

2016 State of the Township Address

Council members, residents, honored guests, staff, friends and family; let me begin by wishing you all a healthy and prosperous New Year. Thank you for joining us today at our Township's annual reorganization meeting, an event, one of many happening throughout the country, reaffirming that we are truly a government of the people for the people. I am both humbled and honored by trust and confidence demonstrated by my fellow residents in granting me the privilege of continued service. Having completed my first term as Mayor I can honestly say this is one of the most rewarding and exciting jobs I have ever held. Over the last four years I have had the privilege of working with dedicated staff and volunteers that have embraced the vision we set at the start; a quality of life in Bridgewater that is the exemplar of other communities. We have developed a strong team that works for our residents, while working closely with our partners in surrounding communities, at the County, State and Federal levels, and with the private sector. This afternoon I want to take a few moments to share with you some of the successes we've had in the past year and speak briefly about some of the challenges which lie ahead.

Economy

Let me begin by saying the State of the Township continues to be strong as we position ourselves for further growth despite continued economic challenges throughout the State. The great recession, which began in 2008 with the collapse of the housing market, has taken its toll on our economy. After seven years our ratable base has still have not recovered to its previous height. Yet we have fared better than most as we continue to see an increased investment by the commercial sector in our township. Both our commercial and residential sectors face pressures to change. As elected officials we must recognize the inevitability of change. We must accept our responsibility to manage change by effectuating the best possible outcome for our residents and our future. Having done so in the past is the very reason we are today a viable choice for business location and housing investment. As I travel around the State and discuss shared concerns and initiatives with my counterparts in other municipalities, often cited are the difficulties towns have in attracting jobs, commercial growth and housing development. Virtually every time I come away from the conversation feeling fortunate and blessed that Bridgewater remains a destination choice for both.

Nestle

One of our biggest success stories for 2015, and also one of our greatest opportunities for 2016, is embodied in the choice by Nestle to locate its Health Science research and development division in our township at the Advance Center of Excellence. Anders Kaspersson, Senior Vice President and program manager for Nestle Health Science was tasked with finding a new home for the growing division which pairs nutritional innovation with healthy lifestyle

choices. In determining the final location for up to 300 plus employees, Anders could go anywhere in the world to achieve his objective of growth for the division. Think about that for a second. Anywhere in the world, and ultimately his choice, and the choice of the corporation, was Bridgewater! When I first met Anders he was full of questions about the area, the business climate, and just how Nestle might succeed in our area. With our state's reputation as the medicine chest of the world and the Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno's business attraction program providing incentives through the EDA, New Jersey had become a logical option. Our discussion focused on Bridgewater and our vision for continued leadership in the life science industry - a statement supported by the investment decisions Valeant and others. I highlighted our township's roll call of existing industry leaders, a talent pool that is highly educated and known for innovation, an ideal location close to New York City and four major airports, the opportunities to utilize public transportation or travel on interstate highways, and the lifestyle their employees will enjoy including a broad selection housing and retail, and a community that values education, recreation and sustainability. Anders was particularly interested in and ultimately chose the Center of Excellence on route 202/206.

The former site of Sanofi's research and development division was vacated in 2010 after an acquisition of Genzyme and relocation of those activities. Recognizing the declining demand for single owner campus-like office space, the Council took two critical actions. First they lifted the single occupier restriction which allowed for the lease of lab space to Ashland Chemical and Kashiv Pharmaceutical. These Fortune 500 companies utilized the facility's newer space to open new operations in Bridgewater and return some activity to the site. Sanofi then sold the site to Advance Realty in 2011 for a fraction of its former value. The second major action taken by the Council was the designation of the older less functional 66 acres of the site for redevelopment in 2014. Over the past year the Planning Board has studied the site, through a subcommittee of Planning Board members, residents, a Council representative, and Administrative staff. They have blended the Township and developer's vision and studied impacts on local economy, traffic, housing and office/retail uses. A presentation by the Township's Planning and traffic professionals was given to the Planning Board over two consecutive meetings detailing the data supporting the site recommendations. The collaborative result was a recommended plan unanimously supported by the Planning Board. In the coming months the Council will consider this plan and determine the future redevelopment of this site, the importance of which cannot be overstated.

Land Use

When I was sworn into office four years ago, I established four primary goals supporting our vision for Bridgewater. Chief among those goals was to be vigilant in land use matters. In 2015 we settled litigation which affirmed our ability to zone land and allowed for a mosque to be located on route 202/206. The redevelopment of the former Weyerhaeuser site was adopted by the Council

with traffic requirements that will protect local neighborhoods. The land in front of Stavola Quarry has received approval for retail development and will be the future home to Whole Foods and other shopping and dining options. I have asked a committee of interested residents to create a bike and pedestrian plan that will complement this and other developments by furthering access to passive recreation and heart healthy transportation. I look forward to working with them in the coming year and implementing recommendations for additional bikepaths and walking trails in this area and others.

Balancing development with open space preservation continued with the acquisition of the remaining 10 acre Hancock property parcel on North Bridge Street. The Township has now preserved 20 acres at this location. Additional property was also acquired adjacent to Harry Ally Park in Finderne further protecting this neighborhood asset.

Our sustainability efforts were again recognized by Sustainable Jersey with our third bronze level sustainable community award in 2015. Our May Eco Blast, sponsored by our Environmental Commission continues to be one of the most popular attractions with annually increasing vendor and attendee participation. In addition to this event, 2015 saw the first ever Electric Ride night. This event gave residents an introduction to the electric car and was complemented by area food trucks and a local band providing free entertainment. I want to recognize Chris Poulsen and the sustainability committee for their work to create this innovative and highly successful event. I look forward to holding the event again this year and to see what new ideas the group will come up with to educate and entertain our residents.

Fiscal

Our fiscal goal to remain in the lowest quartile among all County municipalities remains a critical tenet of our success and was achieved once again in 2015 through sound financial management and the implementation of cost-saving initiatives. 2015 saw no increase in the tax levy despite growing pressures on the municipal budget. The successful switchover to County dispatch will pay fiscal dividends for our residents for the next ten years. I appreciate change can be challenging and I would like to thank our County partners for their cooperation particularly, Freeholder Director Mark Caliguire for his leadership during the migration process. I would also like to thank Chief Caravela and the entire police, fire and rescue personnel for their professionalism and dedication to service during the transition. 2016 will continue to see fiscal challenges to the municipal budget. In the next month my Administration will finalize the spending plan we have been working on since the early fall. The plan will then be presented to Council for their review and adoption. In 2015 we rolled out a new program titled Shop Bridgewater. This innovative plan supports local merchants and provides property owners with tax credits for a percentage of expenditures at participating businesses. For a complete description of the plan, its benefits, and participating merchants, visit our website at [shop Bridgewater](#) or our Shop Bridgewater facebook page. You can sign up for the

program online and pick up your card at the Township building. Check often for new merchants and please encourage your favorite store to join.

Infrastructure Improvements

The goal of improving our infrastructure has never been more pressing than after the devastating winter of 2015. Week after week of single digit temperatures, snow, and ice took their toll upon local roads as April and May seem to sprout potholes faster than flowers. The Public Works crew did an admirable job of patching and filling potholes. A record amount was spent on asphalt and patch materials. In terms of road improvement budget, 2015 marked an all-time high for my Administration in terms of spending on road reconstruction and overlay. Over \$5 million was approved and expended in fixing major thoroughfares and local residential streets. In 2015, I tasked a citizen committee to look comprehensively at the entire road maintenance system and provide the Administration with recommendations for future improvements. The committee has been meeting with the Engineering Department and I look forward to seeing their results in early 2016. I would like to thank the Chair Rob Hellwig for his efforts and the committee members for their countless volunteer hours in seeing this important project through to completion. In addition to the road improvements, 2016 will see the completion of the NJ Transit study of a 2nd train station for Bridgewater. The Administration continues to support the expansion of one-seat train service to New York City by NJ Transit and having a 2nd station will better position our residents to take advantage of this service.

Essential Services in a Resident First Manner

The fourth of our goals is the provision of essential services in a resident first manner. We know we serve you, our residents, and we are here to help in any way possible. Each of our Departments is staffed with dedicated professionals who continue to educate themselves and innovate in their workplace to provide the most comprehensive and inclusive service to our residents. 2015 saw us maintain our leadership position in recyclable materials and clean communities funding. The Construction Code Department continues to provide all sub-code inspectors in-house for faster and more accountable service. Last year the Police Department celebrated its 50th anniversary as an organized department culminating in a community day event at the municipal complex which recognized the professionalism, dedication to community and years of service of all who have worn the Bridgewater Police uniform. In 2016 the police will continue their leadership by being one of the first in the County to implement body cameras for protection of our officers while on duty. Chief Caravela recently received a \$31,000 grant from the Acting Attorney General which will pay for the purchase of all body cams for our officers. The Clerk's Office, with the support and Cooperation of the County, sponsored two local shred days at the Municipal Complex collecting record amounts of materials for secure disposal.

I look forward to working with Councilman Kurdyla, who is also the County Director of Records Management, in providing this service in 2016.

I am pleased to announce that the bulky trash days at BRI will continue in 2016 as our partner BRI has agreed to provide this service once again at no cost to our residents. We are extremely grateful to the management of BRI for this partnership.

In order to streamline the compliance process, and make it simpler and less onerous especially for small residential improvements, I have created a citizens ad hoc committee to review the processes involved and make recommendations for change. This group, led by Debra Albanese, has been meeting over the last several months, reviewing the many facets of the compliance process and with the professionals involved, determining what can be simplified. I am grateful for their efforts and look forward to their completed work in the months ahead.

Volunteer Service

Beyond doubt it is our many volunteers that help make Bridgewater an exemplar community. Today we will appoint new and reappoint existing volunteers to boards and committees essential to our community providing necessary input on issues that touch every neighborhood and street in the Township. I am proud of the extent of our community volunteerism. It goes well beyond today's appointments and includes the mother who coaches her son's soccer team or the father, who is a Boy Scout troop leader, volunteers at the library, senior center, animal shelter, schools, to name just a few. It extends also to those who answer the call of duty as a volunteer fireman or rescue squad member. During the last four years I have had the privilege to meet with many of these selfless individuals. I am grateful for their service and inspired by their dedication. To all of our volunteers on behalf of all our residents, I say thank you. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the service of two particular volunteers, Walt Rusak and Roger Pearley. Both served the Township for over 10 years. Walt, a 31 year resident served on the Park Board, Open Space Committee and as our Planning Board Chairman. Roger also served on the Park Board and the Open Space Committee. Unfortunately for Bridgewater, both are moving and must resign their positions. They have been dedicated volunteers, always providing thoughtful input and using their knowledge and experiences to improve Bridgewater's parks, open space and community. I can safely say their fellow board members will miss their presence and that Bridgewater is a better place for their service. Walt and Roger, I thank you both for your selfless service and wish you and families well.

Closing

Before I conclude this afternoon's comments I would like to recognize the service of someone we lost recently. Alan Grant, an attorney who has served the Township for the last twelve years passed away suddenly just before the

holiday. Alan was a consummate professional, always prepared in defending the Township or providing legal counsel. Many times he has sat on the dais during Council meetings providing valuable guidance. Already we sense his loss, but are strengthened by the remembrance of his quiet, professional manner, his confidence, and his positive attitude. He will be missed by all but not forgotten.

The year ahead is full of challenges and opportunities. I believe we are well positioned to take advantages of the opportunities as they arise, to govern from a position of leadership, and to continue to provide the framework for a Quality of life that is second to none. My Administration will stay true to our principles of transparency, inclusiveness, forward thinking, accessibility and resourcefulness that guided us during my first term. Monthly Evenings with Dan will continue to provide a relaxed forum for discussion with residents. We will keep our doors and minds open so we may benefit from the knowledge and input on local matters from all who care to share. We will seize upon new ideas that provide greater or more efficient service to our residents. And our presence on social media platforms will continue to expand to provide timely information on a variety of topics.

I look forward to working with the Council to maintain Bridgewater's position as a leader in the County and the State. And, lastly, I ask all to please remember our servicemen and women who dedicate their lives to the freedoms we enjoy. They sacrifice time away from family and loved ones and travel to keep us safe.

In the year ahead, may your fortunes be many and your misfortunes few. May God continue to bless our community, and may God bless America.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Daniel J. Hayes. Jr.

Mayor, Bridgewater Township