

**STATE OF THE TOWN 2016  
January 29, 2016**

**SUPERVISOR JUDI BOSWORTH  
TOWN OF NORTH HEMPSTEAD**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, honored guests.

I stand here today before you, a little disappointed that I am not able to use my first version of this State of the Town speech, which began... “How wonderful it is that we haven’t had any snow to contend with so far this year...” Obviously that didn’t work out so well. But we faced our first snow challenge of the year and I hope next year I won’t be starting my speech again talking about snow.

It is an honor to be here with all of you for my third State of the Town address. I would like to thank the League of Women Voters, particularly Luncheon Chair Amy Bass, Marie Bellon, Co-Chair, and Judy Jacobson, Registrar, for their work on this event. The League serves such an important role in bringing local state and national issues to our community and we are all better informed citizens because of your efforts.

As we come together today as a community, we are in a way celebrating the significance and meaning of democracy and representative government – the main ingredient of which is the participation of the people. Democracy calls on each of us to be connected and engaged, involved and caring, concerned and informed. It is a process that, at its best, brings our families, our neighborhoods and our communities closer together and improves the quality life for everyone.

As we come together today for this State of the Town address, we affirm that democracy works, government matters, public service is an honorable calling, and serving one's community is an honor, a privilege and a trust.

I would like to recognize our hard working Town of North Hempstead elected officials,

Receiver of Taxes Charles Berman

Town Clerk Wayne Wink

1st District Council Member Viviana Russell

2nd District Council Member Peter Zuckerman

3rd District Council Member Angelo Ferrara

4th District Council Member Anna Kaplan...

5th District Council Member Lee Seeman

6th District Council Member Dina De Giorgio

Our Town Board continues to function in a spirit of collaboration and bi-partisanship with the best interests of our residents at heart and I know that our accomplishments and progress are the products of that spirit.

We also work together with our colleagues in other branches of government so I would like to recognize these distinguished elected officials who are here with us today.

I am pleased to welcome the Mayors, village trustees, special district commissioners, school board members, school superintendents and union leaders, including our own CSEA Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte, John Shepherd, CSEA Nassau County Region President and our very own Local Unit President Kevin Williams. Also, a special thank you to my North Hempstead government team – my senior staff, supervisors staff, finance team, town attorneys, communication office, commissioners, deputy commissioners, directors, managers and, of course, our unionized work force. These outstanding public servants turn ideas into reality,

problems into solutions, and make the Town of North Hempstead the exceptional place to live, work and raise our families that it is – and will continue to be.

There is nothing more important to me than serving our residents, enhancing our quality of life and running the government in an open and honest manner. I believe that every law we pass, every initiative we put forth and every issue we might oppose is rooted in the belief that we are here to serve the residents of North Hempstead.

During the past year, sometimes what didn't happen was as important as what did. A new casino in the Westbury/Carle Place community was never built and we managed to block New York City's plan to drill into our wells and compromise our aquifers. So now let's talk about some things that did happen in 2015. Our Town's sound financial health is the foundation on which so much is built. So while an administration may have ground-breaking ideas and great vision for the future, without responsible financial planning they will remain just that...ideas and visions.

I am so proud to report that our finances remain strong. Once again, last fall the Town received an Aa1 rating from Moody's Investors Service. Moody's reaffirmed

the Town's stable fiscal outlook, citing our conservative financial management practices and our reduction of debt by a total of more than \$30 million over the past two years.

The entire budget process, from beginning draft to final version and vote, was entirely transparent and collaborative. I am very proud to report, that for the second consecutive year, there was unanimous, bi-partisan approval of the budget before Election Day. The 2016 budget is fiscally conservative and stays under the State-mandated .73 percent tax cap, which presents a continuing challenge to our Town and all municipalities. And next year, with basically a zero percent cap, we will face an even greater challenge. With the help of our strong financial team I'm confident that we're up to that challenge.

We are in the process of updating our third comprehensive five-year Capital Plan for the Town, which continues to demonstrate a bi-partisan commitment to maintaining and improving the Town's roads, parks and facilities and maximizing grant funding sources. Much progress has been made in the past year on projects ranging from the dredging of ponds to the restoration of Whitney Park Pool to actual plans for Alvan Petrus Park in Port Washington, to name just a few.

Recently the Town was awarded a \$450,000 water infrastructure grant from New York State, which will allow us to replace the aging septic system at North Hempstead Beach Park with a sewer system. While attending our Memorial Day fireworks celebration at North Hempstead Beach Park last year I became painfully aware of the fact that we were still using a septic tank system! Frankly, I was surprised, to say the least, that our park, so close to Hempstead Harbor, was not connected to sewers. I knew that we had to address this as soon as possible and we were up to that challenge. The grant will help to jump start this project.

Minimizing the nitrogen content in our harbor and waterways is critical to the health of our water and our residents. This effort is so important as we move forward with one of our most exciting initiatives of the year-the visioning of North Hempstead Beach Park. After conducting an extensive selection process we recently named a firm to create a design and direct the visioning. The firm, Quenelle Rothschild, will soon begin to reach out to the community for input. My team will be working with Quenelle Rothschild to make North Hempstead Beach Park the premier recreational facility that it has the potential to be.

Hand-in-hand with this plan, we are also exploring ways to make the Town more bike-friendly to residents by closing down a lane of traffic, for example, on Sunday afternoons in the summer so that families can bike together in safety. It's an idea that's been successfully executed in New York City, Paris and Amsterdam and we'd like to try it here in North Hempstead.

The Town will be working together with the Village of Plandome Manor to undertake the project of replacing the culvert under the road by Leeds Pond. This \$1.5 Million project would not be possible without the help of our State Senator Jack Martins. Thank you, Jack. And thank you to Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel for securing a grant for the U.S. Geological Survey to monitor our water wells on the Port Washington Peninsula. And thank you also to Assemblyman Michael Montesano for securing funding for the Yes We Can Community Center.

Additional major capital projects that will move ahead, due in part to generous grant funding in 2016 include: A National Endowment of the Arts grant for Town Dock artwork design; funding from the New York Council on the Arts for a Town-wide cultural master plan; a DEC grant for a storm water mapping project; a Department

of State grant for a GIS mapping project of our Town's street structures in which villages can opt to participate; and a grant for an environmental master plan.

All Town departments have put forth new, exciting initiatives, while continuing to deliver excellent services to our residents.

Over the past year our Building Department has worked hand in hand with the Planning Department to better serve our residents. The Building Department has increased staffing levels in several key areas of operation to improve customer service and enhance efficiency. The Department's response time to Customer Service Requests is showing a marked improvement from two years ago. Our Applicant Advocate has worked with the Building Commissioner to provide outreach into the community with mobile evening hours, senior mobile office hours, and business development seminars to guide business owners through the permitting process.

Issues such as illegal rentals and non-compliant landlords continue to be addressed with increased enforcement and potential prosecution. In addition this past May, together with the Village of Westbury, we conducted a well-attended and successful



seminar for realtors to educate them on their legal responsibilities when renting property in the Town.

Last year our North Hempstead Community Development Agency, together with Nassau County and the Long Island Housing Partnership, moved forward with its North Hempstead Workforce Housing Program, consisting of 15 affordable newly-constructed and renovated homes in New Cassel. Several of these homes are nearly complete and ready to make the dream of home ownership come true for those who qualified for the program. In addition our North Hempstead Housing Authority is completing an ambitious renovation of Pond View apartments in Manhasset. I visited them this week and they are just beautiful.

Our Town is seeing some significant building projects from Main Street in Port Washington to the conversion of the former Pergament on Jericho Turnpike into a L.A. Fitness.

Our Business and Tourism Development Corporation continues to broaden its mission and do great work to promote businesses in our Town. We've opened up a dialogue with prospective business owners and last fall held a seminar with our

BTDC and our Building and Planning Departments to cover the most common questions and concerns that hopeful business owners may have about opening a business in the Town. Initiatives like this one are just one step that we are taking towards addressing the problem of empty store fronts in some of our downtowns. On Tuesday night we awarded several Streetscape matching grants that partner with Chambers of Commerce, BID's and others to help spur economic growth in our downtown areas. In 2016 we also plan to collaborate with Vision Long Island and Eric Alexander, a facilitator of community planning, to discuss downtown revitalization efforts and how we can best utilize our pooled resources for our downtowns. It is my hope that by working with Vision Long Island and our Planning Commissioner we can address some of the issues troubling our downtowns and get an objective opinion on how to tackle this problem.

The quality of life of our residents is so impacted by the hard work and commitment of Highway Department employees all year long. This year our Highway crews filled many potholes and resurfaced miles and miles of our roads. But that's only part of what they do. The blizzard that we are still recovering from is a good reminder of the essential role they play in making sure our residents are

safe, our roads are plowed so that first responders can reach those they need to and we can all get back to business as usual. This past weekend our Highway employees, working together with our Parks, Administrative Services and Public Safety staff, literally plowed around the clock making our roads safe and passable for our Town residents. Let's give them a hand.

Seniors continue to be a priority for us here in the Town. Our Project Independence program welcomed our 10,000<sup>th</sup> member this year and our Funday Mondays this summer, organized by our phenomenal Community Services team who also helped organize this luncheon, drew record crowds with more than one thousand people attending each Monday. We continue to explore new and innovative programs for our seniors with such offerings as the senior book club and the organic farmer's market. Our seniors helped to build this Town and now it's our turn to provide them with the support and services they deserve. We are so grateful to our U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer who successfully advocated for the continuation of funding for the transportation program for Project Independence. This funding provides seniors access to free taxis to go food shopping and reduced-rate taxi rides for medical visits. We thank Senator Schumer for advocating on our behalf to get \$1 million over three years to assure that this service is appropriately funded. Project Independence

continues to be an important resource in helping our seniors live an independent life and age in place.

So many wonderful ideas and initiatives have come from the partnership between the Town and its Veterans Advisory Committee. Some of the members helped lead us in the pledge today and we thank them. Last year working with the Town's Department of Services for the Aging, we instituted a new service for veterans which dedicates seven hours a week to social work just for veterans, so that their needs can be filled and they can get the services they deserve. I, with the support of the committee, have also begun a dialogue with the Northport Veterans Affairs Medical Center, to study whether a satellite office of the hospital could be located in North Hempstead, to make access to services for our veterans more convenient. I am very hopeful that this initiative can move forward in 2016. Our Veterans Advisory Committee has been a great source of inspiration and terrific ideas that enriches all of us here in North Hempstead.

Our Public Safety Department, together with the Town Clerk's Office, began an initiative this year to crack down on unpermitted and often unscrupulous clothing bins throughout the Town with great success. And who says parking is a dull

subject? Not in North Hempstead. We are bringing Stars Wars technology to the Port Washington Parking District as we institute a new system that uses license plate recognition to read and verify if vehicles are registered with the necessary permits and vouchers. We hope to expand this license plate reader technology for use by Code Enforcement on a Town-wide basis. This new technology also enables us to go paperless, an added advantage. Parking District residents can acquire their permits and vouchers online anywhere, anytime, making it more convenient and saving taxpayers \$150,000.

We are also piloting the use of Pango Mobile Parking, a pay-by-phone parking payment program, where residents can pay their meters by phone from anywhere, eliminating the need to rush out of the store with quarters because your meter is about to expire.

Next month I will be forming a North Hempstead Parking Advisory Committee to study the parking availability throughout the entire Town and suggest some ways we might improve it. It is my hope that by taking inventory of all our parking assets and studying how to best utilize them for the good of our residents and commuters, we

can alleviate some of the frustrations with which people contend when parking in areas of our Town.

It was a big year for animals as well, both *great* and *small*. Last year our Town's Animal Shelter saw 162 dogs adopted and 78 lost dogs reunited with their owners. The staff at the shelter is to be commended for making such a wonderful effort to always place the right dog with the right family. The dogs in our care are well-trained, well-cared for and well-loved.

And our Bay Constables shepherded two beluga whales and a pod of humpback whales this summer when the mammals decided to hang out in Manhasset Bay. The appearance of the whales was a great testament to the improving quality of our waters. It's pretty exciting to host whales in our waters.

In 2015 we launched our pilot program allowing dogs on leashes at several of our parks and this year we are looking to expand that program. Although I know I shouldn't admit to having a favorite event this past year, because they are ALL wonderful, I have to say that our end of the season Doggie Pool Party at Clinton G. Martin Park was a delight, with nearly 100 dogs and their owners turning out for a

swim. When I asked some seniors who were there without dogs how they were enjoying the event, I was told they were there with their imaginary dog. We look forward to doing this again in 2016.

Our Parks and Recreation Department continues to take a good thing and make it better, as its staff created new and exciting programs for multiple generations to enjoy. The Town sponsored 27 successful concerts, a magnificent Memorial Day weekend fireworks and one of our best and scariest Spooky Walks ever!

In 2016, I will be introducing a new initiative to create a “Friends of the North Hempstead Parks” group that will bring people and institutions together to support parks and improvement projects that the strict financial climate makes so difficult to achieve. Modeled after similar programs that exist in other municipalities, the Friends of the Parks will enable us to address infrastructure and new programming at our parks, without burdening our taxpayers.

The Town’s Clark Botanic Garden continues to blossom and I thank the Garden’s staff for working to return it to its former splendor. We were recently honored to be named as one of the 15 Best Botanical Gardens by ProFlowers, which based the

ratings on the garden's educational programs, unique plant collections and reputation for providing excellent customer care to visitors. This past year we offered a gardening program that gave families an opportunity to have their own plot of land on which to grow vegetables; we held instructional classes on composting, rain barrels and rain gardens; and in 2016 we plan to hold Master Gardener Classes. We also instituted a special volunteer program this summer that gave individuals with vision and hearing loss and those with intellectual disabilities, a chance to volunteer in the 12-acre garden. This initiative was very well received. I hope to expand these opportunities in 2016, as we form a Disability Advisory Committee for the Town which will serve to advise us on issues pertaining to those with disabilities.

The Yes We Can Community Center continues to expand its offerings. One of the highlights last summer was the Life Skills Program hosted by NBA star Tobias (Toe-by-is) Harris, for 100 local youth, free of charge. The center also had more than 100 children registered for its summer activities program; offered free chess and indoor soccer programs for youth; formed its own community band for youth and adults and gave members a chance to get their hands dirty by participating in an



intergenerational gardening program which donated the harvest to nearby senior housing residents.

Our Solid Waste Management Authority and Office of Sustainability continue to brand our Town as one of the most sustainable and environmentally conscious municipalities on Long Island. Last year our award-winning school recycling partnership program expanded to include the Mineola and Roslyn school districts. Now every school district in North Hempstead is participating.

We've also introduced compostable leaf disposal bags with the hope that people will use them instead of the black plastic bags that end up in our waste stream. With the help of our Chief Bay Constable, working together with the Office of Sustainability, we created our own receptacles so that people will have a place to put their discarded fishing line. This will help reduce the incidences of marine life becoming entangled in fishing lines left on the dock or worse, thrown in the water. This cost-effective initiative has even garnered the interest of the Environmental Protection Agency which plans to include it in its Trash Free Waters program.

In 2015 our 311 Call Center answered more than 175,000 calls, the most since 2012 when Hurricane Sandy hit. 311 celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in November and has answered 1.4 million calls since first opening. The call center enables all other departments to deliver efficient services to residents throughout North Hempstead. Last weekend several members of my staff jumped into to help 311 operators answer the large volume of calls...more than 3,500... received by 311 during and after the blizzard. The center was open around the clock all through the blizzard so that residents were able to communicate their concerns to real people, not recordings. This is what makes North Hempstead a family and I thank everyone who helped out during this busy time.

Our I.T. department brought the Town's I.T. capabilities into the new Century so that most departments can now accept credit cards and by the end of the year ALL will be able to; constituents can register and renew several applications with the building department online and more than 75,000 building department records have been scanned and uploaded. I.T. also worked with the Communications Department to revamp our Town's website and transform it into a sleek, modern informative tool.

North Hempstead continues to meet President Obama's "My Brother's Keeper" Challenge. I am so proud that we are the only municipality on Long Island to do so. This national initiative aims to address persistent gaps for boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential. To meet the challenge, my office developed a Local Action Plan which includes a mentoring program that we are piloting this year in cooperation with the Manhasset and Westbury school districts. We now have mentors working with local Manhasset High School students and next Tuesday we will begin partnering with Westbury High School where additional trained mentors will begin to work with several 9<sup>th</sup> grade students from that high school. We anticipate welcoming these students as interns this summer in various Town departments as part of this initiative and hope to continue, and possibly expand the program in the next school year.

As I begin my second term I am ever more cognizant of the need to protect our quality of life. I am calling for the full re-opening of the Sixth Police Precinct on Community Drive so that our residents throughout the town can have the police protection they deserve, resulting in safer communities for us all. A letter has been sent to County officials calling on them to reconsider the merger and reopen the

Sixth Precinct. I am still waiting for a response. Working with local communities, I pledge to continue with these efforts.

I will continue to draw from the Town's past as we plan for its future. We will stay true to our history and reputation as a forward-thinking, progressive place to live. I look forward with anticipation to another great year for our Town in 2016 as we stand together to meet any and all challenges.

Thank you.

And now it's time for questions!