

Re-Org 2018

Thank you. I hope everyone had a Happy Holiday Season and I wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Thank you to the Reverend Ed Carll for joining us today and providing the invocation and Boy Scout Troop 17 for supplying the Color Guard for tonight's ceremony. Thank you to Steven Ward, Kathy Bowditch, and Danielle Lewis for making sure everything is just right for tonight's Ceremony.

I would like to offer my congratulation to returning Councilman and our new Council President Doug Gabel along with our newly elected Councilmen Brian Bergen, Glenn Buie and Gary Borowiec. I am confident that you will all serve the people of Denville well.

And a very sincere thank you to our recently retired Councilmen Chris Golinski, Gene Fitzpatrick and Don Kuser for their eight years of dedicated services to our community and thank you for staying involved as volunteers.

The cardinal points of this administration has always been proactive future flood mitigation, downtown economic development, upgrading our infrastructure, improving our efficiencies all while running the Township in the most cost effective manner possible. As was the case in 2016, last year also saw much of your municipal officials' attention and efforts being focused on and defending our municipality in the courts as it relates to our future fair share affordable housing obligation. The following is a recap of some of our past accomplishments and future goals.

In 2012 and 2014, my Administration proposed and the Township Council funded two flood mitigation studies which were performed by our Township Engineer John Ruschke. The studies were aimed at identifying projects that were either locally achievable or ones for which we would need to seek outside funding to accomplish. In late 2014, the Township submitted these two flood mitigation studies to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for their review.

In 2016, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers reviewed our studies and agreed to perform a more in-depth flood mitigation examination for Denville. Partnering with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, we received formal notification in October 2016 that the US Army Corps of Engineers has agreed to fund an in-depth, comprehensive \$1,259,950 flood mitigation feasibility study for the Township of Denville.

The Army Corp' has been proceeding forward with the study and should advise us of plans in early Spring, with a public review including input on their finding this fall. The goal is to finalize the project in early 2019.

Once completed, a determination will be made as to whether the plan has merit. If it does, our project will be in an excellent position to receive up to \$10 million in pre-approved Federal and State flood mitigation project grant funds. This is a very exciting proposition and places the Township in a great position to have the federal

government potentially fund some of the most comprehensive flood mitigation improvements in the history of our community.

During the past six years, the Township of Denville has undertaken numerous projects that were locally affordable and achievable in order to prepare and protect our community from flooding events. These projects included the installations of water-proof seals on sewer manhole covers in flood-prone areas; installing state-of-the-art flap valves on the Den Brook; acquiring 11 homes on Riverside Drive with grant funding; removing two of the three piers in the Rockaway River to eliminate the “bottlenecking” effect; and obtaining grant funding to perform de-siltation at select locations in the Rockaway River to increase the river’s capacity. As a result of our activities and accomplishments, the Township has achieved a FEMA CRS rating of 6, which qualifies all property owners in Denville that are required to have flood insurance for an automatic 20% discount.

Of course, none of these measures will stop flooding if Mother Nature sends extremely heavy rains; however, each measure will help to prevent flooding in lesser storms and reduce the level of flooding. A belief I hold dear and that I often convey when discussing flood mitigation to residents or our professionals is that one of the lessons Hurricane Irene taught us is 1 inch of water can make the difference on whether or not a home is lost.

I would like to thank the River & Streams Committee for their stewardship of our rivers and the hundreds of volunteers who come out to the annual clean ups.

I also thank the people from the Hewettson Road neighborhood, who have made a real effort in cleaning up the wetlands in their neighborhood. All your efforts make a difference.

In 2016, we commenced our downtown streetscape project. A Federal Grant of \$821,000 allowed us to construct new curbs, add a brick utility corridor and to install decorative lamp posts along Broadway. Although the contractor performed a clean and neat job their where many issue that took almost a year to address. Most every pole was out of line and did not have water proof electrical connectors. Since it was not what we ordered, we simply did not pay for it until we were made completely satisfied. The poles were replaced in October 2017 and once completed Bob Ott and John Ciardi returned the music to Broadway with the state of the art sound system. A goal for 2018 is to put the old sound system on Diamond Spring Road.

We are delighted to report the Township received a \$615,000 Federal Government grant for Phase III of the downtown streetscape improvements, which will encompass First Avenue and the First Avenue parking lot. The project which will be identical to the improvements on Broadway will be for new curbs, a four foot wide brick utility strip and period lighting. This will hopefully be performed in late-2018. New trees were already planted in the new pattern and upgrades will be made to the parking lot.

It is my goal to continue the streetscape project throughout the entire Downtown to include Diamond Spring Road, East and West Main Street, Bloomfield Avenue, Center Street, Second Avenue and Righter Avenue.

In 2016, the Economic Development Committee and a Committee comprised primarily of Downtown Business leaders, proposed to the Administration forming a Business Improvement District. The Town Council passed an ordinance establishing a Downtown Business Improvement District, creating a Board of Directors and a funding mechanism to manage the District. In July, the Board hired Ryan Gleason as their Executor Director and in November elected their first full Board of Directors. Tomorrow morning at 9AM, the BID will hold their re-organization meeting where their new officers will be sworn in.

This is a very exciting opportunity for our downtown and the BID will give our downtown the chance to rise to the next level while retaining its charm and appeal. If our downtown does not continue to evolve, it may lose its competitiveness to other area downtowns or shopping centers.

Another goal of mine has been to maximize the potential of the municipal building while also benefiting the taxpayers of the Township. In 2012, I offered underutilized space in the Town Hall to the Denville Board of Education. As you may know, the Board of Education has been leasing office space for its staff. In late-2015 we had reopened discussions with the Denville School Superintendent, Steven Forte, to potentially offer them a permanent home for all or part of the Board of Education staff. A viable plan was developed to reconfigure some underutilized space in the Construction Department with the ultimate goal of saving the taxpayers of our community money by eliminating the Board of Education's need to pay rent. This is a win/win situation for all concerned, including the Township and the Board of Education, but most importantly the citizens who pay the taxes to both Denville entities. Construction on the renovations began today and the BOE should be moved into their permanent home by mid-2018.

Each of the last two years the Town Council allocated over \$720,000 in the Budget to pave the roads. This is nearly 50% more than appropriated for paving in an average year. We plan to submit for the Township Council's consideration a similar level of paving for 2018. It has been our goal to get ahead of our road maintenance and we are nearing the point that we will be instituting more crack sealing and micro paving in our plans. Collapsed catch basins have been a priority of this administration and I am glad to report that the collapsed catch basins total as we entered the winter season is in the single digits.

Our Paths and Trails Committee has made significant headway creating a path system throughout Denville. In 2017 the Town Council allocated the funding to hire a consulting firm to create a Master Trail Plan. There is a Community outreach meeting planned for next Monday and Tuesday nights at 7PM in the Community Room for anyone who is interested.

Although the Township was successful in being awarded a County grant of \$49,500 to replace the foot bridge at Muriel Hepner Park, finding a design and a contractor in our price range has been challenging. I will be making a recommendation to the Town Council on how to proceed in the next few weeks as the bridge is at the end of its useful life and we need to use the grant funding before the end of August 2018.

When the Township received the County Open Space grant of \$425,000 for the Valva tract off Michael Street, it was with the stipulation that the Township would install a small pocket park. Last summer, a small area on the parcel was cleared and is in the process of being leveled. In the last two weeks playground equipment has been purchased and we anticipate it will be installed in early-spring.

The PAL Project Playground 2.0 Committee is planning to replace the 20 year old playground at Gardner Field. Under the leadership of Don Casse and PAL Director Jeff Tucker, they have done a wonderful job organizing community fund raising events over the last year and a half. As of January 1st, they've raised over \$155,000 of their \$250,000 goal. The construction will take place the weekend of Sept 22nd and 23rd and it will be the place to be in Denville that weekend. The construction of the playground equipment will be done in an Amish Barn raising style by volunteers. I encourage everyone of every skill level to get involved as it will be a very enjoyable and memorable weekend.

In November 2017, the Township received notification that it has become one of only 47 Silver Certified Communities thru the Sustainable New Jersey Program. This is an upgrade from our bronze certification we had previously held. This achievement was attained thru the tireless efforts of Denville's Green Team, lead by Don Tidey and makes Denville eligible for grants offered by the State of New Jersey.

In 2018, the Township will continue to recognize our Denville Veterans and Active Military Personal either at Town Council Meetings or in a private setting. Furthermore, we look forward to a spring dedication of the courtyard in front of the Council Chambers as the "Jack O'Keefe Plaza," who was a former Mayor, Freeholder and WWII veteran.

For nearly two years, the Township of Denville has been engaged in a legal Declaratory Judgment Action in which the NJ Superior Court will ultimately determine our community's affordable housing obligation for the period between 2015 and 2025. The Township has been historically proactive in the requirement for developers to build inclusionary affordable housing and we enter this current round with a slight surplus of affordable housing credits.

The situation is in no way unique to Denville as municipalities all across the state of New Jersey are faced with the following conundrum:

The Supreme Court has ruled that each municipality has a constitutional obligation to provide for affordable housing; however, the State of New Jersey has failed to create regulations or firm unit targets for municipalities to follow to achieve such said obligation.

The conundrum is made worse by the threat of builder's remedy lawsuits in which the Township will be potentially subject to even higher density developments and lose complete control of the planning process if we simply do nothing. Several other local municipalities have been subject to builder's remedy lawsuits with extremely detrimental consequences. You will be seeing the effects of their problems in the near future.

In order to protect the Township and maintain our immunity from the builder's remedy lawsuit, Denville Township's seasoned and talented professionals and officials will continue to work in good faith with the courts and the developers who are party to the court action. We will continue to utilize scientifically based smart growth principals in our planning calculations for these prospective developments while continuing to fight in court to ensure and our ultimate obligation in both units and in bedrooms are as low as possible and built in reasonable locations so as to have the least impact within our community.

In December, the Town Council heard the update revisions of the Station Village and approved settlement agreements with Glenmont Commons and Toll Brothers. These projects, combined with our existing credits will maintain our immunity from the "builders remedy" lawsuits. An Ordinance to change the zoning for Station Village, a 59 unit - 1- and 2- bedroom development, which is also part of the affordable housing plan we submitted to the courts, will put before the Council in the near future. The settlement agreement approved for Glenmont Commons and Toll Brothers is awaiting a date before the judge for a public fairness hearing.

Now that we have been able to present to the court our base line 112 unit plan, it is our plan to reach a settlement with the Court at a affordable housing number that is somewhat less than the Special Master number that we can live with that will not be detrimental to the character of our community.

Please make no mistake about this Administration's position on Affordable Housing.

- **As Elected Official we took an oath of office to uphold the Constitution of the State of NJ. Affordable housing has been deemed to be the law.**
- **We have a social obligation to help the people with disadvantage and special needs of society.**
- **The number of units being suggested by our adversaries in the court is outrageous.**
- **No neighborhood should be overburdened and all need to share in accommodating the obligation.**
- **This administration is committed to keeping the total number of units and total number of bedrooms in those units as low as possible.**

- Senior housing and group homes are our preference and we will always attempt to maximize our credits to the cap.
- We will seek to ensure the affordable and market rate units are integrated as much as possible so no one can be identified by their address.
- We will take advantage of rental unit bonuses, if and when appropriate.
- We will look for creative ways to upgrade neighborhoods.
- We will continue to advocate for the return of the Regional Contribution Agreements or RCAs that we had historically been able to take full advantage of.
- As part of our future plans we will continue to aggressively secure grant money to purchase open space to reduce available developable land in our community.
- We will also be working on creative strategies and constantly thinking ahead as we recognize there will be another round of affordable housing obligations starting in 2025.

As frustrating and as maddening as this process has been, and for all the people that have come out to speak against the horrors of what the builders are doing to our community, we agree with you on so many levels. Our decisions to date have been based on protecting our community from even larger and higher density development as municipalities simply don't win builders remedy lawsuits.

However, also please know that on a regular basis there are single Moms, a recent widow with 2 kids, senior citizens, a parent of a special needs adult and young college graduates just starting their careers asking me for help finding a place to live in their home town, Denville. Many of these individuals, who are our neighbors now, meet the income levels to qualify for affordable housing and deserve the ability to remain in the community they love.

There is little question that the System in Trenton has let us down hopefully our new Governor and legislature will set new criteria and guidelines going forward that are more reasonable, clear and concise.

This Administration has continued to present fiscally responsible budgets, which the Township Council has adopted after making thoughtful modifications. These budgets have ensured future long-term stability for the Township while still enabling us to maintain the current high level of municipal services you have come to expect.

In 2016 and 2017 the Administration proposed and the Council adopted a budget that included a more aggressive pay down of our outstanding debt obligation, a greater cash contribution towards capital improvements including road resurfacing along with no reduction of municipal services to our residents. This was done while maintaining a stable tax rate for the average assessed property owner. In 2018, we plan to continue with the same budgetary philosophy.

In September 2017, our financial management efforts were rewarded when Moody's conferred an Aa1 bond rating on Denville, the second highest rating a municipality can achieve. Such a rating ensures Denville is obtaining the very best interest rates on the market.

In 2011, during Hurricane Irene our Valley View Firehouse was severely damaged to the point the facility was rendered unsafe and unusable. The Town Council allocated the necessary \$1.1 Million in funds to fill in the crew room in the basement and rebuild a new crew room with a new larger front garage doors for future growth of equipment.

Our OEM Director Wesley Sharples has submitted the reimbursement paper work for the Valley View Fire House to FEMA. Although our application was rejected twice, thru the hard work and persistence of our team by taking advantage of the FEMA appeal process, we were notified just last month that we would be receiving \$369,000 towards the replacement of the Valley view Firehouse.

Denville is one of the most fiscally sound municipalities in Morris County, perhaps the entire State. We have the third lowest debt ratio in the County and we have done this by following conservative financial management practices. This Administration has presented and will continue to present sound budgets to the Town Council, which ensure future long-term stability for the Township while still enabling us to maintain the current high level of municipal services, you have come to expect as well as, providing for many of the projects to be effectively implemented and completed.

At the conclusion of my address I will ask the Council to give advice and consent of the Mayoral and Administrative appointments. The team we have assembled is up to the task of completing these projects, while keeping our tax rate low and remaining financially prudent.

Our Administrator Steven Ward has continued to show the ability to find saving, increase efficiencies and attract good people to Denville. Mike Guarino, our CFO, has time and time again demonstrated his strong knowledge and conservative approach to municipal financial management. Our Township Engineer, John Ruschke has proven his ability to be creative, be frugal and get the project completed. Our Planner, Jason Kasler has demonstrated the ability to comprehend the complex issues of COAH. And although this is not my appointment I whole heartedly support your resolution to re-appoint Kathy Bowditch-Leon as our Township Clerk , in just a few short years Kathy has proven to be a dedicated professional and has taken great strides to advance the technology in our Clerk's office.

I am pleased to re-appoint our Municipal Attorney John Jansen who will head up our legal team with Paula DeBona, COAH, Fred Semrau, Tax Appeals & Litigation, Matt Giacobbe, Labor Counsel, Municipal Judge Jerry Smith, Municipal Prosecutor Jim LaSala, and Public Defender Cliff Weininger.

And, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our many volunteers for their hard work and dedication to our community. It is their commitment that enables us to provide services that we otherwise might not be able to afford.

We are very fortunate to have great people working together that continue to make Denville the finest place to live, work, raise a family and retire. Thank you and may God continue to send his blessings to the people of Denville and may God bless the United States of America.