



Secaucus Ice Rink Open

Wednesday 3-5pm | Thursday & Friday 7:30-9:30pm | Saturday 1:30-3:30pm & 7:30-9:30pm | Sunday 3:00-5:00pm & 7:30-9:30pm

Admission: \$3.00 | Skate Rental: \$2.00 | (551) 257-7207

Mayor's Corner

This month, I would like to thank our selfless volunteers at the Secaucus Fire Department led by Chief Fred Schneider, who keep not just our community safe but also help neighboring towns in times of need. Whether it is a smoke alarm or a working fire, our all-volunteer firefighter teams are ready to respond. I have the privilege of working with these courageous men and women and can proudly say they are the best.

All our 5 fire companies have a rich and historic tradition of service to our community. Washington Hook and Ladder Co. #1 was formed in 1891, Engine Company #1 in 1900, Tower 2 in 1907, Rescue Co. 1/Engine Co. #2 in 1911, and Chicora Park Engine Co. #3 in 1922. Currently about 90 personnel including 79 firefighters, 6 probationary firefighters and 5 junior firefighters serve our community. All members attend the State Certified Fire Academy and complete the Firefighter 1 course. They also attend continuing education courses such as Firefighting Safety, CPR and Fire Incident Command. Some team members are also Certified

State Instructors who train other members.

Each company responds to about 500 to 800 incidents each year. As our business and residential community expands, our Town's firefighting response also needs to grow. The Fire Department continues to look for volunteers and invites men and women of all ages to apply. Just visit www.secaucusfire.org/join.

Remember to please keep the road clear when you hear fire engines because every second counts when they are on their way to save a family in a fire emergency. I also invite you to join me in applauding all our firefighters who put their life on the line to keep us safe during fire events and other emergencies. When you see them around town, a small word of thanks will go a long way in showing your appreciation for all they do.



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Improvements Happening Now

- Construction on the Michael J. Gonnelli Community Center and Senior Center has started
- On Grace Avenue, between Paterson Plank Road and Schopmann Drive, new sidewalks and curbs are being installed; roadway will be milled and paved.
- On Mansfield Avenue, sections of sidewalks and driveway aprons will be replaced.
- Entire section of Centre Avenue has been repaved.
- A new GreenFlush bathroom was installed at Mill Creek Point Park. The prefabricated solar-powered unit is the perfect solution for the location.
- Pickleball courts at Buchmuller Park are being replaced

In the Works:

- Roadway improvements on Pandolfi Avenue and Raydol Avenue.
- Streetscape improvements at Plaza Center
- On Seaview Drive new bike path will be constructed, roadway will be milled and paved; sidewalks, curbs and bus stops will be replaced

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Secaucus Municipal Government Center
Paterson Plank Road
Secaucus, NJ 07094

Beautifying Secaucus, One Tree at a Time

Did you know that Secaucus has the honor of being designated Tree City USA, for 30 years in a row! This designation is based on strict standards and on achieving four overarching environmental goals. Our Town continues to hold this prestigious distinction thanks to the hard work of the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Shade Tree Advisory Committee, established by Mayor Gonnelli in 1993, and currently served by Councilwoman Orietta Tringali as Council Liaison.

On any clear day in Spring and Fall, you will likely see DPW personnel planting trees around Town. “Plantings are planned based on several factors. Some are replacements of old, downed trees; others are based on requests from residents. We also plant at locations that could benefit from trees, for flood control and beautification,” said DPW Superintendent Kevin O’Connor.



DPW teams planted more than 275 trees as of September 13, 2023. Forty trees were planted on September 12th and 13th alone. In the next few weeks, 50 trees will be planted on Centre Avenue between County Avenue and 10th Street. Popular tree varieties include zelkova, lilac, redbuds, crepe myrtle, Leyland cypress, red maple and white oak. Plantings are planned primarily for Spring and early Fall, when plantings have a higher chance of success.

“When we look at location and the type of tree, we check for overhead wires, location of gas and sewer lines, width of the curb, suitability to the landscape, resiliency and hardiness of the tree variety—all these have to be considered way before we plant” noted Supervisor Jason Leppin.

Our tree planting teams include Jason Leppin, Robert Michalkovich, Frank Sasso, Kyle Schlemm, Nikos Eleftherakos, Richard Wolf and Chris Leary. If you see them planting a tree, feel free to stop and say hello.

Did you know that you may request a small caliper tree to be planted in front of your home at no cost to you? Plantings are based on availability of trees, volume of requests, and suitability of location. To make a request, please fill in an application on Environmental Department web page at green.secaucusnj.gov/trees. Or you may call 201-864-7336, Monday through Friday 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

Make the Newsletter Your Showcase

Send in pictures and information showcasing your special celebrations, children’s achievements, milestones, graduations, contributions to the community, event announcements and more. Submissions are welcome from residents, community organizations and businesses. Please send information to Alka Jaideep at ajaideep@secaucus.net or call 201-330-2000, Ext. 3042.

New Operators at Empire Hotel

Mayor Michael Gonnelli and the Town Council have been advised that Turtlebrook Investments, LLC, has entered into a long-term lease to operate the Empire Meadowlands Hotel, located at 2 Harmon Plaza. The hotel has been closed for several years and the Town is looking forward to working with the new operators to bring the hotel back to what it once was. Mayor Gonnelli said, “The Empire Hotel, formally Hilton, was one of the premier hotels in town and I’m excited to seeing it reopen. We wish the new operators much success.” The new operators moved swiftly and have already begun work in the hotel.

Mayor Gonnelli and his team have had numerous meetings over the past few years with the owners who initially wanted to renovate the property for residential housing. The governing body made it clear residential housing would not be supported as the property is zoned for a hotel and that is the use the town would support. Accordingly, Mayor Gonnelli and the Town Council are pleased that the property owners entered into an agreement with Turtlebrook Investments.

According to a company statement, “Turtlebrook Investments LLC is thrilled to announce the addition of Empire Hotel Meadowlands, Secaucus, to their expanding portfolio of reputed hotels and hospitality services. We are laser-focused on leveraging this opportunity to bring the strategically located property back to its former glory, and beyond. Our vision is to provide exemplary service to all business travelers, groups, and tourists who visit the multiple sites of interest in and around Secaucus. We look forward to working with the community and significantly contributing to the economic growth of Secaucus.”

Faris Honored with Patriot of the Month Award



Faris Fadel was recognized as the Secaucus Middle School Patriot of the Month in October for being “the student who takes necessary actions to ensure those around him are treated fairly and with respect” and for his “positive influence in the classroom and in the hallways.” Faris’s family proudly sent his picture, with Mr. Pat Coccucci, Principal Danielle Garzon and Superintendent Erick Alfonso.

Eighth Grader Showcases Art at Public Library



When 8th grader Kanthi Bulusu is not practicing dance, or training her voice for the melodious songs she sings at gatherings of friends and family, she is honing her other talents—paintings on canvas, for one. On Friday, September 29th, the Secaucus Public Library held an Artist’s Reception for artist Kanthi Bulusu, who presented her work at the Secaucus Library Panasonic Room gallery. The month-long display was a success, with positive reviews from those who made the trip to see her paintings. Kanthi began her art journey by teaching herself in 1st grade, and now acrylic painting has become her passion. “My favorite way to express myself is through art. What I imagine, I put on a canvas, and I use it to show my emotions, dreams, and inspirations,” she says.

Children Raise Funds for Food Pantry



Sunday School participants from the Episcopal Church of Our Saviour on Flanagan Way ran a lemonade and cider stand on October 22nd to raise money for the Secaucus Food Pantry. They raised \$155.00, which was dropped off at the Department of Social Services by Lisa Masiello. Acts of kindness such as these make Secaucus the beautiful community that everyone loves.

Groundbreaking: Mayor Michael J. Gonnelli Community Center

It was a perfect Fall weather day--crisp air and warm sunshine peeking through the clouds, as dignitaries and Secaucus residents gathered to mark the groundbreaking ceremony of the new Community Center. Congressman William Pascrell, Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise, Incoming Hudson County Executive Craig Guy, Mayor Michael Gonnelli, members of the Secaucus Town Council, Town Administrator Gary Jeffas, and Director of Senior Services Lisa Snedeker picked up the ceremonial shovel to mark the beginning of construction. By unanimous Town Council vote, the center will be named "Mayor Michael J. Gonnelli Community Center."

The new building is estimated to cost \$6.1 million and is expected to be ready in one year. The Town received a federal grant of \$950,000.00 from the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and will allocate up to \$1.5 million from the American Rescue Plans funds for the project. A Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) of \$90,000.00 was used for architectural costs by architectural firm Clarke, Caton and Hintz. Brockwell and Carrington was awarded the construction of the project.

When completed, the two-story building will house the community center, a full kitchen, Meals-on-Wheels and offices for the Department of Senior Services. The community hall, with a seating capacity of approximately 175, will be home to currently well-attended senior activities including bingo, Arts and Crafts, recreation, senior clubs, Social Fridays, and seasonal senior events. The first floor will also house a full-sized kitchen that will serve the needs of senior congregate meals and Meals-on-Wheels program. The second floor will remain as an open shell with plans for future expansion and use to be decided after the first phase of the project is complete.

"A community is known by how they treat their seniors. I know Secaucus does a great job with it and this project is part of that effort," said Congressman Pascrell, one of the most ardent supporters of the project at the federal level.

Mayor Gonnelli thanked the members after Mr. Clancy announced that the Town Council unanimously voted to name the Center after him. "It was a big surprise that they want to do this, especially when I'm still alive," he joked. The Mayor went on to thank all involved in the project and is excited about how the new building will assist in his Administration's goal to continue to enhance services for our senior community.

County Executive Tom DeGise also addressed the gathering and said he was looking forward to coming back to the completed building, after he retires this year. Hudson County Building and Construction Trades Council President Patrick Kelleher noted that the project will employ union workers and applauded the Project Labor Agreement (PLA). Secaucus Social Services Director Lisa Snedeker said she is looking forward to welcoming seniors into the new building and thanked the Mayor and Town Council for their support during the entire planning phase.



"Mori Tract" will not be developed for residential housing

This is an update on the large tract of land abutting Park Plaza Drive and Paterson Plank Road, which is being cleared for development. Known as the Mori tract, for its former owner Eugene Mori, the parcel is about 128 acres of which approximately 68 acres are buildable. This is the largest open tract left in Town. The parcel is currently owned by Hartz Mountain Industries, Inc., which is clearing the area and carrying out the necessary environmental remediation. Hartz Mountain is working with the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority ("NJSEA") on plans for a large warehouse; if approved, Hartz will work with the Town on construction approvals. At this time, details about the timeline or potential tenants are not known.

The Mori tract falls directly under the jurisdiction of the NJSEA, the primary planning and zoning authority of the Hackensack Meadowlands District that includes 14 towns in Hudson and Bergen counties. During the drawing up of the NJSEA Master Plan, Mayor Gonnelli and the Town Council ensured the Mori Tract was zoned for commercial development and not residential use. If this zoning designation was not approved, the Mori tract could have been developed into one of the largest residential communities in Secaucus.

While Mayor Gonnelli and the Town Council cannot stop privately owned land from being developed, they are committed to preserving as much open space as possible for recreational use by residents. They also consistently work with the NJSEA, which has zoning authority on 88% of the land in Secaucus, to promote development that works best for the Town and its residents. The Mayor and Council are pleased this large tract of land is not being developed for residential purposes as such a development would have impacted our school system and other municipal services.

Gardeners Get Free Session on Seed Harvesting

The growing season at all five locations of the Secaucus Community Gardens may be ending but gardeners are already preparing for Spring. On October 10th, the Environmental Department, along with members of Wildflower City, welcomed gardeners and shared tips on how to prepare the ground for winter, care for perennials, proper way to harvest seeds, and the best way to stratify them for the next season. At the Imagine Garden on Meadowlands Parkway, Kimberly McCleary, Environmental Department Coordinator, welcomed the gardeners, and Lorraine Freeney, Kim Correro and Lauren Morse of Wildflower City, led them to different mounds for an informative, engaging, and hands-on seed-gathering session. All attendees ended the evening with refreshments provided by the Environmental Department. For more information on community gardening and other environmental initiatives, please visit our website: green.secaucusnj.gov



Spirit of Giving



Secaucus Middle School student Michael Marrone and grandmother Lois, stopped by the Office of Social Services to make his annual birthday donation to the Secaucus Emergency Fund. The community appreciates your generous gesture, Michael!

Patriots Athlete Honored



The Monnecka family is proud of son Franco, who was invited to Long Island for the "Jam Kancer in the Kan" annual fundraiser event in September, with all the NY Islanders. Anders Lee, the Captain of the Islanders, and the Foundation, honored Franco Monnecka and appointed him an ambassador of the foundation. Keep up the good work, Franco!

Secaucus Student Group, KAI, Receives State Award

KAI, the student wing of the Secaucus Coalition which works towards prevention of drug and alcohol addiction, won the “Most Outstanding Action Group in New Jersey” at the Lindsey Meyer Teen Institute leadership camp held in August 2023. This prestigious award was based on their “comprehensive, innovative and effective prevention programming throughout the school year.” KAI’s activities are guided by Dave Bratton, Secaucus Coalition Coordinator and Jill Preis, SAC at the Secaucus High School, who were also present at the conference.

KAI had an action and event packed year in the 2022-23 school year. The group has raised awareness by visiting participating local liquor stores and placing highly visible stickers that read “Keep it Legal” to remind buyers that providing alcohol to those under 21 years of age is illegal. One of their media campaigns, “What If...?” went national and was utilized by prevention groups across the country. They’ve also participated in numerous trainings, created substance free events, and crafted multiple other substance abuse awareness campaigns. KAI students also gave presentations to over 100 middle school students about vaping.

KAI students also participated in fun activities, or “natural highs”, with activities that keep them entertained and connected with peers. These included movie screenings of new releases at the Kerasotes Theater such as Guardians of the Galaxy, Shazam: Fury of the Gods and Wakanda Forever. They even got a personalized message from Shazam actor, Cooper Andrews, encouraging them to continue their prevention efforts. Visits to American Dream’s entertainment complex as well as Six Flags were of course, well attended and highly appreciated by the student members.

Pictured here is the KAI team being honored at the September 26th Town Council meeting. Congratulations to KAI and Secaucus Coalition for all your efforts!



Resident Honored



Nurse Menchu de Luna Sanchez, Secaucus resident for 31 years, recently received the first Susan Toots Ople Legacy and Heroic Award from The Heritage Global Migrant Foundation USA, Inc. at a ceremony in Falls Church Virginia. The award honors the memory of Maria Susanna “Toots” Vazquez Ople (February 9, 1962 – August 22, 2023), a Filipina politician and

Overseas Filipino Workers’ (OFW) rights advocate who served as the first Secretary of the Department of Migrant Workers. Menchu was cited by President Barack Obama at the 2013 State of the Union Address as Hero Nurse for her act of courage in devising a plan to save the lives of 20 premature babies in the NICU of NYU Langone Hospital, New York during Superstorm Sandy, October 29, 2012. Menchu was also given the key to the Town of Secaucus by Mayor Mike Gonnelli and the Town Council for her heroic act.

Menchu is married to Mr. Judith S. Sanchez, a Senior Technical Specialist at Diagnostica Stago Inc. and has two (2) children, Jude and Michelle. Members of the Sanchez family are active parishioners of Immaculate Conception Church in Secaucus.

Pickleball Courts at Buchmuller Park Getting Major Upgrade

Great news, pickleball lovers! We happy to announce that complete renovation of the pickleball courts at Buchmuller Park is in progress. The top layer of the courts will be laid in a few weeks (weather permitting) and brand new courts will be available for use well ahead of the Spring playing season.

Following the high demand and usage of the pickleball courts, the Town applied for, and received, a grant of \$186,000 from the Hudson County Open Space Trust Fund. The Open Space Grant aids with acquisition of open space, improvements to existing parks and preserving historic resources to ensure that all residents have access to recreational and cultural opportunities within their communities. In the past year, the Town received \$586,000 from the Open Space Grant for updates to the pickleball courts at Buchmuller Park and a complete refurbishment of the playing surface at Shetik Field.

Stay tuned for updates on this and other improvements around Town.

Superintendent's Message



I am thrilled to share with you that we have been honored with the ‘Fostering Diverse Schools Demonstration Grant’ from the US Department of Education, amounting to a substantial \$499,360. This grant signifies our collective endeavor to create a holistic educational environment, focusing not only on academic achievements but also addressing the social, emotional, and mental well-being of our students. As a result, there will be significant efforts dedicated to training our staff and students, enhancing cultural efficacy and promoting a more inclusive environment both within our schools and the broader community.

This past month has been filled with activity and progress throughout our District. On a heartwarming note, in acknowledgment of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, every school within our district successfully conducted fundraisers. This united effort underlines our commitment to raising awareness and supporting causes that resonate deeply with many in our community.

The high school took a monumental step in cementing its dedication to holistic student growth. They successfully organized a career and trades fair that gave our students a window into the myriad of professional opportunities awaiting them. Observing their enthusiasm and participation was a testament to our high school’s tireless efforts in equipping our youth for a promising future.

In another heartwarming initiative, our elementary schools united to host a literacy night, which was an immersive experience for everyone involved. This event served as a reflection of our unwavering commitment to instill a love for reading and fortify early literacy skills. The night was replete with reading sessions that transported our young learners to different worlds, and was further enriched with arts and crafts activities. It was not just an event, but a vivid portrayal of our collective vision - to establish a robust foundation that nurtures a lifelong love for learning.

I am grateful for our community’s support and trust. Together, we are making strides in crafting fulfilling educational journey for every student.

Yours in service,
Erick Alfonso, Ed.D.,M.B.A.



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