

## **State of the Borough Address**

**2016**

Good evening, Happy New Year, and welcome to the Borough of Essex Fells' Re-Organizational meeting of 2016.

Once again, I am very pleased to tell you all that the State of the Borough of Essex Fells is strong, vibrant, and very healthy and sound. 2015 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 budget 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 year also provided unique challenges as well. By order of the New Jersey Department of Taxation, Essex Fells has been ordered to undergo a tax revaluation and we have been busy preparing and updating the tax maps and retaining a revaluation company to assist us in accomplishing this goal by December 31, 2016 to be compliant. Council President Wahl will provide us with a more detailed report on the activities of the Finance and Personnel Committee.

The Essex Fells Water Utility was able to successfully conclude negotiations with customer towns in July, so that now under the new requirements of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, all of our wholesale contracts are signed and fully compliant. Of course, continued upgrades to our system remain ongoing (e.g., Pump No. 4 upgrade) so that the residents of Essex Fells and our wholesale customers can rest assured that the Utility provides the safest and cleanest water on a cost efficient basis. I would like to thank Jack Pohlman, Superintendent of the Essex Fells Water Utility (a/k/a “Aquaman”), and Steven Banchi, Water Operator, who has stepped in magnificently over the last several months, for keeping the Essex Fells Water Utility one of the premier water companies in the State. Councilman Koechling will speak in greater detail as to the activities of the Water Utility.

Our Department of Public Works, under the command of General Roger Kerr, did their usual outstanding job in battling the snows of the beginning of the year (which seemed to last until June), the ever growing grasses on our fields and flowers in our gardens in the Spring, the potholes and storm drains in the summer, and the leaves in the Fall and Winter without fanfare or fuss. This year, we said farewell to long time Borough employee and friend, Bill Monroe, who gave to Essex Fells 29 years and 3 months, and we welcomed Mike Annunziata to the DPW team. Of note this year is the ongoing restoration and re-grading of the road in the Trotter Tract to make it safer for the walkers, runners, and vehicles that use that area. I am very happy to report that we began 2015 with 36.2 miles of Essex Fells roadways, and that we closed 2015 with 36.2 miles. Well done Roger and the guys. Councilman John King will provide more details on the activities of the Department of Public Works.

In the area of Public Safety, The Essex Fells Police Department began the year with a wonderfully deserved and earned promotion of William Theilacker to Lieutenant of the Department on January 20, 2015. Similarly deservedly, on April 7, 2015, Scott Jones was promoted to Sergeant, and on June 18, 2015, Victor Gonzales was brought on as our newest patrolman. Under the leadership, guidance and mentorship of our Police Chief, Vincent Kulik, the Essex Fells Police Department is one of the finest in the State, one that keeps us all safe, and one that always deserves our support and respect. The Borough of Essex Fells and the West Essex Policemen's Benevolent Association, Local 81 were able to finalize and execute the labor agreement as well in March, 2015. On behalf of the entire Borough, Chief, please extend our thanks and appreciation to you and your Department. Further, the members of the Essex Fells Volunteer Fire Department, our neighbors and friends, continue to answer the call of neighbors in danger and distress. The talent and commitment of these members is at an all-time high and Essex Fells is blessed to have each of them ready in a moment's notice. Thank you to Chief John Kauffman and the men and woman of the Fire Department. Councilman Bill Sullivan will provide more details on the activities of the Essex Fells Police Department and Fire Department in 2015.

As I have often stated, Essex Fells is "the town that time forgot" in large part because we keep alive the memories and wonderful character of our town with events like skating at the Pond; holding our Memorial Day Remembrance for our fallen heroes; the Fire Department's Memorial Day Picnic; the Garden Club Christmas Eve Carol sing; the van Brunchers gatherings; the Fishing Derby; the Senior's Coffee with the Mayor; The Veterans' Day Remembrance where now our veterans are joined at Borough Hall with the Essex Fells School's Sixth's Grade who

afterwards invites them back to the school for a question and answer period; and all sorts of recreational activities, now under the leadership of Lauren Lombardy Moussab (long-time director Rob Lombardy's talented daughter) who works alongside the wonderful volunteers of the Essex Fells Recreation Committee; to name only a few. Councilman Davis will provide us with more details on the activities of the Essex Fells Recreation Department.

I would like to take a moment to publicly thank 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 2015 to the committees or organizations for which they served. Essex Fells is a much better place for having each of you care about her, her residents, and her unique character. Thank you.

Tonight is a rather unique night too. This evening, I will administer the oath of office to three Councilmen who are returning to this "glorious burden" in serving the people of Essex Fells: Greg Hindy, Edward Davis, and William Sullivan. I am proud to have each of them join us on this dais and proud that each of them has answered the call of public service to our little town. Each brings unique perspective and talents to the challenges and tasks at hand, and we all look forward to continuing to work with them in 2016. As I remind everyone who takes the oath of office, *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 also like to take this opportunity to publicly thank our Borough Administrator, Francine Paserchia, for all her hard work in this, what had to be, difficult and challenging year for a whole host of reasons. Francine and I have worked together on a daily basis for over the last 13 years and I once again look forward to working with you on the challenges this year. She has assembled a superb team of very talented people that work in the front office of the Borough and deal with a wide and vast array of issues and provide solutions. I truly believe that the Borough is extremely fortunate in having such wonderful, caring, and extremely qualified individuals in Administration. So much goes on every day in the operations of the Borough and this very talented team deserves the thanks and appreciation of Essex Fells and all her residents.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of the residents of the Borough of Essex Fells for their confidence and support in this governing body. I am truly proud and honored for the privilege to serve as your Mayor of this wonderful town.

Alright then, let us to the task at hand. Our well established goal – our mission – 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. So it has been, so it is,  
and so it shall continue to be.

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

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