

As 2011 comes to a close and we begin the second half of our first term in office, this administration is proud to bring its mid-term report to the forefront. When we took office in January 2010, our first goal was to bring the community back together and begin to correct some of the mistakes that were made in the past. One of the first things we did was eliminate political retaliation against employees. Not one employee has lost his or her job since we took office. We have made it a priority to have an open door policy where employees and residents are welcome to stop by with questions or concerns. One way to make this possible was to go from part-time status to a full-time mayor.

We have also maintained our commitment of reestablishing a strong sense of community by bringing back community oriented events such as parades, improving and expanding the summer concerts and introducing new programs such as the street fair and movies in the park where folks could reunite with friends and neighbors. Many of these events are sponsored solely by our corporate neighbors, which results in substantial savings to our residents.

We have kept our promise to televise council meetings to allow the entire community to see and hear how government is being run in an open public forum. Residents can tune to channel 36 which is being updated with new information on a more appealing screen, or simply click on links on the town website, (www.secaucusnj.org) and watch government in action. Council members discuss old business, bring up new business and provide a full report on committees. Residents are welcome to bring up concerns during the public comment portion of the meeting and can be assured of an honest answer.

Each committee consists of residents as well as public officials to help resolve issues that are important to all our residents. Since reviving the environmental and shade tree committees, we have planted over 300 new trees in neighborhoods and parks throughout town. We have increased our recycling program and held our first Green Summer festival in our efforts to be one of New Jersey's sustainable communities. The animal control committee is working hard raising money for the care and well-being of our companion animals as well as making significant changes to the shelter. The animal shelter outreach program has been expanded with a satellite adoption site located at 145 Front Street. We also have a committee working hard to help entice a supermarket to come into town. Hopefully we will have some good news to tell you soon.

Another important component of our platform was to restore honesty, integrity and trust in government. We kept that promise by eliminating all lobbyists and unnecessary consultants and we have kept our commitment to establish a second ambulance. In doing so, we went from a paid EMS service at roughly \$600,000 per year with one ambulance to two full time ambulances at no cost to the residents. That's a savings of over \$1 million.

We reorganized the health department to include property maintenance and animal control complaints to better address quality of life issues. We hired a new full time administrative assistant to answer calls and appointed an additional health inspector to ensure all inspections are completed. The board of health is active in its goal of raising awareness of all public health related topics.

We also better organized the finance department to tighten controls and we have gone over every line of the budget and financial audits over the last several years. To this end, we have identified over \$8

million in uncollected fines, fees and assessments which we will be collecting over the next several years. We have put to good use idle funds from old grants and accounts that would otherwise not be used, to cover the cost of new projects without an added burden to the taxpayer.

The reorganization of the Police Department and Public Works is on the horizon, which should result in a more efficient and enhanced service to the public.

We are pleased to announce that our municipal tax rate has been kept stable for the past two years and we plan to keep it that way for many years to come. Our efforts to hold the line on taxes is working, a difficult task, since our town gets very little in state aid. An analysis by the Star Ledger just this past Sunday revealed that Secaucus has the lowest average property tax bill in Hudson County.

By 2013 all of our parks will be upgraded. Shetik Field on County Avenue now accommodates, soccer, basketball, softball, Little League and Tennis Courts. Ivanoski Park on Charles Street and Nater Park on Koelle Boulevard have also been updated to include new state of the art playground equipment as well as a water park feature.

This year we have received outside funding to construct a beautiful nature playground at Mill Creek Point. Snipes Park off Meadowlands Parkway and Trolley Park, at the end of Paterson Plank Road, two passive parks, will also be completely renovated through that same type of funding. Our plans this year are to add a water park feature and a new playground at Buchmuller Park and Eckel Park on Ninth Street. Both will include a new soft rubber playing surface to prevent injuries. We also plan to continue to renovate the downtown business district making it more appealing to residents and visitors as well as our merchants. A comprehensive flood control analysis is coming up this year to help solve problems in our flood zone areas including two major capital projects, on Golden and Centre Avenues and Farm Road. We have also seen one of the biggest road improvement projects with more than 16 streets repaved to date.

We are also proud to report improvements to our youth and senior services. Seniors are enjoying day trips, holiday luncheons as well as health fairs and many other exciting events all year long. The Senior Centre on Center Avenue will be undergoing a new facelift using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). To assist in getting the word out on what is happening in town, we have initiated the first Senior Citizen newsletter to keep our elder residents informed of the many programs available. A new online newsletter is also being launched soon.

The Teen Center reopened with new activities including video and computer games and recently the first Tot Center opened where our youngest citizens enjoy creative activities in a spacious safe environment. By reducing the cost of, and expanding the programs at the Recreation Center on Koelle Boulevard, membership has increased by 100 percent. By making the fees more reasonable, the entire community can benefit from the facility and its many fitness programs. Don't miss your opportunity to stop by any one of our facilities and join the fun.

In addition to reducing our carbon footprint by banning Styrofoam, we are preparing to launch the largest solar energy initiative in the town's history on our municipal buildings, parking lots and schools.

Additionally, we are in the process of switching our fleet to hybrid vehicles. To date, we have six already in place which dramatically reduces the cost of fuel and emissions. Stay tuned for the launching of the new town wide internet newsletter for more exciting environmental initiatives this innovative committee has planned.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges we hope to accomplish this year is reduce or possibly eliminate tax sharing. As you may know, Secaucus is one of the highest contributors in the Meadowlands District with nearly \$2.7 million paid last year and over \$70 million since tax sharing was enacted in 1968. We have been working with state officials to change the formula to make it more equitable to all municipalities. Secaucus has carried the load far too long.

While other communities across the state are feeling the economic crunch, we are pleased to report that Secaucus ranked third in the state this year for construction fees for new hotels, data centers, warehouses and residential properties. This is a true testament that people want to come to our community where it is alive and thriving.

Our door has always been open and will remain open for public input. Don't be concerned about calling, or coming to a public meeting to voice concerns or share ideas. The only way we know what concerns you have is if you tell us. You can call my cell phone 201-376-3576 or drop me an email at mgonnelli@secaucus.net. We promise to listen to your concerns and ideas and when necessary take appropriate action to assure Secaucus remains the number one place to live in this great state.

I thank you for giving me the honor and privilege to serve as your mayor for the last two years. I look forward to continuing to work together into the future.