

Mayoral Address
2009 Bernards Township Mayor, Scott Spitzer
January 4, 2010

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you all for coming here this evening. Thank you also to my colleagues, John Malay, John Carpenter and Mary Pavlini, and to my newest colleague, Carolyn Gaziano, for electing me as your mayor. I look forward to working with all of you for the citizens of Bernards.

I would also like to congratulate Carolyn Gaziano on her election to the Township Committee. I am excited to work with you, and to embrace your contributions to the Committee.

I would like to recognize our honored guests.

I would also like to recognize my extended family who traveled quite a bit to get here. Family members, please raise your hand. Thanks.

Most importantly, I need to express the gratitude, and the love I have for my family – My father, Murray, who has traveled from Delray Beach, Florida to be here tonight, my wonderful wife Toby, who I have been privileged to be married to for 27 years, and my sons Steven and Reid.

I, along with the rest of Bernards Township need to thank Former Mayor Carolyn Kelly. Her years of service to our town have helped to shape it into the great place it is today. Her personal plans made it impossible for her to join us tonight, but we thank her for her deep and longstanding civic commitment.

Our Township was born 250 years ago, when Samuel Bernard received a charter from King George the Second to establish a Town in what was once known as the Northern District of Somerset County. In those times, our area was most well-known for its prosperous farming lands. This prosperity would only grow as Bernards became an independent township, crossing highways were built, and telephone companies, pharmaceutical labs, and housing developments would help to form our wonderful community.

And yet, despite these innovations and renovations, despite the statistical measures of our town's well-being such as our AAA Bond Rating combined with our rigor and discipline on taxes – It has always been the spirit and the character of our citizens that have really made our town great. We have had great leaders like yesteryear's United States Vice Presidential Candidate William Dayton. We have today's men and women who give of their time, and in some cases their own well-being, to serve in our volunteer fire departments and first aid squads, and others who volunteer on our township boards and commissions. Thank you for enriching our community

It is this spirit and character, and this service, that we proudly celebrate this year of our 250th Anniversary as a town. Special thanks go to our 250th Anniversary Task Force, for spearheading a community wide effort for our citizens to learn about our heritage and embrace our spirit and character.

It is this spirit and character that I as mayor will work every day to support.

And I believe that the best way to support our citizens is to pursue a number of initiatives to:

keep our town Prosperous,

keep our town Safe,

enhance our town's Quality of Life,

keep our town Healthy,

keep our town Green,

and keep our town government Expanding Its Outreach.

These are substantial challenges, but together, we can keep our town a gem.

Let's Keep Our Town Prosperous,

We must keep our taxes in check. More than ever, in these economically challenging times we must do everything possible to provide necessary services, but do so at the lowest cost to the taxpayer. We have reduced the budget and tax levy year after year. Our tax record is unparalleled in the State. The budgetary challenges are great, but we must continue to be vigilant to keep taxes in check, and we

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will. We are fortunate for this challenge because we have a terrific Township Administrator, Bruce McArthur, who leads a team of dedicated, motivated and experienced professionals.

We will also pursue efficiencies and shared service opportunities, where it makes sense for us.

Let's Keep Our Town Safe.

Bernards Township is a very safe community. And we have a very professional and effective police department under the command of Chief Brian Bobowicz, a solid and seasoned professional. Our police department's record for protecting our community is excellent.

We have a strong Emergency Management capability. We can and should improve it. We should seek a more effective means for communicating emergency information to all our citizens. We are working with Somerset County to implement a reverse calling capability that can reach specific communities, sections of towns and even specific streets when emergency communication with our citizens are vital.

Last Fall, I championed a successful Community Shred Day for our residents to safely, and without charge, destroy dated but sensitive documents to help avoid the growing threat of identity theft. In a single day, we handled more than 18,000 pounds of our residents' sensitive documents. The hundreds of Township families who participated were very pleased, and the costs were paid for with a County grant. With the able assistance of Denise Szabo, our Township Clerk, we will sponsor this worthwhile project again this year.

Let's Enhance Our Quality of Life

We have an enviable quality of life in Bernards Township, but we can and should do more.

Recently, our 250th Anniversary Task Force's Daffodil Project chaired by my wife, Toby Spitzer, led a successful community effort centered around a beautiful, unifying daffodil flower for our Anniversary year. The effort resulted in our residents purchasing nearly 8,000 daffodil bulbs, and of that

amount nearly 1,500 were donated by our citizens to the Town. The daffodil have been placed this past Fall by our citizens on their private property, and by other citizens, students, and our Brownie troops and our public works department on Township property, fire stations and other locations. The daffodils will be visible from our roads for residents and visitors to enjoy for years and years. Thank you Toby and the entire 250th Anniversary Task Force for enhancing our quality of life.

We should continue this type of initiative. I will ask my colleagues to create a Beautification Committee to help enhance the overall appearance of our community and the quality of life. There are similar town beautification committees throughout New Jersey and it is time for us to do the same. This Committee should have a core team of citizen volunteers who plan and undertake beautification projects.

Our quality of life is threatened by Trenton bureaucrats who seek to impose on us arbitrary and misguided housing mandates and to subvert local control of our zoning. We will continue to actively oppose these efforts.

Let's Keep Our Town Healthy.

We have a large number of health programs sponsored by our Parks and Recreation department, and by our nonprofit, community organizations like our superb Somerset Hills YMCA and the Visiting Nurses Association. I will highlight health initiatives and encourage our citizens to get out and exercise.

Several years ago, the Township agreed to participate in the Mayor's Wellness Campaign. The program is organized by the NJ Healthcare Institute to spur active living initiatives, improve community health and help reduce skyrocketing healthcare costs. As Mayor, I will seek to raise community awareness of this important focus. To this end, I will ask our residents to join me on a health hike for better living as we open the walking paths at our newest park, Sons of Liberty Farm this Spring. I have

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encouraged my Township Committee colleagues to ask our residents to join them in other exercise activities this year. These events and dates will be announced shortly.

As for the quarry, our community has the unquestioned right to a safe and clean environment. Unfortunately, we have had to spend township funds and considerable efforts to get the quarry owners and operators to do what they should have done all along and be good corporate citizens. I am pleased to report that for more than a year our efforts have successfully prevented more fill from being brought in to the quarry, prevented the stream of related truck traffic on our streets bringing in fill, and caused the commencement of testing of the quarry property. We will be steadfast in continuing to pursue our two key objectives: first, no more fill be brought in to the quarry, and secondly, comprehensive testing of soil, surface water and ground water on all the quarry property under New Jersey State DEP oversight. Let's help Keep Our Town Green.

Our township, led by Mary Pavlini and the Green Team and our Town administration, is recognized for being on the cutting edge of energy conservation and environmental responsibility. We have instituted innovative programs, like the integrated pesticide management program, hybrid municipal vehicles, energy saving lighting, and more comprehensive recycling services. We have statewide recognition as a leading municipality in the Sustainable New Jersey program. We need to continue to pursue and expand programs like this.

We have the ability to significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, reduce our carbon footprint, and enhance our urgent national goal of energy independence, through use of solar power. We have approved land use applications for large solar panel array projects at Verizon headquarters and at Fellowship Village. We can and will do more. We will pursue large-scale solar panel array projects at the town recycling center and at the town sewerage treatment plant, which will also bring in revenues.

We will continue to pursue these goals because we are pragmatic environmentalists, because it is right for our environment and because it is right for our planet.

And Finally, Let's Keep Our Town Government Expanding Its Outreach.

Our Township Committee meetings are televised covered by the media and are open forums for citizens to express their views and provide comment on proposed township actions. Notice of meetings and proposed actions are publicized in advance and minutes of meetings including video clips are available online following our meetings. We have open, transparent and responsive town government.

We should, however, seek ways to improve our solid record and expand our outreach. I will hold several public "brown bag" lunches on Saturdays at rotating locations in the Township where I will sit down over lunch with our citizens to better understand their views and concerns. Dates and locations for these "brown bag" lunches will be announced shortly.

I embrace the challenges of being your Mayor, because I am proud of our community and believe the spirit and character of our residents is noble. Our parents volunteer to coach our children, who in turn offer to help the elderly, the sick, and the less advantaged. The people of Bernards are compassionate, and we care deeply and fully about those who need help.

I have outlined a number of initiatives tonight which we can and should pursue. They are ambitious objectives. With the Township Committee you see on the dais tonight, collegial and thoughtful colleagues, we can address these challenges. We will not necessarily achieve all of our objectives, but we will, together, unified in purpose, make real and measurable progress to make our Township a better place.

In closing, to my fellow residents, I want to say that for 250 years, the spirit and character of our residents has made Bernards a wonderful place to live. This year, we will celebrate 250 years of our enduring community spirit.

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I am honored, not only to serve as your Mayor during this wonderful anniversary year, but to wake up every day, in a place so special as the place we are proud to call our home, our town, our Bernards Township.

THANK YOU. AND GOD BLESS BERNARDS TOWNSHIP