

**119th
REORGANIZATION MEETING OF THE MAYOR & COUNCIL
BOROUGH OF WESTWOOD, NEW JERSEY
COMMUNITY CENTER
55 JEFFERSON AVENUE
JANUARY 3rd, 2013**

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Birkner called the 119th Reorganization Meeting of the Mayor and Council to order at 7:00 PM and 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 Pranschke.

3. COUNCILMEMBERS - ELECT:

Councilmember-Elect Grefrath was administered his Oath of Office as Member of the Council for a three year term by Judge Karch. Term expiring 12/31/15. Councilmember Grefrath thanked his family and supporters. At the conclusion of his remarks, Councilmember Grefrath took his seat on the dais.

Councilmember-Elect Arroyo was administered his Oath of Office as Member of the Council for a three year term by Judge Karch. Term expiring 12/31/15. Councilmember Arroyo thanked his family and supporters. At the conclusion of his remarks, Councilmember Arroyo took his seat on the dais.

4. ROLL CALL

Borough Clerk Witkowski called the Roll:

Mayor Birkner - present
Councilmember Grefrath - present
Councilmember Waneck - present
Councilmember Quinn - present
Councilmember Arroyo - present
Councilmember Miller - present
Councilmember Sciara - present
Borough Administrator Hoffmann - present
Assistant to Borough Clerk Witkowski - present

5. PRESENTATION TO OUTGOING COUNCILMEMBER:

Mayor Birkner asked former Councilmember William Phayre to join him for a presentation. Former Councilmember Phayre addressed the audience.

6. APPOINTMENT OF BOROUGH PROFESSIONALS

Mayor Birkner entertained motions for the following appointments:

Borough Attorney

Resolution #13-1: Appointment of Borough Attorney - Russell R. Huntington, Esq.

Motion: Councilmember Sciara Second: Councilmember Quinn
 Roll Call: Councilmember Grefrath - Yes Councilmember Arroyo - Yes
 Councilmember Waneck - Yes Councilmember Miller - Yes
 Councilmember Quinn - Yes Councilmember Sciara - Yes

Borough Engineer

Resolution #13-2: **Appointment of Borough Engineer - Dr. Stephen Boswell, P.E.**

Motion: Councilmember Miller Second: Councilmember Grefrath
 Roll Call: Councilmember Grefrath - Yes Councilmember Arroyo - Yes
 Councilmember Waneck - Yes Councilmember Miller - Yes
 Councilmember Quinn - Yes Councilmember Sciara - Yes

Resolution #13-3: **Appointment of Various Borough Officials**

Motion: Councilmember Waneck Second: Councilmember Sciara
 Roll Call: Councilmember Grefrath - Yes Councilmember Arroyo - Yes
 Councilmember Waneck - Yes Councilmember Miller - Yes
 Councilmember Quinn - Yes Councilmember Sciara - Yes

Position	Firm	Designee
Borough Auditor	Lerch, Vinci & Higgins	Gary Vinci, RMA
Risk Manager	Burton Agency	Robert Kanwisher
Public Defender		Christopher Leyden, Esq.
Prosecutor		Edward G. Johnson, Esq.
Bond Counsel	Gluck & Walrath, LLP	Christopher Walrath, Esq.
Labor Attorney		Raymond Wiss, Esq.
Comm. Appraiser	McNerney & Associates	Robert McNerney
In Rem	Pellegrino & Feldstein, LLC	Michael Pellegrino, Esq.
Resid. Appraiser	Appraisal Systems, Inc.	Rick DelGuercio
Historic Consultant	G. Dietrich Consulting	Gregory Dietrich

7. MAYOR'S DESIGNATION OF COUNCIL COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS FOR 2013

Mayor Birkner announced the following Council Committee appointments for 2013:

COMMITTEE	COMMITTEE CHAIR	MEMBER
Finance, Admin. & Cap. Projects	Cynthia Waneck	Peter Grefrath
Fire & Ambulance	John J Sciara	Robert Miller
Police & Emergency Mgt.	Robert Miller	John J Sciara
Land Use	Ray Arroyo	Ingrid Quinn
Public Properties	Ingrid Quinn	Ray Arroyo
Health & Recreation	Peter Grefrath	Cynthia Waneck

8. SELECTION OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT FOR 2013

Resolution #13-4: Nomination of 2013 Council President John J Sciara:

Motion: Councilmember Waneck Second: Councilmember Miller
 Roll Call: Councilmember Grefrath - Yes Councilmember Arroyo - Yes
 Councilmember Waneck - Yes Councilmember Miller - Yes
 Councilmember Quinn - Yes Councilmember Sciara - Abstain

9. PUBLIC FORUM:

Motion to open the Public Forum: Councilmember Quinn Second: Councilmember Grefrath
 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: Council President Sciara Second: Councilmember Arroyo

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

10. BUDGET MEETINGS:

Mayor Birkner announced that the preliminary work has been done on the 2013 Municipal Budget, and a schedule of Budget Meetings will soon be published in the official Borough newspaper and posted on the Municipal Bulletin Board and Borough website.

11. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Birkner announced that the Resolutions listed on the Consent Agenda will be enacted with one motion. Copies of all Resolutions are 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 #13-5 through #13-25:

Motion: Councilmember Grefrath Second: Councilmember Waneck

Roll Call: Councilmember Grefrath – Yes Councilmember Miller - Yes

Councilmember Quinn – Yes Council President Sciara– Yes

Resolution Titles

13-5	OFFICIAL ELECTRONIC MEDIA
13-6	TEMPORARY BUDGET
13-7	MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2013
13-8	DEPOSITORIES OF FUNDS
13-9	AUTHORIZATION OF PAYMENT SIGNATORIES FOR 2013
13-10	FACSIMILE SIGNATURES ON CHECKS
13-11	ESTABLISHMENT OF INT. RATES ON DELINQUENT TAXES & ASSESS.
13-12	ADOPTION OF PETTY CASH & CREDIT CARD POLICIES
13-12	ESTABLISHMENT OF PETTY CASH FUND
13-13	ESTABLISHMENT OF PETTY CASH FUND FOR RECREATION
13-14	ESTABLISHMENT OF PETTY CASH FUND FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE
13-15	DEPOSITORY OF ATTENDANCE RECORDS
13-16	APPOINTMENT OF ASSESSMENT SEARCH OFFICER
13-17	APPOINTMENT OF TAX SEARCH OFFICER
13-18	MAGISTRATE'S ORDER DESIGNATING VIOLATIONS CLERK
13-19	APPOINTMENT TAX ASSESSOR / ATTORNEY - TAX APPEALS
13-20	2013 MUNICIPAL HOLIDAYS
13-21	OFFICIAL BOROUGH NEWSPAPERS
13-22	\$20.00 CHARGE FOR PAYMENTS MADE WITH INSUFFICIENT FUNDS
13-23	\$5.00 CHARGE FOR TAX ACCOUNT REPORTS TO SEARCH COMPANIES
13-24	TAX SALE COSTS
13-25	CASH MANAGEMENT PLAN 2013
13-26	MUTUAL AID – PASCACK VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENTS
13-27	AUTHORIZATION OF A FEE FOR ISSUANCE OF DUPLICATE TAX SALE CERTIFICATES

12. ANNUAL APPOINTMENTS AND DESIGNATIONS TO VARIOUS MUNICIPAL OFFICES:

Robert Hoffmann – Affirmative Action Compliance Official, B-MED, B-MEL & JIF Official
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
James Gines - Borough Historian

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

13. APPOINTMENTS TO VARIOUS BOARDS

The appropriate Council Liaison announced the following appointments:

Board of Health

Dennis Farrell, 3 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/15
Maria Costello, 3 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/15
Theresa Lardaro, Alt. #2, 2 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/14
Councilmember Peter Grefrath (Council Liaison)

Recreation Advisory Board

Chris Codner, 3 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/15
Don Smith, 3 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/15
Councilmember Peter Grefrath (Council Liaison)

Technology Committee

Councilmember Peter Grefrath (Council Liaison)

Westwood Parking Authority

Francis Costello, 5 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/17
Councilmember Peter Grefrath (Council Liaison)

Mr. Francis Costello presented to Mayor Birkner a check for \$45,000

Library Board of Trustees

Rory McCourt, School Supt., Annual Expiring 12/31/13
Felicia Brockner, School Alternate, Annual Expiring 12/31/13
Councilmember Robert Miller (Council Liaison)

Shade Tree Committee

Linda Hayes, 5 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/17
Councilmember John J Sciara (Council Liaison)

Safety Committee - (Annual Appointments)

Darren Blankenbush, Safety Delegate
Gary Buchheister, Alternate Delegate
Richard Woods, Member
Armand Marini, Member
Sylvia Kokowski, Member

William Haffler, Fire Department Member
Denise Holmes, Member
Christine Compesi, Member
Barbara Constantine, Member
Jack Sauer, Member
Martha Urbiel, Member
Sgt. Matthew McClutchy, Member
Robert Hoffmann, Member/Borough Administrator

Local Assistance Board

Councilmember Ingrid Quinn (Council Liaison)

Heritage Society

Councilmember Ingrid Quinn (Council Liaison)

Historic Preservation Commission

Councilmember Ray Arroyo (Council Liaison)

Zoning Board of Adjustment

Matthew Ceplo, 4 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/16
Guy Hartman, Alt. #1, 2 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/14
Chris Montana, Alt. #2, 2 Yr. Term Expiring 12/31/14
Councilmember Ray Arroyo (Council Liaison)

Website Committee

Councilmember Cynthia Waneck (Council Liaison)

Environmental Advisory Committee

Michael Ruane, 3 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/15
Conor Odell, 3 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/15
Councilmember Cynthia Waneck (Council Liaison)

Westwood Municipal Alliance (Annual Term)

Gary Buchheister, Annual Expiring 12/31/13

Planning Board

William Martin, Class II, Annual Expiring 12/31/13
James Schluter, Class IV, 4 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/16
Richard Bonsignore, Class IV, 4 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/16
Keith Doell, Alt. #2, 2 Yr. Term, Expiring 12/31/14
Councilmember Ray Arroyo, Class III (Council Liaison)

14. SWEARING IN OF ALL APPOINTEES

Motion to accept all appointees noted above: Councilmember Waneck

Second: Councilmember Grefrath

Roll Call: Councilmember Grefrath – Yes Councilmember Arroyo - Yes

Councilmember Waneck – Yes Councilmember Miller - Yes

Councilmember Quinn – Yes Council President Sciara – Yes

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

15. APPOINTMENT AND SWEARING IN OF POLICE RESERVES

Mayor Birkner invited the 2013 Police Reservists to the dais to be administered their Oaths of Office.

Mayo Credle, Capt.	Damon Vincenty
John Brobson, Lt.	Kenroy Morrison
Michael Amoruso, Sgt.	Michael Gil
Donna Heil	Shaun Walsh
Shawn Yates	Elena Pietrocco
Arnold Luna	Joseph Latino
P.O. Matthew McClutchey, Liaison Officer	

16. OATHS OF OFFICES, AMBULANCE CORPS OFFICIALS

Mayor Birkner invited Captain Steve Wolf to the dais to be sworn into office by Judge Karch.

Mayor Birkner invited 1st Lt. Kevin Brennan and 2nd Ruth Lang to the dais to be administered their Oaths of Office by Judge Karch.

17. OATHS OF OFFICE, FIRE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS

Mayor Birkner invited 2013 Fire Chief Jaymee Hodges, Deputy Chief James C. Mawdsley, Senior Captain James Voorhis, Captain William Haffler, 1st Lt. Kevin Woods, 2nd Lt. Michael Griffin, 3rd Lt. Brian Kronewitter and 4th Lt. Steven Fatovic to the dais to be administered their Oaths of Office by Judge Karch.

18. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

Mayor Birkner and Council President Sciara presented certificates Steven Fatovic, Volunteer Fire Department and Barbara Constantine, Volunteer Ambulance Corps. Mayor Birkner and Councilmember Miller presented a certificate to Shaun Walsh, Police Reserves. Each of these recipients was nominated by their peers in recognition of outstanding service.

19. MAYOR'S REMARKS

Text of the Mayor's speech is attached

20. BENEDICTION

Father Norton gave the Benediction.

21. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn: Council President Sciara Second: Councilmember Miller
Voice Vote: All those present voted in the affirmative. The time was 8:30 PM.

ATTEST:

Denise Holmes, Deputy Clerk
Proofed by: Karen Hughes, Borough Clerk

Westwood – 2013

Councilmembers elect :

Grefrath

It is my privilege to extend a warm welcome back and congratulations on his re-election to Council member Grefrath. No offense Peter, but you have now established yourself as the elder statesman of this bunch. Peter's keen sense of the right thing to do has him as a mainstay of the Westwood Council, and puts him on track for induction into the New Jersey elected officials "Hall of Fame". I am confident that together we will continue to keep Westwood moving forward in the positive direction that this governing body consistently strives to maintain.

Arroyo

Now for the first time in five years I have the privilege of welcoming a new member to the governing body.

No stranger to Westwood politics or to service in our community, Ray Arroyo is a very welcome addition on the dias. The position of Council Liason to the land use boards is not usually burdened onto a newly elected councilmember, however, I am appointing Ray to that position because of the talent he possesses, and because of the skills he has demonstrated during his years of service on our land use boards. Ray has served for a number of years on both the Planning and Zoning Boards with a very sharp focus on the Municipal Master Plan, and how development in the Borough must respect the vision of our predecessors and . Ray's thought and insight for each and every application that has been brought before him has made him a leader on both of our land use boards, and he has proven himself a valuable asset to Westwood. There is a Westwood Urban Legend that tells of Ray and I getting our mutual start in the political process during a very late night, or depending on perspective, an early morning discussion of Westwood's government while at the same house party after a Home for the Holidays parade almost a decade ago. We have often since bounced ideas off of each other, and served as mutual editors to various essays or letters, and I look very much forward to working together with Ray in the years to come.

5. – Billy Phayre

At this time, I would like to take a moment to thank outgoing Councilman Bill Phayre for his tremendous service to our community as a member of this governing body. In the five years that I have had the honor of serving with Bill, I can truly say that I don't know anyone with a bigger heart or more genuine love of Westwood. Bill has been an outstanding councilman, and his insights, ideas, and dedication will be truly missed by each of the members of the governing body. I am proud to have served with him, and even more so to be able to call him my friend. If you see Bill out and about in town (and he is everywhere!) please give him a "thank you". Westwood is a better place because of Bill, and I wish him and his family all the best as he begins a new chapter in his life.

Mayors Report

It is hard for me to believe that it has been five years that I have had the honor to serve as mayor. This has indeed been an honor to represent the residents of Westwood, and an absolute privilege to serve with the members of this governing body, the municipal staff, all of the volunteer organizations, and each of the fine individuals that demonstrate daily why Westwood is the outstanding community that it is widely recognized to be.

During the past five years I believe this governing body has done so remarkably well, remaining on the path of continued positive progress achieved through an open forum for dialog and built upon a healthy transfer of ideas as the cornerstone for progress while effectively carrying out our duties and responsibilities.

Every year there are challenges, every year there are goals and objectives, and every year there are accomplishments both large and small. 2012 had no shortage of challenges, and looking ahead to 2013, we have much to accomplish. The challenges that lie ahead will be met by building on the progress of our previous year, much of which is measured by the accomplishments of our borough employees.

No gains worthy of mention could ever be achieved without the talented and dedicated staff of the Borough. They are part of a great team of professionals that strive for excellence as the standard operating procedure in the Borough of Westwood.

As elected officials it is our job to provide our staff with the tools necessary for them to be successful and perform the vital services that our residents rely on. They are the face of Westwood, and they provide the municipal services that keep our town running smoothly, despite circumstances that occur on a daily basis that may take them away from the routine. Starting with the administrative staff, our employees go above and beyond on a daily basis to make sure that Westwood works.

Our Clerk's office is the Borough's general information office and is the first resource our residents turn to in every possible situation. They handle everything from responding to OPRA requests, of which there were over 225, to handling phone calls during weather emergencies, which have become all too frequent. The Clerk's prepares our agenda books for meetings, and maintains complete administration of all Borough records. The Clerks office really runs our meetings, makes sure we comply with all statutory requirements for open government, and keeps us well supplied with no shortage of fresh baked goods. In addition to the 435 commuter parking decals issued, the clerks office is also responsible for issuing and tracking commercial vehicles, raffle licences, fund drive permits, block party permits, and film permits. This is in addition to the annual renewal of liquor licenses, taxi and towing licenses. One other item I should mention about the Clerks office. They oversee every election from primary's and school board elections, to this years Presidential election. Throw in Superstorm Sandy a week before the election and most of Westwood without power, it was the Clerks office that pulled everything together to make sure our residents votes were counted. No small accomplishment under normal circumstances.

Our Administrator runs the day to day operations of the Borough making sure that Westwood is running properly. Westwood is lucky to have one of the best in the State. Bob Hoffmann has been instrumental in securing numerous grants, working with other Bergen County municipalities on shared service opportunities, working with our insurance provider to redesign our employee benefits and insurance plan, and most recently working closely with representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the State Green Acres Program for the purchase of three homes subject to repetitive flooding events. These are only a few of the higher profile accomplishments of our Administrative staff. To me the greatest success are the things that go unnoticed on a daily basis, and that is the interaction with our residents, serving to make sure their questions are answered, and needs met each and every time they come in the door or call on the phone.

Our Building Department and has conducted nearly 2500 inspections this year and issued over 750 construction permits. In 2012 our housing task force has worked to crack down on illegal housing, collecting over \$10,000 in violation penalties, and prosecuting 3 cases with assistance from the Department of Community Affairs Housing Unit. In 2013 they will continue restructuring the permit process in hopes of lowering costs to our residents.

Our Tax office works diligently to assure that our tax collection rate remains among the best in Bergen County, working with our building department and Department of Health on a variety of housing and occupancy related issues.

The Board of Health has oversight of all official civil registrations and vital statistics, including our pet licensing program, records of marriages, births, and deaths as well as assisting neighboring municipalities with daily registration duties when an emergent situation occurs. They work with Bergen County Animal Control, Bergen Regional Medical Center, and other County and State agencies to meet the needs of our residents and businesses, assuring compliance with State statutes, and protecting the health and safety of our residents. We have hired a new assistant in the Health Department and with the Hospital coming on line in June, it is expected that the Health Department will become one of the busiest offices in Borough Hall.

In such a trying economic environment, the demands on our Social Services and Welfare Department have increased. Still they were able to provide support to residents who needed help with utility bills, medication assistance, minor home repairs, etc. The Social Services Department has maintained a food pantry that has helped to provide nutritious meals to hundreds of residents. All of our borough departments have served remarkably well this past year, and all deserve special recognition for a job well done. In addition to the few highlights above, our library continues to be at the forefront in meeting the demands in an ever changing environment driven by advances in the world of technology.

Our recreation department has been doing great work and has expanded many programs from our fully licensed children's day care, summer playground, and children's special events, to the teen center, our highly acclaimed special needs programs and the many adult and senior activities that are scheduled all year around.

Our Municipal Court, Fire Prevention Bureau, Volunteer Ambulance Corps., Volunteer Fire Department, and Parking Authority continue to improve services to our residents, expanding programs, increasing revenue streams and maintaining public health and safety.

Our police department is deserving of a special mention for all of the great work they do in maintaining a safe and secure municipality. The job they have is difficult, stressful, and dangerous, and I for one appreciate what they do for us every day, and the integrity with which they carry out their duties. They have maintained their accreditation status and continue to operate under the specific requirements and prescribed standards that are considered the best practices in law enforcement. In 2013 we look forward to bringing on three new officers as they are set to commence training on January 8th.

Never short on accomplishments is our amazing Department of Public Works. When you think about the amount of work done cleaning up from Superstorm Sandy alone, it would take most of the evening to describe all of the work that was done in such adverse conditions. That is in addition to all of sewer backup they cleared, close to 1000 catch basins cleaned and repaired, trees, stumps, and limbs removed, road and park maintenance. Really, a very special thank you goes out to our DPW who I know is the best in Bergen County.

Starting out in 2008 and continuing through 2012 this governing body had many short and long-term goals and we proved that by working together with our staff we were able to accomplish these and respond collectively to whatever event came our way.

Working with our neighboring municipalities will continue in 2013 as we build on the progress of 2012. Westwood has a long history of sharing services with our sister municipalities. We will actively research and seek new opportunities, both large and small for ways to combine municipal services with the goal of saving taxpayer dollars.

While our plan at consolidating emergency dispatch operations hit an abrupt roadblock, we will not stop looking to streamline operations, and uncover new efficiencies. We will work with our neighboring towns, State, and county governments to find solutions that make sense for the taxpayers, and continue to aggressively analyze municipal operations for such opportunities. Nothing is off the table for discussion, nothing is off-limits or out of bounds, but we do promise to be responsible. The collective process of coordinating our initiatives with other municipalities provides an arena to cultivate ideas for municipal cooperation. We have seen it, we have done it,

and we know it works. Now we must forge ahead and continue the progress. We have an obligation to continue to look at a shared services throughout the Pascack Valley to determine how equipment, specific expertise, and resources can be shared so that we may eliminate duplication of specialized operations and continue to save taxpayer money. I encourage our residents to let us know where you think the greatest savings may be achieved, what you think works in the borough, and how we can improve. After all, it is your town. I would like you to help us make it work better.

With reductions in State Aid, and reduced funding opportunities, the governing body and our finance department worked hard to craft a budget that was sensitive to the needs of our residents. It should be noted that for each of the past five years Westwood has been able tighten our budgets and introduce increases in the municipal tax rate far below the State mandated 2% Cap. With no furloughs, layoffs, or reduction in hours of municipal operation, the Borough continues to provide it's residents with the high level of service they expect, as we continue to seek more innovative ways to do so while spending less. We have already begun the 2013 budget process, with departmental budgets submitted for committee review. Our line-by-line review meetings have been scheduled with the finance committee and will continue this month.

Westwood maintains a AA Bond rating, a particularly significant accomplishment when viewed against the backdrop of the current international, national, and statewide debt crisis and economic climate. I applaud our former CFO Ray Herr, new CFO Durene Ayer, Borough Administrator Robert Hoffmann, and our borough Auditors for all of the hard work they have put in to help make this possible and to keep our municipality on secure financial footing..

Our finance department is already hard at work developing budget status reports to keep our governing body up to date. The implementation of a new purchase order system is in place, as is a new system for tracking employee timesheets, and Construction Department escrow accounts.

These are just a few of the areas that we have been working on in 2012. Much more has been accomplished, but I would need hours to properly address all that has been done. 2013 holds much promise for continued progress in our borough. One of the larger projects will finally be completed is the reconfiguration of the intersections along Broadway. Traffic is a major issue

around our downtown business district and the modernization at the intersections, railroad crossings and signalization improvements will help make our downtown safer.

Finally, our biggest challenge was met, and we have beat back the opposition to see the return of our full service acute care hospital to serve the needs of the Pascack and Northern Valley.

It certainly took longer than anyone could have expected, and the effort was greater than anything seen here in Westwood since the original hospital was built over 50 years ago, but the fight and the effort was worth it, because in the end – Westwood WON.

Hackensack University Medical Center at Pascack Valley is opening later this year, and if you drive by Old Hook Road you will see a parking lot full of cars. Construction work is over 70% complete, and the hospital has begun hiring permanent employees. The assistance of our residents has been vital to this cause and the goal of opening this new hospital could not be achieved without the support of our residents. I could not be more proud of a community for their involvement, and because of your confidence and faith to keep pushing.

In closing, I would say that 2012 has been challenging, but the greater the challenge, the greater the reward. The many small steps forward we have made make progress and add up to great achievements and great hope for the future.

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