

## **MAYOR BIVONA'S ADDRESS**

Welcome, Happy New Year and thank you all for coming. It is clear from the turnout today 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 today as evidence of that commitment to our Borough. Today we celebrate Franklin Lakes and 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.

I do want recognize a few people today:

[List of former governing body from audience]

I want to recognize Councilwoman Ramsey. Carrying on a long family tradition, Paulette has been a Councilwoman now for 17 years, Council President for five separate years, and she begins her 6th term today. Her service to Franklin Lakes is a daily affair for many, many years and she puts her heart and soul into her work. Who else drives around town with a license plate "LUVFLKS"? She is also our local historian who has worked to preserve our Borough's history including right here in this room. The pictures you see on the wall and our newly adorned presentation cabinet are the work of Paulette and her daughter. Thank you Paulette for your efforts and we all look forward to working with you in the coming years.

I congratulate Joe Kelly, who could not be here today because of an important family commitment, on his election to the Council. I will be swearing in Joe at our next meeting on Tuesday night. Combine Paulette and Joe with our returning Council members; the Honorable, Bill Smith, Nathalie Lota, Charles Kahwaty and Frank Pedone; we have a governing body that has all the requisite skills to meet our goals for the coming year. It's a great team.

I do want to take this occasion to recognize Michael Friscia. Mike's term on the Council ended in 2011 after two terms and six years on the Council. He also sat on our Planning Board since 1998. We honored Mike at our final 2011 Council meeting but I want to recognize his many years of service again today and to express our appreciation for his dedication and commitment to our Borough.

I want to also thank the governing body who 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. In my two years on the governing body, I have come to know and appreciate the many special people we have working for us.

I wanted to briefly touch on some key accomplishments during this past year.

#### Key Accomplishments:

- Successful management within the budget that held to the 2% cap; lowered residential taxes, maintained surplus and reduced debt
- Effectively managed resources through two unusually severe storms; DPW, police, fire ambulance and OEM responded countless emergencies to keep our residents safe and protect our homes
- Vastly improved communication programs with residents with expanded scope and venues
- Restructured the building department with a strong dedication to customer service, improving client satisfaction and overall enforcement of our zoning ordinances
- Opened the Nature Preserve as a community asset and laid the foundation for a unique park for all to enjoy through a partnership with the Trail Conference
- Dedicated an improved Memorial Pond honoring to those who lost their lives to acts of terrorism
- Introduced a concussion policy to keep our kids safe in our recreation programs; opened additional venues to team activity and reinforced our Wellness campaign in our schools
- Instituted the beginnings of a Performance Management system to further build an efficient management process and completed customer service training for employees
- Laid the groundwork for an effective planning process for buildings and grounds by forming a trust account, setting a priority list and hiring an architect for the future capital needs

We have many goals for 2012 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 must continue to find ways to reduce costs while maintaining our service to residents. We must continue to slowly reduce our debt and use fundraising to augment our capital plans. All of this with the goal of keeping our tax rate among the lowest in the County.

**Affordable Housing–** We must protect the natural beauty of our Borough through aggressive management of our affordable housing obligations. Once legal issues are sorted out and obligations are clear, we must be prepared to negotiate with developers.

**Capital Plan –** We must finalize our capital plans and begin active fundraising to support our public safety needs. We must develop a true capital plan with a funding plan that is feasible and meets our financial goals.

**Recreation and Parks –** We must continue to develop our recreation fields, facilities and parks through partnerships, funding grants and fundraising – Nature Preserve paths, Municipal field trails, Community Center improvements, Pulis basketball courts/parking, McBride field improvements, to name a few.

**Sewers –** We must work closely with the NWBUA to ensure that the proposed sanitary sewer lines are consistent with our business district needs and help support the continued upgrade of our business district, while keeping its low impact street plan.

**Service –** We must continue to develop our systems to track performance and customer service to we can ensure we are delivering outstanding service to our residents and taxpayers.

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 starting something new, “Meet the Mayor”. Once a quarter, I will host an open house at Borough Hall for anyone who would like to attend to discuss anything on your mind. The first meeting will be January 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome. Of course, my door will always be open and my cell phone on. I am usually available, so please stop by or make an appointment but to be assured of getting me.

Finally, I want to recognize the families of the governing body. To my family and those of all the governing body and volunteers, I thank you for supporting us and coping with the added attention associated with being the family of an elected official.

Following on the theme of Rabbi Kaplan’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.