

# Our Town

## WALLINGTON, NJ

NEWSLETTER FROM  
**THE MAYOR & COUNCIL**

SEPTEMBER 2025

## Historic Site, Modern Vision: *State-of-the-Art Police Station Project Moves Forward*



When a pipe burst on the top floor of the police station several years ago, water leaked undetected for three days. The flooding caused massive damage, leaving the bottom floor unusable. The insurance award was just \$276,000—barely enough for flooring, sheetrocking, and plumbing. Worse still, \$250,000 had to go immediately toward replacing destroyed technology and police radios.

Rather than patch things up, Mayor Melissa Dabal and the Council believed officers deserved far better. The roof and windows leaked, electrical and HVAC systems were outdated and unsafe, and ceilings on the top floor were caving in. When the second-floor subflooring was exposed, it was found to be months from collapse. Meanwhile, officers were crammed shoulder-to-shoulder in tight quarters with narrow corridors, low ceilings, and virtually no insulation—surrounded by potentially hazardous conditions.

Safety was also a major issue. The outdated design lacked modern security and had already led to detainee's escapes. Interviewing witnesses was difficult due to the open layout, and the holding cells were out of compliance. With nothing truly secure, risks were high for both officers and the public. It became obvious that quick repairs weren't enough—the department's long-term needs had to be addressed to protect both officers and the community.

Other sites were considered. The former Kearny Bank building was rejected by the Department of Corrections for failing to meet minimum standards. Some suggested the Civic Center for its single-level access, but redesign costs outweighed benefits—especially since the Civic Center serves as a vital evacuation shelter during floods.

In the end, the Council chose to keep the station in its historic location and dedicate

all three floors to the department, finally giving officers room to grow. Members of the police department worked closely with the architects on the design, ensuring the building is designed by police, for police. To make it possible, the structure was gutted down to the studs. So far, the roof, drainage system, subfloor, and windows have been replaced, and hazardous materials fully abated.

At the September 4th meeting, the Council will take the final step forward—voting to advertise for bids to complete the renovation of the entire building. Their mission has never wavered: not to slap on the cheapest fixes, but to build a modern, secure, state-of-the-art station that meets the needs of today and the future.

## Residential Overnight Parking Program Shows Positive Results

Wallington's Residential Overnight Parking Program continues to roll out successfully. To date, 23 streets have been fully implemented and are being enforced. An additional 5 streets are in progress, with residency data actively collected before enforcement begins.

Residents can view the full list of streets and their status at [wallingtonnj.org](http://wallingtonnj.org). From the homepage, click the "Residential

Parking Permits" button and scroll to the bottom.

The program is making a noticeable difference. Thirty-two vehicles belonging to out-of-town residents from Passaic, Garfield, and East Rutherford have been removed from densely populated neighborhoods. Through enforcement of our Multi-Family Certificate of Occupancy (C.O.) law—which requires landlords to obtain a valid C.O. before

tenants can apply for parking—we've also identified eleven illegal apartments and issued thousands in fines.

Parking availability is improving as more residents use their driveways, freeing street parking for those who need it most.

Community feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. As Wallington resident Alex Labuda of Halstead shared in a text to Mayor Melissa Dabal:

*"The parking program is amazing. For the first time in years, I was able to find parking close to my home."*

Mark and Lorraine Griffith of Maple Avenue commented that they have noticed a big difference on their street, *"It's working!"*, they remarked.

This program will eventually be implemented borough-wide. Residents who require overnight parking are encouraged to review eligibility requirements in advance.

**Please do not apply unless you've received an official letter from the Borough.** Applications from streets not in progress will not be processed.



## MUNICIPAL WATER QUALITY: SAFE, TESTED & RELIABLE

Wallington's drinking water is sourced primarily from Passaic Valley Water Commission (PVWC). PVWC's 2024 Consumer Confidence Report confirms that all monitored substances—including microbiological contaminants, lead, copper, and disinfection byproducts—met or stayed well below both NJDEP and EPA standards ([pvwc.com](http://pvwc.com)).

In addition to PVWC's extensive testing, Wallington is required by state law to employ a licensed water operator—currently William Bierwas—who analyzes and interprets monthly water samples collected from multiple sites around town. These results, along with PVWC's report, were mailed to homeowners in July.

The latest round of testing shows that Wallington's domestic water continues to fully comply with the New Jersey Board of Health standards.

We invite residents to review the annual Consumer Confidence Report from PVWC or the Borough-distributed summary. For questions or concerns, please contact the Water Department at (973) 777 0318, ext. 208, or visit [wallingtonnj.org](http://wallingtonnj.org).

# Understanding New Jersey's Affordable Housing Laws and What They Mean for Wallington

New Jersey's "fair share" housing laws were created to help communities — but instead, they hand powerful tools to developers, letting them bypass our zoning, pack in high-rise apartments, and forever change the place we call home. Over the past few decades, New Jersey's courts and lawmakers have reshaped how towns handle affordable housing — often limiting local control in the process.

In 1975, the Mount Laurel I decision by the NJ Supreme Court ruled that municipalities couldn't use zoning to exclude low- and moderate-income residents. In 1983, Mount Laurel II went further, giving developers the powerful "builder's remedy" — the right to override local zoning if a town didn't meet state housing quotas.

To manage this, the Legislature created the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) in 1985 to set regional housing obligations and approve local compliance plans. But COAH's system struggled for decades, and in 2015, Mount Laurel IV put enforcement back in the courts, giving developers more leverage to sue municipalities and push high-density projects.

### Why this matters for Wallington:

These laws mean that if Wallington can't prove it is meeting its "fair share" housing requirements, developers can bypass zoning laws and build far more units than the community planned for — sometimes doubling or tripling density.

### The impact:

- **Traffic & parking strain** – More cars clogging our streets.
- **Overcrowded schools** – Larger class sizes and fewer resources for students.
- **Stretched services** – Police, fire, and utilities pushed beyond capacity.
- **Loss of small-town character** – Replacing modest homes with dense apartment blocks.

For towns like Wallington, the challenge is fulfilling state mandates while preserving local control, protecting our infrastructure, and maintaining the quality of life residents expect.

Our governing body is currently working diligently to ensure that Wallington continues to belong to its residents — ensuring the best possible outcomes for our community, while maintaining compliance with state mandates.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

A well-maintained home not only enhances the appearance of our neighborhoods but also helps protect property values, making our town a more welcoming place to live.

During the spring, summer, and fall, homeowners are asked to:

- Cut grass weekly or as needed
- Pull weeds and trim bushes
- Remove garbage and debris from the front of the property

- Repair any broken windows, home façade or structural issues

In fall and winter:

- Leaves should be collected and disposed of properly.
- In winter, snow must be shoveled and ice melt applied to sidewalks.

If you observe a property in need of maintenance, please send an email with photos to:

[boroadmin@wallingtonnj.org](mailto:boroadmin@wallingtonnj.org).

**Let's do our part to keep Wallington beautiful!**



*Smyrna Gyro, located at 133 Main Ave., invited Mayor Dabal and Council members to join them at their 10-year anniversary celebration.*

## Another Successful Summer for Wallington Recreation

The 2025 Wallington Summer Camp season was a great success, with increased enrollment and enthusiastic participation from campers and families alike. Running from June 30th through August 8th, the camp offered a fun and structured day filled with rotating activity stations including arts and crafts, playground time, basketball and four square.



Campers also enjoyed weekly field trips including bowling, movies, Urban Air, Medieval Times, and Monster Mini Golf. Special highlights this year included a visit from the Wallington Police Department, who surprised campers with ice cream, a live State Trooper helicopter demonstration, and a festive Wallington Fire Department wet down to close out the season.

Wallington Summer Camp continues to be the most fun and economical option around—just \$16 per day for a 6-hour, fun-filled experience! Thanks to the leadership of Recreation Leader, **Alysha Curtin**, and her dedicated team, Wallington's camp continues to thrive as a safe, engaging, and memorable experience for local children.

**Recreation in Wallington doesn't stop at summer camp.** The Borough has expanded its recreation offerings to include programs for adults as well as children, promoting wellness and community connection across all age groups. Popular programs such as Yoga, Pilates, Zumba, Pickleball, and Soccer Clinics by Legia Warsaw coaches are in high demand.

**Registration for Fall programs is open.** Scan the code or visit [wallingtonnj.org/recreation](http://wallingtonnj.org/recreation) to register. Programs begin the week of Sept. 22



## Borough Acquires Wagner Avenue Property for Future School Expansion

The Borough of Wallington has officially purchased property at the corner of Wagner Avenue to be used by the Wallington Board of Education (WBOE) as a site for future school expansion. This location, adjacent to the site of the old Jefferson Elementary School, represents an important step in meeting the community's long-term educational needs.

Because the WBOE is unable to bond for themselves, they requested the help of the Borough to bond for the purchase to secure the property. While the Borough handled the acquisition, the planning and development of a new facility will fall under the authority of the Wallington Board of Education. Borough officials have

pledged to work closely with the WBOE to assist in the process and ensure the best outcome for students and families.

Importantly, both the Borough and the WBOE are committed to funding this project through government resources and grant opportunities. This commitment reflects a shared priority to enhance educational facilities without placing an added burden on residents.

As planning moves forward, the WBOE will share updates on the vision, timeline, and opportunities for public input, ensuring the community remains informed and engaged every step of the way.



## Veterans Memorial Library Continues to Thrive

The Veterans Memorial Library celebrated it's first year in operation on August 11th with a live outdoor concert featuring popular entertainers, the Kootz. Patrons young and old came out to enjoy an evening filled with music, fun, and free Italian ice.

The Library continues to exceed expectations. With a 400% increase in new patron sign-ups since opening, and programs filled to capacity, our library has quickly become a vibrant hub for residents of all ages.

To meet growing demand, we are actively expanding our book collection across all age groups and genres—including titles in multiple languages such as Polish and Spanish. A recent and well-loved addition to the children's department is our new book tree, a cozy and imaginative space where children can gather to read with family and friends.

A wide variety of engaging programs for children, teens, and adults are offered, including: jewelry making, felting, candle making, magic lessons, the Big Bubble Show, Van Saun Park Zoo Program, Jenkinson's Aquarium Penguin Program, tie-dyeing, "Spilling the Tea" with historical figures, meditative sound baths, wine glass painting, essential oils workshops, psychic readings, Mahjong lessons, and line dancing. Due to the overwhelming popularity of our programs, priority registration is now given to Wallington residents, with out-of-town participants welcomed as space allows.

Thank you to Library Director, **Risa D'Angelo**, and her dedicated staff, and all who continue to support and participate in our growing library community. Stay tuned for more exciting events and programming updates! For more information, visit [wallingtonpubliclibrary.org](http://wallingtonpubliclibrary.org)





## STAY INFORMED: **REGISTER FOR SMART911**

### Wallington's Emergency Notification System

Wallington continues to improve communication with residents through the SMART911 Emergency Notification System. This free service delivers real-time alerts by text or reverse 911 calls for severe weather, road closures, missing persons, accidents, and more. It's also used for non-emergency updates like school closures, garbage pickup changes, and local events. Of our nearly 13,000 residents, only 5,000 are enrolled. Signing up is quick and easy at [wallingtonnj.org](http://wallingtonnj.org)—just click the SMART911 button. Stay connected, informed, and safe!

## Project Updates

- **Paving Schedule:**  
**Van Dyke and Wadsworth:** late fall  
**Primrose, Tulip and Orchard:**  
Final surface coat - early fall  
**Drainage work on Reservoir:**  
Late fall/early winter  
**Ross Road and Curie Avenue:**  
Bid to be noticed on September 4th  
**King Street:** Paving to be completed by end of September
- **New swing for special needs children** will be installed in the Little League playground this fall
- County mandated **Property revaluation complete**; all homeowners are now paying their fair share of property taxes.
- **Water/sewer audit complete.** \$300K in unpaid revenue identified and collected.



The Mayor and Council presented awards of recognition to WFD firefighter **Robert Decker**, who rescued a man from a burning building on Wallington Ave; and to Officer **Peter Wojcik** for being honored by Mothers Against Drunk Driving and The Bergen County Traffic Officers Association for the most DUI arrests in Bergen County. Pictured from left, Councilmembers **Sylvia Hejzner**, **Dennis Graham**; PO **Richard Ray**; Councilwoman **Beata Balik**, PO **Peter Wojcik**, Mayor **Melissa Dabal**, WFD firefighter **Robert Decker**, Chief **Eric Kluska**, Lieutenant **Paul Stolarz**, Councilwoman **Susanne Preinfalk**, Sargeant **Brian Rosas**, PO **Robert Ventura Jr.**, Councilwoman **Justyna Marciniak**, Sargeant **Nicholas Melfi, Jr.**, Councilman **Eugene Rachelski**.

## WALLINGTON EVENTS: **Family Fun in the Borough**

**First Responders Night – August 29, 6–9 PM, Wallington Little League Complex.** Thanks to all who came to enjoy demonstrations, music, food trucks, and family fun with our community heroes. Congratulations WPD on a great event!



Jaws of Life demonstration at First Responder Day

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Wallington Fall Festival - October 3, 6pm-10pm, Wallington Little League Complex.** Attendees will enjoy live music by returning performers, **Arena ReLive the Rock**, plus Wallington PD Touch a Truck, children's activities, food trucks, WFD presentations, vendor booths, bouncy house and a beer garden.



2024 performers Arena ReLive the Rock will return for the 2025 Fall Festival

**Wallington Fire Department Holiday Parade - Saturday, November 29th at 6pm.** It wouldn't be the holiday season in Wallington without its official kick off—the Wallington Fire Department's Annual Holiday Parade.



Santa and Mrs Claus at the Wallington Holiday parade

**Wallington Holiday Festival and Tree Lighting Saturday, December 6th at 6pm; Union Blvd.**

The fifth annual event will feature live music; professional photos with Santa in a full holiday setup, horse & carriage rides, food trucks, vendor booths and performances by Wallington HS marching band and Gavlak school chorus.



Horse and carriage rides are one of the many attractions at the Holiday Festival & Tree Lighting

