

WANAQUE MAYOR'S 2014 NEW YEARS ADDRESS

Good evening and Happy New Year. Welcome to the annual reorganization meeting of the Wanaque Mayor and Council.

I would like to start by thanking Judge Joseph Perconti for taking time out of his busy schedule to attend our meeting tonight to swear in our Councilmen. I would also like to thank our new Assemblyman Robert Auth for attending tonight. Bob will be sworn to the State Assembly next week in Trenton. Later this month Bob will be opening his 39th District Legislative Office right here in Wanaque at the Haskell Town Center Building. We look forward to working very closely with Bob, Assemblywoman Schepisi and Senator Cardinale.

I would like to congratulate both Councilman Dominick Cortellessa and Councilman Ed Leonard on their re-election to the Council. Both Councilmen Cortellessa and Leonard worked very hard and

were integral members of our team over the past three years. We look forward to their continued commitment to our citizens.

For the past two years I spoke of our vision to construct a new municipal building to replace the current 111 year old structure in need of major repairs. The architectural work was completed in 2012, the bid specifications were prepared in early 2013, bids were received in May, the contract was awarded in June, the groundbreaking was in late July and construction began shortly thereafter. Presently, the foundation work is completed and the contractor will continue to work through the winter, weather permitting. The construction is on schedule and the target date for the completion of construction is mid-October 2014. Upon completion, the police and municipal offices will be moved into the new building and the old building will be razed and converted into a parking lot.

In November 2013, Phase III of the Ringwood Avenue reconstruction project was finally completed. This was a joint project with Passaic County that included new sidewalks and curbs, road resurfacing and a new water main from Father Hayes Drive north to the Ringwood border. This project took several years to complete and it resulted in some inconveniences to our residents, but the end result is a big improvement in the overall appearance of Ringwood Avenue.

The candle factory redevelopment project which was renamed “Parkside at Wanaque”, is now in full construction mode. The project consisting of 88 units sold out very quickly. Approximately one fourth of the units closed in 2013 and are now occupied. The balance will be closed in 2014. We welcome these new residents to our town. This project is a significant tax ratable for us. The developer also paid to reconstruct the tennis courts at Back Beach Park, saving the Borough over \$200,000. This developer is now

looking to do a similar project at the former US Aluminum site on Fourth Avenue.

Recent improvements to our infrastructure include the resurfacing of several streets including Conklintown Road from Chestnut Street to Ramapo Mountain Drive, Garbarino Avenue, McKinnon Place, the northern portion of Crescent Road and a portion of Fourth Avenue. The Conklintown Road resurfacing was a joint project with Ringwood whereby each town paid for their portion of the road that was paved. In addition, we entered into an interlocal agreement with Ringwood to use Ringwood's in-house engineer for all paving and a co-operative pricing group to contract for the paving, which resulted in significant cost savings.

In 2013, construction began to replace the 80 year old sewer lines and connections on Monroe Street, Jackson Street and Jefferson Street. This project is partially funded by a \$250,000 grant obtained from the Passaic County Community Development Block Grant

program and should be completed in 2014. We are now applying for additional grants to upgrade the water mains on these streets which are over 90 years old. These grants will allow us to upgrade the water system with little cost to our ratepayers.

We have applied for a grant from the New Jersey Department of Transportation for the reconstruction of Fifth Avenue in Haskell in 2014. Additional streets will be paved as part of our ongoing repaving program. In addition, we have been notified by Passaic County that they will be repaving Ringwood Avenue from the Route 287 interchange approximately one quarter mile north to Argyle Street during 2014. The infrastructure in this area was last updated approximately 12 years ago and does not have to be replaced. The County estimates that the milling and paving of this area will take about two weeks.

In 2013 we received a \$235,000 grant for the reconstruction of Westbrook Road from Ringwood Avenue to the bridge. The

roadway is deteriorating and needs to be reconstructed. The bridge over the reservoir is being reconstructed by Passaic County. These projects will begin in 2014.

In 2013 we received a \$70,000 grant from the federal government to install emergency generators at the Midvale and Haskell firehouses and at the First aid Squad Building. These generators are expected to be installed during 2014.

The Wanaque “Welcome Park and 9-11 Memorial” near the intersection of Ringwood and Union Avenues is in its final phase of construction and should be completed in the spring. The property is owned by the NJ Department of Transportation and is leased to the Borough for \$1 a year. However, the process of establishing a cross easement between the NJ DOT and the owner of the Dunkin Donuts strip mall who is constructing the parking spaces and sidewalks took much longer than anticipated.

In May 2013, we dedicated Theoharous Park on Conklintown Road in honor of former Councilman George Theoharous who passed away suddenly in March 2012. At the time of his death, Councilman Theoharous was serving in his 28th consecutive year on the Town Council. George was the longest continuously serving Councilman in the 95 year history of Wanaque.

In November 2013, we honorably named the portion of Conklintown Road between Ringwood Avenue and Chestnut Street as “Bill Van Wilpe Way” in honor of Bill Van Wilpe, a lifetime Wanaque resident and World War II veteran who was honored by the US Navy for his heroics during the war. Bill also worked for over 35 years at Lakeland High School and maintained the Midvale Cemetery which are both located along this section of Conklintown Road.

Discussions are continuing with the United Way of Bergen County and the New Jersey Highlands Council regarding the proposed

special needs housing on Warren Hagstrom Boulevard. Wanaque's Highlands Conformance Plan was approved by the Mayor and Council and submitted to the New Jersey Highlands Council in late 2012. This project cannot proceed any further until the Highlands Conformance Plan is formally approved by the New Jersey Highlands Council.

During 2013, we reached an understanding with Tilcon regarding an alternate access to their Pompton Lakes quarry through Susquehanna Avenue which connects to Union Avenue by the Burger King. Under the proposal, Tilcon will relocate the Elks Camp Moore to West Milford and build a connecting road through the former camp to Union Avenue. Currently, trucks leaving the Tilcon facility travel through residential streets in Pompton Lakes before taking Ringwood Avenue to Route 287. Trucks leaving the Tilcon quarry are currently restricted by the Borough of Pompton Lakes to the hours between 7AM and 6PM. Tilcon wishes to begin operations earlier in the day and they want to bid night time

construction and paving contracts. Under the proposed terms, Tilcon will be responsible for a traffic study of the impact of this change. Tilcon will also be responsible for the subsequent construction of the roadway, the relocation of the Elks Camp, a traffic light system at the intersections of Susquehanna and Greenwood Avenues with Union Avenue and all State and County approvals. The Borough of Wanaque will receive an annual licensing fee from Tilcon of \$250,000 per year for 2014 through 2017 and then \$150,000 per year through 2053. Thereafter the fee will be \$150,000 per year until quarrying activities cease. The guaranteed fees through 2053 total to \$6,400,000. Tilcon has estimated the future life of the Pompton Lakes quarry to be between 60 and 80 years. This would result in future fees to the Borough of Wanaque totaling between \$9 Million and \$12 Million. In addition, Tilcon will purchase for fair market value approximately 12 vacant lots in the vicinity of Susquehanna Avenue which are currently owned by the Borough of Wanaque. These lots were acquired over many years through abandonment and tax foreclosures. Their selling price will be

determined by an independent appraiser. These properties plus the land consisting of the Elks Camp will then be added to the tax rolls on which Tilcon will pay property taxes. The fees generated by this agreement will be used to pay a significant portion of the cost of the new town hall.

I have been approached by several residents who were concerned about increased truck traffic in the Route 287 interchange during rush hours and truck traffic going up Ringwood Avenue. Tilcon has represented to us that well more than 50% of their truck traffic currently utilizes the Route 287 interchange at Ringwood Avenue. Tilcon contends that by starting earlier at 6AM, their trucks would be on their way and onto Route 287 before the morning rush hour resulting in little or no impact. With regard to the evening rush hour, the quarry generally does not send out trucks after 4 PM, so there should be no impact. For nighttime construction projects trucks would generally not be leaving the quarry before 10 PM. Tilcon has further represented that the only trucks from the Tilcon quarry that

currently travel north on Ringwood Avenue through Wanaque are trucks making local deliveries to Wanaque, Ringwood or the eastern portion of West Milford. Tilcon estimates that this is now a very small number of vehicles since there is limited construction north of Haskell due to restrictions imposed by the Highlands Act. As a result, they feel that there would be no increase in traffic. What I reminded these residents is that most of the tandem dump truck traffic that they currently see on Ringwood Avenue is trucks going to and coming from the quarry located on Westbrook Road in Ringwood, which is not owned by Tilcon.

We continue to work very diligently with the property owners and developers of the two Redevelopment zones on Union Avenue. The process is moving slower than anticipated but we expect positive announcements regarding these properties to be made in 2014.

During 2013, Police Chief Jack Reno retired after 35 years in our Police Department, the last 18 years as Chief. We wish Jack the best

in retirement. Chief Reno was succeeded by Chief Thomas Norton. In December, the Council ratified a proposal by Chief Norton for changes in the structure and operations of the police department necessitated by past and anticipated future retirements. The plan eliminated a lieutenant position, added a part time administrative assistant and allows for the hiring on an additional police officer. Two new police officers were hired in 2013 to replace recently retired officers and we anticipate hiring two additional police officers in 2014, one of which will be to replace an officer retiring in 2014.

During 2013, the Council combined the DPW, water and sewer employees under one supervisor and one department. This enables the borough employees to be cross trained to make for a more efficient department.

We are currently working to prepare our 2014 budget. We once again anticipate being within the 2% CAP. Unfortunately, increases

in pension and health benefit costs which are outside the CAP have continued.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Borough Council, our Administrator Tom Carroll, our Borough Clerk Kathy Falone, Chief Norton, our Borough Attorney Tony Fiorello, our police department and all of our Borough employees. I am confident that we will continue to move forward as we continue to improve our community.

I would like to conclude by thanking my wife, Marie and my family for their continued support.

Thank you and God Bless America.