

## MAYOR'S 2012 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 Congressman Scott Garrett for taking time out his busy schedule to attend our meeting and to swear in our elected officials. I was disappointed when the congressional redistricting committee announced that Wanaque is being moved out of Congressman Garrett's 5<sup>th</sup> District after 2012. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Congressman Garrett for all he has done for Wanaque over the past 9 years.

Also in our audience tonight is Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen who will be our new congressman in the 11<sup>th</sup> district beginning in 2013. We thank you for coming tonight and we look forward to working with you in the future.

I would like to congratulate both Don Pasquariello and Rob Pettet on their re-election to the Council. Don is starting his 14<sup>th</sup> year on the Council and Rob is starting his 8<sup>th</sup> year on the Council. Both of these Councilmen have continued to work hard for our residents and are both integral parts of our team and I welcome you both back for another three years.

As I begin my Sixth year as your Mayor and my 20<sup>th</sup> year on the Council, I would like to take this opportunity to review the status of some of the development and infrastructure projects completed in 2011 and expected to occur in 2012.

Recent improvements to our infrastructure in 2011 included several street reconstructions which were primarily funded with state grants. These included Furnace Avenue, Melrose Avenue, Wanaque Avenue and Butler Place. We also utilized a Community Development grant to upgrade the drainage on Second Avenue. During 2011, we were able to reinstate our annual road resurfacing program which had been suspended due to budget restrictions. Under this program we provided for the repaving of streets which did not qualify for state funding. Roads repaved in 2011 under this program included Townsend Road, Burnside Place, Second Avenue, Hillside Road, Edgar Place, and Dupont Avenue. We also repaved the First Aid Squad parking lot. We intend to continue the road resurfacing program in 2012.

The Ringwood Avenue reconstruction Phase III, which is a joint project with Passaic County, and includes new sidewalks and curbs, road resurfacing and a new water main from Father Hayes Drive north to the Ringwood border was originally scheduled to begin in June 2011. Due to a delay in the bidding process at the County level, the project did not begin until September. The revised plan was to have the water main completed up to the Wanaque River in 2011. However, the water main failed the pressure tests, meaning that there were leaks. The contractor spent over a month attempting to locate the leaks, but was unsuccessful and had to cease operations for the winter. The contractor is scheduled to start up again in April. We will take a hard line to make sure the water line is installed properly. We will not accept anything less than 100%, even if it means making the contractor replace the newly installed pipe. The road reconstruction along with new curbs and sidewalks will

start once the water line is completed. This will be done in sections. From April through November 2012, travel on Ringwood Avenue is not going to be easy. There is limited ability to detour traffic and we will work with the contractor to help minimize the inconvenience to our residents.

Another carryover project is the revaluation. We had hoped to have the revaluation completed in 2011. However, problems converting our tax maps and getting timely approval from Trenton to proceed have delayed the revaluation to 2012. I have been assured by our Tax Assessor that all of the required adjustments have been made, and with the filing of the 2012 tax book we will get state approval to move forward. The revaluation company is ready to start. The goal is to have the entire process completed by the end of June.

The last building at the Wanaque Reserve is almost completed and units are currently being sold. The building should be ready for occupancy within a few months.

In 2010, we obtained federal grants to refurbish the facades on the storefronts on the east side of Ringwood Avenue between Second Avenue and Third Avenue in Haskell. The project was bid in 2011 with only one bid received which was below the expected cost. However, the bid was rejected by the federal government because there was only one bidder. We were subsequently able to convince the federal government to accept the single bid. This project is now scheduled to begin in the Spring.

The candle factory redevelopment project is back before the Planning Board. The litigation between the various lenders has been resolved and, after foreclosure proceedings were completed,

M&T Bank has emerged as the new owner of the property. This project was originally 114 age restricted units (55 and older). Legislation signed by former Governor Corzine before he left office provides for the conversion of the project to market rate units. The offset is that the number of units is expected to be reduced to approximately 88 two bedroom units.

For the past few years we have been discussing the need for a new municipal building. We looked at the former US Aluminum site in Haskell and the former Rhinesmith School site and adjacent properties in Midvale. Both sites involved land acquisition costs between \$1,500,000 to \$2,000,000 before the cost of the building. The Candle Factory redevelopment project was to provide the funding to pay for the new town hall. When this project went into bankruptcy, the new town hall was put on hold. Now that the Candle Factory redevelopment project is back on the horizon, so is the new town hall. However, the anticipated revenues to be generated from the revised redevelopment project are now lower by approximately 25%. To compensate for this the concept for the new town hall has been modified. The revised concept is to raze the current town hall and to construct a new building on the current site, thus eliminating the land acquisition costs. As a result, we may have to temporarily relocate the municipal offices during construction. Several options are being considered. The plan is to complete the design phase during 2012 and begin demolition in late 2012 or early 2013. Construction would begin in early 2013 with an anticipated completion date in late 2013.

I have been asked by many residents, why do we need a new town hall now? Why spend the money now? Why can't we use the revenues from the Candle Factory redevelopment project to lower taxes? The bottom line answer is that our current municipal building has serious issues. The building is 109 years old. It was originally constructed as a recreation center and later converted to municipal offices. It was last renovated in 1978. It is a wood frame building with little or no insulation. The roof was re-shingled over 15 years ago and it now leaks every time it rains. The roof needs a full replacement of both shingles and sheathing. The building and its stairways, small hallways, restrooms and other public access areas do not conform to numerous federal and state mandates, including the Americans with Disabilities Act. The heating and air condition systems are antiquated and inefficient. There is one restroom for women and one for men which are undersized and contain one toilet each. Neither is handicapped accessible.

Pending legislation would require us to make all required handicapped improvements to the building with our next significant capital improvement to the building, such as a new roof.

The cost to renovate the building would be almost as much as to build a new building. Currently, the interest rates on public financing are at an all time low. Material costs are also favorable due to reduced demand. At this point we are faced with the choice of pouring money into an old dysfunctional building or to build a new efficient building which will serve our community for the next 100 years. I believe that the time is right to move forward with this project.

We are hard at work preparing the 2012 budget. I am happy to report that water and sewer rates will remain flat for 2012. The sewer users continue to benefit from the savings created by the Borough taking over the local sewer authority. The 2012 budget will be within the 2% CAP, but we continue to see increases in health benefit costs which are outside the CAP. While we were able to negotiate a 14% reduction in dental insurance premiums, prescription benefit costs increased 25% and health insurance increased over 10%. Much was said earlier in the year about Governor Christie's fight for pension reform. As a result of the changes made by the Governor our pension bill for 2012 will not increase.

We have continued to discuss a number of shared services with our neighboring communities. The revaluation is being conducted under a shared service agreement with Bloomingdale. With our plans for the new town hall the opportunity exists to develop new regional shares services in the areas of police dispatch and the court system. These items are under discussion.

We have a lot of work to do this year. We do our best to provide great services to our residents. Our Police Officers, Road and Water Department workers, and our Borough Hall staff are second to none. Our volunteer Firefighters, First Aid Squad members, Recreation volunteers and people who donate their time to our community make Wanaque a great place to live. I thank all of them for their efforts. Last August we were hit with Hurricane Irene which was followed in October by an early snow and ice storm. The

hurricane resulted flooding in certain areas of town and both of these events resulted in many trees and branches falling that damaged property and utility lines. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Captain Thomas Norton and his Emergency Management Team for all of their efforts during these storms. Wanaque was one of the most prepared communities in our area which greatly reduced the impact on our residents. I would also like to express my gratitude to our road and water departments for the great job they did in cleaning up after these storms.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Borough Council, our Administrator Tom Carroll, our Borough Clerk Kathy Falone, Chief Reno, our Borough Attorney Tony Fiorello and the entire staff. 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.