

MAYOR'S ADDRESS
January 1, 2020

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 2020. First, I'd like to again welcome back Lou D'Angelo and John Capo to the Council and congratulate them on their recent election victory. Both Lou and John work hard throughout the year for our residents and are involved in many of our town's internal operations. I am sure I can count on them to continue to serve Totowa well in the future.

I would again like to congratulate our Fire Chief, Rich Shopperth, who will be working with our public safety committee quite extensively over the next couple of years. Having a couple of years under his belt as Chief, Rich has grown in the position as a leader of the entire department. In fact, it was under his leadership that we had a very successful fire truck parade on Thanksgiving weekend. Held jointly with the Woodland Park fire department, the two departments organized the parade in under a month's time. I have only received positive comments on the parade. With respect to the Fire Department, in 2019 we refurbished the Scot Packs for our volunteers and purchased a new ladder truck, which should be delivered in February. I thank all of our first responders for their dedication and service to our community, most recently last Saturday morning for their quick response in combatting a house fire.

With respect to our infrastructure, PSEG has continued to proactively replace older gas lines in our town in 2019 just like they have been since 2016. This is being 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 has been digging will be repaved this year and include Bogert Street, Raphael Road, Greene Ave, Claremont Ave, Sutton Ave, Cherba Place, Mitchell Ave., Peterson Road, Rosengren Ave. and anywhere else that PSEG replaces gas lines. PSEG has already paved portions of Lackawanna Ave, Furler Street, Riverview Drive, West End Road, and Maltese Drive as part of a project installing new electric lines. PSEG is planning to be working in the Echo Glen section of our town in 2020. With grants from the Department of Transportation, we will be repaving Jefferson Place, Adams Drive, Dey Hill Trail, Craig Court, Commerce Way, and portions of Winifred Drive. In addition, in 2020 utilizing our own funds, we will be repaving Haven Ave, Young Ave, and Garfield Place. This long list will improve many of our roads by making them smooth again.

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 Boyle Avenue will mark Phase 9 of our sewer lining efforts. In 2019, we completed Phases 7&8, which encompassed portions of Totowa Road, St. James Place, and William Place. We will continue looking at ways to improve our water and sewer system while alleviating flooding to our residents.

We have installed new generators at the DPW garage and at the Shepherds Lane pump station with grants received from FEMA. This should help us tremendously when we have powerful storms that temporarily knock out power to our town.

At the PAL ball field, even though we have been denied grants from the Passaic County Open Space Fund for the past two years, we will be endeavoring to install artificial turf for the football field and the PONY league baseball field. With the poor drainage of the field, our youth do not have the opportunity to use those fields for many days after rainstorms, causing cancellations and having to play as visitors for much of the season.

Real estate development continued in Totowa in 2019. While we are pleased that developers have confidence in our borough, we also want the development to be done smartly and we must consider the impact on our infrastructure. On the former North Jersey Development Center site on Minnisink Road, the first facility being built is a data center, the completion of which is nearly complete. We are pleased that JP Morgan Chase selected Totowa as the site of one of their data centers. On the same site, the construction of the medical office building has begun. As part of the agreement with the developer, Minnisink Road and Vreeland Ave. will be widened at the intersection of those roads and a traffic light installed as part of the obligation of the developer.

Additionally, the former PF Labs site on Union Boulevard has been refitted and expanded. The lone tenant, Corbion, exhibited faith in our community by consolidating its operations from other municipalities into this site. The former Wells Fargo site is

undergoing development and looks to be complete in 2020. Similarly, a new housing development is being constructed on Shepherds Lane on a site formerly owned by the Diocese of Paterson. The additional ratables from all of these projects should provide ratables and ease the tax burden on our residents.

Our community continues to be strengthened by the support of our professional staff, employees, and, of course, 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. It is what makes our town a community. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of our Board of Recreation this past year. We have been improving our town pool and received many compliments from the members in 2019 related to the cleanliness of the water and the increased activities offered. In addition to the annual events that the Board of Recreation has traditionally held, in 2019, we had our second successful Totowa Day in June, another successful summer concert series in front of the Municipal Building, and our first 5K Turkey Trot in November. Many people volunteered to assist in these events to make them all a success. We look forward to continuing these events in 2020.

In late 2019, we sought to increase our recycling efforts and lower our trash disposal costs by supplying a recycling barrel to each residential unit in Totowa. For anyone who did not yet receive one, there are more barrels remaining and we will order more in 2020 to accommodate our residents should we run out. These barrels are to be used for

recycling and will keep our community a little cleaner on windy recycling days as well as help drive our trash costs lower.

On the property tax front, in 2019, our total tax rate increased by 0.2%. This represents less than \$20 annual increase on the average home in Totowa and provides some relief to our taxpayers. As you have heard me say many times, 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. The fire truck we recently purchased and the other improvements I spoke about are being funded without incurring any debt. We have now achieved our eighth 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 2019, 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 2020. Our future is bright and 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.