

MAYOR BIVONA'S ADDRESS

JANUARY 5, 2016

Happy New Year to all, wishing you a happy and healthy 2016!

The municipal organization in Franklin Lakes is comprised of about 70 employees and countless volunteers. We provide essential services that include Public Safety, Public Works, Recreation and Parks, Environmental and Community services, Planning and Development and Finance and Administration. We are here to serve the residents and taxpayers of Franklin Lakes funded primarily by your tax dollars which represent about 15% of your property tax bill. We care for those funds and provide these services with a high degree of concern and accountability. We believe that Franklin Lakes is an extraordinary town in which to live, raise a family, conduct business and enjoy the beauty of our natural surroundings. We are routinely recognized as one of the best places to live in our state and beyond. Our goal is to keep it that way and improve where we can while keeping property tax rates among the lowest in the state. On behalf of the Governing Body we thank you for your support in 2015 and look forward to serving you in the year ahead. We are excited about the future and have a great team in place to make additional strides in the years ahead.

I want to start by congratulating Councilmen Charles Kahwaty and Tom Lambrix on their reelection. I have worked with these gentlemen for several years now and consider myself fortunate to have such great partners. Each begins 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. This is an experienced team – a combined forty-three years of experience on the governing body that has helped us navigate difficult issues with a high degree of professionalism. And that is the way we conduct ourselves. 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 Joseph Cadicina, Charles Kahwaty, Joseph Kelly, Thomas Lambrix, Paulette Ramsey 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 – and the leadership of Greg Hart our Borough Administrator.

Key Accomplishments 2015:

- Our Council and Finance group led us to another year of a less than 2% tax increase while keeping within our 6-year capital and debt plan with the goal of reducing debt and increasing surplus.
- Our Public safety professionals provided outstanding service with a mix of employees and dedicated volunteers.
 - Police – 24-hour protection responding to over 19,000 service calls including 500 medical emergencies. Arrests totaled 167. Home burglaries were at eight year low of 6.
 - Fire – volunteers covering over 553 fire calls
 - Ambulance – volunteers responding to 780 calls
 - OEM – drilling and preparing for emergencies that face our residents
 - Courts – processing approximately 3,000 criminal, traffic and ordinance violations
- Investment in our town continues to rise with over \$37 million of added assessments during the year representing new construction completed.
- We acquired 84 acres of donated parkland and settled several years of tax appeals while maintaining an important job and tax assessment base in the Express Scripts settlement.
- Our Community Center project, in partnership with the Wyckoff Y, was completed resulting in a fully renovated center that is a state-of-the-art resource for our residents.
- We filed a revised COAH plan with the courts to protect immunity from developers who desire to bring higher density housing to our borough.
- Our supportive housing project cleared the latest hurdle, gaining full funding, allowing for construction to begin next year.
- Our Municipal Alliance team expanded its reach and resources responding to the rapid increase in drug abuse, specifically heroin, in our town.
- We installed sewers to all of our municipal buildings; began a major project to upgrade our police headquarters; and ordered two new fire trucks to replace three old and less efficient vehicles.

- We settled our two outstanding union contract negotiations which required an enormous effort of all involved.
- Our Department of Public Works kept our infrastructure sound: road paving, patching and sweeping, updated evaluation of all roads, building of a new recycling center, upkeep of all parks and recreation facilities and cost effective outsourcing of routine landscape maintenance.
- Our Construction Department and Board of Health processed thousands of permits, licenses and inspections supporting our residents.
- 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, shade trees and improve recycling efforts.
- 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 offered IMPACT concussion testing to all student athletes.
- Governing Body adopted 44 ordinances, held 33 meetings and countless committee sessions, supported by our Clerk's office.

We have many goals for 2016 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.

Public Safety – We will enhance public safety capabilities with enhanced training, equipment and use of technology. Proactive focus and communication on problem areas to ensure positive trend lines continue.

COAH – We will fight to uphold our affordable housing plan, preserving our immunity against aggressive developers while maintaining the quality of life in our borough.

Construction – We will work hard to ensure that new construction projects, such as the Toll development, supportive housing and the new downtown business district

redevelopment, comply with plans and ordinances and are beneficial to residents and surrounding homes.

Recreation and Parks – We will close the acquisition of the donated parkland from Express Scripts and incorporate it into our parkland portfolio for the enjoyment of the public.

Special Needs Housing – We will work with our developer to construct our 40-units supportive housing project that meets a huge demand from those with special needs and helps the borough meet its affordable housing obligation.

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

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.