

State of the Borough Address
2015

Good evening, Happy New Year, and welcome to the Borough of Essex Fells' Re-Organizational meeting of 2015.

This is a remarkable night. You have just witnessed an amazing event. An event that separates our free, democratic world from all others and an event that did not take place on the world's stage, but rather right here in the Beloved Borough of Essex Fells, in this 1.3 square miles of the "Enchanted Forest": The democratic transference of "the power of the people."

Just now, John King, Ed Davis, and only a few weeks ago, Greg Hindy took an oath of office that said that they swear that they will "will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey" and that they will "bear true faith and allegiance to the same" and here's the most important thing - "under the authority of the people." "Under the authority of the people." That's you folks - that's the power that you have entrusted them with, have entrusted us all with, and you have entrusted every elected official who has ever sought your support. As our Lt. Governor and Secretary of State Kim Guadagno stated at the swearing in ceremony of our friend and neighbor, Mayor Joseph Tempesta of West Caldwell, we are granted this sacred authority "by the people" and not by a party, or by friends, or by any other influence, but "by the people" who have chosen us, who have entrusted us to represent them in this most noble cause of public service, and who have put their trust in us to do what is best for "the people" of the Borough of Essex Fells. We have sworn to it; and it is something that we do not ever take lightly. And, as if that solemn and weighty oath is not enough, we add the final kicker, credited to George Washington himself when he took the oath of office for the Presidency, "So help me God." (but of course, there is disagreement on its authenticity in the historical community).

The transference of power is powerful stuff. Thank you all for being here to witness it.

I am very pleased to tell you all that the State of the Borough of Essex Fells is strong, vibrant, healthy, and sound. 2014 was a year in which we as a Council were faced with some of the same year in and year out challenges, such as balancing the budget with the ever increasing state mandates on spending, always trying to do more with less when the costs of operating our Borough are ever increasing; operating the Essex Fells Water Utility, which provides water to not only Essex Fells, but also three surrounding towns, in an economical and efficient manner; providing the resources and training for our Police and Fire Departments so that our commitment to public safety remains of the highest priority; properly maintaining our roads, sewers, and Borough facilities and properties, efficiently operating our Recycling Center; and providing recreational facilities and programs for our Borough's residents. The governing body in 2014 certainly had its hands full in dealing with ways in which to maintain and provide the services and programs at the levels that the residents of Essex Fells expect and deserve. It was a difficult and challenging year, and at times extremely frustrating and disheartening, but this governing body did its job and still found ways to accomplish much. I am proud of all of them and they are to be commended.

Shortly, you will be hearing from the Council Chairs of the various Borough's Committees with specific details regarding all of the highlights and achievements for 2014, and the successes are many. I did want to touch upon some of the highlights of some of our larger departments for the record.

Department of Public Works

Superintendent Roger Kerr and the personnel of the Essex Fells Department of Public Works were, as usual, extremely busy with not only the large tasks of leaf pickup and snow removal, but also with many other multiple tasks that go well beyond roads, sewers, and building maintenance. Thanks to the unbelievable work of the men of the DPW, our roads are open and safe for pedestrian and vehicular traffic in great time whether it be leaves or snow. Further, Roger and the DPW worked closely with the Recreation Director in making sure that the Fields of Essex Fells were in top and safe shape for the children playing Fall and Spring sports. Additionally, and I hope you have all noticed, our wonderful and historic Essex Fells sign and map located on the corner of Roseland Avenue and Runnymede Road is back. You will recall that it was severely damaged two years ago in Hurricane Sandy. Thanks to Roger and the DPW crew, the sign and map are repaired with a beautiful new post and it is once again a wonderful entrance marker to our beautiful town. Thank you Mr. Kerr and the men of the DPW for all of the hard work that you do throughout the year. Speaking of Roger, many of you may not know this, but one of his many additional responsibilities to Essex Fells is that he actively sits on the Essex Fells Planning Board and has done so for many, many years, giving of his time to our town. Thank you Roger.

Dr. Robert Burchell, who leads our Planning Board and Gerry Nolan and Mike Candido who lead our Zoning Board of Adjustment are present this evening and I want to publically thank you folks and your committees for being truly the watch dogs for our town. You all do such a tremendous job!

The Recycling Committee, under the leadership of Rob Doelp, has been active with ideas and suggestions in ways to make the center more productive and clean. New signs have been posted and cameras installed in order to better organize the recycling process and prevent illegal dumping of non-recyclable materials. Thank you Doelper and your committee for all that you do.

Councilman John King will report more on the activities of the DPW for the year 2014.

Essex Fells Fire Department

Essex Fells Fire Department under the leadership of Chief John Kauffman had a difficult and challenging year. On Sunday, July 27, 2014, an early morning fire on Fells Road claimed the life of one of our residents, Michelle Meoli. Despite the heroic efforts and relentless hard work of the Essex Fells Fire Department and those of our neighboring towns and the West Essex First Aid Squad, Ms. Meoli tragically succumbed. Her death was the first fatality from a fire in Essex Fells since November 22, 1963 (the day that President Kennedy was assassinated). Our prayers are with her and her family. Then, just a few weeks ago on Christmas Day morning, a Christmas

tree caught fire at the LaHue residence. Fortunately, there were no injuries to the residents who were able to evacuate. The fire was fought and brought under control. One of our firefighters, Jamal Belai was injured when the ceiling collapsed on him and several firefighters. He was taken to Morristown Memorial Hospital's Trauma Unit, evaluated, and thankfully released. Jamal is a terrific and courageous EFFD firefighter and did our town great service and honor that day.

On a much lighter note, the Essex Fells Fire Department hosted the annual Memorial Day Picnic on the Green and it was well attended by town residents and neighboring fire departments. The EFFD also held its awards dinner at the home of Councilman and Mrs. King where John Farrell was named as the 2014 Fireman of the Year. Lastly, Essex Fells Fire Department proudly ran the annual Tunnel to Towers Run in New York City in honor of FDNY's Steven Siller who perished in the Trade Center attacks.

Under Chief Kauffman's leadership, the Essex Fells Fire Department continues to be the preeminent volunteer fire department in our area, has more members of its fire department who are Firefighter 1 trained than ever before, and has maintained - and even raised - the morale of the Department.

Councilman Sullivan will provide more details on the activities of the Essex Fells Fire Department shortly.

Public Affairs

Under the direction of Councilwoman Wahl, the Borough's Public Affairs calendar was busy with the annual Memorial Day Remembrance, the Senior Coffee with the Mayor, and the Veterans Day celebration. This year the Borough was the recipient of a wonderful bench to be placed in the Trotter Tract in memory of Nancy Teepe, who loved walking her dogs in the tract. Thank you Carl Sturcke for all you work in raising the funds for our friend Nancy. We continue our growth into the social media world by now having the Borough on Facebook and Twitter and we are looking into doing something on Instagram very soon. Please visit our Borough's website often for news and information about the activities in town: www.essexfellsboro.com.

Lastly, it's no surprise to any of us that there has been a change in the operation of our little post office in that deliveries and the Post Office trucks no longer originate from there, but instead from West Caldwell. The Essex Fells Post Office itself remains open and we are in the process of renewing the lease with them. It's a relationship that dates back to 1961.

2014 also saw a dramatic increase in the number of demolition permits taken out - 4 in fact. Those, coupled with the prior year's permits, bring the number of homes demolished or being demolished to nine. It certainly is the wish of this governing body, the Historical Committee and many, many of our residents that the homes being constructed take into consideration the aesthetics and wonderful neighborhood qualities of where they are located when they are designed and landscaped.

Sadly, we lose wonderful residents each year. It's the circle of life and it's heartbreaking. I rarely mention the names of those who have passed on because I worry that I will mistakenly omit someone's name. I will, however tonight, make two exceptions:

I was informed earlier today that Michael St. John of Oldchester Road passed away today. Mr. St. John was 92 years old, a World War II Navy Veteran, and a member of what Tom Brokaw referred to as "The Greatest Generation." He was the patriarch of one of Essex Fells' great families and the father to Jerome St. John - Councilman/ Mayor/ Judge of the New Jersey Superior Court, Appellate Division; Thomas St. John - Councilman multiple times; and his daughter Ellen. Mr. St. John was also a grandfather and great grandfather many times over, in fact his grandson Harry and his wife welcomed a son to this world just yesterday. Mr. St. John's two sons told me of their father's passing, "He had a great run" and "Dad left completely on his own terms." What can be better than living a full and meaningful life like that? Today's the day he rejoins his love, Mrs. St. John. Our thoughts and prayers are with the entire St. John family

I also note that Essex Fells lost a true original character when on July 13, 2014, Jacqueline Beusse was "called home." Ms. Beusse lived in Essex Fells since 1961 and was such a wonderfully colorful character, always very interested in the goings on in town, and was never shy about sharing with me her observations, recommendations, criticisms, and compliments. She was an Essex Fells original - and I thank God for that. Any of us who knew her will never forget her engaging personality, her wonderful eccentricities, and her undying love for Essex Fells. Via Con Dios Commissioner!

Councilwoman Wahl will provide a more detailed report on the Public Affairs activities in 2014.

Essex Fells Water Utility

Under the constant care and leadership of Superintendent Jack Pohlman, the Essex Fells Water Utility continues to provide the residents of Essex Fells and three customer towns (over 17,000 people) with high quality and ample quantity of water. 2014 saw our Water Department deal with our new accounting procedures and instrumentation on the water meters; billing issues; upgrades to the system and pumps; painting of hydrants - the blue hydrant markers in the streets identifying the location of the hydrants for when the snows come; and issues regarding our water contracts with our neighboring towns. It's all good.

Thank you Superintendent Jack Pohlman for keeping Essex Fells water flowing, safe, and plentiful. As Mayor, there are many reasons for my chronic insomnia, but I can tell you truly, that as long as Jack is in charge, the operation of our Water Utility is not one of them. Thanks Jack and all the men of the Water Utility.

Councilman Sullivan will present more information on the activities of the Water Utility.

Finance and Personnel

Personnel – Putting aside the Essex Fells Police Department, 2014 was a relatively quiet year for Personnel matters in Essex Fells. We welcomed Vincent Fiscella to our Department of Public Works and he has been a tremendous asset. If you have not met him, please do so - his personality and positive attitude is infectious and he already truly loves our little town. Welcome Vin! On other matters, working hand in glove with our Borough Administrator Francine Paserchia, our Finance and Personnel Committee reviewed and updated the Borough's Personnel Policies and Procedure Manual.

Finance - In 2014, the Borough of Essex Fells received \$150,000 Open Space Trust Grant from Essex County to be used for park development and I want to publically thank the Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. and the Essex County Recreation and Open Space Trust Fund Advisory Board. Our County Executive has been a great friend of our Borough and the Board is extremely generous. These funds have been set aside for improvements to the Essex Fells Fields and backstop nets. This year, we have also reviewed and raised certain fees that the Borough charges for all sorts of activities commensurate with fees charged by our neighboring municipalities.

Lastly, the Essex County Tax Commission has directed that the Borough of Essex Fells undergo a full and complete Revaluation (as opposed to a Reassessment which we did in 2009). The last time we had a formal Revaluation was in 2004 and we have been ordered to update the records. In 2015, the Borough will be going out for bids on a licensed and certified company to conduct the revaluation which is to be completed by 2016.

The Borough has always been fiscally responsible in how we manage our resources by incurring minimal debt while still providing our residents with high quality services and facilities. These are challenging economic times and, as always, the Council in 2014 worked very hard in dealing with these challenges

Councilman King will provide additional information on the activities of the Finance and Personnel Committee.

Recreation Committee

After many years as our Recreation Director and Administrative Assistant in Borough Hall, Robert Lombardy retired his position in 2013. I want to publicly state that Rob Lombardy did more than anyone to bring our Recreation Department up to the high level of capabilities it is today. Rob's commitment to the kids and adults of Essex Fells was truly remarkable and on behalf of the entire Borough and the generations of kids he influenced in such a positive way, I want to thank him sincerely for his care and dedication. But wait - if we can't have Rob, why not go with someone that Rob thinks is even better than he? 2014 marked the first full year that we have as our Recreation Director Lauren Lombardy Mousab! Lauren is doing an absolute fabulous job and the kids are having a magnificent time. There's still a Lombardy at the helm and we are fortunate. Thanks also to the new head of the Recreation Committee, Chris Boeckel and the committee members for all the hours and hard work you do on behalf of the kids of our town.

I would also like to thank Tommy Torter and the Pond Committee for all the work that he and his committee do to keep the Currier and Ives Winter Magic alive in our town. The care and concern that he and the members have for the Pond is a year-round burden of which we all - and especially the children - truly appreciate. The work they do, well, this is the stuff of which wonderful childhood memories are made. Thank you all.

Councilman Koechling will provide information on the activities of the Recreation Committee.

Essex Fells Police Department

The Essex Fells Police Department was extremely busy in the “competitive enterprise of ferreting out crime,” this year and there is much about which the Department can be very proud. I would like to thank Chief Vincent Kulik for his leadership, his professionalism, commitment to the residents of our little town, and his guidance and friendship and also every member of the Essex Fells Police Department for their service, care and concern for all of the residents of Essex Fells. The outrageous happenings going on in New York City and around the country are incomprehensible and appalling and we want the men and woman of the Essex Fells Police Department to know that we respect, support, and admire every one of them every day they wear the badge.

Outside of the usual duties and responsibilities of police work in Essex Fells, 2014 was a bit of a unique year in that, thanks to the generosity of Frederick and Debra Eiden, the Essex Fells Police Department was able to host a most unusual event in their vacant house on Oldchester Road. Under the direction of Sergeant Darren Volker, the Essex Fells Police Department invited the New Jersey State Police and neighboring departments to run a variety of drills in the house in various mock situations using “simunition.” I was invited to attend the activities inside the house - standing in a corner, fully Kevlar-ed, helmeted, goggled, etc. - and witnessed first-hand how members of law enforcement do their jobs in such dangerous and daunting situations. It proved to be a magnificent training session for all involved and the New Jersey State Police Coordinator had very high praise for the professionalism displayed by our Police Department. Thank you Sergeant Volker and Chief Kulik.

2014 was a remarkable year in the Essex Fells Police Department and in Essex Fells itself, for it was the year that we said our thanks, goodbye and “Happy Retirement” to Essex Fells Police Officer No. 159, Donald Allen. Don became a member of the Essex Fells Police Department on August 1, 1988 and has always served her with commitment, pride and extreme dedication. He graduated from the Essex County Police Academy on December 1, 1988 and after 12 years “on the job” as a patrolman, he was promoted to Sergeant on July 18, 2000. Later, Don, with the full and unanimous support of this Mayor, the Essex Fells Police Chief, and the Governing Body was promoted to Lieutenant. Don Allen has had a varied and diverse career in serving the people of the Borough of Essex Fells, not only as a patrolman, Sergeant, and Lieutenant, but also having been in charge of Field Operations of the Essex Fells Police Department, Internal Affairs Officer, the liaison to the Office of Emergency Management, and overseer of the vehicle fleet and emergencies for the Police Department; as well as being an instructor of the Essex County College Police Academy. On a personal level, this Mayor and Donald Allen have shared a very close professional and personal relationship over the years on every matter dealing with the protection and safety of the residents of the Borough of Essex Fells, and that, throughout all of our hundreds of hours of conversations, there was never once, in the

course of those 20 years, that Donald Allen's belief, commitment, judgment, and desire to serve Essex Fells and her people every waivered or flagged. He is someone who understands, above all else, what those four words truly mean that are emblazoned on the side of every police vehicle in the Borough of Essex Fells - "To Protect and Serve." We thank Don Allen for all his care, love and concern for the folks of Essex Fells over his 26 years of service and we wish him, his wife Leslie, and daughter Kelsey all great and wonderful things in Don's "retirement."

With that, at our next regular meeting on January 20, 2015, we will be promoting to the position of Lieutenant of the Essex Fells Police Department, William Theilacker. Bill Theilacker is a 24 year veteran of the EFPD who is known to us all. He has taught our kids in the DARE program, has been involved in every aspect of police and law enforcement in Essex Fells and is our town's own "Bill Gates" when it comes to our computer systems. You will often see him cruising the streets of Essex Fells on our Harley Davidson police motorcycle. He is every bit a Renaissance Police Officer for sure, and we all very much look forward to working with the soon to be "Lieutenant Theilacker" in the years ahead.

Councilman Sullivan will further comment in greater detail on the events of the Essex Fells Police Department shortly.

Now, joining in the oath of office tonight is John King, a true son of Essex Fells. John has been on the Council since 2010 and has been very active on all our Council Committees, particularly Finance and Personnel, Public Safety, and he serves as Chairman of the Public Works Committee. I look to John for his sound judgment and guidance on every issue that comes before this honorable body because he possesses great common sense and a unique and valued perspective on Essex Fells. Thank you John for once again answering the call of public service to Essex Fells.

2015 will be a year of transition on the Council. Tonight, we say thank you, farewell and Godspeed to two of our Council members, Jane McWilliams and George Peck.

Jane served the residents of Essex Fells as a Councilwoman from April 20, 2010 to November 25, 2014. During Jane's tenure, she ably served as the Chairwoman of the Public Affairs Committee and Chairwoman of the Water Committee, and as a member of the Committees of Public Safety and Public Affairs. She always approached every topic that came before her and the Council with passion and enthusiasm, understanding and common sense, and with very much appreciated directness and heart. I always knew where I stood with Jane - she was never shy to let me know what I was doing right or where I lost my bearings. I love her commitment, her zeal and enthusiasm shown during her term and will personally miss her very much on this Council. Several weeks ago, on November 25, 2014, Greg Hindy was sworn in to complete Jane's unexpired term. Greg is a wonderfully talented attorney who has been active and involved in Essex Fells for many years and he and his wife, Loraine and their children are a great Essex Fells family. Welcome Greg! Oh, and by the way, you're not going anywhere soon because Jane's term was to expire on December 31, 2016, so you just sit there and get comfortable. Thank you Greg.

Tonight we say farewell to George Peck. George has served on the Council for eight years from February 8, 2008 to December 31, 2016. During George's terms, he ably served as the Chairman

of the Finance and Personnel Committee, Chairman of the Recreation Committee, and Chairman of the Public Works Committee. He also served as a Member on the Public Safety Committee, Public Affairs Committee, Recreation Committee, Finance and Personnel Committee, and the Strategic Planning Committee - which was a sub-committee created and designed specifically to analyze and review various aspects of personnel, expense and spending of taxpayer dollars. None of us will ever forget the time the town's books were independently audited and reviewed after George and his team did their magic, and the reviewers praised our fiscal conservancy and said that it is absolutely remarkable how there is no fat in our budget. So of course I had to respond, "Well of course, George is a wonderful plastic and cosmetic surgeon, he takes fat out for a living." As Chairman of the Finance and Personnel Committee, George led the discussions regarding the successful review, evaluation, and reorganization of many of our administrative positions and costs associated therewith, the review and analysis of our union and non-union compensation agreements and relationships, in the creative outreach for cost savings with other municipalities through shared service agreements, and in analyzing and evaluating all of the Borough's revenue and expenses so that the governing body can remain true to its charge of being fiscally responsible to the taxpayers of the Borough of Essex Fells. This was no easy task and one which he undertook with enthusiasm and commitment to the taxpayers; to "the people" in order for our Borough to remain financially sound for the current and future residents of Essex Fells.

But wait, there's more! George also oversaw the completion of the Fields of Essex Fells, the "weeding and feeding" of the fields, a/k/a "the Peck Pesticide Program", and the expansion of recreational activities offered by the Borough so that the children and adults can now enjoy a wide range of activities in a safe and beautifully cared for environment. To know "Councilman Dr. George Peck" is to know that when he came to any meeting, he brought with him his creativity, vision, insight, and wisdom. George's counsel and opinions were sought by every one of us on a wide range of issues. George gave of himself unquestionably to town he loves, and the Borough of Essex Fells is a better place for his years of service on this Council. George has been a remarkable Councilman for the Borough in every way and we will miss him terribly. For me personally, George - you have been a remarkable Councilman and also a remarkable friend ever since we met when Morgan and Kelly were in Kindergarten at Essex Fells School. Thank you sincerely, George, for all of the great service you have provided to the people of Essex Fells.

And with that, we very much look forward to working with our newest member: Ed Davis. Ed is also an extraordinary lawyer and has been deeply involved in the town as a fellow firefighter, officer in the Fire Company, active in the Essex Fells Country Club, and he and Lucinda, his wife (who is very active in the Garden Club of Essex Fells and the Essex Fells Elementary School) and their children are also the epitome of a great Essex Fells family.

Greg and Ed, I can tell you that the challenges that await your service on this Honorable Council will be weighty and extremely important. You have been given a wonderful gift; a gift of trust from your town to do the very best you can for the benefit of all of the residents of Essex Fells. We sit here as trustees of a very precious stone and it is indeed an honor; and with that honor comes tremendous responsibility. Remember that, remember to be faithful to that trust, and you will be successful in the tasks that wait. Also know that, serving with you as fellow Council members are extremely talented, dedicated and caring neighbors who, I am happy to say, love

this blessed Borough as much as I and all of us look forward to working with you, together, on those challenges.

I would like to take a moment to publicly thank you - the many, many volunteers who not only make so many wonderful things happen in our little town, but also truly demonstrate that volunteerism is one of our Borough's greatest and unique qualities. Volunteering takes tremendous sacrifice, time, and commitment, and most often, with little or no thanks, but the heart of those who do so is tremendous, and I know that the entire Council joins me in thanking each and every one who gave of their time and of themselves in 2014 to the committees or organizations for which they served. Many of you are here tonight, and there are many more in town. Many of you are familiar faces year in and year out; yet I am happy to say that the volunteer heart is beating powerfully in Essex Fells. There's that old line from the movie, *Field of Dreams*, "If you build it, they will come." In Essex Fells, I love to say, "If you ask them, they will volunteer." As an example freshly in my mind, we just reconfigured our Board of Health Committee because of Dr. Howard Schlachter resigned after over 20 years of service (and we have prepared a Proclamation in his honor), but I simply made two phone calls to Philip Fiore, MD and Patty Difilippo, RN asking that they serve on the Board of Health, and their acceptance was immediate and response overwhelming. Oh, I simply told now former Councilman George C. Peck, Jr. MD that he has no choice - that he's on board and he willingly accepted..

I would also like a moment to thank those whom I rely upon every day and have done so for many years in order that the business of the Borough of Essex Fells gets done and gets done perfectly. Leading this wonderful group of folks is our Borough Administrator, Francine Paserchia, who started working here in 2001. Francine and I talk every day about the business and operations of Essex Fells. Every day. Sometimes multiple times a day. Francine keeps your Mayor informed, tells him where to go (and yes, you can interpret that any way you choose because every interpretation is a correct interpretation), in line, on time, ... and apparently, in rhyme. She sits to my right and I rightly rely upon her capabilities and knowledge constantly. Thank you for all that you do. I want to also thank our front office folks - the people you meet whenever you come to Borough Hall: Brittany Thunnel - Administrative Assistant; Carl Thunnel and Megan Kruszniz of our Building Department; Chris Battaglia of Battaglia Associates - our CFO; Marita Schatzel - Tax Collector. To my left is my "brother in law" (figuratively speaking) - Martin Murphy of Murphy McKeon - our town attorney since 2002. Marty has sat to my left since I started this wonderful journey and he has brought wisdom and counsel to us all over the years and continues to do so. Marty, on behalf of the Borough, thank you for being the ultimate Council's Counsellor.

I would lastly like to thank all of the residents of the Borough of Essex Fells for their confidence and support in this governing body - rest assured, it is not misplaced. I am, as I ever was, and ever shall be, truly proud and honored for the privilege to serve as your Mayor of this wonderful town.

And so, our well established goal has always been to bring Essex Fells' services and programs up to date and to establish a plan for our future, while honoring our past and preserving the unique character of our town. It is nothing less than what is expected of us. So it has been, so it is, and so shall it continue to be.

God bless these United States, God bless Essex Fells, and God bless you all.

Edward P. Abbot
Mayor
Borough of Essex Fells
January 6, 2015