

## **MAYOR'S ADDRESS 2024**

I would like to start out by wishing everyone a Happy New Year and best wishes for a healthy and successful 2024.

Today marks the start of my third term as Mayor. It has been incredible honor to serve the residents of Riverdale for the past 8 years. We started this journey back in 2016 and have been able to establish a great team on the Borough Council. Each individual on the dais brings a level of expertise and professionalism that has served the community well. Our success over the years is a result of their continued efforts to make Riverdale the best place to live and raise a family.

As you all know, we celebrated our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year in the Borough of Riverdale. Our anniversary committee did a fantastic job planning events throughout the year. The signature event was our gala held at the Legacy Castle last April. Close to 600 people attended and the response was overwhelming. Everyone had a great time as we shared our memories of being part of the Riverdale experience.

I would like to take some time to reflect on the accomplishments of the last 8 years with this team.

### **SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE**

- We have successfully provided access to the borough's sewer system to 256 residential properties since 2016. To date, 180 residents have connected to the system. (70% connection rate)
- The next phase of our expansion will start in 2024 with an additional 86 residential properties bringing the total to 342 homes.
- After 40 years, the Borough of Riverdale became voting members of the Pequannock River Basin Regional Sewer Authority with Councilman Dave Desai and Council President Vincent Pellegrini representing Riverdale on the board.
- Our signature accomplishment included our persistent push and ultimate change to the sewer authority's billing methodology to provide what we considered a fairer approach. The change resulted in an annual savings of approximately \$175,000. This savings enabled us to take an aggressive approach to our sewer expansion.

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## ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

- When we embarked on the sewer expansion project, the Council decided to upgrade the streets that added sewer lines.
- These improvements included Belgian block curbing and new sidewalks to replace existing ones. These improvements were made in part by utilizing NJDOT grant funding.
- Since 2016, Riverdale has been awarded \$2,376,645 in NJDOT grants.
- Overall, out of the 57 borough owned streets, we have upgraded 36 streets (63.2%) and have an additional 7 planned for 2024.

## INDEPENDENCE PARK

- Independence Park has received a much-needed face lift. In 2023, we completed the new retaining wall and walking path. This improvement cost over \$450,000. This is the first step in our vision to provide a walking path around the entire perimeter of the park set to begin in 2025.
- With the efforts of Councilman Matt Oswald, the park has been refurbished with upgraded fields and sidewalks. The park is now the home field for the Pompton Lakes High School Girls softball team. We even hosted several County tournaments.
- We will expand the playground area with a Toddler Playground in the spring.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

- In 2023, we held our first annual Riverdale Carnival at the Armory.
- The Labor Day Street Fair continues to be a great event enjoyed by all.
- Unfortunately, in 2023, Riverdale Day was postponed. It will be back in 2024.
- We were able to enjoy our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary fireworks. A special thanks to Councilman Paul Purcell arranging that great display.

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## PERSONNEL

- 2023 saw several retirements.
- Chief Kevin Smith retired on July 1, 2023.
- Officers Gary Keil, Rob DiGiralamo, and Chris Biro retired as well.
- We thank all of them for the years of dedication and service to Riverdale.
- Our longtime Front Office secretary Linda Roetman retired on March 1, 2023.
- Linda was always a great asset to the team and is already missed.

## LOOKING AHEAD

- We are all excited to work with our new Police Chief Chuck Quant.
- In the last year, we hired several new officers as the department takes shape.
- A special thanks to Councilman Steve Revis and Councilman Mike Kheyfets who were instrumental in negotiating a new 4-year contract with the PBA.
- The Police Department transition is complete and we look forward to working with this exceptional group of officers in the years ahead.

## WHAT'S NEXT

- It's no secret that the Riverdale Quarry is set to close at the end of 2024.
- The Quarry Redevelopment Committee has been working with the owners of the property to plan the next chapter.
- I can assure you; this project will have a significant impact for years to come.
- We need to get this right.
- On Hamburg Turnpike, we are seeing the start of some new buildings going up, primarily the old Wes' site and the new "Diamonds by Dawn" location. Both will be a great addition to our downtown area.
- We have been in meetings with officials from Morris County to start the process of expanding the rail trail from the Pequannock border up to Independence Park at Post Lane.
- Part of this project includes the purchase of the old JCP&L property on Post Lane with the plans to create a parking lot to service the trail.

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## SUMMARY

I want to thank the hard-working borough employees who make it all happen.

- Connie Anderson – our Finance and Tax Assistant
- Lisa O'Neill – our Deputy Clerk / Office Manager
- Stephanie Colella – our new Borough Secretary / Planning Board Secretary
- Steve Schotanus – our Public Works Superintendent and his team.
- A.J. Jalloh – our Borough Clerk
- Jill Morano – our new Recreation Director
- Terri Pellegrini – Police Secretary

I would also like to thank the members of the Riverdale Volunteer Fire Department under the leadership of Chief Jim Regeling who is here tonight. They do a great job keeping us safe in the community.

And the countless volunteers on all of our Boards

Thank you all – we appreciate your hard work and dedication to Riverdale.

As we begin year 101, I am excited about the future of Riverdale. As I stated in my gala address, it will always be about the people of Riverdale.

Time will continue to move on. Old stomping grounds will be replaced with new ones. Old buildings will be replaced with modern structures. The landscape will change, but I am confident that Riverdale will continue to prosper and be a great place to live and raise a family.

At the end of the day, it's people that make a community great. And we have 100 years of history to back that up.

***HAPPY NEW YEAR AND MY GOD CONTINUE  
TO BLESS THE BOROUGH OF RIVERDALE.***

***Mayor Paul M. Carelli  
January 3, 2024***