



# COMMUNITY OF SALEM NEWSLETTER

## SHOULD WE SELL THE WATER & SEWER?

We have been hearing of the financial burden of the current water and sewer utility bill for months. In most municipalities, taxpayers maintain the utility bills allowing them to be self-supported. However, after the homeownership ratio dwindled, major corporations moved out, and a lack of infrastructure investment, the City now sees an approximate \$1,000,000 deficit in the City budget annually, which is utilized to offset the water and sewer utility bill. The Water Infrastructure Protection Act 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 April 23, 2023, NJDEP declared Salem in emergent conditions. Over 200 residents came together to submit a petition. An independent special counsel validated the petition, which has temporarily paused the sale of the water and sewer utilities. The petition has enabled the City of Salem voters to have the final say in the potential sale of the utility systems. Voters can expect to see the referendum question on the upcoming ballot on November 5, 2023, asking, "Should we sell the water and sewer utilities to "x" company for "x" price?" Between corporations leaving us high and dry and a history of lacking long-term planning, voters must seriously consider selling the water and sewer utilities. Can an increase in the homeownership rate stabilize the City's budget? Can the investment in the local offshore wind farm provide the necessary jobs for local families in our growing economy? Can we ensure we can repair and protect the water and sewer utilities without depleting the City's finances and seeing spiked tax rates? As the saying goes, "If it isn't one thing, it's another?"

## DCA UNSAFE BUILDING DEMOLITION

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs is currently providing financing for the demolition and disposal of unsafe buildings in eligible municipalities. The City of Salem approved a resolution authorizing the City to apply for an approximately \$651,899 Demolition Bond loans. That will help the demolition of about 13-15 abandoned properties.

## FOOD SECURITY

As NJ Economic Development Authority looks to advance the goals of the Food Desert Relief Act (FDRA), part of the Economic Recovery Act of 2020, the city has approved the acceptance of an award in the amount of \$125,000. There are over 6,500 food deserts across America as our economy is becoming unpredictably unstable and we face a downturn in global food supply. This grant will allow Mayor Veler and City Council to aggressively address the food desert crisis

# COMMUNITY OF SALEM NEWSLETTER

## WHATS YOUR VISION TO PUBLIC HOUSING??



- On June 26, 2023, the City of Salem provided the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) with a tour of the City of Salem. Salem has been honored to receive the 2023 HUD neighborhood choice planning grant, which is officially underway. The Choice Neighborhoods program leverages dollars to support locally driven strategies that address neighborhoods with severely distressed public housing and HUD-assisted housing through a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation. Local leaders, residents, and other stakeholders, such as public housing agencies, cities, schools, police, business owners, nonprofits, and private developers, come together to create and implement a plan that revitalizes distressed HUD housing and addresses the challenges in the surrounding neighborhood. The Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant will focus on the Westside Court public housing development. HUD has awarded the City \$500,000 to develop a plan to relocate residents and redevelop the old Westside court, replacing it with new mixed housing for low-income sections, affordable housing, with opportunities for home ownership. This will be a two-year process and require public meetings about the plans for Westside Court. Residence and local leaders can plan to create the neighborhood they envision.

## RECREATION GRANT

The Local Recreation Improvement Grant is a competitive grant that supports improvement and repair of public recreation facilities including local parks. Ensuring public access to community facilities is imperative since access to outdoor recreation and community resources is critical for mental and physical health, particularly for those residents with limited or no access to quality outdoor space or private recreational opportunities.

The Local Recreation Improvement Grant will allocate funds to update facilities and recreational spaces to meet certain state wide goals that pertain to Green Open Space. The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs awarded the City of Salem \$71,000.00 to conduct improvements of the Elm Street Park.

Completion of work has a tentative scheduled end date of September 2023.

# COMMUNITY OF SALEM NEWSLETTER

## NJ AMERICORPS SERVICE PROJECT

### ANNE HENRY 100TH BIRTHDAY

At AmeriCorps, we take pride in being servant leaders. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers served at more than 400 locations across New Jersey. On June 2nd, in Trenton, NJ, we united with other members who play pivotal roles in their communities by engaging in meaningful and impactful service projects. We assemble approximately 320 hygiene kits for the Trenton Rescue Mission. This shelter provides a place for those in Mercer County, New Jersey, to receive a hot meal, hospitality, and assistance to get back on their feet. As many service projects are about to embark on a new journey with new people, this marks six months after beginning this initiative. We were privileged to share our experiences as trailblazers in a collaborative initiative to increase the homeownership rate in Salem. One thing that was apparent about each New Jersey AmeriCorps member was that they were all dedicated to the success of their service project.

The City of Salem was honored to present a proclamation celebrating the 100TH birthday of Anne Williams Henry. She was born in Jacksonville, Florida, on June 16, 1923. She was enrolled at Glassboro State Teacher’s College, now Rowan University.

Anne Williams Henry started teaching at the John Fenwick School in 1956. After 38 years of teaching, she retired from the John Fenwick School on June 16, 1986, was listed in Outstanding Elementary Teachers in America, and received the Governor’s Teacher Recognition Award of 1974.

Anne Williams Henry had a long, rewarding career not only in education but also in the community. Again, we will like to honor Anne Williams Henry for her long life, prosperity, and many contributions she has made to our community.



Unity in the Community: 7/7/23, 4PM, MLK Park

AmeriCorps Path to Homeownership: 7/8/23, 10AM, Hetty Reckless Center

Oldies in the Park: 7/9/23, 5PM, MLK Park

AmeriCorps Path to Homeownership: 7/11/23, 10AM, Family Success Center

Blood drive: 7/12/23, 1 PM, 76 Market ST.

Tenants Rights w/ South Jersey Legal Aid: 7/18/23, 6 PM, Westside Court

Salem City Regular Council Meeting: 7/18/23, 6PM, Old-County Courthouse

AmeriCorps Path to Homeownership w TD Bank: 7/22/23, 10 AM, Hetty Reckless Center

Oldies in the Park: 7/23/23, 5PM, MLK Park

Salem County Commissioner Meeting: 7/19/23, 4PM, Old-County Courthouse

**TAX LIEN SALE**

A resolution was approved to authorizing the City Tax Collector to hold a Tax Lien Sale. A date has not been approved but is expected to occur in September.



SCAN ME

