

Mayor's Address 2017

I would like to thank all of you for your presence here tonight. Thank you to Congressman Leonard Lance, Senator Tom Kean, Jr., Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick, Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz, Somerset County Freeholder Director Pat Walsh, Deputy Director Peter Palmer, Freeholders Pat Scaglione, Mark Caliguire and Brian Levine for your constant support for Bernards Township.

Thank you to my colleagues on the Township Committee. Although people commonly think that we always agree, more often than not we do not. But because of our mutual respect, trust, and admiration for each other we open-mindedly listen to alternate viewpoints and make better decisions collectively than individually. It has been my pleasure to work with the 4 of you and I humbly accept your appointment as Mayor in 2017.

Thank you to our Township Administrator Bruce McArthur, our CFO and Human Resources Officer Terri Johnson, our Municipal Clerk Denise Szabo, Chief of Police Brian Bobowicz and the entire Police Department, Liberty Corner Fire and First Aid Squad, Basking Ridge Fire and First Aid Squad, and to all of our volunteers for Township Boards and Commissions. We truly appreciate your hard work and dedication to our town.

Thank you to Jake Perry of the Bernardsville News and Linda Sadlouskos of Tap into Basking Ridge for faithfully and objectively covering our meetings and all of the happenings in Bernards Township.

Conservative Fiscal Policies

Looking forward to 2017, first and foremost, we will continue the conservative fiscal policies of controlled spending, pay as you go, avoidance of debt, and maintaining low municipal taxes.

Maintaining the beautiful character of Bernards Township

I think everyone here tonight will agree that we love Bernards Township. Why? Some of the things which come to mind are the excellent schools, the low taxes due to conservative fiscal policies, the beautiful parks and facilities such as the turf fields at Mountain Park, the newly renovated Tobin Heath soccer field at Pleasant Valley Park. But what makes someone driving through town stop and say, wow, this is a beautiful town? I suggest that it is the rural character which we still maintain, it's the houses surrounded by gardens, grass and trees, the colonial architecture. The abundance of open space. It is the fact that we do not have houses and buildings built right up next to each other, or an overabundance of impervious coverage. It is the fact that we do not allow lighted or neon signs. This doesn't just happen. This is the result of continuous work by the governing body, the planning board, and the zoning board of adjustment. It is a result of the strength of the laws governing land use in Bernards Township. These laws apply to everyone: every developer, every institution, and every homeowner. They are

administered fairly to all. In 2017 I will once again focus on land use ordinances in Bernards township to make sure they are strong and clear, that they help us maintain the character of our town and adhere to our master plan. We will not allow establishments or developers to bully us with scare tactics and lawsuits, or to disregard our laws jeopardizing the safety and the tranquility enjoyed by Bernards residents. We will not allow manipulation of the law to avoid local land use ordinances and usurp local regulations. We will ensure that laws are applied to everyone fairly and equally.

We will work with Millington Quarry and the developer to redevelop the quarry property to best meet the needs of the current and future population of Bernards Township.

Diversity and Inclusion

Bernards Township is a very diverse and inclusive community. In recent years the increase in public school students has been entirely in ethnic minority students, up 64% since 2006. According to the January 2016 report by Dr. Draper, Township Demographer, there are 48 different languages spoken as the primary language in Bernards Township homes. These include 4 dialects of Chinese, 11 Indian dialects, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Polish, and Korean.

We embrace our ethnic diversity. In 2016 members of the Township Committee participated in many cultural festivals including Dandia, Diwali and the Chinese/Vietnamese Moon Festival, among others. Continuing this engagement, In 2017 I will launch a new Mayor's Speaker Series on Diversity, Inclusion and Culture. Each quarter will feature a speaker, a resident of Bernards Township, who will tell their family story of immigration to America, and how their culture is expressed and assimilated into part of our American culture. Talks will be followed by discussion and refreshments. More details as to dates, speakers and location will be posted on our website as they become available.

Celebrating the Beauty

This year we sadly lost our 600 year old White Oak Tree, the oldest White Oak Tree in America, in the center of town at the Presbyterian Church. Too often we do not take the time to appreciate things when we have them. After this was announced, one could see people daily at the tree taking photographs, sketching, or just admiring the tree. The Presbyterian Church will be deciding how to preserve and honor the tree for the public who have loved it.

The Township's Farmstead Arts Center and the Somerset Hills Historical Society will honor the famous White Oak with exhibitions of artwork related to or inspired by the tree.

This year as Mayor I will celebrate and document the beauty of Bernards Township. As some of you may know, I enjoy photography as a hobby. This year I will post a photograph taken in Bernards township daily, for 365 days, to celebrate the diversity and beauty of the people, places and things of Bernards Township. You can follow it on the township website or on the township facebook page. I hope you will enjoy this artistic representation of a moment in time, the year 2017, in our hometown.

Health Initiatives

In 2017 the Bernards Township Health Department and the Bernards Township Municipal Alliance Against Substance Abuse and Youth Services Commission will focus on mental health as well as physical health.

Programs will be presented addressing issues such as recognizing mental health issues in children and teens, identifying and addressing underlying issues that can contribute to substance abuse, mindful eating, how the gut micro biome influences anxiety, nutrition and the mind, and Alzheimer's research. A Mental Health Resource Fair is scheduled to be held on April 10th, promoting resources for adolescents and mental health first aid training.

Finally, I look forward to serving as your Mayor in 2017, but it is something I would be unable to do without the support of my family. I would like to thank my family for their unwavering support. Thank you everyone for coming, please join me at the Liberty Corner Fire House for a reception following the conclusion of this meeting. God Bless Bernards Township, God Bless America.