

Good evening everyone and Happy New Year. Like you, I am so grateful to be a member of this great community.

People move to Mountainside and continue to live here for long periods of time for a variety of reasons: low taxes which remain stable, high property values which continue to rise, a high level of services that our residents expect and deserve, recreation programs for residents of all ages, maintenance and improvements of our infrastructure, roads and sewer system and of course the small town suburban way of life that we are proud of. All these reasons contribute to the high quality of life and the fact that Mountainside is the best town to live in.

For the past 12 years as Mayor and 15 years before that as a Councilman I have always fought to maintain the quality of life that makes Mountainside the attractive community that it is and I will continue to do so. In order to keep taxes stable we will continue to do what we have always done. First, we apply vigorously for grants. IN 2021, we received over \$835,000 in grants and will continue to apply for grants. These grants will help cover the costs of maintaining our infrastructure, our roads and sewer system, also to help make improvements to our facilities and to enhance and expand the services we provide to our residents. Second, we also continue to participate in multiple shared services that keep our taxes under control, including the Joint Insurance Fund , Westfield Board of Health, UC Server for Information, Flu Clinics, UC Public Assistance, UC First Alert, UC Print Shop, UC DPW Equipment and Truck Loan Program, Emergency Services Mutual Aid Program which includes Police, Fire and Rescue. In addition, we contracted with Scotch Plains to borrow their street sweeper which saved us \$10,000 over what a private contractor would have cost. We also provide snow plowing services to the Board of Education. These cost savings and grants enable us to better serve our residents and boost our quality of life with a variety of recreational programs and infrastructure enhancements. While still following strict COVID guidelines, the recreation department offered adult and youth programs which included recreational basketball leagues, increased tennis badge registrations, a record number of participants in our youth soccer programs, summer mini camps with over 380 participants, flag football camps, US Sports Multi camps, and winter pickle ball. The recreation department also partnered with our Senior Citizen Coordinator to hold virtual and outdoor programs for our seniors which included health and fitness classes, game nights, technology workshops, bingo, and craft events.

These grants also help and fund paving and drainage improvements and sanitary sewer repairs at Creek Bed Road, Long Meadow, Beachwood Court, Garret Road, Hickory Lane, Sunrise Parkway, Indian Trail, Mill Lane, Rutger Road, and portions of Old Tote Road. The Kids Recreations Trust Fund Grant was used to purchase a new playground structure at Deerfield toddler playground.

However, the true essence of why Mountainside is such a great community is "Our Volunteers". Volunteers are the fabric of small town living and the back bone of our community. We have a great Volunteer Fire Department as well as a Volunteer Rescue Squad. Through their leadership, both organizations have been able to recruit new members, especially young members, allowing both organizations to respond quickly

and effectively when emergencies arise. They continue to spend countless hours in training, preparing and maintaining equipment to keep Mountainside safe. We owe the Fire Department and Rescue Squad a great deal of gratitude for their services. I thank both organizations, they are fabulous. However, even though they have done a great job in recruiting, it doesn't mean they don't need more volunteers. If anyone is interested in volunteering, they should contact the Fire Department and Rescue Squad or Borough Hall. We also have a number of volunteer organizations: Mountainside Youth Softball and Baseball and the Elks. We have Daisy, Girl Scouts, Brownies, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Eagle Scouts. We just passed a proclamation for our 13th Eagle Scout. These are all excellent volunteer organizations that help to provide numerous additional programs for our children and adults (including seniors), and I encourage all who can volunteer for these incredibly important organizations.

Despite Covid there were many positive Community events that took place. Our annual Memorial Day Event was well attended by Veterans and their families, the Boy Scout and girl scouts as well as the entire community. It was a wonderful celebration of the sacrifices of all of our veterans.

We were also able to hold our annual 4 th of July Fireworks which again were well attended and spectacular.

Mountainside Beautiful and other volunteers helped clean up our town on Clean Communities Day and have continued to make our town an even better place to live. I also want to thank the sponsors of our Veterans Banners, I believe that they were a great addition to the downtown during November. They include, the VFW, the Mountainside Rotary, Watts Foundation, Supple Cloney and Co., and Glen Mortimer. I also want to thank Councilwoman Deanna Andre, Councilman Robert Messler, General Tim McLaughlin and Senior Citizen Coordinator Kim Moriak for their perseverance in connection with this project.

I would like to commend our Chief Financial Officer Jill Goode and the entire Borough Hall Staff for once again having our annual audit with no recommendations for the 12th year in a row which is tops in the state. Mountainside continues to score in the top grouping of the New Jersey Municipalities in the state instituted "Best Practice Inventory Questionnaire" which is a Constructive way to encourage municipalities to consider and embrace a range of best practices that will improve financial accountability and transparency.

We also continue to work on our pedestrian safety by working with Union County to have a signal installed at the crosswalk on Summit Road and to install crosswalks and stop signs where the Bridle Path crosses Birch Hill Road and Wood Valley. In addition, the Borough helped the Girl Scouts put up a speed metering sign near Deerfield School to remind motorists to slow down.

As a community we celebrated the Holiday Season with the lighting of the Menorah and the Nativity and a Mountainside favorite the lighting of the Christmas tree. Thanks to Mountainside Beautiful and the Girl Scouts for making it a truly festive event.

In order to make substantial and permanent investments in our Borough we have undertaken several projects. First, we purchased the Viking Property on Route 22. The structure has been demolished and will be the future site of our Salt Dome and new headquarter for a DPW and OEM. Both of these should be completed in 2022. In an effect to preserve open space, we are in the process of purchasing the Levi Cory property and the corner of Mountainside Ave and New Providence Road to create a common area for all residents to enjoy which will be the first major improvement to our down town in many years.

The Borough is also in the process of purchasing the fields behind Our Lady of Lourdes Church. For many years, these fields have been used by all Mountainside Residents, especially the children. This purchase will preserve the fields as open space and prevent any future residential development. Most importantly, these projects will not effect your taxes.

I would be remise if I did not address the current state of the Covid-19 Pandemic. However, before I continue, I want to thank all of the doctors, nurses, and other medical support staff who continue to be on the front lines of fighting to save lives from Covid-19. These people are truly heroes. They risk their own lives in order to save lives. They miss time from their families so that they can protect our families. They are to be commended for their heroic efforts I also want to thank our first responders, the Mountainside PD, the Fire Department, and most importantly, our EMT's and Rescue Squad. They all must be commended for the sacrifices and their dedication in continuing to be on the front lines in the fight against COVID-19.

During the pandemic, Mountainside was able to thrive and continue to provide the services that our residents deserve and expect as a result of myself and the council making decisions that were right for Mountainside. Our senior citizen coordinator along with many volunteers started and maintained through the year the Senior Meals Program which delivers quality meals to our senior citizens 3 to 4 times per week. This senior program is the right thing for our senior citizens and for supporting our local businesses and restaurants. I want to thank all of our volunteers because they are the backbone of a program like this. The program has delivered more than 20,000 meals to seniors from local businesses and restaurants who provided these low cost meals . The businesses included: Mazellas Gourmet Market, Bovella's Cafe, Publik House, Mountainside Deli, Outback Steakhouse, Tarantellas Restaurant, Cioffi's of Union, Cioffi's of Springfield, Chen's Restaurant, Sheela n's Crossing, Zappia's, Spanish Tavern, Vicki's Diner, Barts Market, Prestige Diner, Mosaic's, Darby Road, Tinga, and Stage House. I have estimated that this program has put back in excess of \$200,000 into the local economy.

Now for the bad news. Covid-19 positive tests are touching every Mountainside resident. Everyone has either tested positive or has been in contact with or know someone who has tested positive. All of us have had our holiday plans altered. Our schools are struggling with how to keep our children safe while still providing a quality education. I want to acknowledge and thank Dr. Walling, the Board of Education, teachers and all the staff who have made the options for in person and remote learning available to our students at Beachwood and Deerfield . Keeping our students safe while still engaged has made such a positive impact in our community. Thank you for continuing all your efforts for children as they are so appreciated.

At the present time, Borough Hall is open to the public on an appointment only basis. Our library is closed to the public but will continue with curbside pick up and drop off.

I urge all residents, even children, to get vaccinated and to get boosted. The CDC and the Westfield Regional Health Department is encouraging all residents 16+ who are 6 months past their last dose of Pfizer or Moderna or 2 months past their last dose of Johnson and Johnson to get a booster shot. The Westfield Regional Health Department will continue to hold pop up clinics, provide home visits, and appointments in their office. For more information check their website or call them at 908-789-4070. I urge all residents to wear a mask inside, continue to stay six feet apart, and wash your hands frequently. We must be more vigilant about stopping transmission. Please use common sense.

Stay safe, and don't let your guard down. We can defeat this terrible disease if we all work together.

Mountainside is a gem. I am proud to serve as the Mayor of Mountainside. I will pledge to maintain the quality of life in Mountainside and our long standing record of making decisions about the challenges that we face in Mountainside that are in the best interest of Mountainside. We must always strive to keep Mountainside the great community that we all love.

Happy New Year to everyone, god bless Mountainside, and god bless all of you.