

Mayoral Address – January 2nd, 2016

Good morning and welcome again to the 87th Council reorganization meeting in Manville. As you drove into town today, you may have noticed our welcome signs which state “Manville a new beginning with a proud past...” Well, today a new “fiscally responsible” era begins. One that will be based on ensuring your trust and putting transparency into the office of Manville’s Mayor. And it is such an honor for me to lead the way.

I have always viewed serving on council as my civic duty similar to those who serve on our rescue squad or fire departments. I am here to try to help my hometown by making proper decisions to improve our quality of life as we move forward together.

But it’s certainly not about me. It’s about all of you and helping to make a better future working towards common goals in unity.

Some of the challenges we face today didn’t happen overnight and will take some time to remedy. I ask for your patience.

This governing body will plan and work to stabilize property taxes over the next 4 years as our top priority. President Reagan once said: “I believe the problem is not that people are taxed too little, the problem is that their government spends too much”. For example in Trenton, for every \$1 dollar in proposed spending cuts, \$2,800 dollars in new spending is offered in place.

But before I say more on property taxes, which is the number 1 issue in New Jersey, let me start with some background information about my life...

I lived my entire life in Manville. The first 25 years were spent living in one of our flood zones with my parents who are now retired living in Florida. I grew up one block from here on North Second Avenue. Living with the threat of flooding, I will never forget how it impacts one’s life.

My parents raised me to value hard work and education in life and most importantly to always stand up for what’s right. After Manville High School I attended Rider University and studied computer science. My college degree opened the door for my first job at AT&T Bell Laboratories.

As my career began in corporate America it was there that I realized I wasn’t the smartest guy in the room. I was a member of a bigger team that relied on one another to accomplish our goals and objectives. I continued my education and achieved a graduate level degree in business administration.

So I view this governing body as the same kind of team that I have been a part of my entire career. We will work together without any personal self-interests for the good of all Manville residents. We also pledge to uphold the highest state ethical standards as set forth by the State of NJ.

At this time, I would like to recognize the makeup of our council which I'm proud to say now consists of 3 women and 3 men. We also have 2 military veterans among them.

I thank them for being willing to serve our community and for the past service to our nation. Councilman Szabo served in the US Navy during the Lebanon war and Councilman Petrock is retired US Airforce serving during Desert Storm One. Thank you for your service!

Now back to our property taxes. Our 2016 budget will present some challenges after the loss of 108 homes in the on-going Blue Acres buyout program. We look to help residents who are living in our flood zones get out of harm's way. We still have much work to do to confront the problems caused by flooding in Manville.

We will make the case and apply for some state aid. The Governor's multi-year "transitional aid program" is designed to help towns like Manville get through tough financial times due to revenue loss.

In addition we will aggressively seek non-disaster FEMA aid to help Manville confront the threat of future floods. We have already started that initiative in 2015 and I'm optimistic our first application will be approved.

We certainly can use better planning in this area and a renewed focus on our continued participation in the FEMA Community Rating System to save residents on flood insurance premiums.

Concerning the loss of property tax revenues from the old Rustic Mall, this year we met several times with the property owners concerning the plans and reviewing the agreement. I remain optimistic our redevelopment efforts will move forward based on our discussions.

With a fresh start, a new deal can be reached in 2016 that will benefit both parties with a new, up-to-date agreement to maximize Borough tax revenues from the project.

In closing, I feel Manville is approaching the crossroads of affordability. Continuing to simply raise property taxes year after year as we lose tax ratables is unsustainable long-term.

I'm hoping proposed reforms in Trenton will further address our property tax crisis. On the campaign trail I heard from many residents who want lower taxes. I pledged to control any unnecessary spending to help achieve that goal. I stand by that pledge.

My entire career has been spent in a "profit and loss" world and when you are losing revenues, taking corrective actions to reduce costs and control spending become top priorities.

We will continue to look for additional cost saving ideas that make sense. One recent initiative was to combine our municipal court with Hillsborough's through a shared services agreement that produced a \$100,000 budget savings.

This council will also put together and publish a 5 year plan that will highlight what's important to the residents of Manville. Our goals and objectives for everyone to read as we move forward together. Because like the old saying goes "if you fail to plan, you are planning to fail".

I will try my best to communicate with all residents to keep everyone informed. With the Manville News out of print, I'll explore other options to help communicate our progress.

I'm looking forward to a productive 2016 as we work together for a better future to keep Manville affordable and to improve our quality of life issues.

God Bless Manville and may God continue to bless the United States of America.