

Kickoff Speech by Jim Foohey

I want to wish everyone a Happy and healthy New Year. Congratulations to Councilwoman Denise Carra on her re-election and to Councilman Greg Lobell on being chosen Council President for 2015. I look forward to working with them and the rest of the boro council and Mayor Liptak. It's good to be back. Yogi Berra once said, "It feels like déjà vu all over again." It's been 8 years since I sat on this council. I'm a little older and hopefully a lot wiser. I bring 6 years of council experience to the table and a willingness to work with everyone. I come back to this council with an open mind. I will listen to everyone's opinion before I make a decision on any issue.

Whenever there is only one Democrat or Republican on the council, that person usually takes on the role of watchdog. I plan to be a lot more than just a watchdog. I will be an active player in every decision this council makes. And I will never vote no just for the sake of voting no. Whenever I vote no on anything, I will give a valid reason.

I'm looking forward to working with Councilwoman Gara on the police committee. I have always had the utmost respect for our police dept. It's sad to see so many in our country criticizing police. I would ask those critics, would they be willing to put on a badge and uniform, strap on a gun, get into a squad car and respond to a 911 call in the middle of the night? I don't think so.

I'm also looking forward to being liaison to the schools and the board of education, and working with our board member, Ann Marie Mead. I was liaison for 6 years in my previous two terms. I will be a pro-active liaison once again. I plan to meet our new superintendent in the next few weeks.

One of my campaign promises to residents is the televising of council meetings. It's long overdue in Raritan. Somerville has been doing it successfully for 10 years. Putting our meetings on TV will have several benefits. Residents, especially seniors, who can't make it to meetings, can watch their council in action in the comfort of their home. Since newspaper coverage of our meetings is minimal, residents can easily stay informed on the issues we discuss. Residents may be encouraged to attend a meeting if they have questions or comments. It may also help to keep our meetings civil by forcing council members to be on their best behavior in front of the camera. I will begin working on the project this week and with any luck we could be on TV in March.

Three days ago I attended Somerville's re-organization meeting. It included a slide show of last year's accomplishments. I was impressed with all the progress they made over the last few years. I was told that Mayor Gallagher and the Somerville council accomplished their goals because they all work together. Somerville is a perfect example of how a governing body should work.

I'm hoping the arguments that divided this council last year will stay in 2014. We should start the New Year with a clean slate. No doubt there will be disagreements, but those disagreements should lead to a healthy debate and not a bitter argument producing hard feelings that linger long after the meeting is adjourned.

— John F. Kennedy said, "Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer, but the right answer. Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future." I interpret that statement to mean: cut out the political games, do the right thing, stop crying about the past and make plans for the future.

People run for public office for different reasons. Some run for personal gain. Some have a personal agenda or worse, a vendetta. Some people do it just to help their party by filling an empty spot on the ballot. And some people do it to inflate their already inflated ego. The best reason to run is knowing that if you're elected, you can make a difference. That's why I'm sitting here today. I will make a difference, but I can't do it alone. If we all work together, we all will make a difference, and Raritan will be a better place to live because of it.

Thank you.