

MAYOR'S ADDRESS
January 1, 2017

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 2017. First and foremost, Phil Puglise has stepped down from the Council after serving 28 years in that role, the last seven as Council President. Phil has seen many changes in our community over that time. He has served selflessly for the benefit of our residents and has provided me with counsel in my years as mayor. Our town owes a debt of gratitude to Phil and we wish he and Cheryl many happy moments together in the future. I'd also like to again welcome Lou D'Angelo, our new Council President, and John Capo to the Council and congratulate them on their recent election victory. John is a longtime resident of Totowa and has its best interest at heart. I am sure I can count on them to to serve Totowa well in the future.

Beginning with our infrastructure, PSEG has continued to proactively replace older gas lines in our town 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 will either be 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 will make many of our roads smooth again. With a grant from the Department of Transportation, we repaved the upper portion of Gordon Avenue in 2016 and will repave the remainder

of Gordon Avenue as well as Hobart Place and Furler Street in 2017. Due to the Transportation Trust Fund being out of cash for several months in 2016 until the Governor and Legislature worked out a solution, we could not pave Hobart Place as intended in 2016. We also paved Lind Road and Taft Road in 2016, utilizing our own funds. Although not yet selected, we will be paving more local roads in 2017.

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. Through grants received, we also completed the demolition of five homes in 2016 that had been habitually suffering from flooding. 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. We have installed a new generator in 2016, which we purchased with a grant from FEMA. In addition, we replaced the aging roof on this building.

At the PAL ball field, we have received the second part of a 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, in 2017, we will install a sprinkler system at the football field at the PAL in order to have grass on the field for our football teams and others that use the grounds. We have also received a grant for park equipment at Kennedy Field, which will be upgraded in 2017.

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 will be announcing the redeveloper in the near future once we are permitted to do so. We will remain very involved in the process.

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. At this point, our obligation has not been set by the judiciary but we expect that a final decision will be made in 2017.

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, 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. Our shade tree commission

recently received a grant for \$10,000 to perform a risk assessment on trees throughout our town.

There are a couple of milestones I would like to recognize. First, I would like to congratulate the Totowa Public Library on their 60th Anniversary, which will occur later in 2017. The Library has become more than a building which holds books. It is a true community center. Second, I would like to highlight that Totowa hired its first female police officer in March, 2016. I wish Megan Akins the best of luck in her career with us.

On the property tax front, in 2016, our total tax rate increased by 2.8%. While this increase is certainly much smaller than the increase in 2015, we can still do better. The municipal portion of the tax rate increased by 1.7%, but we can do better. 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 fifth 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 2016, 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 2017. 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.