

## 2018 Montgomery Township Committee Reorganization Remarks

### **DEPUTY MAYOR CHRISTINE MADRID**

Good morning everyone. Thank you for coming. Congratulations to Mayor Conforti. I look forward to working with you in this new role. I am so glad that you decided to spend your retirement with us! Reflecting back on 2017, I am proud that we kept spending low, continued to protect public health and safety, and invested in our infrastructure in many areas of town. We paved a lot of roads. The new park signs as well as park improvements were such a great addition as well. I hope they bring more people to our beautiful parks and all that they have to offer.

The Redevelopment Zone near the Village Shopper and the Tiger's Tale, for which the township recently received an award for Excellence in Planning, is moving ahead. I'm really excited about the services that this will provide our residents. I know I'm not the only one still waiting for that Starbucks. Construction in the Belle Mead section of town, approved decades ago, is making progress. And the much anticipated Madison Marquette is ready to go. These projects are all important for services, for revenue, for the loop roads to enhance traffic flow, and for the sense of community they will offer. We want residents to stay in town and to use our local businesses. Importantly, development has been targeted to the commercial areas of town along 206, and balanced with many open space acquisitions- over 200 acres since 2016 alone. Most recently, we preserved more of the Cherry Brook Preserve, largely with funds from our Transco pipeline negotiations. These open space acquisitions are so important to maintaining the rural character of our town, and they will continue to be an important priority for us going forward.

This was a big year for the police department, and I am proud to have taken a big role in shaping the future of one of the most important services that the township provides. We promoted a lot of dedicated and highly qualified police officers to leadership positions, and I'm excited to see what they can all do in their new roles. It was a pleasure working with our command staff to make that happen.

As always, there will be budget challenges as we look to keep taxes as low as possible while providing great service to residents. I am very concerned at the lapse of the 2% cap on police and fire interest arbitration awards and the impact

that this will have on our municipal budget. This has been an effective tool for municipalities to control salary costs and to stay within the 2% overall property tax cap, which still remains. I hope that the legislature and our new governor will act to extend the cap so that municipalities retain this important and common sense budget management tool.

With the added challenge of changes to the federal tax code, and the significant impact those changes will have on New Jersey residents, it is especially important for us to not only work to keep taxes low, but to also explore all avenues that might help to mitigate that impact. Ideas have been proposed statewide such as a municipal charity to provide tax credits for donations- an idea worthy of further exploration. We will also look at shop local programs that towns such as Hillsborough offer, where residents can get property tax credits at the time of a purchase at a participating local merchant. Anything that can help to mitigate the impact of these changes on our residents needs to be on the table. We have much work to do, but I look forward to working with our township professionals, my fellow committee members, and members of our community to make it all happen.

Montgomery is truly a special place to raise a family. Being a part of this committee and having a role in shaping that community for my kids and yours is such a wonderful opportunity. I am so grateful and excited to be Deputy Mayor this year and to continue working towards making this community an even better place every day. Thank you.