

MAYOR'S ADDRESS
January 1, 2019

Dear Fellow Residents,

It is hard for me to believe that nineteen years have already passed since you first elected me as the mayor of Totowa. The time has passed quickly and I have truly enjoyed my time in office. Our town has changed in many ways since I first took office and I am sure it will continue to change. I am honored that you have re-elected me as mayor and look forward to serving our wonderful community for another four years. The only way it has been possible for me to serve for nineteen years is to have the support of my entire family and relatives, including in laws; but especially my wife, Marygrace, and my children, Alyssa and Matthew. It is with their support and understanding that allowed me to spend the appropriate time for our community.

I'd like to again welcome back Anthony Picarelli and Lisa Palazzo to the Council and congratulate them on their recent election victory. For Anthony, it was his third successful election and for Lisa- her first. You heard from each of them earlier. As you can tell, both Anthony and Lisa have Totowa's best interest at heart. I am happy to have them on our team and I know I can count on them to continue to serve Totowa well in the future.

As I do each New Year's Day, I would like to review some of the events and accomplishments that took place in our town during the past year and to announce some of the plans we have for 2019. Beginning with our infrastructure, we repaved Heritage Court, Knollwood Ave, Wentick St, Dunkerly St, and portions of Greene Ave, Carroll

Place and Craig Court in 2018. With a grant from the Department of Transportation, we will be repaving portions of Furler Street, Jefferson Place, Raphael Road, Adams Drive, and Winifred Drive in 2019. Our paving on Furler Street has been delayed due to work being performed by PSEG and the installation of new water lines by the Borough. We will also look to pave William Place, Haven Ave, and Roseland Ave in 2019 utilizing our own funds.

We applied for another grant from Passaic County to continue relining our sanitary sewers and were recently notified that it has been awarded to us. Our most recent award for William Place between Jefferson Place and Totowa Road to repair a collapsed section of the water main will mark Phase 7 of our sewer lining efforts. We will continue looking at ways to improve our water and sewer system while alleviating flooding to our residents. For example, in 2018, we joined the Passaic Valley Regional Flood Control Board with Woodland Park and Little Falls. Jointly, the three communities will seek grants to improve conditions along the Passaic River. Joining this regional board is another example of a closer working relationship that we have forged with our neighboring communities of Woodland Park and Little Falls.

Another example of our infrastructure improvements will be at our pump station on Riverview Drive that will undergo significant renovations in 2019 which are urgently needed and represent an upgrade to that facility. These renovations will cost over \$300,000. In addition, a new ladder truck was purchased for the fire department in 2018 and will be delivered in 2019, costing \$1 million. We have been saving for both of these

projects for the past several years so we will not incur any debt for these capital expenditures.

At both the PAL and Kennedy Field, due to grants we received from the Passaic County Open Space Fund, we refurbished parks at both fields with new playground equipment and mulch. Our younger residents can now enjoy this new equipment at each of these parks. We will continue to pursue more grants for our parks.

As most residents already know by now, in June, 2014, the State of New Jersey closed down the North Jersey Development Center on Minnisink Road. This facility had been in operation in Totowa since 1928. In August, 2016, we issued a “plan for redevelopment” and request for proposal that outlined how we would like to see the site redeveloped. We selected a redeveloper in January 2017 after reviewing and analyzing all bids. The redeveloper presented conceptual plans to the Planning Board in August, 2017, and then presented the first parcel to be developed to the Planning Board in November 2017. The first facility to be built will be a data center, and construction began in 2018. As anyone who has passed by this site recently can attest, it sure looks different. We know that the residents adjacent to the site have been living through this construction. We have been working with the redeveloper to minimize the disruption to these residents. In July of 2018, plans for a medical office building on a second parcel were presented and approved by the Planning Board. Once construction on each parcel is completed, the additional ratables will ease the tax burden on our residents. We will remain very involved in the development of this site.

As I reported to you last year, like many other municipalities in the State of New Jersey, we were in the midst of a judiciary review of our obligation for providing affordable housing in Totowa. We spent a considerable amount of time in balancing the availability of land for denser developments with the obligation to provide affordable housing. I am very pleased to report that the Honorable Judge Brogan approved our affordable housing plan in December 2018. Judge Brogan commented that Totowa had been proactive in our approach and complemented us for adhering to the spirit of the law. This approval is significant as it means that our town has certainty in our obligations through 2025 and we can plan knowing what our obligations are. I would like to thank our attorneys, Bob and Kristin Corrado and Rich Brigliadoro, our planner, Darlene Green, and our engineers at Alaimo, who worked tirelessly with all stakeholders to get this agreement done.

Our community continues to be strengthened by the support of our professional staff and volunteers. Our employees are proud to work for the Borough and I receive many compliments from residents about their willingness to help. I thank our volunteers, which include our fire fighters, first aid squad members, PAL members, and members of our various municipal boards for the time and effort that they contribute toward the betterment of our community. All of our town's volunteers are truly appreciated by the Council and me. This past year, the Board of Recreation continued its summer concert series in front of the Municipal Building. The concerts were well attended by our residents and we look forward to another series in 2019. The Board of Recreation also

sponsored the first “Totowa Day” in June of 2018 behind Washington Park School. It was a huge success and planning is underway for another Totowa Day.

On the property tax front, in 2018, even though we managed a slight decrease in our municipal tax rate, our total tax rate increased by 1%. While we do not like any increase, we tried to make this one as low as possible for our residents. We are determined to be fiscally prudent. In Totowa we have decided to make tough choices and not place a financial burden on future budgets and future generations. We have now achieved our seventh consecutive year without any long-term debt in our municipality. Just like the fire truck and pump station expenditures I spoke about, our core belief is that we should pay currently to meet our obligations where we can and not borrow if possible. By freeing ourselves of debt, we can utilize those funds for much needed improvements to our infrastructure and replacing outdated equipment. In 2018, Totowa continues the distinction of having the lowest tax rate of the 16 municipalities in Passaic County. The Council and I will once again work hard to maintain the lowest tax rate for our residents.

The Council and I will remain active in our community’s affairs in 2019. Our future is bright. I am confident that we will continue our improvements to our town as well as our stability here in Totowa. On behalf of our Council members, I would like to wish everyone a healthy and peaceful New Year.

Thank you.

