

**STATE OF THE TOWN 2018**

**January 26, 2018**

**SUPERVISOR JUDI BOSWORTH  
TOWN OF NORTH HEMPSTEAD**

Good afternoon everyone. It's such an honor to be here with all of you for my fifth State of the Town address. The State of the Town address is one of the most anticipated events of the year for me personally, because it gives me an opportunity to reflect on the past year and look forward towards addressing new challenges and hopes for the future.

John F. Kennedy said that "every accomplishment starts with the decision to try," and we have made that decision to try again and again over the past year, whether it was to solve an unexpected problem; to improve an existing program; or to embark on a new initiative.

First a few thank you's...I would like to thank the League of Women Voters, once again for their work and dedication to this event, particularly President of the League Julie Harnick, Luncheon Chair Amy Bass and her team of event

coordinators Marie Bellon, Judy Jacobson, Francine Furtado and Danielle Tane.

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 Angelo Ferrara

Council Member Anna Kaplan

Council Member Lee Seeman

Council Member Dina De Giorgio

Our Town Board is successful because of the spirit of collaboration, consensus building and bi-partisanship. It's our secret sauce. If only this simple recipe would be embraced in Washington, DC, there's no telling what could get accomplished!

We are proud of the work we do with our colleagues in other branches of government. I would especially like to welcome and congratulate the women in executive positions in our county including our new County Executive Laura Curran and the Town of Hempstead's new supervisor, Laura Gillen. As I said during my swearing in, maybe it had something to do with that Wonder Woman movie last year. But it's gonna be girl power in 2018!

I would like to recognize our other distinguished elected officials who are here with us today:

I am pleased to welcome

Federal

State

County

Town

Mayors

Village trustees

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, finance team, town attorneys, comptroller's office, communications office, administrative services, commissioners, deputy commissioners, directors, managers and, of course, our entire work force.

I feel a wonderful sense of anticipation as we start this year. I am enthusiastic about so many projects that will be coming to completion this year and those that are just beginning. Everything we are doing began with our decision to try.

If you recall, at last year's State of the Town address I set a goal for 2017 that we would see our bond rating upgraded to Triple A...and last March we hit the target! The Town was awarded a Triple A (AAa) bond rating by Moody's Investor Service,

which results in lower borrowing costs and savings for taxpayers. This is the highest rating that can be attained by a municipality AND the first time that the Town of North Hempstead has achieved this. Our fiscal stability and conservative budgeting practices give our Town a firm financial foundation. According to the New York State Comptroller, the Town's fiscal stress score, which is a reflection of a town's susceptibility to financial stress, is a low two percent! This is the lowest score of any municipality in Nassau County and the second lowest on Long Island, In fact we are second only behind Shelter Island, which I hear has about 2,000 residents in the off season!

We've reduced our debt by \$32 million since 2014. All of our budgets have stayed within the New York State tax cap, without cutting services to our residents. In fact, we've continued to enhance programming, to expand our parks system and to provide the most dedicated and responsive constituent outreach team of any municipality, hands down.

We cut the ribbon on our 53<sup>rd</sup> Town park-Alvan Petrus Park in Port Washington; we broke ground on the Clinton G. Martin pool renovation project, we continue to be right on schedule AND we are opening this summer; we conducted

extensive community outreach for the visioning project of North Hempstead Beach Park; we approved a slate of ethics reforms and a new anti-nepotism law, we put in place a more comprehensive procurement policy; we've made board meeting and BZA transcripts more easily available to the public by publishing these on our website; and we continue to strengthen our commitment to openness and transparency by providing residents with detailed financial information regarding Town finances. Accessing public information shouldn't require jumping through hoops.

Our Building Department continues to offer extended hours of operation, community outreach and great customer service. This year we will be adding staff in an effort to cut down on the time it takes to get a permit or a C.O.

We introduced and enacted several important new laws in 2017 that we anticipate will have a positive impact on our residents and our Town. In March, Tobacco 21 legislation took effect, prohibiting anyone under 21 from buying tobacco or tobacco-related products in the Town. We were the first municipality in Nassau County to enact this age restriction, but we were certainly not the last as five North Hempstead villages-Great Neck Plaza, Williston Park, Baxter Estates,

Great Neck Estates, Port Washington North and the Town of Hempstead followed our lead. In April the Town Board enacted legislation prohibiting All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV's) on Town property. The new law's intent is to halt the environmental damage done by ATV's to undeveloped land, such as the Town's 200 wooded acres opposite North Hempstead Beach Park. We are committed to protecting our wetlands.

We also presented our fourth 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. The Plan includes \$1 million dollars for sidewalk repair and \$4.2 million for road repaving throughout the Town.

We continued to work with our business community by funding matching grants for the beautification of our downtowns. Plans are also underway for a streetscape project for Main Street in Port Washington. Last year our Building Department held an informative seminar for interested business owners about "What to Know Before Opening or Expanding a Business: A Guide to the Building Permit Process," in order to make the permitting process easier.

Even in the smallest business districts, our local shops and businesses provide hundreds of jobs. Our local Chambers do a magnificent job advocating for local businesses, encouraging people to shop local and we support the work they do.

We didn't just look to the future in 2017, but we also honored our past as the restoration of the Schumacher House moved forward with the stabilization of the house and the addition of a new roof and siding, making the structure more watertight, as well as more visually appealing. We still have a long way to go, but we are on our way to restoring this landmark, which dates to 1750. The renovation of the Stepping Stones Lighthouse moved forward last year as preliminary soil testing work was completed to determine the best dock design for the Lighthouse. This year we hope to see the construction of the dock begin, giving construction crews easier access to the lighthouse in order to begin renovation of the historic structure.

Providing programming that appeals to residents of all ages is not an easy task, but our Parks Department, Community Services and Project Independence are committed to doing just that. We take such pride in providing programs for our



seniors, like the always successful Funday Mondays with over 1000 seniors attending a day at the beach each Monday in the summer; and through Project Independence with weekly programs that range from Mindful Coloring, Preventing Falls, social discussion groups, caregiver support groups, Blankets of Love and safe driving tips, as well as access to nursing staff and social workers. Project Independence also continues to provide hundreds of free taxi rides for our seniors for foods shopping and discounted taxi rides to medical appointments. These services are key in allowing our older residents to age in place and stay in their homes.

Our Parks and Recreation department's programming expands each year by offering more and more opportunities for our young families--An extensive summer concert series, Winter Wonderland at Clark Garden, a new drop-in summer recreation program at Caemmerer, Fuschillo and Broadway parks; and an all-day Summer Recreation Program at the "Yes We Can" Community Center in Westbury, all provide stimulating opportunities for the Town's young families and their children.

In 2017 the Town also welcomed the Long Island Nets to our 'Yes We Can' Community Center, where they have been practicing since last fall. Having a NBA-affiliated basketball team in our community center is not only exciting, but the team has also committed to working with our youngsters through a variety of activities.

The residents at our North Hempstead Housing Authority's Magnolia Gardens have started their own "farm to table" project this past year. It's not your imagination if you think you spied a chicken coop at Magnolia Gardens. There is one... now home to 16 egg-laying chickens. And yes, there is even corn as high as an elephant's eye growing in raised garden beds overflowing with vegetables. Residents collect dozens of eggs a week and a variety of vegetables, which are shared among the residents at a group meal in the community room. We also continue to offer Community Garden plots that residents can lease at Clark Botanic Garden to grow their own vegetables and flowers. The knowledgeable staff at Clark Garden is also available for gardening advice!

Protecting our environment here in North Hempstead has always been an important priority and this year we achieved many positive steps in that direction

to create a cleaner, safer environment in our Town. In 2017 we launched our stormwater education campaign with the slogan “Only Rain in the Drain.” The campaign included rain-activated sidewalk art and a fictional Storm Water Cop to help people connect that what goes into the storm drains also goes into our waterways. And watch out for that cop because I think I saw her lurking around here with her ticket book.

If 2016 was the year of bat houses in North Hempstead, 2017 had to be dubbed the Year of the Bob White Quail. Studies have shown that where there are Bob White Quail there is a reduction in ticks. This natural way of controlling the tick population is much preferred to using toxic chemicals and polluting our ground water. Over a thousand people watched North Hempstead’s quails hatch live on NHTV’s Quail Cam and then cheered them on as we released them onto the Hempstead Harbor trail to fulfill their destiny as the Town’s secret weapon in combating ticks. And speaking of our favorite TV programming...no it’s not Netflix...NHTV was awarded two first-place Home Town Media awards in 2017—one, for a public service announcement we did about the dangers of leaving dogs in cars in hot weather and another for our Off the Trail Nature series.

The Town applied for and was awarded more than \$1.6 Million in federal, state and local grants for a variety of projects. These grants are critically important to us as it enables the Town to enhance our infrastructure, thus reducing the cost to our taxpayers. The Town also recently awarded over \$1.14 million in Regional Economic Development Awards that will fund the extension of the Hempstead Harbor Trail at North Hempstead Beach Park. When I first came into office in 2014, a grant to begin the trail was set to expire, but we acted quickly set the project in motion. The first expansion of the trail, completed in 2015, increased it to one and a quarter miles. This further extension of the trail will push that to nearly two miles. So I hope that everyone brought their hiking boots with them today because after this speech we are all going for a long walk. Kidding. But if you haven't walked the trail yet I urge you to do it.

Last year the Town used a \$159,000 grant from the New York State Attorney General's office to address the growing statewide problem of "zombie homes" – vacant and abandoned homes that are not maintained during a prolonged foreclosure proceeding. Using this grant funding the Town focused on public outreach to those homeowners in danger of losing their homes. Through the use of mailings and a public service announcements we let homeowners know the

free resources that are available to them. We also held TWO informative seminars-one homeowners and the second aimed at educating realtors about foreclosure. Both seminars were very effective.

Our CARE program, which provides a Saturday and summer day program for disabled adults and youth in our community, will now be partnering with the Henry Viscardi School. We are exciting to bring the Viscardi School on as our partner to enhance this important program. I would very much like to thank our Disability Advisory Committee for their valuable input on this initiative.

I would like to thank our Town's Veterans Advisory Committee for leading us in the pledge. The Committee continues to work hard on behalf of our veterans. We recently met with Congresswoman Kathleen Rice to discuss the possibility of locating a Northport Veteran's Medical Center satellite office somewhere in North Hempstead. We look forward to seeing that initiative move forward with the Congresswoman's help. Last January the Town joined with several local VFW posts to conduct a memorial ceremony marking the 75th Anniversary of the January 1, 1942 fatal plane crash in New Hyde Park, which claimed the lives of five servicemen who heroically sacrificed their own lives to avert crashing into the

New Hyde Park neighborhood below. 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.

So that is a brief recap of 2017. And 2018 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.

Protecting our ground water and cleaning up our bays and harbors remain a top priority for my administration. As you may know, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection has submitted an application to activate 68 dormant groundwater wells in Jamaica, Queens, which would pump up to 68 million gallons a day from our sole source aquifer. By comparison, the 15 water suppliers that serve the entire Town of North Hempstead pump an average of 42 million gallons per day. Therefore the 68 millions of gallons a day pumped by NYC would account for approximately 36 % of our county wide average. This massive drain on our water supply system could have devastating effects on the future of our water supply. I am opposed to these efforts to secure permits for these supply

wells, prior to the completion of the Long Island Groundwater Sustainability Study. We all must safeguard our drinking water and protect our aquifers and I'd like to thank Mindy Germain, Lead Organizer for the Western Nassau County Aquifer Committee for her fighting spirit when it comes to our water and for keeping all of us informed on this critical issue.

We also continue to work on our proposed Town-wide leaf blower legislation that would restrict the use of this equipment. This proposal brought out a lot of strong feelings on both sides of the issue and we are still in the process of digesting that feedback and crafting a law that everyone can live with. We will also be forming a committee comprised of concerned citizens, landscapers and environmentalists to help us draft this law. As you know, I do not work in a vacuum and I am confident that by listening to all sides of this issue that we will come to a good compromise. Last year we transformed Clark Botanic Garden into a "Battery Landscape Equipment Only" zone and this year we plan to expand that program to more of our parks and Town property.

Our parks will be seeing some other improvements and some new additions in 2018. I am so excited to announce that, yes, the elevator at Michael J. Tully Park is

working and we even had a ribbon cutting. We are so happy that everyone who uses this facility will now be able to now be able to easily access all the programs and activities with the newly refurbished elevator.

Parks will also be adding new splash pads will be installed at Broadway Park and refurbished at Mary Jane Davies Park, which will also be getting a new playground. We know the kids will love these additions. The construction of our first-ever dog park to be located in Michael J. Tully Park, will begin to take shape in the summer. We are confident that this new amenity for our much-beloved dog population will be greeted with barks of joy! A Sensory Garden is in the planning stages for Clark Botanic Garden in 2018, which will encourage garden guests to touch, taste, admire and listen to what is growing there. The Sensory garden will nourish the five basic senses and be totally accessible to people with disabilities.

We will be installing three ADA compliant beach mats to increase mobility and access at North Hempstead Beach Park in Port Washington and Manorhaven Park in order to make the beach and waterfront more easily accessible to all residents, including those using wheelchairs or walkers.



We will launch a re-education campaign for our recycling program to improve its effectiveness. Back in the 1980's we were introduced to recycling and most of us take it in stride today as we separate our cans, bottles and papers almost without thinking. However, some rules of recycling have changed in recent years. We hope to educate residents about these new rules so that we can continue to reduce our waste stream and make our recyclables more marketable.

I am very pleased to announce that the Town will be partnering with Northwell Health System to educate Town employees, on a voluntary basis, in the hands-on use of Narcan, used to block the effects of opioids. Our employees interface with the public in so many ways...in our parks, in our recreational buildings, code enforcement, etc. Just like employees are offered training in CPR, why not training in the use of Narcan, which can save a life? We believe that this public-private partnership will serve an important educational service so that our employees, can be trained in this life-saving technique. While this is just one small step in combating the opioid epidemic health crisis, we believe it is a significant step in the right direction.

It's not just our initiatives that make North Hempstead a Town to be proud of, it's the people. And we continue to make North Hempstead one of the most welcoming places for everyone as we participate in the national initiative Not in Our Town. Last May we partnered with the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County to present "*Not In Our Town: A Unity & Anti-Hate Conference*" that brought together community leaders from across Long Island to take a stand against hate crimes, violence and intolerance. The Not In Our Town initiative speaks right to the heart of how we feel here in North Hempstead: All are welcome. Hate will not find a home here.

This year the Town is proud to be partnering with The Long Island Press in sponsoring a photo contest for students using Not In Our Town as a theme. So far we have received nearly 100 entries and I look forward to the awards ceremony sometime this spring. Through the year we continued to celebrate the many cultures found here in North Hempstead...cultures that represent every corner of our world, every race, religion and way of life. Our diverse population provides the threads for the beautiful tapestry that we call North Hempstead.

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.

Thank you.

And now it's time for questions!