

# NEWS

TOWNSHIP OF WOODBRIDGE



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## Mayor John E. McCormac Issues Annual Report 2018 ~ "State-of-the-Township" ~ 2018



**MAYOR JOHN E. McCORMAC**  
**2018 ~ STATE-OF-THE-TOWNSHIP ~ 2018**  
**TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2018**

Thank you very much.

I would like to start by thanking the Woodbridge Chamber of Commerce not only for this afternoon's event, but also for another year of progress in working with the business community of Woodbridge Township.

Karen Barnes as Executive Director and Nancy Drumm as Membership Director have really helped our administration retain and attract business - and when companies see the relationship that we all have with each other it gives them a sense of comfort that they are picking the right municipality to do business in.

I would like to recognize our former Business Administrator Bob Landolfi who retired on December 31. Bob for the last 13 years, including 11 while I was Mayor, has been a steady rock in the operation of Woodbridge Township.

As Mayor, I am able to spend half of my time each week out-of-the-office, but I could only do that knowing that Bob had everything under control operationally back in Town Hall.

In his various going away parties, Bob has been described as fair, ethical, hard-working, professional, reasonable, brilliant, positive, and just about every other flattering adjective one can come up with.

Every other Mayor I know has to run his or her town down to the most minute detail on a daily basis, but I didn't because of Bob's leadership.

The Mayor and Council of Woodbridge can establish the vision for our Township - and follow through on that vision and let our Business Administrator, Department and Division heads and rank and file employees keep the trains running on time and – in Woodbridge – on the fast track. Bob could not be here today but let's give him a round of applause anyway.

We are very, very fortunate in Woodbridge to have been able to replace Bob as Business Administrator with former Senator John Bennett - who actually served as Governor of the State of New Jersey for 3 ½ days in 2002. I got to know John when Carol and I worked in Treasury while he was the co-Senate President along with former Governor Dick Codey. These two gentlemen simply kept the State of New Jersey together during two very difficult years of a 20-20 tie in Senate membership between the two major political parties.

It was a recipe for disaster, but it turned out to be two of the most productive years in State history. Senator Bennett has six years as a Board of Education member; 14 in the General Assembly; and 10 in the Senate. He has been a BA in other towns and an attorney for many municipalities and school districts in central New Jersey, though none quite as busy as Woodbridge. He has hit the ground running and he is a true problem solver with an unusual sense of humor that we all are just beginning to understand. Senator Bennett please stand.

By now, you all know the importance of Caroline Ehrlich not only personally to my career but to the entirety of Woodbridge Township in her role as our Chief of Staff and head of our Redevelopment Agency. You will hear a lot of economic development success stories today with plans for the next year and beyond and none of that happens without Caroline.

John Mitch our Township Clerk and John Hagerty our Township Communications Director round out our Senior Management team. Both are valuable advisors and both have a wealth of government experience to help guide this Township and move it forward. Our Monday morning meetings now include one Carol and four Johns and although I might have uttered a wisecrack about that a few years ago I will stay silent now. Would the three of you please stand.

As noted earlier, the business operation of Woodbridge Township continues without interruption and without a hitch thanks to the terrific leadership of our Department and Division Directors and the thousand employees who work hard every day for our 100,000 residents.

Our nationally accredited Police Department led by Director Bob Hubner, Deputy Director Joe Nisky and new Chief Law Enforcement Officer Scott Kuzma continues to be the best around - not just because I say so, but because people in law enforcement all over the country say so. Every three years they pass with flying colors when evaluated by a national team of police experts. Would the leaders and members of our fantastic Police Department please stand.

Dennis Henry and George Brew lead a Public Works Department that generates 10 times as many compliments as complaints when it comes to snow removal, garbage and recycling collection, park maintenance and road paving. None of my peers hear praise like I hear every day in Woodbridge and they wish they had a team like ours in their town.

Last year we changed our system of bulk pickups - and suspended our garage sales to get people used to the new system – although this year we are bringing back the neighborhood garage sales in the spring - but we still ask that residents call for a special pickup because we will no longer do them automatically. No other town offers these kinds of services to their residents. If you are part of our outstanding Public Works team, please stand.

Again, it is not just me as Mayor bragging about how good our DPW is. Just ask anyone you know in another town if they get the services you get and if they feel they receive real value for the property taxes they pay. Nobody likes to pay taxes and people usually think they pay too much – but in Woodbridge Township there is incomparable value for the dollars sent to town hall every quarter.

While you are talking to people from other towns, ask them if their kids have the opportunities in their towns like our kids do. Ask if they have anything even remotely like our Woodbridge Community Center with an ice rink, roller rink, gym, track, pool, fitness equipment, batting cages and a mini golf course. The Center was recently given an extreme makeover and it looks fantastic. New flooring, lighting, equipment and programming make it the go-to place for our kids, families and seniors.

Ask if other towns make a major financial commitment every year to their youth leagues. Ask if their kids have summer camps and sports camps, and day-care opportunities, and before and after school care-programs. Ask if their schools have new state-of-the-art turf fields, courts, gyms, tracks and playgrounds.

Ask if their town is building new soccer fields or if their town established a home for cheerleaders and wrestlers. Ask if they have a Youth Center (with more on the way) or an outdoor pool or a spray park. Ask if their Recreation Department implemented an AED program to provide defibrillators in facilities all over town with another two dozen in portable backpacks for our youth leagues.

Ask if they have anyone working there like Vito Cimilluca and Brian Molnar – who both have lived in this town their entire lives and both have worked only for the Township since they were old enough to work. Vito and Brian and their staff make it great to be a kid in Woodbridge Township and that makes it easier to be a parent here. Would Vito and Brian and anyone else in the Recreation Department please stand.

Our Library system in Woodbridge is, like everything else, the best among its peers. Monica Eppinger joined us over a year ago and has made her presence felt in changing the dynamic of our libraries and bringing them the new technology they need to keep up with the needs of our students and citizens.

Cynthia Knight and her staff keep bringing classic acts to our Barron Arts Center and Lee Beckerman and his professional staff of videographers bring our residents all the action from Township events, community meetings, sporting events and games and other special events right to their living room on TV-35. Monica, Cynthia and Lee please stand.

Hundreds of employees work for our Township in positions that are not as public and not as glamorous as Police or Public Works or Recreation.

They collect our taxes, assess our properties, issue licenses and permits, clean our buildings and schools, run our judicial system, hire people, buy and pay for things, inspect our projects, run our computers, check our restaurants, cross people at intersections, prepare our financial statements, answer our phones, write our memos and reports, paint crosswalks, film our events, schedule poetry readings, and just handle the day-to-day operations of our local government and help our citizens in so many ways that people take for granted every day.

Well, today we are not taking them for granted and we want each and every one of them to know how much we appreciate the effort they put in each and every hour of each and every day to improve the quality of life in Woodbridge.

Anyone who works for the great Township of Woodbridge that has not stood yet, please stand now.

Last year was a terrific one for our seniors. We closed on the purchase of the American Legion in Iselin to be our Five Branches Senior Citizen Center which will open this spring and we closed on the purchase of the Fords First Aid Squad which will be our Hickory Senior Citizen Center that will open later this year.

By 2019 we will have four active vibrant Senior Centers along with Evergreen in Colonia and Sycamore in Port Reading. Seniors will choose a “home base” center with priority for events, but be able to attend any of the other three whenever they want.

Getting to and from the Senior Centers and our Senior Clubs will be easier with our expanded Senior Transportation. We added several new drivers and two new busses to our fleet and we now offer better service than ever before - after adding doctor visits and shopping on top of social trips like the Farmer’s Market, concerts or Fireworks.

I have to admit that it took our team a while to convince me that we should take over senior bussing from the County of Middlesex, but I should have known that Dennis Green and the Health and Senior Services employees would make sure it would work and work incredibly well. The seniors rib me constantly by asking “What took you so long?”

Our very unheralded - but not unappreciated Multi-Service Program on Aging - will continue to offer programs and services to our homebound senior population, so in one way or another we reach every single senior citizen in Woodbridge Township to help them meet their everyday needs.

Dalina Manor opened last year to rave reviews and we now are planning Red Oak Manor next to the Sycamore Center in Port Reading to offer additional living opportunities to our seniors who want to downsize from a single family home into an apartment with fellow seniors while staying close to their children and grandchildren. Based on the demand at Dalina - along with Reinhard Manor in Colonia - we will continue to look for other opportunities to build more senior housing in our town.

Last year at the State of the Township I said, and I quote, "within a few months we should be closing on the purchase of 86 Green Street in Woodbridge – a 20<sup>th</sup> century Colonial home - which will serve as our long-awaited history museum".

This year, I'm proud to say that within a few months we should be closing on the purchase of 86 Green Street in Woodbridge – a 20<sup>th</sup> century Colonial home - which will serve as our long-awaited history museum.

The closing is finally set for April and I want to thank Frank and Audrey LaPenta, Dan D'Arcy and our Township Historian Brenda Velasco and the rest of our Historical Association for their patience in seeing this transaction through. A town of our rich 348 and 1/2 year history deserves to show it off in a facility such as the one we are planning.

Speaking of that history, June 1, 2019 will mark our Sesquicentennial - or our 350th anniversary as a Township. A huge kickoff gala is being planned for June 1 of this year, followed by a year of fun-filled and historically-themed events which will lead up to another big celebration on that date in 16 months.

A year of events like these will take a commitment of time and resources and we have coincidentally included some fundraising information – and a free anniversary pin – on your tables today. I would like to thank our Anniversary Committee for all of your work so far and for what you will be doing for us for the next year and a half. Last year saw progress on our plans to revitalize the 60 year old Federal Housing Project on Bunns Lane, which will soon be renamed Veterans Lane. A third of the units were torn down and new attractive units are being built and another third will start this year.

We are still working on financing for the rest of the project, which we hope to complete in a few years. Residents can already see the impact on their property values living next to new apartments instead of the unattractive buildings they are replacing.

And, I am proud to report that our abandoned house project run by Caroline Ehrlich and Dean Janowski has not produced one single home yet that we have taken possession of in almost two years – and that is because almost 200 homes have been fixed-up by banks and mortgage companies and returned to active use because of the pressure our program has put on them. We don't need to go to court to get actual possession of a dilapidated home to consider our program a success.

We continue to work with Rutgers University on the multi-year project to turn the Blue Acres properties in the repetitive flood zones - that were purchased from the State and demolished - into beautiful park-like settings with a natural habitat and trails and passive recreation.

The wildlife has already returned to the area and the impact of our work is already very obvious. Our Engineer Mike Gelin and our Flood Plain Manager Tom Flynn have done a phenomenal job in managing this project and their knowledge of the topic is unmatched anywhere in local government. A section of land there will be turned into a vegetable garden with individual plots assigned to those families who are clients of our various food banks in town. People will be able to grow what they want and tend to their own gardens in an effort spearheaded by Maureen Jorgensen, a teacher at St. James School in Woodbridge, with help from the Township, the Woodbridge Fire Department and Eagle Scout candidate Dennis Abate.

We are a Township that takes the issue of hunger very seriously and we now have 13 pantries that provide food banks or soup kitchens under the leadership of our very own Deacon Peter Barcellona – a Health Inspector by trade and a food bank advocate by passion.

The two areas that we as an Administration are most proud of in 2017 and that we will continue and expand in 2018 are our efforts with our special needs adult population and our efforts with the opioid addiction issue. Last year we told the story of how a group of parents approached us about dealing with their special needs children who were aging out of the school system when they turned 21.

We turned to Our House Inc. - which opened their fifth location in the State - to provide for these special citizens at the Cypress Center in Port Reading - a building donated to us by the Hess Corporation several years ago. Our House provides job training, life skills training and social interaction to their clientele, most of which are Woodbridge residents. The parents can rest easier knowing their children are closer and safer. There is nothing like hearing a mother say "The Township has changed my child's life" - and we have heard that.

John Cook and Jimmy Carroll are working with our terrific special needs professionals in our local school district to make sure this building can also be used by our teenage population. Soon a small café will open there to give them opportunities to work and learn - and when the restaurant is open to the public a few hours a week, I expect all of you to make reservations.

I love Castello's and Trattoria Venezia as much as anyone, but I guarantee you will have more fun at our new Café with a turkey sandwich and a bag of chips and a soda served by one of our special needs citizens than at one of those fancy places for lamb chops or pork osso bucco and a bottle of expensive wine. I am still trying to figure out though how to get Miller Lite on the menu in our café.

Our second big initiative in 2017 was the continuation of our Opioid Peer Recovery Coach program under the leadership of Dr. Bonnie Nolan.

After experimenting with an outside service provider when we started, we decided to run the program ourselves. Today, we have hired nearly 20 Township residents who are in recovery themselves as coaches. We now have the program in five different hospitals in our area and we are now handling the program in eight different Middlesex County municipalities.

Our addiction coaches reach out to those who have overdosed, or in many cases, to those who just indicate a need for help. They help find the person treatment either as a resident or outpatient and they then become an advisor and mentor and more importantly – a friend – to those suffering from addiction.

Bonnie and her team run not only a social night for those in recovery, but also sessions for the families of people in recovery. I have had the opportunity to attend some of these meetings and people in our Township truly appreciate the efforts of our team.

There is nothing like hearing a mother say to us: "The Township has really saved my child's life"... and we have heard that. Would Bonnie Nolan and Chris Powers and Sarahmarie DeValle please stand and be recognized. We are also working not only as a Township ourselves but also with other businesses in Woodbridge to encourage companies to hire those in recovery. People deserve a second chance and if we can help them get that chance then we are all-in.

Many of you attended the Chamber breakfast two years ago and heard Jordan Seagull speak of his experiences in one of the most heartwarming and impressive speeches I have ever heard someone give in my entire lifetime. While Jordan was not available to attend today, many of the Recovery Coaches are in attendance. Thank you for your service and we appreciate what each of you mean to our town. Please stand and be recognized.

Even students attending our elementary schools in Woodbridge know how good our Township is. To prove that point, I recently challenged a few of them to a contest in the format of "Are You Smarter Than A Fifth Grader?"

Let's see what happened.

Gee, TV does really add 15 pounds.

I would like to thank and recognize Mawbey Street School Principal Barbara Balog and Gym Teacher/Emcee Andrew Maurizio for their help in putting together that video. And our terrific students – Kayla Parrinello, Tyler Simkovich, Divya Kumar and Sushrut Sarpotdar. You were great... and smarter than the Mayor!!!

You have not heard me mention our Planning Department yet. Sure, they handle day-to-day business like all of the other Departments – in fact last year they handled nearly 6,000 permits and over \$3.3 million in permit fees representing a \$264 million investment in Woodbridge – but their additional responsibility is to plan for the future of Woodbridge Township. What will we look like next year, in five years, 10 years and 20 years?

Marta Lefsky, our Planning Director, teams with Caroline Ehrlich to form an incredible one-two punch in dealing with economic development here in Woodbridge.

I say it all the time - I get on television and get quotes in the newspapers and get my picture in our newsletter every time I throw dirt with a shovel at a groundbreaking or cut a red ribbon at a business opening.

It is the in between activity that Marta and Carol and their teams handle that is important. They literally hold the hands of companies and businesses to help them navigate not only the Woodbridge system - which is very easy - but also the County, State and Federal governmental regulations and those of dozens of outside authorities.

Time and time again company owners tell us how easy it is to do business here and how quickly someone can get from an idea... to a site plan... to a Board approval... to a building permit... to a final inspection... to a grand opening. And, we are very, very proud of that.

We compete with all the towns around us every time a business looks for where to expand or where to locate and unless we offer a competitive edge in the ease of doing business - and a less costly and less lengthy process from start to finish - then these businesses will go elsewhere. Will Marta and the Planning Department please stand. Last year saw some outstanding progress in economic development activity throughout Woodbridge Township. And, 2018 looks to be even better.

Our signature commercial project this year is the huge investment by Arizona Iced Tea - which recently broke ground on a nearly 1 million square foot manufacturing facility in Fords where they will not only brew tea, but will also manufacture the cans and bottles and package everything for shipment right there. No town in the State that I know of has a manufacturing facility opening within its borders.

We have been talking to the company for many years but the project is finally underway – though it has officially passed The Olive Garden in Woodbridge Center as the project that took the longest to get started. And, while on the topic of Woodbridge Center – congratulations to Amy Bellisano on being the first location in the State of New Jersey for Dave & Busters – which has waiting lines practically every night of the week. Thank you Amy.

Sitex just opened a brand new warehouse on Blair Road in Avenel and renovated another. The Principal Group has started to build a 245,000 square foot warehouse at the corner of Rahway Avenue and Randolph Avenue which will open this year.

The Goodman Group has plans for a new warehouse on the PQ Corporation site in Avenel - and numerous companies have looked at land off Pennval Road in Sewaren to try and build more warehouse space there.

Pennrose Properties finished the financing and is now starting construction of 100 apartment units on Rahway Avenue. Twenty five of those units will be specifically dedicated to the Developmentally Disabled population within Woodbridge - and we hope the remaining units will be rented to other families and individuals with special needs.

Buckeye Pipeline, which bought the Hess terminal facility, is primed for a major investment of millions of dollars into that business. It was a slight blow to the Township when we lost the Hess Corporation as a major taxpayer, and an even bigger blow when their taxable building was sold to the Turnpike Authority which is exempt from property taxes as a governmental entity, but the investment by Buckeye will much more than make up for that loss. We actually lost our biggest taxpayer - but within a few years - we should have more ratables in its place.

PSEG is literally months away from opening the second power plant in Woodbridge next to their Sewaren generating station in an investment worth over a half billion dollars. Not to be outdone, CPV is investigating the feasibility of another power plant right next to their current one in Keasbey which will add another hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in Woodbridge... and we are encouraging them every step of the way.

Just imagine three power plants producing over \$7 million in tax revenues with literally no additional expenses in our annual budgets. Deals like these are why we are able to invest so much into our schools.

Additional luxury apartment development is underway around the MetroPark train station where residents will likely be commuters without school children.

Fieldstone Properties invested nearly \$150 million in purchasing apartment complexes in Fords, Iselin and Menlo Park Terrace and the company is investing additional millions to renovate those units. People want to live in Woodbridge – and let's face it – who can blame them.

Our most visible project, however, and one that we literally started discussions about in 2006 even before taking office, remains Station Village in Avenel.

There, the old abandoned General Dynamics plant has been turned into absolutely beautiful apartments both outside and inside. There will be 500 units, including 50 which will be affordable to meet our State obligations.

There will be upscale retail space and the one facility that will be our pride and joy for years to come – a 200 seat theater with a bar/restaurant appropriately called Curtains. Carol had the vision for an arts-themed development 11 years ago and has worked literally every day to make this project happen and be successful.

A County grant approved by our very own Freeholder Charlie Kenny and shepherded through the process by Freeholder Director and Woodbridge native Ron Rios got the project off the ground.

We hired Anthony Wilkinson, an Emmy winning actor/director/producer, to be the Executive and Artistic Director of the facility which broke ground just last week.

Anthony has literally travelled the country attending seminars and meeting acts and agents and other directors and producers - and he has already begun to fill the calendar with concerts and plays and other shows that will keep the new theater hopping nearly every night of the week. The bar/restaurant will be run by the Woodbridge Arts Alliance and will have additional entertainment every single day. Anthony please stand.

We have already begun to see the impact this project has had on Avenel. Route One has been, and continues to be, improved with the Wawa and Holiday Inn Express and a new Quick Chek and other new retail space at the Big Top site – all of which replaced eyesores that nobody was proud of. Dunkin Donuts – of course – and Wendy's and other recognizable names will soon pop up all along that corridor.

Rahway Avenue has seen action also and the Township expects to purchase the 50 acres of land where the former Woodbridge Developmental Center was located to bring other terrific uses to Avenel.

Something that we have never publicly talked about - but which will go down as one of the most important things we ever did in the last decade - was to actually stop the State from using eight acres of that Developmental Center site as a youth prison.

The State is closing the Jamesburg Home for Boys and they sought three sites where smaller facilities would be constructed for these youths - and one of those sites was Avenel. Last month, we fought this - and we fought it hard!!! We are already home to the East Jersey State Prison for the last 100 plus years and to the Sex Offender Unit for more than 20 years. We have done enough. The last thing we need was another prison literally in the backyards of our residents in the College Park section of Avenel.

I mentioned last year - and will repeat this year - that when a reporter asked me years ago to give him the most important word when it comes to being in politics and government - I said the word was "Relationships." Well Carol and I used our relationships that we developed during our four years in Trenton and we forced the State to consider another location for the prison.

We worked with Senator Joe Vitale and Assemblyman Craig Coughlin and in particular with Senate President Steve Sweeney – a true friend of Woodbridge. Senator Sweeney came through big for our Township and we will never forget that.

Now we can look at that site for warehouses or our long anticipated health care use or for additional educational needs for our students – anything but a prison.

We literally dodged a bullet – a bullet that would have shot down everything that we have been building up with our work all throughout Avenel. If Senator Sweeney was here right now I would ask him to stand – but please give him a round of applause anyway.

While speaking of our Legislators, Senator Joe Vitale and Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin deserve more than just a name mention. Joe will once again serve as Chairman of the Health Committee – a position where he can influence policy to protect the most vulnerable citizens in our State with regard to Charity Care, Family Care, pharmaceutical assistance and food stamps.

A few weeks ago, Craig was sworn-in to the top spot in the State Assembly as Speaker – a position that rewards the respect he has earned in eight years there and a position where he is certain to be of great help to his hometown of Woodbridge. Joe had a prior commitment and couldn't be with us today - but I'd like to ask Craig to please stand and be recognized.

We are working diligently to bring luxury housing projects to downtown Woodbridge. This is certain to be controversial and we expect to take heat for it from people who don't understand the issue or people who just want to be against something – but it is essential that we do it – and we have answers for all of the critics.

Towns all around us are building around their greatest asset – their train stations – and we have invested in two of our three at MetroPark and Avenel. It is time to develop downtown Woodbridge in a similar fashion. It has to be done!!!

If we stand idly by, Main Street will turn into a ghost town. Investments have been made already in several locations with a half dozen health themed shops and stores, including a healthy smoothie shop. Two new sandwich shops have opened and to operate as a counter to the health craze a donut shop will soon open on Main Street.

Opportunities for upscale housing exist across from Town Hall, across from the train station, at the former Riffy's site, and behind Berkeley College among others. Castello's built 16 beautiful apartments and wants to build 40 more and other smaller developments are in the discussion stage.

Hess has not yet completed the sale of their vacant land, but we have every expectation that they will do so shortly, which will provide other opportunities for luxury housing along with retail and restaurant space.

There is simply no reason why we cannot have the best downtown around and we have the focus and determination to get that done.

The Board of Education is close to breaking ground on a new Ross Street School on a site next to the existing school to make sure we have room for any students who move here into our new housing - though we expect to follow national trends which show minimal impact on schools from transit village development.

If school children move in we will welcome them and we will educate them and we have room for them thanks to a referendum that passed overwhelmingly last March.

Improvements to our Woodbridge Middle School will compliment that project - and the entirety of Woodbridge proper will benefit from these investments and from the housing developments - because people will want to stay in Woodbridge and buy a single family home when they outgrow their apartments. Property values have risen in Avenel more than the Township average because of Station Village - and we expect similar results in Woodbridge proper.

We are actively redesigning the downtown traffic flow in anticipation of more activity and we have eliminated truck traffic from Main Street and Green Street to help that cause. One or more parking decks will be constructed downtown to make it easier for new residents and shoppers and diners to park and patronize our local businesses.

Downtown development is absolutely necessary in Woodbridge. Our schools can handle it, our infrastructure can handle it – and our future depends on it.

We continue our good relationship with our Board of Education and school district administration – School Board President Jonathan Triebwasser and Superintendent Dr. Robert Zega.

We are working diligently to have the old St. Cecelia's building ready by September so it becomes Oak Tree Road School 29. Kennedy Park School 24 will move there and all classes throughout the Township where children are bussed to schools will now move to Kennedy Park - creating space in all of those schools for full day kindergarten starting in September – an amenity that we always wanted and now we have a plan to get it done.



Although it's hard to believe, the turf football/soccer field at Woodbridge High School is 11 years old. It was the first major investment by the Township in our school athletic facilities way back in 2007 and it started what would become an investment of more than \$30 million.

We will replace that field late this spring and then have nine turf fields less than four years old throughout our Township. If you work with for our Board of Education or are on the Board, please stand.

We have dozens of playgrounds at schools and parks throughout Woodbridge and – working with Councilman Gregg Ficarra and the Wellness Committee – we now are going to make them adult-friendly over the next few years with an investment of workout equipment so parents can get in shape while watching their kids play on the swings and slides. Working with Councilman Brian Small, we have accepted a proposal to allow for bicycle lanes and bike sharing throughout Woodbridge and soon will be adding electric car charging and sharing stations. Councilman Kyle Anderson is working with us to build a Scout camp across from Oros Park to give our Boy and Girl Scouts a chance to stay local for weekend trips while availing themselves of the immense beauty of the park with its lake and its wildlife.

Councilwoman LizBeth DeJesus has adopted the Greenway Family Success Center in Fords and she constantly attends their functions and helps to advertise their amazing programs for young moms and their children.

Each of our Ward Council people are outstanding representatives of their local business districts and advocates for their downtowns, including Nancy Drumm in Woodbridge; Howie Bauer in Fords; Cory Spillar in Avenel and Port Reading; Viru Patel in Iselin; and Debbie Meehan in Colonia. Businesses in town know their Council people and know they can turn to them for help whenever they need it.

The Woodbridge Town Council also works closely with us on Quality-of-Life issues.

Council President Debbie Meehan helps raise money for our food pantries and runs our annual Support the Troops Rally, while also advocating for traffic lights at Inman and Delaware Avenues and Lake Avenue and Lancaster Street – both in Colonia.

Vice President Cory Spillar is helping to advance shuttles to the Avenel Train Station and he shepherded our terrific mural project on the underpass there.

Nancy Drumm promotes our animal shelter and our Buy Local program.

Kyle Anderson helps connect Woodbridge residents with job opportunities and helps run our annual Martin Luther King ceremony.

Gregg Ficarra helped bring back our Athletic Hall of Fame and coordinates our Bike Tour and running events.

LizBeth DeJesus started our Hispanic Heritage Festival and is an advocate for the Woodbridge Police Department's Community Police officers – Det. Joelle Slossberg and Marc Zeno - and for the Girl Scouts and local girl's athletic programs.

Brian Small's career experiences give us another asset in dealing with our fire companies and first aid squads and our schools and he advocates for State programs like tax deductions for veterans and pension exclusions for seniors. Viru Patel is advocating for commuter parking and safety improvements in his ward.

And new Councilman Howie Bauer has hit the ground running to advance former Councilman Rick Dalina's agenda while developing his own.

On that topic, it is appropriate to also recognize Rick Dalina for his 24 dedicated years of service to the Second Ward residents of Fords, Hopelawn and Keasbey and the entirety of Woodbridge Township as a whole. It was a pleasure to work with Rick for my entire term as Mayor and even many years earlier way back to 1994. Rick filled his father's shoes very admirably he will be missed on the Council.

The Township Council in Woodbridge is truly a partner with myself as Mayor and our entire administration. We work unbelievably well together and quite frankly we are all friends and we all get along and we all socialize regularly.

A lawyer from another town with dozens of municipal clients stopped in at one of our holiday gatherings and saw us laughing and joking together all night and said he has never seen anything like that in local government in his life. To us it is normal and I truly appreciate having all nine of you as teammates and friends. Members of Council please stand.

I would also like to personally thank Chairman Terry Sharkey and the Mayor's Advisory Committee – a group of dedicated individuals who attend just about every event in our town – not as participants but as volunteers. They love their work and our activities would not be nearly as safe and successful without them so thank you to Terry and the entire MAC team. Terry and any MAC members please stand.

All of these events have really branded Woodbridge Township throughout the State of New Jersey.

We are the home to the New Jersey Senior Olympics sponsored by Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey.

The St. James Street Fair.

The New Jersey Paranormal Expo.

The Woodbridge Community Center.

Dozens of concerts.

The St. Patrick's Day Parade.

The Indian and Pakistani Parades.

Tooling Around the Township.

Our Fireworks.

Our Fire Departments, First Aid Squads and our Community Emergency Response Team – CERT and our Domestic Violence Response Team.

We are eight years as the Sustainable Jersey champion – as crowned by the New Jersey League of Municipalities.

We are the only town around with a convenience center for recycling drop-offs.

Our animal shelter provides top-notch shelter service to three neighboring towns – and our residents safely walk and exercise their dogs in our Sewaren dog park – thanks the years of work by Bob Landolfi.

We are also known for our VFWs and our American Legions and the Reinhard Detachment of the Marine Corps League.

Our Veterans Alliance and our Veterans Parade.

The Oros Wildlife Preserve.

Our Community Days in Avenel and Port Reading.

Our fields, tracks, courts, parks and playgrounds.

The Taste of Woodbridge and Taste of Colonia.

We are proud of our Have-a-Heart Food Drive - which by the way is in process as we hope to beat last year's 32,000 pounds of food and \$26,000 in cash contributions.

And our Senior Tax Program staffed by volunteers.

This State-of-the-Township address highlights all of the reasons why Woodbridge is a great town to live in – a great town to grow up in – a great town to age gracefully in – and a great town to visit to work, shop, dine and recreate in.

We are the smallest big town in New Jersey – and we are the biggest small town in the State.

Over 100,000 people seem to all know each other through our churches, our civic groups, our charitable organizations, our sports leagues and our community groups.

And, even if someone from one end of town does not know someone from the other end, they both certainly know by now that they have one very important trait in common.

They both live in “THE BEST TOWN AROUND.”

Thank you.

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