have their course tuition paid. Members are required to cover 12 hours of call per week and attend two meetings per month. The Squad provides free uniforms, pagers, and ongoing training for members.

The Squad, established in 1954, has an all volunteer staff, providing 24/7 emergency ambulance service to the Borough of Oakland and its surrounding neighbors. The Squad responds to approximately 900 emergency calls per year and has two fully modern, equipped ambulances. The Squad is sustained by the generous donations of Oakland residents and businesses.

To donate to the Squad, make checks payable to The Oakland First Aid Squad and mail them to Oakland First Aid Squad, PO Box 5, Oakland, NJ 07436.

2011 Firematic Officers of the Oakland Volunteer Fire Department.

Department Chief Robert Knapp Jr.,

Co. 1 Assistant Chief Curtis LeRoy, Co. 2 Assist Chief Peter Warnet Jr.,

Co. 1 Captain Charles Kelly, Co. 2 Captain Timothy Ryan,

Co. 1 Lieutenant Mark Romme, Co. 1 Lieutenant Vincent Dies,

Co. 2 Lieutenant Gary Walker, and Co. 2 Lieutenant Vincent Incorvaia.

2011 Association Officers of the Oakland Volunteer Fire Department.

President Edward Proskey, Vice President Timothy DeBlock,

Secretary Joseph A. Gallup, and Treasurer Edwin Kimmel.

In 2010, your volunteer Firefighters spent approximately 2,400 man hours of training and answered 408 calls for assistance, 96 more than in 2009 and only the second time in the department's history in which they answered over 400 calls. In 2007, the department answered 409 calls for assistance. In 2005, the department responded to 365 calls, marking the first time the department answered over 300 calls in a year. Since 2005, your volunteers have responded to 2199 calls, an average of 367 calls a year. This is done by a department of volunteers made up of 54 men and a woman, who are on call 24/7 365 days a year. Everyone has full time jobs and in some cases two jobs. Most are married with families, some are single. They come from all walks of life and professions. Included amongst their ranks are electricians, plumbers, police officers, career firefighters, computers techs, students, business owners, teachers, municipal employees, and more. But, what they all have in common is a love for Oakland and wanting to give back to the community that has given all of them so much. At a time when the economy is uncertain, one thing the residents of Oakland can be certain of and count on is their volunteer fire department being there for their neighbors in their time of need.

The department also hosts tours of the firehouse for the boy & girl scouts and provides a safety training house for the children during "Safety Town" each July. The department also hosts a fire prevention poster contest for all children in the public schools between 1st & 5th grades, and provides a fire prevention program & open house for every member of town every October.

The department has spent the past 2 years planning and creating the specs for a new rescue truck. The new truck is a 2010 Pierce and will replace the current 1989 Mack. The rescue truck carries equipment to be used on numerous situations, including but not limited to the following; assisting on structure fires, water rescue, and extrication of victims of motor vehicle accidents. It is also used for firefighter rehabilitation during structure fires and serves as a mobile command post. The new truck is scheduled to arrive in Oakland in July and should be in service by September.

The Oakland Volunteer Fire Department is always looking for members. If you are interested in joining their ranks and are at least 16 years of age, come and visit us any Monday night after 7:30 and speak with an officer.

Borough Brine Making System

The Borough purchased the brine making system for \$34,000 from Reed Systems Inc. The system includes two 1500 gallon mixing tanks, one 5000 gallon storage tank, one 375 gallon application tank, and one 980 gallon application tank. The application tanks are mounted on two of our dump trucks.

Salt brine is made by mixing our road salt with water, resulting in a specific % concentration. This mixture can be applied to our roads up to 48 hours before a predicted snow or ice event. You may have noticed the lines on some roads prior to our most recent storms. This allows the DPW to spread this material during regular business hours, potentially saving thousands of dollars in overtime costs per event.

Treating our roads with rock salt costs us about \$16.00 per lane mile (rock salt cost only). Treating our roads with salt brine cost us about \$4.50 per lane mile (materials only). This mixture is also less harmful to the environment than straight salt.

Reports show municipalities saving upwards of 30% in salt usage since they began pre-treating their roads with brine. We haven't been using this system for a full season yet, but DPW Superintendent, Anthony Marcucilli, estimates the Borough has saved well over \$20,000.00 in materials since mid-January alone. One full season using this system will easily pay for itself when you factor in all the savings on materials, overtime, etc.



News From Oakland Schools

The Superintendent's Message - *The Importance of Community*

Dear Residents:

The next few pages provide a glimpse of our students' and our schools' relationship with our community. It has been said that successful schools come from strong communities. In Oakland, the interrelationship among the schools, the families, and the community, as a whole, has resulted in children of whom we can all be proud. Furthermore, the specialness of our community has earned Oakland a reputation as a good place to raise children. Thus, families in search of a caring and nurturing oasis in which to raise their children often find their way to Oakland.

We are proud of the work of our talented and committed teachers, administrators, and staff who also contribute mightily to our students' success. Additionally, from the day they are employed in our school district, our staff realizes the importance of a community commitment in their work with children. Thus, they, too, develop their connections with Oakland, support town organizations, and encourage children to value a strong, connected community.

We are also very grateful for the support for our schools from all of Oakland's citizens who do not currently have children in school. They, too, recognize that a strong community and strong schools are part of the essential foundation of well-educated, caring, and respectful children who grow to become adults possessing a community commitment.

Working together, we all make a difference in the lives of children and each other. Together, adults and children make Oakland special. Please join us, with pride, as we send our State Champion Future City Team to the National Competition in Washington, D. C., and thank you for making it possible that our children can be champions, in so many ways, every day.



Sincerely,
Dr. Richard G. Heflich

Valley Middle School Celebrates Ten Years of State & Regional Championships in the Future City Competition

Valley Middle School students have competed for the past eleven years in a special engineering challenge called National Engineers Week Future City Competition. Students work as a team under the guidance of their teacher/coach, Ms. Judith Vihonski, and an engineer mentor to envision the city of tomorrow. By designing both virtual and physical models of cities, developing an essay about an engineering topic, and presenting their research and product to a panel of engineers, students vie to represent the New Jersey Region at the National Competition.

Two teams recently participated in the Competition at Rutgers University. One team won the Regional Championship and will be advancing to the Washington D.C. National Competition! This marks the tenth consecutive year that a Valley Middle School team has won this prestigious competition. Congratulations to our newest National Competition contenders: Sidney Anderson, Benjamin Clauss, and Jeevan Jeyabalan for their envisioned city, Eleebana Wahan, a reclaimed quarry city located in Australia.

The winning city features a Health Dome, helicoid bridges, cliffside condominiums, and a humanoid robot named PAM that assists patients with their healthcare. The city model, constructed of recycled materials also received the Students' Choice Award. The students spent over four hundred hours on the project with most of the work occurring outside of school and on their own time. We look forward to their continued success as they represent Oakland in Washington D.C. on February 19 - 23.

Congratulations are also extended to our second team members who won Second Place and special recognition at the competition for having the Most Organized City. Peter Zaporoshan, Karina Rahaman, and Nicholas Bonini created a polar city in northern Canada featuring algae bridges, floating hotels and hospitals, and wildlife preserves.

Both teams join a long list of past winners from Valley Middle School, many of whom became engineers as a result of their experiences with the Future City Competition and are now mentors for our current competitors.



STUDENTS CELEBRATE DR. KING

This year, the students of the Oakland Public Schools celebrated the life and ideals of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. through art. The work of many of our students hangs at the Oakland Public Library for the community to appreciate.

Valley Middle School students designed their display, with hands reaching out to break chains, symbolizing the struggle Dr. King led against the remnants of racism and oppression still evident into the twenty-first century.

Elementary students from Dogwood Hill, Heights and Manito Schools also honored the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with a variety of presentations that reflected their knowledge and insight. The common theme was of the courage to speak out for further justice and non-violence.

In sharing the thoughts he had when completing his project, Dogwood Hill student, Michael McCusker said, "While I made my Martin Luther King project, many thoughts started running through my mind, like how brave and respectful he was, while arguing for freedom. I also thought about how hard he worked for civil rights, and that he never gave up. Now to me that is a real role model!"

Another Dogwood Hill student, Alexa Inglima, explained her artistic work in this way: "The reason I drew the brick wall in my picture, is that it shows how strong his opinions and words were. I chose the waves to represent that Martin Luther King brought everyone together. You need to show respect for everyone around you. I loved this Martin Luther King Jr. art project!"

Thank you to Library Director Abby Sanner, Mr. Clark and the teachers who inspired our students and to the students for their commitment to their learning. The work was on display in the main vestibule's display cases from January 17 through February 18 at the Oakland Public Library.



YES Brings Community and School Together

Armed with pick-up sticks, trash bags, and gloves, members of the Valley Middle School YES (Youth-Environment-Seniors) Club have patrolled the streets and fields of Oakland looking for litter and recyclables every spring and fall for the past twenty-three years. This intergenerational club recently celebrated its 50th cleanup. Valley Middle School students are joined by senior citizens, community volunteers, and elementary and middle school parents for their cleanups. Judith Vihonski, the club's advisor, organizes the cleanups and club activities.

Students continue to participate in YES and other town cleanups after they graduate from Valley Middle School. "I have received notes from former club members who tell me that they are participating in litter cleanups—from New Jersey to California—and trace their environmental awareness to the YES Club."

The county and state have recognized the club's efforts. The club has received numerous grants and awards for bluebird interventions, idling, and environmental awareness initiatives. This year's activities have included a trip to the Lakota Wolf Preserve, a presentation about New Jersey wildlife by Weis Ecology Center, and a presentation on rescued greyhounds.

Elementary World Language Immersion Approach

An exciting elementary school curriculum revision this year is the use of *Rosetta Stone* for World Language instruction in Grades 4 and 5. The children have the opportunity to explore basic Spanish through an interactive, personal, language immersion program. Each student progresses at his or her own pace, with an individual microphone and the use of headphones to interact with the Rosetta Stone program.

This program immerses the students in the language, so the children learn the language just as a person learns their native language. Students are presented with basic vocabulary and sentences verbally, and are required to identify the appropriate, corresponding picture. Other times, they will be asked to repeat a word or phrase. The *Rosetta Stone*'s voice recognition component, also, rates students on how well they pronounce Spanish.

Each child's progress can be tracked individually. By so doing, for a student who is a Native or Heritage Spanish speaker, the curriculum can be individualized to a higher standard. Similarly, the program can, also, be adjusted to allow for a student who has a speech or language difficulty.

As students progress through the course, reading and writing skills are introduced, just as they are for most native English speakers. In this way, with the use of the computer screen, headphones, and microphone and with reading, writing, listening and speaking skills emphasized, the student is truly "immersed" in a new language.

During the summer, a committee of fourth and fifth grade teachers, as well as traditional World Language teachers, met to review the *Rosetta Stone* program and develop the curriculum for use in the Oakland Schools. This committee will convene again in late spring to review the results of student achievement and consider refinement of the delivery system.

Kathleen's Garden

This spring, Manito School will be having a special ceremony to formally dedicate Kathleen's Garden. The project, which has been lovingly supported by the Pinckney family and their friends, is a fitting tribute to Kathleen Pinckney, who attended Manito until losing a very brave battle with cancer last year. The centerpiece of the garden is a stone bench that is inscribed with the following words: *She touched our lives in ways that always helped us to see how beautiful and wonderful our world could really be. In loving remembrance of Kathleen Pinckney, our friend forever...* The garden, which incorporates existing shrubs by the flagpole, will also include a variety of bulbs, new shrubs, a lovely tree, and natural stepping-stones. It is designed as a beautiful place that the community can visit to celebrate all of the things Kathleen loved about life—her family, friends, school, animals, sports and art. When considering a site for Kathleen's Garden, everyone agreed that Manito School would be the perfect place. After all, Kathleen's mother, Therese, recalls Kathleen skipping happily out of school one day in the second grade exclaiming, "Mom, I love school, and I love Oakland!" Details about the ceremony will be forthcoming.

CHILDREN'S VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

An educated person has often been equated with one who has a strong, comprehensive, and diverse vocabulary. Recently, the Report of the National Reading Panel determined that the growth in reading comprehension hinges, in large part, on the increase in students' vocabulary development. (National Reading Panel, 2000) Thus, vocabulary knowledge continues to be one of the most important indicators of successful reading achievement.

What does this mean for children and their parents? We know, from an extensive body of research, that those children who come from language-filled homes, who are read to, and whose parents take time to explain new words and answer questions enter school with twice as many oral vocabulary words than those whose parents do not provide language rich environments. By senior year in high school, these same children know approximately four times as many words as their lower performing peers! (Beck, et al 2002) Therefore, with a large vocabulary, students are able to read more fluently and better understand a variety of texts – all important for successful achievement.

It is never too late to foster a child's vocabulary development. Simply reading parts of a newspaper together, including the comics, is one way to interest children in the act of reading and to build vocabulary. Conversations about current events, important people, book characters and the like are another way to engage in vocabulary and the nuances of language. "Collecting" words or phrases, using puns, riddles, puzzles, analogies, and playing word games, such as Scrabble or Pictionary, are still other activities that can aid in learning new words. Of course, limiting the amount of time spent watching television, playing video games or internet use is a great way to re-direct interest to books, magazines and discussions. By creating a positive attitude and valuing vocabulary development, children can improve their vocabulary knowledge which, in turn, supports reading, writing, and life long learning.

CROSSROADS IS GOING DIGITAL!!

Oakland has more going on every day, and so there is more to tell you than we can fit in **CrossRoads**. Therefore we are expanding our coverage but not our costs. Look on the Oakland Borough website for a link to the new **CrossRoads Online**. We will be posting additional articles, and longer versions of published articles, on our website, with more information and pictures. Hopefully we will be able to keep you informed while keeping our costs down. Feel free to send suggestions and feedback to ***communications@oakland-nj.org***. You can also submit articles and pictures to the same address.

Community Service: The Ticket to Good Citizenship

The Oakland Public Schools are dedicated to instilling high academic achievement in our children as well as fostering a nurturing and caring environment. In addition to teaching our children to do their best academically, we encourage them to do "what's right." Community service enables our children to practice and expand the values they have learned both in the classroom and at home, share responsibility for the welfare of their communities and make a selfless positive impact in society.

Valley Middle School provides a framework for every child to develop the habit of caring and reaching out to help others in need. During the year, students may participate in the various community service projects organized by VMS, but children are also encouraged to work with their families and the community to find opportunities for personal involvement. Each year students support a wide range of activities: collecting food and clothing, visiting nursing homes, acting as guides at community events, providing lawn maintenance for the elderly or ailing, and cleaning up the environment, to name just a few.

If you know of a worthy cause that could use a few scholars to assist, please contact Mr. Gregg Desiderio at Valley Middle School and help us help children learn the value of doing "what's right."

OAKLAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Mayor John Szabo
Council Members
Council President Frank Di Pentima
Timothy Jensen • Karen Marcalus
Pat Pignatelli • Betsy Stagg
Christopher Visconti

OAKLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION

Superintendent Dr. Richard G. Heflich
Business Administrator James J. Davis
Board of Education Members
John A. Scerbo, **President**
Russell Talamini, **Vice President**
Robert Akovity • James Gaffney
Jennifer L. Matts

OAKLAND COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Peter Foley **Chairman**
Fred Birks **Vice Chairman**
Cynthia Atwood • Donald Burns
Peter Marcalus • Hank Roth
Brian Zeller

CROSSROADS STAFF

Donald Burns • Peter Foley

Oakland Board of Education
315 Ramapo Valley Road
Oakland, New Jersey 07436

U.S. POSTAGE
PAID NON-PROFIT
Presort Standard
Permit No. 7
Oakland, NJ

POSTAL PATRON
OAKLAND, NEW JERSEY 07436