



## Emerson's new mayor, Bergen County executive jointly pledge end to Kinderkamack Road traffic jams

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Bergen County Executive James Tedesco, right, swears in Emerson Mayor Lou Lamatina on Tuesday night as Lamatina's wife, Jeanine, and daughter, Allison, look on.

EMERSON — Bergen County Executive James Tedesco swore in fellow Democrat Lou Lamatina to his second stint as mayor Tuesday night — and pledged to secure funding toward revitalizing Kinderkamack Road, a major goal in Lamatina's election campaign.

During his campaign for the four-year term, Lamatina — who served as mayor from 2007 through 2010 — zeroed in on two issues: the redevelopment of area around the congested intersection of county-owned Kinderkamack Road and Linwood Avenue in the center of downtown and bringing civility back to a council that has been mired in infighting for many years — both of which he said are already in the process of being fixed.

Tedesco also focused on both of those goals in his remarks after swearing in Lamatina.

Lamatina's message resonated with borough residents, as nearly 56 percent of voters chose him over his opponent and current Councilman Stephen Paino, a Republican, in a town where 45 percent of registered voters affiliate themselves with the Republican party.

Tedesco's presence on Tuesday night was more than just a high-level Democrat swearing in of someone from their own party, Lamatina said: It signified that the county is committed to finally fixing Kinderkamack Road.

"It's sending a message," Lamatina said before the municipal reorganization on Tuesday. "Our executive is with us as a friend and neighbor and understands the importance of this project."

Tedesco said Kinderkamack Road was a priority because it serves as a "gateway" to the Pascaek Valley.

"Having lived in Paramus for almost 62 years and traveled on Kinderkamack for many years, I can tell you that I am one that is very much in favor of the improvement of the road and the revitalization of your downtown," Tedesco said. "I am here tonight to commit to you that I will work with the council and the mayor to provide the funding from the county side to the borough for the roadway improvements to Kinderkamack Road."

Lamatina said he has met with Tedesco and other county engineering executives on multiple occasions about the project already and hopes to go out to bid by this summer.

The redesign of Kinderkamack Road would eliminate some turning possibilities, add turning defined lanes, widen the street in multiple areas and add another traffic light — all aimed at reducing the bottleneck congestion that forms there every day.

“It’s an optimistic time for the borough in light of the leadership now in Bergen County,” Lamatina said.

As to the issue of civility among council members, Lamatina said that during meetings he attended after being elected in November, he noticed some council members felt “out of the loop,” leading to tension. To help dissipate that feeling, he said, he is now sending out emails each week updating the council on everyone’s work.

“It is something I did before and I will continue to do this term,” he said. “From my observations, I saw a lack of transparency and lack of communication — I want to keep the entire council informed. No one should say they don’t know what’s going on.”

Returning council members Chris Knoller, Rich Worthington and Vincent Tripodi also took the oath of office for three-year terms at the reorganization, Knoller being sworn in by Bergen County Sheriff Michael Saudino.

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