MAYOR’S ADDRESS

January 1, 2023

Dear Fellow Residents,

It is hard for me to believe that 23 years have already passed since you first elected

me as the mayor of Totowa. The time has flown by and I have truly enjoyed

my time in office all of these years. 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 23 years is to have the support of my

entire family, including in-laws; but especially my wife, Marygrace, my daughter Alyssa

and her husband Allan, and my son Matthew and his wife Emily. It is with their support

and understanding that has allowed me to spend the appropriate time away from our family

in order to serve our community.

I’d like to again welcome back Lou D’Angelo and John Capo to the Council and congratulate them on their recent election victory. Lou has been a Councilman since 2005 and our Council President since 2017. He has chaired each of our six committees and his long tenure on the Council has provided us with invaluable experience. John was first elected in 2016 and his chairmanship on our engineering and public property committee has utilized his knowledge in these areas. You heard from each of them earlier. As you can tell, both Lou and John have Totowa’s best interest at heart. I rely on their counsel and advice, as well as the entire Council along with Joe and Kristin, in making decisions for Totowa. I am happy to have all of them on our team and I know I can count on them to continue to serve you 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 2023, which by the way, is the 125th anniversary of Totowa’s founding, which occurred on March 14. 1898.

The story for the past couple of years has been the pandemic. While 2022 introduced new strains of the Corona virus and a second booster, most of us have learned to live with COVID 19 and it has become part of our regular life. Thus, in Totowa, we have returned to pre-pandemic activities. Our artificial turf, which was installed in 2021, had plenty of use last year. The Memorial Day parade was back in full force in 2022. And in June, a very successful Totowa Day had the largest turnout I have seen for any event in Totowa in many years. During the summer months, we held camp for our youth once again and our town pool enjoyed a record number of members. There were 12 summer concerts on our lawn in front of the municipal building that were well attended.

During the Fall, we held our 5K Turkey Trot with over 700 participants this past year. The fire truck parade with the Totowa and West Paterson Fire departments was also held again and the number of trucks in the parade reached over 210. The toys collected by our volunteer firefighters surpassed the prior year totals and were donated to children in local hospitals.

And speaking of parades, in December, we were once again fortunate to have a convoy of trucks from Wreaths Across America rumble through our town on Union Boulevard to crowds of supporters who lined the street. We also held our annual tree lighting ceremony with the school choir and musicians.

With respect to our infrastructure, we received a grant from the NJ Department of Transportation in 2021 for Hamilton Trail, Stirling Terrace and Fellner Place. And with Totowa’s own funding, we added Huntington Terrace, Mountainwood Court, and Cumberland Ave. to the planned paving. Two of these streets were just completed and the remainder will be completed in the Spring. In 2022, we have received grants from the DOT for portions of Winifred Drive, Liberty Ridge Trail, and Centennial Court. For our industrial park, we received a grant for a portion of Maltese Drive, which is in dire need of repair.

As for our parks, in 2022, we received a grant from the Passaic County Open Space Fund for the renovation of the Riverview park and are awaiting delivery of the equipment. And in March we were notified that we received a grant of $649,000 for the installation of lights at the PAL, which we have begun planning.

We applied for another grant from Passaic County to continue relining our sanitary sewers. Our most recent award is for a portion of Willard Avenue. These efforts will help alleviate some of the infiltration that enters our sanitary sewer system. We are continuing the project to replace the pumps and infrastructure at the William Place pump house and are just about ready to go to bid on the upgrades to the Riverview Drive pump station. These are both expensive projects but the upgrades are necessary as the existing systems are quite outdated. We will continue looking at ways to improve our water and sewer system while alleviating flooding to our residents.

Real estate development continued in Totowa in 2022. We are pleased that developers have confidence in our borough and consider it a desirable location to build. On the former North Jersey Development Center site on Minnisink Road, the construction of the medical office building is now complete and is a beautiful addition to our community. As I have stated in the past, part of the agreement with the developer, Minnisink Road and Vreeland Ave. will be widened at the intersection of those roads and traffic lights installed as part of the obligation of the developer.

Digital Realty has begun construction of data centers on Union Boulevard just south of Route 46. The additional ratables from the projects mentioned and other construction taking place should provide ratables and ease the tax burden on our residents.

Our community continues to be strengthened by the support of our professional staff, our police department, all of our employees, including DPW, and, of course, volunteers. Our volunteer fire fighters and first aid squad members are vital to our community as they give up their time to serve selflessly for you, our residents, in your time of need. There are also volunteers at the PAL and on our municipal boards who donate their time in the best interest of our community and all of these efforts are truly appreciated by the Council and me. In particular I would like to acknowledge the efforts of our Board of Recreation and their Director this past year. While I only mentioned a few of the events that the Board sponsored in 2022, there were others as well for the benefit of our children and adults.

Our Totowa Public Library continues to flourish with new and expanded programs offered as well as assistance to our senior citizens and residents in need. Its recent renovation has given our Library a fresh look. Under the direction of the Library Board of Trustees and its director, the library has become more than a library- it is a community center.

On the property tax front, in 2022, our total tax rate increased by 2.5%. This was attributable to several factors, including favorable tax treatment from our own municipal budget, Passaic Valley High School and the Totowa schools, offset by an increase of 15% from Passaic County. As you have heard me say countless times, we are determined to be fiscally prudent and while our borough wide tax increased by 2.5%, it is clearly less than the annual inflation rate we are experiencing. In Totowa we have decided to make tough choices and try not to place a financial burden on future budgets and future generations. We have now achieved our eleventh consecutive year without any long-term debt in our municipality, a claim only a handful of municipalities across New Jersey can make. 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 2022, 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.

Our town is going to be 125 years old and has a rich history. Looking forward, our future is a bright one and 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.