



MAYOR'S ADDRESS TO THE ASSEMBLAGE

Reorganization Meeting

Tuesday, January 4, 2022

Welcome to the 118th Annual Reorganization Meeting of the Borough of Emerson. I would like to welcome those who are joining us this evening, either in person or online. I welcome our newest and reelected members of the Council who have just been sworn in and taken their seats at the dais, Councilman Brian Gordon, Councilwoman Kelly Moore and Councilman Don Pierro. We all look forward to working with you and trust that you will be assets to the Governing Body.

There is one thing I would like to point out this evening, which is a historic moment in the Borough of Emerson. For the first time in history, there are four women elected officials sitting on the Governing Body. In 2018, Emerson made history by electing its first female mayor. In 2019, for the first time, Emerson elected two women to the Council. And this year, in 2021, the voters of Emerson elected the fourth female member of the Governing Body and here we sit today.

Throughout 2021 the Borough has had many accomplishments

- The Borough has been awarded over \$1.5 million in grants including:
 - \$875,000 for the streetscape improvements along Kinderkamack Road.
 - The Borough was awarded over \$400,000 in NJDOT Local Aid Improvements grants for various road projects.
 - Emerson was also awarded grants totaling \$75,000 to protect our police officers and our emergency responders for body worn cameras and Jaws of Life.

- This year we are anticipating grant funding in the amount of approximately \$1.9 million for the following projects:
 - NJDOT Safe Routes to School grant funding which will improve the walkability and safety around our schools and throughout the Borough.
 - We have applied for a Library Construction Bond grant for over \$300,000
 - A local recreation improvement grant for \$150,000.
 - We received over \$700,000 in stimulus funding from the American Recovery Fund Program which we are using to upgrade the Cindy Lane pump station.
 - We were able to upgrade our ADA crosswalks along Ackerman Avenue this year with 2020 grant money from NJDOT.

- We have finalized two easements that were outstanding for many years that result in the Borough being returned \$175,000 that was due us from the County of Bergen for the Kinderkamack Road Project.

- We established a Military Banner program to salute Emerson's patriot heroes from Memorial Day through Veterans Day. We are proud to be able to honor the many residents who defended our country by serving in all branches of the military.

- We are moving forward with our new emergency services building addition. A subcommittee was recently formed to suggest minor adjustments to the structure that will be presented to the Governing Body at an upcoming meeting. We are working very hard on this project and, as it will stand tall until at least the end of the 21st Century. This project will allow us to preserve our historic building while at the same time, creating much needed space for our Police, Ambulance, Municipal Courts and the Mayor and Council Chambers.

- The Firehouse floor, which was promised to be fixed for years, was finally repaired in 2021.

- We established a shared service with Westwood to offer a Senior Bus service.

- We have settled our DPW contract and are very close to coming to an agreement with our Emerson Police Local PBA 206.

- We established a shared service agreement with Upper Saddle River to purchase a tree truck to help maintain the Borough shade trees, which will save taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars over the course of the agreement as well as being able to work on the Borough schedule as opposed to a contractor's especially when dealing with hazardous trees in the Borough.
- We held 3 different Covid vaccination clinics for our Emerson residents.
- We moved our 911 dispatch to Central Dispatch and have saved approximately \$10,000 to date.
- We started upgrading our PSE&G lights thanks to Councilman Gordon at a cost savings to the Borough.
- We dealt with numerous homes that were flooded by Hurricane Ida and, thanks to our Office of Emergency Management, we were able to host a mobile response team from FEMA at the Senior Center which helped our residents navigate the reimbursement process for qualified damages. We are now working with our engineer to provide potential solutions to those areas in the Borough which are prone to flooding.
- We hired a new Risk Manager (PIA) who reviewed and upgraded our insurance policies for our firefighters and emergency responders, reducing policy costs while improving coverage at the same time.
- Our Recreation Commission has expanded on Rec programs including adding a co-ed volleyball program as well as extending after care for Summer Recreation Camp. And as you recall, Rec brought us one of the greatest display of fireworks that the Family Town has ever seen at Emerson Day.
- We have been working with Suez to help reduce lead in our water lines.
- We updated our Commercial Zone ordinance.
- Over the last three years Emerson has been able to repave more than 70% of our roads in conjunction with the PSE&G gas service upgrades and will continue with our road program this year to maintain the quality roads our residents expect.
- We continue to live stream our Governing Body meetings. This fulfills a promise of making our Borough more open and transparent to our residents, an issue I've always felt very strongly about.

- This year you will see many projects beginning in the Borough. The Borough has been assisting the American Legion members in order to facilitate a new meeting room and additional housing which may contribute to meeting our affordable housing obligations.
- The Governing Body wants to thank all our volunteers, our Police Department, Volunteer Fire Department, Volunteer Ambulance Corps who help to keep us safe and help our residents with medical emergencies. Dealing with Covid-19 this year, our volunteers continue to go above and beyond to help our residents. For all others who have volunteered for a board, help coach our kids, kept our environment cleaner, helped with our library or on our Land Use Board or our Shade Tree Commission or our Board of Health, Thank You! We held our 1st Volunteer Dinner and will continue to honor our volunteers by making this an annual event. You are the backbone of our 'Family Town.' I look forward to working with you and the rest of our Governing Body to continue to provide the service that our residents in our Borough deserve.
- In 2021, the Borough had a total of approximately 885 reported positive cases of Covid 19. For the last several months we, not unlike the rest of the country, have seen an increase in cases. In November there were 71 reported cases, in December there were 300 cases and so far for the month of January we have five reported positive cases. These are reported cases of individuals who have been tested at a medical facility. This does not include the positive cases that are testing at home and not reported to our health official. The most important thing I can advise you as your mayor is if you are not feeling well, stay home so as to avoid the spread of Covid-19 in our community. Also please follow the recommended CDC guidelines, wear a mask, practice social distancing, wash your hands frequently and again, stay home if you are not feeling well.

For a second year in a row, we have been confronted with worldwide health concerns regarding the Covid-19 virus but in Emersonian form, we have continued to run the Borough as effectively as we did during year one of Covid-19. I want to thank all of our Borough staff that continue to provide excellent service to the residents of Emerson despite the challenges over the last two years.

In closing, I want to wish everyone a Healthy and Very Happy New Year. Be smart, stay healthy, God Bless You and God Bless Emerson.