

# MAYOR BIVONA'S ADDRESS

## JANUARY 6, 2015

Happy New Year to all, wishing you a happy and healthy 2015!

On behalf of the Governing Body we thank you for your support in 2014 and look forward to serving you in the year ahead. As I enter my second four year term as Mayor, I am excited about the future of our fine Borough.

I want to start by congratulating Councilwoman Paulette Ramsey and Councilman Joseph Kelly who each begin a new three year term on the Council. We are very fortunate to have a terrific team of Councilmembers who all bring specific areas of expertise that allows us to effectively and efficiently deal with all issues. No, we don't agree on everything and we have healthy debates on issues but we always seem to be driven by doing what is right for Franklin Lakes. We respect each other – we are friends, neighbors and proud residents of the town we serve.

Here is your team for the year ahead: Councilmembers Paulette Ramsey, Charles Kahwaty, Thomas Lambrix, Joseph Kelly, Joseph Cadicina and Ann Swist. 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 employees and professionals who provide their specific expertise where and when necessary, we are grateful. It's a great team.

During the past year we had strong contributions from all facets of our Borough operations, and I share some of the highlights below. None of this gets done without a great group of employees, professionals and volunteers. For 15% of your tax bill you get a multitude of services including public safety, recreation and parks, environmental and community affairs, public works, planning and development and administration and finance.

### Key Accomplishments 2014:

- We provided a broader array of essential services to our residents and taxpayers with a higher degree of responsiveness. We can now track performance with our new "Performance Dashboard" now expanded to additional departments and displayed for all to see on our website.
- Successful management within the budget limiting tax increase to under 2% maintaining one of the lowest tax rates in the State; increased surplus level and reduced debt.
- Finalized a six-year capital spending plan that provides for all essential capital purchases and projects for the Borough while still reducing overall debt levels at the end of that period.
- Refinanced our outstanding debt reducing funding costs and locking in very favorable long term financing. Moody's awarded its highest rating "Aaa" to our bonds.

- Public safety provided outstanding service with a mix of employees and dedicated volunteers.
  - Police – 24 hour protection responding to over 18,000 service calls
  - Fire – volunteers covering over 425 fire calls
  - Ambulance – volunteers responding to 763 calls
  - OEM – drilling and preparing for emergencies that face our residents
  - DPW – clearing roads, maintaining parks and municipal buildings
  - Courts – processing approximately 4,000 criminal, traffic and ordinance violations
- Our Construction Department and Board of Health processed thousands of permits, licenses and inspections supporting our residents.
- Improved upon our award winning communication programs with residents with expanded scope and venues.
- Our Planning and Zoning Boards worked hard to ensure consistency with our master plans and ordinances.
- Our Environmental and Shade Tree Commissions worked hard to protect our environment and improve recycling efforts.
- Improved our parks, recreation facilities and nature trails using grants and donations to enhance the natural beauty of our Borough and provide improved recreation activities.
- With the support of our Recreation Committee and many volunteer coaches we held recreation and sports programs for over 3,000 participants and added activities to our wellness programs.
- We completed our Mayors Wellness application to the State asking for a “Healthy Town” designation supported by a robust program of activities and programs that promote well-being.
- Instituted a new annual Mayor’s Volunteer award program and recognized ten individuals from various volunteer activities in town highlighting their contributions and the virtues of volunteerism.
- Established a synergy task force comprised of our Borough, Library and School administrators seeking ways to work together more effectively and efficiently.

We have many goals for 2015 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 will continue to find ways to control costs while maintaining our service to residents. We will continue to slowly reduce our debt and fund recurring capital items through operating reserves. All of this with the goal of keeping our tax rate among the lowest in the State.

**Shared Services and Synergies** – We will find ways to share services and ideas in a coordinated fashion with other governmental groups, towns, schools and libraries. These efforts will result in more effective delivery of services and the potential to reduce costs.

**Public Safety** – We will proactively promote and highlight best practices for keeping our residents and our property safe and secure. We will increase our public safety communications across the board.

**Roads** – We will improve our roads and our responsiveness to road repairs while keeping with budgets. We must update our assessment process and responsiveness.

**Capital Projects** – We will execute our capital plan and begin the necessary infrastructure projects scheduled for the year such as municipal sewers, police headquarters renovation and purchase of fire trucks.

**Recreation and Parks** – We will continue to develop our recreation fields, facilities and parks. We must work closely with the Wyckoff Y on the renovation of the Community Center and the delivery of programs to our residents.

**Sewers** – We will work closely with the NWBUA to ensure that we provide voluntary service hook ups and appropriate expansion to meet the needs of the Borough and its residents.

**Special Needs Housing** – We will finalize the plans for our special needs housing project that will bring much needed capacity in a low-impact natural setting.

**Municipal Alliance** – We will increase our emphasis and martial our resources to proactively prevent and discourage drug and alcohol abuse – for the youth, adult and senior populations.

**Service** – We will 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 is 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 to be assured of getting me.

Finally, I want to recognize the families of the governing body, employees and volunteers. I thank you for supporting us which allows us to better serve our community.

Thank you and God Bless Franklin Lakes.