

Mayor's Address

January 2, 2011

Welcome, Happy New Year and thank you all for coming. It is clear from the turnout tonight that others share my sense of enthusiasm for the year ahead. Franklin Lakes is a great community with residents who care and unselfishly give of their talents. Many are here tonight as evidence of that commitment to our Borough. We also have others here tonight who don't reside in Franklin Lakes but are connected in other important ways. Whether it is a representative from our State or County government, past members of our governing body, religious leaders, Borough professionals, employees, friends and family members, all are here with a common purpose – to celebrate Franklin Lakes and to christen the team who will lead us forward. With the support of you in this room tonight and the many others who are here in spirit, we can and will meet the challenges ahead with a goal of doing what is best for Franklin Lakes.

It is a great honor to serve as your Mayor and I begin this role with great enthusiasm. I want to thank all of those who supported me in my recent campaigns for Council and then Mayor. Through this process I have been fortunate to have the support of so many talented people without whom none of this would have been possible.

I congratulate Nathalie Lota on her second term on the Council and Frank Pedone who begins anew. Combine them with our returning Council members; Council President Mike Friscia, Paulette Ramsey and Bill Smith; we have a governing body that has all the requisite skills to meet our goals for the coming year. It's a great team.

Two people that are not here tonight deserve recognition: Mayor Maura DeNicola and Councilman Steve Marcus. Both have ended their terms serving our community here in Franklin Lakes and I want to express my appreciation for their dedication and commitment to our Borough. The governing body gives generously while sacrificing time away from their careers and family; to all past and present members of the governing body, thank you.

I also want to thank the volunteers. Our fire, ambulance and OEM volunteers are probably our most giving, and their service, most vital. They are staffed with professionals who we entrust with our lives. They are there for us at all hours of the day and night under any circumstances. We are fortunate to have such dedicated people and we owe them a debt of gratitude. Additionally, we have many volunteers that serve on our various boards and committees that are part of our governing process. Thank you to the many residents who volunteer their time and talents giving to our community.

I want to spend a moment recognizing one of our most important assets - Borough employees and professionals. These are the people that make this Borough tick. They are led by Greg Hart our Borough Administrator. They are a talented group of people who work very hard and tend not to get the recognition they deserve. Over the course of this year I will endeavor to increase

awareness of our employees and professionals so that you better understand what they do and the services they provided. In my year on Council I have come to know and appreciate the many special people we have working for us. I have asked Greg to post a list of accomplishments on the website so that you can see all the things they do for our Borough. I think you will be impressed.

All of our accomplishments in 2010 are significant, but I believe that our Council tackled one of our most important issues – stabilization of our financial position. Despite persistent economic woes and past practices - surplus spending to cover gaps, tripling debt and excessive employment costs – we have made progress. This year we have made many tough decisions that will impact next year –we stabilized or surplus, we actually reduced our debt, and we renegotiated employment and service contracts, just to name a few initiatives. These actions are already saving tax payer dollars. More must be done and we are beginning to see some help from Trenton. The proverbial ship is turning and we are headed in the right direction to meet our 2% tax caps without compromising the quality of service.

We have many goals for 2011 and I will work closely with our Council in the coming weeks to finalize them. My focus in these discussions will be:

Property Taxes- We only control about 15% of your property taxes. The County represents another 15% and nearly 70% pays for our schools. For the 15% that is attributable to this governing body, I am committed to a zero based spending program each year designed to minimize your taxes. We will be under the 2% cap, but there are still too many exceptions to that cap which we must attack, like healthcare costs. We must keep our tax rate among the lowest in the County.

Affordable Housing– We must protect the natural beauty of our Borough through aggressive management our affordable housing obligations. In light of the new developments in COAH legislation and the rejection of the Borough plan, immediate action is necessary to establish a realistic plan that is accepted by the agency and allows the Borough to successfully negotiate with developers.

Harmony and Service – We must work together as a governing body, volunteers, committees, boards, employees and professionals as one team. There is no reason for political discord and our focus must be to resolve the key issues that face our town. The delivery of unsurpassed municipal services should be our goal. Residents and taxpayers are our clients and we must promote a sense of client service by instituting a meritocracy in the management of our employees.

The New Year will be filled with challenges and I look forward to an open dialogue with residents and taxpayers. I invite your comments, suggestions and involvement. To aide in that effort, I will be establishing set hours for anyone who wants to visit the Mayor’s office and discuss issues that are of concern to you. Of course, my door will always be open and my cell

phone on, but to be assured of getting me, these set times will ensure that your issues are heard. Please check our website for times.

Finally, I want to recognize my family. My wife Maureen, daughter Christina and son Charlie, I love you guys and I thank you for supporting me and coping with the added attention associated with being the family of an elected official.

Following on the theme of Bishop Flesey's Invocation, this is a new beginning and with the spirit of teamwork and togetherness we will excel. Thank you and God Bless Franklin Lakes.