

STATE OF THE TOWN 2017
January 27, 2017

SUPERVISOR JUDI BOSWORTH
TOWN OF NORTH HEMPSTEAD

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guests.

It is an honor to be here with all of you for my fourth State of the Town address.

I would like to thank the League of Women Voters, once again for their work and dedication to this event, particularly Luncheon Chair Amy Bass, Co-Chair Marie Bellon, and Registrar Judy Jacobson. 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 their efforts. A special thank you to the Harbor Links staff and to my staff for working with The League to coordinate this event.

I'd like to now recognize our Town of North Hempstead elected officials and my partners in Town government who are here with us today.

Receiver of Taxes Charles Berman

Town Clerk Wayne Wink

Council Member Viviana Russell

Council Member Peter Zuckerman

Council Member Anna Kaplan

Council Member Lee Seeman

Council Member Dina De Giorgio

Council Member Angelo Ferrara expresses his regrets that he cannot be here.

Our Town Board continues to function in a spirit of collaboration and bipartisanship...most of the time... with the best interests of our residents at heart...all of the time.

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 our local officials, school superintendents, special district commissioners, school board members and union leaders, including our own CSEA

Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte; CSEA Nassau County Region President John Shepherd; and our very own Local Unit President Kevin Williams.

Also, a special thank you to my North Hempstead government team – my senior staff, the finance team, town attorneys, comptroller’s office, communications 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.

Since I first took office in 2014, my watchword has been “TRANSPARENCY.” Transparency brings sunlight to the process of government. In fact in North Hempstead we’ve opened up the blinds and rolled up the shades! I will never lose sight of the fact that we are here to serve our residents. Our residents are entitled to know how their government is running, what its priorities are and how we are spending their tax dollars. I will continue to run Town government in an open and transparent manner, in a way that people can trust, because it’s the only way I can imagine doing things. Our residents deserve no less.

From the very beginning we've been committed to that open and honest government. This year we've improved upon that to make sure our government continues in the direction it needs to go. We proposed stringent reforms to address issues of ethics, procurement policy and nepotism. And we've set the bar high.

Several financial and nepotism disclosure recommendations were enacted into law in March 2016. These changes now include requiring contractors who directly advise town boards to file financial disclosure statements. In addition, all those who are required to file statements, must now also disclose relatives who are employed by the Town. We have also proposed a package of nepotism reforms that will apply to all Town employees, which will be discussed at a public hearing at our February 28th Town Board meeting. A bipartisan Ethics Reform Working group was also formed last year, composed of representatives of the Town Board, the Board of Ethics, the public and the administration. I'd like to thank Council members Peter Zuckerman and Dina DeGiorgio, The Reverend Charles Vogeley, Honorable Richard Kestenbaum, John Brickman and our Town Commissioner of Planning Michael Levine for their service as members of this group. They recently presented us with a package of recommended reforms which will also be considered at the February 28th meeting.

We have totally reworked our procurement policy and procedures and have put a procurement officer in place to oversee this. We believe that by centralizing the procurement procedures and preparing bids in a way that attract a wider pool of respondents, including minority and women-owned businesses, we are opening the Town to new vendors and, thereby, increasing competition. This leads to more competitive bids and will save taxpayer dollars.

We dramatically changed our cash procedures. We have put in place the ability to accept other methods of payment, with the goal of moving to a non-cash operation, or as close to that as possible. There is now a “no cash policy” at the Town’s Highway Department, Solid Waste Management Authority, the Port Washington Parking District and the Building Department, while other departments have greatly reduced the number of services they accept cash for. In addition, we have hired an outside firm to review our cash policies so that we can have an independent additional set of eyes taking a look at what other changes we can institute.

There was so much we accomplished in 2016. Under my leadership our finances continue to improve. The Town’s strong Aa1 rating from Moody's Investors Service was upgraded from a “stable outlook” to a “positive,” outlook, just one small step

away from Triple A. This is a testament to our conservative fiscal management practices. We continued to reduce our debt over the past three years by a total of more than \$30 million, all without reducing essential services.

The Town was once again awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association for the sixth consecutive year for its comprehensive annual financial report for the fiscal year ending 2015.

The entire budget process, from beginning draft to final version and vote, was entirely transparent and collaborative. I am very pleased to report, that for the third consecutive year our budget was approved with bi-partisan support before Election Day. The 2017 budget was our third in a row to stay under the State-mandated tax cap.

We also presented our third comprehensive five-year Capital Plan for the Town, which continues to demonstrate a bi-partisan, unanimous commitment to maintaining and improving the Town's roads, parks and facilities and maximizing grant funding. Much progress has been made in the past year on projects ranging from the construction of

an outdoor classroom at Bunky Reid Park, the rehabilitation of ponds at Clark Botanic Garden, the restoration of the pool at Whitney Pond Park to the near completion of Alvan Petrus Park.

The Town set a powerful precedent this past November when we voted unanimously to prohibit the sale of cigarettes, tobacco products, liquid nicotine and electronic cigarettes to anyone under the age of 21. North Hempstead joins New York City and Suffolk County as local municipalities that have done this. The legislation was inspired by my colleague and friend the late Nassau County Legislator Judy Jacobs. I know that today Judy is looking down and smiling to see what we have accomplished in her name. I am also very hopeful that our 31 villages will also follow suit in adopting the Tobacco 21 law as well. We've just learned that Williston Park, under the leadership of Mayor Paul Ehrbar, is also considering joining us in this effort. We hope other villages will, as well.

Protecting our environment here in North Hempstead has always been an important priority and this year we achieved many positive steps in that direction. In May the Town was honored with the prestigious Environmental Champion Award by the EPA Region 2 for our low-cost fishing line disposal program, which was cited for reducing

plastics in our waterways. The program places receptacles and signage around Town Dock and five other Town locations urging fisherman to discard any monofilament fishing line properly. The line we collect is then sent out to be recycled into fish habitats.

Under our Office of Sustainability, and thanks to a generous Water Quality Improvement Program grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, we commenced a dynamic new intermunicipal project to create a unified, electronic map of all the stormwater infrastructure within the Town and 19 of its Villages. This will allow us to track pollution from its source, no matter where it starts. Through this project, we are also working with the City of Glen Cove and the Village of Sea Cliff, so that we can enhance our efforts to protect Hempstead Harbor.

Protecting our ground water and cleaning up our bays and harbors remain a top priority for my administration.

I also continue to be a strong, vocal opponent of the re-opening of the Jamaica wells by New York City. The Town has also joined with the Port Washington Water District to support its progressive “Be Smart and Green, Save 15” campaign, a plan to reduce

Districtwide water consumption by 15 percent. The Town is using a wide variety of water conservation methods to cut down on water use at the Harbor Links Golf Course in by using digital moisture meters and other watering techniques to reduce usage.

Last year we rolled out the welcome mat for mosquito-eating bats in the Town. We placed numerous bat houses in parks, with the goal of reducing the population of disease-carrying mosquitoes, without using harmful chemicals that disturb the balance of the environment and pollute our drinking water. This initiative got world-wide attention as we heard from the BBC radio, NPR and media outlets as far away as India and Germany who wanted to hear and learn more about our bat houses.

In August a brand new rain garden was introduced at Clark Botanic Garden in Albertson. The rain garden is designed to take advantage of rainfall and stormwater runoff in its design and plant selection. The garden is a collaboration between the Town and Sustainable Long Island and will serve as a teaching tool. Rain gardens help to filter excessive nitrogen from storm water runoff and help to replenish our aquifers. I hope that this garden will plant a seed of inspiration in all who see it, so that they will think of creating rain gardens of their own.

A clean and sustainable environment has always been one of my top priorities and I am proud of all we have accomplished. But it's not just our initiatives that make North Hempstead a Town to be proud of, it's the people.

Our Town's Veterans are an extraordinary group of people and I have found that working with them is both rewarding and inspirational. We must never cease to recognize and honor our Veterans who have bravely served our country as well as those who are currently serving. They are a constant reminder of the sacrifices that are made to protect the ideals of liberty and freedom that we cherish.

We are so proud that we have an active Veterans Advisory Committee. Some of the members helped lead us in the pledge today and we thank them for that and for all that they have done. Recently our Veterans Advisory Committee took a look at the Nassau County listing of businesses that provide discounts to veterans. There weren't many retailers in North Hempstead listed. The committee members said "We can do better than that," and they did. As a result our veterans have reached out to local businesses and have successfully enlisted nearly two dozen merchants who are offering our veterans a discount on goods and services. Participating businesses will have a sticker identifying them as a participant in the North Hempstead's Veterans

Discount program and will be included in a directory on our website. We also held our most successful Veterans Holiday Donation Drive yet, delivering over 250 boxes of needed items to the Northport Veterans' Hospital. We are so proud to have partnered with so many community groups and schools this past year for our holiday drive. We had very generous donations from students at St. Mary's, Mineola, Carle Place, Westbury and Chaminade high schools. This served as a wonderful opportunity for the students to acknowledge our veterans and their contributions to our country. It's so important that young members of our community know how much our veterans have done for all of us and their significant place in history. This younger generation will soon be the custodians of that history.

Our Veterans Advisory Committee has been a great source of inspiration and has come up with terrific ideas that enriched all of us here in North Hempstead.

The Town continues to provide dozens of concerts and other events throughout the year. The parks Department has also continued to raise the bar on providing family-focused events. The Department has introduced wonderful, innovative programming like this past year's Zombie Spooky Walk and the week-long holiday extravaganza Winter Wonderland at Clark Garden. The Town now provides child care as part of

several fitness classes at Tully Park, so that a parent can enjoy taking a class while their child is cared for. Our Yes We Can Community Center ran a very successful summer camp program this past year and plans for 2017's camp program are already underway.

Community Services welcomed more than one thousand seniors to each of its Funday Mondays throughout the summer at North Hempstead Beach Park and Project Independence reached a milestone in October as it surpassed 100,000 taxi rides for its members. Our senior members have taken advantage of these many free and discounted taxi rides, helping them to stay more independent and to remain in their own homes.

We have re-organized the Highway Department and placed it back under the Public Works umbrella. Joe Geraci has been appointed as our Acting Superintendent of Highways. We thank Joe for taking on this role as we take a fresh look at the various department operations so that we can serve our residents more efficiently, whether it's with snow plowing, tree trimming or filling pot holes. The recent snow storm earlier this month went smoothly and I commend Joe and the highway crews for doing such a superb job.

We have also re-activated the Citizens Advisory Committee, which represents the community's interests in a variety of issues, including the capped landfill. Our new Executive Director of the Solid Waste Management Authority, Robert Lange, recently met with the group to ensure that their concerns were heard and that the Town keeps an open dialogue with them and members of the community.

By now I am sure you are all familiar with an initiative I announced at my first State of the Town speech, that of the Applicant Advocate, a position that helps residents navigate the permitting process at the Building Department. Well I am now expanding that "personalized customer service" to both the Highway and Code Enforcement departments. The new, expanded role will now be called the Resident Advocate, who will assure that, along with the commissioners, that resident's concerns and service requests are being dealt with in a courteous, timely and efficient manner.

The Town applied for and was awarded more than \$16 Million in federal, state and local grants for a variety of projects.

We were awarded \$12.5 million from FEMA for the replacement of our Town Dock due to damages incurred during Superstorm Sandy. The new Dock will also be equipped with more resilient features in order to help better withstand future storms. We thank U.S. Senator Charles Schumer for advocating for the funding on our behalf.

The Town also recently received over \$1.14 million in Regional Economic Development Awards that will address promoting North Hempstead Beach Park, Hempstead Harbor Wetlands restoration and the Baywalk.

The New York State Attorney General's office awarded the Town a \$159,000 grant to address the growing statewide problem of "zombie homes" – vacant and abandoned homes that are not maintained during a prolonged foreclosure proceeding. The Town intends to focus on public outreach by sending informative mailings to residents, and producing public service announcements targeting at-risk homeowners to make them aware of the resources available to aide them.

The Town received a \$50,000 grant from the National Park Service to preserve and highlight sites and stories related to 20th Century Civil Rights Movement. We were one of only 39 awardees of this grant in the entire country. Many of our North Hempstead

residents have powerful stories to tell and we hope to capture those stories by filming oral histories and making a documentary, produced by our very own North Hempstead TV.

So that is a brief recap of 2016. And 2017 has already gotten off to a great start. We look to the future vision of our Town and are actually starting to see it take shape.

The renovation of the Clinton G. Martin pool complex has begun, after several community meetings, design plans, redesigns and much discussion. I think the planning process for this community pool was a great example of government working in partnership with residents to assure that everyone's voice was heard. We listened, residents made suggestions...sometimes very vocally...and we adjusted our designs. We can't wait for it to open...on time. We thank our Public Works Department, which has been heading up this project, as well as so many others.

We have just completed three community visioning meetings for our North Hempstead Beach Park project. This park possesses the potential to become a beautiful recreational destination that all residents can enjoy; where they can boat, row, kayak or swim. The park could also feature amenities such as a restaurant,

environmental learning facilities for students, a water sports rental facility, bike paths and pedestrian walkways along the water. At these meetings residents viewed possible plans for the 90-acre park and the 200-wooded acres across the street and were able to make valuable suggestions about what their vision is for the park. It is very exciting for all of us to reimagine how the Town's former Bar Beach and the additional property we received from the County can be combined, while making sure we preserve the wooded areas and protect our wetlands.

We've made all the information about the Beach Visioning available on our website, where people can go and actually view the entire presentation, make comments and suggestions and even take an aerial tour of the property. It's all one-stop shopping at our website.

Both the CGM pool project and the visioning of North Hempstead Beach Park are wonderful examples of how engaging the community throughout the process can yield some fantastic results!

I spoke about forming a new Disability Advisory Committee at my last State of the Town address and it was formed. It consists of members of the community, parents

of children with disabilities and adults with disabilities. The committee did not waste any time setting an ambitious agenda. It became clear that transportation was an issue. Together we came up with the idea of partnering with local taxi companies to offer free and discounted taxi trips to residents with disabilities 21 and older, mirroring what we do with Project Independence. The local law was approved unanimously at the December 13 Town Board meeting and services got started this month. To my knowledge we are the ONLY municipality offering such services. A big thank you to the members of this committee, many of whom are here today.

Unfortunately, in recent months there have been several occurrences of hateful discriminatory incidents in our Town. This has been upsetting, disheartening and it is unacceptable. Many residents have reached out to me to express their concern. As a result the Town is joining with the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center in Glen Cove on several initiatives. These will be aimed at supporting, protecting, and empowering those who are targets of hateful acts and raising consciousness about the importance of us standing together in opposition to hate. We have reached out to the Center, led by the Center's Chairman of the Board Steve Markowitz, and we have already met on several occasions. Our message is "Not in Our Town."

Every person in our town should be treated with respect and kindness. By doing this we can all make a difference and have a positive impact on our Town and in fact, in our world.

It continues to be an honor to serve you, our residents, of the great Town of North Hempstead. Your being here today means so much, because our Democracy functions best when there is active participation and input from all our residents. Our success depends on our working together as partners and making sure everyone has a seat at our North Hempstead table.