

# 1-1-2021 Mayor Message at Council Meeting

## Council Meeting - 1/1/2021 - Mayors message -

I am both thrilled and humbled to be your new mayor. Many thanks for the extra efforts of the mayor, council, borough staff, and volunteers that made 2020 a success.

For me, “the responsibilities of governance are no longer a distant possibility” [1] - they are here; and I take them seriously. Congratulations to councilman Gubitosi for assuming the role of Council president. Al and I collected a record 2200 votes of the 2900 registered voters in November - so you should all feel like you are being well represented!!

We are in a great position as a community. We are blessed with both opportunities and challenges which, if we choose to work on them in a smart, unified manner- we will succeed in 2021 and beyondtogether.

We are ending 2020 fiscally sound; but still in the middle of a health pandemic that threatens our residents and our local businesses. With some vigilance through the middle of the year and some support- better days are ahead. We WILL begin to see a path forward.

So what might that path look like? -

We are putting plans in place (like beachfront, Main Street, and infrastructure improvements) that will keep us on a good path to the future.

## In the area of à Safety/ Security/ & Services -

We need to continue to build on this success. Our Police and Dept. of Public Works strive to improve an already great record- Chief Guida and DPW Supervisor Cofone and their organizations are to be commended. The Office of Emergency Management and all our First Responders are also to be thanked for their efforts in a challenging year!!

We are facing the toughest few months coming up. Our COVID number is nearing 200 cumulative cases and we have about 70 active cases. We must be vigilant AND at the same time encourage people to safely support our restaurants and buy from our local businesses.

## On Affordability -

Our municipal tax levy, which we control, is almost 40% of the total tax levy for our residents. We need to keep this increase to an absolute minimum in 2021 and beyond.

## On Main Street -

Our Main Street Task Force has done some good work and we have applied for an initial state grant for a streetscape of several blocks. We need to keep a focus on a 5-year plan; but, again, in the short-term- do everything we can to support our small businesses, particularly through the first half of 2021, until vaccination levels are adequate.

## On Our Future -

We have had dozens of active volunteers develop a strategic plan for our community. This initiative was led by Paula Gavin. This featured a focus on Main Street, our beachfront/ ocean front, and our communications, among other things. (The BBBCA (Bradley Beach Business Community Alliance came into its own in 2020; and will seek to expand in 2021.)

Bradley Beach has a few big opportunities and challenges to address- and I am confident we will meet these opportunities head on-

## The ShowRoom Theater closing -

We potentially will be assessing a proposal made by a management group who is interested in buying the theater. There are preliminary presentations recently made to the Mayor and Council. One of our residents, Arianna Bocco, has been a real leader bringing the interested parties together.

The idea of a Community Center in the church the borough purchased last year -

Some preliminary analysis and work have begun here; and we need to determine a best path.

A broader question we need to ask ourselves is – how do we organize our towns assets and match them to a mid-long range plan. I look forward to getting to a clearer picture of our municipal “footprint” by mid-year. I think we have opportunities.

These projects will require analysis, feedback, and dialog to get to the next phase of each -

Resolution 2021-28 that we passed on New Year’s Day should be as much APPRECIATION and RECOGNITION as affirmation to the various boards, commissions, committees and teams. -more than 75 volunteers in a dozen different areas were appointed.

Our environmental focus- unparalleled, a sharp focus on our Community Development, Arts, Tourism, to name a few – outstanding efforts.

On “Feedback and Communication”-

Overall, I received several recommendations from citizens (around 50) that I am in the process of assessing with our Business Administrator- David Brown and will be sharing with the council and broader community shortly. They range from beach improvements, to parking, to safety, zoning/ planning, to DPW, etc. a KEY UNDERPINNING OF FEEDBACK IS 2-WAY COMMUNICATION; AND WE ARE AND WILL BE WORKING ON THAT FOR 2021 AND BEYOND. I am strongly considering a periodic “town hall” meeting format that we can flow ideas back and forth as fellow citizens. Important topics or areas of interest will be considered- stay tuned on that.

In conclusion, I *will* disappoint some of you as we go forward- one cost of progress. I hope we get most of it right- I’m sure you will let us know. But let me leave you with 2 thoughts- First, a philosopher once said- “Perfect is the enemy of good” translated- for want of perfection- a task is never completed. I assure you this will not happen. We need to make steady progress as a community. Second, we will listen to the concerns and desires of our residents and try very hard to achieve the collective desires of our community.

Thank you- and welcome 2021!

Larry Fox - Mayor