

Borough of Chatham

2010

State of the Borough Message

The Mayor's State of the Borough Message

January 3, 2011

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guests. I wish success and wellness to all in 2011. Last year the economic recession, efforts to control State governmental deficits and deflation of home prices continued and created economic conditions not seen since the Depression of the 1930's. Chatham Borough government was affected by the loss of \$176,000 in State aid, and due to tax assessment appeals the Borough lost over \$63,000. The stagnant economy that affected Borough residents and businesses continues to present challenges. The distressing human toll of the economy slump was the loss of jobs for both residents and Borough employees.

Your Borough government used imagineering (imagineering is a blending of imagination and engineering disciplines) to plan for the last year and provide vision for the New Year. The 2010 budget was a 3.4% decrease over the prior year. Total municipal budget in 2009 was \$14,309,139 and the total municipal budget in 2010 was \$13,813,516 for a decrease of \$495,623. The tax rate increased from .350 in 2009 to .355 in 2010 a .05% increase. The 2009 tax levy was \$7,219,865 increasing to \$7,343,861 in 2010 an increase of 1.7%. This was due to the loss of municipal revenue totaling \$700,000. An average home valued at \$658,000 realized an annual total municipal tax increase of \$40.00. Through our imagineering, and tight budget process, Chatham Borough continued to support a high quality of life for our residents. For example, during 2010 we worked on consolidating services with neighboring communities in anticipation of the constraints in 2011 caused by the new mandated 2% levy cap. The 2011 budget will be a tough challenge to continue to hold down taxes and maintain services.

During 2010, we had many accomplishments in the Borough, including:

- Budget control, while maintaining the high level of services to which our residents are accustomed.
- The Environmental Commission and Green Initiatives Committee held its fourth annual Green Fair. The Green Initiatives Committee also completed all the necessary requirements and documentation to obtain the Sustainable Jersey Bronze certification for Chatham Borough, making us one of the 67 municipalities to attain such prestigious certification out of New Jersey's 566 municipalities.
- The Memorial Pool and Park Advisory Committee recommended a rebuild of the pool and in an affirmative public vote in November residents indicated their desire to maintain and improve the municipal pool, a process that will begin in the first quarter of 2011.
- During my tenure we have reinforced efforts that support our local economic vitality of our business districts and local businesses. A viable business district adds value to our community and our residential tax base.
- 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 a Joint Court arrangement with Madison and two other communities; our Construction Code Department being consolidated with Madison; our Police Dispatch Unit being consolidated into the Morris County Emergency Dispatch Department.

- Major personnel retirement replacements took place with the Police Department new Chief and Lieutenant, and we added a Recreation Director, and a tax assessor.
- The DPW and PBA unions worked with the administration to change health insurance carriers which saved the Borough approximately \$280,000 in the 2010 budget and the administrative/non-union staff began contributing to their health coverage this past May.
- Additionally the DPW and PBA agreed to reopen their employment contracts and agreed to reduce their wage increase by 50% to 2%.
- The Borough received the Morris County McFlowertown award, the second consecutive year, for our Community Garden Development model that was completed almost entirely through volunteer effort by both local interested individuals working with local private business entities. The Land Conservancy Sub-Committee provided a venue for over 60 lottery participants to enjoy the freshness of locally grown fruits and vegetables while enjoying “horticulture therapy” in a controlled environment close to home.
- The Mayor’s Wellness Campaign Advisory Committee was consolidated with Chatham Township, and with the support of community volunteers and Saint Barnabas Medical Center, we expanded our health awareness programs to include a Know Your Numbers project aimed at empowering participants to be aware of critical health factors that can change your life. Supportive materials were available for 22 weeks (at our newly lengthened season) at the Farmers’ Market and available on our website.
- We continue to look for ways to improve recreation in our community and, working with the Township, changed the management to create a better and more responsive recreation department that allows for more parental input and involvement.
- Completed a traffic study of Milton/Elmwood and Fairview Avenues and increased sidewalk construction by 150%. In conjunction with the School District improved the parking at Milton Avenue School and created safer walking for elementary students.
- We made infrastructure improvements on many streets and public areas including: Hillside Avenue reconstruction with municipal aid grants; the Commuter Oasis; an aggressive 2010 Curb and Sidewalk Program; installed new playground equipment at Garden Park; resurfaced the following streets: Weston, Gerard and Bridge; and completed curbing on the following streets: Martin, Overlook and Charles.
- Completed 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 the following: Ward, Philman and Highland.
- Repaired the Roosevelt Avenue sewer lining with NJEIT grant.
- Renovated the Joint Meeting Sewer plant through NJEIT grants.
- Converted our traffic light conventional bulbs to LED bulbs to save energy and money.
- Working with the Morris County Election Commission was able to move some voting out of the public schools.
- Improved the curbside recycling program by switching to single-stream recycling system which will increase the ratio of recycled material from the Borough.

Looking to the New Year and the new decade some of the 2011 goals will include:

- Support the business sector by offering a Borough location for business related seminars, workshops, and networking opportunities with entities like the Morris County Chamber of Commerce, NJ State Department of Community Affairs, Main Street Program.
- As an outgrowth of parking issues before the Traffic Committee forming a sub-committee as a parking “task force” to use imagineering to recommend solutions to improve parking all over the Borough with an emphasis on Main Street areas.
- Financing and completing bid process for Community Pool renovation so that work can commence on Labor Day.
- Expand the Community Garden Plot to allow waitlisted residents and families an opportunity to join the fun of growing their own food at no taxpayer expense.
- While we were at 76 of 88 points of the Governor’s “Best Practices” list with no loss of State aid, we will strive to improve even more.
- Continue to consolidate services where possible to maintain service levels while continuing to drive down expenses.
- Working to reduce Borough expenses through initiatives with an emphasis on green money saving proposals.
- Complete the energy saving initiatives identified in our three municipal buildings audits completed in 2010 through a Board of Public Utility Grant. Receive Energy Saving Rebates through NJ Direct Install Program for energy saving upgrades in these facilities.
- Establish a sub-committee for a leash-less dog park location and creation.
- Reinstate the Department of Public Works Micro Road Resurfacing, and the 2011 Curb and Sidewalk Program will continue with applications completed in the office of the Engineer no later than February for 2011 consideration.

The imagineering by our Borough Employees, Council Members, Mayor and volunteers has enabled the Borough to come through this sluggish national economy healthier than most New Jersey municipalities. While 2010 was not a great year, it was one of the most active of recent years thanks in large part to volunteers activities. I look forward to leading the Borough and its residents in 2011.

All the best to the Borough of Chatham and its residents during 2011, and the Borough’s future looks excellent as long as we have imagination, and a clear shared vision.

Thank you.