

2018 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 this evening at our Township's annual reorganization meeting, an event, one of many, happening this month throughout the country, reaffirming that we are truly a government of the people for the people. To begin I would like to congratulate the three Council members sworn in to new four year terms, I look forward to working with them and the rest of the Council as we work together to position Bridgewater for continued prosperity. My administration continues to lead with the vision we set just six short years ago, achieving a quality of life in Bridgewater that is the exemplar of other communities. Within the administration, and with our volunteer boards and committees, we have built a strong team that continues to work for our residents, maintains strong ties with our partners in surrounding communities at the County, State and Federal levels, and with the private sector to achieve our goals. Serving as Mayor is a tremendous honor, a privilege for which I am continually grateful. This evening I want to take a few moments to assure you the state of our Township is strong and our future bright, to share a few of the milestones we've achieved in 2017 and speak briefly about some of the challenges and opportunities which lie ahead.

On the Economy

By any measure our economy continues to gather strength. We have a strong commercial base and lead the region with new business development. Our ability to attract life science businesses remains our cornerstone and we have welcomed several new companies in 2017. I was privileged to visit the new Nestle Health Science offices in the NJ Center of Excellence. Nestle is a perfect example of a leading life science company, working on the cutting edge of nutrition and health, that could have chosen anywhere in the world to locate their Health Science Research division, and they chose Bridgewater. By becoming known as a leader in health and life science we are able to attract companies large and small that view the Bridgewater area as vibrant with a talented, highly educated workforce, a variety of housing stock, excellent schools, and a multitude of recreational and retail locations. Our central location, with easy access by car, train or plane, makes us THE place to live, work and play. But it is not only the large corporate giants which make our business sector so attractive. Small and growing companies such as Saama Technologies, Inc, are expanding into Bridgewater to be closer to current and prospective clients, all part of a thriving pharmaceutical and biotechnology hub. Saama is a cutting edge data and analytics firm that utilizes technology to optimize data from clinical trials with a goal of reducing by half the time to market for new treatments. In visiting their Bridgewater offices I was impressed with their enthusiasm, technical expertise and optimism for the growing Bridgewater market. The collaboration and co-location of the life

science industry continues to evolve and strengthen. BioNJ held its fifth annual CEO Summit in Bridgewater, an event which brings together life sciences C-suite leaders and their teams — representing a wide breadth of companies from early to late-stage, as well as public, private, revenue and pre-revenue enterprises — for a full-day program focused on the opportunities and challenges facing the sector as it works to bring innovative medicines to market to address unmet medical needs. I would like to personally thank BIO NJ CEO Deb Hart for her continued advocacy and support of the life science industry in Bridgewater. I was fortunate to be able to represent the NJ Mayor’s Life Science Committee in Washington, working with our partners at We Work For Health, for a full day of advocacy with key legislators on Capitol Hill. This fast paced event gave us the opportunity to have meaningful one-on-one dialogue with New Jersey’s Congressional leaders to underscore the importance of the industry to New Jersey’s economy and our own.

Technology continues to be an important segment of our ratable base, and this year we were honored to welcome Iconectiv to their new home in the Somerset Corporate Center. Iconectiv, formerly Telcordia, located 500 employees in Bridgewater positioning their business for future growth and continue global leadership in their field. Their work on maintaining the infrastructure of the internet is crucial to almost every facet of daily life.

Our retail sector continues to flourish and adapt to the ever-changing marketplace. Significant progress was made on the Chimney Rock retail

center. Several stores including Whole Foods, Saks Off 5th and Nordstrom Rack will open in 2018. The Commons Mall continues to add new offerings and remains one of the strongest retail properties in the General Growth Properties portfolio. New dining choices such as Cava Grill, sustainable jewelry retailer Alex and Ani and many others have opened in 2017.

The hotel industry continues to see Bridgewater as an attractive market. Hampton Inn and Suites opened in 2017 and continues to do very well at its Route 22 location. Recently AC Hotel broke ground at the Somerset Corporate Center and looks to a late 2018 open. The Days Inn on Route 22 has been sold and the new owners are looking to transform the property into new hotels and retail in the future.

Demonstrated Fiscal Leadership

The Administration follows four major goals in pursuit of our vision and exemplary service to our residents. Our fiscal goal is to maintain our Township within the lowest quartile amongst all municipal taxes in Somerset County. We continue to achieve this goal by being fiscally prudent in our operations and partnering wherever possible to achieve cost efficiency. 2017 saw our sound financial standing receive reaffirmation with a AA+ bond rating by S&P Global Ratings. During the re-examination report, S&P affirmed the combination of strong management, strong budgetary performance and a very strong economy that places Bridgewater in this highly desirable rating category. We have also taken steps to upgrade our internal accounting system and have maintained

our tax collection rate above 99%. In addition, our Shop Bridgewater program, a buy local property tax credit program, continues to expand and provide savings for our residents. We have added a number of new vendors, collaborated with surrounding municipalities and promoted specials that further increase the amount of savings our residents can achieve by utilizing the program. The card is free and open to both residents and non-residents. Visit our website or the Finance Office to sign up if you aren't already saving.

Land for Work, Living and Play

Vigilance in all matters pertaining to land use is critical to achieving our vision. Land use matters can affect residents on both a macro and micro scale, from increased traffic or density, to the enjoyment of your personal property. All applications for development are carefully considered by the Planning and Zoning Boards where resident concerns are addressed and mitigated to the best extent possible. 2017 was a very active year for both land use boards which is a reflection on increased economic activity, low interest rate environment and demand for a Bridgewater address. 2018 looks to continue this trend and Bridgewater will be prepared to handle the increased pace. The Planning Board will hear the application for the Center of Excellence redevelopment which will continue the transformation of the former Sanofi research site into a premier destination for life sciences and their partners. Land use also pertains to the acquisition and management of open space. This past year saw the Township, with generous assistance from the Somerset

County Freeholders; acquire 110 acres known as the Camp Cromwell property. When the Boys Club of New York decided to focus on assets closer to the city, the Township moved quickly. In a town that is matured and almost fully developed, the opportunity to acquire over 100 acres of land naturally suited for recreation is rare. Both the Council and I were delighted we could complete this acquisition in 2017. This property offers a unique opportunity for the Township to create new active and passive recreation venues for our residents. Some of the facilities on the site are recently renovated and are unlike any we currently own or operate. I have formed an ad hoc committee to explore the amenities of the entire property and make recommendations for the sustainable use of the site for future generations. The ad hoc committee is comprised of volunteers from throughout the township with varying interests and expertise. All have agreed to invest their time and effort into researching and collaborating on ideas that will best suit our present and future needs. This committee has already met several times and is excitedly working on this project. I look forward to their recommendations and presenting a formal plan to the Council in 2018.

One of the more significant land use accomplishments was the successful settlement of all Township affordable housing obligations through the year 2025. I would like to thank Township attorney Bill Savo and his partner Alex Fisher for their excellent work in defending the Township position and crafting a settlement with the special court master that reflects our years of diligently adding to our affordable housing stock. By setting and adhering to sound

policy and requiring developers create new affordable housing inclusive in their developments, we were able to be credited by the court with all of our previous work and avoid the burden, faced by many of our neighbors of having to add dense development en masse to meet their obligations. In speaking with fellow Mayors both in our region and around the State, the obligation for new affordable housing is unavoidable. Fortunately we have met our need, already built affordable units, already added low and moderate income rentals, and have all along assisted our residents in need. I have recently announced the start of the housing rehabilitation program. Information can be found on our website or in the housing office at the municipal building. In 2018 the Housing Advisory Board will begin accepting and awarding grants to income eligible families, assisting them with roofing, heating and plumbing repairs. This investment in our existing housing stock will allow families on fix incomes to make much-needed repairs and remain in the township they helped create and stay among family and friends.

Innovative Infrastructure Investment for Future Success

Improving our infrastructure is the third of our goals and one that in 2017 we have invested both funds and manpower. Our roads are critically important in maintaining our leading stature and we must continue our ever increasing investment in repairing and resurfacing. In 2017 we were able to resurface over 14 miles of roadways, focusing on main thoroughfares and heavily trafficked areas in every part of the Township. Even with the gains we were

able to make over the last six years, even with increasing yearly the amount of funds we put towards road improvement, we still need critical improvements on roads that have reached the end of their useful life. As we examine our road improvement needs for 2018, we see entire neighborhoods, built roughly around the same time in the 80's and early 90's that require immediate attention. As a recent study by the ad hoc committee for road improvement quantified, if we do not address this critical need, the cost to maintain and improve the road surface at a later date will only escalate. Our infrastructure improvement is not limited to roads. We have also made a significant investment in improving our sanitary sewer system. We have begun the process of replacing aged lines in several areas of the Township and while doing so improving the affected road surfaces. This improved project coordination addresses costly infiltration of storm water into the sanitary sewer system and improves neighborhood roads. The sewer utility will continue this process in 2018 utilizing a combination of cash reserves and capital funds.

We will continue to a similar partnership with New Jersey American Water Company throughout the year as they replace aging water lines in the Township. Through a similar coordination of efforts, we have been successful in resurfacing entire roadways wherever their work is taking place.

On a grander scale, NJAW has also made a \$65 million investment in improving the water treatment facility on Polhemus Road. This improvement will protect the plant from future flooding and help insure a sustainable

drinking supply for over 1 million people in our Township and Central New Jersey. Public Service Electric and Gas has also made a significant investment by locating its emergency operations unit in their new facility on Route 22. Combined, these investments in critical infrastructure help insure Bridgewater's place for generations to come as a leader in business attraction and first choice for living, work and play.

Essential Services Delivered with a Resident First Manner

The last of our four primary goals is to provide essential services in a resident friendly manner. All of us know we work for you, our residents. Every department and division strives to deliver services effectively, efficiently and in a timely fashion. Wherever advantageous, we utilize shared services to lower costs and increase efficiency. This past year Somerset County opened its new Social Services facility and we were able to transfer all of our public assistance clients to the County. This placed the needs of these individuals under one roof while providing more cost effective service. Our police department under the steady leadership of Chief Nicaretta, continues its mission of being the frontline of service to our residents. They are among the most professional departments in the state, maintaining public safety, providing traffic education and enforcement, answering an increasing number of calls for service with proficiency. The Code Department has issued a record amount of permits for construction and continues to service its clients with timely inspections and plan review. 2017 saw the introduction of a new service for our residents with

the opening of the park and ride lot on Route 22. Coach USA is servicing the lot with a direct bus to New York City with stops along 42nd street. The parking is free and tickets may be purchased direct through Coach USA.

Guided by Principles

Along with our vision and goals, we espouse several guiding principles. They are to be forward thinking, be inclusive, embrace diversity, be resourceful, be accessible and be transparent. No one embodied these principles more completely than Chris Poulsen our Director of Health and Human Services. His untimely passing last month gave all of those he touched during his many years of service, cause to pause and reflect upon both the fragility of life and how impactful one can be in dedicated service to others. Chris provided so much to the residents of Bridgewater, expanding upon his mission serving as many people as he could reach. If you had an idea with merit, whatever your background or experience, Chris would help transform it into something that could be shared with all. When I reflect upon my many conversations with Chris and upon all of the many events Chris championed, his loss is deeply felt, yet at the same time it also highlights a personally motivating legacy of service. For so many of our new program's his enthusiasm and planning ultimately led to a successful event. The Farmers Market, Senior health fair, Tree-For-All, Arbor Day celebrations, Eco Blast, Diwali celebration at the Senior Center, Chinese Cultural Celebration, Electric Ride, Mayor's Wellness Stone Soup Reading, Turn the Town Teal, Recycling Superheros, rain gardens, and

clean communities clean-ups are just some of the events Chris had a hand in making successful throughout his career. He never asked for or sought credit, but was always there with a positive attitude, steady guidance and hard work. Many of you in this room and those who will read this message online will remember his smile, pleasant greeting, or brief story he loved to share when you engaged him at one of our events. Those of us who were fortunate enough to know Chris as a colleague and a friend will cherish our memories and by his example be motivated to put our own stamp of excellence on our efforts to deliver better service, increasingly inclusive and successful programs.

In the year ahead, we will stay true to the principles Chris embodied. I will continue monthly Evenings with Dan to provide a relaxed forum for resident discussion on any matter. All of us 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. I look forward to working with the Council, other officials, the private sector and residents from all walks of life to maintain Bridgewater's position as a leader in the County and State. We will work with the new Governor and his administration to make sure New Jersey remains positioned for continued success.

Finally, I ask all to remember our servicemen and women who dedicate their lives to protect and defend the freedoms we enjoy. They sacrifice time away from their family and loved ones so that we and our loved ones live safely in the blanket of their protection.

In the year ahead, I pray your fortunes are many and your misfortunes few.
May God bless you. May God bless our community and may God bless
America.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Daniel J. Hayes, Jr.

Mayor, Bridgewater Township