

## **The Mayor's State of the Borough Message**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guest and a healthful, joyful and successful New Year 2009. 2008 was a great year for the municipal government of Chatham Borough and the residents despite the national economic recession. The state of the Federal Government, State Government, and even County Government is precarious with major deficits, but your Borough Government is financially sound. The Borough has prepared for and is ready to ride out the economic downturn.

2008 presented major national fiscal and economy problems for our Country, our State and our County, but despite the national financial system near collapse, we in Chatham Borough completed many major infrastructure projects, such as streetscape, renegotiated our bonds at 2.8% and kept operating expenses within budget. Through progressive thinking Chatham Borough continues to improve the quality of life for our residents. For example, many of the infrastructure improvements which the Borough was able to complete were enabled due to the competitiveness of bids fostered by the poor economy.

Due to the severe reduction of State aid in 2008 we were not able to contain tax increases last year, but the 2009 goal is to make the increase as small as possible.

**During 2008 initiatives** included the following:

- The completion of the streetscape project on Main Street ahead of original schedule and under budget,
- The Green Initiative Committee was started. They have applied for a Morris County grant to study possibilities of solar panels on Borough Buildings.
- Appointment, with Council approval, of a Public Arts Council. They have proposed a life size bronze statue for a public park.
- After obtaining a State Grant I appointed, with Council approval, a Business Improvement District Study Advisory Committee.
- The creation of the 911 Memorial not-for-profit Charitable Foundation
- The completion by the 911 Memorial Committee, of the 911 memorial dedicated on time thanks to the 911 Committee and many others
- The completion of projects on numerous streets and parking lots. including the 2008 Curb and Sidewalk Program, Chandler Road Reconstruction, Woodland Ave Improvements, Garden Ave Improvements, Center Street East Parking Lot Improvements, Fairview Curbing, Highland Curbing, Elmwood Avenue Road Reconstruction and the repair of the Days Brook Wall by Cherry Lane
- The Union contracts were signed prior to expiration with both the local police and public works employees with a fair settlement for all parties
- The Land and Historic Conservancy Advisory Committee was established
- The completion of the Jackson Avenue lift station
- The completion of the FIOS interface for local public access TV
- The Council on Affordable Housing's required the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan Report was submitted to the State by 12/31/08 as required by law.

**Some of the 2009 goals will include:**

- Continue to have a tightly controlled budget process and still maintain the high level of services to residents
- Continue infrastructure maintenance and improvements on various streets and public areas including the reconstruction of Van Doren Avenue, improvements to the Parrott Mill and Riverview Pump stations, Coleman Avenue sewer replacement, 2009 Curb and sidewalk Program, improvements to Shepard Kollock Park and the reconstruction of Washington Avenue.
- Continue to encourage volunteers to serve on fire, emergency squad and all boards, commissions and committees, along with the many volunteers who support our recreation programs.
- Continue to explore the possibilities of improving the community pool, form a new community garden and a leash-less dog park
- Continue to study and hopefully create a Business Improvement District which encompasses many business districts and works as a public/private partnership with the Chamber of Commerce to help businesses increase their profits and attractiveness
- Continue to work with surrounding communities to consolidate services without dissipating service qualities in order to create savings for taxpayers
- Work toward better communications from Borough to residents and visa versa and investigate the WiFi monopoly possibilities, publications potentials and website revamping.
- Begin a Mayor's Wellness Campaign working with the Board of Health
- Improve the process and procedures policy manuals to tighten practices of the Joint Recreation Committee and create a long range fields usage estimate.

I owe a big thanks to Borough residents, employees and Councilmen. First, thanks for the privilege and honor of allowing me to be your Mayor. Secondly, thanks for putting up with many inconveniences during the infrastructure improvements. Next, thanks to all for their many suggestions and even criticisms. I believe I have to be guided by a quote by Abraham Lincoln: "If I were to try to read, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how - the very best I can; and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what's said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference."

But, nothing would have been possible in 2008 without the many conscientious, hard working outstanding volunteers who spend many hours providing invaluable services to the entire community along with Borough staff members lead by Bob Falzarano. May God bless the Borough of Chatham and its residents. Thank you.