

Mayor's Message

January 2009

2008 will be remembered as an extremely challenging year in so many ways for the Borough of Lincoln Park. The economic crisis, which has been termed an event of global proportions, has filtered right down through our nation and state and has landed squarely on our municipality (as it has every town) and all of its businesses, employees and residents.

2008 began with the prospect of an unwelcome tax increase due mostly to the rising costs of fuel, insurance and pensions along with the many state mandates that are forced upon us at the municipal level without any state relief. The Governor then attempted to control state spending by decreasing the aid that it sends to each municipality. Complicating matters was the fact that the State was so sluggish in getting information to the towns, that a tremendous amount of uncertainty was created, leading to delays in passing our budget and the hampering of being able to budget appropriately.

In the midst of our budget process, administration was able to uncover an apparent theft of nearly \$20,000.00 by our former CFO. Through the efforts of my office and staff, Borough administrator Joe Maiella and the Police Department, an arrest was made, indictments were handed down and prosecution is ongoing.

As if all this wasn't enough adversity, we rolled right into our tax board mandated property re-valuation. Making matters worse was the fact that the process was begun at a time when real estate prices were close to their peak and the new assessments were delivered to our residents in the midst of the market's nose dive. The new numbers now seem almost as skewed over value as the undervalued numbers which were trying to be corrected.

In light of all this difficulty, I am happy to say that Lincoln Park was able to flourish in many ways this year.

The borough continued to improve and increase the various programs and events run by Administration, Recreation, Health and Police Departments for the benefit of our residents. Much of the success of these programs must go to Parks and Recreation Superintendent Janet Cassidy, Health Officer Pat Pignatelli, Police Chief Sean Canning, DPW Superintendent Tom Piorkowski and Ellen Ross, who are gifted at being able to take my visions and put them into practice. More importantly, each of these individuals has their own vision and a great passion for improving the quality of life for the residents of town. Most importantly, however, is that these borough officials listen to the ideas of the residents which have led to the formation of many of these new programs. The newly formed Lincoln Park Runner's Club, the first ever town wide garage sale and several of the newly offered recreation programs started as ideas of residents and have been implemented, promoted and/or funded by the borough.

I would also like to give my sincere thanks to the Borough Council for supporting these programs through endorsement or funding. In harsh economic times, being able to provide low or no cost recreational and social opportunities for our residents is one of the many things that make our town so extraordinary.

We have continued to enhance Lincoln Park's participation in the New Jersey Mayor's Wellness Campaign. This campaign is supported by nearly every volunteer organization in town...Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, PTO, PAL, Police, Fire and First Aid along with many others including regional organizations like the Rotary Club and individual citizens who help to make this a great program for increasing awareness for fitness for our populace. A good amount of the businesses in town give support to this program through donations of time, money and resources.

Earlier this year, the Lincoln Park Police Department achieved the superior status of National

Recognition and State Accreditation due to their efforts in setting a high level of operating standards and procedures. I would like to recognize Chief Canning, Deputy Chief Tom Andrascik, and every member of the PD for not only reaching this objective, but for adhering to the achieved level of quality every day.

The borough was the recipient of several state and federal grants in 2008 for emergency services and communications. In addition to public grants, Lincoln Park was the grateful beneficiary of two private gifts from an anonymous resident which were designated by the donor to re-construct our aging tennis courts and for the use of our recreation department.

I like to think that one can always find good in a bad situation. One truly great thing for the Borough of Lincoln Park in the wake of the troubles of our former CFO has been the addition of Ms. Kerry Giesler as our new CFO. In less than a year, Kerry has been instrumental in saving the borough thousands of dollars that would have otherwise been lost. She has brought a new level of professionalism to the borough and an already great finance team which excels in their service to the town.

Although we were not challenged by any severe natural or other catastrophic event this past year, it is comforting to know that our emergency services stand at the ready 24/7/365. Along with the police and Office of Emergency Management, I would like to thank our volunteers in the Fire Department under the guidance of Chief Sal Marino, the LPEMS led by Chief Richard VanOrden and the C.E.R.T. members who protect us whenever they are called upon.

Special recognition must be given to the following organizations for their contributions to our community this year: The Pequannock Valley Rotary Club, the Pequannock UNICO, and the Lincoln Park American Legion for donations to our food pantry. This year, more than ever, these donations along with borough funding enable us to provide assistance to residents who may be having a difficulty making ends meet. The Rotary Club also established the Morris County DWI Victims Memorial on the grounds of our municipal complex. The Lincoln Park Lion's Club for their installation of a new flag pole at the clock tower on Chapel Hill Road. The S.A.L. of the LP American Legion for their placement of United States Flags and flags representing each of the branches of U.S. Armed forces along the Veteran's Memorial Bridge on Comly Road.

Of course, one of the most impressive events to happen this year was Lincoln Park being named one of the top 5 places to live in the entire state of New Jersey by New Jersey Monthly magazine. Once again, congratulations to every one of us for achieving such a lofty position.

I would like to thank Councilman Ray Kerwin for his year of service as Council President and welcome Councilman Jim Wild to the position this year. I would like to also thank Councilwoman Ellen Harrigan who leaves council this year after many years of service to the borough. Welcome to Matt Petracca who will now be representing Ward 2 on the council. As a former councilman from Ward 2 myself, I hope you find the position as enjoyable as I did. To all of the council members I look forward to 2009 serving the borough with you.

I would like to thank my wife Andrea and my children Brielle and Camryn for allowing me to take away from them the time this position demands.

Finally, before we get back to business, I would ask that when you have a moment, you join me in wishing for the health and well being of each of us in the coming year and especially for the safety of those who are serving overseas.

David Runfeldt