

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

## **January 4, 2010**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guests. I wish prosperity and wellness to all in 2010. The decade we have left behind was the worst for the U.S. economy in modern times. Chatham was rocked by job losses, home foreclosures and the economic sickness that affected Borough residents and businesses. During 2009, the Borough struggled to swim against the tide and maintain our services without increasing the resident tax burden. The 2009 budget only included a less than ½% (actually 0.47%) increase over the prior year. Total budget in 2008 was \$14,242,636.00 and the total budget in 2009 was \$14,309,139.00 for a total increase of \$66,503.00. The actual tax increase was 0.9 Cents per \$100 of assessed value. Through our creative thinking and tight budget process, Chatham continued to improve the quality of life for our residents. For example, many of the infrastructure improvements which we completed, we received State aid for and then completed the work for less than budgeted amount. The 2010 budget will be an enormous challenge to continue to hold down taxes.

### During 2009, we had many accomplishments in the Borough, including:

- we maintained a tight control on our budget allowing us to maintain the high level of services our residents are used to.
- we made infrastructure improvements on many streets and public areas including the reconstruction of Washington Avenue and VanDoran Avenue and re-surfacing of the Library Parking lot, Garden Place, Regina Court, Lindsey Court, Jessica Court, Summit Avenue, Fern Avenue, Tallmadge Avenue, Minton Avenue, Myrtle Avenue and access to Middle School off of VanDoren and Micro-Surfacing of Cornell Place, Dunbar Street, John Street, Lincoln Avenue, Cherry Lane, Fuller Circle, Chandler Road (lower) and Ogden Street, improvements to the Parrott Mill and Riverview Water Pump stations, the Coleman Avenue sewer replacement, 2009 Curb and Sidewalk Program, and approval for improvements to Shepard Kollack Park.
- The Environmental Commission and Green Initiatives Committee held its second annual Green Fair in town.
- The Borough was awarded the collaboration prize from the Sustainable Jersey Organization for its work with Chatham Township in our joint effort to make both Chathams more Green.
- The Borough received the MCFlowertown award for our streetscape and ambiance of downtown and library.
- we formed a Memorial Pool and Park Advisory Committee which began work and has sent out a pool survey to gauge what our residents want in a municipal pool – Please return them if you haven't done so yet. Your input matters.
- The Business Improvement Advisory Committee drafted an ordinance to create a Business Improvement District, which will work as a public/private partnership with the Chamber of Commerce to help businesses increase their profits and Chatham's attractiveness
- we continued to look for budget savings by working with surrounding communities to create joint programs that provide our residents quality services. This resulted in an

agreement between Chatham, Summit and New Providence to share DPW equipment and employees.

- we worked toward better communicating with Borough residents and visa versa and began work on Borough Community Cable TV station and website revamping.
- we began a Mayor's Wellness Campaign Advisory Committee and launched the Toxic Waistline Contest with events and speakers at the Farmers' Market and began a restaurant healthy eating contest with local eateries as winners in providing alternative healthful meals to residents and customers.
- we continue to look for ways to improve recreation in our community and are working with the Township to create a better and more responsive recreation department that allows for more parental input and involvement.
- we began a Community Garden sub-committee in the Land Conservancy Committee and have chosen a location, leased land from PSEG for \$1 a year and plan on a Spring planting.

Looking to the new year and the new decade some of the 2010 goals will include:

- Starting the Main Street Business Improvement District with the projected advertising publication for Chatham businesses and concierge service at the train station.
- Complete a traffic study of Milton/Elmwood and Fairview Avenues.
- Hillside Avenue reconstruction with municipal aid grants.
- 2010 Road Resurfacing as well as enhancing and expanding the Curb and Sidewalk Program.
- Complete an energy audit of our municipal buildings.
- HVAC system upgrade at Borough Hall and generator upgrade at Firehouse.
- Greenwood Avenue Drainage improvements and also on Lower Chandler, Weston Avenue, Fairview Avenue, Duchamp Place, and Hillside Avenue
- Open a Community Garden and create a sub-committee for a Dog Park.
- Repair the Roosevelt Avenue sewer lining with NJEIT grant.
- Renovate the Joint Meeting Sewer plant through NJEIT grants
- Convert our traffic light conventional bulbs to LED bulbs to save energy and money.

The hard work by our Borough Employees and Councilmen, and even myself, has enabled the Borough to come through this gloomy national economy better than almost all New Jersey municipalities. Much of this would not have been possible in 2009, however, without the many conscientious, hard working outstanding volunteers who spend many hours providing invaluable services to the entire community. I look forward to leading the Borough and its residents in 2010 and in the new decade.

May God bless the Borough of Chatham and its residents.

Thank you.