

MAYOR'S ADDRESS
January 1, 2018

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 2018. First, I'd like to again welcome back Debbie Andriani and Bill Bucher to the Council and congratulate them on their recent election victory. Both Debbie and Bill have Totowa's best interest at heart. I am sure I can count on them to continue to serve Totowa in the future.

I would again like to congratulate our new Fire Chief, Rich Shopperth, who will be working with our public safety committee quite extensively over the next couple of years. I have known Rich since grammar school days and know he will do a great job for the Department. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Vinny Marciano for his years of dedicated service as our fire chief. Until you are in that position, you really don't know how much time the position requires. He and I have had quite a few conversations over the years, usually over his budget and the next fire truck. On behalf of our entire community, we offer our heartfelt appreciation to all of Chief Marciano's efforts over the past (10) years.

Beginning with our infrastructure, PSEG has continued to proactively replace older gas lines in our town in 2017 just like they did in 2016. This was done to try to avoid some

of the gas problems that occurred during Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy. The roads in our town where PSEG dug were completely repaved this year and include Harding Ave., Bogert Street, Wilson Ave., Francis St., and Acorn St. Wentick Street, Dunkerly St., and Garretson Ave. will be completely repaved in 2018. This will make many of our roads in this section of town smooth again. With a grant from the Department of Transportation, we will be repaving portions of Furler Street, Jefferson Place and Raphael Road. We will also pave portions of Greene Avenue, Knollwood Ave., Carroll Place, Craig Court, and Heritage Court in 2018 utilizing our own funds.

We applied for another grant from Passaic County to continue relining our sanitary sewers and were recently notified that it has been awarded to us. Our most recent award for Riverview Drive between Margaret and Rosalie Aves. will mark Phase 6 of our sewer lining efforts. We will continue looking at ways to improve our water and sewer system while alleviating flooding to our residents.

Our municipal building has undergone changes as well. After having installed a new generator and replacing the aging roof on this building in 2016, we had new wall tiles installed in 2017. We hope you like the new look as compared to the worn tiles that existed.

At the PAL ball field, due to grants we received from the Passaic County Open Space Fund, our residents began to enjoy playing on our recently constructed tennis court. We

have also received a grant for park equipment at Kennedy Field and are in process of applying for more grants for our parks.

As most residents already know by now, in June, 2014, the State of New Jersey closed down the North Jersey Development Center on Minnisink Road. This facility had been in operation in Totowa since 1928. The State and the Borough have jointly determined how the property will be developed. In 2015, Totowa formally designated the site as “one in need of redevelopment.” This designation gave our municipality more of a say in how the property is to developed. In August, 2016, we issued a “plan for redevelopment” and request for proposal that outlined how we would like to see the site redeveloped. In October, we received bids from developers that we have reviewed and analyzed. We selected a redeveloper in January 2017. The redeveloper presented conceptual plans to the Planning Board in August, 2017, and then presented the first parcel to be developed to the Planning Board in November 2017. The first facility to be built will be a data center, and the construction is expected to begin in early 2018. Prior to construction, the site must be sold by the State of New Jersey. It is expected that the Legislature will approve the sale in early January. Once construction on each parcel is completed, the additional ratables will ease the tax burden on our residents. We will remain very involved in the development of this site.

As I reported to you last year, like many other municipalities in the State of New Jersey, we are in the midst of a judiciary review of our obligation for providing affordable housing in Totowa. We have spent a considerable amount of time in balancing the

availability of land for denser developments with the obligation to provide affordable housing. We thought we would know our obligation by now, however, at this point, our obligation has not been set by the judiciary. We do expect that a final decision will be made in 2018.

Our community continues to be strengthened by the support of our professional staff and volunteers. Be they fire fighters, first aid squad members, PAL 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. This past year, the Board of Recreation held a summer concert series in front of the Municipal Building. The concerts were very much appreciated by our residents and we look forward to another series in 2018.

On the property tax front, in 2017, our total tax rate increased by 0.4%. This increase is certainly much smaller than the increases in 2015 and 2016 and provide some relief to our taxpayers. 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 sixth 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. In 2017, Totowa continues the distinction of having the lowest tax rate of the 16 municipalities in Passaic County. 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 2018. 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.