

MAYOR BIVONA'S ADDRESS

JANUARY 1, 2013

Welcome, Happy New Year and thank you all for coming. I hope you all had a pleasant New Year's celebration.

On behalf of the Governing Body we thank you for your support over the 2012 year and look forward to serving you in the year ahead. It is clear from the turnout today that others share our 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. In the fall we celebrated the Borough's 90th anniversary and today we celebrate and christen the team who will lead us forward into year 91. With the support of you in this room today 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 want to start by congratulating Councilmen Kahwaty and Lambrix. Charlie is beginning his second term after replacing me and Tom is beginning his first full term after replacing Bill Smith. Having worked with both Councilmen, I am excited about the opportunity to continue the progress we have made in so many areas. I also want to thank Councilman Kahwaty for serving as Council President the last year. He filled in nicely for me at times and set new records for brevity and efficiency in meetings. I welcome Councilwoman Lota back to her second term as Council President. We all look forward to working with you for the coming year as the leader of the Council.

We are very fortunate to have such a great Council. This group has worked very hard this past year. I remember telling Councilman Lambrix before he started that it wasn't much work, two meetings a month...I fibbed. I looked back at my calendar for 2012 and noted over 120 meetings. Sorry Tom. Combine Nathalie, Charlie and Tom with our other returning Council members; the Honorable, Paulette Ramsey, Frank Pedone and Joe Kelly; we have a governing body that has all the requisite skills to meet our goals for the coming year. Add in Borough Administrator Greg Hart, Borough Clerk Sally Bleeker, Borough Attorney Bill Smith and Borough Engineer Kevin Boswell who prepare and guide us through this busy schedule with great expertise. And to all of our other professionals who provide their specific expertise where and when necessary, we are grateful. It's a great team.

I also want to thank the volunteers. With our proclamation we honor Fire, Ambulance and OEM. Given the last two years of storms their importance to our community has grown. We are also fortunate to have so many residents serve various boards and committees. There are too many to name but they volunteer their time for Planning, Zoning, Shade Tree, Board of Health, Environmental, Recreation, Library, Nature Preserve, Municipal Alliance, Public Events and other ad hoc committees. Thank you to all who volunteer so unselfishly.

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 three 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:

- We provided strong across the board delivery of essential services to our residents and taxpayers with a higher degree of responsiveness.
- Successful management within the budget that held to the 2% cap; increased surplus to \$2.3 million and reduced debt to by over \$2 million the last two years to a level of about \$14 million (more work to be done).
- We were able to fund some additional capital improvements without bonding with a goal of funding normal recurring items from operating expenses – goal to reduce reliance on debt.
- Effectively managed resources through hurricane Sandy; 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; from calendars to eblasts to Facebook and other items – we will continue to push until we get to everyone.
- Instituted a “Meet the Mayor” night with good interest and attendance.
- Our Planning and Zoning Boards worked hard to ensure consistency with our master plans and ordinances.
- Our Environmental and Shade Tree worked hard to protect our environment and improve recycling efforts.
- Continued the fight to preserve our zoning on the golf course. We may have to compromise so as not to risk the worst case, but the road ahead is a bit clearer because of the work we have done.
- We have identified and contracted for the purchase of property that would have become dense housing and replace that with a Borough initiative to supply special needs housing to serve those in need, including residents.
- Established the Nature Preserve as a community asset and a unique park for all to enjoy through a partnership with the Trail Conference; through donations and grants, more enhancements to come in the spring.

- With the support of our Rec Committee and many volunteer coaches we held recreation and sports programs for over 3,000 participants and added to our Wellness campaign in our schools.
- Added public events such as movie under the stars, trunk or treat and wellness walks at the nature preserve to provide more opportunity for community events.

We have many goals for 2013 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.

School Safety - We must come together with our schools to share information and ideas that will ensure that our school safety programs are the best they can be.

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 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. 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 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.