

# NEWS

TOWNSHIP OF WOODBRIDGE



**MAYOR JOHN E. McCORMAC**

◆ 1 Main Street, Woodbridge, NJ 07095

Phone: (732) 634-4500 ◆ Fax: (732) 602-6016 ◆ Web: [www.twp.woodbridge.nj.us](http://www.twp.woodbridge.nj.us)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

January 26, 2021

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

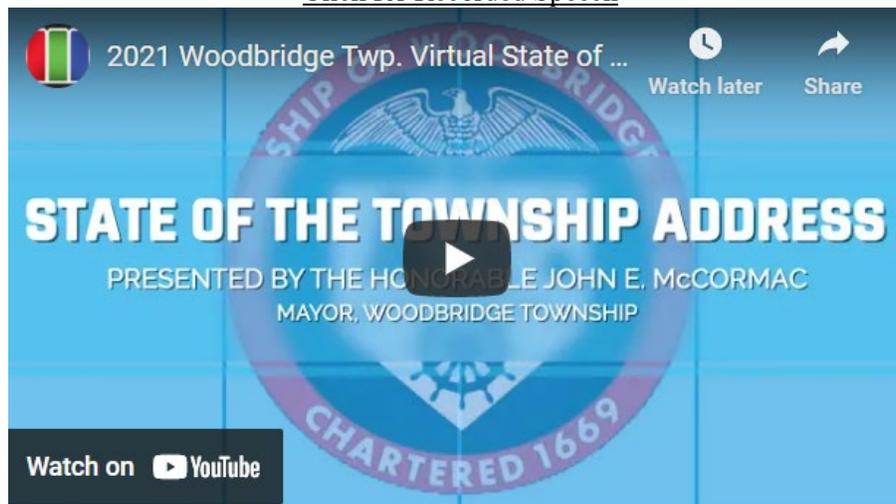
John R. Hagerty

Mayor's Office of Communications

732-602-6039

## Mayor John E. McCormac 2021 ~ "State-of-the-Township" ~ 2021

[Click for Recorded Speech](#)



It is our pleasure to once again present the State-of-the- Township address to the residents who call Woodbridge home and the companies who operate their businesses here.

For the first - and hopefully last time - this address is not being presented live to a Woodbridge Chamber of Commerce luncheon in a hotel banquet hall but rather remotely from the TV-35 studios on the second floor of Town Hall. The address is like so many events of the last 10 months which have been cancelled, postponed or altered as our Woodbridge community dealt with and continues to deal with the awful pandemic known as COVID-19.

We should begin this address with a Moment-of-Silence for the many Woodbridge residents who passed away from the Coronavirus and for their families and for those who are still sick from this awful disease. In this moment of silence, please also remember two former Woodbridge Mayors - Joe DeMarino and Phil Cerria - who both passed away in 2020. Each had many years of public service to the residents of Woodbridge and their careers were exemplary and they should be properly remembered for their contributions to the success of Woodbridge Township.

We are very proud of the way people and businesses in Woodbridge responded to the drastic impact that COVID-19 had on all aspects of our community. We cannot thank our First Responders enough as they faced additional challenges and risks every time they answered a call for help. Our nationally accredited Police Department - under the leadership of Director Bob Hubner, Deputy Director Joe Nisky and Chief Law Enforcement Officer Scott Kuzma - handled every call for service flawlessly. Our Fire Departments and First Aid Squads, which do not work directly for our Township government, teamed up with our Police Department to form the best trio of Public Safety agencies in the State. Our Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers chipped in whenever they were asked.

Doctors, nurses, medical professionals and support staff faced similar challenges with every person who they treated. Though we have no hospitals in town, we none-the-less have hundreds of residents in the health care field though they are not obvious because they work out of the public eye. We appreciate them all.

For first responders and health care workers, every cough, every sneeze, and even every breath from someone they came in contact with while helping them became a concern. Everything they touched presented a risk of infection. They spent years as a child dreaming about their career and they have years of education and training and decades of public service. They all knew the risks in assuming these positions. None, however, thought they would face perilous times like these last 10 months with more to come. Still, these dedicated individuals pressed on. Countless numbers of people are alive today because of these heroes and we thank them from the bottom of our hearts for putting themselves at risk to save others. And, we cannot forget the unknown caregiver heroes who tended to friends and relatives who were sick at home while also risking their own health. Your efforts were just as important and we thank **ALL** of you.

Our Emergency Management team, led by Patrick Kenny, took charge in making sure we had access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like gloves, masks and sanitizer. He was like Radar on M\*A\*S\*H... running everywhere to pick up donations from our residents and businesses to get them where they needed to go. I am pretty sure I inadvertently signed a three day pass to Seoul for Patrick back in May.

Our State Legislators - Senator Joseph Vitale, Assemblyman and Speaker Craig Coughlin and Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez - usually help us with grant funding and other day-to-day issues, but last year they went out of their way to help our residents, especially those in our only nursing home. Laurie McCabe from the Legislative office deserves special praise for her dedication and outreach on behalf of Woodbridge.

Our Township Health Department, which until 2020 operated quietly while more attention was paid to Public Safety, Public Works and Recreation, stepped up brilliantly this past year. Director Dennis Green and Chief Health Inspector Phil Bujalski and the nurses and other staff members worked tirelessly around the clock. Their expertise and experience helped us manage the crisis in ways you cannot even imagine. They were a source of comfort and professional guidance for the thousands of people infected with Coronavirus and they coordinated information from County, State and Federal governments for distribution to our residents. There's a reason why the State of New Jersey called on Woodbridge Township to help in the vaccine distribution – they are simply that good.

So many other Township employees rose to the occasion in dealing with Coronavirus.

Our Public Works crews under the direction of George Brew and Bobby Higgins kept sanitation and recycling pickups on schedule without missing a day – even after the first snow storm of the year.

Our custodians faced additional demands in cleaning offices and particularly classrooms but they performed their jobs amazingly well.

Our Parks crews kept playground equipment sanitized and our Recreation team under Director Brian Molnar and Deputy Paul Losik tried to keep as many activities like concerts and youth leagues running as much as possible while ensuring that participants were safe.

Our Office on Aging kept in constant contact with our homebound seniors and those living alone. Our senior centers opened when they safely could with reduced capacity. Our senior transportation crews kept busses running to doctors and supermarkets. Each of these efforts were supplemented with hundreds of helpers from all over Woodbridge, including Meals on Wheels drivers under the direction of Bob Wynne.

Our wonderful high school students in the Colonia Cares and Woodbridge Cares efforts showed that the world might not be so bad in the future after all with young adults like these ready to take over.

Town Hall switched to providing services by phone, online and by appointment for the last 10 months. Our employees worked hard to make sure permits and licenses were issued, approvals granted, checks processed and hearings scheduled. They kept the business of government working under very difficult conditions.

Our residents and businesses answered the call to collect food and monetary donations for those in need so nobody in Woodbridge had to go to bed hungry. At last count, the We Feed Woodbridge effort collected close to \$300,000 in checks and over 100,000 pounds of boxed and canned food which was essential in dealing with a demand that more than doubled last year from 600 families to 1,300.

Peter Barcellona was an unbelievable asset in making sure that food and money got from the donors to the donees with the help of so many dedicated volunteers from our eleven food pantries. Atlantic Realty and the Halpern family deserve special mention for their significant contribution toward We Feed Woodbridge. And, last month, the Woodbridge Senior Billiards Club and the Kevin J. Reinhard Detachment of the Marine Corps League collected thousands of toys to make the holidays brighter for hundreds of our children, with Councilwoman Debbie Meehan leading the effort.

Everyone connected with our education system in Woodbridge went above and beyond the call-of-duty in situations that were less than ideal and they continue to do so. Zoom calls replaced classrooms and students struggled to adapt but teachers did everything possible to continue to provide a quality education and make learning as meaningful as possible. It became commonplace for a teacher to drive around town to the homes of students to drop-off books, school and art supplies, or to spend extra time after hours to give a student extra help. You can't measure teacher dedication in test scores, but if you could, the Woodbridge teachers and staff would get straight A's. A special thank you to Superintendent Dr. Robert Zega and his administration and elected Board of Education members for their stewardship of our school district over the last 10 months and into the future.

The glue of our Township effort to deal with COVID-19 was our Township Business Administrator, Vito Cimilluca, who took over the job a year ago in December and was thrown into the fire less than 90 days later. Vito's calm demeanor and outstanding leadership and organization skills kept everyone at ease knowing he was steering the ship coordinating our response to COVID-19. He made sure everyone knew what everyone else was doing. You would have thought he was at the job for many years instead of less than three months. Assistant Business Administrator Casey Wagner helped Vito guide Woodbridge through a year that was unlike any in the past 50 and probably unlike any for the next 50. I cannot imagine what this past year would have been like without Vito and Casey at the helm.

So many events that are staples in the Township calendar did not happen in 2020, but they hopefully all will return in 2021, including Fireworks, the Senior Olympics, various parades, the Summerfest, Farmers Market, Tooling Around the Town, Hispanic Heritage Day, the Holiday Stroll, tree lightings and many others. The good news is that we started a tradition with many new events and now the pressure is on to repeat them. Our nine fire districts are used to driving Santa Claus around every December, but this year they took The Easter Bunny all through Woodbridge a few weeks into the pandemic and then drove around again with firefighters tossing candy to kids in October when trick or treating for Halloween was too dangerous.

The highlight of the year was when these same firetrucks with the same firefighters joined Police Officers and their squad cars, First Aiders and their ambulances and Public Works crews and their trucks on a Saturday night in late November for a ride through all 10 sections of town with their vehicles lit up with thousands of lights. It was truly spectacular and there are not enough adjectives to describe the looks on people as the convoy drove past.

The Holidays were difficult for people of all ages and all walks of life, but for one magical night all the troubles of Coronavirus were forgotten. And, the men and women on the trucks had as good of a time as the kids, especially when they saw dozens of children holding up signs that said: "Thank You First Responders." Thank you to Township Clerk John Mitch, Council President Brian Small and everyone else involved in brightening the holidays for our people. As usual, when you do a great job you have to do it again. The whole Township is looking forward to this year knowing that Woodbridge will continue these new traditions, along with bringing back the old ones, and 2021 will be more active than ever before.

Last year we opened the outdoor part of the Cypress Recreation Center for our special needs population, including those who attend the on-site Our House for autistic adults. The soccer/baseball/softball field, volleyball courts, pickle ball courts, track and soon-to-open greenhouse are tremendous assets in the Port Reading section of Woodbridge. We had to shut down the Café staffed by our special needs young adults in the RISE program, but we are anxious for it to reopen – hopefully this Spring.

Speaking of Our House, we are still negotiating with the Diocese of Metuchen to obtain the community building at the Mount Carmel site on Route 35 for another operation to meet the needs of families with adult children with special needs. We have \$1.5 million in State funding to assist in that effort. This year we will expand Cypress when we finish the other side of Port Reading Avenue by renovating the soccer field and adding another small field. Our amazingly popular Street Hockey League will have two more courts and a new spray park will be our second on the opposite side of town from the one in Fords. If Phase Two is anything like Phase One it will be amazing for our residents. When our Special Projects Coordinator Chris Kosty looks back on his career the entire Cypress project might just be his best effort considering the population we served.

Our long-awaited History Museum was finished on the outside last year, and it looks spectacular, and this year we hope it will be finished on the inside.

We finished work on our Scout Camp on Omar Avenue across from the Oros Wildlife Preserve and now Boy and Girl Scouts are putting the finishing touches on building great amenities like tent platforms and a fire pit. The combined complex has everything a Scout could want for hiking, camping, fishing, boating and exploring nature and it is right in our own backyard and also available to the public.

We expanded the offerings at the Highland Grove Swim Club in Fords by adding our second Youth Center. We took ownership of the former Hungarian Club property on Port Reading Avenue and are busy turning it into the Acacia Center which will include our third youth center plus three outdoor basketball courts, a large soccer field and a giant hall that can be used by our school, religious, civic and athletic organizations for banquets and fundraisers. The possibilities with this new asset are limitless.

We received certification from the Community Rating Service that will result in significant flood insurance savings for our residents who need it. That was a gigantic effort and it took many years, but our residents in flood zones are saving actual dollars thanks to the work of Tom Flynn, our Certified Flood Plain Manager.

We added our eighth rain garden with butterfly art at the Woodbridge Library and we are working with Rutgers on the transformation of the Blue Acres properties into walking trails and bird watching stations and expansive meadows. And, we are once again the most Sustainable town among 565 others in the State of New Jersey.

We made progress on the project to re-route trains away from private residences in Port Reading and directly into the rail yards and we will keep that moving forward this year.

We added adult exercise equipment to the Tanzman Recreational Area across from the Woodbridge train station just like we have at LeGrand Park in Avenel. We have plans to install similar equipment in five other parks and more playgrounds will get toddler equipment.

Perhaps the biggest news of 2020 was the overwhelming passage of the school referendum on March 10 - just days before the vote would have been postponed because of the pandemic. Work is already being done on smaller projects and architects and engineers are working on the major expansions of Lafayette Estates School 25 in Fords and Matthew Jago School 28 in Sewaren and the consolidation of buildings at Kennedy Park School 24 in Iselin and Lynn Crest School 22 in Colonia. School security is being ramped-up at each and every facility in the district and technology advancements continue to keep our children at the forefront of computer enhancements.

The biggest part of that referendum though is the construction of a brand new School 4/5 on Rahway Avenue at the Premiere Die Casting site. If this new school looks anything like the Ross Street School 11 or Woodbridge Middle School from the 2017 referendum, then parents and schoolkids will be thrilled.

These current school projects became possible from the Township's successful purchase of 54 acres of State property at the former Woodbridge Developmental Center for \$5 million in June and the purchase of nine acres of adjoining property from Conrail for \$2 million in September. The Morris Companies emerged from 16 proposers to be the selected redeveloper of the site and they paid us \$51 million in cash for the 63 acres that we paid \$7 million for plus they will soon donate the six acres of the Premiere site for the school which is worth another \$10 million. When all the numbers are put together, the \$87 million cost for the all of the 2020 referendum projects from last March will be entirely paid by the new one million square foot warehouse on the site between the profit on the sale of the land and the \$2 million annual Payment In Lieu Of Taxes, or PILOT, and not by existing Township taxpayers.

Many critics continue to disparage these PILOT arrangements, but because of PILOTs and the people who voted for the last two referenda, we have or will have, two brand new schools at 11 and 4/5; two practically new schools in Woodbridge Middle and Oak Tree Road School 29; and two expanded schools in 25 and 28. We also added nine new turf fields; 15 new tennis courts; three new tracks; auditorium seating; re-surfaced gymnasium floors; new cricket fields; a new stadium; multiple playgrounds and many other improvements and enhancements at each of our 25 schools. PILOTs also help us afford an aggressive capital program for road and sewer improvements, enhanced parks and fields and new vehicles and equipment.

Last year we also implemented an expansive program to fix long term flooding problem areas which led to water infiltrating homes and ponding in streets leading to dangerous icing conditions in cold weather. Special thanks to Engineer Mike Gelin for overseeing this work.

And while our property tax and sewer collections are somewhat delayed due to people's struggles with the pandemic, 100% of our PILOT payments come in every quarter despite COVID-19's impact on our local, County, State and national economies.

We did see some revenue shortfalls over the last 10 months in areas like hotel taxes, municipal court fines, interest income and some licenses and fees. However, we saw a huge positive spike in building permits as people used their down time to improve their homes. We finished the June 30, 2020 fiscal year with the same \$25 million surplus we started with and our AA+ bond rating was confirmed by Standard & Poor's in August at a time when municipal bond ratings were declining all over the country. This accomplishment is due to the efforts of Chief Financial Officer Manny Fernandez and his Assistant Mike Klepchick.

The Middlesex County Commissioners, formerly called Freeholders, including Director Ron Rios and our very own Charlie Kenny, came up big for Woodbridge with many millions of dollars in funding from the Federal Cares Act with more millions to come. This funding covered all of our out-of-pocket expenses for Personal Protective Equipment and other items we purchased to fight the impact of the pandemic on our infrastructure while also covering the cost of salaries and overtime of people directly involved in dealing with COVID-19.

Our Communications team, led by John Hagerty with his Assistants Megan Kushpa and Kelly Mitch, kept residents updated with social media posts, videos and Code Red calls full of helpful information.

It is vitally important that our residents and businesses know exactly what is happening in town with regard to COVID-19 and we used the opportunity of the Code Red messages to publicize and promote many of the Township, school district and community group events so people could participate if they were able. While everyone saw the COVID-19 reports on TV-35 and heard the final recording on your home and cellular phones, the production of these messages was not always as easy as you might think.

A main emphasis of our Township government in 2021 will be an analysis of every aspect of our governmental operation to be sure we are free of discrimination or bias for any reason, including gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, disability or any other category. 2020 was a turbulent year throughout the country and activism from our residents, including the young adults in the group Woodbridge Youth for Liberation and Equity, focused us on this self-evaluation. A team of experts will look at every policy, practice and procedure in the operation of our local government and every form, every script and every manual. They will interview our employees and survey our residents. They will evaluate all of our interactions with people, businesses and employees to be sure everyone is treated equally and fairly. We cannot do anything about bias or discrimination in society, but we can make sure that our governmental actions with regard to public service are free of these problems.

Woodbridge Township is a trendsetter in dealing with individuals with addiction issues and in dealing with victims of domestic violence. We capitalize on grants and our employees and volunteers know exactly where the proper programs and services are to help our residents. They assist with counselling, employment, housing and transportation. Our approach toward dealing with residents experiencing mental health issues, however, could be better. Dr. Bonnie Nolan, who runs our Peer Recovery Coach program that seven other towns also utilize, is spearheading our effort to evaluate our current relationships with Hackensack Meridian Hospital and Rutgers Mental Health Services to see how we can improve our services to this population.

Most of our interactions with people in all of these areas begin with a call to 911 - which is a practice that we will continue. Uniformed Police Officers will always answer every emergency call and use their training and experience to assess a situation and keep people safe as their primary goal. Officers will utilize new specialized training to refer people to the proper individual or entity going forward.

We listened to our residents who brought many of these issues to our attention by reactivating a long dormant Human Rights Commission. The HRC has met many times and will continue to meet monthly in 2021 in meetings open to the public. The HRC has already hosted presentations and information sessions from our Police and Health Departments and other experts. A special thank you to these seven individuals for your time and effort - including Chairman Glenn Morgan, whose mother was the last Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission back in the 1970s, and Co-Chairperson, former Councilwoman Pat Osborne.

We continue to focus on economic development as we have for the last 14 plus years knowing that our warehouses and power plants and downtown luxury housing projects have provided the funding to allow us to keep investing in school and municipal infrastructure. No municipality of our size has had the success we have had attracting new projects and retaining the ones we have. That's because no other municipality has Caroline Ehrlich as the Director of their Redevelopment Agency like we do in Woodbridge with Heather LaMotta as her Deputy. Carol is a recognized redevelopment expert in the State of New Jersey and when developers are asked about the best town to do business in they usually answer with Woodbridge.

Our process for developing in Woodbridge is simple and streamlined thanks to Planning Director Marta Lefsky, who teams with Carol and Heather to oversee nearly 50 current projects in town. Plans are reviewed quickly. Meetings are scheduled quickly. Permits are issued quickly and inspections performed quickly. Often a meeting with our Construction Code Official Tom Kelly and our Zoning Officer Tony Tortorello will give you information and answers you need before you put pen to paper and save thousands of dollars and many months of time in the development process.

Warehouses are the perfect neighbors, usually located on the outskirts of town with easy truck access away from residential areas. The ground they are on in many cases was contaminated and they require very little in municipal services. Three new warehouses opened in 2020 and another ten will open in the next two years. Our two power plants will soon be joined by a third as Competitive Power Ventures is now obtaining approvals for a new plant next to their existing one. Like warehouses, these power plants require little municipal investment either up-front or annually and neither put any additional burden on our schools.

Our downtown luxury apartment projects are moving ahead.

The Prism project at the old Riffy's site should be open by the late spring or early summer. We are absolutely thrilled that the first retail tenant signed by the company is the LeGrand Coffee House owned by our very own Eric LeGrand. Eric's first business venture will be right here in our downtown. He is an amazingly popular young man who has dealt with a truly horrific injury to become a national sensation and spokesperson for spinal cord injuries. Any time someone in the world has a similar injury, they can count on inspiring words from our local hero who also regularly speaks to and inspires children and adults from all over Woodbridge. We wish Eric the best of luck in his new venture.

Right behind Eric's investment will be a brand new retail site at the corner of Main and 35 at the former karate store site. The owners, recognizing what is happening downtown, have prepared plans to completely redesign the façade of that building from the ugly tan brick storefront into a look that will rival the best buildings in any downtown. The Township purchased the old bank building at 106 Main Street and we are in discussions to make that a new steakhouse - which is something that is sorely needed on Main Street. And, we are looking forward to many more future investments there.

Other projects at the former Hess site, the former strip mall right across from Town Hall and at the former Stern Tower site have all begun construction. A very encouraging fact is that all of these sites have had their financing secured after the pandemic hit, indicating that lenders are still bullish on the success of these projects despite the impacts of COVID-19.

We fully understand that these projects are controversial and that there are a number of naysayers. Although most residents at downtown projects are train and bus commuters, we have taken - and will continue to take - steps to mitigate the minimal increase in traffic that will occur from these developments.

We are well underway with plans for a complete redesign of the Main Street and Route 9 intersection, which will be funded with County and State grants. We eliminated trucks from Main Street and Green Street, and we have restriped the roads to make vehicles move better.

Ross Street School is brand new and Woodbridge Middle School is virtually brand new. Both were designed for, and can easily handle, any increase in students from these much-needed development projects. The Station Village project in Avenel has produced 51 new students from nearly 500 apartments - less than one per classroom. For those who are under the false perception that these projects produce little or no taxes, this is incorrect. The Stern senior towers produced no taxes but now will pay \$23 million over 30 years when complete. Vacant land at Hess with just solar panels produced minimal taxes and now will produce \$48 million over the same period. The strip mall across from Town Hall will produce over one million dollars a year instead of the \$136,000 we collected last year. The alternative to do nothing is unacceptable. Main Street simply cannot fail and absent the infusion of business from foot traffic from local residents and commuters, it will.

It is important to note that every town in our regional area with a train station is constructing housing to attract people who need that access and we need to do the same thing. We can again point to Station Village in Avenel as a great example of the impact of luxury housing projects. The Coffee Bar opened at the site of the Avenel Performing Arts Center and was soon joined by two well-respected national firms – the Kessler Institute and the Kumon Learning Center. Rocco's Pizza has new owners and Feed Ya Soul restaurant opened a year ago. Margeez Bar was sold to Carmine Testa of Colonia who will soon open Jersey Boys Pizza. Route One - both North and South - has seen tremendous action as the dominos continue to fall. Two small casual restaurants will soon occupy the Bud's Hut site and a medical office, featuring our very own Dr. Kenneth Swan, is set to open in the near future on Route One North past the firehouse.

A big reason for the Avenel makeover has been the Avenel Performing Arts Center and Curtains Restaurant. APAC's Executive and Artistic Director Anthony Wilkinson has dealt with a constantly changing schedule of shows and will pack the place again when capacity limits are lifted. Pat Kotsonis, our Head Chef at Curtains, has dealt with constantly changing COVID-19 restrictions designed to maintain safe restaurant operations and, throughout, he has managed to put out a terrific product with an outstanding menu of great food. The Avenel model will be repeated all over Main Street, Rahway Avenue, and Route 35 in downtown Woodbridge because of steps being taken now to incentivize and encourage businesses to invest there.

We are hoping that the Woodbridge River Walkway will open this year on our waterfront outside of Raritan Center. We are working with the Zuckerberg Institute Foundation and the Woodbridge Board of Education on a program to bring entrepreneurial training to a group of 15 high school students who will then reach out to our businesses to take what they learned and help them.

We are working with the County of Middlesex on road improvements to Inman Avenue in Colonia and Oak Tree Road in Iselin. We are exploring sites for shopper parking on New Brunswick Avenue in Fords.

We have secured \$4.5 million in funding from the County of Middlesex and we obtained title to the Captain Hook marina in Sewaren last month and to the abandoned marina between that and our marina earlier this month. We plan on opening an awesome complex featuring a pet-friendly restaurant a short walk from our Dog Park.

We are continuing our commitment to our senior citizens by forming a Department of Senior Services separate from the Health Department. It will be run by our Office on Aging Coordinator Michele Morgan. Michele will oversee the opening of two new Senior Centers that will be rented by the Township at two Knights of Columbus buildings - one in Avenel and one in Iselin from 8:30-4:30 weekdays. These two new centers will bring our total to six and will provide even more entertainment opportunities for our senior citizens. And, we have Senior Transportation busses for those who have no other way of getting to these great facilities. We are also investigating another possible senior housing site like Maple Tree, Dalina, and Reinhard Manor's and the Red Oak complex for seniors who can no longer maintain a home but want to stay in town near their families. Having all of our services coordinated under one roof will ensure that our seniors, active or homebound, will have a better Quality-of-Life because of everything we have to offer here in Woodbridge.

Woodbridge is well known throughout New Jersey as the Concert Capital of the State. We are proud of that and we won't stop providing high quality musical entertainment to our residents. In fact, our goal is to have 10 weeks of one show nearly every night from late June to early September between the Barron Arts Center, the Avenel Performing Arts Center and our various concert fields at Woodbridge High School, Tanzman Park and Ferry Street Park. Throw in our multitude of other events... like races, parades and festivals, our sports leagues for children and adults, our painting and essay and poetry contests, our cultural events and the programs and services offered by our religious and community groups... and you can have something to keep you busy practically every day and night year round – at least when it is safe to go out again after this pandemic is over.

The financial statements from The Club at Woodbridge and The Woodbridge Community Center were unbelievably strong with hundreds of new members in each at the beginning of 2020 until Coronavirus hit. While we lost a number of members since last March - as was expected – we are already seeing a lot those members, and new ones, returning to our two premier facilities. It's important to mention that we used the down time at The Club to improve the infrastructure. We removed the tennis courts – which were not getting much play - in favor of another indoor hockey rink which is sure to help us turn the numbers around to where they were. A second rink across the street from our existing rink at the WCC will help us attract tournaments and events from teams all over the Mid-Atlantic States. Our hotels, restaurants, shopping centers and other attractions will see a boon in increased activity from this investment.

The Mayor's office was particularly busy during 2020 and this won't change in 2021. Cindy, Gerry, Loretta and Nicolette kept all of us on schedule and handled more constituent issues than ever. Erika from our Legal Department worked on more contracts and agreements than many large companies ever see. Vito as our BA also oversees the Department of Administration and Finance which includes Rich Lorentzen as Tax Collector, Rich Duda as Tax Assessor, Jennifer Burns as Purchasing Agent, Darren Crocker as Human Resources Director, Bryan Austin as the Information Technology Director, Lee Beckerman and his TV35 crew and Cynthia Knight and her Barron Arts Center team. Special thanks to Library Director Monica Eppinger who kept our four facilities active all year and who oversaw a record number of new Library cards issued in 2020.

We are very fortunate in Woodbridge to have a senior management team like Vito Cimilluca, Caroline Ehrlich, John Mitch and John Hagerty meeting every Monday morning to determine the vision for and plan the future of Woodbridge Township. Their advice is much appreciated and their friendship even more so. We are also fortunate to have the Department and Division Heads – many of whom we have already mentioned - turn our vision into an action plan and from there our 1,200 employees follow their lead to make everything happen for our 100,000 residents who they interact with on a daily basis. Our employees are the life blood of our Township's success. We appreciate everything they do every day and we have enough calls and emails to prove that our residents appreciate them as well.

We also need to thank those of you watching this program.

Many of you serve on our Boards and Commissions.

Many of you run or assist with our youth athletic leagues, our community service groups, our religious organizations and our civic entities.

Many of you operate businesses in town or work for companies within Woodbridge.

Many of you attend and support our events and many sent a check or dropped off a toy or a can of food.

Many of you did all this while juggling your work and family responsibilities with more conference calls and virtual Zoom meetings than you ever imagined.

Many of you did all you could while struggling with your own issues that prevented you from doing more.

Many of you cannot do any of these things because of illness, hunger or unemployment and if that is the case please let us help.

Whatever you did was - and whatever you continue to do is - greatly appreciated.

The Executive branch of any government gets plenty of attention, but very little of what we are able to accomplish can happen without the support of our Legislative branch – the Township Council. These nine individuals represent all geographical areas of Woodbridge Township and are a diverse cross section of races, religions and ethnic groups.

Our Ward Councilpersons are Nancy Drumm in the First, Howie Bauer in the Second, Cory Spillar in the Third, Viru Patel in the Fourth and Debbie Meehan in the Fifth. They are joined by at large Councilpersons Kyle Anderson, Lizbeth DeJesus, Greg Ficarra and Brian Small to make up as outstanding a group of talented and dedicated individuals as you will find anywhere in local government in the entire State of New Jersey. They achieved their positions on the Council because of the same community involvement that we have consistently talked about. They have raised families in Woodbridge Township and many were born here and educated here. They managed and coached, shook cans at the corners, ran leagues, sold raffle tickets and cakes, helped their local churches and were officers in PTOs and on civic and community boards. They still do these things while spending countless Council-related hours in meetings and attending events and helping our Township administration while functioning in an oversight capacity.

Special thanks to last year's Council President, Lizbeth DeJesus, for leading the Council charge in what everyone has agreed was the toughest year to be the President in recent memory. Good luck to Brian Small who took over as President this year.

In summary, the State of Woodbridge Township is outstanding and we just explained why.

It's because of our hard working and dedicated employees.

It's because of our church, civic and community group leaders and volunteers.

It's because of our businesses and your employees.

It's because of our elected officials and those who serve on our various Boards.

It's because of our residents who are proud to call Woodbridge home.

We succeed because the people of Woodbridge care about your families, about your community and care about those in need.

When **ALL** of our people with **ALL** of your talents and **ALL** of your dedication and commitment and **ALL** of your compassion come together and work together as a team – the result is Woodbridge Township – truly **THE BEST TOWN AROUND.**

Thank you.

###