

Mayor's Annual Report 2015

For a number of years we have adopted goals and objectives for the coming year prior to finalizing the budget. That practice has helped us prioritize our budget items and helped to ensure that we have focused municipal resources on the activities we agree are the most important.

Although we have always taken a look back and seen how we did against the goals we set, for the past several years we have taken that one more step and measured ourselves quarterly on our progress against the goals. In 2015, we did a very good job of meeting our goals, including:

- keeping the municipal tax increase under 1%.
- completing a number of capital improvement and infrastructure maintenance projects,
- awarding a new solid waste contract.
- not only recertifying the Borough as a Sustainable Jersey community, but recertifying at the highest level – Silver – and once again receiving the Champion Award for obtaining the most points for medium sized municipalities.

We had intended to continue developing an affordable housing plan, building on work we had done in 2014, but our intention was re-directed by the Supreme Court's order last year directing municipalities to submit affordable housing plans. Fortunately, we had done a lot of the ground work and were able to submit a draft Housing Element and Fair Share Plan ahead of the court-mandated deadline.

2015 was a good year for the Borough and we will talk more about our accomplishments at a Council meeting in February. At that time, we will also discuss our goals and objectives for 2016. For right now, I anticipate that those goals and objectives will include:

- conducting a detailed re-examination of our master plan, which forms the basis of our land development ordinances and will guide us as we address affordable housing obligations and developers' proposals (this process has already started).
- moving forward with necessary improvements to our roads and water utility infrastructure.
- developing plans to market our downtown and Chatham Gateway.
- making sure that our interests are protected if and when Pilgrim Pipeline moves forward with its proposal.
- implementing a plan to deal with the emerald ash borer.

Our success in 2015 was based on many things, including the hard work of the Council Members, administration, and the dozens of volunteers who serve on the boards, commissions and advisory committees. And, over the years, we have done our best to make sure residents are informed of what is happening and ensure that residents have the opportunity to share their opinions and ideas. Technology has allowed us to do a better job of this whether it be by broadcasting, streaming meetings, posting information on the website, sending AlertChathamBorough messages about important event and in 2015, introducing a quarterly electronic newsletter. Sometimes we may miss the mark, but I think that in the 11 years I have served as an elected official we have made significant improvement in our communications and openness.

Some of our projects in 2016, and perhaps most significantly the re-examination of our master plan will **only** be successful if there is broad participation from residents. My promise to you is that we will do all we reasonably can to make sure that the master plan re-examination will be an open process where all have the opportunity to share their ideas, and to do so in an atmosphere where their ideas are treated with respect. We know that just as we all decorate our homes differently, each of us has a different vision of what Chatham Borough is and should become, and through this re-examination process we must share our differing visions and come to a collective consensus on that future. Although our focus will be on in-person “visioning” meetings, we will find other ways for people to participate.

As an aside, from experience I know that sometimes an idea gets processed by the rumor mill into a “done deal”, but let me assure you that there are no “done deals” and no decisions have been made regarding the master plan or any potential development in the Borough. In fact, I encourage everyone to contact me directly at mayor@chathamborough.org if they want to determine whether something they have heard is true.

I see 2016 as a very exciting year for Chatham Borough because we will be working together to map out our collective vision of our future. I think I can say quite safely that everyone in this room cares about that future, and I think I can also say that all of us sitting up here look forward to working together with you in 2016 to ensure that the community that we love will thrive for another 300 years.