



# The TAVI Times



*A community service of The Allentown Village Initiative*

March 20, 2025

Volume V, Issue III

4<sup>th</sup> Annual

## TAVI "Daffodil Days" Celebrates Spring

Since 2021 TAVI has planted about 10,000 daffodils across town

*You may have seen them poking up through leaves and the still-cold ground: "Harbingers of Spring" -- and the handiwork of TAVI volunteers over the past three years -- some 10,000 daffodils along park trails, sidewalks and front yards. While Mother Nature clearly has the last say, TAVI is hoping the bulbs will be in bloom the weekend of April 5 & 6, 2025 to celebrate Spring and the 4<sup>th</sup> annual "Daffodil Days" with music, strolls through town and, of course, sunshine! Mark your calendar to join in the fun.*

### Saturday, April 5, 2025 - Free Walking Tours

10:30 a.m.- Allentown's Historic Architecture

Noon – Allentown & the Underground Railroad

1:00 p.m. – Allentown's Historic Cemeteries

Enjoy a walk through town filled with daffodils. Tours start inside Allentown Public Library, 16 S. Main Street, Allentown.

Please register in advance at [www.allentownvinj.org](http://www.allentownvinj.org)

**Sunday, April 6, 2025 - "A Tonal Oasis" – Music for Piano, Flute & Voice** With Patricia Landy, Kevin Willois, Yvonne Rondinone & "The Singables" of Four Seasons, Upper Freehold vocal ensemble. From Muczynski, Still and Burton to Gershwin and Berlin, enjoy the sounds of Spring during this year's free Daffodil Days concert. 3 pm in Allentown Methodist Church, 23 Church St., Allentown.

### New This Year: Take the Sunspot Challenge –

On Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. walk town to find five "Sunspot Stations" at Main Street businesses for sidewalk chalking, kindness cards, random messages of

kindness and a kindness craft. Complete all five stations and be entered in raffle to win a prize. The Sunspot challenge is free - Non-perishable food donations will be accepted to benefit the Allentown Food Pantry. **For more information on The S.U.N.S.P.O.T. Project see page 4 of this edition of the TAVI Times.**

*Continued on next page....*



## Daffodil Days Story Walk Returns -



Throughout Daffodil Days, the Allentown Library Association will once again offer a free “Story Walk” through the Heritage Park daffodils off Main Street. Bring the whole family to discover this year’s story!

Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup> is also “Handmade Day” at historic Walnford. Quilt, sew, felt, knit, & crochet in 19<sup>th</sup> Century style; 9 am – 4 pm, 62 Walnford Road, Upper Freehold, NJ.

Walnford has planted its own collection of daffodils on the park grounds. Free mill demonstrations will also be offered throughout the weekend.

Round out your Saturday with the Allentown Future Farmers’ annual spaghetti Dinner - 5:30 p.m. at Hope Fire Co., 82 Rt. 526, Allentown. Tickets are \$15 (at the door only) with proceeds benefitting the next generation of agriculture in our community.

Visit Allentown’s boutique shops – many with handmade items just for Daffodil Days -- and enjoy fine dining in Historic Allentown, New Jersey. **Check out TAVI’s “Guide to Fun, Learning & Adventure in Historic Allentown and Upper Freehold for more driving tours, historic sites and activities --** <https://www.allentownvinj.org/tavirsquos-guide-to-fun.html>

*Daffodil Days is made possible in part by a grant from Monmouth Arts, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and the Monmouth County Board of Commissioners.*



## TAVI “Six Triple Eight Day” Bill Advances Through the State Legislature

The effort to designate May 18<sup>th</sup> each year as “Six Triple Eight Day” in New Jersey was endorsed by the State Senate’s Military and Veterans’ Affairs Committee following testimony on March 3, 2025. State Senator Shirley Turner, who also serves as president of the State Senate, is sponsoring the bill at TAVI’s request. Senator Turner was joined by Karen Johnson, whose mother served in the 6888<sup>th</sup> Central Postal Battalion, and Mike McCormick, a member of TAVI.



From Left: Karen Jordan, daughter of a 6888th member, State Senator Shirley Turner, and TAVI member Mike McCormick testify before the Senate Military & Veterans' Affairs Committee on March 3, 2025.

The bill will next be considered by the State Assembly’s Veterans’ Affairs Committee, with testimony scheduled to be heard on March 13<sup>th</sup>. If approved, it will be considered by both houses of the State legislature shortly thereafter. Governor Murphy is expected to sign the bill by May 18, 2025.

**SAVE THE DATE:** TAVI will conduct a wreath-laying ceremony at the grave of Marion VanOrkey in Allentown Methodist Church Cemetery at 3 pm on Sunday, May 18, 2025, which would have been Ms. VanOkey’s 111<sup>th</sup> birthday. Ms. VanOrkey grew up in Allentown, served in the 6888<sup>th</sup> Central Postal Battalion during World War II and was awarded a Congressional Gold Medal for her service. The “Six Triple Eight,” as it became known, accomplished the amazing task of delivering over 17 million pieces of backlogged mail to 7 million service men stationed in Europe in just three months during 1945.



*"When I was hungry, you gave me food to eat...."*

## Allentown Food Pantry Meets Growing Need



**By Joshua Schulman**

As food insecurity rises in New Jersey, organizations like the Allentown Food Pantry are stepping up to provide support. Located in the Allentown Presbyterian Church, the pantry serves approximately 400 families per month to help them put meals on the table.

Unlike many pantries, the Allentown Food Pantry operates entirely with volunteers. In fact, only four volunteers are present when they are open — two help the clients shop for food while two register them on the computer. Among them is Lisa Boss, who has played a key role in handling donations and managing government reports for nine years. Through her experience at the pantry she has witnessed firsthand the rising need for food.

"The need for food has dramatically increased," Boss said. "It hasn't doubled, but the need is up significantly. We have a

record number of clients. I thought we would see more [clients] during COVID, but now the need for food is more than ever."

To receive food from the pantry, clients must live in New Jersey and provide their town and ZIP code before receiving assistance. While the food pantry is located in Allentown, a generally affluent area, most of those seeking help come from Trenton. Others come from nearby towns such as Ewing, Wrightstown, and New Egypt. Many are non-English speaking and may visit multiple food banks just to ensure their families have enough to eat.

The majority of the pantry's supplies come from Fulfill in Neptune Township. Founded 40 years ago, Fulfill is a food bank that services roughly 300 agency partners across Monmouth and Ocean County. Agency partners include food pantries, soup kitchens, and youth eating programs, such as Boys & Girls Clubs.



The Seeds of Faith garden (see sidebar)

According to Fulfill's Vice President of Development & External Relations, Stephanie Ferrier, the food bank sent 82,715 pounds of food to the Allentown Food Pantry in 2024 alone. The pantry places orders for the most in-demand foods, which are then delivered to the church in monthly shipments. That does not include the donations that local residents give the church, as people can request to meet a volunteer from the pantry or leave non-perishables in a drop-off bin.

Most of Fulfill's supplies are limited to canned goods and dry pantry staples, and the organization has already donated over 17 million pounds of food to its clients in the past year. However, they are raising funds for a major warehouse expansion focused almost entirely on adding refrigeration and freezer space. This upgrade will allow Fulfill to accept and distribute retail donations from grocery stores, providing more protein, fresh produce, and dairy products to agency partners.

*If you or someone you know needs assistance, stop by the Allentown Food Pantry during their open hours on Monday and Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. They can be found at 20 High St on the lower level of the Cornell House, the office of Allentown Presbyterian Church.*

### How Does Your Garden Grow?

The "Seeds of Faith" garden, located across the street from Allentown

Presbyterian Church, provides fresh produce for Allentown Food Pantry – typically about 1,500 pounds each season, picked fresh on days when the pantry is open.

Volunteers are needed to help plant, maintain and harvest – Can you spare a few hours? The growing season is about to begin! No experience is needed and all ages are welcome. Email [mccormicknj@aol.com](mailto:mccormicknj@aol.com) for more information.

# Volunteers Uncover A Mystery in the Woods



From left: Scott Robbins, his nephew Stephen Knebels and his son, Scottie Robbins around the marker stone discovered during TAVI's March 1st clean-up.

TAVI coordinated a “Spring Clean-up” at the Old Robbins Burial Place on Route 524 in Upper Freehold on March 1<sup>st</sup> which uncovered a long-lost cornerstone placed by the West family in the northeast side of the site. Inscribed “Trees placed by J.W. West” the stone is believed to mark the concerted maintenance effort in 1936 which included installation of the large granite marker on Route 524 identifying the Burial Place and its historic significance.

The Old Robbins Burial Place holds the graves of Revolutionary and Civil War veterans as well as that of Deborah Lincoln, great aunt of President Abraham Lincoln. The site is surrounded by the Assunpink Wildlife Management Area, but is accessible through a trail leading up from the historic marker on Route 524. Many of the volunteers who have helped restore the graves are descendants of those buried there. Allentown Boy Scout Troop 180A has also been instrumental in returning the site to a respectful condition.

Next steps include completing the clearing of overgrown brush from the northeast quadrant of the site and restoration of the surrounding fence. Interpretive signage will also aid understanding of the Burial Place. If you’d like to become involved with the restoration project, contact Tom Robbins at [tomrobbins@comcast.net](mailto:tomrobbins@comcast.net). Tom’s book “A Mystery in the Woods” tells the story of the Robbins Burial Place and his family members who rest there. *The Old Robbins Burial Place is also part of TAVI’s Historic Cemetery Trail* -- <https://www.allentownvinj.org/tavirsquos-guide-to-fun.html>

## Allentown Budget Hearing Scheduled for April 8<sup>th</sup> Borough may add speed signs to County roads

By Eddie Young

During its March 11<sup>th</sup> meeting the Allentown Borough Council introduced the town’s fiscal 2026 budget and scheduled a public hearing on the spending plan for 7 pm April 8, 2025 in Borough Hall. The budget is available for review at [https://allentownboronj.com/vertical/sites/%7B7748EEEEB-2391-4653-8B6A-4A64C85A6D79%7D/uploads/2025\\_Allentown\\_Budget\\_as\\_Introduced.pdf](https://allentownboronj.com/vertical/sites/%7B7748EEEEB-2391-4653-8B6A-4A64C85A6D79%7D/uploads/2025_Allentown_Budget_as_Introduced.pdf). A budget summary is also available at [https://allentownboronj.com/vertical/sites/%7B7748EEEEB-2391-4653-8B6A-4A64C85A6D79%7D/uploads/doc09223020250312091021\(1\).pdf](https://allentownboronj.com/vertical/sites/%7B7748EEEEB-2391-4653-8B6A-4A64C85A6D79%7D/uploads/doc09223020250312091021(1).pdf)

At the public hearing, residents will be allowed three minutes each to give their opinions on the proposed budget during a public comment period.

For fiscal 2025 Allentown’s borough council proposed a budget of just over \$6 million, funded by tax revenue collected in 2024. This budget included about \$500,000 more in available tax money to spend from 2023 to 2024. In 2023, the borough estimated that each taxpayer contributed an average of just under \$8,500 to the budget. The council did not say how the proposed fiscal 2026 budget might impact residents’ property taxes.

Also in the meeting, Mayor Thomas Fritts said he had suggested reimbursement for towns affected by bird flu. This was in response to a state bill proposed by Assemblyman Alex Saucikie which would provide

\$100,000 for the future removal and disposal of birds that die from bird flu in New Jersey. Fritts felt that since some towns, like Allentown, have already been hit with the effects of the bird flu they should be reimbursed for the removal and disposal that has already taken place.

In response to one resident’s question, the council discussed adding a street sign displaying the speed of cars on one of the county roads in town. They said that this street sign will be coming, and it is a matter of when, not if it comes. It was unclear how much the sign would cost or who would pay for the sign.

Council President John Elder said he would like to see all of the county roads in Allentown have their speed limits lowered to 25 miles per hour, and all of the approach roads have their speed limits lowered to between 30 and 35 mile per hour.

Mayor Fritts proposed an amendment to the meeting’s original agenda, adding Real Estate Acquisition to the executive session, which is not open to the public. The council was also slated to discuss in executive session the Mercer Corporate Park Settlement, Open Space Acquisition, some abandoned properties, a re-evaluation of the Monmouth County Tax Assessment Program and the Verizon Property Tax Appeal.



# The S.U.N.S.P.O.T Project

*Spreading Unity, Nurturing Souls, Promoting Outreach & Togetherness*

[youtube.com/@thesunspotproject](https://youtube.com/@thesunspotproject)

## Spread Kindness: Join the Project!



We're on a mission to inspire kindness in our communities, and we need your help! Our YouTube channel promotes kindness through engaging campaign ads, heartwarming stories, and videos that highlight the good already happening around us. We believe that small acts of kindness can create big change, and together, we can spread positivity.

### Here's how you can get involved:

- **Watch, Like, Share, and Subscribe:** Help us amplify the message of kindness.
  - **Create & Collaborate:** Join us in producing videos or share your ideas for stories to feature.
- **Businesses:** Support the movement by sponsoring a video, with an ad spot in return, or by sharing the good work happening in your organization or community.



Email us at [thesunspotproject@gmail.com](mailto:thesunspotproject@gmail.com) if you are interested in helping out!

# Taxes in Allentown - How Are They Determined?

By Joshua Schulman

*Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of articles on property taxes in Allentown and Upper Freehold.*

Let's be honest — nobody in New Jersey likes talking about property taxes. They're high, they're confusing, and they seem to climb no matter what. Owning a home in the Garden State means accepting the reality of sky-high tax bills and vanishing paychecks. But what exactly drives these costs?

Property taxes in Allentown are based on the assessed value of a home, dictated by the borough's tax assessor. The assessor's office takes into account factors such as square footage, age, and condition of the property to decide its value. The assessed value is compared to the market value using a formula called the "Director's Ratio," which is determined by the state's Division of Taxation. Its goal is to ensure the borough's taxes are collected fairly based on property values.

The tax rate is determined by adding up the budgets for the municipality, county, and school system, and then dividing that total by the net valuation taxable, which is the sum of the total assessed value of all taxable properties in the borough. Allentown's estimated 2025 general tax rate is 3.279%, marking the fourth consecutive year it is expected to be the highest in Monmouth County. Given that the county's median rate most recently was 1.893%, that number may be concerning to local residents. So, where is everyone's hard-earned money going?

In 2024, 60.16% of Allentown's property tax dollars went toward the Upper Freehold Region School District budget, while the remaining 39.84% was allocated to the municipal and county budget. This may appear to be a significant amount for school funding, but it is actually 14.28% less than the percentage allocated in 2023 when 74.44% of property taxes were directed to the school budget. The State of New Jersey cut a portion of suburban school funding to give more to urban areas last year.

The average property assessment across Monmouth County in 2024 was \$715,263, per NJ.gov data. However, the average assessed value of a home in Allentown for 2024 is \$293,411, while the average sale price of homes is over \$400,000. Ideally,

assessed values should align closely with market values. Yet in Allentown, they fall well short due to the economy's fluctuations. The borough's lower



property assessments lead to a higher tax rate because it still needs to collect the same amount of revenue. This total amount, known as the tax levy, was \$6,217,559 in 2024. In contrast, Upper Freehold's numbers are more aligned with the tax rate, meaning that their assessed values better reflect market values.

One factor potentially driving up Allentown's tax rate is that the borough lacks large commercial properties or major taxpayers (such as large businesses or industrial facilities) that could help offset the burden on homeowners. With fewer "ratables," the town relies heavily on residential property taxes to fund services.

Fortunately, there is a silver lining. Allentown had \$193,244,900 worth of taxable properties in 2024, but the true market value of those properties was actually \$290,113,947. This discrepancy occurs because the Aggregate True Value of Real Property is the total market value, and Allentown's Director's Ratio is 66.61%, meaning the average borough property is assessed at only about two-thirds of its actual value. So even though Allentown's tax rate may feel exorbitant at 3.279%, it actually works out to a lower effective rate of 2.507%, making the tax burden feel lighter. This is good news for homeowners whose properties are under-assessed since they are paying significantly less taxes on less than market value.

*Continued on next page*



## Property Taxes *(continued)*

New Jersey offers, with certain caveats and income limits, a few programs to help ease the burden of property taxes, especially for seniors. The ANCHOR program unveiled by Governor Phil Murphy in 2022 provides reimbursements of up to \$1,500 to both homeowners and renters, regardless of age.

Meanwhile, the Senior Freeze freezes taxes for

seniors two years after they turn 65 and reimburses them for any tax increases. Finally, the Stay NJ program takes effect in late 2025, and it aims to keep seniors in the state by offering quarterly payments and property tax benefits. These programs are steps toward making life more affordable for New Jersey's residents.

*Next Month: A look at Upper Freehold.*



**SATURDAY  
APRIL  
26TH  
7:00-9:00 PM**



**\$20/Player (Online)  
\$30/Player (At The Door)  
10 Players/Team**

**NEW LOCATION:  
Allentown Methodist Church**

**SCAN HERE  
TO REGISTER** → 

**NEW JERSEY FIRE MUSEUM  
ANNUAL SWAP MEET**  
4 POLHEMUSTOWN RD, ALLENTOWN NJ

**SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025  
9 AM TO 3 PM**

**VENDORS! VENDORS!  
RESERVE YOUR SPACE NOW**

**20 X 20 SPACE**  
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**Stone Tavern  
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**SUNDAY APRIL 6TH 2025**

**HORSE PARK  
OF NJ!**

**ENTRY INFO**  
\$45 PER RIDER BEFORE  
CLOSING DATE  
\$55 PER RIDER AFTER  
CLOSING DATE

Details at <https://www.horseparkofnewjersey.com/event-6113444>

**Scavenger Hunt trail ride through  
HPNJ and the Assunpink**

**Opening Date March 12th  
Closing Date April 3rd**




Age Groups:  
1-3, 4-6, 7-9  
and 10-12 ▶

Meet the  
Easter Bunny  
in Person

Special prizes  
for Gold and  
Silver Eggs



**Easter Egg Hunt**

Hosted by the Allentown Lions Club  
Sponsored by Pleasant Run Nursery

**Saturday, April 12th**  
**Starting At 9 AM Sharp!**

**Location: Heritage Park, off Church St.**



HoP HoP





## **Monmouth County launches Ride in Monmouth**

### *Ride in Monmouth to replace SCAT*

The Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners is proud to announce their latest transportation initiative, Ride in Monmouth, formerly known as Special Citizens Area Transportation (SCAT).

Ride in Monmouth is a demand response shared ride transportation service. All services are first come, first served, by availability and curb to curb. Available for transportation Monday – Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Residents can book their trip as far as six months in advance or as little as 48 hours, however, it is strongly encouraged to book as far in advance as possible to secure a ride.

Residents qualify for our services if they are:

- 60 years of age or older,
- Temporarily or permanently disabled
- Veterans
- 18 years of age and traveling from or going to one of our 11 rural communities including Allentown, Colts Neck, Freehold Twp, Holmdel, Howell, Manalapan, Millstone, Roosevelt, Tinton Falls, Upper Freehold, and Wall.

Ride in Monmouth provides transportation to:

- Life-sustaining treatments such as chemotherapy, radiation and dialysis,
- Doctors and medical appointments, physical and occupational therapies,
- Grocery stores,
- Hair and nail salons,
- Pharmacies,
- Senior and community centers,
- Employment training, and much more.
- Barber Shops
- The Mall
- Transit Centers
- Foot Pantries

Ride in Monmouth also provides transportation services for other County programs and activities such as Made in Monmouth and the SUSHI program.

There is now no charge for any trips medical related, including life-sustaining trips such as chemotherapy, radiation, and dialysis, or for veterans to travel to the various VA clinics and hospitals in New Jersey. The cost of all other trips is just \$2.00 one way. We encourage those interested in learning more about Ride in Monmouth to call 732-431-6480 or email [RideIn-Monmouth@visitmonmouth.com](mailto:RideIn-Monmouth@visitmonmouth.com).

To learn more about the Monmouth County Division of Transportation, go to [visitmonmouth.com](http://visitmonmouth.com). The announcement was live-streamed and can be viewed in its entirety on the Monmouth County Government's [Facebook](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).





**C is for Cookie.....**

**Order your girl scout cookies today**

*Scan the QR code to order your cookies and support our Allentown – Robbinsville Girl Scouts*



# Welcome to the World!

Congratulations to Noelle and J.C. Fowler on the happy arrival of their son, Jace Mitchell Fowler, born February 6, 2025. May your family be filled with love and joy!

Are you marking a birthday, anniversary, graduation, marriage or other milestone event in your family? Let TAVI celebrate with you – Send your announcements to [mccormicknj@aol.com](mailto:mccormicknj@aol.com) so we can include them in future editions of The TAVI Times.

**Hope Fire Company**  
*Ladies Auxiliary* Basket Auction



**6 pm**  
**Saturday, April 12, 2025**  
Hope Fire House, 82 Rt. 526, Allentown

Hundreds of prizes & handmade baskets,  
See [Gift Basket Auction](#) for details

**UPPER FREEHOLD REGIONAL  
EDUCATION FOUNDATION**

*presents*

# LADIES' NIGHT



**SATURDAY, MARCH 29**  
**AT THE NOTTINGHAM BALLROOM**

*Featuring:*

**DJ SKRIBBLE**

**DOORS OPEN AT: 7:00PM**

**TICKETS: \$90 DINNER,  
BEER, WINE, STARTER TICKETS**

**LADIES' THEMED GIFT BASKETS  
CASH BAR FOR COCKTAILS**



**NEW ENTERTAINMENT, NEW  
VENUE, SAME GREAT BASKETS!**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
UFREF.ORG**





## Did you know....

See otters hold hands when they go to sleep to avoid drifting apart....

## The TAVI Times –

*The return of local journalism to our community* The TAVI Times exists to report local news you are not likely to see elsewhere. Please send us your local news as well as information about the events and activities which make Allentown and Upper Freehold a great place to live. News, events and activities are free -- TAVI is a small band of volunteers which happily serves our community free of charge. If

you are a small business owner, please consider supporting TAVI's many community service projects by purchasing ad space in this monthly publication, now reaching over 2,100 households in the Allentown-Upper Freehold area. Contact Mike McCormick at [mccormicknj@aol.com](mailto:mccormicknj@aol.com) for more information.

### Commercial “Camera-Ready” Ad Subscription Rates

	Full Page	Half Page	Quarter Page	Eighth Page
One-time Ad	\$250	\$125	\$65	\$30
<b>Total Price</b>				
Monthly Ad (12 Ads)	\$1200	\$600	\$300	\$150
Quarterly Ad (4 Ads)	\$400	\$200	\$100	\$50
Semiannual Ad (2 Ads)	\$200	\$100	\$50	\$25

[www.allentownvinj.org](http://www.allentownvinj.org)

#### The Allentown Village Initiative (TAVI)

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**Donations are always gratefully accepted at**

<https://www.allentownvinj.org/donate.html>

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The Allentown Village Initiative

