

THE EAGLE'S VIEW



**Chris Tully, CFP®, RICP®,
CIMA®**
Managing Partner

EWS Updates

The new year is upon us! At Eagle Wealth Strategies, that coincides with two exciting new adventures.

First, as mentioned in our October newsletter, our long-awaited move to Mullica Hill (or at least long awaited by us!) has finally happened as of January 20th. Our new home – 118 Bridgeton Pike – is next to the municipal building, across the street from the post office, McDonalds, and Shop Rite, and in front of Ella Harris Park. We have plenty of space to continue adding staff, and 2 acres of land in case we ever need to expand. Hopefully (fingers crossed), this is “home” for the next two decades or more. We even have a groundhog – aptly named Mullica Hill Phil – on the premises, and the staff (or perhaps just I) are thrilled to feed him each day!

The second adventure – which was announced through email in December – was the addition of a CPA (Certified Public Accountant), Matt Persichetti, to the team. We created a second company under common ownership for legal reasons: Aerie Tax & Advisory (ATA). This expansion of services has been in the works – or at least on our minds – for a long time, and was driven by several things we’ve taken note of in recent years:

- ...Several accountants our clients work with have retired or are in the process of retiring;
- ...There is a nationwide shortage of accountants (with AI likely making this worse in the coming years; more on this topic later) and many that remain are aiming more for businesses, or are demanding higher dollar amounts to complete simple 1040 returns for individuals;
- ...And we have increasingly begun to realize that strategy and planning are lacking, with things between accountants and financial advisors slipping through the cracks.

Our addition of Matt aims to solve all three. In terms of tax prep and filing, Matt will work exclusively with our clients (or our clients’ children) at a cost at or lower than many clients we’ve surveyed have stated they’re currently paying. This is a voluntary service, of course, as many of our clients have expressed interest in continuing to work with their long-time accountants. This is perfectly fine! We just hope they’ll work with us in terms of collaborating on strategy. Matt is young, entrepreneurial, and has the temperament and personality to be a great fit for our clients, hopefully for many years to come. And in terms of strategy, while tax is a component of financial planning, we feel having a CPA on staff will take our recommendations to another level. If interested, ping us for more information!

Aerie Tax & Advisory is the first – but not the last – step in the process of becoming the premier wealth management firm in our area (with capabilities beyond the immediate geography). Over the coming decade, we’ll strive to have the resources of a larger firm but never lose the one-on-one feel of a boutique.



IN THIS ISSUE:

Updates at EWS/ Markets & Economy	1-2
Mullica Hill - The Long Awaited Move!	3
Meet Matt Persichetti	4
New for 2026	5
News at EWS	6-7

In 2026 we'll be focused on several other areas of improvement within our firm. One will be our technology. Artificial Intelligence (AI), mentioned earlier, is a hot topic in our industry. Thus far, we've adopted a note-taking tool to be used in client meetings. This efficiency will allow Advisors to remain more engaged and allow Relationship Managers to attend fewer meetings, so they can work on more valuable tasks behind the scenes. We'll embark on a heavy-duty due diligence process beginning in the 2nd or 3rd quarter of this year to see what other automations and efficiencies would work well with our business model. Ultimately, we don't believe AI should replace humans, but firms that harness the power in the background to become more efficient (ability to do more for clients) will likely come out ahead.

We also recognize that "too much" AI is not a great thing. Recently, while trying to solicit bids for a client's borrowing needs, I discovered that the website's chat feature was only using AI, and the phone number, too, would not allow me to reach a person. The website wasn't working for us, and there was no way to rectify this. I had to reach out through LinkedIn and cross my fingers a human would see it. Bad product and bad service! We don't want robots answering our phones, and we don't want robots telling our clients what to do. But we do want to continue adding services and value, and AI here and there can help us achieve this. More to come!

Economy, Markets, and Investments

Looking ahead at the economy, per Ned Davis Research, "After a volatile year marked by major policy shifts in tariffs, taxes, and immigration, the U.S. economy continued to adjust heading into year end. Our base case for 2026 remains for real GDP growth of 1.75% to 2.25%, below potential but consistent with continued expansion. Despite data disruptions from the government shutdown, private indicators suggest recession risks remain low. December data reinforce a mixed but resilient late Q4 picture." Tariffs, immigration, and geopolitics will continue to influence the direction.

Another nice year in the stock markets, and a solid – and much needed – year for bonds. The recent uptrend in stocks, which began with the launch of ChatGPT in October 2022, has produced three consecutive years of double-digit stock returns. However, the future may bring about a different story.

Global measures of the stock (MSCI ACWI All Cap Index) and bond (Barclays Global Aggregate Index) markets may look very different in the next 5-10 years than the past 5. The 5-year average in stocks was an impressive 10.7%, while bonds were a negative 2.1% (driven mostly by a horrific 2022). Going forward, looking at "capital market assumptions" (return predictions for various asset classes, and in our case, from Ned Davis Research) we could be in line for much less in stocks, but much more in bonds relative to the past few years. As such, we think 2026 is a good year for individuals to re-visit their long-term target allocation, with potential adjustments based on tolerance, age, and/or goals. Prior to annual review meetings (or over the summer) expect to receive a "Risk Tolerance Questionnaire" via email. We'd like to re-boot and gather more intel from clients on their current thoughts on risk.

At our January Investment Committee Meeting we approved a series of changes in various investment models. On the stock side, we're continuing to invest slightly more defensive (more "value" stocks, less "growth"; more dividend payers; managers with good track records during down years). Several active mutual fund managers significantly outperformed last year, while several underperformed. We're looking to cut exposure per manager to protect against the severe underperformance possibility. On the bond side, we reduced our allocation to short-term bonds, as the likely path forward for interest rates is a continuation of where they are currently, or lower.

As always, any questions pertaining to our current views or current positioning, please feel free to reach out and ask!



**Steffanie Lerch ,
CFP®, RICP®
Partner, Senior Wealth
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Mullica Hill—The Long-Awaited Move!

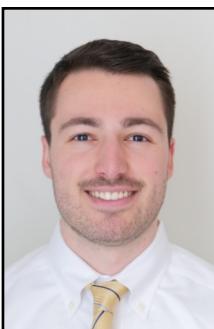
You may have seen and read the announcement – we have officially moved our office to Mullica Hill! The last 17 months have been challenging, to say the least from a building perspective. Beginning with officially owning the property in August 2024 (with a projected April 2025 move in date), to a fire in part of the building in February 2025, to renovations not picking back up until September 2025, it has been a long road that sometimes felt like it would never get here. A lot has also happened in those 17 months from a business perspective, where we celebrated promotions and prepared for expanding services by adding a CPA to our team – all things that make this official move even sweeter.

Here we sit today officially moved in! Over the past few weeks we set up offices, conference rooms, internet and cable, etc. Though we still have some “finishing touches” to add, the new office is now functional. And with a hefty snowstorm during official moving week, I am proud of how we all navigated around that, having our first client meeting 2 days after the snowstorm. Meetings are well under way and with two spacious conference rooms, we are happy to welcome all of our clients to the new office.

As the only employee (at this time) that lives in Mullica Hill, it is exciting to plant EWS roots here knowing the community-centric, business-friendly and family-focused ideology that this town represents. With that, we are eager to develop relationships within this town that will further enhance our presence and involvement in the community. We are also in the beginning stages of mapping out potential client-interactive events throughout this year, so definitely stay tuned to future newsletters and announcements.

For anyone that has been through Mullica Hill, our office sits conveniently on Bridgeton Pike (Route 77) in between Warren's Hardware Store/Harrison Township Municipal Building and the entrance to Harbaugh Village/Ella Harris Park. Across the street is the Mullica Hill post office, Shoprite and McDonald's. These are all great landmarks to look for when visiting our office. We look forward to seeing everyone and if you are ever in the area and want to stop by, please don't hesitate – **welcome to the new EWS!**





Meet Matt Persichetti, CPA

Hi, my name is Matt Persichetti. I am a CPA, practicing tax in various forms for 5 years since graduating from St. Joseph's University. After starting out at PwC (a Big 4 accounting firm), I am stepping into a specialized individual tax role. I have wanted to work directly with clients and help to plan for their future in ways that minimize tax implications as well as maximize their financial potential. Working directly with clients is a passion of mine which will come to realization at Aerie Tax and Advisory.

Matthew Persichetti, CPA

**Director of Tax
& Accounting**

I am looking forward to working with clients and seeing them face to face as we tackle complex life issues together through a tax lens. In an industry that continues to stay stale, I pride myself on being on the cutting edge of changing tax legislation, an ever-upgrading world of technology, and the specific world in which clients live their day to day.

Aerie Tax and Advisory is an affiliated entity with Eagle Wealth Strategies through common ownership. As an employee of Eagle Wealth Strategies, I will be on secondment or "lended" to Aerie to complete tax return preparation and advisory services. So, while two distinct entities, what clients get at Eagle Wealth Strategies in terms of hospitality and responsiveness, clients can also expect from Aerie Tax and Advisory.



At Aerie Tax and Advisory, that is exactly what we are looking to do. Combine the financial planning with tax planning and return preparation to seamlessly keep clients up to date, well-informed, and secure in their financial outlook. As the tax and accounting industry continues to grow, being able to keep tax return preparation and planning under the same roof as the financial planning will go a long way to create a sense of ease for clients. We want to make client's financial outlook as simple and straightforward as possible while also offering clients competitive return preparation pricing. Aerie Tax and Advisory will also break the stigma that return preparation services are extremely expensive.

Clients can look forward to faster communication, planning, strategy, and more seamless and effectiveness in terms of planning for the future. My goal is for clients to have a positive experience and have a feeling of ease when it comes to their finances.

Tax Year 2025 Notes:

Clients will start to receive their tax forms in the coming weeks. Keep a look out in the mail or through online portals for W-2s, 1099s, 1098s or any other forms that may be relevant. Typically, forms are issued by the end of January and into February and early March.

Raymond James issues retirement account forms such as 1099-R or 1099-Q by January 31st of each year. Other original 1099s from Raymond James for securities with lesser complexities are issued around February 15th. By the end of the month of February, any delayed 1099s and amended forms as needed are issued. Final mailings are issued by March 15th, these include more complex investments.

Clients should keep an eye on their mailbox at this time of year to safely and securely collect mailed tax statements. If any issues arise, the issuing institution can and will amend or reissue upon request. Most forms are available via online portal as well. Typically, whether it is through the web portal or a phone app, there is a section to access forms which institutions issue.

All of these forms are very important to the successful tax return filing season. Whether client's file with a W-2, 1099s, or any combination of the multiple tax forms, completeness is always at the forefront of preparers minds.



Ryan Miller
Wealth Advisor

New for 2026

Happy New Year! With each new year comes new limits and thresholds for a variety of tax and planning areas:

- You can now save more in your retirement accounts. The maximum you can contribute to an employer-sponsored retirement plan in 2026 is \$24,500 per year, or \$32,500 if you're 50 or older, and "SUPER CATCH UP" of \$35,750 if ages 60-63.
- If your goal is to max out your contributions, remember to review and update your deferral elections with your employer.
- The SIMPLE IRA contribution limit will be increasing to \$17,000, if you're 50 or older \$21,000, and "SUPER CATCH UP" ages 60-63 of \$22,250.
- If your goal is to max out your contributions, remember to review and update your deferral elections with your employer.
- The maximum IRA contribution will also be increasing to \$7,500, or \$8,600 if you're 50 or older.
- The annual gifting limit will remain \$19,000 per year per individual.
- Social Security benefits are getting a 2.8% raise while Medicare Part B premiums are increasing by \$17.90 per month. The standard Part B premium will be \$202.90 for 2026.
- If you are working in 2026 but will not reach Full Retirement Age for Social Security this year, you can now earn \$24,480 without your benefits being impacted.
- The standard deduction will increase by \$2,300 for married couples filing jointly, going up to \$31,500. For single filers and married individuals filing separately, the increase will be \$1,150, going up to \$15,750.

2025 IRA Contribution Deadline

If you have not contributed to your IRA for 2025, you can still make contributions until Wednesday, April 15, 2026. You'll want to be sure your contribution is reflected on your 2025 tax returns if you're making a deductible IRA contribution in 2026 for 2025, so while the deadline for the deposit is April 15, you'll want to coordinate it with filing your tax return as well.



News at EWS

Chris' son, Meyer, turned 6 months old already! We hope to extend a summer internship to this young man very soon. His new favorite toy from his "Aunt" Steffanie is a light up musical computer keyboard, so he's already honing his office skills. Other hobbies include chewing just about everything he gets his adorable little hands on.



Ryan, David, and his wife Kim represented EWS again this year at the Cathedral Kitchen's annual Harvest for Hunger event, which brings awareness and funding to local individuals and families facing food insecurity.



News at EWS (continued)

David's family kept busy these last few months with some winter fun, including multiple trips to see Santa (he does visit many locations, you know!), a trip to the aquarium, and a chilly but fun snow day.



Please remember to update your records with our new address:

118 Bridgeton Pike, Mullica Hill, NJ 08062



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AN INDEPENDENT FIRM



Frank Febbo, CAP®

Client Service Associate

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