

# TOWNSHIP OF HAMILTON

## INTER-OFFICE ADVISORY MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Kelly A. Yaede

FROM: Richard S. Williams, Director of CP&C

DATE: January 22, 2017

RE: Annual Report – Calendar Year 2017

The year 2017 was a highly productive one for the Department of Community Planning and Compliance. The dedication and diligent efforts of the Department of CP&C staff are reflected in the attached report.

Accomplishments in a wide range of activities in relation to serving the public and business community are obvious throughout the report including: Land Use Board administration, construction permits, building inspections, plan reviews, submission of grant applications, enhancement of traffic and school zone safety, fees and escrow management, processing inquiries and complaints and over the counter customer service to businesses and residents.

MAJOR achievements and accomplishments are:

The Construction Office made every effort to operate at no expense to Hamilton Township taxpayers. The Construction Office made use of a new software system for on-line permitting as well as for residents. Their accomplishments were as follows:

- 8,582 permits issued
- 8,233 plan reviews performed
- 17,787 field inspections performed
- 406 certificates of occupancy
- 1,885 certificates of approval

The Housing Division continues using the software program that allows residents and realtors to schedule inspections and pay for inspections and permits. The Landlord Registration has continued to be a success. To date, approximately 2,300 landlords have registered and 4,800 rental units have been registered.

Many rental units have been inspected and brought up to our housing code protecting the safety and welfare of its tenants. Enforcement and fines for non-compliance continue to move ahead. We made 55 court appearances from the program last year.

A new ordinance became effective in December 2012 regarding vacant/abandoned properties. Since January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017, three hundred and seventy-five (375) properties have been registered and inspected for compliance.

The Planning Division's accomplishments for the year 2017 are as follows:

#### **A. Land Use Development**

The Planning Division held at least one hundred seventy (170) meetings with private individuals and developers concerning their land use proposals and questions. The Planning Division made seventeen (17) presentations to the Zoning Board of Adjustment and fourteen (14) to the Planning Board. These presentations essentially reported on applications before these Boards – many of which emanated from the separate meetings initially held.

Some of the more prominent developments reviewed by the Division of Planning and approved by the respective Boards were the following:

1. Mill One Redevelopment/Isles Inc. (1 Johnston Avenue) – Site plan approval granted to a renovate one hundred sixty-five thousand two hundred sixty-seven (165,267) square foot of existing building space for vocational, public interest, arts and culture, office and mixed commercial/retail space (Phase I only).
2. Manchester 270/Congoleum Redevelopment (Sloan Avenue) - Approval granted to construct a one hundred seventy-three thousand two hundred thirty-two (173,232) square foot three-story office building and to re-purpose an existing one hundred thirty-nine thousand eighty-seven (139,087) square foot warehouse/office building (Phase 1 only).
3. Dollar General (South Broad Street) – Approval granted to construct a seven thousand five hundred (7,500) square foot Dollar General store.
4. Holiday Inn Express (Route 130 southbound) – Use variance approved to construct a 52,827 sq. ft. 85 room four-story hotel including a interior 4,623 square foot restaurant.
5. JDN Real Estate/ULTA (Hamilton Marketplace) – Approval granted to construct a ten thousand four hundred fifty-nine (10,459) square foot addition to an existing retail store (Staples).
6. Trane CAC Inc. (East State Street and Sculptor's Way) – Approval granted to construct six (6) ground mounted solar canopies over three hundred twenty-five (325) existing parking spaces.

Other notable redevelopment projects that will continue into 2018:

1. Congoleum – This office continues to work with the property owner, Manchester 270, as it drafts a redevelopment plan and ordinance for the remaining portions of the property to be developed.

2. Whitehorse Circle properties (The Ferber Company) – This office is currently working with the prospective developer, the Ferber Company, as it prepares its “Area in Need of Rehabilitation” study. This study is scheduled to be reviewed and approved by the Hamilton Council early 2018. Next step will be to develop a redevelopment plan and ordinance for the subject lots involved.

In addition to formal reviews before the Planning and Zoning Boards, the Division’s Administrative Waiver process handled twenty-one (21) cases. These waivers primarily resulted in approvals for various residential homeowners and some larger commercial applications such as the redevelopment of the former Wonder Bread outlet on Old Olden Avenue, the former Gallagher’s Bar on Lalor Street and a gas station conversion to a convenience store on South Broad Street.

The Division of Planning also performs various site visits/inspections. We completed forty-three (43) site visits pertaining to items such as site plan submissions, building permits, Zoning Board applications for homeowners, meetings at site with property owners, compliance with approved site plans, etc. We also completed eighty-eight (88) site visits/inspections pertaining to tree planting projects (NNL Phase 3 plus 2016 and 2017 Tree Contracts) and parks and capital construction contracts (SRTT and SRTS). Inspections to reduce/release performance bonds for landscaping are also a function of the Planning Division. At least thirty-seven (37) such inspections were performed by this office plus another ten (10) by our landscape inspection consultant.

All sign (façade and freestanding) permits are reviewed and approved by the Planning Division. These amounted to sixty-one (61). Sheds and fences are also reviewed and approved by the Division of Planning. These amounted to a total of two hundred forty-six (246) permits, of which two hundred eight (208) were fences and thirty-eight (38) were sheds. This office reviewed another one hundred ten (110) permits relating to generators, AST’s, construction trailers, demolition, telecommunication monopoles, pools, solar panels, handicapped ramps, site lighting, pools, etc.

## **B. Grant Administration**

The Planning Division administered a number of grants during 2017. These included the following:

1. 2012 Safe Routes to Transit –Hamilton was awarded funding in the amount of **\$200,000.00** for this project in March of 2012. We finally received our State approval (Notice to proceed) May 1, 2017. The project was advertised for public bid July 10, 2017 and low bid was awarded by Council August 15, 2017. The contractor’s Notice to Proceed was on September 28, 2017 and substantial completion was on November 17, 2017. The project is 100% complete and this office continues to complete the necessary wrap up grant paperwork with NJDOT. The final contract amount was \$218,324.30.
2. 2012 Safe Routes to School – Hamilton was awarded funding in the amount of \$275,000.00 for this project in February of 2013. We finally received our Federal approval (Notice to proceed) October 18, 2016. This office requested additional funding in the amount of \$47,250.50 in August 2016, and we were successful in obtaining the supplemental request. The new grant amount is now **\$322,250.50**. The project was advertised for public bid July 2016 and low bid was awarded by Council on January 17, 2017. The contractor’s Notice to Proceed was on April 21, 2017 and the project was deemed substantially complete on September 13, 2017. There are a few punch list items remaining and this office continues to complete the necessary wrap up grant paperwork with NJDOT and Federal Highway.
3. 2015 Recreational Trails – Received fully executed project agreement from NJDEP October 2016. The project is now proceeding to design (plans, specifications and cost estimate). The grant is for **\$24,000.00**.

4. 2016 Transportation Alternatives Program - Applied for \$1,104,316.40 in grant funding for the Phase 2 South Broad Street streetscapes project (from the Whitehorse Circle to Trenton City line). Hamilton was not awarded funding for this project.
5. 2016 Recreational Trails – Applied for \$24,000.00 in grant funding to close the gap in the existing trail network within Veterans Park and the roadways that surround the same. The gap, 0.6 miles or +/- 3,168 feet, will be constructed along Kuser Road to connect Veterans Park south entrance to the recreation building entrance further east along Kuser Road. Awards for this application have not been announced as of the date of this memo.
6. 2016 Mercer County Municipal Non-Profit Assistance (i.e. Open Space Trust Grant) - Applied for a non-profit open space assistance grant from Mercer County (December 2016) in the amount of \$500,000.00 for the purchase of land at 275 Merrick Road (aka Lord Estate, 2714-24). The Mercer County Open Space Preservation Board and subsequently the Freeholders approved the grant in August 2017.
7. 2016 Mercer at Play 2 – Applying to Mercer County for a \$500,000.00 Open Space Assistance grant for improvements to various athletic fields and playgrounds within the Township. Hamilton Township was awarded \$500,000 and the grant agreement between Mercer County and Hamilton Township was executed June 2017. We are currently drawing down funds as projects are completed.
8. 2017 Community Stewardship Incentive Program (CSIP) –Applied for and received a \$10,000.00 Resiliency Planning Grant from the NJDEP Forestry Service to complete Hamilton’s first street tree inventory. This office is currently writing bid specifications for this project and we hope to advertise it by late winter 2018.
9. 2017 CDBG – South Broad Street Streetscape Improvements - \$115,809.00 was allocated from Hamilton’s Community Development Block Grant to renovate both South Broad Street public parking lots. Both properties have been surveyed and preliminary design is currently underway.

In summation, the following highlights Division of Planning’s efforts throughout the past year:

Grants currently under administration/or completed: **\$1,540,574.80**  
 Grants applied for and awarded, project not started yet: **\$149,809.00**  
 Grants applied for and not funded: **\$1,104,316.40**  
 Grants applied for and awaiting notification: **\$24,000.00**

### **C. Green Acres (GA)**

This office continues to partner with the NJ Conservation Foundation on prospective acquisition projects within the Township that further our Open Space and Recreation Master Plan goals and objectives. We are currently looking at several properties within the Township that would serve as “linkages” to other municipally owned lands. The NJ Conservation Foundation and the Division of Planning are jointly working through some due diligence on several properties within the Township. This office continues to regularly police Township owned Green Acres properties looking for any encroachments or violations that would adversely impact the properties. We continue to replace Green Acres signs once they become faded or add newly acquired properties and also plan for the future as it pertains to passive or active recreation needs or Township residents. The more notable projects completed this year include the following:

1. Groveville-Allentown Road (Block 2690 Lot 37) - In December 2017 we closed on the +/- 13.3 acre property (100% wooded with wetlands therein) immediately adjacent to Doctors Creek. This

property further advances our goals to acquire and connect stream corridor lands throughout the Township.

2. 275 Merrick Road (Block 2714 Lot 24) - Currently under contract to purchase a +/- 62.58 acre active farm property (within the Rural Resource Conservation zone). We are in the final stages of completing the property survey and having it reviewed and approved by Green Acres plus our environmental due diligence on the property. We also were awarded a \$500,000.00 Mercer County Open Space grant to help fund the purchase of this property. (See B #6 above) We anticipate an early 2018 closing.
3. Youngs Road (Block 1519 Lot 4) - In January 2015 we closed on the +/- 5.7 acre property (100% wooded with wetlands therein) which is adjacent to a 193 acre parcel already owned by the Township.

The Engineering Division has a total of 43 capital projects either completed or underway. They involve overlays, reconstruction, sidewalk replacement, storm and sanitary replacement, traffic, pedestrian safety and recreational improvements. Of the 43 projects, 14 have been completed constituting \$3.3 million dollars' worth of construction work. The remaining projects are either under design or ready for bidding. We anticipate either a Spring or Summer 2017 construction period. In addition, nearly \$1 million was saved in the Capital Budget due to competitive bidding and diligent construction management by this Division in 2017.

In addition to the capital work, the Engineering Division performed approximately 33 reviews of plans. We also approved grading plans for 35 residential permits and 20 pool permits, plotted over 2,700 deeds and handled approximately 140 flood plain inquiries.

The Land Use Division has continued to serve the public. There were 67 Zoning Board and Planning Board applications which required reports from the Engineering and Planning professional staff. There were 21 administrative waivers acted on, 246 zoning permits issued for fences and sheds, 135 approvals for construction permits issued, 65 mylar and deeds signed, and 941 citizens were assisted at the information counter in the CP&C office.

The Zoning Enforcement Office addressed over 1,000 complaints received by the Q-alert (Citizen Call Center) program which involve high grass, unkempt property and other zoning violations. Over thirty-two were heard in municipal court, 329 violation notices were filed and sent, working with the various other departments and divisions such as the Health Office and Police Department.

The accomplishments of this Department could not have been met without the conscientious personnel that continued under very trying circumstances, even with reduced staff and demanding workloads.

