

RE-OPENINGS &



The **WOOD-RIDGE CIVIC CENTER** was officially opened on October 21, and rededicated to the late Robert Stoesser, a 45-year teacher, former councilman and Borough clerk who earned the name "Mr. Wood-Ridge" for his dedication to the community. On hand for the ribbon cutting were Mayor Sarlo and the Council, as well as former Wood-Ridge Mayor Paul Calocino and former Councilmen Ronald Fraioli and Peter Morreale, who were instrumental in first constructing the Civic Center.

The ribbon was cut for the adjacent **WOOD RIDGE SENIOR CENTER** on October 26, at the seniors' annual Halloween Party. Together, the buildings received a comprehensive revision over the summer, including the installation of an elevator, ADA-accessible bathrooms and automatic entry doors, new ceilings, floors, lighting and fresh paint. Both buildings also received bright new awnings in Wood-Ridge blue and white, said Councilman Joseph DiMarco, who serves as Community Development liaison.



REDEDICATIONS



Also in October, the Our Lady of the Blessed Mother and Ten Commandments statues at the former Assumption School site were rededicated at the their new home in front of the Father Hayes Center on Second Street. The ceremony marked a halfway point in the conversion of the former Assumption School building into the Wood-Ridge Intermediate School. At the ceremony, Assumption Pastor Father Richard presented Mayor Sarlo with a symbolic key to the school. Wood-Ridge Intermediate School will house 4th, 5th, and 6th graders beginning in September 2013.

WOOD-RIDGE



NEWSLETTER

2012 EDITION #3



Welcome to the latest edition of the Wood-Ridge Newsletter. Although the damage wrought by Superstorm Sandy this October is not the type of good news we usually enjoy sharing with residents, it did demonstrate the successful cooperation of our police, fire, DPW, Borough Council and residents, both before and after the storm.

Thanks to advanced planning in the Borough, we were able to prevent losses to life and mitigate damage to property by removing dead and damaged trees before the storm hit. When it did hit, we responded to emergencies, removed fallen trees, kept catch basins clean, and had power back online to all residents within the week. Wood-Ridge was lucky compared to its neighbors, but Wood-Ridge was also smart in its preparation and response.

Also in this edition, we highlight major renovations to the Civic Center and Senior Center and an enhanced communications system to better connect with our residents for public broadcasts and emergency announcements.

We wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season.

Very truly yours,

Paul A. Sarlo
Mayor

SUPERSTORM SANDY: PRIOR PLANNING PAYS OFF

The Borough of Wood-Ridge spared itself much of the wrath of the second costliest Atlantic Hurricane in meteorological history thanks to strategic planning and quick mobilization by numerous Departments including the Office of Emergency Management, DPW, Police and Fire.

Hurricane Sandy made landfall in the State of New Jersey on October 29, a week after it began as a tropical depression off the coast of Jamaica, and two days after it merged with a low-pressure system off of Canada to earn its nickname "Superstorm."

The storm was accompanied by intense rains, sustained 100 mile per hour winds, storm surges in tidally influenced water-bodies, and, in its wake of widespread blackouts, freezing temperatures.

"Thankfully, we were not hit as hard as surrounding communities flooded by the Hackensack River and Berry's Creek, but there was still a significant amount of property damage and flooding on the eastern side of the Borough and to the DPW facility," said Councilman Dominick Azzolini, who serves as Liaison to the Office of Emergency Management.

Although the DPW buildings took in four feet of water, damage was restricted to small equipment, power tools, road salt, and the Borough fueling station, which was



(Main): A house on Columbia Boulevard took heavy damage from an ancient tree during Superstorm Sandy's wrath; (Above) The base of the tree, ripped up from heavy winds.

temporarily underwater. All plows, service and maintenance vehicles were moved to high ground before the storm.

Such preparation was only one of several ways that Wood-Ridge stayed ahead of Sandy, said Councilman Phil Romero. Nearly a week before the storm, Wood-Ridge also aggressively targeted dead and dangerous trees throughout the Borough for removal. Trees marred with the signs of decay – those frequently losing bark or branches, with roots cresting the surface - were removed before they had a chance to fall on people or property.

SEE 'SANDY' ON NEXT PAGE

Borough of Wood-Ridge
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POSTAL PATRON
WOOD-RIDGE, NJ 07075

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SANDY: PLANNING

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After cutting the trees down to stumps, professional arborists were unsurprised to find that the centers of many of the trees were completely rotted out.

“The continued growth of leaves on a tree does not mean it’s healthy, said Romero, who serves as Liaison to the Share Tree Committee. “The identification of dangerous and decaying trees and their preemptive removal saved property and quite possibly lives during this storm.”

Of the 34 New Jersey residents reportedly killed by the Superstorm Sandy, many of the deaths were attributed to falling trees.

Following the storm, Wood-Ridge was also fortunate to have power completely restored to all homes within the week.

Some areas experienced virtually no disruption, while a handful of homes, with unique circumstances such as being on other towns’ electric grids, took longer. Mayor Paul Sarlo kept residents informed while communicating with PSE&G on service restoration.

During the storm, Mayor Sarlo, the Council and the Borough Administrator pitched in to keep catch basins clear of leaves.

“The new sewers we have installed need to be clear to function properly,” said Councilman Ezio Altamura, Liaison to the DPW. “After discussing concerns about buildup on Borough roads that could lead to basement flooding, dangerous passage, and interference with cleanup, the Mayor, Council and Administrator mobilized



The remaining stump of a tree removed before the storm reveals the extent of its internal decay.

with gloves and shovels to remove leaves throughout the Borough.”

Altamura credited the DPW for working 12-hour shifts in the six days following the storm, coordinating pickup of additional yard waste from residents and working to remove the 20 - 30 additional trees that Hurricane Sandy still brought down.

**AFTER THE STORM:
Recovery Will Not Impact Borough Finances
Wood-Ridge remained within its budget of \$100,000 for emergency response during Superstorm Sandy.
Most expenses incurred by the storm will be reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and will not impact taxpayers.**

While helping residents evacuate their homes on the east side of town, Wood-Ridge police, fire and EMS staff provided aid to Moonachie, which had lost its police station, all vehicles, and fire apparatuses, said Police Commissioner Catherine Cassidy.

Students from Moonachie’s schools, which were also inundated with water, have been welcomed into the Board of Education’s facilities until FEMA trailers arrive.

Displaced Moonachie families were treated to a Thanksgiving Dinner at the Fiesta, courtesy of the Wood Ridge Lion’s Club.

NEW SYSTEM WILL PROVIDE EMERGENCY UPDATES DIRECTLY TO SMARTPHONES

The Borough of Wood-Ridge is currently developing an emergency communications system that will provide updates directly to residents from a mobile source with an independent battery system.

Residents are encouraged to opt into this system now by visiting the Wood-Ridge website, www.njwoodridge.org.

“This new system will allow residents to receive free emergency text messaging in emergency situations like Superstorm Sandy,” said Councilman Ed Marino, who chairs the Finance and Administration Committee and is an IT professional. “In consideration of the need to get important information to our residents, we are looking into several platforms – including Twitter, reverse 9-1-1, and text messaging - that could be transmitted directly to residents via their cell phones and smartphones.”

Although emergency generators powered the police, fire, and EMS departments at Borough Hall throughout Sandy, website servers went down with the power outages accompanying the storm.

By mobilizing communications, the new emergency broadcast system will ensure residents receive the latest information during future inclement weather and other events.

Watch for smoother transitions from sidewalk to the streets along Hillcrest Avenue over the next few months, as new, ADA-compliant sidewalks are installed to improve walkability and cycling. The improvements are being funded with Bergen County Community Development grants, in anticipation of the opening of Wood-Ridge Intermediate School next September.

NEXT CHAPTER FOR A BUILDING WITH A ‘STORIED’ HISTORY

The Borough is currently utilizing a historic grant to conduct a preservation study on the Brinkerhoff House, more commonly known as the Wood-Ridge Memorial Library.

The study is a necessary first step to determine eligibility for additional county and state grants that would go towards repainting, new siding, a new roof, and new windows, said Councilwoman Catherine Cassidy, noting that any changes to be taken would have to be mindful of the building’s historical designation.

The Wood-Ridge Memorial Library was converted to a public library by a group of concerned citizens in 1954, centralizing what had formerly been collections of books for the public to loan in stores along Hackensack Street and the Boulevard.

Also under consideration is a replacement of the later-added children’s wing of the library, which has suffered from issues of roof leakage since its initial construction.



LADDER TRUCK 904 JOINS THE WRFD FLEET



The Wood-Ridge Volunteer Fire Department christened a new ladder truck this fall with the help of departments from surrounding towns.

With its ten-story ladder, 6-man cab, and 2,000-gallon per minute pump, Truck #904 replaces the Borough’s

former ladder truck, which the insurance company deemed inoperable and in mandatory need of replacement.

“Our volunteer firefighters maintain the trucks for as long as possible through upkeep, but the new truck’s predecessor was more than 25 years old



and past its time,” said Councilman and Fire Department Commissioner Dominick Azzolini.