



MAYOR'S ADDRESS TO THE ASSEMBLAGE

Reorganization Meeting

Tuesday, January 2, 2024

Welcome to the 120th Annual Reorganization Meeting of the Borough of Emerson. I would like to welcome those who are joining us this evening in person as well as everyone watching on YouTube. Congratulations to our newly sworn in members of the Council, Council President Michael Timmerman and Councilwoman Ashley Rice. I look forward to continuing to work with you both as well as the rest of the Council to move Emerson forward.

Borough Hall is a very busy place and there is a lot going on every day. On behalf of the Governing Body, I want to thank all of our borough staff, our police department, our DPW, our fire department, our ambulance corps, auxiliary police, and all of our volunteers on all of our boards and commissions for all of their hard work throughout the year as well as for always keeping everything running smoothly. Your dedication is commendable and we thank you for that.

The Governing Body has been very busy this past year as well. Some highlights from 2023 and things we are looking forward to in 2024 include the following:

- We were excited to offer new events and programs throughout 2023, including cooking classes, concerts, and performances as part of the Mayor's Wellness Campaign. Not only did these promote healthy

lifestyles and overall wellbeing, but they gave our residents opportunities to gather together and have some fun, while showcasing the incredible talent that we have here in Emerson. The Recreation Commission also added Volleyball to sports programs that are offered and they sponsored a cornhole tournament and a Fall Harvest Festival, which were both huge successes. We are busy planning even more events and programs for 2024. Please sign up for Rave Alerts to receive notifications from the Borough so you can know about upcoming events when they are announced.

- The retirement in 2023 of Police Chief Mike Mazzeo led to the restructuring of the police department with a promotion to Chief for Mark Savino, to Captain for Rocco Duardo, and promotions to Sergeant of Chris Bova and Brendan Rizza. And this evening, we swore in two new probationary police officers, Owen Lennon and Craig Merkle.
- Our two shared service agreements with the Board of Education for the Student Resource Officer (SRO) and the Special Law Enforcement Officers (SLEO's) were renewed in order to continue to protect our schools and keep our children safe.
- The Kinderkamack Road streetscape is now scheduled to begin in 2024 and will improve the overall aesthetics of the northern portion of our downtown.
- Two Affordable Housing rental units, at the former Valero site, will be ready for occupancy in the coming months. The eligibility requirements and application process will be announced in the near future. If you would like your name on the list to receive information about the application process, once available, please contact the Clerk's Office.

- We have extended our contract with Holy Name Medical Center to aid our volunteer ambulance corps in order to provide continuous emergency standby ambulance services for our residents.
 - Both EVAC and the Emerson Volunteer Fire Department are always looking for members. Please consider joining! Although it is a commitment, the reward of helping your neighbors in their greatest time of need is priceless.
 - And, speaking of Holy Name, I want to again recognize their generous donation of an AED device for Hillman Park, which will be available if an emergency arises from the Spring through mid-Fall.
- We continue to make investments in our infrastructure that not only maintain our facilities, but also bring greater efficiency to our operations.
 - Our boiler replacement project through PSE&G, which saved over \$80,000 in equipment and installation costs alone, was completed this past Fall, and further savings are expected on this winter's heating bills.
 - The library's roof was also replaced and solar panels installed, which make it a greener and more energy-efficient building.
 - The Randolph Ave and Cindy Lane Pump Stations will be replaced this year through our participation in local pricing cooperatives, which will save on expenses and DPW overtime costs; and
 - Just last week, we received notice from Bergen County Open Space's 2023 grant program that we were awarded \$60,000. Earlier in 2023, we were also awarded another \$60,000 from the State's Local Recreation Improvement Grant. We will have

a combined \$120,000 to make improvements to Ackerman Park, including resurfacing the basketball courts and if funds allow, additional improvements.

- Another update that you will soon see happening is the Lighting Replacement Project at Benkovic Field, which utilizes matching grant funds awarded from the 2022 Bergen County Open Space program.
- In 2023, through a shared service with Upper Saddle River, we purchased a tree-trimming truck which has netted the Borough a savings of more than \$21,000 in outside vendor costs with more savings expected in the future. We continue our shared service agreement with Old Tappan for court administration services and we will continue to explore future shared service collaborations with the Pascack Valley towns and the County of Bergen itself.

I encourage you to join us at our meetings and if you can't, please watch us on television in order to keep updated on all the work of the Governing Body and the Borough. And as always, if you need me, please call me. I am always available to our residents, to answer questions and to listen to recommendations on how we can make our Borough better.

Finally, thank you to the residents of Emerson for continuing to entrust us to lead the beloved family town. I am truly humbled by your support. This next year is going to be an exciting and productive one in Emerson! I wish you all a happy and healthy 2024!