

# NEWS

TOWNSHIP OF WOODBRIDGE



**MAYOR JOHN E. McCORMAC** ♦ 1 Main Street, Woodbridge, NJ 07095

Phone: (732) 634-4500 ♦ Fax: (732) 602-6016 ♦ Web: [www.twp.woodbridge.nj.us](http://www.twp.woodbridge.nj.us)

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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

John R. Hagerty  
Mayor's Office of Communications  
732-602-6039

## **Mayor John E. McCormac Announces Appointment of Three-Time Emmy Award Winner Anthony Wilkinson as Coordinator of Woodbridge Township Arts Initiatives**

### **Future Avenel Arts Center set to be Regional Performing Arts Showcase**

**WOODBIDGE** – Mayor John E. McCormac today announced the appointment of Anthony Wilkinson – three-time Emmy Award winner and a nominee (2017) for Best Supporting Actor in a Digital Drama Series – as coordinator of the Woodbridge Township Arts initiatives and Operations Manager of the future Avenel Arts Center.

“I am excited to announce that Woodbridge Township is destined to become the regional mecca for the performing arts with the appointment of Anthony Wilkinson as coordinator of Woodbridge Township’s arts initiatives and Operations Manager of the future Avenel Arts Center,” said Mayor McCormac. “Over the past ten years, we have established Woodbridge as a regional destination for entertainment and performing arts with the ever-expanding Mayor’s Summer concert series and Music on Main Street, the Barron Arts Center’s established musical performances, Poets Wednesday and art exhibitions by internationally renowned artists, the Woodbridge Community Players (WCP) summer-stock performances at the newly renovated Theatre at Woodbridge Middle School, and the ever-expanding entertainment opportunities at the Woodbridge Community Center (WCC). And, with the arrival of the Avenel Arts Center – slated to open for performances in 2018 - Woodbridge will stand as the ‘Best Town Around’ for the performing arts.”

According to Mayor McCormac, Wilkinson, winner of three Daytime Emmy Awards for Editing and four-time recipient of the Directors Guild of America Award, served as Associate Director of ABC’s *One Life To Live* for 14 years. Anthony’s original production of *My Big Gay Italian Wedding* opened Off-Broadway in 2003 at the Actor’s Playhouse and later moved to Theatre Four in the spring of 2004. In 2006, Anthony wrote and starred as “Rio La Rocca” in the Off-Broadway production of *Boys Just Wanna Have Fun*. Anthony restaged *My Big Gay Italian Wedding* in September of 2009 at the St. George Theatre and a revival on Restaurant Row with a full Equity cast in April of 2010 – the performance played in multiple cities in the United States, Edinburgh, London, Vancouver, Hong Kong and parts of France. In June of 2013 Anthony opened the sequel to *My Big Gay Italian Wedding*, *My Big Gay Italian Funeral*, which ran for over two years at St. Luke’s Theater in New York City. Wilkinson’s final chapter to the Trilogy, “My Big Gay Italian Midlife Crisis,” opened at the Theater Center Off-Broadway in November of 2015. Anthony is currently performing on Amazon Prime’s hit series “Tainted Dreams” which recently landed him a nomination for Best Supporting Actor in a Digital Drama Series. (Tainted Dreams received a total of five Emmy nominations including Best Show.)

“I am looking forward to the challenge of bringing Broadway-style shows, performances and productions to Woodbridge Township and the Avenel Arts Center. Mayor McCormac and the entire Woodbridge Township administration are committed to establishing Woodbridge as the regional performing arts center and I am excited to bring a new level of theatre and entertainment to the Avenel Arts Center,” said Wilkinson.

**ABOUT THE AVENEL ARTS CENTER:** The Avenel Arts Center is envisioned as a 13,500 sq. ft. performing arts facility specially designed for theatre, stage productions and special performances. The exterior and interior finishes will include a combination of brick veneer, metal cladding, wood and glass that embrace the industrial past of Avenel and the nearby railroad. The Avenel Arts Center will include two main program elements with ‘back-of-house’ supporting spaces. The Main Performance Hall includes a large flexible space with A/V systems for multiple performance settings, as well as flexible seating arrangements for up to 225 patrons. The Performance Hall will feature retractable seating, a sound/lighting booth and moveable modular stages. A separate small performance room and pre-function/lobby area that can open to the exterior space for larger gatherings and events will be included. There will be two dressing rooms, an audio recording room, various storage rooms and lounges, and a box office. Acoustical glazing will be used in the large windows on the west elevation of the performance space facing Avenel Street and in the clerestory roof windows above the performance hall. The Avenel Arts Center will also include a restaurant with commercial kitchen and a cocktail lounge with approximately 1,200 sq. ft. of indoor dining space – the restaurant/dining space will allow for catered pre-performance and special events and as a stand-alone dining destination. A main lobby and reception hall will connect the performance area and restaurant space. Large overhead glass doors will open to the exterior to provide an indoor/outdoor social experience before, during and after performances. Outdoor dining will be offered by the restaurant in an adjacent patio area. The Avenel Arts Center anticipates a 2018 opening.



Avenel Arts Center



Avenel Arts Center & Complex