April was so action-packed, and May has so much on the calendar (honoring our war dead, parades, a concert, a church’s birthday, and more) that it’s hard to know where to begin. We’ll “write short” to make sure all the news fits.

First, on a somber note, we lost three community members in March and April who gave so much to our little town.

Long-time state Sen. S. Thomas Gagliano was a true statesman, serving our district with honor, and continuing in public service as a founder of the Jersey Shore Partnership after his tenure in the legislature. As a former newspaper reporter, I recall his equanimity during the raucous debate over the reappointment of Chief Justice Robert N. Wilentz, a clash that never degenerated into name-calling or mud-slinging.

Sen. Gagliano’s even temper and thoughtful (though passionate) advocacy elevated our public discourse. His son Robert, and Robert’s wife Karen, live in town, and we extend to them and the senator’s family our condolences.

So too, we extend our condolences to the family of Claudia Bruno, wife of former Mayor Tony Bruno. Mrs. Bruno, who passed away March 31, was active with the Board of Health, our EMS, and her church. She will be missed by so many here in Little Silver and beyond.

And Roger Dolan, a former captain of the Fire Police and a crossing guard here after his retirement, passed away in April. Roger was a much loved and for many years a very active volunteer in town and elsewhere. We are sure his family is proud of his service, and wish them all well.

All of these folks would likely have been pleased when we came together in April to pass an ordinance that phases in a ban on single-use plastic bags, straws, and polystyrene containers. Our businesses in particular were supportive, although it does affect them, so please support them whenever you can to thank them for stepping up.

As well, our Fire Department supported the ordinance by beginning a fundraiser involving the sale of reusable shopping bags. Please support this all-volunteer department during its current fund drive, and by purchasing these bags when they come out — to the benefit of the environment and our volunteers.

Next, we received word in April that Little Silver will receive a $275,000 state grant to fund the repaving of Markham Place. The grant is a significant boost to our yearly road repaving program, and will ensure the improvement of this well-used roadway running past Markham Place School and between county roads.

At the same time, we were advised that Little Silver qualifies for a fifty-percent no-interest loan through a state program, which will help move forward a sidewalk renovation plan in a fiscally responsible manner.

The governing body in April also passed a municipal budget, which can be found, along with a user-friendly version, on www.littlesilver.org.

This year’s tax levy increase is $224,233.66, due partially to a down payment for the reconstruction of certain sidewalks, a $37,012 pension payment increase and a $23,000 Planning Board operating expense increase for affordable housing fees (both courtesy of the State of New Jersey), and certain contractual and utility increases.

Even so, the tax levy increase is $157,800 under the two-percent cap. With overall department spending staying relatively flat, and given the overall property valuation increase, the municipal tax rate will decrease slightly, from 0.437 in 2018 to 0.436 in 2019. So the average assessed home in town, valued at $685,000, will see a municipal tax decrease of 4.37% in 2019.

Please remember that this is only one part of your annual tax bill, the remainder of which comprises the local and regional school taxes, the county tax and the penny open space tax. Once all budgets have been passed, the overall tax rate will be calculated, which will likely be available in June.

Again this year, conservative spending by our various departments, shared services, effective debt service planning, and the gradual funding of future capital expenditures have helped us keep costs down. Thanks to all involved in this year-long effort.

In other April news, the applicant to build a bar/restaurant on the site of the former shoe store adjacent to the large train station parking lot has withdrawn the proposal from consideration. The withdrawal does not preclude the applicant from refiling the application at a future date.

For now, however, there is no longer a pending application to build such a facility, which stemmed from the issuance by the borough of the town’s only on-premises consumption liquor license after voter approval by referendum.
Also in April we recognized the great help that our all-volunteer Little Silver Shovels provided to those who have difficulty shoveling snow and ice. This was the fifth year Eileen Kubaitis’ crew of students helped nearly 60 households shovel out, despite the relatively mild winter. Way to go shoveler!

Thanks also to PBA Local 359 and our recreation department for joining forces to bring us the annual Easter Egg Hunt. It was a beautiful day for our little ones to scurry over the Gazebo lawn hunting colorful treasures. And of course our EFLS held its packed, very successful fundraising party with the support of our businesses, and the generosity of our residents: a great effort so critical in these days of difficult school budgets.

Looking ahead, the rest of this newsletter is full of May events, so please check it out for details. The Parker Homestead is particularly busy, including the hosting of its second musical Ramble, featuring great local musicians including the Honey Badgers, on May 19 beginning at 3 p.m. This is a family-friendly Woodstock style event with terrific music; check out www.parkerhomestead-1665.org for more events and information.

In addition, the Little Silver Charitable Foundation is hosting the second Taste of Little Silver on Markham Place on May 18 from 2-7. Come taste our eateries’ fine offerings in a festive atmosphere.

And birthday wishes are in order for Embury Methodist Church, which reaches its 150th birthday this year. On May 19th, there will be a special worship service at 10 a.m. We wish this very community-minded, vital and supportive congregation all the best as it looks to the future.

Also on May 19th is the Ridge Road Run for Suicide Prevention, kicking off at 8:30 a.m. at Red Bank Regional High School. Notice will be given of the very short-term road closings that will accompany this important fundraiser initiated by local students, and benefitting local organizations, now in its second year.

Importantly, May brings our Memorial Day parade and ceremony. As usual, the parade steps off at 8:30 a.m. on Memorial Day from the corner of Willow and Parker. It ends at Memorial Park, where our ceremony will feature our school musicians, student essayists, our Scouts, dancers and others.

Whether or not you attend the event, please remember the young men from Little Silver who lost their lives in battle: Richard L.J. Conner and Henry G. Woodruff in World War I; John R. Toomey, a paratrooper killed during the Rhine jump in World War II; Tom Firth, who died in a gun battle in South Vietnam in 1965; Jordi Grez, who was killed by an IED in Iraq in 2005; and Tinker Dorn of Shrewsbury, killed by sniper fire in South Vietnam, and whose brother Dan, a Little Silver resident for many years, has assisted in our ceremony.

Our other parade in May is the Spring Sports Parade on May 4 at 1 p.m. Our young athletes travel from the Fire House to the fields behind Borough Hall, where everyone is welcome, young and not so young, to gather for some fun, fresh air, food and drink as another great season begins.

On behalf of the governing body, we wish you blue skies and sunshine, cool nights, and all the hope this time of year has to offer. As always, please call borough hall with any concerns, or contact me directly by calling my home phone at (732) 576-8595, or emailing me at bobneff80@gmail.com.