

Happy New Year everyone!

I want to begin with a few thank you's. First and foremost, of course, my husband and children. Andy, there aren't enough words to say for the kinds of sacrifices you have made and continue to make so that I can sit up here and do what I love. Those of you who know us, know our funny back and forth, but I never really get to say aloud in front of everyone just how much I depend on him. I love you very much and can't imagine doing this with anyone else. To Lena and Cece, you too have made a lot of sacrifices over the past six years. Having not only your mom running out constantly each night for meetings but having many months of your lives where your parents are running around town campaigning. I know how hard it has sometimes been. I hope that now that you're older you've started to understand why I've chosen to do these things. It all begins and ends with you.

My siblings and parents and in-laws are here. I want to thank them for everything. Back when I started on Council, it was a lot harder to run out for those meetings every night when the kids were so young, but my parents made it a lot easier, knowing the girls were with you. Thank you for all of your support.

To Mayor Todisco, Mayor Lombardo and all of the former Councilpeople out there I see that I've worked with, along with Mayor Mahr and Mayor Prunty who I see out there as well and have been true mentors, a big thank you for teaching me so much. To Clarissa and Marc, thank you for taking this journey along with me, and to everyone here tonight to support us, I just want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. It means so much to be surrounded by so many family and friends who have been here through the not-always-so-smooth past six years and who are graciously showing up for my family and me for the next four.

In thinking about what I wanted to say tonight, I of course started to reflect on everything I've been a part of during my past two terms on Council. We now have a beautiful development across the street which has brought some amazing new neighbors. We have more newly paved roads than the borough ever, new flashing pedestrian beacons and blinking stop signs. Our town wide celebration events have never been better because of the great energy and creativity of our volunteers as well as the generous support of our growing business community. Speaking of businesses, we have so many new ones in town that weren't here even 3 years ago. Great products, great services, run by great people, who know Garwood is where to build not only a business but a livelihood.

Now, I'm not the same person I was six years ago when I first sat up here. Obviously after steep learning curves that I think we all go through, I am much wiser in the ways of local government. I have taken in the knowledge and experience of my peers and professionals and have come out ready to use that knowledge as I shift into this role of Mayor.

I've also changed the way I think about my interactions with friends and strangers. As a Councilperson, I have encountered and been a part of conversations with people who have

differing views and opinions. This job has allowed me to meet and work with people from all backgrounds, and it has made me a better listener. You all know I like to talk, but I think these past six years I've been given a new perspective on just how important listening is.

But what is the same as back when I was first starting my first term is my enthusiasm for this job. I am still so energized to keep helping our community, to keep making progress, for our residents and to keep finding solutions. That hasn't changed and though I'll now be doing it in a different role, I am just as determined to continue putting in the time and dedication into Garwood.

Which now leads me to the real reason we are all really here tonight: to look forward to 2023. I am so excited for this new year and for the chance to really get to work. Up here on the dais, I want to foster a positive environment and I pledge to my fellow Councilmembers that our meetings will be productive and informative, where we will all be able to engage and ask each other questions. I want this to be a Mayor and Council formed of respect. We all know you have to give respect to get it, and so I want you all to know from the get-go that you each have that from me.

As for getting down to some goals for the year, there are a number of initiatives and areas where I'll be looking to focus. First and foremost, my top priority this year will be public safety. It will be a time of change in our Police Department. As we know, we will soon be looking to hire our next Police Chief and we also have a number of new officers joining our ranks. I am looking forward to working with them all to bring public safety and, as part of that, traffic enforcement to the forefront of Garwood's next chapter. We all know that speeding or distracted driving isn't just a Garwood problem, but that won't stop us from working to curb these dangers within our town. I want every resident to feel safe on the road and on the sidewalk. We know how dedicated our Officers are and the Mayor and Council will continue to work alongside them, providing support and making public safety our number one goal.

One of the reasons I am so focused on public safety and speeding and traffic issues is of course because it is something I hear from the residents about. It's obviously so important to them and I'm glad that so many have come to me to tell me their concerns. Because communication between our Council and our residents, between our departments and our residents and between our volunteer committees and our residents is so important. That's why I'm making some clear objectives to further improve this communication. I am going to be introducing Mayor's Office Hours. I will be setting aside dedicated time where residents can meet me in the Mayor's office to talk privately, whether it's for concerns or new ideas. I am hoping this relaxed atmosphere will allow residents who may not feel comfortable speaking at meetings to voice their opinions or to simply allow residents to get to know me better and vice versa. For the first Thursday of each month, my hours will be in the evening from 6-8pm. The third Thursday of each month will be during the day from 9-11am. My first office hours will begin this Thursday the 5th and I want to encourage everyone to stop by, even if it's just to introduce yourself or ask a question.

In addition, I am looking to better the communication between myself and the departments as well as between the departments themselves. The Borough Administrator and I will be meeting with Department heads prior to the finalization of each Council meeting agenda so we can ensure all matters are being taken care of in a timely manner and address any outstanding issues.

I also want to improve the communication between residents and the Borough. I feel the elimination of the Public Information Officer has left a hole in the Borough's social media presence and I will be asking the Finance Committee to address that, as well as to fund seasonal mailers of our Borough's many events, classes and offerings to address those who may not get their information online. Together I believe we can better spread the word of goings-on in Garwood in an efficient, cost-effective way.

I will also be asking the Council to make recommendations on how we can more actively and efficiently address property maintenance and zoning issues, given the limited number of hours our officers are employed. I myself have fielded an uptick in resident concerns as have other members of Council up here. There are also more state mandates coming down the pike that will affect our employees' workload levels and it is important that the Council stay ahead of them and manage these properly. We will also need to assess how to address this while continuing to keep a limited budget impact at the forefront of our priorities.

In that vein, I will be tasking the finance committee to bring forth a budget with the goal of bipartisan support from Councilmembers. To aid in that effort, the Borough Administrator and I already reached out to our Department heads and they will be providing their initial 2023 budgets this week, along with their 5-year capital plans, so that we may begin the budget process even earlier than previously done. Each Department's 5 year capital plan will also be provided in the same single document format across the board, allowing them to be easily uploaded to the Borough's website, giving the public even greater transparency. I will be meeting with each of the department heads along with our Borough Administrator and CFO in the next two weeks so that we may begin the task of assessing each department prior to the finance committee's examination later in the winter. We hope that this will not just provide more efficiency, but will allow us a different perspective when making our budget. We want to build our budget from the bottom up, rather than getting down to the end of our process and making small cuts to departments that could in turn hurt those departments' abilities to run properly. By making these small changes in perspective and process, I am confident that the budget produced by our Council will continue to responsibly fund our services, and do so in the absolute best interest of our town's hardworking taxpayers

All of these various priorities will also be making their way to the Citizens Advisory Panel for their feedback as well. I want to continue Mayor Todisco's use of this great committee to help guide our Council in their decision-making. In fact, I want to further amplify the voice of our residents. Road work and capital equipment will continue to be among the topics discussed, however, I will be tasking the Panel with examining parking issues that have arisen with our improving downtown, as well as looking to them to help us address any communication

issues. As such, I have decided to eliminate the Parking committee and Council Communications committee and streamline both through this one Panel. I have offered those on the Parking Committee a spot on the Citizens Advisory so they can continue their work there and have increased the number of members on the Panel accordingly. Streamlining and efficiency have been words I've already said often tonight, but they are always lofty goals and ones I hope to accomplish with this change.

My objectives for this year and for this new administration are not quick and easy. In fact, some of them may take most of this year to accomplish or perhaps run into next. But I am always thinking of the long-term, of the kind of Garwood we all want for the future, and sometimes that takes time and planning. They will also take the teamwork of everyone up here. But with Councilwoman Herz's eagerness and Councilman Kearney's attention to detail, and with Councilwoman Salmon's tenacity, the financial acumen of Councilman Lazarow, the research-oriented methods of Councilwoman Nolde and of course the experience and wisdom of Council President Graham, I know the Borough is in good hands. I know that this year will be one of hard work and big results for our residents. I know that 2023 will be one we will all be proud of.