

# Supervisor Romaine Presents Accomplishments, Goals and an Optimistic Future in his State of the Town Address, "Turning the Corner"

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**Farmingville, NY** - On March 4, Supervisor Ed Romaine delivered his second State of the Town address in the auditorium at Brookhaven Town Hall. [Click here to view the speech.](#) The theme of the address was "Turning the Corner," and he delivered an optimistic look at the great strides that have been made this past year, his new initiatives and the challenges that face the Town in the years ahead.

In his opening remarks, the Supervisor spoke of his first fifteen months in office and his successful efforts to restore fiscal stability to the Town. He renewed his commitment to control spending and reduce debt, which he has accomplished with a 2014 budget that freezes taxes, decreases the reliance on surplus and proposes no layoffs. He has also worked with the Town Board to limit new staff, reduce the debt, sell off non-performing, non-essential Town assets and eliminate more than \$16 million in pipeline debt. His conservative fiscal approach over the past year has paid off as Standard and Poor's reaffirmed the Town's AA+ credit rating and upgraded its outlook from "stable" to "positive," while Moody's affirmed its Aa2+ rating. These very strong credit ratings, during a time when other municipalities have been given a negative outlook or been downgraded, will save Brookhaven Town taxpayers \$4 million to \$6 million now and in the future.

#### **Other key indicators that show how the Town has "turned the corner" include:**

- Mortgage Tax increased 21%, or nearly \$2.0 million, from 2012 to 2013
- Planning Fees are up 145% and Building Fees are up 24%
- Businesses and our Residents are re-investing into Brookhaven
- Creation of a Pension Contribution Reserve Fund to help retire pension debt

Highlights of Supervisor Romaine's State of the Town Address include:

#### **Economic Development**

The Town's Economic Development Agency and Industrial Development Agency (IDA) have attracted over \$153 million in investment for projects that have created or retained more than 2,000 jobs. There is currently \$176 million in proposed projects which will create or retain over 3,300 jobs.

The Supervisor also noted a number of development projects including:

- The Ronkonkoma Hub Transit Oriented Development, which is on target to begin construction in 2015.
- Wincoram Commons, a mixed use affordable residential/retail project that will replace the blighted UA Coram movie theater site.
- Amneal Pharmaceuticals that will soon complete their \$60 million expansion in Yaphank.

### **Shared Services and Intermunicipal Agreements (IMA)**

The Town will work with all levels of government to share services and reduce costs for the taxpayer. This includes IMAs with the County to share fuel pumps, construct bus shelters, clean public right-of-ways, increase recycling and assist with the Mastic-Shirley sewer district.

- The Town will establish IMAs with school districts to help them increase recycling and save money for Brookhaven taxpayers.

### **Accountability, Code Enforcement and Quality of Life Issues**

When speaking of accountability in his address, Supervisor Romaine quoted President Ronald Reagan saying, "When you can't make them see the light, make them feel the heat."

- The Town Law Department has aggressively enforced Building and Housing Codes, instituting over 4,800 investigations and issuing over 2,300 housing violations.
- They have also addressed over 400 graffiti complaints and removed over 10,000 illegal signs from Town right-of-ways and utility poles.
- Approximately \$1.3 million in fines have been levied in District Court in the past year.
- The Town will continue to work with local communities to hold landlords, banks and problem property owners accountable when they violate our Town Codes. The Vacant Building Registry will be fine tuned and launched later in the year.
- The Law Department has aggressively investigated Worker's Compensation claims, resulting in a significant drop last year and we will continue to seek recovery payments and to crack down on fraud.

### **Environmental Protection and Green Energy Initiatives**

The open space priorities that the Supervisor has established will continue as he strives to "save what is left" by preserving key environmental parcels throughout the Town. Last year, the Town Board unanimously passed the Carmans River Conservation and Management Plan which will preserve this vital watershed for generations to come. In addition, the Town has:

- Preserved 250 acres of open space in 2013, identified over 315 acres for future acquisition, and has allocated \$10 million in 2014 Capital Budget for open space acquisitions, including \$6 million for the Carmans River Watershed.
- Created a Green Buildings Committee to develop ways that we can reduce lighting, heating and cooling costs at Town-owned facilities to reduce our carbon footprint and generate revenue.
- Adopted a first on Long Island Green Energy Code to promote the use of solar, wind and geothermal energy.
- Committed to move forward with a 53 megawatt Renewable Energy Project, which could generate \$40 million to \$50 million in revenue for the Town over the next 20 years. It is one of the largest projects of its kind in the state and now awaiting approval from LIPA/PSEG.

### **Helping Our Neighbors in Need**

The Supervisor strongly supports Town programs that reach out to our most vulnerable residents, including seniors, teens, children and families who have been affected by tough economic times and the destruction left in the wake of Super Storm Sandy.

- In 2013, the INTERFACE program collected and distributed more than \$800,000 in food, school supplies and toys for the holidays, helping over 10,000 needy residents.
- Last year, our Nutrition Program served 63,000 lunches to seniors and the Jitney program provided almost 14,000 rides for doctor appointments and shopping.
- Our Youth Bureau provided hundreds of prom gowns for young women and the Women's Helpline fielded over 1,900 calls for assistance on career, domestic violence, child care, substance abuse and other issues.
- The Town continues to work with the Army Corps of Engineers and all levels of government to help the thousands of

people who are still suffering from Sandy related issues and to repair our dune system so our shoreline communities will be protected from future storms.

### **Recycling and Waste Management**

Stating in the address that reducing garbage and increasing recycling is the key to proper management of the Town's solid waste issues, the Supervisor announced that he will launch a public education campaign and name a person to coordinate and expand the Town's recycling program. He outlined additional steps that we have already taken and plans for the future, including:

- Brookhaven is the first town on Long Island to undertake Single Stream Recycling and there will be a town wide effort to increase revenue through recycling with a comprehensive public education program. We expect to realize a 20% rise in recycling rates which will help the environment and increase revenue to the Town.
- The operator of our Material Recovery Facility (MRF) has agreed to invest over \$6 million for new single stream processing equipment at no cost to the Town. The new equipment will be operational in April of this year.
- We will work with Suffolk County to handle its recycling waste at no cost, saving taxpayer dollars and benefiting our environment.

### **New Initiatives**

The Supervisor announced a number of new initiatives that he will pursue this year, including a study of the Route 25A Corridor in Stony Brook and the Setaukets as it relates to traffic flow, pedestrian safety, railroad parking and land use. He will also review the County's Sunrise Highway Corridor Study covering Blue Point and east to Bellport.

Other Town wide initiatives include:

- To help stop the growth of illegal off-campus housing around Stony Brook University that continues to burden the local neighborhoods, the Supervisor will work with the University to establish a public/private partnership that would allow private developers to build student housing.
- Continuing to work with the County, State and Federal government to protect our surface and drinking water from activities that contribute to diminished water quality.
- Strongly push for federal and state funding of sewer districts in Mastic-Shirley and Bellport, and commit to 15 acres of land at Calabro Airport for construction of a sewer treatment plant that would service the Mastic-Shirley sewer district.
- Updating land use plans, hamlet studies and zoning codes to help stop unguided, opportunistic and haphazard development.
- Working with the Town Clerk and Receiver of Taxes to improve the Town's record storage, data collection and shared information to better serve Town residents.

Finally, the Supervisor praised the Town Board for being united and said that he remained "confident that Brookhaven's best days lie ahead." He ended his address by saying "our challenges are great" but that we are "turning the corner and continuing to move Brookhaven forward."

To read Supervisor Romaine's State of the Town address, visit [www.brookhaven.org](http://www.brookhaven.org).

### **Division of Public Information \* Office of the Supervisor**

One Independence Hill • Farmingville • NY 11738 • Phone (631) 451-6595 • Fax (631) 451-6258