

The past two years have been difficult for our town, state and country. COVID has created many challenges for all of us. The stress has been great and made things difficult but the council still had a job to do. Thanks to our supportive community we were able to keep functioning throughout.

Maintaining the safety of our residents is always a priority. Our municipal departments must be prepared to serve and need to be equipped properly to meet the challenges. When we were told we needed a new fire truck, we procured one.

We also needed a new police vehicle, we now have two new vehicles, a pick up and a cruiser.

We needed new radios for our police department. We now have new hardware and by moving dispatch to the county system we saved almost a half a million dollars

We needed a sanitation truck, we now have one. Through aggressive grant writing we also were able to get grants for a new Kabuto tractor

Our municipal water system needed repairs and we are making needed repairs now.

We needed an emergency ramp repair at the harbor, we now have a new ramp and a new hoist is on the way.

Our harbor needed a new truck to replace the old one and we now have one.

We also value our municipal employees, who go above and beyond and help make our community great. We wanted to pay them a higher salary so last month we made that happen with a new MEU contract that they are very happy with.

And all this was done without a tax increase. I really believe we are one of the best managed towns in NJ. This was due to the several prior and our current administration's care to not to take on debt unless absolutely necessary. Now we are in a position to be nearly debt free in a few years. We may even be able to fund a portion of our own road repairs with the surplus. Few towns in NJ can make such a claim.

But there is more work to do and we are now actively helping our First Aid Squad, an independent but vital service, to rebuild and hopefully we can meet the difficult nationwide challenge of volunteerism better than most.

We are also pursuing a cannabis workshop and possible ordinance to manage this new industry. Our goal is to have the least impact to our quality of life and the best revenue possible to defray property taxes. We welcome your input on this matter.

Over the last several years we have also seen unwanted development. We listened to you and after a large developer planned to develop one of our last waterfront lots for a housing

development, we worked with NWP who tirelessly fought to preserve the waterfront by introducing a bold ordinance that would protect our waterfront. The developer saw we were serious and a week later came to borough hall saying he was ready to make a deal. Now we have an agreement granting us the waterfront for all residents to enjoy. Thank you NWP and councilmember SB for the ordinance introduction.

Then we had Mother Teresa school close and we didn't know what would take its place. We are taking action and will make sure whatever does take its place will be a benefit to our community.

And through much of the last two years, when COVID struck, we had businesses close or reduce hours. Many residents were out of work. As we learned to adapt to this crisis our residents came together to support the businesses and help our impacted residents. Our party boat fleet was also shutdown, many of the captains and their mates are residents. We contacted Trenton and were able to get their passenger numbers raised so they had a fighting chance to survive. Sadly we lost two of them, but most are still operating.

The pandemic has been stressful for all, sometimes making it difficult for us to agree on solutions to the problems we face. But through it all, we stuck together as neighbors first, neighbors who cared for each other and worked things out. We have many kind, caring residents in our town who are always ready to help. Let their examples be the ones we emulate as we hope the worst is behind us and stay united as a community in 2022 and beyond. Happy New Year to all.

Thank you,