

Supervisor Romaine Presents Accomplishments, Goals and an Optimistic Future in his State of the Town Address, A Blueprint for the Future

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Read Supervisor Romaine's State of the Town address now .

Farmingville, NY – On March 15, Supervisor Ed Romaine delivered his fourth State of the Town address in the auditorium at Brookhaven Town Hall. The theme of the address was "A Blueprint for 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.

Declaring that the "state of the town is good and getting better," the Supervisor opened his address by saying that finances have been strengthened and the bond rating has improved. He noted that the Town is rebuilding reserves, not depleting them, and announced that Brookhaven Town is one of the few municipalities that plan for a balanced budget and has paid off all of its New York State Retirement Contribution amortization debt. He also stated that he will continue to comply with the state tax levy caps, a standard that he wished "other taxing jurisdictions" would follow to help reduce the cost of living on Long Island. He thanked the members of the Town Board and commended their efforts to keep expenses down and save taxpayer dollars.

The Supervisor spoke of the Town's financial progress 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 second time in many years the Town ended the fiscal year with a surplus in the General Funds. He also noted that his 2014, 2015 and 2016 budgets complied with the Town's spending, debt and tax rate caps and assured taxpayers that the 2017 budget will also comply with the caps.

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

Creating New Jobs

Although financial markets are still struggling, many companies view Brookhaven Town as a good place to do business. Over the past year, the Brookhaven IDA:

- Closed on 13 major Economic Development projects
- Helped create or retain more than 1200 permanent and construction jobs
- Brought more than \$187 Million in private investment into the Town

Supervisor Romaine highlighted Beijing, China-based WHTB Glass Company, which is locating its first US manufacturing facility (44,000 sq. ft.) in Shirley. This alone will create more than 140 new jobs.

Delivering Town Services

In an effort to make Town services more accessible the Town will:

- Enhance staff training and improve technology
- Upgrade the town's Information Technology infrastructure
- Hire a new Chief Information Officer

Cleaning Up Neighborhoods

The Supervisor noted that the Town has boarded and secured over 1500 abandoned houses. In 2015, the Town demolished 48 dilapidated eyesores. The Town will continue to move aggressively against code violators to help clean up neighborhoods across Brookhaven, including:

- The continued demolition of blighted and dangerous "Zombie Houses"
- Clean up eyesores, combat squatters
- Hold property owners accountable for property maintenance
- Strictly enforce building and fire codes, particularly for rental properties

Recycling and Waste Management

The Town of Brookhaven is leading the way by:

- Recycling over 28,000 tons of single stream recyclables
- Establishing Single Stream Recycling collection programs in seven school districts and eight municipalities
- Shredding 100,000 pounds of paper and collection of 75,000 pounds of e-waste
- Recycling nearly 30,000 tons of yard waste
- Removal of 396 tons of debris by litter crews from empty lots and roads and 10,500 illegal signs from public right-of-ways and utility poles Land Use and Zoning

To control growth and help shape the future of our communities, the Town has recently undertaken land use plans for Farmingville along Horseblock Road; Eastport, East Moriches, Center Moriches and Moriches; Route 25 A from the Smithtown line to the Village of Port Jefferson. Corridor studies for Route 25 from Ridge to Coram and for 25A from Wading River to Mount Sinai have been completed.

Environmental Protection

A longtime advocate for the environmental, Supervisor Romaine declared that the Town will redouble efforts to protect and preserve the environment. He noted various initiatives now in place, including:

- A standard of 33 MPG for Town vehicles
- Continued replacement of aging cars with hybrids
- Plans to install electric vehicle charging stations at Town Hall
- Upgraded lighting fixtures in Town buildings are expected to save \$260,000 over the next 15 years
- Street light upgrades save \$350,000 per year
- Contracts to install solar panels at Town facilities will generate green power and reduce our carbon footprint
- Codes in place to encourage green energy in homes and business
- Established wind, solar and geothermal codes
- Planting 10,000 new trees by 2020
- More open space acquisitions, especially along the Carmans River

Protecting our Waterways and Groundwater

Because we live on an island, keeping our waterways clean is a priority. Supervisor Romaine proposed a Nitrogen Protection Zone that applies to new construction within 500 feet of a body of water. He also noted that the Town has:

- Provided 100,000 seed oysters per year to be planted in Bellport Bay. Many more continue to be planted in Moriches Bay and other waterways throughout the Town
- Established an eelgrass planting program to enhance water quality and strengthen the ecosystem
- Promoted innovative denitrification sanitary systems and upgrading of sewer plants

Public Transportation Improvements

Supervisor Romaine called on the MTA to extend LIRR electrification on the north shore to Port Jefferson, the South Shore to Patchogue or Mastic-Shirley and the main line to Yaphank. He also commented that the little used Yaphank station be moved to East Yaphank, near the William Floyd Parkway.

Illegal Student Housing

While acknowledging the Town's close relationship with Stony Brook University, the Supervisor also noted the proliferation of illegal student housing that plagues the nearby community. He encouraged the University to build more on-campus dormitories to address the demand. He also mentioned the need for the school to help pay for fire protection which is provided by the Setauket and Stony Brook Fire Departments without compensation.

War Against Drugs

While the heroin epidemic grows in Brookhaven and across the nation, the Supervisor has called on every level of government to help solve the problem. He noted that the Town is working with the Suffolk County Police Department to close down suspected drug houses that plague our community.

In closing, Supervisor Romaine praised the Town's elected officials for their "united effort" and thanked the Town employees for their hard work, calling them "the backbone of Town government."

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