



Township of Mendham

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August 28, 2018

Dear Residents of Mendham Township:

As I enter the final months of my term as Mayor, I wanted to provide an update to the Township on the progress of the goals that I set at the beginning of the year. As you all know, I established an ambitious set of goals for the Township Committee and I am pleased to report that we have made much progress.

Our first goal was to continue our debt reduction plan and continue to put the Township on better financial footing. Our current forecast is that we will reduce our overall debt by approximately \$600,000 by the end of the year. Because of the fine work of our Finance Committee led by Mr. Frank Cioppettini and Deputy Mayor Warren Gisser, the Township has been able to pay down debt while still providing funding for needed capital improvements. The rigorous plan put in place by our Finance Committee allowed the Township to order a new fire engine to replace an aging pumper truck at the Ralston Engine Company, invest in the Ralston playground and purchase other needed equipment for the Township. I cannot stress how important it is for the Township to follow the strategic financial plan put in place two years ago that will result in the Township reducing outstanding debt 50% by 2025 and eliminating it completely within 10 years thereafter, all while providing the necessary funds each year to maintain the town's assets. I'm proud to report that through this rigorous effort, the municipal share of property taxes was increased by only a net 1.4% in 2018.

The establishment of ad hoc committees to study areas to improve Mendham Township's government and resident life was the second goal. Currently, there are three ad hoc committees in action. Ms. Amalia Duarte is leading the Ad Hoc Communications Committee, Ms. Sarah Neibart is leading the Ad Hoc Shared Services Committee and I am leading the newly formed Pitney Farm Seven Acre Task Force. The Communications Committee will propose expanded ways to communicate with our residents and we look forward to an updated website. Ms. Neibart's Shared Services Committee is engaging with our neighboring towns of Mendham Borough, Bernardsville, Harding, Washington Township, Randolph, Morris Township, Peapack-Gladstone, Chester Borough and Chester Township to come up with ways to share services and collectively develop cost effective solutions and efficient delivery of services to our residents. As you all know, Pitney is a hot topic right now and our newest task force has already toured the property and is working on ideas to restore the seven acres of open space into a new park for our residents.

My third goal for the Township Committee was to launch and implement a successful Recreation Committee. Our new Recreation Committee, led by our Recreation Director Steve Eisenstein, is comprised of residents, members of organized youth sports programs, and our head of the Department of Public Works. I am thrilled to report that our new Recreation Committee is making great advances in delivering new and improved recreation services to our residents. Most notable, the Ralston Playground, is almost complete with Phase I and we are expecting a grand opening at the end of September. This revitalized playground is a great example of a private and public partnership between Mendham Township residents and the Township. In addition to the playground, the Recreation Committee had its first successful Father Daughter Dance this past Spring and successfully ran a new teen adventure program this Summer. Brookside Beach was opened with week days free to residents that greatly increased use of the park and we enjoyed increased interest from local camps. I also invite our residents to check out the newly resurfaced tennis courts at the Township's property at Mt. Pleasant Road.

In addition to these goals, there are a number of other projects that are progressing. Chief Ross Johnson and the Police Committee are working on plans for a new police station and we are optimistic that a long-term plan will be developed before the end of the year to replace our aged facility. Currently, five acres of the Pitney Farm property are scheduled to be put up for sale by public bid this Fall. The sale of Pitney will address the badly damaged buildings as well as potentially create a new neighborhood and further pay down the debt associated with the Pitney Farm purchase. The Township's Master Plan Subcommittee lead by former Mayor Sam Tolley is embarking upon an update to the Township's Master Plan. The updated Master Plan process is looking at the Township's current zoning and evaluating how to update the Township's zoning for the future. We have seen great interest and participation with the Township residents introducing and presenting new thoughts and ideas to ensure that Mendham Township continues to be a great place to live.

Finally, I want to thank our many volunteers and Mendham Township employees for their dedication and support. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Township Administrator Deborah Bonanno, CFO Karen Fornaro, Police Chief Ross Johnson, Recreation Director Steve Eisenstein, DPW Superintendent David Read, OEM Buzzy Thomas, Township Clerk Maria Coppinger, Russ Heiney and Beth Foley in the Building Department, Assistant to the Township Administrator and Board of Health Secretary Melanie Politi and all of the Mendham Township employees and Police Department. Our employees are truly remarkable and go above and beyond for the sake of our town. Without them, all of the ambitious goals we embark upon cannot be achieved.

It is a great honor to serve as Mayor of Mendham Township and I look forward to a strong finish to 2018.

Sincerely yours,



Mayor Richard P. Diegnan