

West Windsor Township

Office of the Mayor

State of West Windsor Township Address

MARCH 1, 2010

Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh, Ph.D., P.E., P.P.

Good evening and thank you all for joining me for my ninth State of the Township address. I appreciate the support of Township Council for providing me with this time to report on West Windsor Township's activities this past year and plans for the future. As always, I would like to first thank the elected officials and volunteers for continuing to serve the residents of this great municipality despite the demands of their work and families. Numerous evening meetings take place throughout the year for both the Township and the recreational and community groups which add so much to our quality of life. I will be introducing five selected individuals who have exemplified this spirit of giving later on in my address to you.

We have not been immune to the difficulties with our State's economy. It resulted in a very challenging year for West Windsor and our government in 2009. Revenues were down across the board. We are currently working on the 2010 budget, the introduction of which was extended to March 19 given the changes in State government and the delayed calculation of state aid for this year. We have been working with our Department Heads in an effort to provide Council with a responsible budget for 2010 that addresses our demand for high quality services that our residents deserve while at the same time continuing my policy of sound long term financial planning and stable tax trends. The budget that we provide to Council will have information concerning specific areas of increased costs so that the Council and public may better understand the proposed budget as they proceed with their deliberations towards its ultimate passage.

Currently, the Township remains a full-service community with garbage collection, recycling, and fire and emergency services contained in the taxes that we pay. Residents of many other municipalities have to arrange their own garbage collection and pay extra taxes to fire districts. So far, West Windsor has been able to avoid this. Meanwhile, we continue to be a growing community. We have seen the completion of the Estates of Princeton Junction and the start of the Elements. Development of the Windsor Garden apartments is now beginning and further controlled development is on the horizon. In 2000, the census put the population of West Windsor at 22,032. In 2009, the estimated population has grown to 27,000. With population growth of over 20% in the past 10 years, I am happy to report that service levels have remained and improved in some areas while we have not grown our administrative staff.

The commercial growth of West Windsor has been mixed. We are still talking with the Rite Aid executives to start development on County Route 571 where the buildings are currently boarded up for safety. We are very close to having completed plans that will allow them to break ground

and are hoping that will occur late spring or early summer. We continue to meet with the management company of the Windsor Plaza shopping center where the ACME was. They are going through a transition of ownership from a trust to the heirs and pursuing State requirements. That is going slower than we would like but there is activity and we remain in contact with both the management company and the heirs.

On the plus side, University Square, which has remained empty for so many years, is now seeing tenants beginning to fill the building. The first two tenants are Otsuka America Pharmaceutical and Axis Reinsurance. We have also seen a Trader Joes move into West Windsor as well as a Home Goods. Princeton Power Systems has taken up residence at Sarnoff. The WWM property on County Route 571 which had been dormant for so long has now been remediated and capped and construction plans are in the Community Development Department for all but the PNC building. We remain encouraged by this activity.

In 2009, we were once again awarded a Triple A bond rating from Standard and Poor's and we continue to balance our spending to maintain a quality of life for all residents. Even with the economy remaining unpredictable, we have managed to accomplish quite a lot. We now have a sewer along Meadow Road which was a major project paid for by developer dollars. We have extended bike lanes on numerous additional roads. The Senior Center addition was completed and offerings have been increased. Work began on the firehouse on Alexander Road where the Arts Council will take up residence. We had an open house to discuss County Route 571 which brings us one step closer to seeking federal funding. We have continued our programs to repair residential roads and sidewalks damaged by street trees. We received numerous grants from the State for road and sidewalk projects and for remediation of the compost property which we plan to utilize for commuter parking.

This year will see many of these grant projects take place since planning and permitting was done in 2009. These include the Alexander Road 'S' curve reconstruction; Wallace Road improvements; North Post Road pedestrian improvements from the Municipal Center to the train station; Dutch Neck Village improvements; completion of the Meadow Road realignment; Phase I of the Penn Lyle Road reconstruction; and a bicycle and pedestrian path along South Post Road from North Post to Mercer Lake. The Township also received a grant from Mercer County in the amount of \$448,500 for recreational improvements at Duck Pond Park. We will be seeing a lot of activity in the park this year including the creation of a fishing pond. While not a Township grant, the New Jersey Department of Transportation will be making pedestrian and traffic improvements to the intersection of County Route 571 with Wallace Road and Cranbury Road this spring. These improvements will include count-down timers on traffic signals; crosswalks in every direction; a left turn lane from the bridge onto Cranbury Road; and a pedestrian path over the bridge with a pedestrian crossing at Station Road.

In the redevelopment area, NJ Transit is moving forward with the planning and construction of a parking garage. West Windsor staff together with the West Windsor Parking Authority has been working with NJ Transit to complete a concept. The garage will be on the west side of the tracks and includes a redesign of the taxi stand area to better accommodate drop offs and buses. The garage will have space for retail on the first level. As you may know, we are in litigation with a property owner who wants far more housing than the Township does. We continue to stand firm on the issues related to housing that were called for in the plan. However, we need to watch closely the changes that are taking place within the state government especially with the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH).

In another development, five area Mayors and I have joined together to lobby the State to move forward with the Penns Neck project. This project was defined by the Penns Neck Environmental Impact Statement which was initiated in 2001 and completed in 2005. This project calls for an overpass at Harrison Street, a Route One underpass at Washington Road, and the Vaughn Drive connector roadway. The Mayors collectively believe that much of the economic growth of this area will be greatly improved if the congestion on Route One through West Windsor is addressed. The Mayors also continue to encourage NJ Transit to pursue the Bus Rapid Transit initiative throughout the area. NJ Transit has already announced plans for additional bus routes and bus stops.

In summary, West Windsor is in a good position as we look forward to 2010 and beyond. Recently, I have been speaking with area realtors and have been provided with figures that show that a house in West Windsor sells on average within three months which is the fastest turnaround time in the area. I think because of West Windsor's central location, its schools, recreational opportunities, and train station, our municipality continues to fare well. I also hope that this is a reflection of the quality of life that we try to ensure for our residents. I know that we have very giving residents who strive to make West Windsor a better place. I would like to recognize five of them.

A municipality needs to have good planning for growth, both residential and commercial. A lot of the burden for this is carried by the Chair of the Planning Board. A retired lawyer, Marvin Gardner has been Chairman of the West Windsor Planning Board since 2002, a year after he volunteered to serve on the board. Under his leadership, the Planning Board has adopted a series of planning initiatives such as a Housing Element and Fair Share Plan and revisions to the Township Circulation Plan Element focusing on bicycle and pedestrian design. He held successful hearings on the redevelopment study and the resulting Redevelopment Plan. He has been involved with many development milestones in West Windsor's history. I would like you to join me in thanking him for his dedication and service.

I have always said that a vibrant community must have a balance of community services and recreational opportunities. We are lucky to have so many people to work with the Township to provide recreation for our youth. One of these individuals is Patrick Boyle. Pat has served as a volunteer for many of the sports leagues in the Township including eight years as the treasurer for Pop Warner Football and several years as the Director of Facilities for Pop Warner. He is currently involved with the Babe Ruth League as treasurer. He has also coached for West Windsor Little League and the West Windsor-Plainsboro Soccer Association. Pat has been involved with several major capital projects at Community Park including the construction of the football/lacrosse game field in 2003; construction of the football/lacrosse practice fields including lights in 2008; and improvements to the Babe Ruth field in 2009. Pat is also a volunteer to the West Windsor Parking Authority. I would like to recognize Pat Boyle for all that he has given to the youth of our community.

Another important youth sports leader around town is Andy Lupo. Andy has been a member of the West Windsor Little league for seventeen years and its president for twelve years. He will be stepping down this season. Through his leadership, the Little League has improved their facilities; hosted several District Tournaments; and, in conjunction with the Township, built an indoor batting facility in Community Park in 2002. Andy spearheaded the "Sports Group Alliance" to help improve the playing conditions of the sports fields within the Township. You

may have seen a recent article in the New York Times with a picture of Andy playing touch football with a group of friends. He definitely practices what he preaches. Andy is also a volunteer to the West Windsor Parking Authority and has been serving as its Chair for many years. Please join me in recognizing Andy Lupo for his many contributions to the Township.

I am very proud of how our Township values its senior citizens and that we not only retained our accreditation for our Senior Center but also continue to improve its offerings as shown by the recent expansion. But it takes concerned and selfless residents to help the Township achieve these accomplishments. One such person is Bob Lowe. Bob is a retired banker who first became involved with the Senior Center by starting an Investment Discussion Group which has grown to a weekly meeting of over fifteen participants. He has worked diligently to reinvigorate the non-profit Friends of West Windsor Senior Citizens which raised \$70,000 for program enhancements like computers and audio-visual equipment. For the past three years Bob has chaired the Senior Center Advisory Council, a position to which he was elected again for 2010. Please join me in thanking Bob for his hard work and continued commitment to the Senior Center.

Lastly, a very special friend, Jake Fine, only 12 years old and a 7th grader at Community Middle School who co-founded a youth-run fundraising campaign that has collected more than \$60,000 to find a cure for juvenile diabetes, a disease from which he suffers. Jake also created a buddy program for recently diagnosed diabetes patients.

Because of these accomplishments, Jake is named one of the top youth volunteers in New Jersey for 2010, in the 15th Annual Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. It is an extraordinary honor because more than 21,000 young people across the country were considered this year.

Jake represents the best of America's youth and is a role model to his peers and community. On behalf of West Windsor residents, I'd like to congratulate Jake on his accomplishment and present to him a certificate of recognition.

I want to thank all of you for joining me tonight and for your support. I also want to thank all of the township employees for their hard work. The long list of accomplishments and the list of work yet to be completed are in their hands. With the able leadership of Bob Hary who has assumed the position of our Business Administrator, I know that we will continue to deliver the services and projects that will keep West Windsor a vibrant community.