

122nd
REORGANIZATION MEETING OF THE MAYOR & COUNCIL
BOROUGH OF WESTWOOD, NEW JERSEY
COMMUNITY CENTER
55 JEFFERSON AVENUE
JANUARY 5, 2016

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Borough Clerk Hughes at 7:00 pm. Mrs. Hughes then read the Open Public Meetings Law Statement: "This meeting which conforms with the OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS LAW, CHAPTER 231, PUBLIC LAWS OF 1975, is a regular Borough Council meeting. Notices have been filed with our local official newspapers and posted on the Municipal Bulletin Board".

2. FLAG SALUTE AND INVOCATION:

The Colors were presented by the Westwood Police Reserves Color Guard.

The invocation was delivered by Reverend Sutton.

3. MAYOR ELECT:

John Birkner, Jr. was administered his Oath of Office as Mayor for a four year term by Freeholder Tom Sullivan, said term expiring 12/31/19. He now takes over chairing the meeting. Mayor Birkner thanked his family and supporters. At the end of his remarks, Mayor Birkner took his seat on the dais and chaired the remainder of the meeting.

4. COUNCILMEMBERS - ELECT:

Peter Grefrath was administered his Oath of Office as Member of the Council for a three year term by Judge Karch, said term expiring 12/31/18. Councilmember Grefrath thanked his family and supporters. At the end of his remarks, Councilmember Grefrath took his seat on the dais and chaired the remainder of the meeting.

Raymond Arroyo was administered his Oath of Office as Member of the Council for a three year term by Borough Clerk Karen Hughes, said term expiring 12/31/18. Councilmember Arroyo thanked his family and supporters. At the end of his remarks, Councilmember Arroyo took his seat on the dais and chaired the remainder of the meeting.

5. ROLL CALL

Mayor Birkner - present
Councilmember Owens - present
Councilmember Montana - present
Councilmember Grefrath - present
Councilmember Dell - present
Councilmember Bicocchi - present
Councilmember Arroyo - present
Borough Clerk Hughes - present

At this time Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi addressed the audience, followed by Freeholder Tom Sullivan.

6. APPOINTMENT OF BOROUGH ADMINISTRATOR

Resolution #16-1: Appointment of Borough Administrator

Motion: Councilmember Grefrath Second: Councilmember Montana
Roll Call: Councilmember Owens - Yes Councilmember Montana - Yes
Councilmember Grefrath – Yes Councilmember Dell - Yes
Councilmember Bicocchi – Yes Councilmember Arroyo – Yes

7. APPOINTMENT OF BOROUGH PROFESSIONALS

Resolution #16-2: Appointment of Borough Attorney - Russell Huntington

Motion: Councilmember Bicocchi Second: Councilmember Owens
Roll Call: Councilmember Owens - Yes Councilmember Montana - Yes
Councilmember Grefrath – Yes Councilmember Dell - Yes
Councilmember Bicocchi – Yes Councilmember Arroyo – Yes

Resolution #16-3 Appointment of Borough Engineer - Boswell Engineering

Motion: Councilmember Grefrath Second: Councilmember Dell
Roll Call: Councilmember Owens - Yes Councilmember Montana - Yes
Councilmember Grefrath – Yes Councilmember Dell - Yes
Councilmember Bicocchi – Yes Councilmember Arroyo – Yes

Resolution #16-4: Appointment of Various Borough Professionals

Motion: Councilmember Arroyo Second: Councilmember Bicocchi
Roll Call: Councilmember Owens - Yes Councilmember Montana - Yes
Councilmember Grefrath – Yes Councilmember Dell - Yes
Councilmember Bicocchi – Yes Councilmember Arroyo – Yes

Position	Firm	Designee
Borough Auditor	Lerch, Vinci & Higgins	Gary Vinci, RMA
Risk Manager	Burton Agency	Debra Ginetto
Public Defender		Christopher Leyden, Esq.
Prosecutor		Edward G. Johnson, Esq.
Labor Attorney		Raymond Wiss, Esq.
Comm. Appraiser	McNerney & Associates	Robert McNerney
Resid. Appraiser	Associated Appraisal Group, LLC	Rick DelGuercio

Resolution #16-5: Appointment of Various Borough Professionals by Public Bidding

Motion: Councilmember Dell Second: Councilmember Montana
Roll Call: Councilmember Owens - Yes Councilmember Montana - Yes
Councilmember Grefrath – Yes Councilmember Dell - Yes

Councilmember Biccocchi – Yes Councilmember Arroyo – Yes

Joseph Burgis, PP of Burgis Associates as Borough Planner
Gregory Dietrich of G. Dietrich Preservation Consultant as Historic Consultant

8. MAYOR’S DESIGNATION OF COUNCIL COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS FOR 2016

<u>COMMITTEE</u>	<u>LIAISON</u>	<u>DEPUTY LIAISON</u>
Finance, Admin. & Cap. Projects	Christopher Montana	Christopher Owens
Fire & Ambulance	Peter Grefrath	Robert Biccocchi
Police & Emergency Mgt.	Ray Arroyo	Christopher Owens
Land Use	Beth Dell	Ray Arroyo
Public Properties	Christopher Owens	Beth Dell
Health & Recreation	Robert Biccocchi	Christopher Montana
Shared Services	Peter Grefrath	Christopher Montana

9. SELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT FOR 2016

Resolution #16-6: Nomination of 2016 Council President: Robert Biccocchi

Motion: Councilmember Arroyo Second: Councilmember Grefrath

Roll Call: Councilmember Owens - Yes Councilmember Montana - Yes

 Councilmember Grefrath – Yes Councilmember Dell - Yes

 Councilmember Biccocchi – Yes Councilmember Arroyo – Yes

10. PUBLIC FORUM:

Motion to open the Public Forum: Councilmember Montana Second: Councilmember Owens

Voice Vote: A voice vote was taken with all present voting in the affirmative.

No member of the public wished to speak.

Motion to close the Public Forum: Councilmember Owens Second: Councilmember Montana

Voice Vote: A voice vote was taken with all present voting in the affirmative.

11. BUDGET MEETINGS:

Mayor Birkner announced that preliminary work has been done on the 2016 Municipal Budget, and a schedule of Budget Meetings will soon be published in the official Borough newspaper and posted on the Municipal Bulletin Board.”

12. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Birkner announced that the Resolutions listed on the Consent Agenda would be enacted with one motion. Copies of all Resolutions were available to any person upon request. Any Councilmember who wished to remove any Resolution(s) to be voted upon had the opportunity to do so at this time and said Resolution(s) would be moved and voted upon separately.

Motion to approve Consent Agenda Resolutions #16-7 through #16-35: Councilmember Grefrath Second: Council President Bicocchi

Roll Call: Councilmember Owens - Yes Councilmember Montana - Yes
 Councilmember Grefrath – Yes Councilmember Dell - Yes
 Councilmember Arroyo – Yes Council President Bicocchi – Yes

Resolution Titles

- 16-7 OFFICIAL ELECTRONIC MEDIA
- 16-8 TEMPORARY BUDGET
- 16-9 MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2016
- 16-10 DEPOSITORIES OF FUNDS
- 16-11 AUTHORIZATION OF PAYMENT SIGNATORIES FOR 2016
- 16-12 FACSIMILE SIGNATURES ON CHECKS
- 16-13 ESTABLISHMENT OF INT. RATES ON DELINQUENT TAXES & ASSESS.
- 16-14 ADOPTION OF PETTY CASH & CREDIT CARD POLICIES
- 16-15 ESTABLISHMENT OF PETTY CASH FUND
- 16-16 ESTABLISHMENT OF PETTY CASH FUND FOR RECREATION
- 16-17 ESTABLISHMENT OF PETTY CASH FUND FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE
- 16-18 DEPOSITORY OF ATTENDANCE RECORDS
- 16-19 APPOINTMENT OF ASSESSMENT SEARCH OFFICER
- 16-20 APPOINTMENT OF TAX SEARCH OFFICER
- 16-21 MAGISTRATE'S ORDER DESIGNATING VIOLATIONS CLERK
- 16-22 APPOINTMENT TAX ASSESSOR / ATTORNEY - TAX APPEALS
- 16-23 2016 MUNICIPAL HOLIDAYS
- 16-24 OFFICIAL BOROUGH NEWSPAPERS
- 16-25 \$20.00 CHARGE FOR PAYMENTS MADE WITH INSUFFICIENT FUNDS
- 16-26 \$5.00 CHARGE FOR TAX ACCOUNT REPORTS TO SEARCH COMPANIES
- 16-27 TAX SALE COSTS
- 16-28 CASH MANAGEMENT PLAN 2016
- 16-29 MUTUAL AID – PASCACK VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENTS
- 16-30 AUTHORIZATION OF A FEE FOR ISSUANCE OF DUPLICATE TAX SALE CERTIFICATES
- 16-31 BERGEN COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT MUTUAL AID
- 16-32 AWARD OF BID FOR HVAC MAINTENANCE & EMERGENCY SERVICES
- 16-33 AWARD OF BID FOR VEGETATIVE WASTE DISPOSAL SERVICES
- 16-34 2016 TEMPORARY CAPITAL BUDGET
- 16-35 AWARDED CONTRACT FOR THE DISPOSAL OF SOLID WASTE SITE

13. ORDINANCES FOR FIRST & FINAL READING:

Ordinances on Introduction

Mayor Birkner commented that this first ordinance is for the purchase of an additional home as part of the Borough's ongoing effort to mitigate the effect of flooding in the Borough. In 2012 the Borough obtained grants from FEMA and Green Acres totaling \$2,068,057 which were used to purchase five homes on Harding Avenue and Nugent Place. We've received two additional grants, one from Green Acres and a second from the Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund, to fund the purchase of one more house on Nugent Place.

16-1 An Ordinance Of The Borough Of Westwood, In The County Of Bergen, New Jersey, Providing For The Acquisition Of Property And Other Related Expenses In And For The Borough Of Westwood And Appropriating \$492,500 Therefor (Including \$200,000 Expected To Be Received From The State Of New Jersey Green Acres Fund And \$292,500 From The County Of Bergen Open Space Trust Fund), And Providing For The Issuance Of \$477,875 In Bonds Or Notes Of The Borough Of Westwood To Finance The Same

BE IT RESOLVED, That Ordinance #16-1 entitled: “An Ordinance Of The Borough Of Westwood, In The County Of Bergen, New Jersey, Providing For The Acquisition Of Property And Other Related Expenses In And For The Borough Of Westwood And Appropriating \$492,500 Therefor (Including \$200,000 Expected To Be Received From The State Of New Jersey Green Acres Fund And \$292,500 From The County Of Bergen Open Space Trust Fund), And Providing For The Issuance Of \$477,875 In Bonds Or Notes Of The Borough Of Westwood To Finance The Same” Is hereby introduced by title; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Borough Clerk is hereby directed to advertise said ordinance with the 19th day of January, 2016, hearing date in the official newspaper according to law.

Motion to pass the ordinance on First Reading: Councilmember Grefrath Second: Councilmember Dell

Roll Call: Councilmember Owens - Yes

Councilmember Dell – Yes

Councilmember Arroyo – Yes

Councilmember Montana - Yes

Councilmember Grefrath - Yes

Council President Biccocchi – Yes

Mayor Birkner stated that this second ordinance is due to a grant received by the Borough from the County of Bergen to fund ADA compliant curb cuts.”

16-2 An Ordinance Of The Borough Of Westwood, In The County Of Bergen, New Jersey, Providing For The Construction Of Ada Accessible Curb Ramps And Other Related Expenses In And For The Borough Of Westwood And Appropriating \$210,000 Therefor (Including \$175,000 Expected To Be Received From The County Of Bergen 2014 Community Development Block Grant Trust Fund), And Providing For The Issuance Of \$35,000 In Bonds Or Notes Of The Borough Of Westwood To Finance The Same

BE IT RESOLVED, That Ordinance #16-2 entitled: “An Ordinance Of The Borough Of Westwood, In The County Of Bergen, New Jersey, Providing For The Construction Of ADA Accessible Curb Ramps And Other Related Expenses In And For The Borough Of Westwood And Appropriating \$210,000 Therefor (Including \$175,000 Expected To Be Received From The County Of Bergen 2014 Community Development Block Grant Trust Fund), And Providing For The Issuance Of \$35,000 In Bonds Or Notes Of The Borough Of Westwood To Finance The Same” Is hereby introduced by title; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Borough Clerk is hereby directed to advertise said ordinance with the 19th day of January, 2016, hearing date in the official newspaper according to law.

Motion to pass the ordinance on First Reading: Councilmember Grefrath Second:
Council President Bicocchi
Roll Call: Councilmember Owens - Yes Councilmember Montana - Yes
 Councilmember Dell – Yes Councilmember Grefrath - Yes
 Councilmember Arroyo – Yes Council President Bicocchi – Yes

14. ANNUAL APPOINTMENTS AND DESIGNATIONS TO VARIOUS MUNICIPAL OFFICES:

- Ben Kezmarsky – Affirmative Action Compliance Official, Alternate Fund Commissioner-B-MED, B-MEL & JIF
- Mayor John Birkner, Jr. - Fund Commissioner B-MED, B-MEL & JIF
- Karen Hughes - Assessment Search Officer, Local Ethics Official
- Denise Holmes - Deputy Borough Clerk
- Letitia Candeloro - Court Administrator
- Elizabeth Kraus - Deputy Court Administrator
- Rick Woods - Recycling Coordinator, Clean Community Coordinator
- Sharon Blehl - Right-To-Know Coordinator, Bloodborne Pathogens Coordinator
- Stefanie Stokes – Tax Search Officer
- Robert Hibler - Borough Historian

Mayor Birkner invited all appointees to the dais. Judge Karch administered the Oaths of Office.

15. APPOINTMENTS TO VARIOUS BOARDS

Board of Health

- Dennis Farrell, Term Expiring 12/31/18
- Maria Costello, Term Expiring 12/31/18
- Theresa Lardaro, Alt. #1 Term Expiring 12/31/17
- Councilmember Bicocchi (Council Liaison)

Local Assistance Board

- Councilmember Bicocchi (Council Liaison)

Westwood Municipal Alliance (Annual Term)

- Gary Buchheister, Annual Expiring 12/31/16

Website and Technology Committee

- Councilmember Owens (Council Liaison)

Heritage Society

- Councilmember Owens (Council Liaison)

Westwood Parking Authority

Mary Ann Basset, Term Expiring 12/31/20
Councilmember Arroyo (Council Liaison)

Library Board of Trustees

Dennis Farrell, Term Expiring 12/31/20
Noeline Grefrath, Term Expiring 12/31/20
Beverly Karch, Term Expiring 12/31/20
Frank Zimmerman, Unexp. Term, Term Expiring 12/31/16
Mayor John Birkner, Term Expiring 12/31/16
Ray Gonzalez, School Supt., Annual Expiring 12/31/16
Felicia Brockner, Superintendent Alternate, Annual Expiring 12/31/16
Councilmember Dell (Council Liaison)

Historic Preservation Commission

Jim Murphy, Class C, Term Expiring 12/31/19
Eric Gsellmeier, Class C, Term Expiring 12/31/19
David Hohmann, Class A, Term Expiring 12/31/19
Tyler Rubin, Class A, Term Expiring 12/31/19
Councilmember Dell (Council Liaison)

Zoning Board of Adjustment

George James, Term Expiring 12/31/19
Eric Oakes, Term Expiring 12/31/19
Cynthia Waneck, Term Expiring 12/31/17
Michael Klein, Alt #1, Term Expiring 12/31/16
Anthony Zorovich, Alt #2, Term Expiring 12/31/17
Councilmember Dell (Council Liaison)

Shade Tree Committee

Councilmember Montana (Council Liaison)

Safety Committee - (Annual Appointments)

Darren Blankenbush, Safety Delegate
Gary Buchheister, Alternate Delegate
Mary Beth Netzer, Member
Craig Hegner, Ambul. Member
William Haffler, FD Member
Gary Haight, Member
Denise Holmes, Member
Sylvia Kokowski, Member
Linda Aiello, Member
Det. Warren Morrell, PD Member
Jack Sauer, Member
Martha Urbiel, Member
Richard Woods, Member

Ben Kezmarsky, Borough Administrator

Environmental Advisory Committee

Mike Waugh, Term Expiring 12/31/18
Wilhelm Wang, Term Expiring 12/31/18
Boniface Kiamue, Term Expiring 12/31/18
Councilmember Grefrath (Council Liaison)

16. SWEARING IN OF ALL APPOINTEES

Motion to Accept All Appointees: Councilmember Arroyo Second: Councilmember Owens

Roll Call: Councilmember Owens - Yes Councilmember Montana - Yes
 Councilmember Dell – Yes Councilmember Grefrath - Yes
 Councilmember Arroyo – Yes Council President Biccocchi – Yes

Recreation Advisory Board

Amy Saunders McDevitt, Term Expiring 12/31/18
Kevin Corcoran, Term Expiring 12/31/18
Jennifer Scardino, Term Expiring 12/31/18
Councilmember Biccocchi, (Council Liaison)

Planning Board

William Martin, Class II, Annual Expiring 12/31/16
Thomas Constantine, Class IV, Term Expiring 12/31/19
Keith Doell, Class IV, (unexp. term Cerruti), Term Expiring 12/31/17
Yash Risbud, Class IV, (unexp. term Bonsignore), Term Expiring 12/31/16
Councilmember Dell, Class III (Council Liaison)

Mayor Birkner invited all appointees to the dais. Judge Karch administered the Oaths of Office.

At this time, Mayor Birkner asked Francis Costello, the Chairman of the Parking Authority, to address the audience. Mr. Costello presented the Borough with the annual payment from the Parking Authority. He then took a few moments to remember a long-time active Parking Authority employee, Mario Ciocca, who recently passed away. Mr. Costello ended by advising the public that the Parking Authority had commissioned a parking study that would be discussed in 2016.

17. APPOINTMENT AND SWEARING IN OF POLICE RESERVES

Mayor Birkner invited the 2016 Police Reservists to the dais to be administered their Oaths of Office.

Mayo Credle, Capt.	Damon Vincenty
John Brobson, Lt.	Sal Grosso
Michael Amoruso, Sgt.	Shawn Yates
Donna Heil	Shaun Walsh
Kenroy Morrison, Sgt.	Raheem Jackson
Nicholas Antonucci	Misael Cortez

Esequiel Cortez

PO Niko Pieratos, Liaison Officer

18. OATHS OF OFFICES, AMBULANCE CORPS OFFICIALS

Mayor Birkner invited the 2016 Ambulance Corps Officers to the dais to be administered their Oaths of Office.

Captain Kris Rasmussen, 1st Lt. Bonnie Costello, and 2nd Lt. Steve Wolf

19. OATHS OF OFFICE, FIRE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS

Mayor Birkner invited 2016 Fire Chief James Voorhis, Deputy Chief William Haffler, Senior Captain Kevin Woods, Captain Michael Griffin, Senior, 1st Lt. Brian Kronewitter, 2nd Lt. Brian Wicenski, 3rd Lt. Scott Stewart, 4th Lt. Michael Griffin, Junior to the dais to be administered their Oaths of Office by Judge Karch.”

20. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

a) Volunteer Emergency Services Hall of Fame:

Mayor Birkner and Councilmember Grefrath presented certificates to Ed Keller, Westwood Volunteer Fire Department and Jeri Bowman, Westwood Volunteer Ambulance Corps; and Mayor Birkner and Councilmember Arroyo presented the certificate to Kenroy Morrison, Westwood Police Reserves, in acknowledgement of their induction into the Volunteer Emergency Services Hall of Fame. Each of these recipients was nominated by their peers in recognition of outstanding service.

b) Special Presentation:

Mayor Birkner announced that the Borough is honoring a very special volunteer who has 43 years of continuous service on the Westwood Planning Board. He invited Mr. Dick Bonsignore to the dais for several special presentations. Mayor Birkner explained that “as a tribute to the many lasting contributions that Mr. Bonsignore has made during his tenure, the Governing Body wanted to do something equally as lasting. We thought that the most meaningful tribute we could do that would ensure Mr. Bonsignore’s contributions are not forgotten is to ceremonially name a street in his honor. Now, of all the many notable projects that Mr. Bonsignore has reviewed and contributed to, and there are many, perhaps the most significant is the Westwood House. Accordingly, I would like a motion to name the circular drive in front of the Westwood House Bonsignore Circle.”

Resolution #16-36: Designating Bonsignore Circle

Motion: Councilmember Arroyo Second: Council President Bicocchi

Roll Call: Councilmember Owens - Yes Councilmember Montana - Yes

Councilmember Grefrath – Yes Councilmember Dell - Yes

Councilmember Bicocchi – Yes Councilmember Arroyo – Yes

Mayor Birkner revealed the street sign that will be installed. He read the resolution for the benefit of the audience and presented Mr. Bonsignore with a copy. He also read and presented a proclamation to Mr. Bonsignore. Mr. Bonsignore reflected on his time with the Planning Board. He encouraged everyone to volunteer in some capacity, and especially to be involved with the Westwood House.

21. MAYOR'S REMARKS

Text of the Mayor's speech is attached.

22. BENEDICTION

Reverend Pranschke delivered the Benediction.

23. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn: Councilmember Dell Second: Councilmember Montana
Voice Vote: All those present vote in the affirmative. The time was 8:55 PM.

Attest:

(sign) Karen Hughes
Karen Hughes, RMC
Borough Clerk

Proofed by: Denise Holmes, Deputy Clerk

First and foremost I need to say thank you to so many people who supported me during my campaign. It would be so very difficult to name everybody involved, but I do have to point out a few that made this endeavor particularly rewarding and personally enriching :

To my brother Michael who throughout the years has been my sounding board. Having served for eight years as a councilman Gettysburg, Pa., Michael is well versed in the intricacies of municipal government. He is a renowned political historian, author, scholar, and professor. The value of his advice has been immeasurable.

My Cousin Bob Gallione, a former Mayor from my hometown of Bergenfield. Bob has been my real life Godfather, my conciliary, a mentor, but best of all, my family.

Politics has been part of the fabric of growing up in the Birkner/Marsilio/Gallione family. My father was a factory worker who served our country in World War II, supported his widowed

immigrant mother and his siblings. Growing up in the 60's and 70's, social events and political ideology were common topics at the dinner table. I am so very proud to be able to continue to carry the torch and am comforted by the tremendous wealth of knowledge and sage advice I have available to draw on during difficult times.

To my family, my wife Susan, and children Paris and Kyle. I thank my wife for thickening up her skin and for agreeing to share me with the residents of Westwood for another four years. I may have previously mentioned that when the phone rings at 3:00 AM, it is Suzy that has to pick up because the phone is on her side of the bed. Paris and Kyle have embraced the electoral process and have admirably met the challenges that were presented by having the mayor as a dad. I am quite sure they will be very quick to tell you that while I may be the Mayor of Westwood, mom is the real mayor at 416 Fourth Ave. They have themselves learned more about democracy and public service and hopefully someday look back fondly at their years growing up in Westwood and watching its progress from a very unique perspective. You are indeed my inspiration.

It is especially meaningful to me to have my mother, Mildred Birkner here to see me sworn in for the third time. My mom is 91 years old and has more energy than anyone I know. If it snows overnight, I had better get to her house by 5:00 AM because I know she will be out there and have her sidewalks and driveway cleared by 5:30. Thank you for everything you ever do Mom, and especially for all the fresh homemade eggplant, manicotti, and stuffed peppers you send over.

Most importantly, I really wish to thank all of the residents that came out to vote, and in many cases twice this year! In so doing you confirmed that our form of democracy works as our founding fathers had envisioned, and as it has for 240 years. You were engaged in the process, you spoke and now we are committed to listening. It is now time to govern per your will. Thank you for your trust, thank you for your support, and thank you for this opportunity to continue to serve the great town of Westwood.

Thank you all for being here at the 122nd Annual Re-Organization of the Borough of Westwood.

Acknowledge dignitaries present:

Assemblywoman Schepisi

Freeholder Tom Sullivan

Councilmembers elect :

Arroyo

It is my privilege to extend a warm welcome back and congratulations on his re-election to Council member Arroyo. Ray completed his first term admirably and most certainly has earned his seat at the dias in 2016. Ray has been a tremendous asset to the governing body with his thorough analysis of each project we have had before us. During this past year, as Council President, Ray has been especially engaged in labor negotiations, budgeting, and borough operations progressing the governing body's objectives as we head into 2016. Ray will continue to bring his voice of

experience to the dais and I very much look forward to continuing our work together as we strive to keep Westwood moving forward.

Grefrath

I have actually lost count of the number of terms Peter has served but it is more than 5 but slightly less than ten. Actually Peter was recently honored for his twentieth year as a member of the Westwood Borough Council. This year he was inducted into the New Jersey Elected Officials Hall of Fame for his longevity and commitment to public service.

Peter has been a valuable member of the governing body, with his historical perspective on borough operations and of particular assistance to our newer members of the council. He has worked closely with our CFO as the chair of our finance Committee for several years and his keen sense of municipal finance has helped Westwood's governing body navigate the complications of our annual budget process. I very much look forward to working together with Peter in the years to come.

Mayors Report

I find it remarkable how not only has this past year has gone by in what was seemingly a blink of an eye, but my how eight years have passed since I first stood here and gave my first address as mayor of Westwood. Looking back at old photographs, I once had thick Black hair, while now it is thinning and turning grey. I am not sure if that has more to do with my eight years as mayor, the past eight years raising teenagers, or with the impending reality of having two kids in college at the same time!

Eight years ago I first stood in this room to take my oath of office. At that time I outlined several priorities that I hoped to address as mayor. One was to bring pride and dignity back to our local government. I ran because I did not like the direction Westwood was headed in. Division, confrontation, and controversy eclipsed the task at hand which was to move Westwood into the new millennium. I knew then, and I know even more clearly today that I was not the smartest Borough engineer, or municipal attorney. I knew I was not the most knowledgeable DPW Superintendent, Clerk, Borough Administrator, or Tax Assessor. I knew I was very limited on my knowledge of Board of Health issues, Construction Codes, or the Fire service. I was certainly not the smartest Police Chief, or CFO. Heck, I sure wasn't then and still am not now the

smartest mayor around, but I was smart enough then, and I am glad that I continue to recognize now even more, just how lucky we are to have such a dedicated group of professionals, resident volunteers, and staff that really are some of the best in the business. I thank them sincerely for their great efforts day in and day out. I attribute Westwood's successes to you.

Eight years ago I discussed the need to move forward with a real plan for Westvale Park. To achieve that, a new Recreation and Open Space Element was created which allowed for significant grant funding to be obtained. Looking at that park today I am proud to say that the vision came to life. The dream became a reality, and that reality became the premiere recreation facility for residents of all ages we always knew it could be. With the connection to Pascack Brook County Park, we created 110 acres of active and passive recreation facilities that is in constant use 365 days a year. Yes, I am very proud of that park and of all the people who committed their time and energy to see it to completion.

Eight years ago I stood here and talked about the effect that the closing of Pascack Valley Hospital would have on, not just Westwood, but the entire region. "Our hospital" had for so many years provided quality and accessible health care to tens of thousands in our area. Together residents from Westwood and

throughout the Pascack and Northern Valley joined for an unyielding effort during a five year battle to return that care to our corner of New Jersey. I remain grateful to what has become the Hackensack University Health Network for their steadfast commitment to our community, and now I am excited to see that commitment grow as they are currently in the process of constructing a new fourteen million dollar Emergency Department set for completion later this year. Yes, this is indeed progress.

Eight years ago I stood here to talk about addressing matters such as shared services, improving our bond rating and financial position, our pursuit of new green initiatives, responsible development, and improved services for our youth and senior citizens. I talked about our aging infrastructure and the need to invest. I talked about aggressively pursuing grant opportunities to supplement our investments. Each of these have been improved and expanded. Yet there always remains more to do.

It is with great pleasure that I announce that by working in conjunction with Pascack Valley Meals on Wheels we been awarded a planning grant by the Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation as part of the foundation's initiative to make communities livable for people of all ages, especially for older

adults. This grant represents phase one of the age friendly initiative. It provides \$35,000 to conduct a six month planning process incorporating a comprehensive assessment of the Westwood community's resources and strengths and identification of gaps and areas needing improvement. As we move forward with our objectives of making Westwood a leader in providing age friendly infrastructure and services, this was a great start for asset mapping and our grant application to fund projects to improve the quality of life for our residents.

We implemented our new "Stigma free Team" , worked to clear numerous tax appeals, strengthened our Fire Prevention enforcement, improved library services and programs, and expanded our community policing initiatives among the dozens of accomplishments of our various departments.

Moving forward Westwood is committed to exploring shared services in a meaningful way. The hard part is finding a willing partner. Unfortunately Boroughitis and Home Rule stand in the way of legitimate property tax relief. We will not be deterred and are currently working again on a new proposal to consolidate emergency communications. Technology has made a savings to Westwood of 150 – 200 thousand dollars per year realistic

provided we have a willing partner. The savings for neighboring municipalities can be even greater. We have proved it works and we have the capabilities for a turn key operation that can be implemented immediately. Everything is on the table for discussion. In 2016, the governing body will re-establish our Shared Service Committee. We are well into a new century and we must re-evaluate how municipal services are delivered. Anything less would be a dereliction of duty.

I look at the staffing improvements that have been made and can't help but to think how lucky we are to have added so many outstanding individuals to key positions. From our Recreation Director, Construction code official, Borough Administrator, and CFO, to the promotions within our Police Department. Yes, again, it really is our staff that makes Westwood work.

Eight years ago I spoke about the issue of chronic flooding and its impact on our community. While we have done much to attempt to bring light to this issue, and to help those repeatedly affected by the devastation of flooding, we still have a long way to go. Yes we worked very hard to secure funding for the purchase of six homes in flood prone neighborhoods, but what about the dozens of others that remain? The reconstruction and hardening of the Woodcliff Lake Dam has now been completed and the dam itself will be

protected from the thousand year storm. I am very glad about that and have supported those upgrades wholeheartedly.

Unfortunately, the NJDEP has refused to listen to the pleas of our resident who remain at greater risk as long as the practice of maintaining water levels in the Woodcliff Lake Reservoir at 95 feet elevation remain in effect.

Yes we acquired homes in flood prone areas, but you should know what the requirements are for that arduous process. The qualification for home buyouts is based on the number and amount of claims made through flood insurance policies. The more that is claimed and the greater the frequency of the claims, the higher on the list you go. In effect, payouts are made for flood claims, then payouts are made to purchase homes – if you are lucky. Good money after bad. The reality is not a great number of homes are bought, because 2.5 million really does not go to far when home values are 400 – 500 thousand dollars.

The irony is that the NJDEP will not work with us to mitigate what we know with no degree of uncertainty are contributing factors of flooding. Those are the factors that lead to the damage to homes and increase insurance payouts. That increase the hope to buy homes which cost the borough money by further reducing our tax rolls. If money were spent instead to maintain and manage stream

flow on a regional basis, if the reservoir were operated in such a way as to respect both the water allocation and the ability to retain water during a precipitation event of up to four inches of rain many of our flooding events would be eliminated. We will continue to beat the drum but we will need our County and State elected officials to stand with us.

We have already begun the 2016 budget process, with departmental budgets developed for committee review. Our line-by-line review meetings are being scheduled with the finance committee and will commence later this month and early February.

Westwood maintains a AA Bond rating, a particularly significant accomplishment when viewed against the backdrop of the current economic climate. CFO Durene Ayer, and our finance team are to be commended for all of the hard work they have put in to help make this possible and to keep our municipality on secure financial footing.

Just in case anyone has not noticed, one of the larger and most important infrastructure projects that Westwood has initiated in many years has been completed. Our Intersection Modernization and Rail Signalization project was completed under budget. The reconfiguration and modernization of the intersections and rail crossings along Broadway had been long overdue. The impact is

evident, serving to make traffic flow more efficiently through our downtown business district. Traffic has historically been a major issue around our downtown business district and the work we accomplished makes our downtown safer for pedestrians and motor vehicles. As far as cost, Westwood contributed \$400,000 dollars to a \$4.4 Million dollar project. For that we received all new rail crossings, newly paved roads, and improvements to Veteran's Park. That is sound planning and fiscal responsibility.

There were some difficulties for sure when PSE&G advised us that their "Energy Strong" infrastructure upgrades were targeted for downtown Westwood. Make no mistake, there were hard decisions to make during this project, and I have always made mine based on the good of the Borough as a whole. It was through a tremendous level of cooperation between the agencies involved that we were able to complete the final stages of the intersection project and put the PSE&G Energy Strong project on the fast track.

After all the road work was completed we entered into a public/private partnership with the Westwood Taxpayers Alliance to renovate our downtown streetscape. Trip and fall hazards were eliminated and while our new trees may be small now, they will grow. That lends to the adage that "A wise man plants a tree whose shade he may never sit under".

Another project on the horizon will be the remediation of the old Police Pistol Range at Westvale Park. This is a project initiated in 2008 but delayed in order to maximize grant funds toward the project. We have recently completed the applications to receive 100% grant funding and are working with our municipal engineer to make this parcel of land an active recreation area and another great addition to the facilities at Westvale.

In closing, I would say that 2015 was a pretty good year in town. Major milestones were reached, projects large and small were undertaken, and Westwood continued to move forward. 2016 is here, and with it a new set of challenges. We have many projects on the horizon, and I look forward to continuing to lead Westwood on the path to positive progress.

I would again like to thank all of the municipal employees, volunteers, and elected officials that work hard every day to make Westwood special. I thank you again for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Mayor. It truly is my privilege and my honor to do so.

Thank you and God Bless You.