

When I took office last January, nobody would have believed what was in store for us in 2020. Although, not as hard hit as the big cities, Linwood still has had its cases and was able to come together and persevere. We all hope that with the vaccine now available life will start to get back to normal. Linwood thrives on community and embraces the social aspects of the bike path, parks, and other recreation amenities; not to mention an ice cream, coffee, or a meal out at one of our fine restaurants. The City of Linwood never closed through this pandemic. We unfortunately had to stop seeing residents face to face for a while, but we never stopped serving you.

The Construction Office was always open and was led by Jim Galantino our Construction Official as well as Angela Marshall who serves as TACO/Zoning Officer with her assistant Whitney Rodriguez. They were as busy as ever and handled every transaction without missing a beat. Our esteemed Fire official Tom Flynn and his Deputy Nick LaRotonda took the department to new heights completing 654 inspections for the year and raising revenue to its highest level ever.

The great news out of the Tax Assessor's Diane Hensley's office is that tax appeals are down, and real estate prices are rising. We had similar good news as our Tax Collector Silvia Washington and Assistant Michael Allenbaugh have our collection rate at 99.36 percent which in this COVID year is exceptional.

The Public Works Department led by Chip Jones and Assistant Mike Ware took on some major projects such as installing Speed and LED Radar stop signs around the City, a new floating dock at Seaview Docks and soon to be open Poplar Ave Landing, street cleaning, storm water basin cleaning and outfall pipes. The largest and toughest project was getting the City cleaned and back up and running after Hurricane Isaias. I can honestly say what took Linwood a week took other cities months to clean up after the storm. Chip and his crew are amazing, and we thank them for the little and big things they do every day for the residents.

The Fire Department did a great job helping Public Works with the cleanup effort and were on call 24/7 during the storm and aftermath. They were instrumental in keeping people safe from the numerous down wires throughout the City. We are lucky to have a Fire Department to call on that will come out in any kind of weather to assist residents and even sometimes non-residents who are injured on

the City's roadways. The Department is led by Captain Jay Loder and Volunteer Fire Chief Marty Walley and we thank them for their service.

The Police Department had a remarkably busy year keeping the roadways safe as well as responding to residents in need. Do not be surprised to see them on their bikes on beautiful sunny days patrolling and visiting with residents in and around the bike path. We are also happy to announce that Officer Kaos is back out on patrol after a health scare and back to 100 percent. The Police Department has fully taken over Code Enforcement and really has made a difference around the City. Even with Schools closed our School based officers were still out being a resource for protection of staff and students at Mainland High School and when needed at our primary schools. The front-line supervisors even found the time to take a three-day command and leadership class given by the FBI. I stated earlier that Public Works put up signs around the City that were purchased by the Police to help with difficult traffic issues around the City. These areas were chosen for the most part from verbal and written interactions from the public asking for help to solve those issues. A thorough investigation is done by the Police and City Engineer and a recommendation is made.

The City Engineer Vince Polistina and his staff especially the wonderful Jen Heller completed many projects last year. They are also working on lots of new projects for this year. Highlights include the Wabash Avenue widening project by the Belhaven Middle School, paving of Brighton Avenue, Sterling Avenue, Wilson Avenue, Davis Avenue and River Drive all paid for by a \$290,000 grant from the NJ DOT. This year Wabash Avenue from Poplar Avenue to Patcong Avenue will be resurfaced and drainage improvements will be made also from a grant from the NJ DOT. Also, the Polar Avenue pump station will be completely refurbished to help with any flooding in that area. We also will be undertaking a refurbishment of the Library inside and out and hope to have a nice new amenity for the under 5-year-old set as well as a new room dedicated to Makerspace programming.

The City, in its ever-growing efforts to ensure open space remains in the City, purchased two parcels of land with Grant money from the Frank H. Stewart Trust and Atlantic County Open Space program. These include the area around Cleveland and Wabash Avenue's as well as a property along Patcong Creek at Poplar Avenue which we will open to Linwood residents for Canoeing/Kayaking

this spring. We installed a new roof on the Linwood Historical Society which was 75 percent funded through a grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust.

The shared Municipal Court had its first full year in Linwood, and they have had to learn a whole new way to serve the public as Courts changed over to Zoom. Laura Garvey Santoro the Court Administrator and Deputy Chelsie Havens with their Assistant Shantal Swaby put many hours in getting us ready to have court in this new way. It was not easy but court is running smoothly, and we thank them for a job well done.

The City Clerk and Financial office run with utmost professionalism and I thank CFO Anthony Strazzeri and our Deputy Clerk and new Planning Board Secretary Mary Cole for the great work they do every day. Our Auditors Leon Costello and Carol Russ make sure we are doing everything correct and usually have a perfect score every year. City Solicitor Joseph Youngblood is now in his 43rd year and is always a guiding force on our decision making.

And I will say it again this year that the glue that holds everything together is our City Clerk Leigh Ann Napoli who makes everyone's life easier and I am sure all the people who serve on Council or work for the City would agree that they would not want to do their jobs without her.

In closing I would like to thank all our Council Members, board members and volunteers who give so much time to the City. I also would like to thank my wife Brett and my two boys Zach and Xander for allowing me to do this job and serve the residents of this great City.

Mayor Darren Matik