

Mayor James Barberio 2017 State of the Town

Members of the Township Council, ladies and gentlemen and fellow Parsippany residents, I want to take this opportunity to report on the State of our Township. But first, I want to wish everyone here a very happy, healthy, safe and prosperous New Year. I also want to thank my fellow Parsippany residents for the opportunity to serve as your Mayor, and to thank you for your continued support and trust.

2016 was a year of tremendous accomplishments for Parsippany. The biggest reason for our accomplishments was a change in relationship between myself and the majority of the Council. Not long ago, the executive and legislative branches of our local government did not work well together. Council meetings were circus-like spectacles that did not serve the interests of the Township. That had to change, and it did. Last year, Council President Louis Valori and I sat together and decided that whatever our personal differences were in the past, we needed to work closely and cooperatively together to serve the people of our community. Because after all, this is not about us- it's about you- the people of Parsippany.

I'm proud to report that Council President Valori and I have been working together for the best interest of Parsippany. And now, with a majority of the Council working cooperatively with me, great things are happening in Parsippany.

Last Year Money Magazine ranked Parsippany as the 5th best place to live in the United States of America. Personally, I think we should have been 1st, but 5th is an outstanding accomplishment. As Money Magazine stated "residents pay less in property taxes relative to their home values in Parsippany than they do in 75% of the NJ locations we visited."

As your Mayor, it is my job to balance the public's need for services against the need to raise sufficient revenues to provide those services. I think we have done a good job of that. Today, Parsippany has the 3rd lowest tax rate in Morris County. Our bond rating is strong at AA, which is proof that we have been a good steward of our taxpayers' dollars. I want our taxes to be as low as possible. But I also want to ensure that our local government is serving the needs of our residents.

One reason for our strong bond rating is our strong economic development. But just don't take my word for it. Moody's Investors Service stated "in fiscal 2016, tax base expansion was driven by a strong increase in commercial rental/leasing activity, highlighting the township's role as a regional employment center."

I believe that government's most important job is to ensure the safety of our residents, especially our children. Last year, we entered into a historic contract with our Board of Education to assume the safety of our schools. Today, I am proud to say that our police department is providing for the safety of our schools pursuant to a ground breaking shared services agreement. Under that agreement, our police department maintains security of all the public schools and School Resource Officers in each high school, middle school and elementary school. This program dramatically increases the safety of our schools, our children and the dedicated employees who work in our schools.

This program is strongly supported by our police department, Board of Education, PTA's. What is so great about the agreement is that the BOE shares in the cost. Previously, the town encumbered all the cost. The agreement was supported by the majority of the Council, but shamefully, not every member of the Council supported this agreement. That councilman let politics and personal IOUs stand in the way of doing what was right for our community.

We have increased our police force from a low of 87 police officers to 103 officers. This has enabled us to create an anti-drug unit, called the SPECIAL ENFORCEMENT UNIT - SEU unit, which has three full time officers. Making Parsippany a bad place for drug dealers is one part of our strategy to combat the drug epidemic plaguing Morris and so many other counties in New Jersey. Our SEU unit is making arrests and making Parsippany a difficult place to deal or sell drugs! So drug dealers, I've got a message for you- if you deal drugs or sell drugs in Parsippany- you're going to get busted.

The other part of our strategy is to reach our residents directly to help them avoid drugs. It's not easy. The opiate epidemic is real and the stories of tragedy are truly heart wrenching. That is why, on behalf of Parsippany, I have joined a coalition of 9 other Morris County towns as part of the Morris Area Coalition for Education and Positive Choices. This Coalition has been very active and you will hear more about various events we will be sponsoring. This is very important work, and I look forward to working with my coalition members to do all we can to save lives.

We have expanded services for our seniors. Our seniors have built this town, and we owe it to them to do all we can for them. We recently added the Senior Prom as one of the new programs. This program was a huge hit with our seniors who are already looking forward to the next one.

We have also invested in our recreational facilities which are vitally important because they add to our quality of life making Parsippany a more desirable community and which increases the value of our homes. Last year, we completed the Smithfield expansion project under budget. This multipurpose field will provide additional capacity for our growing lacrosse, softball, soccer and Cricket programs. An outdoor exercise station was added at Veterans Memorial Park in addition to new picnic, shelter, grills and a pavilion at Manor Park in Intervale.

We have also invested in our infrastructure to ensure our quality of life and to attract desired economic development. In 2016, we paved 37 roads. We continue to make upgrades to our Sewer Treatment plant and have plans to upgrade the Knoll. All of our utilities are self-liquidating.

After nearly 30 years, we settled a dispute regarding Forge Pond. Under that settlement, the Township owns the property, preserving our history forever; and the developer paid the township \$600,000. I could not have done this without the help of Council President Lou Valori and Councilman Michael dePierro.

Now, I know what you are thinking- you're thinking- Mayor, with all of these new services, on top of all the other services we have, how can we continue to have the 3rd lowest tax rate in Morris County? Well, that's a good question. The answer is – new quality ratables and sound fiscal management of our tax dollars.

Since I became Mayor back in 2010, Parsippany has added 4.7 million square feet of occupied commercial space. We conservatively project another 500,000 square feet of office space coming in 2017. This brings the total to over 5 million square feet of office space new and previously unoccupied space to be occupied since I became your Mayor. This year, we will enjoy an increase of over \$27 Million in new ratables, translating to over \$750,000 to Parsippany. This is a track record we all should be proud of.

Some of the companies who have moved since 2010 to Parsippany and/or expanded their presence in Parsippany include GAF, Wyndham Worldwide, Ferring Pharmaceuticals, UPS and many others. I have to tell you that Parsippany is competing with other towns for these ratables. We are competing well because we have a Mayor's Action Team for business. When a company is thinking about locating to Parsippany, I bring the Mayor's Action Team directly to the table and meet with that company to demonstrate that my administration can work diligently and cooperatively with business to facilitate good ratables for the town. The best example of this was UPS.

UPS contacted us a little over a year ago to say that they were moving 700 high paying jobs, - and the choices were Parsippany or Marietta Georgia. I assembled the Mayor's Action Team to work with UPS. We had several meetings, went through a complex redevelopment process and negotiated a payment in lieu of tax agreement in a very compressed period of time. Parsippany won that competition. Today, the 200,000 square foot UPS building is under construction and nearly complete. Parsippany will gain millions of dollars in tax relief because of the deal we negotiated. That's what it takes for Parsippany to win. And Parsippany won by getting UPS. Parsippany won by getting companies like I named before to come to Parsippany. And under the leadership of my administration, Parsippany will continue to win for our residents.

In coming weeks, I will be announcing the formation of the Mayor's Council on Business, Industry and Commerce. This group of distinguished leaders will assist me in charting a course to build on our successes.

The Township's focus on safety training and education of our employees has resulted in a major reduction of worker's compensation claims by more than \$700,000 in savings from the prior year. We are entering into shared service agreements to save costs and maximize services. The tax collection rate remains at 99.36%.

However, there are still challenges. Our biggest challenge will be complying with a disastrous Supreme Court decision which imposes unwanted development on Parsippany. We will face the challenge and do what is best for Parsippany.

Sadly, you wouldn't know about any of these positive things for Parsippany if you get your news from local media and people with their own agenda. The taxpayers have been inundated with misinformation for far too long. Credible news sources report facts. Credible sources of news present the views of both sides. Many in our local media do neither. I can't respond to all of this local media fiction tonight. But, tonight, I am announcing a new blog called Plug into Parsippany. Plug into Parsippany is my blog and it will be used to maximize communication between me and our residents. Plug Into Parsippany will correct the inaccuracies published by the local media and maximize communication between us. So log on to Plug Into Parsippany at <https://www.plugintoparsippany.com> and subscribe. There is no charge.

I also want to recognize our community volunteers and all our first responders for doing an outstanding job serving and protecting our community. We all appreciate your sacrifice for our community. You make us proud.

Again, I want to emphasize that the reason 2016 was so successful is because the majority of the Council and I are working together, for the betterment of Parsippany-Troy Hills. A special thank you to Council President Louis Valori. Together, we put our past differences aside to work on behalf of our residents we have pledged to continue to do so. I look forward to working with the entire Council and our Community to keep Parsippany moving forward in 2017.

Thank you and God Bless you and your families in 2017.