

The Progress



'Avoiding All Malice and Uncharitableness' Former U.S. President Grover Cleveland, Born in Caldwell, March 18, 1837

'Roseland saves costs, time through tech, social media'

By Steven Galante, Jr.

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Roseland – Want to watch the latest Borough Council meeting but missed it? There's an "app" for that.

Not sure if the person from town hall is listening to your request? File one through the town's website and make it visible to all visitors to the site. Looking to contact a fellow Roselander you have never met? Join the official Roseland fan page on Facebook, where over 1,000 people have joined already.

During the past seven months the Borough Council has approved numerous measures to increase the town's presence on the Internet, due to the expertise and technical background of Thomas Tsilionis, chairman of the Communications and Technology Committee and chief architect of the town's new website and updated communication infrastructure.

"While I was campaigning and knocking on people's doors, one of the things that kept coming up was complaints that went unanswered. They're saying no one gets back to them, it's like a black hole. They try to get in touch with the town and no one follows up on their requests," he said. "We were trying to come up with a way to utilize technology to improve our resident's communications with the town".

So on January 19, 2010, the Borough Council voted to eliminate the Cable TV committee and form the new Communications and Technology committee, chaired by Councilman Thomas Tsilionis.

"We never had a technology committee because we didn't have technology. We had a website that was archaic and had no functionality. So, we took everything and put it into one centralized location," he said.

By consolidating departments into one committee, the borough is able to process information more efficiently while also saving money.

"We spend an extraordinary amount of money mailing out letters for Recreation Department, Public Works, including tax bills and water bills," Tsilionis said.

In addition, Tsilionis devised a "Resident Ticket System" that allows residents to file requests with the town online. Those responsible for processing the request will be able to view its progress and whether further action must be taken. "We would see it on a daily basis until someone answers and closes it," he said.

Tsilionis plans to use e-mail to send out bills and late payment reminders to residents.

The website, he added, was developed at no cost to the town. "When I volunteered for the website, I donated everything. I did not bill the council for anything," he said.

When we began talking about revamping the website, people thought we were nuts," he recalls. "The amount of money we are able to save from that is extraordinary. Our target for the committee is to save \$60,000 to \$90,000 with these improvements."

One of the more unique features is the Roseland iPhone app that streams council meetings to the phone. Users can watch meetings live or watch a previous meeting from as far back as two years. The app must be downloaded from the Roseland website. (roselandnj.org)

