

2015 State of the Borough Speech

By Mayor Liptak

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, family and friends, welcome to our annual reorganization meeting of the Borough of Raritan. Thank you for joining us today. We are pleased to welcome back to our council Jim Foohey who served the borough as a councilman in previous years and welcome back Denise Carra for another term in office. When asked what was wrong with the United States, Senator Thomas Coburn from Oklahoma stated “it’s about the politicians and not about the United States and it should be about the United States and not the politicians.” Perhaps we need to paraphrase Dr. Coburn and ask what’s wrong with Raritan. Is it about the politicians and not about Raritan when it should be about Raritan and not the politicians? I sincerely hope that we will be able to set aside differences both personal and ideological and work for the good of the community this year. Effective government represents diverse opinions and works toward informed, conscientious decisions and compromises, for the good of the order, and not for personal gain or self-aggrandizement. We sit here to make Raritan the best it can be and the finest community in Somerset County.

Many positive things have happened this year that will benefit the borough going forward.

- Stone Bridge at Raritan opened the Veterans Building. It is beautiful and completely handicap accessible with wider doors and lowers countertops. Stone Bridge is an excellent example of what can happen when cooperation, compromise, and open dialogs occur between the developer and the borough.

- Phase two of the reconstruction of Orlando Drive was completed and we are anticipating the start of Phase Three in 2015. Thank you Stan Schrek for your perseverance and diligence on this project.
- Through the Somerville/Raritan/Bridgewater Regional Center Partnership we received four traffic calming signs that are in place on Woodmere Street approaching JFK School; on Anderson Street near the intersection of Second Street; on Bell Avenue and on Sherman Avenue. We will be receiving two more signs for placement in other parts of the borough in 2015.
- The MLUB approved an application for a Tim Horton's Coffee Shop and a Cold Stone Creamery on the West End Avenue site of the Fresh Foods Kitchen. Tim Horton's is a Canadian company very much like the well-known coffee shops that are here in the United States.
- Numerous smaller shops opened their doors on Somerset Street and Thompson and Anderson Streets as well.
- The Library Board of Trustees is presently working on the addition of a community room to the library that will accommodate various groups and committees who now use the lower level of the municipal building as a meeting space. The new room will also be used for library programs and will allow the library in cooperation with the Cultural and Historic Committee to exhibit various local historic artifacts on a rotating basis.
- We continue to benefit from a close cooperative relationship with Michael Catania, the Executive Director, of The Duke Farms Foundation as we move forward with the redevelopment of the riverfront.

It is very gratifying to work with so many dedicated and enthusiastic people, and I would be remiss if I did not thank our professional staff: Administrator Dan Jaxel; Borough Clerk Maggie Schmitt; Borough Attorney, Rich Wenner; Borough Engineer Stan Schrek; and Borough Planner Dave Maski. We also thank our Department of Public Works and our Police Department for the fine job they continue to do for the people of Raritan.

No community can function without its volunteers and we are grateful for their service to our borough. It is their altruistic desire to serve their town which compels them to public service. They give their time and talents to help plan our community and preserve our quality of life. Special recognition should be given to our Fire Department and Rescue Squad who respond 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Their commitment and dedication is beyond description. Since 2007 we have honored one volunteer each year with the Nicholas Esposito Volunteer of the Year award. For those of you who do not know, Mr. Esposito was a long time member of our Fire Department and many other committees as well as being our Clerk-Administrator for many, many years. He was the quintessential volunteer. His portrait hangs in the back of our Council Chambers. This year's honoree was Bill Mener our retiring fire chief. Bill and each of the previous winners will receive a framed picture of Somerset Street, circa 1909, engraved with their name as a memento of their service to Raritan. As we speak of volunteers we must mention Dan Soriano, who recently passed. He was an active member of our Cultural and Heritage Committee and also served as our Municipal Prosecutor and Borough Attorney. Earlier this year we also lost Jim Sibilia. Jim was a police officer with the borough but also served as a Councilman during the 1990's. In memory of Dan

and Jim and the many other people who passed from our community during 2014 I'd like to read a short passage from a poem by Linda Ellis titled "The Dash".

In conclusion, the Council and I would like to wish you and your loved ones good health, happiness and peace in the New Year. May God bless our servicemen and women; the United States; and the Borough of Raritan.