

Thank you to all of the residents that have braved the cold to come here for today's Reorganization meeting. While I do not have the official tallies', I would venture to guess this is the coldest reorganization in the Borough's history.

Although, today may be cold in temperature, South Plainfield is always warm to my heart and to the hearts of all that call South Plainfield home. Today we reflect on what we have accomplished, but more importantly it is a day that we look to the future and lay the foundation for 2018 and the years to come.

The reorganization at the dais today shall be fairly simple. South Plainfield residents overwhelmingly placed their faith in Derryck White and Christine Faustini and reelected them to new three-year terms. Congratulations Councilman White and Councilwoman Faustini. I look forward to working with you and the entire Council in 2018.

Before discussing 2018, I would like to reflect on this past year. 2017 was a year of tremendous achievement and success. This success is the byproduct of proper planning, dedication and hard work. The Borough in 2017 adopted a municipal budget that called for a slight reduction in the municipal tax levy versus 2016. The municipal tax rate, which is the portion of your property taxes that is controlled by this governing body, remained below 2009 levels. Thank you Council President Bengivenga, Chairman of the Finance Committee, and to the Borough's CFO Glenn F. Cullen for once again putting taxpayers first and keeping our hometown affordable. South Plainfield remains one of the most affordable and desirable places to live and raise a family in New Jersey. In fact NJ.com in 2017 listed South Plainfield as one of the most affordable towns in the State.

The South Plainfield Recreation Department experienced its finest year since I have been Mayor. Under the leadership of the Recreation Commission led by Chairman William Cochrane, Director Kevin Hughes and Councilwoman Faustini, recreation experienced the highest memberships ever recorded for Junior Field Hockey, Soccer and Summer Parks. A new facelift and shade structures helped to rejuvenate the Community Pool continuing our multi-year investment in this important facility. With the assistance of an Open Space and Recreation grant, Lights were installed at Memorial Field that will allow for additional hours of recreation games from soccer to T-ball. New wrestling and cheer mats were installed for the wrestling room and new equipment was installed in the weight room.

Willow Park was expanded through a collaborative effort with the Library, and thank you to the South Plainfield Elks for your donation of accessible swings that have been installed in various parks. The year ended with the opening of the Southside Dog Park, which is the first new park to open in decades. It has been an enormous hit for dogs and their owners. The park is so popular that Santa and his Elf stopped by for a photo-op just before the holidays.

Like Recreation, our Senior Center continued their record growth. In 2017 memberships were up for the fourth consecutive year. Meals on Wheels increased and there was a 30-foot addition to the Senior Center garden. This year the seniors grew the sweetest corn you can imagine, and I hear next year they are planning on adding pumpkins to their burgeoning garden. Thank you Tree Olano for all of your hard work. Programs for the youth and the aged are how you rate the values of a community and I feel nobody does it better than South Plainfield.

These accomplishments could not have been possible without our Department of Public Works. The Borough Engineer Len Miller designed the Dog Park and much of the work at the Southside Dog Park, Willow Park and the Community Pool was done by the Department of Public Works. Important renovations such as the new bathrooms at the Library and at the Senior Center were all done by the hands of Public Works employees. The Department oversaw the paving of nearly 20 roadways and the resolution of drainage issues on Belmont Avenue and Pierce Street.

Our Cultural Arts Commission continues to provide residents with a suite of annual programs designed to educate and provide entertainment to all. Popular programs include the annual Talent Show, Art and Photography exhibits, Shakespeare and Line Dancing. Thank you to the entire commission for your tireless efforts. Our Clerks office remained a vital contact point for residents, ensuring the smooth delivery of borough services. Anne Daly, my assistant continued to assist residents with their vital needs, ensure the efficient operation of the Mayor's office and lead important initiatives such as our annual Toys for Tots drive.

On the Economic Development front, we welcomed new businesses including Raymour and Flanigan, Pinot's Pallete, South Side Clam Bar, Kenny's Empanadas, Little Nicky's and Metropolitan Dermatology. In addition to many new businesses, we witnessed continued investment in existing businesses such as Genewiz, one of New Jersey's 25 fastest growing companies. Our goal is to remain customer and business focused while soliciting new retailers, corporations and industries to South Plainfield. I extend a special thanks to Councilman White and the Business and Economic Development Committee for their continued efforts.

Our EMS department recorded over 16,000 volunteer hours and responded to over 800 resident calls while expanding training for all riding members. Our Fire Department responded to nearly

1,000 calls and continued to maintain a focus on training and fire fighter readiness with various training sessions throughout the year. After nearly 25 years our Fire Department said goodbye to our Ladder Truck and put into service a new Ladder Truck 7. This state of the art vehicle was christened by our beloved former chaplain the late Reverend Mingle. I know he will continue to look over our emergency services from the skies above forever.

Our Police Department welcomed three new officers, implemented a Special Problems Unit and through a collective effort between the Borough and the Board of Education created a School Resource Officer. In December the Department began a Special Needs Registry for South Plainfield residents. There is an old saying that quiet is a good thing, and it was relatively quiet in the Borough in 2017. There is no doubt that is due to the incredibly hard work of our Police Department and Chief Parker. Thank you Chief for a job well done.

In 2017 the Borough may have been booming economically, but we continued to be eco-friendly. The last Tonnage Grant report filed, documented 51,465 tons of solid waste diverted from the landfill through recycling. Residential use of the MyWaste app increased significantly. In the period mid-November through mid-December, there were over 2,000 users, and over 9,000 interactions with the site for information about schedules and how to dispose of solid waste items.

Our Green Team successfully documented Borough sustainability activities to achieve bronze-level recertification in the Sustainable Jersey program. This included resolutions restricting smoking at Borough facilities and parks. The Highland Woods Nature Reserve continues to provide residents with numerous outdoor and indoor learning opportunities. If you haven't visited yet, you don't know what you are missing.

The Library had its first full year in the new building and what a year it was. There were 156,032 items circulated, 994 new patrons, 840 programs and 16,630 individuals that attended the programs. The new Library has far exceeded everyone's expectations and all of these things would have not been possible without our Library Staff, Board of Trustees and many volunteers.

Hard work is the recipe for simple solutions. That's what is in store for 2018. I am requesting Council President Bengivenga and our CFO to once again find innovative ways to fund our Borough operations in the most cost effective manner. The key is to keep South Plainfield affordable. It needs to remain affordable to our young, our seniors and our families. The 2017 Municipal tax rate was less than what it was eight years ago. I am requesting the Administration and Finance Committee to do the same in 2018. This goal will complete nearly a decade of keeping municipal taxes in check. It is a goal I know we are capable of achieving.

In the first quarter of 2018 the Borough will be unveiling the Estate Card Program. This program will enable residents to earn credits against their property taxes as they purchase items and spend their hard earned dollars in the borough and elsewhere. This innovative program will reward residents for shopping local while providing them and our merchants with a user-friendly program for all. By early March, the Motor Vehicle Agency will be back in operation in town. New investments in our building department will include new software and online forms designed to make the permit process more efficient.

To the residents that have endured what seems to be never ending utility work on our streets, relief is on the way. Middlesex Water Company's Renew project is virtually complete. I have directed the Borough Engineer to go over the affected roadways to ensure they are repaved in 2018. Additionally, the Borough has received a grant for Hadley Road. This as well as a number of additional roadways will be repaved in 2018.

The Borough Engineer will continue an evaluation of our municipal roads to identify underlying conditions that have caused roadways to deteriorate. This has led to additional storm sewer work on Belmont Ave and Pierce Street. In 2018 storm sewer work will be done on Orchard Drive, Ledden Terrace, Ranger Street and Lonsdale Drive. The Borough is also looking at similar issues on Risoli Terrace and a number of other roadways. These issues have persisted for decades, and it is our goal to address these issues head on.

In 2018 the Police Department is joining forces with our Senior Center to establish a Senior Registry. The response has been overwhelming with the Special Needs Registry, and we believe the expanded Senior Registry will be even more popular.

In 2018 I am asking Councilwoman Faustini and the entire Recreation Commission to keep the momentum going. The plan is to have more upgrades at the PAL, Willow Park, the Southside Dog Park and additional accessibility equipment installed in 2018.

The safety and well being of our residents remains a top priority. And so today, I am directing Councilman Wolak and the Public Safety Committee to begin working on the feasibility of a South Side Public Safety building that will enhance our ability to provide top-notch public safety service to our residents. Additionally, we will continue to invest in training and equipment for our public safety employees and volunteers.

Working with a number of private partners, the Borough in 2017 authorized the filing of a grant for the design for the Hollywood Avenue project. In 2018 we are hopeful to obtain both State

and Federal Funding for the design work and ultimately enhance our ability to seek State and Federal funding of this multi-million-dollar project.

I am proud of our accomplishments and remain excited about our future. South Plainfield continues to be a model for how government can work effectively and efficiently. We are a desired destination for individuals, families and businesses alike. A recent social media note I received from a resident in December tells me we are still that special place I have always called home. It reads simply, "Hello Mayor Anesh, I purchased a home in South Plainfield last year after living in Edison over 20 years. South Plainfield is such a beautiful town. Keep up the good work," Best Regards Valerie Haynes.

Well Valerie thank you for your encouraging words, and I agree. South Plainfield is a beautiful town. Made beautiful by our wonderful residents like you, our talented employees, our dedicated volunteers, our emergency services and responsive officials. Best wishes to everyone for a happy, healthy and prosperous 2018.