

SUPERVISOR JUDI BOSWORTH'S

2020 NORTH HEMPSTEAD

STATE OF THE



T



TOWN



JANUARY 31, 2020

THE CLUBHOUSE AT HARBOR LINKS

STATE OF THE TOWN 2020

January 31, 2020

SUPERVISOR JUDI BOSWORTH

TOWN OF NORTH HEMPSTEAD

Good afternoon everyone and thank you for being here this afternoon. This State of the Town address marks my Lucky 7th one!

I like to think of the State of the Town address as one-part report card and one part “to do” list for the future and I look forward to it each year.

First a few thank you’s...I would like to thank the League of Women Voters, once again for their work and dedication, particularly President of the League Julie Meer; Luncheon Chair Amy Bass and her team of event coordinators: Michele Lamberti, Francine Furtado, Judy Jacobson and Marie Bellon.

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. I’d like to also recognize an important historical moment. Two thousand twenty marks one hundred years since the ratification of the 19th amendment, giving women the

right to vote. So, I'd like to say, "well done, ladies! I would not be here without your efforts" thank you to those courageous suffragettes who helped give all women their voice. To help memorialize this anniversary, the Town will be partnering with the League in August for a Garden Party "Equali-Tea" and the unveiling of a plaque to commemorate this important occasion.

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 Veronica Lurvey

Council Member Lee Seeman

And our newest member...Council Member Mariann Dalimonte

Our Town Board is successful because of the spirit of collaboration, consensus building, bi-partisanship and respect for one another.

And we play well with others! We are very proud of the work we do with our colleagues in other branches of government. I would especially like to welcome and recognize our other distinguished elected officials who are here with us today.

I am pleased to welcome other colleagues in government, special district commissioners, school board members and union leaders, including our own CSEA Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte and CSEA Unit 7555 President Tom McDonough.

Also, a special thank you to my North Hempstead government team – my senior staff, finance team, town attorneys, comptroller’s office, administrative services, commissioners, deputy commissioners, directors, managers and, of course, our entire work force. Without the hard work of all these people nothing I am about to report on could happen.

It's been said that things do not get better by **chance**...they get better by **change**, so I like to think that 2019 was a year of **change and progress** in North Hempstead.

I'm very proud to say that in the fall of 2019 the Town once again received a Triple A bond rating by Moody's Investor Service, the highest rating that a municipality can attain. This was the sixth straight Triple A rating we have achieved and it's no small accomplishment. It is the result of conservative fiscal management; adhering to the State tax cap and careful guardianship of taxpayer funds.

And more good financial news...as the national debt goes higher, North Hempstead's goes lower. Yes, we have reduced our debt by \$27.6 million since 2014. The Town's fiscal stress score is 1.7 which is one of the lowest of any Town on Long Island, according to data released by the Office of the New York State Comptroller.

Comparatively there are Towns on Long Island with fiscal stress scores as high as 70 and above, further demonstrating North Hempstead's commitment to sound financial management.

We continue to keep North Hempstead's infrastructure updated and safe by designating more than \$111 Million towards our capital projects over the next five years; we have enhanced programming and amenities in our parks and at the "Yes

We Can” Community Center and we continue to offer our constituents convenient access to Town services, such as extended hours at our building department and tax receiver’s office.

We used a lot of ribbon in 2019, for some momentous occasions!

We cut the ribbon on a spectacular two miles of new bike and hiking trails constructed by our partners at **C.L.I.M.B.**--the Concerned Long Island Mountain Bicyclists- at no cost to taxpayers, with another four miles being developed as we speak!

And we didn’t forget our canine friends as we opened the Town’s first-ever **dog park** at Michael J. Tully Park. The new dog park is already a tremendous success, bringing together people who share a common passion—their dogs... and bringing dogs of all types together to play and get some exercise. And last fall we hosted our first dog costume event at the new park--**Howl-A-Ween** – so cute!

The Town was also the recipient of a new structure to house the **Northern Bobwhite Quail** that we raise each spring in order to combat ticks in our parks without using toxic pesticides. Our quail program, done in partnership with Ranger Eric Powers, is now in its third year. We previously had to transfer our newly hatched quail to quail

summer camp in a Suffolk County park, but now thanks to Eagle Scout Daniel Reilly, the Town has its own flight pen located at Clark Botanic Garden. This also serves as a wonderful educational opportunity as well for visitors to the garden. It was one of the many projects that we benefit from by partnering with our Girl and Boy scouts troops, as they earn their higher rankings.

In 2019 our **Building Department** continued to see an increase in total building permits issued, which shows that North Hempstead continues to be a great place for building and development, so long as it is environmentally responsible and a good fit with the community and code compliant. Since 2014 when I first took office, we have increased staffing levels in the Building Department to improve customer service and enhance efficiency. In addition, we provide community outreach with mobile evening hours, senior mobile office hours and extended early hours of operation by opening at 7 a.m. five days a week.

We are also working closely with all of our **Chambers of Commerce** in an effort to revitalize our downtowns. Our Chamber of Commerce Roundtable meetings, which we instituted last year, have been very successful and have provided an opportunity to work with our local chambers. Even our State's Lieutenant Governor Kathy

Hochul has expressed interest to meet with our roundtable and we are looking forward to an upcoming visit from her.

Last year the Town funded and created “Shop Local” signs for eight Chambers of Commerce to urge residents to support small businesses in their neighborhoods. These signs will be installed soon, so be on the lookout for them as you drive through your business area!

Downtowns are the lifeblood of our local economy, and it is our responsibility to help them flourish. We must continue working to grow our downtowns because when our downtown corridors succeed, so does our Town and our villages.

Our NHTV studio is also working with the chambers to create short public service announcements to educate viewers on the vital role that their local chambers play. You may have seen the PSA for the Manhasset Chamber on our NHTV. There’s more to come in 2020.

One of the initiatives that has come out of the roundtable meetings is a working partnership between the chambers and the Town as we move forward with our cultural master plan.

Much progress was made in 2019 on the plan, which is funded by a New York State Council on the Arts grant. With the help of the planning and urban design firm that we contracted with **CivicMoxie** we are weaving together a plan to use our cultural, historical, and business assets. We are currently working to identify some possible tenants for an arts program that would fill vacant store windows with pop-up art installations. As this initiative progresses and we all work together, we believe that it will help to attract visitors, shoppers and consumers to our Town. We have currently begun a search for a director to head the Cultural Master Plan initiative and we have revitalized our arts advisory council. Our arts community is such an important part of this effort and I believe that the new director will help coordinate this plan.

Another grant that I like to call “the gift truly keeps on giving” is our **Civil Rights** grant from the National Parks Service, which was to be used to capture civil rights stories from the people in our community who actually lived through this time. The result is a poignant film called *Defining Moments: The Civil Rights Movement in North Hempstead*. The film highlights some of our local civil rights heroes, including our very own Council Member Lee Seeman, who stood up to bigotry and inequality and in many cases put themselves in danger to move our Town and this country forward. To date the film has been shown to hundreds of people and has been shown at the

Gold Coast International Film Festival, the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center and Farmingdale State College and events sponsored by ERASE Racism, the New York State NAACP and various libraries and houses of worship. This year we also printed one thousand DVD's made for distribution to schools, libraries and more. All paid for with the grant. Housing discrimination and racial steering practices by real estate agents that were exposed last year by Newsday made me think again and again about an instance in our civil rights documentary in which activist Hazel Dukes describes racial steering that happened to her back in the 1950's. **The 1950's.** And here we are in 2020 hearing the same story as if we are frozen in time. So, I like to think that continuing to show this film will help to highlight and expose the issue of housing discrimination and perhaps help move us towards a more just society.

The grant also supported a group of local women who worked on a historical quilt project about the Spinney Hill community in Great Neck. The quilt is a moving tribute to the many North Hempstead residents, past and present, who were key participants in the Civil Rights Movement and the development of the community of Spinney Hill. Visitors will have the opportunity to see the quilt in Town Hall this spring.

Working closely with our **Veterans Advisory Committee** we have continued several significant initiatives, including the services of the Northport VA Medical Center's Mobile Unit, which is stationed at Clinton G. Martin Park three days a week providing medical services to our veterans in their own backyard. The unit has administered care to over 400 of our local veterans over the past year. In addition to providing physical therapy, podiatry and primary health care, we also added bloodwork services this past year. Other new initiatives for our veterans included the waiving of adoption fees for any veteran wishing to adopt a dog at the Town's Animal Shelter. Our Veterans Advisory Committee worked hard to increase the number of local businesses offering discounts to veterans. We ended the year by once again delivering about 250 boxes of clothing, toiletries and other needed items for our vets to the Northport Medical Center. A special thank you to Town employees Tom Devaney, for serving as the liaison to the advisory committee, and Suzette Gray and Joel Harris for their work on the holiday drive. Our Veterans have sacrificed so much for our safety and Democracy and this is just a small way to say 'thank you' to them.

I would like to take a moment now and ask the members of this outstanding Committee to stand and be recognized.

And anyone who is a veteran in the audience please stand so we can acknowledge you and thank you for your service.

Our **Labor Advisory Committee** has been very productive. A good working relationship between the Town, its outside contractors and our labor unions is so important. Council Member Angelo Ferrara has been an important part of this endeavor. This past year we advocated for stricter State building codes that would require plumbing contractors to have a license when doing work in a school facility. Other issues under discussion include ensuring that contractors are paying prevailing wage; educating contractors as to how the Town follows state and local laws in soliciting bids for construction work; and ensuring that the Town stays up to date on New York State issues that may impact local contractors.

Our Disability Advisory Committee plays a vital role in standing up for those with disabilities in our Town. Disability Advisory Committee members concentrated on critical issues such as affordable housing opportunities, tax exemptions, and services for people with disabilities and their families. I thank all of you for your service and input on these issues. Your perspective is invaluable as we work together to bring alternative housing options and a better quality of life to our residents with disabilities. We need to be looking for out of the box solutions that will help our

residents with disabilities to be comfortable with where they live and work and still be able to remain close to their families.

Community Services continues to give us a host of delightful, imaginative, educational and entertaining events for the whole family...Spring Festival, Asian American Festival, National Night Out, KidStock and BeachFeast.

Of course, our Town's seniors continue to be at the heart of what we do. **Community Services** coordinates our Funday Mondays in the summer in which a thousand people attend each Monday, offering activities such as dancing, exercise classes, musical entertainment, a reading club, cards games and Mah-Jong, a farmer's market and more, not to mention the opportunity for seniors to just get together. What a wonderful way to spend a summer day.

Our **Project Independence** is a nationally recognized senior program that offers dozens of weekly activities, free health screenings, as well as access to a top nursing staff, caring social workers and basic handyman services. In 2019 we also held our third bi-ennial P.I. conference featuring dozens of vendors and useful and informative panel discussions.

Project Independence also continues to provide hundreds of free taxi rides for our seniors for food shopping and discounted taxi rides to medical appointments. These services are key in enabling our seniors to maintain their independence, so that they can age comfortably in place and stay in their homes. With all these extraordinary programs for our seniors it's no wonder that North Hempstead was named the eighth Best Place to Retire in the U.S. by Money Magazine. Our seniors are the backbone of our community. They live here, they have raised their families here, they've paid their taxes here and we are happy to be there for them now.

Our **Parks and Recreation department's** programming expands each year by providing more and more opportunities for residents of all ages, with our annual Memorial Day Fireworks, our summer concert series throughout all our parks, Winter Wonderland at Clark Garden, a drop-in summer recreation program at Caemmerer, Fuschillo and Broadway parks; a Summer Recreation Program at the "Yes We Can" Community Center, and Vacation Recreation programs during school vacations. This year we again have a vacation recreation program - Tuesday, February 18 and Wednesday, February 19 beginning at during the February school break at Michael J. Tully Park in New Hyde Park with lots of great activities planned. Our programming at the "Yes We Can" Community Center has now expanded to include STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) activities for girls

in the After-School Program; free dance classes, as well as informational programs courtesy of Cornell Cooperative Extension to teach kids about health and nutrition and there's more to come. We recently welcomed our new Director Tyronza Murray to the Center and we look forward to great things.

We've heard concerns from residents about the need for a **cat shelter** and we responded. We awarded a contract to a firm that will address the issue of finding space for a cat shelter so that we can accommodate cats and expand the Trap Neuter Release program. We have also awarded the Port Washington Animal Hospital a contract for a voucher program. The Town will pay for the voucher and a resident can take a captured feral cat to the hospital using the voucher. This new voucher program will be our third active program to target the issue of feral cats. The new program will work alongside our mobile clinic and trapper services coordinated through our 311 Call Center. This new initiative will allow us to greatly increase the number of cats we are able to spay and neuter. More specific details regarding our voucher program will be announced soon.

We continue with our "Not In Our Town" initiative, which is more necessary than ever. This year we joined with dozens of youngsters at our "Yes We Can" Community Center's summer program to declare ourselves "up standers" and not bystanders to

incidents of bullying. The campers watched a “Not In Our Town” film about bullying and the importance of being an up stander, held a discussion and traced their footprints and wrote positive messages on them, which were hung up all over the community center.

With the latest rash of violent hate crimes, we cannot be complacent. We need to stand together in unity so that every resident knows they live in a town that will speak out against acts of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and other acts of hate and prejudice. We in the process of planning a meeting to further this initiative sometime in the spring.

The **Town’s 311 Call Center**, established back in 2005, reached a milestone last year as the two millionth call was answered. This was quite an achievement and we sincerely thank our call takers who provide such vital, personal and helpful service to our residents. In times of emergencies our Call Center is open throughout the day and night so that our residents know they can always reach us and count on us.

We continue our wonderful partnership with **the Long Island Nets G-League** as the team utilizes the Town’s “Yes We Can” Community Center’s (YWC) NBA-sized basketball court as its practice facility. The team recently purchased a new

scoreboard for the basketball court and a shot-clock and have been great partners with the town.

In November our Veterans Advisory Committee was honored at a Nets basketball game and good news, there will be a Town of North Hempstead night at the Coliseum on March 4. Free tickets will be available for those who want to attend.

In 2019 the Town coordinated a ground-breaking **environmental** partnership to clean up Hempstead Harbor, working with the Town of Oyster Bay and City of Glen Cove to conduct a major cleaning of the Harbor, a body of water which all the municipalities share. The joint clean-up collected several tons of debris, an assortment of marine garbage, including old docks, tires, broken moorings and pieces of Styrofoam. The Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee and the Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor were instrumental in encouraging the municipalities to work together on the joint cleanup project. After all, we are all neighbors who share the same waterfront and we need to work together on any initiative that can make Hempstead Harbor cleaner and more beautiful. We are scheduling an inter-municipal cleanup again for 2020!

We are also nearing completion of a critically important project-the stabilization of the **Beacon Hill Bluffs** in Port Washington. The project will serve as a long-term solution to stabilize the Bluffs, making them resistant to future erosion and permitting long-term vegetation of native grasses and trees, while ensuring the security of the homes there.

We also listened to our constituents whose quality of life has suffered from the incessant airplane noise and emissions from frequent low flying airplanes approaching and taking off from nearby airports. We have attempted to work with the FAA but we believe that they have consistently kicked the can down the road, or just ignored our requests entirely. And so, it was time to get their attention. The Town has consulted with several of our village's mayors, including Mayor Koblenz, and is now pursuing the retention of a law firm to aid us in taking legal action against the FAA. Our Council Peter Zuckerman has been staunchly advocating for us to take action. Aircraft noise and pollution has become a critical quality of life issue for many of our North Hempstead residents and we all deserve better.

And, we have heard from many residents who are alarmed at the aggressive tactics of the companies who want to install upgraded "5-G" cell phone transmission equipment in residential areas. There are many things that need to be taken into

consideration and we feel that the wireless industry and the FCC are trying to drown our voices out. Instead of listening and trying to address the concerns of the communities, they seem determined to sue their way into our backyards whether we like it or not. We shouldn't have to endure that kind of bullying and we should have some say in where these installations can and cannot be placed. Council Mariann Dalimonte has jumped in to tackle this issue. On March 19 we will be holding a public hearing on this issue and we look forward to hearing from our public.

I, along with many other north shore elected officials and environmental groups, have been concerned about the Army Corps of Engineers developing plans to place flood gates near the Throgs Neck Bridge to protect Manhattan from storm surges, like the ones that occurred during Superstorm Sandy. We do understand the need to protect Manhattan from flooding, but we don't want the north shore to be the designated spillway. It's not OK for the North Shore of Long Island to be considered acceptable collateral damage. I have reached out to the Army Corps of Engineers to express my concerns and will be meeting with a representative on February 26 to request a study of the possible impacts their proposed options would have on our town.

The aircraft noise, 5-G networks and the flood gates are all examples of how local governments are being compelled to take on issues that should be dealt with on the federal level. Whether it is the FAA, FCC, or the Army Corps of Engineers, we need the government to help represent our needs on our local level.

Which ends the “report card” portion of my address. Now for the 2020 “things to look forward to” list! You’ll see that there is a lot of overlap as our Town’s work is always evolving.

Our much-anticipated **North Hempstead Beach Park** redevelopment project is moving forward to the engineering design stage after a two-year visioning process. This park on the waterfront has always possessed the potential to become a beautiful recreational destination that all residents can enjoy and today we are closer to that reality. Some of the first stage projects will include renovations to the promenade; improvements to the parking lots; the addition of kayak launches and the construction of a year-round restaurant-concession in order to bring in visitors to the park. We will be awarding the RFP for the design and permitting phase of the project at the February 27th Town Board meeting.

Whitney Pond Park in Manhasset will be the subject of a re-visioning this year as well, as we form a visioning committee comprised of members of the community to help us determine how to make better use of this park. Council Member Veronica Lurvey is spearheading this effort.

And while it cannot be called a “ground-breaking” since it’s on the water, work began last fall on the construction of a dock at the **Stepping Stones Lighthouse** in the middle of Long Island Sound. The dock will be a game changer for restoration of the lighthouse and will enable access. How great it will be for future generations to have a better sense of our maritime history. And while I’ve never done a ribbon cutting in the middle of the water, I’m game!

Some much-anticipated environmental capital projects on schedule to be completed this year include the dredging of Gerry Pond Park, Manorhaven Beach and the area around Town Dock which will improve water quality. We are also constructing a vehicle and equipment washing bay station at the highway yard which will prevent pollution from entering our ground water supply. I am especially excited about a project going on right now that will develop a water management system using storm water collected at both the Solid Waste Management Authority landfills and at Harbor Links Golf Course to help address water conservation concerns at the golf

course. This has the potential to save millions of gallons of water for irrigation! Re-using storm water runoff for annual irrigation purposes is a project that just makes good environmental and economic sense.

We are all looking forward to the official ribbon cutting on our new extension to the **Hempstead Harbor Trail**. This newest addition adds about another mile to the trail, making the length a total of almost two miles. I walked this new extension and I can tell you that it is absolutely amazing! It meanders along the waterfront and I know it will quickly become one of the most popular recreational destinations in our town. This extension now brings the trail all the way to Roslyn. We are already getting feedback from those using the trail and I can tell you it has rave reviews!

The **Homestead Housing apartments** are nearing completion and we hope to have that ribbon cutting sometime this spring. This North Hempstead Housing Authority project is adding 76 units of affordable senior housing in New Cassel, on the former site of the Grand Street School. Applications will be accepting until February 19. I'd like to thank our Housing Authority Executive Director Sean Rainey for all his hard work guiding this beautiful addition to the community. We look forward to moving ahead with the total renovation of our Laurel Homes at Roslyn in 2020, which will also add eight additional units.

And this spring, the Town will be launching the formation of a North Hempstead **Senior Softball Team** to be part of the Long Island Senior Softball Association. The team is open to residents of North Hempstead, 60 years of age and over and will play 30 games beginning in 2020. And seniors, we hear you. More pickle ball courts! We now have pickle ball courts at Clinton G. Martin Park, we've marked two additional courts for pickle ball at Michael J. Tully Park and Manorhaven AND if that is not enough pickles for you, we are looking into adding a court at Whitney Pond Park in 2020.

Our 53 beautiful parks add to the quality of life for all our residents and this year, as one of our more ambitious new initiatives, we will be unveiling a program that will keep our parks in peak condition, while also providing accountability on our part and transparency for our residents. We call it our Park Enhancement Assessment Program, or PEAP, and it will help us measure the conditions of our parks on a regular basis...everything from safety issues and the maintenance of equipment and sidewalks, to cleanliness and the conditions of the fields. It will be modeled after a similar program in New York City and I thank our new Parks Commissioner Arnyce Foster-Hernandez for implementing this initiative.

Think of the PEAP program like a comprehensive check list. A Town employee will check off dozens of items, as part of the inspection and assessment of each park. This checklist will be entered into a data base and all this information will be available for viewing on our website. So, for example, if you visit one of our parks and see a broken bench, you would be able to check the data base immediately to see if that issue has been reported and when is it scheduled to be repaired. And if it's not on the list then you can report it. It will make the evaluation of our parks an open book. It is my belief that this new initiative will make visiting any of our wonderful parks a more gratifying experience. You see, you're never too old for a report card!

And we are looking forward to the launching of our software system called **Citizen Serve**. Throughout 2020 the Town will begin migrating many of its departments to this new system, starting with the building department. It is modern, intuitive and easy to use. With Citizen Serve we will have the opportunity to manage the entire permit and licensing system online from applications of permits, to intake, through plans review and on to inspections. It will allow for online scheduling of appointments, professional license and permit expiration notices and renewal reminders. It provides complete customer care to help our Town provide online services to our residents and will help to provide our building department and other departments with the most current and efficient technology.

In 2009 North Hempstead passed a resolution to become a certified **Climate Smart Community**, a program providing guidance to local governments on best practices for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

It is our goal this year to work towards achieving a higher level of certification- becoming a **Bronze** Certified Climate Smart Community. The Town has completed many actions thus far towards the Bronze certification and this year we will be working hard to check off even more of the boxes so that we can actually achieve the Bronze rating. These will include tracking energy usage of Town buildings, increasing charging stations for electric cars with the possibility of implementing an electric car share program and searching for possible location sites for solar panels.

We will also be looking to create a green procurement policy for the Town in an effort to purchase products and services that have a reduced negative impact or increased positive impact on the environment and human health compared to traditional products.

And just a reminder that 2020 is the year of the census. Our very own Council Member Viviana Russell is the co-chair to the Nassau County Local Government Committee.

Please participate and make sure that Nassau County is completely and accurately counted in the Census. The decisions made based on the information obtained from the 2020 Census will affect the quality of life for the people here on Long Island for the next 10 years. It's our responsibility as a Town and as a member of the greater Long Island community to ensure every person is counted so that we all receive the proper resources and congressional representation we deserve.

So, this next year is going to be a year of exciting initiatives and forward movement for our town, we have a great team working to make these plans a reality.

You have placed your trust and confidence in me as your supervisor and I do not take that lightly. It is truly an honor to serve you. The residents of North Hempstead are among the most educated, enthusiastic and civic-minded citizens I know. I am proud to work together with all of you as my partners in government.

A 20th Century Japanese author Akutagawa said it best and so eloquently...

Individually we are a drop.

Together we are an ocean.

Just imagine what we can do by working together.