

Supervisor Romaine Presents Accomplishments, Goals and an Optimistic Future in his State of the Town Address, "Focused on the Future"

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Farmingville, NY - On March 9, Supervisor Ed Romaine delivered his third State of the Town address in the auditorium at Brookhaven Town Hall. The theme of the address was "Focused on the Future," 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.

[View State of the Town Address Transcript](#)

Declaring that the "state of the town is strong," the Supervisor opened his address by outlining the financial progress made over his first two years in office and his successful efforts to restore fiscal stability. He renewed his commitment to focus on revenue growth, cost efficiencies and debt reduction and said that for the first time in many years the Town ended the year with a surplus. He also noted that his 2014 and 2015 budgets complied with the Town's spending, debt and tax caps and assured taxpayers that the 2016 budget will also comply with the caps.

The Supervisor said that his conservative fiscal approach since taking office has once again paid off as Standard and Poor's reaffirmed the Town's AA+ credit rating and "positive" outlook while Moody's re-affirmed its Aa2 rating and improved the Town's outlook from "stable" to "positive." 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 millions of dollars now and in the future.

Supervisor Romaine also outlined initiatives that will improve the Town's financial outlook, including:

- A plan to establish a Snow Removal Reserve designed to further stabilize Highway property taxes.
- Conversion of the Landfill Facility Reserve to a Post-Closure Reserve to help fund future post closure regulatory responsibilities.
- Paying down in full the remaining \$6.5 Million of New York State Amortization Debt associated with the Town's mandated pension contributions. He also noted that the Town did not have to borrow this year to pay its pension contributions.

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

Green Energy Initiatives Stating that "protecting the environment and being fiscally prudent are not mutually exclusive," the Supervisor outlined a number of far-reaching environmental initiatives, including:

- An "Energy Efficiency and Sustainability Initiative" as part of a 5 year Capital Plan to achieve a 50% reduction of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 2020. The plan will focus on Town-owned Buildings and Facilities, Traffic Controls, Street Lights and Town Vehicles.
- Continuing energy audits that have already been completed for a number of town buildings that have shown we can reduce our energy use and save money.
- Changing out energy intensive high pressure sodium town-owned street lights with LED fixtures that will cut Greenhouse Gas Emissions from street lights, saving more than \$200,000 annually.
- Right-sizing the Town's fleet and replacing aging, inefficient vehicles to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions through a reduction in fossil fuel consumption.
- Adopting new MPG minimum standards for new vehicle purchases. Already this year, the Town has ordered 7 hybrid vehicles that are 32% more fuel efficient than the vehicles they will replace and will collectively save an estimated 4,100 gallons of gas each year.
- Expanding the use of alternative fuels: bio-diesel, compressed natural gas, E-85, hybrids and electric vehicles.
- Exploring the feasibility of constructing a "microgrid."

He also noted that the Town has adopted wind, solar and geothermal codes to promote renewable energy and is currently working with the County on a code for commercial or large solar installations.

Environmental Protection A longtime advocate for the environmental, Supervisor Romaine declared that the Town will continue efforts to protect and preserve our streams, waterways and groundwater. He noted the recent clean-up of the northern end of Swan River in East Patchogue and the construction of the new Swan River Preserve on property where a vacant and blighted auto dealership once scarred the landscape.

Preserving open space has been a priority of Supervisor Romaine's administration, and he indicated that in 2014 the Town purchased 137 acres of open space and entered into an agreement to acquire an additional 399 acres.

Other environmental initiatives mentioned in the Supervisor's address include:

- The recent adoption of tougher sanitary discharge standards to protect our ground and surface waters.
- The Town's successful launch of Single Stream Recycling, which helped to increase recycling by 22.4%.
- A call for the New York State DEC to regulate commercial mulching facilities that that generate numerous complaints from residents citing smell, noise, unsightly conditions, airborne pathogens, mold, spores, and other nuisance issues.
- A continued crack down on illegal signs in Town right-of-ways, noting that over 15,000 were removed in 2014.
- Support for the proposed revisions to New York State's Solid Waste Management Facilities Regulations, Part 360, first drafted in 2012. In a letter to State Legislators, the Supervisor urged the State to take immediate action on these regulations as the health, safety and welfare of the Town residents are being affected.

The Supervisor also thanked the residents who participate in the Great Brookhaven Clean-up, as well as other environmental related events throughout the Town.

Improving Quality of Life in the Community As a result of the Great Recession, thousands of homes in Brookhaven Town have been left vacant and abandoned. In 2014, the Town Board voted Supervisor Romaine's Vacant House Registry into law and nearly 1000 structures are now registered. The Town also adopted the Supervisor's "Blight Restoration Code," requiring property owners to maintain their properties or face a summons. Houses that are beyond repair and are deemed structurally unsound will be demolished by the Town at the owner's expense. In 2014, many structures were demolished, including a number of those on the Supervisor's "Dirty Dozen" list.

Supervisor Romaine acknowledged residents for their diligence in the fight against unscrupulous landlords who convert single family homes into illegal rooming houses. He promised that the Town will not stop until houses in violation of our zoning codes are shut down. He also noted the Town's efforts to ensure that taxpayer supported Social Services housing meets State Building Code, guaranteeing decent housing for even our poorest residents.

Planning for the Future In his address, the Supervisor said "we must work to save what is left to prevent

overdevelopment and traffic congestion," and how he will focus on long range planning to repurpose vacant commercial and industrial properties and promote livable, walkable communities that will attract investment and new residents. He also stressed the need for improving our infrastructure and asked New York State to allot part of the \$5.5 to \$8 billion surplus and "not forget Long Island" since there are a number of projects that need attention, including everything from potholes, repaving, storm drain cleaning and the Mount Sinai and Patchogue jetties. He also reprised his recent call for the LIRR to electrify on the three branches that go through Brookhaven Town.

The Supervisor also reconfirmed his support for the Federal government's pledge of \$200 million for sewers in the Mastic Shirley area and the upgrade and extension of the Patchogue Village sewer system and believes they will create jobs, improve our ground and surface water and spur economic development.

Economic Development Noting that a strong economic base and new jobs are critical to the Town's future, the Supervisor recognized the Town's Industrial Development Agency, Local Development Corporation and Economic Development Department who helped many businesses to expand or relocate in Brookhaven Town.

A partial list of some of these Economic Development projects include:

- Bristol Assisted Living in Lake Grove
- Suffolk Transportation Hub in Coram
- Peconic Bay Medical Center in Manorville
- Mather Memorial Hospital expansion
- LA Fitness in Port Jefferson Station
- Pallets-R-Us in Bellport
- Ronkonkoma Hub Project
- Meadows at Yaphank
- Winoram Mixed Use Development in Coram
- Amneal Pharmaceuticals in Yaphank

Finally, the Supervisor called for Stony Brook University to help bear some of the burden for fire protection. Currently, the Stony Brook and East Setauket volunteer fire departments provide protection but receive no tax revenue. He will work with the Board of Regents and propose a payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOT) to give relief to the local taxpayers.

In closing, Supervisor Romaine said that while the challenges are many, "the Town Board is united and determined to succeed" and he re-affirmed that the state of the town is "good and improving."

Read Supervisor Romaine's State of the Town address.

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