

CROSS ROADS

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MAYOR'S REPORT

First and foremost on everyone's mind is the economy. Many people are out of work and many more are concerned whether they will have a job over the coming year. Home foreclosures are at an all time high and the value of our real estate market has plummeted. As we approach this budget year I want to assure all the residents of this community that this Mayor and Council will do everything within its power to lower our tax burden while providing the excellent services that has made Oakland one of the top places in the country to raise a family. This will not be an easy task. We can expect less aid from Trenton and the federal stimulus package is still being debated in Washington D.C. But all is not doom and gloom and there are positive signs that we will weather this financial storm. For example, when faced with an over \$30,000 increase in our Bergen County Health Services Contract representing a 26% increase over last year, through our due diligence, we sought out subcontractors for various parts of the contract and reduced the overall increase to 4,365.42 (3.6%). The total increase in all our health services contracts (which includes Blood-borne Pathogen Training, Well Baby Clinic and Animal Control) would have been well over \$30,000 but we reduced the total overall increase to only \$1,730 (1.18%). We have held all of our professional contracts to a zero increase over last year. Faced with large increases in insurance costs, we have hired a new insurance representative in both health and liability to generate a fresh plan to reduce costs. In 2008 we added a new hospital network and re-

vised our short-term disability program. These changes should save us about \$100,000 annually. We have started purchasing more fuel efficient police vehicles which should save us \$3000.00 in fuel costs this year and are exploring the possibility of buying a hybrid vehicle for the Police Department as well. Our Public Works Department is investigating the use of brine solution as a way to both reduce our expenditures on road salt and to improve road conditions in the early stages of snow storms. These are but a few examples of what we can do to reduce costs. We are committed to applying all of our talent and resources to continue to reduce the cost of government during the coming budget year

To cut our costs even further we have formed a cooperative partnership with Franklin Lakes and Wyckoff to explore ways we can share services and pool resources to save our communities money. This committee comprised of myself and Councilmen DePentima and Visconti, meets monthly with our FLOW partners to pursue common interests. Our first joint effort was to use the purchasing power of all three towns to jointly bid on recreation equipment. The prices we will pay in 2009 are generally less than what we would have been able to secure on our own.

The downtown is emerging as planned. Walgreens and Starbucks are now open and a new Columbia Bank will be completed shortly. The streetscape including the sidewalk treatment, lighting and landscaping associated with this project were constructed in accordance with our Downtown Master Plan and was all paid

for by the developer. Not a dime of your tax dollars was invested in



improving the streetscape. The project not only added a needed ratable to our tax rolls but created an important gateway into our downtown area. Despite the rough economy businesses are investing in Oakland. I wish to welcome such businesses as SVE Savings Bank, Franks Pizza, Oakland Java, and V Capelli Salon to our community. It is our hope that as we attract more businesses to town where we can encourage them to participate in improving the downtown as the Eden Project has done.

It is imperative that we conserve energy and I invite all of our residents to "Go Green". It makes sense not only from an environmental point of view, but also from the point of view of saving money. The less energy we use, the more efficient we are in managing our resources, we save not only the environment but money as well. I have been working closely with the Environmental Commission in formulating a "Green Plan" for Oakland. It is our goal to become a certified "Sustainable New Jersey Community" this year. To begin the process on March 24th at 7:00 p.m. we will be hosting a televised public forum in Council Chambers to discuss ways we can become a "Green Community". I look forward to this very important public discussion and encourage all residents of Oakland to participate and join in. (continued on back page...)

News Release from the Oakland Historical Society

Who is it who once said: "Now is the time for all good men (or women) to come to the aid of your party," or was it "with a party"? In either case, as long as it is delicious and entertaining, it is a good quote. And the Oakland Historical Society, Inc. worked to make its annual 18th Century Gala Dinner Party both delicious and entertaining. It was held at Oakland's Senior Center on Sunday, February 8, starting with soups and appetizers served at 5 P.M. The Society requested donations of \$ 35.00 for adults, \$ 30.00 for members and seniors. Donations received will be used for touch-ups to the Van Allen & Stream House. We want to thank all those who attended for their support, and we hope we can provide proof of their kind involvement with Oakland's history.

We served a 3 course dinner, all dishes being prepared according to authentic 18th c. Colonial Dutch recipes. Between courses we had our Society musicians present vocal pieces, with fife and drum, of popular hit songs by Handel and Haydn from America's beginning years, in honor of George Washington's birthday in February. Following dinner, we listened to period music, played by our local musician families, Lanny & Laurie Paykin and Mitchell Weiss, a string quartet with clarinet, which has prepared a selection of popular 18th c. music from Mozart and Haydn.

If you have not visited the Van Allen House lately, you will not know that recent donations have helped repair the rain-damaged upstairs bedroom, also known as the "Van Houten

Room." Oakland Girl-Scouts Victoria Pallien and Olivia Favaro are currently working to finish the job by adding a fresh coat of paint to the new ceiling and walls. Donations also replaced the roof of the tool shed next to the Van Allen House. This was done to help preserve the farm tools which Boy Scouts troop #49, led by Frank Pallien of Oakland, recently cleaned and documented for their engineering education and the knowledge of possible future generations of mechanics. Do you know how ingenious farm and dairy tools of the past century were? You should stop by and take a look. Watch for signs announcing open-houses.

The Oakland Historical Society is glad to hear that the Borough is still pursuing State and County grants to stabilize the condition of the Stream House, which many residents perceive as an eye-sore in the downtown area. With your donations and support, at least the exterior of the building could be brought to a condition that residents could be proud of. Please consider attending future events and help beautify your town.

Colonial
Quintet

**Recycling Program Expanded, Saving the Environment, and Taxpayers Money**

By Michael Kozak, Oakland Environmental Commission member

Starting Dec. 1, we now recycle ALL plastic type items, not just #1 and #2. We also recycle ALL foam (white or any other color) items. "This is another major step in moving more garbage out of the waste stream normally headed to a dump site, and now redirected into a facility to make useful products", explains Eugene MacMahon, Oakland Recycling coordinator. "Add ANY plastic or foam type items to your metal, glass and plastic pail(s). It is that simple. Even if you are throwing out your plastic patio table, it is recyclable. Set it next to your pail."

FOAM you say? "Yes, foam. Packing foam, peanut shell foam, meat tray foam, any type of foam is really a #6 plastic. It is now a recyclable item."

The other big change is on the newspaper and cardboard recycling side. "You now must add your Orange Juice cartons, and any other cardboard/wax type item to your paper pile."

The new additions to recycling will save tens of thousands of tax dollars, and save the environment. "Normally we pay \$82 per ton to send trash to a dump site" explains Eugene MacMahon. "By diverting these new items to the recycling pickup, we send them to a company who pays us for the recyclable material. This will result in a big savings to the taxpayers once we get everyone complying. We need people to spread the word."

Another newsletter was sent out to give you a full outline of the recycling items. Please tell you neighbors about the change so we can save taxpayers money, and save the environment. Have a question? Call DPW at 201-337-8103

Remember the 3 R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Going Green in 09, with your help.

The Seven Member Oakland Environmental Commission has been working on objectives to make Oakland a "green community", and sustainable for our children. Mayor Szabo attended the November and December EC meetings, sharing his vision for Oakland "Going Green". The Mayor relayed information on the League of Municipalities "Mayors Committee for a Green Future (MCGF)" program that is intended to initiate sustainability and conservation. Their Website: http://www.njslom.org/Green_Future_committee.html is giving municipalities and businesses the opportunity to understand ways to become sustainable for a greener future.

The website describes the MCGF mission to "*Make New Jersey green, one municipality at a time.*" The hope of MCGF is that through local action, municipalities can initiate programs on the environment in the areas of: water, air, transportation, toxics, energy consumption, waste, land use, conservation and health. The initial product of the MCGF is the creation of SustainableJersey.com. Sustainable Jersey will provide direction and resources for municipalities and businesses to institute programs that address sustainability and green communities. The **MCGF** and NJ State League of Municipalities will provide recognition to "green communities" - those communities that adopt, support, and implement a specified set of sustainability and greening initiatives. This is our chance to rise to the top.

The Mayor and Oakland Environmental Commission are designing a roadmap for Oakland to achieve "certified" Sustainable Community status. The Commission will be looking to get public input in a forum in March. "Going Green" is not just for environmentalists, it serves to protect the future of Oakland to conserve its resources and save taxpayers money. Some of the local initiatives discussed by the Commission include:

1. Increasing communication regarding new recycling initiatives including the addition of the #3-7 plastics recycling. The goal is to ultimately save the taxpayers up to \$100,000 annually while reducing our collective "carbon footprint."
2. Increase awareness and communication of the benefits of Open Space acquisition for the preservation and environmental protection of our local natural resources.
3. March 2009 - Coordinate a community wide "Green Forum" or environmental conference on the benefits of sustainability (to be broadcast on Channel 77).
4. Summer 2009 - Coordinate a community "Green Fair" The goal is to invite 50+ vendors Exhibiting "Green" building and community sustainability initiatives.

Oakland First Aid Squad Celebrates Milestones



The John Robert Walker Memorial Oakland First Aid Squad will be celebrating its 55th year in 2009. Along with the squad, the following members have also reached some significant milestones. Paul DeLorenzo one of the squad's longest running active riding members has been with OFAS for 25 Years. During that time Paul has served in many capacities, including as Captain for a record 7 terms! Others with anniversaries in 2009 include: Milka Morin, David Meyer and Kate Foster - 5 years. Brian La Forgia and Shirley Hutsebaut - 10 years. Additionally, Connie Monks (pictured above) who has been with the squad since its inception (54 years!), also received the Annual EMS Excellence Award from the Hackensack University Medical Center.

The State Visits Oakland: QSAC

Beginning last summer, the Board of Education, the administration and the staff of the Oakland School District began preparing for an assessment visit from State officials from the New Jersey Department of Education. Revised State Code now states that each school district in New Jersey will be assessed every three years to monitor their performance in relation to newly developed indicators in the areas of Instruction and Programs, Fiscal Management, Governance, Personnel, and Operations. Within these cluster areas, there are more than 450 indicators to which school districts must demonstrate that they have been addressing. The monitoring process has been named New Jersey Quality Single Accounting Continuum. In districts, the process has simply been termed "QSAC."

Under Instruction and Programs, for example, the State Department of Education ensures that the curriculum is current and aligned with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS). The Department also monitors that children receive both formative and summative assessments of their progress in the nine CCCS. Another item that the monitors review is the Superintendent of Schools public report of the results of student performance on NJ ASK, the state-wide assessment. Areas of Fiscal Management that the State Department of Education reviews include the budget process, purchasing procedures, fiscal efficiency, and how grant funding is tracked.

The Operations area includes a review of the facilities in the District, a district's Long Term Facility Plan, and its Comprehensive Maintenance Plan. The monitors also make sure that the annual Health and Safety Inspections for the facilities have been completed and are satisfactory. Additionally, the Operations area includes student programs for safety, such as the District's Emergency Evacuation Plans, Drug and Alcohol Awareness Programs, and counseling programs.

In Personnel, the State requires districts to support ongoing professional development of its staff. This Professional Development is vital to keeping a school district focused on the evolving needs of the students it serves. Additionally, districts must prove that certificated staff have or are achieving NCLB's Highly Qualified Teacher status and have met all employment requirements, including State certification and Criminal Background Reviews.

In the area of Governance, State monitors review the operations of the local Board of Education. Interviews with Board Members supplement a review of the Board's Governance Manual, including the policies and bylaws of the Board.

Two different State teams visited Oakland – one each on November 17 and November 18, during which time they reviewed the documentation accumulated by the District and interviewed officials, administrators and staff, including Board President Jennifer Matts and Immediate Past President James Gaffney. Although it may be weeks before the "official" results are reported to the Board Of Education, the entire District is proud of its efforts and feels very positive about the results.

Although a committee of eight individuals provided the leadership in the District's review and coordinated the documentation, the QSAC process included contributions from the entire staff. The real preparation, however, is conducted every day by the entire school district. Teachers, administrators, clerical and custodial staff, child study team members, bus drivers and aides/paraprofessionals all display the necessary level of dedication daily that ensures that Oakland is a "learning community committed to excellence."

Glenn Clark, Dogwood Hill School Principal

The Oakland Board of Health urges residents to USE ANTIBIOTICS WISELY

What's the harm in taking antibiotics anytime? Using antibiotics when they are not needed causes some bacteria to become resistant to the antibiotic.

These resistant bacteria are stronger and harder to kill. They can stay in your body and can cause severe illnesses that cannot be cured with antibiotics. A cure for resistant bacteria may require stronger treatment – and possibly a stay in the hospital.

To avoid the threat of antibiotic-resistant infections, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you avoid taking unnecessary antibiotics.

For more information, go to the CDC's website at: www.cdc.gov/getsmart or contact your Healthcare Provider.

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News From Oakland Schools

The Superintendent's Message

Dear Oakland Residents:

At this special time of year, we often think of those important people and things in our lives. All can probably agree that family and community are high on our "most valued" lists, and we give thanks for both.

Oakland is a special community. Its specialness emanates from its residents and families. No community cares more about its children, its schools, and each other. Oakland's citizens are quick to respond to those in need and have repeatedly demonstrated their caring hearts.

Typically, as a community, Oakland's residents always "look after" their neighbors and friends, and assist when help is needed. In our schools, we have discussed with the P.T.O.s, administrators, Board of Education, nurses and counselors about the needs that an increasing number of our families have and how we collectively may help. Since learning what resources may be available during difficult times is often a challenge, we would like to share the following community resources that are available to qualified families.

Families who are income eligible may access the National School Lunch Program's Free and Reduced meal program for children. Applications for participation are available in the schools and at the Board Office and may be submitted at any time. Similarly, those families who qualify for the lunch program also qualify for school transportation services.

Families who have lost health benefits may be eligible for health insurance through a new New Jersey State plan. For an application and for information, access "www.njfamilycare.org." Our School Nurses and the Board Office also have information. Remember, please, that New Jersey now requires all children age 18 and younger to have health insurance.

We also ask our families to inform us if they are having difficulty paying any fees, etc. associated with their children's participation in the school program (for example: class trip fees). We will do our best to assist. If there are other ways we can help, please let us know.

Our thanks go to the Valley Middle School faculty members who annually contribute to *Santa's Kids* – an informal helping organization formerly led by Sally Anne Pilcer and now coordinated by VMS Spanish teacher Ms. Karen Drury. This initiative provides holiday gifts and gift cards to children of families in need. If anyone would like to participate, as a donor or a recipient, please contact Ms. Drury at Valley Middle School.

Finally, as the pages of the calendar turn, a new year – 2009 – will be born! Every new beginning brings change and hope. Therefore, we hope that the new year will make our nation stronger and will bring all of Oakland's residents good health, prosperity, and a continuing strong community. Let us, also, continue to commit to the children among us – for they are our country's future. Greetings of the Season to all!

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard G. Heflich
Superintendent



Valley Middle School: The First Four Months

This August, I accepted the position of Principal of Valley Middle School, entered a community to which I was a stranger, and committed to fulfilling the responsibility of continuing the educational leadership that has brought the Oakland schools great success. As part of the transition, I spent several days with retiring Principal Dr. Christopher Lane, and I had the unique opportunity to solicit advice, glean wisdom and learn about Oakland from the person who led this community for more than a decade. Dr. Lane imparted much guidance during these sessions, but paramount was that I take the time to get to know the staff, students, parents and community in a personal way.

After four months, this advice has proved invaluable. As an outsider stepping in, one thing that I learned quickly is the close, friendly nature of this community and the pride invested in the schools. I have come to see Valley Middle School as a cultural and social center within Oakland. The parents of our VMS students invest great faith in the staff to not only educate their children academically, but to assist in guiding the children socially and emotionally as well. The staff has also committed to the total development of each child, and believes deeply in presenting an education that values the unique needs of every student.

Nowhere is the friendly nature of Oakland more evident than with the children. The reception that the students of VMS have given has allowed me to feel a sense of home among them within a short period of time. It is a pleasure to move amongst the student body while monitoring the cafeteria, hallways or chaperoning a school dance. The generosity, warmth and gregarious nature of the students speak loudly of the quality of the character that is our community. It is not often in life that you uproot yourself and find that in the move you have found a new home. Thank you, Oakland, for the welcome.

George J. Villar, Principal

Manito School Facility Improvements

The cumulative effect of years of natural weathering and erosion had taken its toll on the Manito Elementary School parking lots. Prior to this past summer, any brave motorist or pedestrian would have confirmed that a visit to the property was nothing short of “adventurous.” Dodging the potholes, craters, and loose gravel had become a daily challenge to students, parents, and teachers alike. Add a little rain, snow or ice into the mix, and the challenge became one that was not for the faint of heart.

The decaying asphalt also resulted in a great deal of loose gravel that adversely affected the children's ability to play safely at recess. That loose gravel also interfered with proper drainage on the property. In addition, years of paving over the existing asphalt meant that the sidewalk in front of the school was at the same level as the rising parking lot. As a result, there was no curbing and no longer a protective barrier between moving automobile and pedestrian sidewalk traffic.

Recognizing the urgent need to improve the safety conditions at the school, the District Superintendent, Dr. Heflich and the District Business Administrator, Mr. Vincent Yaniro took the recommendations of Manito Principal, Mr. Adam Silverstein to the Oakland Board of Education. Last spring, the Board unanimously supported a resolution to request bids on a project that would restore the Manito parking areas while vastly improving safety conditions for pedestrians and motorists. Under the supervision of Mr. Robert Jacod, the District Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds, work on the project began in late June and was completed by mid-July. Most of the front and rear lots were milled and resurfaced; a curb was installed on the center island in front of the school, which was also reduced in size to improve traffic flow; guard rails were placed around the circle and in the back of the school protecting sidewalk areas; a new drainage system was installed under the asphalt in front of the school; and a new sidewalk (with a curb) was constructed in front of the main entrance of Manito.

These much-improved safety conditions have been met with overwhelmingly positive feedback from the Manito School Community, whose members not only appreciate the safety and aesthetic improvements to the grounds, but also appreciate just how “unadventurous” a trip to Manito has now become!

Adam I. Silverstein, Manito School Principal

VMS Extreme Sports Team

In June, six Valley Middle School teachers decided to participate in Men's Health Magazine's URBANATHLON! Two teams were formed to compete in this unique race. Ms. Blender, Mr. Blanken, and Mr. McGoldrick made Team #1, while Ms. Stepien, Mr. Parra, and Mr. Desiderio comprised Team #2.

The race started at 7 a.m. on Saturday, September 27th at the 72nd Street Bandshell in New York's Central Park. The race had three challenging legs. Ms. Blender and Ms. Stepien attacked the first leg of the race running three miles and navigating the “Jersey Barricades” and “The Culvert Crawl”. Mr. Blanken and Mr. Parratook on the second leg. They ran two miles, hit a series of Marine Hurdles, crawled under a 50 foot cargo net, swung through a set of 30 monkey bars, and ran another two miles. Mr. McGoldrick and Mr. Desiderio faced the third and final leg at 7 World Trade Center. They had to ascend and descend all 52 stories (over 2,500 steps) of the building. After the stairs, they ran 1.25 miles, hurdled a NYC taxi, climbed an eight-foot wall, and then sprinted to the finish line! Our teams captured 6th and 8th places in the co-ed team division!

So why did we do all this? The objective of this endeavor was two-fold. First, we saw this as an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and staying physically fit. A lifestyle that includes proper exercise and diet provides a foundation that ensures a healthy and productive future. This is a message that we'd like to communicate to all members of the Oakland Public Schools' family.

Secondly, we also saw this as an opportunity to raise awareness of the new District technology initiative which incorporates SMART boards to teach our children. SMART boards provide teachers with an unbelievable interactive teaching tool. As educators, we see the amazing possibilities that the SMART Board will bring to our classrooms. The Board of Education, the District's PTOs, and the Oakland Education Foundation have done a tremendous job in providing our schools with a number of SMART boards. As teachers, we wanted to do our part to help provide our children with this exciting teaching tool, and we wanted to raise funds to purchase additional Smart boards for the many classrooms that still do not have this technology. To achieve this objective, the VMS Extreme Sports Team collected donations to help purchase additional SMART boards. In total the VMS Extreme Sports Team raised over \$2,150!

Special thanks go to the following companies/businesses for their support: The Johnson House Inn; Douglas Sales Associates Inc.; The Andrew Bruno Agency; A-List Interior Design; and, Hair Expressions. If you would like more information on the race, check out www.menshealthurbanathlon.com.

The VMS Extreme Sports Team

Something New In The Air....

The 2008 - 2009 school year was jump-started with the introduction of state of the art technology. Oakland schools were brought further into the 21st century with gifts of SMART Boards - interactive white boards, from the PTOs and the Oakland Education Foundation.

The SMART Board brings another dimension to the delivery of instruction by making what would ordinarily be a lecture/discussion into a much more dynamic, interactive experience. The ability to hide and reveal information and create clear graphics captivates the children's interest and focuses them on the lesson at hand.

In addition, modeling technology usage for children has never been better. Prior to the SMART Board, a teacher could use the cursor only to indicate text or points of interest. The SMART Board allows teachers to circle, highlight, and underline text in a meaningful way. This enables even the special area teacher who sees the children only once a week, to pick up exactly where the class left off and efficiently review what was learned seven days earlier. Prior to this year, children would crowd around several computers in the school library. Now, the children can use laptops at their desks as the teacher models searching techniques on the SMART Board.

As an instrument that connects the children to the worldwide web, the SMART Board allows us to share, collaborate, and use lessons with teachers all over the world! As a teaching tool, the interactive white board is so inviting, and our students are more engaged and interested. It provides the opportunity for students to visualize concepts in a way they couldn't before. The animated feature allows students to experience rather than just see the way things work. Differentiated lessons are easily created for the many different learning styles that exist within our classrooms. With our new SMART lessons, we never fear that our students will not be challenged.

The SMART Board is a technological tool that is transforming the classroom. For example, in the teaching of writing, the SMART Board is an effective tool for modeling and creating written pieces in an interactive manner. The students participate and make suggestions to develop, edit and revise a writing piece. The Notebook Software allows students to manipulate and move sentences and text. Teaching the mechanics of quotation marks has never been more exciting with the linked pages that let the student know whether their answers are correct.

In math, we have utilized the SMART Board to explore place value and problem solving, as well as to learn basic computational skills. During Global Education, the teachers used the technology to show short video clips of the various cultures that they were studying. This enabled the students to gain a better understanding about the country that they were learning.

The SMART Board is an instructional tool that enables the learner to have hands on experiences that are motivational and substantial, and that allows all students to pursue their interests, both academic and extracurricular. It fosters life long learning. We are grateful to our PTOs and to the OEF, as well as to our Board of Education, for their continuing efforts on behalf of our children. We are always reaching new Heights!

Barbara A. Ciambra, Principal, Heights School

Frost Valley - 2008

On September 24, our Grade 7 students arrived, with much luggage, early to school with the excitement and anticipation of three days at the Frost Valley YMCA in Claryville, New York. In this overnight learning experience chaperoned by 20 teachers, the students were being given the challenge to step up and become positive leaders and influences on their peers. Throughout the sunny three day trip, students were observed leading, encouraging and guiding each other over cable bridges, across low ropes obstacles, and discussing solutions to Project Adventure challenges. Students laughed and learned with each other as they picked and crushed apples for cidering and as they scooped up and identified critters from the pond in water ecology class. These experiences helped the VMS Class of 2010 learn about each other and challenge themselves. They bonded as a class, made new friends, and learned more about themselves and others.

This year, our teachers were asked to identify students who demonstrated positive peer leadership throughout their three days. Congratulations to Jack Alderisio and Ryan Leahan for being selected to receive the first annual Frost Valley Peer Leadership Award for demonstrating the true spirit of positive peer leadership and caring. These students will receive a certificate of achievement and their names will be placed on a plaque that will hang in the Grade 7 hallway at Valley Middle School.

Gregg Desiderio, VMS Vice Principal

Oakland is Going Green!!

Come to the "Green Forum" scheduled for 7:30 pm on March 24th in the Council Chambers to learn more about Oakland's initiatives to become a certified Sustainable Community. Tune into Channel 77 and check the borough website for more information. The event will also be televised live on Channel 77!

(continued from page one) In addition to this forum, we have applied to the State Board of Public Utilities (BPU) for a sizable grant to conduct a detailed energy audit of our municipal facilities. If awarded, the grant will pay an energy consultant to analyze our municipal facilities and identify ways we can save energy and lower our energy cost. We should be hearing back from the state by March.

To preserve the character of our community we have begun the process of preserving the ridgeline in the southern part of our town. We recently purchased 50 acres that was slated for development and are actively negotiating to purchase the remainder of the mountain. We are also proceeding to purchase the former Pleasureland site also known as Heritage Hills. To date, we have received over \$5.5 million dollars in state and county grant money to preserve these critical tracts. These are your tax dollars coming back to Oakland to preserve Oakland. We have enjoyed remarkable success in promoting our open space initiative and will continue to work hard to protect our valuable landscape.

You may have noticed improvements being constructed around our recreation fields such as improved batting cages, safety netting and field improvements. I thank the Recreation Commission for their initiatives in making needed facility improvements to keep our recreation program safe and functional. We are in the process of analyzing the bid responses to our proposed tennis court improvement project and I am pleased to report that they were very favorable to the borough. I am confident that the new tennis season will open with completely reconstructed courts. In my view these improvements are long overdue.

During these trying times I am reminded that we have faced difficult challenges before throughout our history. Working together, I know we will manage our way through this storm and emerge even stronger than before.

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