

Mayor's Comments from January 5, 2015 Re-Organization Meeting

I would like to begin by welcoming everyone here tonight for the annual re-organization meeting of the Borough of Lincoln Park. A special thank you to the elected officials from throughout the county and state who have joined us this evening. (In attendance were State Senator Joe Pannachio, Assemblyman Jay Webber, County Freeholders John Kricus and John Cesaro, American Legion Post 279 Commander Arnold Garrison and former Lincoln Park Mayor, David Baker). Thank you especially to Commander Garrison for holding the bible for me during my taking of the oath of the office of Mayor.

I must say that I am very honored to be elected to a third term as the Mayor of Lincoln Park. This is a privilege that I take seriously and I am grateful for the support and trust of this great community.

Congratulations to Councilman Cardillo and Councilwoman Thompson on your re-elections. Ann, I would like to also offer congratulations on your re-election to the position of Council President. Your being named to this position for another year shows the faith your colleagues have in you. Likewise, I believe that you and I have created a very good working relationship this past year and I look forward to continuing that in the coming year.

It has been a pleasure working with Council members Gary Gemian, Ray Kerwin, Ellen Ross and Jim Wild this past year and I expect that we will continue to work well together in 2015.

Tonight I am happy to welcome our newest Councilman, Dan Moeller. For those of you who don't know, Dan is another Lincoln Park lifer who lives, works and volunteers here in town. He is very qualified to represent the people of Lincoln Park. Dan, congratulations on your victory and good luck to you.

It is important to recognize outgoing Councilman Lou Pepe. Lou had been an important part of this Council for the last eight years and was instrumental on many issues, especially those pertaining to flooding and financial matters.

2014 began with us in the middle of what was termed a Polar Vortex. Large amounts of snow and low temperatures would be the theme of most of the winter of 2014. In addition, a shortage of road salt throughout the state and most of the East Coast made keeping our roads clear a challenge. Challenges are no issue for us though as Rick Beyer and the members of our DPW did a fantastic job of keeping our roads safe all winter long.

Luckily, that would be our only real challenge from Mother Nature during the year. However, please do not underestimate how much effort goes into the protection of you, your family and your property on a daily basis. Chief Mark West and the men and women of our Police Department keep us safe at all times and do a tremendous job. We have the new officers of our Fire Department here tonight. I would like to welcome Chief Joe Fede and Deputy Chief George Gilland on their new positions and thank Deputy Chief Shaun Mackey and Chief Nick Pappas

for the great job they did last year. Outgoing EMS Chief Anderson, Incoming Chief Ward and the members of the LPEMS have likewise done a fantastic job to keep all of us safe in times of need. Those involved with our Office of Emergency Management and Community Emergency Response Teams, although not called into action much this year, are always ready to drop everything and serve you in times of emergencies.

2014 also found us in the middle of a tremendous amount of buyouts of flood prone properties by several Federal, State and County programs. With no real solution for preventing flooding in the immediate future, removing people from harm's way is one method that has been engaged. This way of thinking does have some downside to it. Most notably is the destruction of neighborhoods and the loss of tax ratables as an effect of bought out properties. We are thankful to the agencies that have assisted in the buyouts, but at the same time must continue to beseech those involved to also look to ways to help mitigate the severity of flooding going forward.

2014 was the 6th consecutive year that Lincoln Park's budget had no appreciable increase in spending with only a slight .007% increase last year. CFO Kerry Geisler, Administrator Perry Mayers and all of our department heads deserve much credit for controlling spending in the preparation of our budgets. Unfortunately our diligence on controlling spending was overshadowed by the previously mentioned loss of ratables mostly by flood buyouts. Several years ago the Governor mandated a 2% cap on tax increases that each municipality had to adhere to. He offered 33 "tool kit" items that he felt were necessary to help achieve the 2% cap. To this date, only a small fraction of these items have been put into law. In order to truly provide property tax relief in New Jersey, I implore that those in our state legislature continue to take action to provide us on a municipal level with the tools necessary to make a real difference.

Development continues to be an issue here in Lincoln Park. "How do we keep our small town feel, while making up for the tax impacts of so many buyouts and still maintain a vibrant community?" This is a dance that will continue, no doubt, this year. I think I can speak for most of our town Council and administration when I say that we are committed to finding the best solutions to keep Lincoln Park the great community it is now and do our best to prepare it for the future...our future and that of our children.

I am committed to continuing revitalization of our down town and business areas. This year our old traffic signals are to be replaced with modern ones, traffic flow is to be improved and more parking spaces are anticipated around the Main Street area. All of which are to provide pedestrian safety and a greater opportunity to use our local businesses. The Economic Development Committee is exploring the creation of a Lincoln Park business organization, or partnering with an existing group in a neighboring town.

One way to boost the quality of life in our town is to continuously improve on what we do so well already. Our borough website was updated this year and is a greater source of information and resources than ever before. Electronic communication and social media continue to be used more often to get news and information to our residents. There have been some great improvements to our athletic and recreation facilities, our gym, our parks, our fields, and our lake. Our 5K and Triathlon continue to get bigger and better each year. Our participation in the

New Jersey Mayor's Wellness Campaign is providing greater opportunities for improving the health and wellness of our community and our residents.

During the course of 2014 we lost several dedicated Borough employees to retirement. Our Registrar and Health Department Secretary Karen Noonan, Health Officer John Wozniak, Police Officer Ron Wenzel and Police Lieutenants Steve Zoeller and Mike Hackett all began their retirements. In addition, we have the impending retirements of Police Sergeants Mark Bosland, Gary Massaro and Bill Karback. We wish all of those who have left or will be beginning their retirement, the best of luck and thank them for their years of dedicated service to the Borough of Lincoln Park.

I need to recognize two individuals that have needed to step away from the volunteering they do. Jim Hughes and Carol Offermann have been a tremendous asset to our town. Carol has been an important volunteer in our food pantry. Jim has been a member of the Library Board of Trustees and the Recreation Advisory Board for many years before that, both as my appointment and Mayor Baker's before me. Jim and Carol both deserve a great thank you from me and from all of us.

Lincoln Park is truly blessed with great employees. Police Chief West, Health Officer Kathy Skrobala (who has done a tremendous job since taking over the department last year), Sal Marino of the Building Department, Rick Beyer from DPW, CFO Kerry Giesler, Janet Cassidy from Parks and Recreation, Patty Fritz in the Court, Borough Clerk Cindi Sloan and in my office Borough Administrator Perry Mayers and my Aide Dina Valente. Each of these people and every employee on their staff give so much of themselves to make Lincoln Park great. They each have my appreciation and they all deserve yours.

Our engineers Paul Darmofalski and Tom Boorady have helped us with many infrastructure grants for things such as sidewalks, river desnagging and street paving. Ken Rush and Chris DiLorenzo have had a very successful first year as our new town attorneys. Judge Wobbenhorst, Prosecutor Kim Kassar and Public Defender Dave Amadio have ensured that our court system is efficient and fair.

There are so many people that make contributions to our community individually or through an organization, that there is no way to name them all. Please know that your involvement is noticed, is appreciated, and is important.

I must give a huge thank you to my wife, Andrea, and my daughters Brielle and Camryn for they selflessly allow me to take time away from home to do all the things I find important to do for our community.

In closing I would like to say to every Lincoln Park resident, employee, volunteer, business owner, elected official and member of a civic organization... "Thank You for all you do, and I wish you a Happy, Healthy and Wealthy 2015!"

Sincerely,

David Runfeldt