

First, I want to thank my peers for giving me this opportunity to serve as Mayor. Kevin, you were a great Mayor and good for the Township of Neptune. I will do my best to continue the momentum that you have started. Eric, the Township is proud to have you as its Deputy Mayor and I am deeply grateful for the strength of service that you have shown in your first year in office and for your and Linda's friendship. I am proud to be a part of the team with Committeewoman Jahn and Committeeman Michael Brantley that is so focused on the needs and future of this Township. To our professionals and the men and women of this township I offer my heartfelt thanks. The past few years have been beset with obstacles and you have continued to serve and work through snowstorms, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and inane requests from elected officials. Thank you for all that you do for you are the backbone of this Township. And to our residents for entrusting us to serve and always challenging us to do better, I thank you.

Finally, Dan, here we go again, another year of "where are you" and "what are you doing"; "do you have a meeting tonight" and "don't worry, I'll

come and check people in and serve them breakfast because you have to be at Town Hall". Thank you. I could not do this without your support and you know how much Neptune means to me but what many people may not realize is how much Neptune and its residents also mean to you.

We stand today at the dawn of a New Year. And this dawn brings with it the faint signs of hope that the dark clouds of the recession are beginning to break. I believe that we have weathered the worst of the storm and are poised to walk forward into a brighter day. And we as a Township can be proud of how we weathered the storm.

When others around us were taking draconian measures, slipping backwards on their promises, goals and plans, we in Neptune Township held on, kept moving forward, keeping our eyes focused on the future. We dedicated a new office building and park in the Midtown section - a project that has moved more slowly than we wished but has moved forward in spite of economic difficulties; we have attracted new businesses such as Restaurant Depot and a new hotel to our town and while we have seen two of

our larger restaurants close on the Rt 66 corridor we welcome two new ones on their sites.

We completed long overdue renovations of the municipal building, opened an incredible new Senior Center, welcomed a new tenant, the County 911 Dispatch Center in our former Senior Center, maintained our police force and improved our bond rating by not one but 3 steps - a feat our bond counsel has not seen in his years in the industry and certainly not in economic times like these.

Our partners in the schools continue to make incredible strides in the education of our younger citizens. Our friends at Jersey Shore University Medical Center continue to build to the future making us a destination for state of the art medical care not just at the shore but in our entire state. While other shore towns reported losing people in the 2010 Census, Neptune reported growth while still decreasing the township budget by over \$3 million over the last two years and maintaining services.

You see those who moved to Neptune are realizing something that we already know; Neptune is the place to live, work and grow;

investing in your future, raising a family and enjoying your leisure years.

But this is not the time to rest and look back. The year ahead brings new challenges. As Winston Churchill said, "The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

This year there are three things on which I will focus the office of the Mayor. All three present difficulties, but I believe all three hold tremendous opportunity.

The first is a contaminated piece of property that has sat idle for many years and considered to be undevelopable land because of the density of housing that would be required to make it profitable after clean-up. But Neptune instead saw an opportunity; a park that would join with other municipal and county recreation spaces to form a band of green space across our town. And in the light of another difficulty, one that many of us cannot even fathom, the loss of a child to war, came another opportunity. As Mrs. Sherman mourned the loss of her son, Sgt. Sherman, to the Afghani conflict, she looked for ways to honor his sacrifice. Mayor Jahn saw that

within this moment lay an opportunity to recognize all those of Neptune Township who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom, all fallen sons and daughters of Neptune Township.

This year I will work to make the concept of Neptune Township Veterans Memorial Park a reality. But I cannot, nor can the town do it alone. With Mrs. Sherman, the American Legion and VFW Posts and you, we will take once contaminated land and make it a place of beauty and honor to all who have served but specifically to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

On either side of me you see two placards about this project. I want to personally invite you to join us on January 11th at Jumping Brook Country Club for our kick off fundraising event. Our friends at Jumping Brook have generously donated the space and refreshments so that every ticket we sell will go towards the Memorial Park. But as they say in infomercials, that's not all! You may also purchase a brick paver to support this park not just in memory of a loved one but perhaps in honor of our troops, your family or a family member who served. I am also announcing today that proceeds from the 2012 Mayor's Ball will go to benefit Neptune Township

Veterans Memorial Park. I know that I can count on the support of our Neptune family to make this a place of beauty and honor for which we will all be proud.

Another difficulty that we will take as an opportunity is the dredging of the Shark River. A once vibrant and thriving river for recreation and fishing has languished, unmaintained and is too quickly becoming a silted in wetland, many times unnavigable and unable to carry the waters from large rainfalls as nature intended. Once teeming with aquatic life and a place of industry and sport, unchecked development over the years up and down this river have added silt from runoff and it must be corrected. Though the dredging addresses navigational waterways, I believe the river will take this work as a sign and begin its healing and with continued stewardship will one day return to the proud waterway it once was.

As many of you know this has been an ongoing project and struggle with our friends at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. By my side during our time on this project has been our friend and neighbor Freeholder Tom Arnone. With Freeholder Arnone's help and our 11th District Legislative team we hope to move

this from the courts to the river and see this project begin in 2012.

The life of this river and what it means not just to Neptune but to all towns that share its banks is too great to just give up on.

Finally, because of changes in the pension laws and the expiration in 2012 of our contracts there is the potential for tremendous change at town hall. As many of you may know Mr. Huhn has announced that he will be leaving us at the end of 2012, the expiration of his current contract. Now while many breathe a sigh of relief.....I want to thank Phil for his guidance and friendship not just to me, not just to this Committee, but to all the Committees who have had the pleasure of working with him.

But this year may see the departure of other familiar faces and many are evaluating their futures as we speak. So from this difficulty arises another opportunity, the opportunity to reorganize town hall. I have asked Mr. Huhn, Mr. Cuttrell, Mr. Bascom and members of our team to join me this year in reviewing, rewriting and reorganizing how we do business in Neptune Township.

While we have always strived to serve the public we will look at how we might make improvements that would mean less cost in both time and money for our community. We will continue to work at improving our internal efficiencies to reduce burdens on our taxpayers as we anticipate a return to sustained growth in the coming years. We will look to continue to improve our service and work not toward just giving you an answer, but helping you get to a yes especially in as it pertains to our Land Use and Construction Departments. I will personally be periodically reaching out to residents who have visited us at town hall and appeared before our boards to talk about their experience, hear what was good and hear their suggestions for improvements.

While those are my goals they are far from the only goals we have for this Township. In the next few weeks I will ask for a special workshop in which we, as a committee, will set both long and short term goals for ourselves and our departments.

In closing, a personal note. When I came to Neptune 17 years ago, I never envisioned having the opportunity to work with such incredible individuals, to live in a community so committed

to its residents and to be not only on its governing body but to serve as its Mayor. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you. A great New Jerseyan and Virginia native, Woodrow Wilson, once observed that, and I quote, "When I give a man an office, I watch him carefully to see whether he is swelling or growing." I hope as you watch me in this coming year you see me growing; growing in my abilities to serve, growing in my knowledge of our town, and growing in the love of my friends and neighbors in Neptune. God bless you all and my wishes for the best of the New Year. Thank you.