

COMMUNITY OF SALEM NEWSLETTER

UNCOVER THE PUBLIC HOUSING CRISIS

The Salem Housing Initiative AmeriCorps members have learned firsthand the issues many public housing residents face. Evidence of chronic administrative neglect, including severe rodent and pest infestations, black mold, crumbling structural integrity, and general disrepair in almost all public housing properties, have left many tenants seeking answers and, for many years falling upon deaf ears. Under New Jersey law, tenants have the right to live in safe, sanitary housing with an "implied warranty of habitability."

In late December of 2012, The Salem City Housing Authority (SHA) voted to suspend its executive director and enter into a shared-service agreement with the Millville Housing Authority, which allowed Millville's management team to take over leadership of the SHA board of commissioners. According to NJ.com, Paul Dice approached the SHA board of commissioners with a shared service proposal after learning about the charges against the previous executive director, and the potential need for new leadership at the Salem Housing Authority. Dice would be quoted stating that sharing services and reducing costs is really the original focus. Many residents have complained about the mismanaged shared service agreements, which is evident through its understaffing.

Public housing has significantly deteriorated and raised public officials' concerns. New housing commissioners were established earlier this year, and the shared-service agreement was soon ended. There has been slow progress as funding, and staffing to maintain public housing properties will become the new focus for Salem Housing Authority. AmeriCorps members have urged tenants to know their rights and provide them with legal aid resources.

INTERESTED IN AMERICORPS?

The Salem City Housing Initiative is looking for dedicated and reliable servant leaders. AmeriCorps is the federal agency for national service and volunteerism that looks to address the nation's most pressing issues. SHI looks to address the current housing crisis in Salem, NJ. We look to solve our housing crisis by offering financial literacy and homeownership workshops, cataloging properties in the City, addressing tenants' rights, and maintaining communication with local residents. If you are interested in becoming a member reach out to jjohnosn@cityofsalemnj.gov

CITY OF SALEM JOB OPPORTUNITY

Over the last year The City of Salem has been very successful at finding resources and assistance from state and federal grants. Ordinance 23-13 was approved this month which would allow City Council to hire a **Grant Application Analyst to prepare grant applications and monitor the grants for compliance with grant program requirements.**

Having a dedicated position would allow the City to pursue grants with more focus.



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WATER & SEWER AGREEMENT OF SALE

On July 17th, 2023, City Council signed Ordinance 23-10 into legislation approving a sale agreement between The City of Salem and New Jersey American Water Company, INC. The Water Infrastructure Protection Act (WIPA) was passed by the New Jersey Legislature in 2015 and authorized owners of water or wastewater systems to enter a long-term lease contract or sell their water or wastewater assets to a capable entity without a referendum if Emergent Conditions exist. On June 1st, 2023, Egg Harbor Township became the first municipality in New Jersey to sell its water and wastewater systems through the WIPA process to NJ American Water Company.

Salem's City Council determined that the bid submitted by NJ American Water Company for 18,000,000 was the highest responsible bid. Under the terms of the agreement, the City of Salem would sell all of the City's rights and interests in the land and improvements of the water and sewer systems. The service rates will be subjected to approval by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities. It will also require NJ American Water Company to make substantial capital improvements. This would free the City of ownership and maintenance responsibilities of our current deteriorated systems. Over 200 voters turned in a petition to end the WIPA process and proposed the sale through a referendum in the upcoming general election. In addition to the City Council's agreement of sale, the City's legal voters must also approve the sale of the systems. On November 7th, 2023, Salem City voters will have their opportunity to vote yes or no to the proposed question "Shall the City of Salem, in the County of Salem, New Jersey, be authorized to sell its water and wastewater systems to New Jersey American Water Company, INC for the sum of \$18,000,000?"

FIRST TIME HOME BUYERS!

AmeriCorps Salem Housing Initiative collaborated with TD Bank Hanz Molina on July 22nd. Hans serves as a community loan officer, and presented on how to obtain home ownership and what lenders look for when evaluating a home mortgage application. Mr. Molina specializes in first-term home buying and finding affordable resources for potential first time homeowners. He helps prepare them on their home journey whether it is 2 months or a year.

Salem High School graduate and current Indianapolis Colts running back, Jonathan Taylor, hosted his 3rd Annual Jonathan Taylor Youth Football Camp. More than 500 kids registered for the free camp and participated in numerous drills, in addition to receiving position specific instruction from all of the coaches involved. The Salem City community and Salem City High School coaches contributed significantly to this successful day.

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KEASBY CREEK FLOODING

Some residents have been voicing their concerns regarding the Keasby Street drainage ditch. The Keasby Creek drainage ditch has not been properly draining, which has caused flooding around Johnson Street and neighboring areas. Standing water, unpleasant smells, and concerns about mosquito breeding have been highlighted. The City of Salem signed a resolution asking the County of Salem to help with this issue. The City is receiving transitional aid and needs more funding and staffing for this project. Salem County Commissioners have the resources and personnel to undertake the project and address the drainage issue quickly and efficiently.



A UNIFIED COMMUNITY

On July 7th, The Coalition for a Safe Community hosted its second annual Unity in The Community Cookout. This Initiative brought together organizations that provide critical resources to the community. Most recognizably, police have been stepping up and taking a proactive approach to policing. Local policemen participated allowed for children to test their accuracy by participating in the dunk tank. In a time when tension began to rise slowly, they have been putting their best foot forward and began bridging the gap to be an integral part of the community.



National Night Out: 8/1/23, 5PM, MLK Park

AmeriCorps Path to Homeownership: 8/5/23, 10AM, Hetty Reckless Center

Oldies in the Park: 8/6/23, 5PM, MLK Park

South Jersey Medical Center: 8/9/23, 5PM, MLK Park

Community Outreach: 8/12/23, 12 PM, MLK Park

Junior Ram Day: 8/12/23, Rayfield Tull Sports Complex

Salem County Commissioner Meeting: 8/16/23, 4 PM, Old-County Courthouse

AmeriCorps Path to Homeownership: 8/19/23, 10 AM, Hetty Reckless Center

Oldies in the Park: 8/20/23, 5PM, MLK Park

Salem City Regular Council Meeting: 8/21/23, 6:30 PM, Old-County Courthouse



SCAN ME

