

## MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Good evening again everyone and thank you for attending tonight's meeting.

I'd like to acknowledge a few dignitaries who are in attendance tonight and thank the 3<sup>rd</sup> Legislative District and the Gloucester County Board of Commissioners for their continued support they provide to the Borough of Westville.

1. U.S. Congressman Donald Norcross Staff Members
2. Representing the 3<sup>rd</sup> Legislative District, Assemblywoman Heather Simmons.
3. Representing the Gloucester County Board of Commissioners, Director Frank DiMarco, Deputy Director Jim Jefferson, Commissioner Tom Bianco, Commissioner Joann Gattinelli, Commissioner Matt Weng.

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 with keeping the town moving forward in 2026.

I'd like to congratulate Councilman Lawrence, Councilwoman Van Acker and Councilwoman McCullough on being reelected and sworn in to their council seats tonight for their next term. Also, congratulations to Councilman Nordaby for being selected to serve as council president again this year. Congratulations to Councilman Joe Bobiak who was appointed to council on December 15<sup>th</sup> and sworn in tonight to fill the vacated seat as Councilman Tim Young resigned in November.

In an effort to continue to communicate with our residents many general informational messages along with actions taken by council, scheduled events, monthly activity reports continue to be posted on the borough's official face book page and website. Again, this year I would like to

recognize and thank our Deputy Clerk Kate Carroll for continuing to do an excellent job preparing the communications that are posted, along with all the other duties and responsibilities she has as our deputy clerk. These messages, reports and announcements will continue in 2026. 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 2026 will continue to take place on the fourth Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. here in these 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 2025. 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.

Thank you to our Borough Administrator, Ryan Giles for his efforts in all that he does as his administrative services continue to be shared with the Borough of Brooklawn. Although Ryan is scheduled to be in Westville two days a week, he can be counted on 24/7 to provide information to council members and office staff when called upon. We all appreciate his efforts.

Thank you to our Tax Collector Nicole O'Hara for keeping our tax collection at high levels each year. Nicole is always talking to our residents about their tax payment and making sure they pay on time. Our tax collection rate in 2025 was 99.2%.

Thank you to the Public Works Department for continuing the exceptional services they also provide. Thank you to the borough 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 2026 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 and all Sports Organizations for volunteering their time, giving many hours back to the community and making Westville a better place to live. Thank you for "Getting Involved and Making a Difference."

### **Summary of 2025 and moving forward in 2026**

In January 2025 Mandi McCullough was appointed to council to fill the vacated seat as Councilman Charles Murtaugh resigned in December 2024.

Mike Packer was sworn in as our new Police Chief in January of 2025. Thank you to Chief Packer for reorganizing and redefining our police force. The Chief recommended and council approved the promotions of Eric Hibbs to Lieutenant and William O'Connell to Sergeant which completed the police command staff. I believe Chief Packer has also changed the departments culture and our resident's perception of our police department from "Oh, where is our do-nothing police department" to "Oh, there's our police department" through community policing, community involvement and conducting special events such as Cones with Cops. Chief Packer has also applied for and received various grants for new police vehicles and equipment such as a hand-held radar gun for traffic speed enforcement saving the borough approximately \$100,000 in local tax dollars. Thank you to Chief Packer and the entire police department for all their efforts, dedication and commitments made to our town as they continue to keep us all safe throughout the year.

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 2026 the Borough will continue with its downtown redevelopment plans.

Mayor, Council and the Borough Administrator continued to meet with developers and private businesspersons throughout 2025 who seem to be very interested in Westville. In fact, the sale of borough owned property at One Deadline Drive, (Mars Graphic Printing) was finally completed to a private developer who will develop that property into a viable business. The new owners of the property have proposed a cannabis manufacturing and growing operation which will provide much needed rateables and revenue for our town.

The borough welcomed three new businesses to the downtown business district in 2025 which are: Jobbi's Juicy Fruits at 221 Broadway, In & Out Décor Doors at 126 Broadway, JHarte Associates at 216 Broadway, along with new business owners of Westville Deli at 521 Broadway. We are hoping to see other businesses open in the downtown area in 2026. We are currently in active negotiations with the current owner of the old Rita's Pizza Building located at 185 Broadway to purchase the property. If negotiations fail the Borough will use the court system in hopes to acquire the property to have it redeveloped and occupied with a viable business in 2026.

In 2025 a private redeveloper completed renovations at 216 Broadway which is now the home of JHarte Associates on the first floor and living quarters on the second floor. This same redeveloper continued with the redevelopment to 201 Broadway which is the home of the Westville Brewery, Big Swerve BBQ and Stella's Banquet Hall & Catering. The expansion of the Westville Brewery was completed and the construction of the living quarters on the third floor are continuing. South Jersey Cookie Cakes relocated from 189 Broadway to 201 Broadway completing occupancy of the entire first floor.

In October 2025 the Borough acknowledged and celebrated Pisker's Bakery 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of business in Westville. Families of the two past owners attended along with the current owners and their family. Many residents, dignitaries and customers attended to show their support and appreciation to Pisker's Bakery. The event was also covered by 6ABC, Action News.

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 is ongoing and will continue in 2026.

In 2026 the borough will continue to search for developers to develop the underutilized Park Avenue ballfield. We were working with a viable developer during 2025. For various reasons that developer decided to terminate its plans for that property.

As you know in August 2023, 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 continue notifying all residents and businesses of such in 2024 and 2025. At that time the Public Works Department changed to another water well where our drinking water is pulled from. Those actions have reduced our PFNA Chemicals or "Forever Chemicals" to be under the current threshold limits mandated by the NJDEP. The Borough was awarded a \$1,000,000 USDA Grant to make the high priority upgrades to our Water Plant Filtration System. In November of 2025 bids were open and awarded to make the upgrades and installation of the CAC Filtration System. The necessary upgrades needed were delayed due to the recent government shutdown which delayed funding of the project. The upgrades of the water plant will be starting in the very near future. Borough Administration, Borough Engineer and Public Works Superintendent will be monitoring and overseeing the project once started.

Thank you to Superintendent of Public Works Marty Finger for researching and finding the vendor that we hired to clean up the pond at Thomas West Park. Marty did an excellent job overseeing the pond clean up and the vendor hired did an excellent job as well. We are hoping to allocate funds within the budget to continue with the maintenance of the pond each year, as needed. Public Works will continue to monitor the perimeter of the pond and maintain as needed.

In 2025 all borough community events such as the Memorial Day Service, Fireworks Festivities/Car Show, 911 Memorial Service, Fall

Festival, Christmas Tree Lighting and Parade were well attended and will continue in 2026. However, in upcoming meetings the fireworks show will be discussed. Due to the rising cost, donations dwindling and the possibility of losing Brooklawn as a partner for the fireworks they may need to be cancelled. 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. Thank you to all businesses and the borough professional appointments who continue to donate and support these events. Without their generous donations and support these community events may not happen.

In 2025 the borough completed the repaving projects of Chestnut Street and High Street.

Bids were received and approved for the River Drive project which will enhance that area with a walking track, new lights, benches and playground area. Phase one of the project will start in the spring or sooner depending on the weather. This project will be funded in part with two different grants the borough applied for and was awarded. Both grants total \$153,000.

We ask for your continued patience as the reconstruction of the Route 130 Bridge and the Broadway/Delsea Drive Bridge projects continue to impact traffic in Westville and Brooklawn. The bridge projects are scheduled to be completed by 2028.

In 2025 much needed renovations were made to the Community Center which was renamed the “Harry Laskowski Senior Center” in honor of former Mayor Harry Laskowski. Although an outside contractor was hired to do the major renovations our Public Works Department completed the finishing touches in the Senior Center reducing the cost for the borough. Thank you to our Public Works Department again for the work they did.

In November 2025 the Borough recognized Mrs. Anne Hoppe for her 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Mrs. Hoppe, along with family and friends attended our November Council meeting where she was presented with a

proclamation, bouquet of flowers and got to hear all the fantastic voices of those in attendance sing happy birthday to her.

Thank you to Pastor Turner of the New Life Community Praise Center for providing us with the Invocation and Benediction at tonight's meeting.

As you have heard tonight your mayor and council have worked very hard in 2025 on many projects and will continue to do so in 2026. 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 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"