

2014 STATE OF THE TOWNSHIP SPEECH

Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh

April 7, 2014

Thank you for making the effort to come to my 13th state of the township address. Before my speech, as always, I'd like to thank my wife and my family for all their support and sacrifice over the past 12 and one half years. Their patience and understanding has permitted me to focus on my community service.

More than twenty years ago, I had a vision for West Windsor and decided to run for public office. I wanted to make sure we had stable municipal finances; a community with a high quality of life encompassing our agricultural roots and utilizing current technology; a community that took good care of its retirees and its youth; a community that respected diversity; and a community where we could all come together and call it home. This vision evolved, and continues to evolve, from my own experiences with my growing family; from speaking with so many of my neighbors and friends; from serving on Council; and communicating with those I serve.

Today, West Windsor continues to receive the highest ranking, silver-level certified, sustainable community award from the State Sustainable Jersey Program. This distinction summarizes where we are at the state level with respect to our accomplishments in the social, economic and environmental areas. West Windsor also received awards as one of the top ten municipalities in e-government performance and the third best website in the state. This is an indication of how far we have progressed in the use of information technology to promote citizen engagement with an open and transparent government. Adding to this our many improvements in traffic circulation, environmental clean-up, commuter parking, public services, recreational opportunities, a highly regarded farmers market, a dynamic arts center, a nationally recognized senior center, and a local history museum, we have created and preserved a greater sense of place and community. I pledge to continue to manage our town cost-effectively by striving to have the lowest municipal portion of the property tax rate in the region along with maintaining a Triple-A credit bond rating with full public services including garbage collection, leaf and brush pick-up, and public safety responders.

As you may already know, the state's diversion of energy tax receipts continues to keep municipal property tax rates higher than they need to be. The receipts are supposed to come from utilities to reimburse local towns that host substations and power lines.

As a member of a state League of Municipalities committee that deals with this issue, I am actively pursuing the restoration of this money to West Windsor. Based on an estimate, West Windsor is losing \$1.8 million each year in energy tax receipts because of the state's diversion.

Regarding the 2014 Municipal Budget, as I had mentioned in my budget transmittal to Township Council, all of us share the overall objective and joint desire to keep tax increases in check while maintaining the high quality of municipal services our residents expect and deserve. My proposed budget was formulated with the theme of "long-term

financial planning” understanding that the actions we take this year and next will have impacts on budgets and municipal services going forward. It has long been a mandate of my Administration that we refrain from a policy of up and down “spikes” in our budgets and tax levies. I am aware that Township Council has introduced a budget with a more aggressive use of revenue and Fund Balance with their goal of a 0% tax levy increase for 2014. I respect the different philosophic approach for the same objective. My administration will work with the Council to monitor the progress of that decision and its impact on our Triple A bond rating and long-term sustainable financial goal.

As we know, development usually comes with economic growth. We expect to see more developers coming to West Windsor in the next few years. We need to control and manage growth that enhances our community yet does not negatively impact our educational system and quality of life. The redevelopment plan around the train station, which was formally adopted in November 2011, will serve as a blue print for our future town center. On March 28, 2014, Mrs. Green’s formally opened its doors at the newly renovated Windsor Plaza. It was exciting to see quality ratables such as PJ’s Pancake House, Corner Bakery Café and Mrs. Green’s come to town. With the zoning board approval of the Ellsworth Village Shopping Center, we anticipate that redevelopment of the center will be initiated in the coming months. More and more proposals to create a vibrant town center will be forthcoming. Your participation either through the planning board or zoning board review meetings is welcomed and essential to these efforts. All potential developers will have to follow an open, transparent process for public review based on statutory procedures. More business expansions are also moving forward in a positive direction. These include international business headquarters, shopping centers, legal services, and research institutions already in existence in West Windsor.

We will continue the implementation of bike lanes and sidewalks to ensure the safety of cyclists and pedestrians and increase our open space and recreational opportunities. In the next few years, we plan to work with the State DOT and other stakeholders to begin the Route One traffic improvements and work with the Mercer County DOT to turn Route 571 and Cranbury Road into a bicycle/pedestrian-friendly district to support the transit-oriented development. As with all Township projects, the public will also have the opportunity to be involved in the planning of the Cranbury Road improvements, Howard Hughes property development, and implementation of the redevelopment plan around the train station area.

As the location of one of the thirteen US Olympic training sites in the country, in rowing, we will see some very special events held in West Windsor during the year such as the NCAA Rowing Championship. But on a larger scale, West Windsor and the surrounding region will be the site of the Special Olympics 2014 USA Games. This will be a huge economic benefit to our hotels, restaurants, and other businesses. West Windsor has also been selected as one of the tournament sites for the Babe Ruth Baseball League and the Ironman triathlon. It is truly an honor for us to be the home of Mercer County Park and the recognition that comes with national events being held in our Township.

This year, we plan to establish a new playing field for cricket. We have worked with many active players in the community on this idea for the past few years. The West Windsor Cricket Association has finally been established. Now with a joint effort, we are ready to start the construction of a new field in Community Park off of Route 571. On the other side of town, development of Duck Pond Park on Meadow Road will see tennis courts, basketball courts, a sand volley ball court, pathways and benches. So, more sports and recreational facilities are planned to enrich our social activities.

Completion of the Big Bear Bridge on County Route 571 and the Old Trenton Road Bridge at Edinburg was very critical for traffic improvement in West Windsor. In fact, we are one of the few municipalities who can declare that here in West Windsor, we finally have brought all of our major bridges up to today's standards, thanks in large part to the Mercer County Transportation Department.

We are also lucky to have one of the busiest train stations in the state. With one of the best research universities in the world nearby and Stanford Research Institute as part of our community, we have the opportunity to combine all of these assets to grow our business ratables along Route One to enhance future business opportunities in West Windsor.

Tonight, as we always do, I'd like to recognize two of our outstanding volunteers in this community - Steve Decter and Nancy Kieling.

1. Steve Decter – Steve was elected to the then Township Committee in 1982 and served two terms from 1983-88. He was voted Mayor by the Committee in 1987. He served as Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee from 1990-92. Steve also served as Chairman of the Growth Management Planning Committee (1989-90) and continued to chair the Growth Management Advisory Board (1991) when housing developments were rising so rapidly at the time when resources and infrastructure were stressed in West Windsor. He served on the Planning Board from 1983-88, and 2001-08. He also served as Vice Chair in his final year on the Planning Board.

Steve spent his career at Rutgers in the area of public policy and government issues. At the Center for Government Studies he was involved in many studies that impacted governance and public services. Above all, he was an advocate of good government. He graduated from Princeton and has his graduate degree from Penn.

2. Nancy Kieling – Nancy had served as President and CEO of the Princeton Area Community Foundation for almost 20 year since May 1994. She retired at the end of last year. During her tenure, Nancy worked tirelessly to bring the Foundation from its infancy to its standing today as a leader and advocate for the non-profit sector in Central New Jersey. She was the driving force in taking the Foundation's asset from \$300,000 in 1994 to

nearly \$100 million today. The Foundation was the first Nationally Certified Community Foundation in New Jersey, and among the first nationwide.

Nancy sets a great example for the younger generation in West Windsor of what they might aspire to, in terms of career goals; not only to afford one's own family a basic sense of comfort and security, but to enable many others in the community to have a more secure future as well. Nancy graduated from University of Wisconsin, Madison and has a graduate degree from Old Dominion University.

Lastly, I would like to again thank the municipal staff and volunteers of the Township of West Windsor for their cooperation and hard work. I look forward to working with Council and all of you to continue to improve our community. As in the past, I plan to hold frequent Town Hall meetings to ensure we continue our open exchange of ideas.

Thank you for coming to this special event.