TOWNSHIP OF DENVILLE
MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
REORGANIZATION MEETING

JANUARY 3, 2019

The Meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Municipal Clerk Kathryn Bowditch-Leon, who then read the Statement of Compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. Boy Scout Troop 118 advanced the Colors and led the Salute to the Flag, which was followed by an Invocation by Reverend Heather Valosin, Pastor of the Denville Community Church, UM.

The Clerk recognized the following State and County Officials:
Marilyn Cioffi on behalf of Senator Anthony Bucco and Assemblyman Anthony Bucco, Tony Luby on behalf of Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll, Freeholder Kathryn DeFillippo, Freeholder Deborah Smith and Freeholder Heather Darling.

ROLL CALL:
Present: Bergen, Borowiec, Buie, Gabel, Lyden, Murphy, Witte
Absent: None
Also present were Mayor Andes, Administrator Ward and Attorney John Jansen.

Municipal Clerk Bowditch-Leon then called for nominations for Council President.
Councilman Murphy nominated Douglas Gabel. Councilwoman Witte seconded the nomination.
The Clerk asked if there were any other nominations and hearing none, closed the nominations.
ROLL CALL FOR NOMINATION OF DOUGLAS GABEL FOR COUNCIL PRESIDENT:
AYES: Murphy, Witte, Buie, Bergen, Lyden, Borowiec, Gabel
ABSENT: None
Clerk Bowditch-Leon then administered the Oath of Office to President Gabel.
Council President Gabel assumed the President’s chair on the dais.

President Gabel recognized Sheriff James Gannon, Freeholder Director Douglas Cabana and County Clerk Ann Grossi who were now in the audience. He then read a statement which may be found at the end of these minutes.

OPEN PUBLIC PORTION:
No one wished to be heard.
CLOSE PUBLIC PORTION.

MAYOR’S STATE OF THE MUNICIPALITY ADDRESS:
Mayor Andes then read the State of the Municipality Address, a copy of which is attached to the end of these minutes.

CONSENT AGENDA:
R-19-01: Resolution Designating Official Newspaper for Notices in 2019
R-19-02: Resolution Designating the Township of Denville Municipal Council Meeting Dates for the Year 2019
R-19-03: Resolution Designating Legal Depositories for Public Monies for 2019 Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:5-14
R-19-04: Resolution Appointing Assessment Lien Searchers for the Year 2019
Township Council
1-3-2019

R-19-05: Resolution Appointing Custodian of Petty Cash Fund for the Recreation Department for the Year 2019
R-19-06: Resolution Authorizing Tax Assessor to Enter into Tax Appeal Settlements on Behalf of the Township of Denville for 2019
R-19-07: Resolution Establishing Interest Penalty Charges on Delinquent Taxes for the Year 2019 Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:4-67
R-19-08: Resolution Appointing Municipal Council Liaison Representatives to Various Committees, Boards and Commission within the Township of Denville
R-19-09: Resolution Extending Advice and Consent of the Township of Denville Municipal Council to Various Mayoral Appointments
R-19-10: Resolution Designating Year 2019 Public Agency Compliance Officer (P.A.C.O.) for the Township of Denville
R-19-11: Resolution Rejecting Bids for the First Avenue Streetscape Improvement Project and Granting Permission to Re-Bid.

President Gabel asked if anyone from the Council or the public would like to have anything removed from the Consent Agenda. No one responded.

MOTION TO APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA:
Moved by Member Witte, Seconded by Member Buie.
AYES: Witte, Buie, Murphy, Bergen, Lyden, Borowiec, President Gabel
NAYS: None

NON-CONSENT AGENDA:
R-19-12: Resolution Authorizing Temporary Budget for the Year 2019
MOTION TO APPROVE R-19-12:
Moved by Member Murphy, Seconded by Member Lyden
AYES: Murphy, Lyden, Buie, Witte, Bergen, Borowiec, President Gabel
NAYS: None

President Gabel advised that the Oath of Allegiance would now be administered to several individuals and all appointees.
Municipal Clerk Kathryn Bowditch-Leon and Mayor Andes administered the Oath to the following people:
John P. Jansen, Esq., Municipal Attorney
Members of the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment and all other appointees who were present.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Moved by Member Witte, Seconded by Member Lyden
AYES: Unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Kathryn Bowditch-Leon, RMC
Municipal Clerk
Thank you Councilman Murphy (who nominates) and the rest of the Council for your support and also to the residents of Denville, especially Ward 1 for your continued confidence in me.

I want to thank my wife, Chris, and my children, Marissa and Jason, who continue to allow me to do this job. Without their support, I would be unable to serve.

I'd like to thank Mayor Andes for your friendship, wisdom and counsel over the past 7 years. Additionally, Administrator Ward, thank you for your patience, listening and responsiveness. It is much appreciated.

I would like to thank the various elected officials in attendance, past and present, for attending tonight’s reorganizational meeting. I want to thank you Pastor Heather Valosin for sharing the Invocation with us this evening. I'd also like to thank the Boy Scouts from Troop 118 for their participation with presenting the colors this evening.

Last, but not least, I want to thank the many volunteers of our Township. I consider Denville to be a volunteer community. It is what makes us a beloved community. Give us a great cause and we will rise to the challenge, whether it is to build a playground, enhance our sports facilities, clean the river, build trails, serve our Seniors, help those who are less fortunate, beautify our township, preserve our history or support green sustainability. Our countless volunteers who work throughout the year, to us, you are priceless.

As I reflect on 2018, we had a busy year. I’m going to defer to the Mayor who will highlight in his State of the Municipality remarks, many of the Council’s and Administration’s accomplishments and challenges we’ve tackled.

I would like to share with you briefly a perspective from this side of the diesis. One of the resolutions that we will pass this evening will be our liaison appointments. Each council member has 4 or more committees that he or she are responsible for. They attend monthly meetings, share ideas, work side by side with fellow committee members and report back to the council. We get a chance to see what really makes Denville function as well as it does. For those
of you who are gathered here tonight, I’m preaching to the choir, but I would encourage you to talk with your neighbors and friends and invite them to become involved in our communities many volunteer organizations. There is just something special about giving back to one’s community.

I look forward to working with the council, debating the tough issues, finding solutions and putting ordinances and plans into place that support the wishes of the residents of Denville. This goes both ways. Should we identify ordinances that are no longer needed or outdated, we’ll look to simplify, consolidate or remove them. We look forward to residents making their voices heard as well. All residents are welcome to attend any Council meeting to address the council. We will also do our best to be as transparent as we can and leverage numerous channels to communicate with residents.

As was stated in the Oath of Office I just took, I will “do my best” as I serve as Council President. I reminded you last year when appointed Council President for the first time that it is no coincidence that the Boy Scout’s Oath contains the same “Do Your Best” and I have lived that promise for practically my entire life. I look forward to doing the same in this role as Council President.

I love our wonderful township. When I am out of town, I enjoy bragging about our quaint and prosperous downtown, great library, our great school system and all of our devoted community volunteer committees. It is also comforting to live in a safe and protected community. Hats off to our volunteer Fire Department and EMT’s and to our outstanding Police force that keeps us safe and keeps the peace each and every day. To our DPW and all township employees, we also say thank you.

Looking forward into 2019 we do have a number of challenges ahead of us; addressing our affordable housing obligation, flood mitigation, our evolving downtown, and fiscally responsible budgets, just to mention a few. I look forward to the challenge and I’m confident this very capable council will deliver appropriate resolutions and ordinances to meet these challenges.

So with that I say, let’s get started.
Mayor Thomas W. Andes Re-org Address January 3, 2019

Thank you. I hope everyone had a Happy Holiday Season and I wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

We are very fortunate here in Denville to have the three groups of individuals it takes to properly operate and provide quality services and programs to our community. I would like to thank the entire team of elected and appointed Officials for continuing to work together so effectively.

Secondly, our Township staff, led by our Township Administrator Steven Ward, our Department Heads and each of our employees who do a very fine and professional job every day serving the public and our community. And last but not least, our many volunteers for their hard work and dedication to our community.

It is the volunteers that make up the fabric of our community and their tireless commitment that allows us to provide so many services that we may not otherwise be able to afford.

Congratulations to Doug Gabel on being re-appointed as Council President. You have performed the duties of Council President extremely well during the past year and I have enjoyed working closely with you. I can tell you, each Council Member brings a unique perspective and opinion into public policy discussions for the betterment of our community. This Council continues to demonstrate that when our elected officials work as a team, the people of Denville are best served.

It is my pleasure to highlight some of our community’s accomplishments and challenges we faced in 2018 as well as discussing our plans for this coming year.

In the spirit of volunteerism and patriotism, Denville participated in “Wreaths across America” for the second year in a row. On December 15th, this event, coordinated completely by volunteers and donations, several hundred people laid wreaths upon the graves of our deceased Veterans.

In October, the Township dedicated the courtyard in front of the Council Chambers as the “Jack O’Keefe Plaza.” He was a former Mayor, Freeholder and WWII veteran.

We also recognized many of our Denville Veterans and Active Military Personal throughout the year either at Township Council Meetings or in private settings where each are presented with a small token of our community’s appreciation. We look forward to continuing our veteran recognitions in 2019 and encourage
those veterans in our community to contact us if you have not yet been recognized.

Some of our Departments will be having new leadership in 2019. Long time Court Administrator Lorrie Garabrant, passed away in December and Police Chief Christopher Wagner announced his retirement.

Lorrie was a very skilled, efficient and dedicated department manager, employed by the Township for 36.5 years. Flags fly today at half staff in her memory. The Township will be interviewing qualified candidates for the Court Administrator position next week.

For over 31 years, including 11 years as Chief of the Denville Police Department, Christopher Wagner has served the citizens of Denville with Integrity, Honesty, Fairness, Respect and Compassion. His many accomplishments include being one of the first departments in the State of New Jersey to earn national law enforcement accreditation, and greatly improving and enhancing security and safety in our local schools, which included his spearheading of the State-wide legislation to enable the hiring of Class III Officers.

Denville now has 5 Class 3 Officers stationed daily at our local schools. He will be sorely missed but his presence will be felt for generations. Last week, Interviews were conducted and we are very fortunate to have a very deep group of Senior Officers and we are very happy to report that Captain Frank Perna will be promoted to Department Chief and Lieutenant Jeff Tucker will promoted to Captain. In the coming months, we will be holding interviews for Lieutenant and Sargent.

In late 2014, the Township submitted our flood mitigation plans to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for their review. In 2016, the Army Corp reviewed our plans and they agreed to perform a more in-depth flood mitigation examination for Denville. Partnering with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, we received formal notification in October 2016 that the Army Corps would fund an in-depth, comprehensive $1,259,950 flood mitigation feasibility study for the Township of Denville. The Army Corp provided us with an initial time line that unfortunately they have not achieved.

However, in a recent meeting in December with 13 Army Corps staff members, the Army Corps is currently fully engaged in the analysis of the local flood mitigation efforts in Denville. We are yet to receive a timeline for the completion of the study but we remain patient as once the study is complete it could avail our community to $15,000,000 in project grants from the Federal and State governments to greatly enhance our community’s level of flood
readiness and prevention. If approved, these would be the largest flood mitigation improvements in the history of our community.

While we await word on potential Federal flood mitigation funding, our Township Engineer John Ruschke will continue to recommend projects that are affordable and achievable that we can complete ourselves. This year we will be asking the council for funding for an additional State-of-the-art Flap Valve for the Rockaway River.

I am proud that our Township maintains its FEMA CRS rating of 6, as a result of the initiatives the Township has taken over the last seven years. This rating qualifies all property owners in Denville that are required to have flood insurance for an automatic 20% discount.

Of course, none of these measures will stop flooding if Mother Nature sends extremely heavy rains; however, each measure will help to prevent flooding in lesser storms and reduce the overall impact of flood events in the future.

A belief I hold dear and that I often convey when discussing flood mitigation to residents or our professionals is that one of the lessons Hurricane Irene taught us is 1 inch of water can make the difference on whether or not a home is lost.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the River & Streams Committee for their stewardship of our rivers and for the hundreds of volunteers who come out to the annual river clean ups.

As many of you may have seen in today’s Daily Record, 2018 was the wettest year in New Jersey since they started recording data in 1895. As we experienced no major flooding events, all of the measures and actions undertaken by the Township and our volunteers has certainly paid off.

Last year I was happy to report the Township received a $615,000 Federal Government grant for Phase III of the downtown streetscape improvement project, which will encompass First Avenue and the First Avenue parking lot. The project which will be identical to the improvements that were completed on Broadway in 2016 with new curbs, a four foot wide brick utility strip and period lighting.

We had hopes work would begin in late-2018.

This is a Federal Grant administrated by the State which means there are two sets of bureaucratic standards that we must adhere to. Believe it or not, our plans to improve First Avenue were delayed due to a review from Fish and Wildlife Commission’s desk for months. The good news is the project is on
tonight’s agenda for authorization to bid. If approved by the Council, it is anticipated the bids would be opened in early-February and work would begin in mid-Spring.

We have submitted our application for Phase IV of the Downtown Streetscape Project in the amount of $615,000 for Diamond Spring between Broadway and First Avenue.

We replaced all the trees on Bloomfield Avenue this past fall as part of downtown improvement plans. Bloomfield Ave may most likely be the last street to be renovated; however, their trees will be the same generation as the other streets.

It is my goal to continue the streetscape project throughout the entire Downtown to include Diamond Spring Road, East and West Main Street, Bloomfield Avenue, Center Street, Second Avenue and Righter Avenue.

The Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) led by their Executive Director Ryan Gleason has proven to be the business partner that we hoped for. Not only is our Downtown thriving, Ryan is beginning to market our Downtown and elevate our promotional events.

The creation of the BID and the streetscape projects makes for a very exciting opportunity for our community. It gives our downtown the chance to rise to the next level while retaining its charm and appeal. If our downtown does not continue to evolve, it may lose its competitiveness to other area downtowns or shopping centers.

It has been our goal to make our downtown charming and quant. I like to thank the Beautification Committee for sharing their talents and all their efforts making our town so beautiful.

Another goal of mine has been to maximize the potential of the municipal building while also benefiting the taxpayers of the Township. In 2012, I offered underutilized space in the Town Hall to the Denville Board of Education. The Board of Education had been leasing office space for its staff on Ford Road. In late-2015 we reopened discussions with the Denville School Superintendent, Steven Forte, to potentially offer them a permanent home for all or part of the Board of Education staff.

A viable plan was developed to reconfigure some underutilized space in the Construction Department. The ultimate goal of this objective was to save the taxpayers of our community money by eliminating the Board of Education’s need to pay rent. Construction on the renovations began last January and last summer the Board moved into their new office suite. This is the ultimate
shared service for as the taxpayers who pay taxes to both the Township and the Board of Education.

I mentioned earlier, Chief Wagner spearheaded the implementation of the Class III officers legislation state-wide. He deserves much credit for testifying in Trenton before the State Legislature to enable the creation of this program. School Superintendent Steve Forte has always had a good communication and working relationship with the Township Administration and Chief Wagner. Once the Class III Officers Program became law, the Chief and Mr. Forte began working on how we could implement this program in Denville.

Morris Catholic High School and Celebrate the Children School inquired and the Chief came to Administration with a plan and asked for our support and funding. We presented it in our budget and the Town Council adopted it in 2017. The Class III officers are employed by the Township. They answer to the chain of command in the Police Department. Their salaries however are reimbursed to the Township by the various schools.

The Township assumes the financial responsibility for training, uniforms and supplying the necessary equipment to the Class III Officers. No community thinks they will be the one where tragedy strikes and although you cannot prepare for every possibility, this has been an outstanding collaborative effort between the Board of Education, Police Department and Township. Collectively we have put the safety of our children and the adults in our schools as a priority. Denville is a leader in the County and in the State in school safety and it is because your leaders decided it was important to work together to make it happen.

Each of the last three years the Town Council allocated well over $700,000 in the Budget to pave the roads. This is nearly 50% more than appropriated for paving in an average year. We plan to submit for the Township Council’s consideration a similar level of paving for 2019. It has been our goal to get ahead of our road maintenance and continue to crack seal to extend the lives of our roads. As part of the 2019 budget, Administration will be asking the Township Council to oil and seal at least one road this year.

This is typically applied to extend the life and improve the quality of a road not quite ready for resurfacing at a true fraction of the cost of resurfacing.

Collapsed catch basins have been a priority of this administration and I am glad to report that the collapsed catch basins total as we entered the winter season is in the single digits. Paving of all of the roads contained in the approved 2018 road list was not completed due to weather issues as Tilcon lost a lot of days with last year’s record rains. The funding for the following
roads approved in 2018 is reserved and will be paved in early 2019 as soon as the weather is conducive. These roads include a section of Canterbury, all of Woodland Ave, Woodstone Road, Shawnee Trail, Lafayette Place, Cliffside Trail, Seneca Trail and half of Sunset Trail.

The PAL Project Playground 2.0 Committee, under the leadership of Don Casse and PAL Director Jeff Tucker spent over 2 years raising nearly $250,000 for the new state of the art handicapped accessible playground equipment at Gardner Field. Under DPW Director John Egbert’s leadership, Recreation Supervisor Bill Kenny and Road Supervisor Warren Van Dyk and the DPW staff demolished the old playground, prepared the site, and did the finishing touches after the 150 volunteers installed much of the equipment. This was a tremendous community effort. I would like to congratulate and thank everyone involved for providing a wonderful place for the new generation of children to play.

Playground equipment is currently being installed on the Valva tract off Michael Street. As a stipulation of our acquisition of the property, which was funded principally with County and State Open Space funds, the Township committed to install a small pocket park on the site. I will be asking the Council to name the park after the Lions Club that donated their clubs remaining funds to create a park in their memory.

Girl Softball is investing over $10,000 into field #8 at Veteran’s Field in new Dugouts and Drainage, the DPW and Recreation is working with them on this project, which we anticipate will be completed in early-2019. When the new all-purpose turf field was installed at Veteran’s Memorial Field, the Town did not allocate funds for large home field bleachers, a press box and a score board. Many of the Playground volunteers teamed up with Jeff Tucker and the PAL to form Vamp up Vets Field Committee and in just a few short months raised over $64,000 toward the $125,000 needed for the project. I will be asking the Council to support this project during the budget process out of our local Open Space and Recreation Trust fund. These are great capital projects that will enhance our complex.

Over the last 20 years our Township has been diligent in acquiring and preserving open space. Last year we closed on the 16.7 acre Sousa Tract on Evergreen Rd and the 18.48 acre La Platte Property on Smith Rd. The Township came to an agreement with the Dioceses of Paterson on the 9.03 acre tract of land on Cooper Rd for $825,000. We successfully applied for and received a County grant for $375,000 for the Diocese property and are now in the process of closing on the property.
Since 2016, the Paths and Trails Committee made significant headway creating a path system throughout Denville. The initial path was the handicapped accessible path around the main pond at Muriel Hepner Park, followed by the funding of the Path & Trail Master Plan, which was prepared last year. We also received a County grant for $49,500 which we put toward the funding of the new bridge that will be named this spring after Muriel Hepner’s longtime friend and great Denville volunteer, Peggy Gray. The bridge was just opened as the contractor is putting on the finishing touches. We will be applying to the County for a grant this year for improvements on a 1 mile long stretch of Trail #6 which is on Township property along the Denbrook between the Shongum Bridge and the Denbrook Playground.

It is important I mention some of the struggles your Town leaders have been and continue to be engaged in.

Last year, I spoke these exact words “For nearly two years, the Township of Denville has been engaged in a legal Declaratory Judgment Action in which the NJ Superior Court will ultimately determine our community’s affordable housing obligation for the period between 2015 and 2025.” Unfortunately, now it has been three years.

The Township has been historically proactive in the requirement for developers to build inclusionary affordable housing. In fact, we enter this current round with a slight surplus of affordable housing with 33 credits.

The situation is in no way unique to Denville as municipalities all across the state of New Jersey are faced with the following conundrum:

The Supreme Court has ruled that each municipality has a constitutional obligation to provide for affordable housing; however, the State of New Jersey has failed to create regulations or firm unit targets for municipalities to follow to achieve such said obligation. This new administration in Trenton has taken no action at all.

The conundrum is made worse by the threat of builder’s remedy lawsuits in which the Township will be potentially subject to even higher density developments and lose complete control of the planning process if we simply do nothing.

Several other local municipalities have been subject to builder’s remedy lawsuits with extremely detrimental consequences. We have started to see the outrageous housing numbers in Rockaway Township, Morris Plains and Parsippany.
I have been working very closely with Denville Township’s seasoned and talented professionals and officials. To protect the Township and maintain our immunity from the builder’s remedy lawsuit, our plan is to continue to work in good faith with the courts and the developers who are party to the court action.

We will continue to utilize scientifically based smart growth principals in our planning calculations for these prospective developments while continuing to fight in court to ensure our ultimate obligation in both units and in bedrooms are as low as possible and built in reasonable locations so as to have the least detrimental impact within our community.

So far we have submitted a housing plan to the court for a fairness hearing that included Estling Village, Redmond Press, Glenmont Commons and Toll Brothers. The Court has accepted this plan and has continued our immunity but has not set our affordable unit number. These projects, combined with our existing credits will maintain our immunity from the “builders remedy” lawsuits for now. However, the level of pressure from our adversary, the Fair Share Housing Center and developers who have joined in the lawsuit against the Township continues to increase.

One of the applications, Glenmont Commons on Casterline Road, was heard by the Denville Planning Board in December and approved. Now approved, we do not have a timetable for this 65-unit development to proceed at this point and will proceed only once all the construction permits have been applied for, approved and issued.

The proposed Toll Brothers development on Franklin Avenue, adjacent to the Rockaway Borough border, has not been deemed complete and therefore has yet to appear before the Planning Board.

Toll Brothers needs an exception from the NJDEP for a sewer allocation before their project can ultimately be built as their property lies outside the sewer service area.

Station Village in the former Redmond Press building on Rt-53 opted to become an intervener in the Township’s affordable housing litigation after they requested a PILOT or Payment in Lieu of Taxes from the Township which was denied. I am pleased to announce that on December 21, 2018 the Judge ruled in favor of the Township and denied Station Village from becoming an intervener simply as a result of our refusal to provide them with a PILOT.
Our Affordable Housing Professional Team is in weekly negotiations with the Special Master, the Fair Share Housing Council and at times the Interveners. As slow as the process is moving, I know it is all coming to a head very soon.

As far as the Township goes there is nothing “Fair about the Fair Share Housing Council.” On the surface they represent people in need. Frankly, I believe they represent builders just going from one town to the next without ever looking at what they are actually doing to the community.

I need to prepare the community that we have a choice. Thru negotiations in a conference room we can have a say in the locations and number of units. Or conversely we can have no input when a Judge in a court room orders the location and number of units. We will negotiate in good faith but we will not be bullied and if we need to fight in court we will be prepared to do so.

The 112 new affordable units we have already committed will not be enough for the Special Master or the Judge. They will be looking for many more and therefore we proceed forward cautiously for the most reasonable negotiated settlement we can achieve.

Please make no mistake about this Administration’s position on Affordable Housing.

Nothing has changed one bit

- As Elected Officials we took an oath of office to uphold the Constitution of the State of NJ. Affordable housing has been deemed to be the law and constitutional obligation.

- We have a social obligation to help the people with disadvantage and special needs of society.

- The number of units being suggested by our adversaries in the court is outrageous, with the most recent numbers in excess of 1,700 new affordable units in Denville alone.

- No neighborhood should be overburdened with all the development and all need to share in accommodating our ultimate obligation.

- This administration is committed to keeping the total number of units and total number of bedrooms in those units as low as possible.

- Senior housing and group homes are our preference and we will always attempt to maximize our credits up to cap allowed for these types of units.
• We will seek to ensure the affordable and market rate units are integrated as much as possible so no one can be identified or stereotyped by their address.

• We will take advantage of rental unit bonuses, if and when appropriate. As rental units receive a 2 to 1 bonus, again subject to a maximum cap, this can help reduce the total number of units ultimately constructed.

• We will look for creative ways to upgrade neighborhoods.

• We will continue to advocate for the return of the Regional Contribution Agreements or RCAs that we had historically been able to take full advantage of in which we were able to sell a portion of our obligation to urban centers, who would then build affordable units, where there is a much greater need.

• As part of our future plans we will continue to aggressively secure grant money to purchase open space to reduce available developable land in our community.

• We will also be working on creative strategies and constantly thinking ahead as we recognize there will be another round of affordable housing obligations starting in 2025.

As frustrating and as maddening as this process has been, and for all the people that have come out to speak against the horrors of what the builders are doing to our community, we agree with you on so many levels.

Our decisions to date have been based on protecting our community from even larger and higher density developments as municipalities simply don’t win builders remedy lawsuits.

However, also please know that on a regular basis there are single moms, a recent widow with 2 kids, senior citizens, a parent of a special needs adult and young college graduates just starting their careers asking me for help finding a place to live in their home town, Denville. Many of these individuals, who are our neighbors now, meet the income levels to qualify for affordable housing and deserve the ability to remain in the community they love.

There is little question that the system in Trenton has let us down. Regrettably our new Governor has shown no desire to do anything and the legislature keeps passing laws promoting open government, while Towns across the state are defending themselves in court and legally negotiating zoning in conference rooms at taxpayers’ expense. The level of frustration felt by your local elected officials simply cannot be summed up in words.
Another challenge the Township faces relates to NJ Transit and the NJDOT. Last June, the Township received a letter from NJ Transit dated March of 2017 informing Denville of deficiencies on the bridge on the Franklin overpass. It is very upsetting that the letter took months to arrive and then it took us a week of correspondence with them to figure out which bridge was actually the bridge of concern. We met with State and NJ Transit Official officials about the Franklin Avenue Bridge, which we have now had to implement weight restrictions on as well as on the crumbling Franklin Road Bridge trestle.

We also expressed our concern regarding the Rt-53 retaining wall that continues to crumble and the cleanliness, or lack thereof, of the Denville train station. Despite the meeting, constant calls and e-mails, little improvement has been seen.

Additionally NJ Transit has notified the Township of their intent to close the at-grade Lackawanna Avenue crossing. This is totally unacceptable and we continue to meet with them in an attempt to prevent the closing of the crossing.

NJ Transit has long been the most difficult of the State bureaucratic agencies. We have engaged Senator Bucco and Governor Murphy’s Office to assist us in these matters and will continue to fight to get the necessary repairs done and prevent the closing of the crossing.

Denville is one of the most fiscally sound municipalities in Morris County, perhaps the entire State. We have the third lowest debt ratio in the County and we have done this by following conservative financial management practices. This Administration has presented sound budgets to the Town Council, which they adopted after making thoughtful modifications that ensure future long-term stability for the Township while still enabling us to maintain the current high level of municipal services, you have come to expect as well as, providing for many of the projects to be effectively implemented and completed.

In 2016, 2017 and 2018 this Administration proposed and the Council adopted budgets that included more aggressive pay down of our outstanding debt obligation, a greater cash contribution towards capital improvements including road resurfacing along with no reduction of municipal services to our residents. This was done while maintaining a stable tax rate for the average assessed property owner. In 2019, we plan to continue with the same budgetary philosophy.
Over the last seven years we have constantly taken advantage of grant opportunities, made sure we received every FEMA reimbursement, shared services and implementing effective cost managing practices. This includes a $369,861 reimbursement for the Valley View Fire House, which was destroyed by Hurricane Irene.

In the fall of 2018, the Township saw for the first time our recycling cost escalate past our garbage cost for the first time in history. It actually cost us money to recycle now. Seeing the trend heading this way a few years ago, Administration coordinated for our garbage and recycling contracts to end this December 31st. We have already and will continue to explore all possible options and over the upcoming months to find the best solution on how our community should handle our waste disposal in the future.

At the conclusion of my address I will ask the Council to give advice and consent of the Mayoral and Administrative appointments. The team we have assembled is up to the task of completing these projects, while keeping our tax rate low and remaining financially prudent.

Our Administrator Steven Ward has continued to show the ability to find saving, increase efficiencies and attract good people to Denville. Mike Guarino, our CFO, has time and time again demonstrated his strong knowledge and conservative approach to municipal financial management. Our Township Engineer, John Ruschke has proven his ability to be creative, be frugal and get the project completed. Our Planner, Jason Kasler has demonstrated the ability to comprehend the complex issues of COAH.

I am pleased to re-appoint our Municipal Attorney John Jansen who will head up our legal team with Paula DeBona, COAH, Fred Semrau, Tax Appeals & Litigation, Matt Giacobbe, Labor Counsel, Municipal Judge Jerry Smith, Municipal Prosecutor Jim LaSala, and Public Defender Cliff Weininger.

We are very fortunate to have great people working together that continue to make Denville the finest place to live, work, raise a family and retire. Thank you and may God continue to send his blessings to the people of Denville and may God bless the United States of America.