

Ladies and gentlemen; distinguished guests; family and friends; welcome to the annual re-organization meeting of the Borough of Raritan. The New Year is upon us. Beginnings have a way of remembering the past while looking forward to the future. Let us take a few moments today to look back and anticipate what 2013 will bring to Raritan. I am honored to be the Mayor of this fine community and so proud of the fine people who work and volunteer for us.

Our engineering department headed by our capable borough engineer, Stan Schrek, had a very active year. Improvements were made to Ashton Street, Marson Place, and Avon Place. This project concurred with the schedule stipulated by our infrastructure program and was fully funded with Borough capital. LaGrange Street was constructed and fully funded with a grant from NJDOT. Johnson Drive was also fully funded with NJDOT grant money. Due to poor performance, the original contractor was terminated and we are working with the bonding company and this project will resume in the spring. Design was completed for the Reconstruction of Orlando Drive, Phase 1, from Route 206 to Busky Lane. This project was substantially funded by two grants from NJDOT. Work will begin in the spring. We applied for a NJDOT grant to enable Orlando Drive, Phase 2, which will reconstruct the road from Busky Lane to Thompson Street. We expect to hear about the grant shortly. We have been working with NJ American Water to coordinate roadway repairs with the utility's capital improvement program. NJAC is now installing water main on Second Street. As the weather permits, new main will be installed on Orlando Drive from Thompson Street to Canal Street. Both roads will be milled and paved, from curb to curb, later this year. All work is funded by NJAC. Working with the Municipal Land Use Board, we prepared a Land

Use Amendment which will serve as a guide for the redevelopment of the Orlando Drive/River Front Corridor. The Land Use Amendment was followed by the new Land Use Ordinances which provide planning and zoning criteria for any new development within the corridor. The planning work required to prepare both documents was funded through a County Planning Grant. 2012 marked the first grant received through the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJAC). This matching grant is funding a "Green Development" checklist. Work is in progress and will be rolled out late this year.

The ongoing normal function of the Tax assessor's office included interaction with the Borough Council, continuous property market analysis, sales studies, tax map revisions and this year, in particular, a successful appeal to the State Tax Court. Without going into great detail this will have substantial impacts upon the distribution of shared burdens including county tax and regional school taxes along with major implications for the defense of tax appeals during the coming year. This should also serve as a reminder to all assessors of the importance of thoroughly investigating any sales which reflect a ratio that seems out of line with the areas overall ration. Thanks go to Glenn Stives, our Tax Assessor, for his tenacity and hard work on this appeal. The assessor's office accomplished 18 inspections, which included decks, polls, patios, and renovations. These inspections translated into 15 added assessments that have a total assessment value of \$32,800 which should also help with this year's tax rate. The Stone Bridge at Raritan project has not been issued its first CO yet and we anticipate significant assessment for this project this tax year.

Our finance office reports that in the borough 690 properties received rebates for NJ 2010 Homestead Credit decreasing that 1st quarter 2012

property taxes. The 2012 Tax sale was held in November and had only 5 properties sold. As of the of 12/31/12 our collection rate was almost 98.69%. Thank you to our very conscientious citizens who actually try to pay their taxes before they are due.

The Office of Vital Statistics recorded 38 marriage licenses, 56 certified copies of marriage licenses, 134 burial permits and 840 death certificates.

Our building department was very busy this year with a total \$19,537,683.00 in construction permits issued. We had some notable construction projects for 2012 including:

- Tenant fit out for a new Guitar Center store at the circle
- Installation of new labs and many new mechanical up grades including new equipment at Ortho and Janssen Pharmaceuticals and Johnson and Johnson ITS facilities.
- Stone Bridge at Raritan housing development currently has 231 residential units under construction. The first building containing 36 residential apartments is currently being leased with occupancy within the next few weeks. The clubhouse is also up near the entrance on route 202.

The rental property registration and inspection program has been proceeding quite well. 375 residential apartment inspections were conducted this year. \$ 64,573.00 has been collected this year including \$3200.00 in penalties.

Early January 2012 was the beginning of a new standard of operating for the Raritan Borough Police Department. Somerset County Communications took on the responsibility of dispatching

for the PD. Repairs and upgrades were completed at the end of 2011 thus allowing for the transfer to County without any issues or problems and Somerset County has proven to provide the highest level of professional service to our borough.

During the calendar year steps were taken to upgrade community policing efforts. Extra walking patrols were added to the daily duties of our police officers in the area of Somerset Street and the Nevius Street Bridge. By adding these patrols it increased the visibility to the public and communication with residents.

Patrolman Andrew Regati joined the department in September replacing Patrolman Anthony DiGraziano who took on a new position with the Bridgewater PD. The following statistics for the time period of 1/1/12 through 12/11/12 are as follows:

- 12,456 calls for service
- 652 Motor Vehicle crash or hit and run reports
- 281 adult offenders and 22 juvenile offenders arrested
- Completed 773 investigations reports
- 1091 motor vehicle moving violations issued
- 373 parking violations and 106 radar summonses.
- 61 DUI arrests were made

As we mentioned before, the Raritan Fire Department distinguished themselves this year. During 2012 the Fire Department responded to exactly 300 alarms, the most ever in a single year and during Hurricane Sandy they manned the firehouse around the clock for three days and responded to over 70 alarms during the storm. The Fire Department was a key lynchpin in the very successful Rubber Duck Race.

Our recreation department celebrated the 60th anniversary of Raritan Baseball with many former players returning for an “old timers” game. Both the Halloween Parade and the Easter Egg Hunt were bigger and better than previous years and the Recreation Committee has taken on the task of running “Santa Claus Comes to Town” which they did very successfully this past year.

As with every community, we rely on our citizen volunteers to help get the work done. We are thankful for those people who give so freely with their time and talents to make our community run so well. Each year we honor one of those hometown heroes for whom the words “I don’t have time” do not exist in their vocabulary. Irene Salek Sixt was honored as our 2012 Nicholas Esposito Volunteer of the Year. Irene, thank you for all you do for us and thanks to each and every person who helps the borough in any capacity. That is especially true for our fire and rescue personnel who truly went above and beyond during Hurricane Sandy in October. At the height of the storm, as the fire department was being called back to the firehouse because of the sustained wind velocity, our firefighters encountered an active house fire. Disregarding their own personal safety they began knocking down the fire and saved the structure plus those located close to the fire. We also send thanks to the Somerville Fire Department who responded with mutual aid and to the Somerville Rescue Squad who responded too.

In September the Borough embarked on an amazing journey with the Steeplechase Cancer Center located at SMC when we held our very first

Raritan River Fest and Rubber Duck Race. I truly believe that no one thought it would be as successful as it was and I want to thank Councilman Don Tozzi for all the time and effort he put into that amazing day. He kept the groups motivated and stopped us from “quacking up” from the pressure.

The borough was privilege to partner with OISCA International and was the recipient of lovely flowering Japanese cherry trees which were planted at JFK School last May in commemoration of the Japanese cherry trees that were planted in Washington, D.C. 100 years ago. Thank you to Councilwoman Gara for coordinating that memorable day and to Mr. Prospero Tayco for facilitating the securing of the trees.

As we move into 2013 you can now find our updated code book on line and we anticipate the startup of our new website beginning sometime in March. It will be more comprehensive and easier to navigate. Beginning with this year, I am requiring all departments to submit to the Council a 5 year operational plan including any capital purchases and expenditures. We need to continuously monitor our expenses and be prepared for any unexpected expenditures.

I would be remiss if I did not welcome back Councilmen Giraldi, Soriano, Lobell and Tozzi and Councilwomen Gara and Carra. I anticipate another incredible year working with you all. Although this year was a banner year for the Borough we also felt the loss of three incredible people who affected the lives of us all here in Raritan. Lynn Bray was an amazing woman who never said no to anything I asked her to do. She was the very first, and I think the best, leader of our Youth on Main Street group. Lynn was taken from us all too soon. Rose Pacifico was a dedicated teacher, sister, and one of the mainstays of

the Library Board. She also made the best chocolate cover graham cracker cookies in the world! Mayor Steve DelRocco was the man my class wrote to about starting something to honor John Basilone. He was a true gentleman and a gentle man who loved Raritan and was part of the fiber of our community for his entire 94 years. He was a mentor to many, a role model and the founder of the recreation program here in town. We should all emulate these three Raritan people who in their own special way made our town a better place to live. Council and I send our heartfelt sympathies to their families.

In closing may you and your loved ones enjoy good health and happiness this year. May God bless all our young men and women in the armed services wherever they may be stationed. Keep them safe and bring them home quickly.

Robert Zimmerman said it best: *“May God bless you and keep you always, May your wishes all come true, May you always do for others, and let others do for you.*