

“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 Assemblyman Robert Auth for taking time out of his busy schedule to attend our meeting tonight to swear in our elected officials. Bob took office last January and established his 39th District Legislative Office in the Haskell Town Center Building here in Wanaque.

I would like to congratulate both Councilman Don Pasquariello and Rob Pettet their re-election to the Council. For Don this will be his sixth term and for Rob this will be his fourth term. Both of these Councilmen have worked very hard in the past for our town and we look forward to their continued commitment to our citizens.

I would also like to congratulate our Administrator, Tom Carroll, on his recent election as president of the NJ Municipal Managers Association for 2015. We are all proud of his dedicated involvement with this organization.

As I begin my third term as your Mayor, I would like to take this opportunity to review the status of several projects and to discuss the vision for the future of Wanaque.

For the past few years I have spoke of our vision to construct a new municipal building. As everyone can see the new building next door is progressing nicely. The exterior is substantially complete and the building is now closed to the elements. Over the next few months the contractor will be finishing the interior. The construction schedule was delayed by the harsh winter in 2014 and we are looking at a completion date in the spring. After the new building in occupied, the old building will be razed and converted into a parking lot. I can confidently say that our 2016 Re-Organization meeting will be held next door in our new Town Hall.

In September, we dedicated the new Wanaque “Welcome Park and 9-11 Memorial” at the intersection of Ringwood and Union Avenues. This project includes a piece of steel from North Tower of the World Trade Center and a memorial to John E. Bulaga, Jr., a lifelong resident of Wanaque who died in the terrorist attack on September 11 2001. This project was a joint effort between the Borough of Wanaque, the NJ Department of Transportation, Passaic County, the owner of the Dunkin Donuts strip mall, numerous businesses and many volunteers. I would like to personally thank the Project Chairman, Frank Covelli and his committee for a job well done.

Parkside at Wanaque, which is an 88 unit development at the old candle factory on Fourth Avenue is now completed and fully occupied. Last month, the developer donated the final unit through the Wounded Warriors program to a young Marine who was seriously injured in Afghanistan. This same developer is now in the process of building an additional 78 units across the street from Parkside at the former US Aluminum site. They have a waiting list from Parkside and expect to have the initial units completed in the fall of 2015.

We are finally seeing some movement on the Mountain Lakes - Lakeside Manor development off of Conklintown Road which has been abandoned for over 12 years. The completion of these partially built structures was delayed by a combination of the Highlands Act and subsequent litigation. The developer of Parkside has entered into a tentative agreement with the property owner to complete Phase I of the development, which is the currently disturbed area comprising 47 townhouses and 13 single family homes. Permits from the State of NJ are in the process of being refreshed and construction is expected to resume by the summer.

Recent improvements to our infrastructure include the resurfacing of several streets including part of Cannonball Road, McAtee Lane, Mullen Avenue and East Street, Park Street, Prospect Street, Short Street, Shady Avenue, Skylands Avenue and Oak Street. We utilized an interlocal agreement with Ringwood to use their in-house engineer and a co-operative pricing group to contract for the paving at significant cost savings. In addition, we completed the reconstruction of Westbrook Road from Ringwood Avenue to the bridge during 2014 using a \$235,000 grant. The bridge over the reservoir is in the process of being rebuilt by Passaic County. The County project should conclude in late 2015.

During 2014, we completed the upgrade of the sanitary sewer lines on Jefferson Street, Monroe Street, Jackson Street and Dickens Place. This consisted of replacing old deteriorated clay lines which were behind residents homes with state of the art sewer lines located the streets. This project was partially funded by a \$350,000 Passaic County Community Development Block Grant. It is expected that these new lines will significantly reduce ground water infiltration into the sewer system which is problematic of clay pipes. We have applied for grants to upgrade the water mains in these streets and to complete the paving.

We also received over \$200,000 of grants to reconstruct Fifth Avenue and Leonard Place, which includes replacing the 80 year old water main. This work is expected to occur in 2015. We have also applied for additional grants to complete similar work on Sixth Avenue and Phelan Court.

In November, the tax lien holder foreclosed on the abandoned restaurant at 815 Ringwood Avenue. The new owner subsequently contacted us and we expressed our desire to see the return of an active restaurant at this location.

In August, we settled a new contract with our police officers, which was in conjunction with a re-organization of the police department. Police officers are now working a 12 hour shift vs the prior 8 hour shift. This allows for 4 officers per shift vs 3 per shift under the prior schedule. The number of years it takes for an officer to reach the maximum salary was increased by 3 years and police officers will begin contributing to their health benefits. In September, we hired two new police officers. Both are veterans that served in the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan. They expect to graduate from the police academy in March. We will be hiring additional police officers in 2015 to replace retirees. These changes in the police department are considered cost neutral meaning that they should not have a negative impact on the 2% cap.

In the area of property taxes we have worked very diligently to control expenses while continuing to provide the best level of services to our citizens. We are currently working to prepare our 2015 budget. Our 2014 budget included a 1% increase which was below the 2% CAP. We once again anticipate being within the 2% CAP. However, increases in pension and health benefit costs and several large commercial tax appeals may require us to be closer to the CAP in 2015. We will continue to review every budget line item for potential savings.

To help curtail costs, we entered into several new interlocal shared services agreements with neighboring municipalities in 2014. These included sharing our construction department with Riverdale and sharing a Deputy Court Administrator position with Ringwood.

We have a lot of work to do again 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

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Borough Council, our Administrator Tom Carroll, our Borough Clerk Kathy Falone, Chief Norton and our Borough Attorney Tony Fiorello. 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, my mother Geraldine and the rest of my family for their continued support in allowing me to be Mayor of this great town.

Thank you and God Bless America.”