

It has been an honor serving as your Mayor in 2016. I want to thank the residents of Bernards Township, our outstanding staff led by our administrator Bruce McArthur, our municipal clerk Denise Szabo, our police, volunteer fire and first aid, township attorney, all of our volunteers, our county and state representatives, and my colleagues. I especially want to thank my husband Rich, our four children, my mom Rita and father in law Al for all of your support and help this year. I wish to recognize our honored guests tonight

2016 was a busy and productive year.

Financial/Administrative/Capital:

We followed an aggressive capital plan for community improvements while maintaining our pay as you go philosophy. We say it every year, but I'm proud to say it again. Bernards Township has zero debt, the lowest equalized municipal tax rate in the state for any municipality with a population over 11,000, and a AAA bond rating.

We achieve these goals by saving, planning, and pursuing creative funding solutions for projects. We enjoyed our first full year playing on our Mountain Park turf fields, the cost, maintenance, and replacement of which will be funded entirely through user fees. We received numerous grants, and shared services when it made sense, including installation of a county salt dome at our Department of Public Works. We worked closely with Far Hills on a joint grant for our shared Douglas Road. We will continue to work collaboratively with our neighbors to benefit our towns.

We also began the process of exploring redevelopment of the Millington Quarry. I look forward to working with our Planning Board and the public to hear your ideas and to develop a plan that is best for our community.

Environmental:

Bernards Township proves that government can be financially and environmentally responsible at the same time. Among our environmental initiatives, we:

- renewed our New Jersey Sustainable Silver Certification through 2019*
- earned Silver certification from Ridewise for exploring cost-saving transportation alternatives for employees*
- completed a Passaic river stream restoration project*
- completed a landfill solar project, which will generate over \$500,000 in revenue for the township, and*
- neared completion of our 5 in 5 Shade Tree program to replace 5,000 trees lost during Hurricane Sandy*

Public Events:

We continued our traditional community events and added new ones this year. Here's what we enjoyed this year as a community:

Our Charter Day, plays, movies, and concerts in the park, senior bus trips to Broadway, Labor Day bike races, Pumpkins in the Park, golf tournaments, pool member events including our first "Membership Appreciation Day," our Memorial Day parade, and Veterans Day Field of Honor raising money for homeless veterans; and our 93d year of caroling in the center of town. We added new events this year: A car show with the Rotary Club; walks at Sons of Liberty Park for Constitution Week (in the rain and mud), a soccer field dedication to Olympian and Ridge High graduate Tobin Heath; and a First Responders Appreciation night.

Other terrific events were brought to you by local organizations, including the Basking Ridge Business Alliance, Friends of the Farmstead, Ross Farm and other local organizations. We thank you for bringing more business, arts, and music to our community.

Communications:

We increased communications this year, in an ongoing effort to remain open and to engage our residents in government. I want to thank Chris Kyriacou and our IT department for help with pushing out information through a Mayor's newsletter, increased information on our website, Facebook, and electronic notifications. Our IT department also created a face directory for our employees. We brought each of our department heads to our public meetings to provide an overview of their activities and the challenges ahead. We did all of these things to fulfill our promise of open and honest government.

Challenges:

Life is never without challenges. We began 2016 with Jonas, the biggest snowstorm in history in Bernards Township—30" of snow dumped in several hours. I will never forget riding in the snowplow with Tom Nicolletti, our DPW foreman, and getting stuck in a snow bank for an hour. As is typical of our dedicated staff, Tom was humorous, patient, and determined to get us out and get back to work. We had our share of fires, one of which destroyed several units in Spring Ridge. Our First responders, members of our Township Committee, and Office of Emergency Management kicked into action and comforted displaced residents. Our dedicated fire department even successfully rescued a wedding dress for a bride-to-be.

We lost several residents this year, some untimely, and with each loss we mourned together as a community and continue to extend our support to the families.

We have stood up in litigation against a force of high powered New York attorneys, the US Department of Justice, and the media for what we believe in—we believe in every one of our ethical Planning Board members and trust that they have made responsible land use decisions with bias toward no one. We assure our residents that everyone is welcome in Bernards Township and we embrace our growing diversity.

As one of the few towns which has historically always complied with our affordable housing obligations, we continue to monitor and work towards a fair and equitable allocation of our fair share. Lastly, we celebrated the final days of our dear 600 year old oak tree.

Throughout each challenge, our community came together, proving that long after our oak tree is gone, we will continue to weather any type of storm, remain united, and emerge even stronger.

I truly loved serving as your Mayor in 2016.

May God bless Bernards Township and the United States of America in 2017.