

REORGANIZATION MEETING SPEECH  
MAYOR ROBERT J. SEADER  
1 JANUARY 2016

"The Year in Review and a Look to the Future"

I thank you all for joining us today, this first day of a new year, and, I predict, the first day in what will prove to be a great year for the Borough of Dunellen.

2015 was an eventful year for Dunellen and I am sure that 2016 will be even more significant. Those of you who were here last January 1st to hear my Reorganization Meeting Speech will recall that we certainly said goodbye to 2014 with a surprisingly shocking bang. I am hoping that we all welcome in this New Year more quietly and calmly.

I would like to congratulate Kenneth Baudendistel on his re-election to another three year term as Councilman. Ken's devotion to the people of Dunellen is second to none and we all appreciate his valuable contribution to the welfare of all our residents. And, I welcome our newest councilman, Jeremy Lowder. I know he brings a wealth of knowledge and civic commitment to these Chambers and I look forward to working with him, and the entire Dunellen Borough Council to ensure that Dunellen is a safe, inviting, and prosperous place to work, live, and raise our families.

The economic condition of the Borough and its residents reflect the larger circumstances of the State of New Jersey and of our nation. As our country fares, so do we. Unfortunately, the effects of the financial downturn our country took in 2008 are still with us, with more people unemployed or under employed or working more jobs to make ends meet than we all would wish. Please believe me when I say to all of you that the Dunellen Borough Council understands the economic realities of day to day life and our goal is to fairly and equitably enhance the quality of life for all our residents.

We do this by carefully analyzing the needs of the residents and responding with efficient and well run departments which closely scrutinize their budgets to make every penny go the distance. The performance of each department is evaluated by councilmen who conduct regular meetings with department heads to ensure that yearly goals are being met and surpassed. Furthermore, the two-way street of communication with our residents has never been wider or more vigorous. All our meetings are publicly advertised and each elected official has a government email that can be used for contacting him directly.

And speaking of open communication, these official email addresses can be found on the new borough web site: [www.dunellen-nj.gov](http://www.dunellen-nj.gov)

I think you will be impressed by this site's comprehensiveness as it now offers important borough and community information in an attractive format with

opportunities to post inquiries directly to the Clerk's Office from the "Contact the Borough" page. Take a few moments to explore the site, and let us know what you think.

I would like to share with you some highlights from the past year.

We continue to develop our relationships with other nearby municipalities utilizing as many appropriate shared services as we can. For example, our DPW Yard is used for leaf and brush collection by Middlesex and Piscataway; our sewer system is overseen by the Plainfield Area Regional Sewerage Authority, which brings great technical expertise to this vital service; and we are eagerly looking forward to joining with Somerset County to oversee our Dispatch Services. In all these joint ventures, our goals are efficiency, cost savings, and service to our residents.

One of the key roles of local government is the maintenance of our infrastructure, our roads and bridges. Last fall, we prevailed upon NJ Transit to paint the railroad bridge at Madison Avenue. Though it temporarily disrupted traffic, and I think the result is a vast improvement over the rusted eyesore we all were so tired of looking at. In 2015, we paved another stretch of Dunellen and we hope to undertake a Madison Avenue Road Improvement project in the Spring, as well as further the decorative lighting up Washington Avenue toward the park and

easterly on North Avenue. I think we can all agree that a brightly lit downtown is attractive and inviting for shopping and strolling on warm summer nights.

Our Police Department, under the able leadership of Chief Jeffrey Nelson, welcomed two new officers: Marcin Nierodzik and Nicholas Pepe. A number of our sergeants and officers received awards or commendations for Gallantry and Valor, were honored by the State PBA, and received Life Savings Awards and Meritorious Service Awards. The department added two vehicles to its patrol fleet and, most exciting for Dunellen, Lt. Dan Smith became the first officer in Dunellen's history to attend and graduate from the esteemed FBI National Academy.

Our Volunteer Fire Department kept us safe, going out for 180 fire calls, drills and meetings, with 1700 total man hours. In addition, they conducted 65 Special Details that include work around the firehouse, cleaning, and fundraising, with 2,000 total volunteer man hours. The department will receive a new Rescue Pumper engine to replace one that has seen over thirty-one years' service. The new pumper will have more compartment space to allow the department to grow over the next 30 years as the needs of the fire service continually shift and evolve. It has a new pump design allowing for safer operations by the pump operator and it will also contain cross lays through the side of the truck to allow for quicker deployment of the pre-connected hoses for fire attack.

The all-volunteer Dunellen Rescue Squad, consisting of 10 EMT's and 10 non-EMT's, answered over 400 calls in 2015 and came out to ensure the safety and health at all our public events.

We have seen substantial improvements in our Recreation Department and programs in 2015. Alex Miller organized a very successful summer camp, increased enrollment in our soccer program to over 155 kids, is developing baseball and softball programs, is working closely with our Seniors group in developing new trips and events, and is looking to continue Plays in Park and summer concerts.

If you haven't visited our public library recently, you will be gratified to see a new interior space arrangement that maximizes the shelving and table areas; there are many new programs for adults and children, and the Friends have been sponsoring some very interesting fund raisers that greatly contribute to the book budget.

I continue to be amazed at the vibrancy and community spirit of our town. Whether it's our great High School athletic teams, our community volunteers from church organizations and civic groups such as the Rotary Club, the hard work of our volunteer emergency services, or the way the entire town comes out to help those in need such as after our recent fires. Dunellen is also a fun place to be. Just look at our exciting annual Car Show in June, the dramatic productions under the

stars in Washington Park, our September Street Fair, or our October Haunted Trail and HarvestFest. Thousands and thousands of people come out to walk our streets, eat in our restaurants, play in our sports venues, plant trees for Arbor Day or walk in support of our Veterans and fallen military heroes at our Veteran's Day Ceremony and Memorial Day Parade.

I can think of no finer example of "giving to the community" than our Eagle Scouts. Since 2010, there have been 13 young men of Dunellen who have achieved the outstandingly high rank of Eagle Scout. Just two weeks ago, I had the honor to attend the ceremony for Michael Nielsen whose project was the creation of a Memorial Plaque for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Mr. Nielsen, and his brother Eagle Scouts, represent the future of Dunellen, and I feel assured that our future is bright.

As I look around this crowded room, a room that is not only the Council Chambers but also serves as the meeting place of the Planning Board and the Municipal Court, I am grateful to our Municipal Court Judge, Dennis Fackelman, who oversees a smoothly running and productive court, to Terry Crisafulli our Court Administrator, her Assistant, Lauren Colletti, our two prosecutors: Thomas Lanza and Paul Garelick, and our Public Defender, Bob Spengler.

I would like to give recognition to our hard working volunteers who serve long hours on the Recreation Commission, which oversees our many athletic and

recreational programs; the Shade Tree Commission which plants trees and shrubs in our parks and right-of-ways; the Library Board of Trustees; the Planning Board; the Dunellen Downtown Management Organization which has developed a “Welcome to Dunellen” brochure you can find on our new web site and runs the October HarvestFest; the Parking Authority, which each year gifts the borough \$50,000 to help lessen the burden of property taxes. The people who serve on our boards and commissions labor at often thankless tasks, but they help create policy, serve as emissaries to the public, often do hard physical labor maintaining vital facilities, and generally ensure that everything runs professionally in their respective departments.

I would also like to recognize the hard work of the Parking Authority personnel, Sandy, Charlotte, and Dave; Scott in the Construction Office and his code officials Mike and Ken; George in Code Enforcement; Ray and Wendy in our Tax Collection Office and Rich the Tax Assessor; Scott Olsen in Finance, Debbie in Accounts Payable; and all the other people who, with dedication and good will, serve the residents of the Borough of Dunellen, day in and day out.

Finally, I must thank Karen, Bobby and Kelly Seader—my family. Without their support and understanding, I could not be sharing this day with you.

In conclusion, I predict that the year 2016 will be one of the most important in the history of Dunellen. As I walk about town, I feel an excitement in the air.

Residents feel safer. The business climate is heating up. Community spirit is on the rise. Wonderful things are coming. I am pleased, grateful, and privileged to share Dunellen's great future with all of you. Thank you and Happy New Year!