

# Township of Bensalem



Joseph DiGirolamo  
Mayor

## 2026 BUDGET MESSAGE

To: Township Council  
From: Mayor Joseph DiGirolamo  
Date: November 26, 2025

Pursuant to Section 2-24 of the Code of the Township of Bensalem, on November 10, 2025, I submitted to you my proposed 2026 Municipal Budget. I now submit to you my accompanying Budget Message for my 2026 Municipal Budget.

As I prepare this Budget Message, I cannot help but be thankful for the overwhelming display of confidence and support I received from the residents of Bensalem just weeks ago in the recent Mayoral Election. I am proud of all that my administration has accomplished to improve and maintain the wonderful quality of life we enjoy here in Bensalem, and I am all the more proud to know that these accomplishments are recognized, and appreciated, by citizens of our community.

That being said, I have always said, and believed, that “Teams Win,” and all that we have accomplished during my tenure as Mayor could not have been accomplished without the assistance, the support, and the teamwork that I have enjoyed through the years with the Members of our Township Council. As Council Members Pilieri, Benitez, and Champion complete their terms of office, I am ever grateful for all that you have done to help me lead our community, and on behalf of the citizens of Bensalem Township, I thank you all for your years of dedicated service to our community.

Turning to next year’s budget, I must again reflect first upon the challenges that have confronted our community during the years following the Coronavirus Pandemic. Inflation, soaring prices, manpower shortages, rising interest rates, and supply-chain delays of many of the goods, materials and supplies we utilize, continue to this day to present challenges to our residents and businesses. Regrettably, at the national level, all of these conditions have continued during the past year, and as a result, at the local level, our residents, our businesses, our schools, and our Township government continue to feel the devastating effects of the current national economy.

I am proud to say, however, that in spite of all of the challenges we have had to confront these past several years, our Township Government has nonetheless continued to operate and deliver essential services to our residents efficiently, responsively, and without delay or interruption.

As you know, I was a local business owner for many years before being elected Mayor, and I have always attempted to run Township government with the same sense of fiscal responsibility that I employed in operating our family business. No matter whether economic conditions are favorable or challenging, my Department Heads and I monitor the Township's financial position not just at budget time, but continuously, throughout the entire year, each and every year, as our normal operating procedure. As I have reminded you many times, this constant review and analysis of our revenues and expenditures, together with continuous analysis and vigilant research for opportunities to find savings and secure grants and other third-party funds, is not a unique response to the current economic times, but instead is the manner by which my Department Heads, our professionals, and I have conducted Township operations since the earliest days of my Administration.

Much has changed in Bensalem from the days when I worked alongside my Father on our family farm on Dunks Ferry Road. Over the course of the past century, Bensalem has grown to become one of the 10 largest communities in all of Pennsylvania, with nearly 65,000 people residing within the 21 square miles of our Township. Today we have a police force of over 100 officers, an infrastructure of over 144 miles of roads, and over 1,400 acres of open space, parks and playgrounds within our borders.

I am proud that during my time as your Mayor, our efforts have led to Bensalem becoming a destination for so many people throughout our region who seek to share in our community's prosperity and unparalleled quality of life, civic attributes that have led to Bensalem attaining national recognition as "1 of the 50 Best Places to Live in America," as "1 of the 100 Best Communities for Young People," and most recently as "1 of the 50 Best Places to Live for Families" in all of the United States, a recognition bestowed upon us by *Fortune Magazine* by virtue of all that our community has to offer to our residents of all ages, from children to senior citizens and everyone in between. Locally, the *Bucks County Courier Times* has lauded our community as a "Model for America". I am equally proud that our community continues, without exception, to welcome and embrace all who wish to be a part of, and to share in, all that Bensalem is and has to offer.

As I have stated many times, the safety of this community and its residents has always been my paramount concern. This is certainly reflected in our Bensalem Police, Fire and Emergency Management Services, all of which are the best equipped, most well trained, and most community active of any such departments or squads in the Commonwealth.

Our Police Department has earned both international accreditation from CALEA and state accreditation from PLEAC, an accomplishment achieved by only a handful of the more than 1,200 Police Departments in all of Pennsylvania. Further, our Police Department is the only department in Bucks County to have earned the CALEA "Gold Standard" Certification. The International Association of Chiefs of Police has similarly recognized the Bensalem PD as a "Premier Agency" in law enforcement. These various recognitions and accreditations are reflective of the professionalism, dedication, and hard work of our officers and command staff alike to assure that our policies, practices, and procedures meet the highest levels to which law enforcement officers and departments can be held.

Our Bensalem Rescue Squad is the busiest unit in the County, utilizing state of the art Emergency Medical Equipment and staffed by 24 full-time and approximately 40 part-time personnel who are among the best trained Emergency Medical Personnel in the region. Their average response time to any location in our community with Advanced Life Support level of care in under 7 minutes, well exceeding the Commonwealth standards for both Basic and Advanced Life Support.

The six volunteer fire companies serving our community made the historic move to consolidate into a new, single volunteer fire company - the "Bensalem Volunteer Fire Department" (BVFD). The BVFD continues the long history and tradition of service to this community that was the hallmark of our former six volunteer companies, and does so using the staffing of those six companies working as a single, unified fire department. Through a combination of government funding and their own fund-raising efforts, these brave men and women continue to undergo the training, and to operate and maintain the equipment and facilities, necessary to safely protect and save lives and property throughout our Township. Our community is grateful for the service these volunteers provide each and every day, and I am pleased that by virtue of their dedication and cooperation in undertaking this restructuring, they will continue to serve our community as the Bensalem Volunteer Fire Department for years to come.

Our Township was also one of the first in the County to employ a complement of full-time firefighters to further improve and enhance fire protection throughout Bensalem. Our full-time firefighters operate during those daytime hours when our Volunteer Fire Department may not have the manpower or equipment available to fully respond to a call. This full-time firefighter service has been critical to our ability to save lives and preserve property in our Township. As we analyze our Township's current emergency response capabilities, and look toward the future as well, it is clear that there is a need to at this time to further increase the number of full-time firefighters serving out Township, and to that end, the Township has applied for and received a Federal SAFER Grant to help fund the hiring of four additional paid firefighters. This will increase the ranks of our Bensalem Fire Rescue to 11 full-time firefighters, and together with our Township Fire Chief, they are all available to respond to emergency calls anywhere in the Township during daytime hours with the necessary manpower and equipment to assure the safety of our homes, schools, and businesses, as well as all who occupy them, any day of the week.

Continuing our long-standing tradition of being a "Community of Firsts," we continue to operate and maintain our own Township Fire and Emergency Training Facility so that all of our First Responders have the ability and facilities to train right here in Bensalem. This Facility also allows our Township Firefighters, Police, and EMS to coordinate and train jointly, as well as with other County and Federal Agencies and First Responders, for all possible emergencies that might arise within our Township. We remain the only community in Bucks County, and one of the few in our region, that has constructed and maintains its own training facility for its First Responders.

While we all certainly recognize the importance of Philadelphia to the economy of the region, for a community like Bensalem, located right along the city's border, our proximity to the city also results in great economic challenges to our community, particularly in the areas of law enforcement and crime prevention. More than 80% of the individuals arrested in Bensalem are not, in fact, residents of Bensalem. They have travelled into our community from other places, mostly from Philadelphia, to traffic in drugs or to commit other crimes. A tremendous amount of our Police resources is spent simply to prevent crime, and to arrest criminals, that come into Bensalem from across our border with Philadelphia.

Clearly the safety of our community is, and continues to be, of the utmost importance, and as you all know, maintaining the safety of this community and its residents does come at an ever-increasing cost, and that cost represents 65% of our overall 2026 Township Budget. I am pleased to report, however, that as a result of the decisions and policies of my administration, we are able to fund and maintain our Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services at their current levels of service in our 2026 Budget, levels that must be maintained, and continuously expanded upon, if we are to maintain the safety and quality of life we enjoy in our community.

Ultimately, the service that every one of our First Responders provide to this community is the foundation of our success in making and keeping Bensalem a desirable place to live, work, and raise a family. I thank them all.

I am proud to say that the quality of life we enjoy today, and the quality of governmental services that the Township delivers to its residents, have greatly improved over the past three decades. During that time, the Township has undertaken major capital improvement projects to improve our system of roads and improve the flow of traffic throughout the Township. Every Township road has been repaved over this period, in many cases multiple times, at a total cost of over \$30 million, and eight different intersections involving State Highways have been enlarged and improved at a cost to the Township of \$8.5 million, with other millions having been spent on local road improvement projects during this time.

More recently, in our continued efforts to improve traffic flow and traffic safety throughout the Township, we have undertaken the installation of an Adaptive Traffic Signal System along Street Road, Hulmeville Road, Rockhill Road, and Bristol Pike, a multi-year project that was completed in 2025. This 21<sup>st</sup> century technology adjusts and changes the timing and phasing of the traffic signals along these roadways, based upon the real time traffic volumes and conditions at each of the improved intersections, to respond to the actual traffic conditions that arise throughout the day.

During my time as Mayor, the Township has also embarked on numerous projects and initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life in our community. Many of these projects and initiatives have been focused on our Parks and Recreation Facilities, a crucial element to the quality of life we enjoy in Bensalem.

We built, expanded and developed our Bensalem Central Park, including the construction of our Amphitheater that today serves as the centerpiece of our Summer Concert Series and our Family Fall Festival Community Celebration.

We rebuilt neighborhood playgrounds and constructed the Bensalem Community Park, the Firefighters' Field Complex, and, most recently, our First Responders Field, to provide much needed sports and recreation opportunities to our residents, especially our youth. Our 18+ acre First Responders Field Complex has undergone several years' worth of renovations, including new irrigation for the grass fields and the construction of our new Stadium Field including new bleachers, new LED lighting, and a brand new multi-purpose turf soccer, field hockey and lacrosse field. This \$2 million improvement project was completed with the assistance of a \$1 million grant from the State.

In the past few years we also purchased, replaced and refurbished three neighborhood playgrounds – the Executive Park Playground, the Clusters Playground, and the Coves Playground.

Imaginationland, built through a partnership with the Bensalem Kiwanis, is a destination that provides recreation opportunities to children of all abilities and their families within our community. Over the past several years we performed extensive repairs and a rebuild of our Imaginationland Playground, and as part of my budget for 2025, we included funding for a complete redesign of Imaginationland intended to continue to provide the “traditional” play equipment designed to be accessible to children of all abilities, while also introducing accessibility features designed to meet current ADA requirements and to address the needs of individuals with sensory sensitivities, as well. I am also pleased to remind you that a significant portion of the costs for this project will be covered by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) that my administration was able to secure.

As I write this message, construction of the Imaginationland rebuild and redesign is underway, and when completed, the playground will include ADA-compliant parking spots, accessible pathways, and ADA-compliant park features such as swings, we-go-round, zip-line, and see-saw, all of which will allow individuals of all abilities to navigate the park and participate in its activities. Additionally, tactile, auditory, and sensory installations, such as musical equipment, communication boards, sensory walls, cozy dome, and shade structures, will be included to accommodate individuals with sensory sensitivities, as well. The Township recognizes the significant benefit of providing a fully inclusive playground for the residents of Bensalem, and we are proud to continue to lead the way among communities in Bucks County in fulfilling this important community need.

We continue to hear a demand for public Pickleball courts, and in answer to that demand, in 2024 we installed the Township's first Pickleball court in our Mill Creek Farms neighborhood. The response to the construction of these courts has been incredibly positive, so much so that the 2026 Budget includes the construction of new Pickleball courts in Bensalem Central Park.

The need and demand for facilities for our community's youth sports groups has grown with the growth of these organizations as part of youth sports in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Residents of all of ages are continuously asking for neighborhood basketball, tennis, and now pickleball courts throughout the Township, and our street hockey and skateboard facilities at Bensalem Community Park are in constant use. Accessible walking trails and other passive recreation facilities throughout the Township are in constant demand. Our Summer Recreation Program for children of all ages is full to capacity, and recreation programs throughout the year for residents of all ages provide both active and passive recreation and learning opportunities, with requests for more and different programs being made to the Township all the time.

Well over 200 acres of open space have been preserved by and through the Township during my time as your Mayor, increasing the total Township Open Space to well over 1,400 acres in 2025. A significant portion of this Open Space also provides passive recreation opportunities to our residents throughout the Township. As you are aware, through funding obtained through State Representative Tomlinson, we were able to undertake negotiations with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for the purchase of 18 acres of unused cemetery land at Bensalem Boulevard and Gibson Road.

With all of that we have done to improve and expand our Parks and Recreation facilities, Bensalem now has almost 300 acres of parks, playgrounds, and athletic facilities available to our residents. The demand for new and expanded recreation facilities and opportunities has been continuous since the earliest days of my Administration, and in recent years, that demand for both active and passive recreation opportunities within the Township has become even greater.

Like public safety, providing, operating, and maintaining our parks, playgrounds and athletic facilities, together with the over 1,400 acres of preserved open space, are a significant annual cost to the Township. These costs include our Park and Recreation Department manpower comprised of Park and Recreation Staff, Park Rangers, Camp Counselors, and Field and Facility Maintenance Personnel and Contractors, all of whom provide exceptional service to the residents of our community, especially our youth.

Furthermore, playground maintenance has become increasingly cumbersome and increasingly expensive in the last several years. The supply-chain issues, together with the increased material and labor costs, that we have been experiencing for the past several years, have significantly impacted our playground maintenance efforts at our 30 Township playgrounds and parks. As I believe you are aware, many of our playgrounds have been in service for 20 years or more, and for both safety and liability purposes, when their 20-year service anniversary approaches, the Township must replace much, if not all, of the equipment and components that make up those playgrounds. Our Imaginationland redesign and rebuild, described above, is only the most recent example of this need and expense. Nonetheless, these repairs and replacement projects must be undertaken if we are going to continue to provide safe neighborhood playground facilities for our community's youth.

While public safety is crucial to keeping our community a great place to live, the quality of our government services, particularly our parks, playgrounds, youth programs, and open space are also integral to keeping Bensalem a vibrant and desirable place live, work, and raise our children.

During my time in office, we also constructed a brand-new Senior Citizen Center, and we partnered in the construction of the Ashland Manor, Gravel Pike, Presbyterian Homes and Somerton Court Senior Housing Facilities that provide quality, affordable housing for our growing population of senior citizens, and just last month we cut the ribbon on the Daniel B. Green House in Trevoze, the newest affordable housing complex that will serve the senior citizens of our community.

I was especially proud when just a few short years ago we cut the ribbon on the Bensalem Veterans Residences on Mechanicsville Road. The Residences, constructed on land that was provided by the Township, provides affordable housing for age and income qualified Veterans of our Armed Forces, the first project of its kind in Bucks County and one that was long overdue for our Veterans.

Stormwater management continues to be at the forefront of our future capital projects. Since 2020, we were able to construct and place into operation the first phase of the Ogden Avenue/Cornwells Stormwater and Basin Project, improving and alleviating many stormwater management problems that have long plagued the Cornwells Heights and Eddington neighborhoods, two of the oldest neighborhoods in our Township. Our efforts in these neighborhoods also included the upgrade and replacement of concrete curb radii to further improve stormwater flow and reduce ponding and flooding in these neighborhoods, and in 2024 we completed Phase I of the construction of new stormwater facilities along Hulmeville Road in the area of the Bensalem Country Club, including new facilities on the golf course itself, designed to manage and keep stormwater within the Country Club property, and to improve stormwater management in the neighborhoods surrounding the golf course.

Many storm sewer repairs earmarked to utilize the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funds provided by the Federal government were awarded and, in some cases, completed, in 2024. These projects and repairs include Phases I and II of the new stormwater facilities on Hulmeville Road and the Bensalem Township Country Club, as well as drainage improvements along Glendale Drive, Pasqualone Boulevard, Treeline Drive, Third Avenue, and Grandview Avenue.

As 2026 begins, we have completed an aerial graphing of impervious surfaces and topography throughout the Township to aid and assist in the planning, design, engineering and construction of ongoing and future repairs and improvements of and to the Township's aging infrastructure. Future projects are currently under analysis and development, and this year's budget includes funding for such projects.

Beyond the stormwater improvements to the Country Club mentioned above, in the past few years we have also undertaken significant renovations to a number of our Country Club facilities. These include remodeling and renovation of the Banquet Facilities and the Owls Nest, creation of a new locker room, much needed new equipment for course maintenance, and, most notably, to improve safety both on and adjacent to the golf course, the relocation of the 11<sup>th</sup> Green, the relocation of the 18<sup>th</sup> Tee Box, and the realignment of the 18<sup>th</sup> Fairway. The completion of these golf course improvements, together with cart path repaving throughout the golf course, are intended to take place in 2026. These improvements increased the demand to play our course, and as a result, further improvements to the course, specifically the rebuilding and enlarging of tee boxes, have become an immediate need and included in this year's budget.

My 2026 Budget proposes further improvements to the facilities and operation of our Bensalem Township Country Club, chief among them the continued restoration and renovations to the interior and exterior of the historic Standish Forde Hansel Mansion located in the heart of our beautiful golf course. Through the assistance of Governor Shapiro, Senator Farry and Representative Tomlinson, we secured a \$2.25 million grant for the renovation of the interior of the Mansion to become a full service restaurant and event facility. Upon completion, "The Farm House at Bensalem Country Club" is planned to be a destination for all of the residents of our community, golfers and non-golfers alike, and will be a facility that will greatly enhance the opportunities and amenities available to anyone and everyone booking their events at the Country Club.

All of these aforementioned various improvements and projects throughout our Township, both past and more recent, have all contributed to the development of an expanded and improved housing base within our community, a stronger business climate in Bensalem, a significant boost to our local and regional reputation, and a strong sense of community pride.

As a result of the fiscally responsible decisions and policies of my administration, heading into 2026 the Township's overall fiscal position is, and remains, strong and stable.

During my Administration, we have not only successfully weathered the economic challenges of the past that saw our nation experience some of the worst economic conditions since the Great Depression, but we are also successfully weathering the more recent challenges that have seen skyrocketing inflation, rising interest rates, and continuously increasing material and equipment that have continued since the Pandemic.

In the process, we have achieved and maintain both the short- and long-term financial stability necessary to maintain and improve our already strong credit rating of Aa1. Contributing to our financial stability and this strong credit rating are our conservative budgeting style, a tax base growth rate that is on an upward trend, a general fund balance that meets general accounting standards, and a Township liquidity that remains solid. Further, as I reminded you above, my Directors and I constantly study and analyze our operations to assure that we remain efficient, and, as always, we continue to look to find ways that our Township government can "do more with less."

Furthermore, the policies and practices of my administration not only have made and kept our financial position strong for over three decades, but they have also allowed us to provide all of the government services our residents continue to receive and enjoy, and to accomplish the many capital and community projects detailed above, and all without raising Township property taxes for thirty years.

Bensalem is a proud, dynamic, diverse and vibrant community. While our strong financial position, the unparalleled services we provide, and the ambitious public works projects we pursue all contribute to our success as a community, our prosperity as a community is not dictated by just these factors alone. Ultimately, it is the people of this community that make it a great place to live, work, worship and raise family. The ongoing involvement, commitment and support of our residents and business partners are essential to Bensalem's continued success and our recognition as a strong and unified community.

Finally, I am extremely pleased to report that I am once again proposing that we continue the Homeowners' Assistance Grant for 2026, and that the Grant amount remain at \$300.00.

As of the date of this Message, Bensalem will have returned over \$66 million dollars to its residents over the life of the Homeowners Assistance Grant Program, and with the funding I am proposing for 2026, that figure will increase to over \$70.9 million. I am proud to have fought in Harrisburg, alongside then Senator Tomlinson and then Representative DiGirolamo, for the inclusion of the Casino Host Fees in the State Gaming Laws, and I am proud that **Bensalem remains the only community in Pennsylvania that provides any Casino Host Fee monies directly to its residents.**

In closing, I would like to once again thank my staff and our professionals for their hard work, support and dedication. Without them, the many successes we have accomplished for the people of Bensalem over the years would not have been possible, and certainly the Township's ability to continue to respond throughout the pandemic to previously unimaginable issues, and to maintain, without interruption, the exceptional levels of service that our residents and businesses both expect and deserve, is a testament to all of their dedication and hard work.

I must also take this opportunity to once again thank the members of Township Council, past and present, who have given me their support though the years, and especially to our current Township Council, all of whom have given me their counsel, support and cooperation. I believe that together we have been successful in our efforts to make and keep Bensalem a community with quality of life of which we can all be proud.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Councilmen-Elect Jesse Sloane, Ed Tokmajian, and Joe Wenzel on their election earlier this month. I look forward to working with them over the next four years on behalf of our wonderful community and on behalf of all of the citizens of Bensalem Township.

Bensalem's future remains bright, and I am grateful to have the opportunity and the privilege to continue to lead this community into that bright future.

Thank you.