

MAYOR'S ADDRESS
January 1, 2016

Dear Fellow Residents,

As I do each New Year's Day, I would like to review some of the events and accomplishments that took place in our town during the past year and to announce some of the plans we have for 2016. First of all, I'd like to again welcome Carolyn Fontanella and Anthony Picarelli back to the Council and congratulate them on their re-election. Carolyn and Anthony have both served our town well for years and I am sure I can count on them to continue to serve Totowa well in the future. I would also like to congratulate Vinny Marciano upon his re-election as Fire Chief and look forward to working with him and the entire department.

Beginning with our infrastructure, as many of you are fully aware, PSEG proactively replaced the older gas lines in our town. This was done to try to avoid some of the gas problems that occurred during Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy. In doing so, many roads in our town were dug up and our residents were inconvenienced for a period of time. Once the project had been completed and new gas lines installed, the roads that were dug up were either completely repaved or repaved from the curb to the middle of the street, depending on how long ago the road had been last paved. This has made many of our roads smooth again. With grants from the Department of Transportation, we will also be repaving Gordon Avenue and Hobart Avenue in 2016.

We applied for another grant from Passaic County to continue relining our sanitary sewers and were recently notified that we have been awarded a grant to continue relining the sewers on Dewey Avenue near Totowa Road as well as Mitchell Place. As I reported last year, we are also in the process of buying out five homes that have been habitually suffering from flooding. These buyouts should be completed in early 2016. We will continue looking at ways to improve our water and sewer system while alleviating flooding to our residents.

In 2015, we completed the revisions to our Master Plan. It is important that we continually review our plans for our community as this planning will have an impact on our town's development for many years. You certainly have seen some of the building changes that are occurring on Union Boulevard. More changes will be coming as the property where Wells Fargo is located becomes redeveloped. I believe that changes on Union Boulevard will continue to occur as the main streets of towns are becoming more developed. To that end, we will revive our Parking Authority so that they can look for solutions to help alleviate the traffic on Union Boulevard.

Our municipal building is undergoing changes as well. We are installing a new generator which we purchased with a grant from FEMA. In addition, we are just about completed with replacing the aging roof on this building.

At the PAL ball field, we have received another grant from the Passaic County Open Space Fund to construct a tennis court at the PAL field where the old street hockey area

is. This will be done at no cost to our taxpayers. In addition, we have installed lights at the Minnisink Road field to replace some of the temporary lighting that had been previously used.

In June, 2014, the State of New Jersey closed down the North Jersey Development Center. This facility had been in operation in Totowa since 1928. We have been in communication with officials from the State to discuss the disposition of the property. The State and the Borough will jointly determine how the property will be developed. In 2015, we concluded environmental testing at the site. Totowa has formally designated the site as “one in need of redevelopment.” This designation will give our municipality more of a say in how the property is developed. At this time, no final determination has been made on the ultimate use of the property but we will be introducing a “plan for redevelopment” of the site ordinances in the early part of 2016 and we will remain very involved in the process.

In 2015, we began curb side pick-up of recycling material twice a month. We have received extremely positive responses from our residents in moving to twice a month pick-ups. But remember, pick up is twice a month and not every other week. Please check the flyer that will be mailed out or our website for details.

Our community continues to be strengthened by the support of our volunteers. Be they fire fighters, first aid squad members, PAL members, PTO members or a member of one of our municipal boards, the time and effort of all of our town’s volunteers are truly

appreciated by the Council and me. For our firefighters, we purchased a new fire rescue vehicle in 2015 and it is now housed at Fire Rescue on Mitchell Ave.

On the property tax front, as you all know from the property tax bills you received last summer and from my previous communications, we were slammed with an enormous increase from Passaic County. In 2015, while the municipal portion of taxes on the average home in our town increased about \$34, the county portion of taxes on the average home increased by a whopping \$450, an increase of 20% over the prior year. We believe this may be the largest increase to one municipality from the County of Passaic in history. Nonetheless, we are determined to be fiscally prudent. In Totowa we have decided to make tough choices and not place a financial burden on future budgets and future generations. We have now achieved our fourth consecutive year without any long term debt in our municipality. Our core belief is that we should pay currently to meet our obligations where we can and not borrow if possible. By freeing ourselves of debt, we can utilize those funds for much needed improvements to our infrastructure and replacing outdated equipment.

Even with the enormous tax increase passed along to us in 2015, Totowa continues the distinction of having the lowest tax rate of the 16 municipalities in Passaic County. Hopefully, the financial and economic instability that we have experienced will subside and the County will get a handle on its finances. The Council and I will once again work hard to maintain the lowest tax rate for our residents.

The Council and I will remain active in our community's affairs in 2016. I am confident that we will continue our improvements to our town as well as our stability here in Totowa. On behalf of our Council members, I would like to wish everyone a healthy and peaceful New Year.

Thank you.