

MAYOR SIMS MESSAGE
FROM THE REORGANIZATION MEETING
HELD ON JANUARY 2, 2024

I am honored to continue serving as your mayor and to represent the town and its residents as I have done since May of 2020. I look forward to working with all of council, along with our professional appointments, department heads and staff to keep the town moving forward in 2024.

I'd like to congratulate Councilman Murtaugh and Councilwoman Domico on being reelected and sworn in to their council seats tonight for the next three years. Also, congratulations to Councilman Murtaugh for being selected to continue to serve as council president for his fourth year.

In an effort to continue to communicate with our residents, many general informational messages were posted on the Borough's official face book page, along with actions taken by council, scheduled events, code enforcement, police and fire department monthly activity reports. I'd like to thank our Deputy Clerk Kate Carroll for working closely with me as she creates very professional messages with fantastic graphic imagery which are then posted to face book and the Borough's website. Deputy Clerk Carroll also took the lead working with our Planning & Business Development Committee and website professionals to redesign the Borough's website which is now easier to browse and navigate for information and more pleasing for the end user to use. I encourage everyone to visit these official sites to review important and informational messages. These messages, reports and announcements will continue in 2024. Please do not rely on unofficial social media sites to obtain factual information regarding the Borough of Westville. When in doubt please call the Borough Offices for the correct information.

Our regular monthly council meetings in 2024 will continue to take place on the fourth Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. here in council chambers.

I'd like to thank all department heads, along with all borough employees for all the hard work and services they provided to the town and its residents in 2023. Thank you to the Police Department and Fire Department for their exceptional services and all that they do in protecting the town in any emergency that may occur and working hard keeping our residents safe.

In July, the Police Department conducted a Public Safety Engagement Night Out to engage with the general public and make them aware of all the public safety services available to our town when needed.

In 2023, through a shared service agreement with the Westville Board of Education, a Westville Police Officer was assigned to Parkview School as a fulltime School Resource Officer. This shared service agreement has worked very well and will continue in 2024.

In October of 2023 the Fire department held a beautiful ceremony celebrating its 35th Anniversary of the Westville Fire Department along with an Open House and Fire Prevention Program Activities.

Five years ago, the Borough entered into a shared service agreement with the Fire District to enhance our efforts with code enforcement and to address quality of life issues. This arrangement will continue in 2024.

Thank you to the Public Works Department for continuing the exceptional services they also provide. Thank you to the Borough administrative staff along with the office staff for continuing to provide excellent service to the residents as they come to the borough hall to take care of their needs. In 2024 all of the departments I have just mentioned, I'm sure, will continued to provide the level of service our residents have grown accustomed to.

Thank you to all the volunteer service organizations such as the Lions Club, Women's Club, Rolling Badges, Town Watch, Westville Business Association and the Sports Organizations for volunteering their time, giving back to the community and making Westville a better place to live. Thank you for "Getting Involved and Making a Difference."

Thank you to the Westville Democrat Committee for donating and providing the two flower arrangements you see here tonight. As a token of our appreciation, those flower arrangements will be given to Council President Murtaugh's wife Joann and Councilwoman Domico.

Summary of 2023 and moving forward in 2024

Westville will continue to be open for business to anyone who is interested in working with Mayor and Council to fill vacant buildings and houses for the betterment of the town along with listening to and reviewing any proposed projects, town wide to enhance the future growth of the town.

In 2024 the Borough will continue with its downtown redevelopment plans.

The Governing Body and the Borough Administrator continued to meet with several developers and private businesspersons throughout 2023 who seem to be very interested in Westville. In fact, we have recently finalized the sale of 201 Broadway, (Westville Square) to a private developer who will continue to make renovations to the building to be the cornerstone of our downtown redevelopment project and will continue to be the home of the Westville Brewery and J&J

Construction. In October, 2023 through the Governing Body's redevelopment efforts, 201 Broadway became the home of Big Swerve BBQ and to the newly renovated Stella's Banquet and Catering Hall which is now open to the general public for catering and banquet events. In addition to the new businesses at this location, approximately twenty-five new public parking spaces were created for downtown parking. The private developer and now owner of this property will continue with renovations to the second and third floor with businesses to be determined.

The Borough welcomed new businesses to the downtown business district in 2023: Coastal's Smoke Shop-124 Broadway, Hot Body Yoga-160 Broadway, R4 Studio Hair Salon-142 Broadway, Big Swerve BBQ and Stella's Catering & Banquet Hall-201 Broadway along with other business around town including Amore Weddings-606 Ryan Ave, Gametime Sportzbar-500 Gateway Blvd, Chef's Flame-713 Delsea Drive and Lynmar Builders-829 Delsea Drive. We are hoping to see other businesses open in the downtown area in 2024.

The Borough continues a working relationship with the Gloucester County Chamber of Commerce and the Gloucester County Economic Development Committee to promote the town's business district and attract other businesses to invest in Westville. This effort is ongoing and will continue in 2024.

In 2023 a private developer completed renovations to West Park Apartments at 910 Gateway Boulevard and Woodbine Apartments at 300 Broadway. These apartment complexes have been an eyesore and endured quality of life issues for several years with the West Park apartments actually being shut down. These apartment complexes are now occupied and have become a viable, beautiful place to live as they once were.

We continue to work with and negotiate with investors to redevelop the old Mars Graphics property. Several developers have shown interest in developing this property into certain types of cannabis businesses and proposed erecting a digital billboard for advertising purposes. Discussion with various developers will continue in 2024.

Phase #3 of our water main infrastructure replacement which included replacing water mains on Pine Street and along Broadway between Olive and Delsea Drive was completed in 2023. Broadway which is a county road, is the responsibility of the Gloucester County Board of Commissioners and they have advised the Borough that the road is now scheduled to be repaved sometime in early spring of 2024.

In August we were notified by the NJ DEP that our drinking water exceeded new threshold limits of PFNA Chemicals or “Forever Chemicals” causing the Borough to notify all residents and businesses of such. The Borough is currently searching and applying for grants to fund this project and has submitted permits to the NJDEP to start the process of reducing PFNA levels within our drinking water. This project could cost up to 2 million dollars to complete.

Thank you to our Public Works Department who installed pedestrian activated crosswalk lights at the intersection of East Olive and High Street in 2023 and will be installing pedestrian activated crosswalk lights on Broadway at Pine Street in the near future now that our permits were approved by the County.

We have received word from the State DOT that they will be installing pedestrian activated crosswalk lights as the Borough requested at Delsea Drive and Duncan Avenue, Almonesson Road and Delsea Drive once the Delsea Drive repaving project is started with a date yet to be determined.

In March of 2023, as recommended by our CFO, Council authorized the sale of \$6,027,000 in General Obligation Bonds. We converted Short Term Notes to a Long-Term Bond in order to save on rising interest rate fees and reduce the Borough’s yearly debt service amounts. These actions also enhanced the Borough’s Bond Rating to AA.

In 2023 the Borough-owned house, located at 128 Crown Point Road was sold to the highest bidder and placed back on the tax books with the Borough now collecting property taxes on the property.

In January 2023, the Borough mourned the passing of former Westville Mayor Harry Laskowski. Harry served as a Councilman from 1963-1971 when he was elected Mayor of Westville and served as mayor until 1982. He served as one of the five original Fire Commissioners for the Westville Fire District #1 and was an Honorary Lifetime Member of the Westville Fire Department. Mayor and Council recently approved much needed renovations to the Community Center. Once completed, the Community Center will be renamed “The Harry V. Laskowski Senior Center” in his honor with a dedication ceremony date to be determined.

In March, the Governing Body agreed to repair and restore the basketball court at Thomas West Park with a new playing surface and upgraded basketball backboards and nets. This court was shut down during COVID for safety reason and several motor vehicle accidents which damaged the basketball courts.

In June PSE&G announced a major infrastructure project was needed replacing most underground gas line piping and pressure regulators throughout Westville. This project was started in October on Lehigh and State Streets before it was to be repaved. The entire project is expected to be completed in ten to twelve months weather permitting.

In March the Delaware River Port Authority held a public meeting at Parkview School to present information on the proposed GCL Trainline.

In 2023 all Borough community events such as the Memorial Day Service, Fireworks Festivities, 9/11 Memorial Service, Fall Festival, Christmas Tree Lighting and Parade were well attended and will continue in 2024. A big thank you to the Celebrations of Public Events Committee for continuing to meet on a monthly basis to plan, prepare and make changes where needed to make these events successful each year. I'd also like to thank all businesses and the Borough's professional appointments for their donations and supporting these events. Without their generous donations and support, these community events may not happen.

In 2023, the Borough approved a new shared service agreement with the Borough of Brooklawn to share our Tax Collector which will continue in 2024. Shared service agreements already in place with the Borough of Brooklawn to share Borough Administrator Services and Public Works Departments will also continue in 2024.

High Street between Duncan Avenue and New Street along with Chestnut Street are listed projects to be repaved in 2024. Delsea Drive which is a state project, is scheduled to be repaved with a date yet to be determined.

The borough applied for and received various grants for special projects around town including grants for repaving streets and projects within the Police department. We will continue applying for grants in 2024.

Borough Officials will continue to address our flooding issues with our 5th Legislative District officials and our new representatives within the 3rd Legislative District.

Reconstruction of the Route130 or Westside Bridge was started in 2023 and is expected to last several years. Reconstruction of the Broadway/Delsea Drive or Eastside Bridge is expected to start sometime in 2024. Unfortunately, due to this bridge project the State of NJ used their eminent domain powers on the Gateway Diner which was closed in October after 32 years of serving the community.

In May 2023 our Police Department, along with the entire town, mourned the line of duty death of Deptford Township Police Officer Robert J. Shisler.

In March 2023 our Fire Department mourned the line of duty death of Retired Fire Chief Jeff M. Pfeiffer of Almonesson Lake Fire Department of Deptford Township. The 5th & 6th grade students of Parkview School lined up along Delsea Drive waving American Flags honoring Chief Pfeiffer as his funeral procession drove through Westville making its way to his final resting place in Bellmawr.

In December, our 2024 Borough Wall Calendar was delivered to approximately 1600 homes and businesses throughout the Borough. Thank you to the members of the Westville Fire Department for volunteering their time and delivering these calendars.

Thank you to the Parkview School Student Choir for singing our National Anthem at tonight's meeting.

As you have heard tonight Council and I have worked very hard in 2023 as a TEAM on the many projects I reviewed tonight. In 2024 we all will continue to work very hard as a TEAM to keep the town moving forward. We do have challenges ahead of us and we will do everything possible to conquer them while continuing to provide the town with the same Borough services in the most efficient and cost-effective way.

Thank you all for attending tonight's meeting. I wish you all a safe, healthy, prosperous, peaceful, Happy New Year. Remember.....

..... "Get Involved and Make a Difference"

Mayor Sims