Thank you very much. I would first like to extend my sincere thanks, appreciation and gratitude to my colleagues on the dais for their confidence and support and promise everyone to give my utmost in respectfully executing the duties of this office to the best of my ability for our Township and all of its residents.

I would like to thank our outgoing Mayor Carol Bianchi for her legacy of service to this community. Carol has been an inspiration in terms of her tireless efforts in making our town a better place to live. Mayor Bianchi, I think I can speak on behalf of all of the residents when I say thank you very much for your years of service, we sincerely appreciate all of your efforts and accomplishments.

And I’d like to thank my wife and family (especially my wife) for her unwavering support, inspiring confidence and unconditional love, without which I would be lost. Tracy, thank you for always standing by me and supporting me.

Bernards Township is in a very good place. I would say that in many if not most respects we are a “model” town. This is no accident and reflects years, indeed decades, of good governance and solid leadership. The happy state of affairs we enjoy today is the legacy and result of the work of prior administrations. Years of prudent fiscally conservative government has resulted in our town being 100% debt free at a time when many other municipalities have debt or are running deficits. Our enviable position is the result of careful spending and following a “pay as you go” approach which is so central to our governing philosophy. I fully intend to work with the other Township Committee members to continue a fiscally conservative approach to government spending and indeed look for ways to efficiently reduce government spending without sacrificing the high quality of municipal services our residents have come to expect and are entitled to.

Aside from our strong financial position we enjoy one of the best school districts in New Jersey. Good schools are a key component to what makes Bernards such an attractive place. My colleagues and I will work hard to continue to seek opportunities to support parents and our schools on mental health, opioid and substance abuse issues. We will continue to partner with our schools on maintenance, engineering
and safety. We want to ensure that residents continue to enjoy access to and the opportunities of the world class education to which they are entitled.

Another key metric for me is safety. Our town is among the safest in New Jersey and indeed the entire United States. This is a testament to the men and women in blue who tirelessly serve our community to the benefit of every resident, every day and every night. I can promise that this administration will continue to support our police wherever we can to maintain the excellence they deliver regularly and I personally cannot thank them enough.

We enjoy outstanding parks and other public facilities. Working with staff we will continue to make prudent improvements and investments in our roads and infrastructure. These are some of the things that affect the high quality of life that Bernards is well known for.

The blessings we enjoy as one of the debt free, safest towns with outstanding schools and recognized as one of the “best places to live” are not “happy accidents”. They are the result of the many choices and decisions made over the years. Our good fortune can easily and quickly be lost if we are not prudent and vigilant.

As some of you may know I am the third generation of my family to live in Bernards Township and my children are the fourth generation. I have seen the town grow and evolve and I want other families to have the same positive experiences I have had growing up and I am having now in raising my family in Bernards. As the town has grown and evolved it has actually gotten better and I will do everything in my power to keep Bernards the strong welcoming community you have chosen to call home.

Despite the enviable state of affairs, we and other municipalities are being challenged by overdevelopment. Overdevelopment has the potential to seriously affect our quality of life and have serious adverse impacts on schools, traffic, emergency services and finances. As noted in the Affordable Housing Taskforce report dated October 29th 2019, the majority of Bernards’ current residential development is being driven by court mandated affordable housing obligations. That report is available on the Bernards website, and I encourage every resident to read the same. As you may know, Bernards is fully compliant through 2025 with its’ affordable housing obligations; however, overdevelopment is not something that we can successfully address alone. The solution lies in Trenton with the State
Assembly, the State Senate and the Governor’s Office. In my view, the courts should not be deciding how our local zoning works.

I pledge to work with the Township Committee, other Mayors and our elected State officials to find the appropriate solutions that make sense and have bipartisan support. We can only make progress on the challenges of overdevelopment and finding a solution to meeting future affordable housing mandates if we work together in a collaborative manner.

One of the many great things about Bernards is the level of engagement by many of our citizens. Our volunteer first responders in both fire and rescue as well as first-aid and EMT services, along with our Police Department, has been the backbone of Bernards Township in times of need and emergency. We can’t thank these citizens enough for all their time and commitment. We have many great volunteers but could use many more. Volunteering is a measure of a commitment to the community and its improvement. I urge all of our residents to find opportunities to follow the issues, become engaged and serve in some capacity toward the betterment of our town. Volunteering is a big part of what makes us a “family” and “neighborhood” as a community. We are after all a community of families with a strong family focus. I see opportunities for volunteers to initiate, sponsor or otherwise support a variety of family fun activities and I wholeheartedly encourage and support the same.

In conclusion I would like to say that I am very thankful, grateful and humbled to serve as your Mayor and I am looking forward to working with my caring and very competent colleagues on the Township Committee, and; along with our outstanding and unparalleled staff, I have no doubt that the interests of our Township and its residents will continue to be well served in 2020. I am a strong believer in the power of positive thinking. How you think is everything in terms of creating the right environment for success. In any situation, those individuals who convey a positive outlook will be the ones who help us succeed, particularly in challenging environments. Our future is bright.

Please join me at the Mayor’s reception being held at the Liberty Corner Fire Company on Church Street. I look forward to seeing you there.