



2020 Mayor of Riverdale Address

By Paul M. Carelli on January 8, 2020

I would like to start out by wishing everyone here today a very happy and healthy new year. It's fantastic to see such a large turnout today as we start the New Year.

It's hard to believe I am starting my second term. It seems like yesterday that I was sworn in as Mayor. I am eager to start a new term and honored to be surrounded by such a great team of Councilman. Riverdale has always had stability on the governing body and I am happy to begin year 4 with the same team. I would like to take a little time to recap the accomplishments of the Mayor and Council over the last 4 years.

FINANCE – led by Councilman Dave Desai

- Implemented and continue our annual reassessment program. The main objective is to stabilize taxes by keeping property assessments at near or close to the 100% ratio as possible. This initiative minimizes the risk of spikes in borough taxes.
- The Borough's tax levy has risen only 2.9% over the last 4 years, with the last 3 budgets keeping the municipal taxes flat.
- We went to bid on (2) leased borough properties in 2017. This was an effort to increase revenue and insure we were getting the best possible deals.
- 83NPT – new monthly lease increased from \$1,750 → \$5,500.
- Leaf Compost – new monthly lease from \$3,375 → \$11,550.
- TOTAL = \$204,600 additional revenue to offset taxes.
- As always, we plan to adopt another tax friendly budget in 2020.

PUBLIC SAFETY – led by Councilman Steve Revis

- Negotiated and ultimately agreed to a new 4-year contract with the PBA for 2019-2022.
- Under the leadership of Chief Smith, the department continues to be one of the best trained, equipped, and professional departments around. We thank them for their commitment to Riverdale.
- Our Fire Department has continued to keep us safe and we congratulate the new officers for 2020. They will be sworn in at our January 22nd meeting. I look forward to working with them and Chief Regeling.
- The Public Safety Committee has been working with the Fire Chief on a Recruitment and Retention policy. The Council approved a retention ordinance last year that helps provide monetary incentives for members of the department who greatly volunteer their time to keep us safe. The next phase is to reach out to the community to recruit new members.

PUBLIC WORKS – led by Council President Vinny Pellegrini

- Through attrition, we were able to upgrade positions in the Department of Public Works.
- We made a conscious decision to hire more seasoned employees and add more expertise in our public works department. We hired Pete Daken and John Banaski to join our team who bring a variety of skills to the department.
- Our road improvement program has now completed resurfacing on 15 streets with another 10 scheduled for 2020-21. This represents 35% of the 66 municipal streets in town. We will continue this each year with our plan to follow the sewer expansion projects.
- With the help of our beautification committee led by Michael Carelli, we continued our efforts to expand pride in the community, with the continued plantings of flowers, trees, and decorative landscaping to enhance our properties.
- A special thanks to DPW Superintendent Steve Schotanus and his entire team for their efforts throughout the year. Especially during these cold months, we know they are ready to hit the streets when the snow starts falling. They really are the best around.

PUBLIC UTILITIES – led by Councilman Matt Oswald

- Revamped our entire Field Maintenance program for Independence Park.
- Matt spearheaded a new field rental program which has generated over 20k in the last 4 years.
- Removed the deteriorated basketball court and expanded the soccer fields.
- Purchased a field groomer and took over the maintenance of the field by our DPW crew.
- We opened up our field to the Pompton Lakes High School Lady Cardinals softball team. The Pompton Lakes Board of Education was grateful and the girls loved the field. This year we upgraded the facility with (2) brand new scoreboards that will be operational by opening day.
- Matt also spearheaded the Annual First Responders 5k Walk/Run on Riverdale Day

COMMUNICATIONS– led by Councilman Paul Purcell

- We greatly grew our social media presence with regards to Facebook, Twitter, and our Borough website. Special thanks once again to our Social Media Director, Michael Carelli who manages these sites daily. Information is always timely and relevant.
- We continue to maintain a website full of information. Minutes are published for the last 16 years, Council Booklets, started when I became Mayor are provided BEFORE each Council Meeting, with all of the information available before the Council votes.
- Our new digital sign has been a great asset to get information out to the residents on a timely basis. It can be changed at a moment's notice from anywhere.
- We have continued our Borough newsletter increasing our communication by allowing borough organizations and departments to advertise and provide information to every resident once a month in the mail.
- With Krista Osborne and Michael Carelli, Paul helped organize and create Riverdale Day, a huge success with food, bands, and fireworks. The residents love it.

PERSONNEL– led by Councilman Michael Kheyfets

- 2019 was the beginning of a transition year.
- Our longtime retired Borough Clerk and my Assistant over the last 4 years, Carol Talerico passed away in October. Our Chief Financial Officer for over 20 years, Ken Sesholtz retired at the end of November, and our Tax Assessor, Shawn Hopkins retired at the end of December. Mike and I are currently developing a staffing plan for 2020 that will include adding an employee to the front office.
- We are currently reviewing all borough policies and procedures. Our borough handbook, last updated in 2015 is under review and will be presented later this month.
- 2020 will be a year of change.

One of our greatest accomplishments over the past 4 years has been our aggressive Sewer Expansion Project. The first 3 phases included 164 new connections to the system. Phase 4 has been designed and is awaiting approval from the NJDEP where another 63 homes will be added. The Council adopted revised ordinances to ease the burden of cost by allowing residents pay for the improvements over time without the mandate to connect immediately.

After 30 years, Riverdale will become a full voting member of the Pequannock River Basin Regional Sewer Authority in 2020. With the assistance of Councilman Desai and Council President Pellegrini, we were finally able to convince the authority to change its method of billing to number of connections versus flow. This will result in savings to Riverdale of over \$100,000 per year.

In summary, we once again have ambitious goals for 2020 – but I know we have the right people to get the job done.

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

Connie Anderson – our Finance and Tax Assistant

Linda Forbes – our Deputy Clerk

Linda Roetman – our Borough Secretary, Zoning Official, Property Maintenance Enforcement, etc

Steve Schotanus – our Public Works Superintendent

A.J. Jalloh – our Borough Clerk

Krista Osborne – our Recreation Director

Michael Carelli – our Social Media Director

Police Department / Public Works / Municipal Court / Library

And the countless volunteers on all of our Boards

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

Wishing you all a happy, healthy, and successful New Year.