

Borough of Rocky Hill
Reorganization Meeting
January 7, 2008
Mayor Zimmerman' Comments

As we start this New Year we need to remember those we have lost. We will miss long time residents Bill Geoghan, Lorraine Fehrer, Leonard Steinline and Dorothy Young. We also want to welcome the many new residents that joined us in 2007 and hope they will volunteer some of their time and abilities to help keep the Borough running as it does.

As I look around this table in this newly renovated room, I 'm happy to see some of the same faces. When we began last year, 3 of the 5 council members were new and we were about to appoint another. This year, everybody has at least a little experience under their belt but we still have an almost all new Council and with new blood come new ideas. New ideas on how to do more for our seniors, new ideas on how to protect our citizens, new ideas on how to improve the infrastructure of our municipality, new ideas on how to leave this Governing Body better than we found it and most importantly new ideas on how to present Rocky Hill as a shining example of how things can be done when volunteers put their time and abilities to good use for their neighbors.

Last year was an interesting year. I certainly learned a lot in my first year. At the re-org meeting last year I said I was going to lean on the former Mayors for advice and counsel. I have and I especially want to thank Mayors Whitlock, Morren and Bianculli for being so supportive. I also want to take a minute and recognize the person who makes everything actually happen around here, Clerk Griffiths. We could not have done what has gotten done if it were not for the professionalism, dedication, organization and attention to detail of Donna. Over the year many people have given us a gentle pat on the back or sent a nice message saying thanks for what we do. The truth is Donna is the one who deserves our thanks and I know I speak for the entire council in saying we really appreciate everything she does.

As I said last year, we began the year with an inordinate amount of change, a new mayor, basically a new council, and a new school board. So how did we do?

I think we did pretty well. If you asked me what I was most proud of it was the way we all came together and handled the Nor'easter and the associated flooding in April. First and foremost I am really proud of our first responders. Our fire and first aid teams were out and working really hard to insure as little as property damage as possible and more importantly that no one got hurt. I was amazed to see that people that were at political war just a few months earlier were out offering coffee and sandwiches to each other while the Mayor, Council and Constables directed traffic and comforted stranded travelers. It showed me that in tough times we can all get along for the good of the Borough and I hope it continues even into the not so tough times.

During the year we saw some pretty big successes.

Early on the WaWa application was withdrawn, and a low traffic, more environmentally friendly office building is being built in its place.

Borough of Rocky Hill
Reorganization Meeting
January 7, 2008
Mayor Zimmerman' Comments

The first annual Rocky Hill Cycling Classic took place and was hugely successful. Based on how well it went, I would expect that funds raised this year will far exceed the amounts of money given to each of the five recipient organizations. And once again I am really proud of our Fire and First Aid teams for their assistance in making it run so smooth.

In 2007 a Superior Court Judge decided that our Council and Planning Board had acted properly and upheld the Shafer/Pulte Planning Board approval. Unfortunately now the appeal is under appeal. Hopefully we can get through this as quickly and with as little impact on the taxpayers as possible.

Last spring we were able to negotiate a delay in the County mandated revaluation process until 2010. This is an expensive and time consuming process so the extra time will really help us prepare for it.

The State Police have increased their coverage of Rocky Hill to two patrols a day and are using the substation built for them in 2006.

We were able to negotiate multiple short term extensions with South Bound Brook for the services of their Police. This was not an easy task given that their Mayor was opposed to it.

They now have a new Mayor who is not opposed to the inter-local agreement and we have already begun the negotiations on a long term extension.

It was a banner year for grants. We received almost \$275K in grants in 2007. When you compare that to our total budget of \$919K, and tax revenues of only \$400K, that's pretty amazing. The biggest grant was just received in December which was \$200K for sidewalk work on Rte 518.

Speaking of sidewalks, after years of conversation but little action on sidewalk repairs, in 2007 we actually began the program by approving the contract for Phase I of repairing all of the sidewalks in the Borough. Work will commence this spring. With Phase II about to go out to bid plus the grant we just received, you will see a lot of construction going on this year as we move to repair long neglected infrastructure.

Borough of Rocky Hill
Reorganization Meeting
January 7, 2008
Mayor Zimmerman' Comments

The Web site, while not everything we want it to be yet, is dramatically improved from a year ago. I have transitioned it to Linda and she is doing a great job of taking it to the next level. One improvement she has already made is that all ordinances will be available for viewing on line.

From a financial standpoint, we held the municipal portion of your taxes steady this year with no increase. We also began to put together a process to better track and collect non tax revenues.

These are just a few of the many accomplishments of 2007. So what do we have in store for 2008?

Like I said earlier, the multi phase project to repair our sidewalks will be a major project this year that will certainly keep our Engineer and Streets and Roads Committee on their toes.

In Public Safety, we will be working at negotiating a long term contract with the South Bound Brook Police. We will also work closely with the Fire Department on the possible purchase of a new engine this year.

In a few weeks I am going to appoint a short term *ad hoc* committee to review our technology infrastructure and make recommendations for improvements. One such improvement I know we need is a phone system with voicemail. We need to continue to improve communications between the Borough and its residents and this would be a good step.

After six years of trying, we will finally begin the process of adopting the Code Book later this month. We will also work diligently this year at repealing or updating out of date ordinances, like the one for example that says you can't run your horse down Washington Street at more than 8 miles an hour. I'm not certain, but I don't think South Bound Brook's radar is calibrated for large animals.

In 2008 you will see Van Horn Park really open for full service use as well as hopefully the second annual Rocky Hill Cycling Classic in June.

Last year we received a grant from the county to build a tennis practice area behind Borough Hall. This year we will begin the process of figuring out how to make the best use of that grant.

A long running problem we face is non-residential parking in the Borough. This year I would like to appoint a short term small ad hoc committee to study the options we have for improved parking for our downtown area. This is a problem that has been around for years and may take years to resolve but I think it's time we get started on it.

Lastly, in 2008, we will do our best to hold municipal taxes down as best we can by continuing the practice we began last year of forecasting projects three years out. Unfortunately, with the unexpected added legal expense of the continued litigation and the inability to collect the revenue associated with the Planning board approval that's under appeal, it may not be possible

**Borough of Rocky Hill
Reorganization Meeting
January 7, 2008
Mayor Zimmerman' Comments**

to do without an increase this year. I do promise that we will make every effort to hold municipal taxes down as much as we possibly can.

So as you see, we have another busy year ahead of us. We will continue to clean up what was left for us, complete what we have started and look to the future to see where we can take the Borough.

Let's get started by confirming my appointments.