

Mayor's Address – Jan 1, 2016

The following is a report of the Borough events and activities of 2015

The Borough Council

The Borough Council members have met the year's challenges with diplomacy and with the dignity that would be expected from such an experienced Council. I applaud each of you for the contributions you have made on behalf of the residents of Rumson.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to every Borough employee, committee member and professional for their support and assistance throughout the past year.

I also want to thank Tom Rogers, the Municipal Clerk/Administrator for the leadership he provides each and every day. Thank you, Tom.

This year we welcomed John J. Conklin, III to the Council, replacing Frank Shanley who resigned on January 1, 2015. John is a lifelong Rumson resident and was member of the Zoning Board of Adjustment for 18 years, on which he served as Chair for 12 years. Councilman Joseph Hemphill served as President of the Council in 2015. John Conklin and Mark Rubin were re-elected in November to another three year Council term and I was re-elected to my fourth term as Mayor. On behalf of the Council members and myself, it is our honor and privilege to serve our community as your elected representatives and we appreciate your support.

Success with Shared Services Continues

Last year the Borough continued its commitment toward creative cost cutting solutions through its shared services programs with Fair Haven and Little Silver. Namely, the Borough re-committed to its the long-running Inter Local Service Agreement with Fair Haven on brush disposal, parks and grounds maintenance, street sweeping, catch basin cleaning and engineering services.

In addition, on July 1, 2015, Little Silver merged its Building Services Department with Rumson, seeking to lower costs and improve services. Recall that 8 years ago, Rumson and Fair Haven similarly combined their Building Services Departments, with Rumson servicing both towns from our Borough Hall. This allowed residents in both towns to enjoy access to full-time Building Department Services, while eliminating redundancies. With the addition of Little Silver's resources last year, each of the three towns will benefit due to additional investments in office technology and staff, while any incremental costs are spread across all three towns in accordance with each town's usage. The result is an increased level of service and a significant cost savings to taxpayers in all three towns.

Road Improvements

In 2015 the Borough and County implemented significant road improvements in the Borough, repairing and repaving several significantly damaged streets. The 2014 Road Improvement Program called for the repaving of the Deane-Porter School parking lot as well as portions of Avenue of Two Rivers, Ward Lane, Center Street and Washington Street. The end result is safer streets and sidewalks in these areas.

Monmouth County repaved Rumson Road from Bingham Avenue to Branch Avenue in Little Silver and Ridge Road from Bingham Avenue to Branch in Little Silver. In addition to a much improved driving surface, formal bike lanes were created on Rumson Road from Avenue of Two Rivers west to Buena Vista Avenue, across Buena Vista, down Ridge Road to Alderbrook in Little Silver. This will result in a more pleasant and safer experience for cyclists and pedestrians.

Major Community Events

Rumson is a small, close-knit town with a big heart and a lot of spirit. As such, there are numerous community events throughout the year that bring our residents together for fun and, often, to benefit a good cause. Some are sponsored by the Borough and others by independent entities, but all add to the feeling of community and togetherness long enjoyed by our residents.

The Third Annual Rumson Saint Patrick's Day Parade was celebrated in Rumson on Sunday, March 8, 2015 with floats, bands, Irish step dancers, veterans and military groups, novelty acts and representatives from local civic groups and area businesses in the mile long parade. Residents and guests lined River Road awash in green pride – a day everyone is Irish, enjoying the festive display. The Parade raises thousands of dollars to benefit local charities.

The Rumson Annual Baseball Parade was attended by hundreds of ball players and their families on Saturday, April 11, 2015, marching from Forrestdale School to Piping Rock Memorial Park where they were greeted by Recreation Commissioners serving hot chocolate and bagels. Eighth grade resident Kate Gagliardi performed a stirring rendition of the National Anthem and the attendees were inspired by the words of former pro ball player and current resident Darren Stumberger. The event culminated with yours truly throwing out the first pitch of the season.

The Annual Memorial Day Parade and Service was held on Monday, May 25, 2015. Once again the town came together to honor those who gave their lives in service to our country, with over 20 organizations marching down River Road to Victory Park, lined with flag waving residents. The parade showcased patriotic music from the RFHRHS and Elementary School bands, the National Anthem sung once again by resident Kate Gagliardi, followed by a service at Victory Park featuring keynote speaker and Rumson resident, Major James Martin, M.D.

The Kelleher Kids Triathlon held its 6th annual event at Victory Park on Sunday, June 14, 2015. This treasured family event had over 240 children, ages 14 and under, participating in the Swim, Bike, Run, while hundreds of parents, supporters and volunteers cheered them on. The event raises funds for Rumson EMS and Rumson Recreation, two organizations dear to former resident Bob Kelleher, in whose memory the event is held each year.

Movies in the Park, jointly sponsored with Fair Haven Recreation, were greatly enjoyed by local families this summer and included *The Blind Side*, *How to Train Your Dragon II*, *Big and Frozen*. RFH students ran the concession stand and raised money for their sports teams and clubs.

The Sixth Annual Rumson Boat Race featuring the Governor's Cup took place in late September on the Navesink River. Local families provided housing for 150 visiting collegiate athletes from Army, Drexel, Rutgers and Villanova. These disciplined athletes provided inspiration and camaraderie to our **RFH High School Rowing Team**. Proceeds from the Boat Race support the RFH Rowing Program.

The Rumson Halloween Parade & Carnival took place on Sunday, October 25, 2015 at Forrestdale School Field. Hundreds showed up in their costumed finery, with a costume contest for each age group and best group costume. RFH High School and Forrestdale School volunteers ran game booths and the Rumson Seniors served hot dogs and lemonade. Several Rec Commissioners and Councilwoman Laura Atwell also pitched in to make the event a success.

The Veterans Day Service at Victory Park on November 11 highlighted the contributions of former resident and World War II veteran Don Blesse, who passed away in August. Don was a champion of veteran causes and a great contributor to the Rumson Community in general. Guest speaker and Rumson OEM Director First Sgt. James Duffney reminded us all of the sacrifices made by the men and women who have served our country. Many thanks to Rev. Jeffrey Roy for leading those present in prayer, and to the Scouts from Troop 201 for the posting of the colors. Scout Owen Doherty performed a moving rendition of the National Anthem.

The Traditional Christmas Tree Lighting in Victory Park on December 6 was a wonderful way to begin the holiday season – perfect weather, delicious snacks, and heartwarming holiday favorite sing-a-long songs. The Deane-Porter Third Grade Chorus kicked off the event with their lively carols, followed by Tim McLoone and The Shirley's, and select members of Holiday Express, who entertained the crowd until almost 6.30pm. Santa's arrival with Rudolph and Frosty the Snowman added to the festive atmosphere. The Rumson Christmas Tree Lighting is truly a highlight of the Rumson Community Calendar.

Ordinances

All Borough Ordinances can be viewed on line by logging onto our web site at www.rumsonnj.gov.

Police Department

Our outstanding Rumson Police Department greatly contributed to the safety and well-being of our residents in 2015.

Ptl. Grace Maggiulli was hired full-time in September and has the distinction of being the first female officer on the Rumson Police Force. She is a great addition to the community and our Police Force. Several officers received a Lifesaving Award from EMS, including Ptls. Fenn, Maggiulli, and Torres. All Rumson PD officers received Advanced Training in School response this year, making our schools safer than ever. I am also delighted to announce two promotions on the force. Senior Patrolman Anthony E. Ciambrone and Senior Patrolman Chris Isherwood were promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

Police Chief Scott Paterson participated in the Polar Bear Plunge to raise money for the Special Olympics last February, and he was the seventh highest fundraiser in the state! We would like to thank Scott and his supporters for their efforts on behalf of this worthy cause.

Finally, the Department launched the Borough of Rumson Police Facebook page this year, helping keep our residents up to date with major and minor developments pertaining to their safety and convenience.

The officers of the Rumson Police Department have worked honorably, and in many cases heroically, demonstrating great teamwork that the entire community appreciates.

Rumson EMS

The Rumson First Aid Squad has dozens of volunteer members, all of whom have completed the rigorous, 250-hour Emergency Medical Technician course. Mary Nichols, a 40 year veteran of the First Aid Squad, has honorably served as Captain in 2014 and 2015.

In addition to answering calls within Rumson, these volunteers frequently respond to emergency calls in Sea Bright, Fair Haven, Red Bank, Atlantic Highlands, and Highlands for mutual aid assignments. Using new state-of-the-art equipment, the squad has responded to many serious incidents this year. In 2015, eight First Aid Squad members and three patrolmen received the Life Saving Award. A resident was going into respiratory failure and cardiac arrest and the first responders successfully revived the victim who ultimately made a full recovery. Those EMS members honored included EMS Captain Mary Nichols, Frank Davis, Robert Nichols, Dennis Nitka, Evette Polczynski, Kyle Sullivan, and Michael Volker. In addition, EMS member Lauren Kammerer was recognized for emergency delivery of a baby in Sea Bright this summer, which received national recognition in the media.

The residents of Rumson should take pride and comfort in knowing that their First Aid Squad is ready, 24-hours per day, to respond to every medical emergency. Rumson EMS receives funding from the Borough, the Rumson Community Appeal, the EMS Fund Drive and

the Kelleher Kids Triathlon. EMS is always looking for additional members, including Cadets starting at 16 years old. Please contact Borough Hall for an Application.

Rumson Fire Department

The Rumson Fire Department responds to numerous fire calls in the Borough and in surrounding towns and is staffed solely by trained volunteer members. The Department was ably led by Fire Chief Kevin McCarthy and Assistant Fire Chief Ron Immesberger.

The Oceanic Hook & Ladder Company congratulates three members for obtaining their “life membership.” They are James Fenn, Mark Osmulski, and Kevin Anderson. These members have completed 25 years of continuous active service. We thank these members and all of the volunteer officers and membership that continue to support our Borough Fire Department.

In addition, the Department welcomed two new volunteer members in 2015, Julia Diaco and Matt Moore, while two members were recognized for 25 years of service, Michael Estelle and Timothy Lane. Sadly, Paul Shea, a 69 year member, and Joesph Raniere, a 36 year member, passed away in 2015. They will be missed and we are grateful for their devoted service.

In other news, the Rumson Fire Company has installed a new emergency back-up generator that will keep the firehouse with power during outages. This upgrade was made possible through the generosity of a resident donor.

The Rumson Fire Department is supported in part by resident contributions each year and they would like to offer their sincerest thanks for your support.

Volunteers are always needed and Borough residents are encouraged to apply and learn about how they can assist with the Borough’s fire protection. Applications for the Fire Department can be obtained through Rumson Borough Hall.

Department of Public Works

Last January the Borough received the Most Creative Safety award for 2014 from the Monmouth County Municipal Joint Insurance Fund for a Shared Capital Purchase Program with Little Silver, in which a Bucket Truck and Asphalt Hot Box were jointly purchased and included an innovative design improvement by DPW to lift the heavy equipment onto the trailer. In addition to a plaque, both Boroughs received a cash award of \$750 to purchase safety equipment.

After an extensive budget and human resources analysis and at the recommendation of our Supervisor of Public Works, garbage collection and recycling were outsourced to a private company in 2015, Suburban Disposal. It was determined that this would result in a long-term cost savings to our residents with no measurable impact on the high quality service our residents enjoy. I am glad to report that all has gone smoothly with this transition.

Rumson's Department of Public Works continues to operate a robust and successful Recycling Program. In May and October, Rumson Recycling conducts Green Day events, in which electronics and books may be recycled and materials shredded. This year, DPW collected 18,800 pounds of shredding, 12,220 pounds of electronics, and 8400 pounds of books from an estimated 400 cars – a substantial increase from 2014. Green Day is funded by a Recycling Tonnage Grant.

We offer a note of sincere appreciation and best wishes to Michael Bouthillier, a DPW Laborer, who joined us in 1993 and retired in April 2015. Sadly, Joe Raniere, a DPW laborer from 1986 until his retirement in 2006, passed away in September.

Wastewater Management

In 2015 the Wastewater Management Department purchased a 6 inch trailer mounted diesel bypass pump, which is designed to handle emergency pumping situations at most of our pump stations. In the past, the Borough has rented similar pumps and the investment has already paid for itself in its first year.

Residents are reminded to please stop dumping cooking grease / cooking oil down their drains. This costs the Borough thousands of dollars to clean out the infrastructure. In addition, residents are requested not to flush baby wipes or other “flushable” wipes, as these clog the drains and pumps.

Department of Public Works Toy Drive

The Department of Public Works Toy Drive in early December was a great success. The Toy Drive brought in 950 toys, a significant increase from 2014, and close to the goal of 1000 gifts. The toys were distributed to Family and Children's Services and the Salvation Army in Red Bank and will benefit local children in need. Miss New Jersey Teen USA, Gina Mellish, was on hand to greet donors, much to their delight. Gina is the daughter of Recycling Foreman Jamie Mellish, a 29-year veteran of DPW. Thanks to everyone for your generous gifts. Once again, you have made Santa's job a little easier.

Historic Preservation Commission

The Rumson Historic Preservation Commission (“HPC”) was formed for the purpose of identifying and assisting in the preservation of the many important properties, homes, landmarks and sites in our Borough. Thus far, the HPC has identified more than 240 properties over 100 years old that meet the preservation criteria. In an effort to preserve the special character of our town, the Commission acts as a resource for historic property owners and other residents, the Council, and the Zoning Board. In the Fall of 2015, the Commission launched the Rumson Historic Preservation Commission web site, www.rumsonnj.gov/rhpc/welcome. The site has a brief history of Rumson, streams historical photos, and provides information on identified

historic properties and the Commission itself. Our deepest thanks to the volunteer members of this Commission for their dedication in educating our residents on Rumson's historic properties and to preserving the unique character of our town.

Shade Tree Commission

The Rumson Shade Tree Commission had an eventful year of maintaining and enhancing the Borough's parks and street trees. A concerted effort was made to refurbish the landscape of Victory Park, our flagship park, which was greatly affected by Superstorm Sandy. Many damaged trees were removed and the Garden Club donated and planted numerous new trees and shrubs. Rumson-Fair Haven Boy Scout Troop 201 planted 75 plants and ornamental grasses in the new beds. In addition, a young balsam fir was planted alongside our mature Christmas Tree, so that it may be utilized in future town Christmas Tree Lighting celebrations. An intern from Rutgers University spent the summer maintaining and watering the new plantings, which was a great help.

The Shade Tree Commission hosted an Arbor Day Celebration with the Kindergarten classes at Deane-Porter elementary school. A presentation of the benefits of trees was made and a willow oak was planted with the children on the school campus.

As part of street reconstruction projects in the Borough, numerous street trees needed to be removed this year. Unfortunately the trees were planted in areas that were not ideal for a long and healthy life span. Many of these trees were planted 30 to 40 years ago and were already in decline. However, efforts were made to save healthy trees of significance that had a strong chance of surviving the impacts of construction. The Commission has appointed new planting guidelines to insure all future street tree plantings will be in areas that promise a long, healthy lifespan for the tree and minimize damage to curbs, sidewalks and resident's property. The Commission will be involved in selecting new trees and facilitating their planting on the reconstructed streets in the Spring of 2016.

Parks & Recreation

Rumson Recreation offers over 20 programs annually enjoyed by more than 4500 residents of all ages. Activities include a variety of recreational youth sports and non-sports programming, summer camps, as well as featured family events and holiday parades. New in 2015, Rumson Rec sponsored Movies in the Park in conjunction with Fair Haven Recreation. Rumson Rec also offers rowing programs for high school and middle school students, seasonal job opportunities for local teenagers, and provides support to the Rumson Senior Citizens Club.

Rumson Rec utilizes over 300 volunteer coaches each year and provides volunteer opportunities for local teens and seniors. These volunteers are the cornerstone of our programs' success. The Rumson Recreation Commission would like to thank all our Rec volunteers for their time and devotion to the benefit of our children and our community. We would also like to thank our parents and participants for their support.

Maintaining the highest quality parks and recreational spaces is a high priority for the Borough. As such, grass playing fields are periodically closed for rest and maintenance and DPW is regularly checking our facilities to ensure maximum safety. As part of our on-going park maintenance, the Borough resurfaced the Victory Park tennis courts at a cost of approximately \$17,000 in 2015.

In the last decade resident demand for playing field time has skyrocketed, particularly in field sports such as lacrosse and soccer. In fact, the Borough struggles to meet current resident demand for field space. As such, the Recreation Commission recommended in 2013 that the Borough consider improvements to Piping Rock Park, including installation of a regulation size synthetic turf field. The Borough conducted a needs study and determined that consideration of the recommendation was reasonable. In consideration of the potential cost, the Borough applied for two Monmouth County Municipal Open Space Grants, one in 2014, and one in 2015. Thus far, the Borough had been awarded \$250,000 in matching funds and expects to hear shortly if additional funds will be granted from the 2015 application. Once the full grant amount is known, the Council will then review the project more comprehensively, including having the Borough engineer draw up a detailed plan with more precise costs. There will be at least one more public hearing on this topic. At that point, the Council will consider whether or not to move forward. For more information on the project, please review our FAQ sheet on the Parks page of the Borough web site.

In November, the Borough welcomed a new Recreation Director, Kevin Delia. Kevin brings a significant amount of professional experience in physical education for children and adults and a great enthusiasm for the role. Kevin looks forward to contributing to a fun, healthy atmosphere in town and promoting community spirit through our Recreation activities. Former Recreation Director and resident Sarah Orsay is taking on a new role in the Borough, where she will spearhead the Borough's communication efforts, keeping residents up to date with happenings and topics of interest. Sarah also will lead selected projects and special events. We thank Sarah for her three years of dedicated service as Rec Director and wish both Sarah and Kevin success in their new roles.

Tax Assessor

In 2015 fifty new or rebuilt homes were completed in Rumson contributing significantly to the approximately \$40,000,000 in added rateables for the year.

Last year the Borough continued with participation in the Monmouth County Assessment Demonstration Program. Twenty percent of the properties in Rumson were inspected last year, bringing the total to date since program inception to 40%. Over a five year period, 100% will have been inspected and the cycle will begin again, with the idea to bring all properties up to current market value assessment each year and thus each homeowner paying their fair share of property taxes. All properties in the Borough have been considered in the annual assessment.

Rumson Endowment Fund

The Rumson Endowment Fund, Inc., a 501(c)3 organization formed in 1997, is the financial backbone of many projects and events throughout the Borough, such as the Rumson Christmas Tree Lighting, Veterans Day, park upgrades, emergency vehicle and other public safety equipment purchases, to list a few.

Once again two individual generous donations funded the annual upkeep of Bingham Hall and the George H. Moss Rumson History Room on the third floor of Borough Hall. We are grateful to those contributors.

Donations to the Rumson Endowment Fund, Inc., are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please contact the Borough if you would like to make a donation. Your charitable donation is greatly appreciated and truly makes a difference in our community.

Borough Staff & Commission Volunteer Updates

We appreciate our Borough's municipal staff, which continues to provide the best and most courteous service to our residents. Borough Hall employees provide the high level of services our residents expect, as they work within the budget and regulatory constraints set forth by the State of New Jersey.

In addition to those previously mentioned, the Borough welcomed several new employees in 2015 and fondly wished several retirees well. Finance Assistant and Payroll Clerk Hope Richardson retired after eight years and was replaced by Melissa McGuire last summer. Administrative Assistant and Deputy Registrar Loretta Chebookjian was well known to residents, providing a cheerful welcome and able assistance at the front desk. Loretta retired in December after nearly 12 years at the Borough. Tamila Bumback joined the staff in November as Acting Deputy Municipal Clerk in anticipation of Deputy Municipal Clerk Jane Hartman's upcoming retirement. We wish Hope and Loretta all the best in retirement and welcome Melissa and Tamila.

Personally, I would like to extend a special thank you to the Chairs and Members of all the various boards in Rumson. Each one of you volunteers a considerable amount of time attending meetings and reviewing issues important to this community. Your personal commitment is Rumson's most valuable asset and is greatly appreciated. Your spirit of volunteerism is exemplary.

John Brodsky, a 12 year veteran of the Zoning Board, assumed Chairmanship when John Conklin resigned to join the Borough Council. Steve Cottrell, the first Alternate, assumed full membership on the Board at that time. We wish John and Steve continued success and thank them for their service.

Sharon Greener resigned from the Recreation Commission in April and was replaced by Jonathan (“JB”) Kiley. Chris Hawke was appointed #1 Alternate in November. In addition, Robert McGinty’s term ended in December 2015 and he served the Commission with distinction for seven years as both an alternate and then a regular member. We thank Bob and Sharon for their service and welcome JB and Chris.

Our Police Department, volunteer Fire Department and First Aid Squad are to be commended for their unconditional commitment to the safety and welfare of our residents, addressing every emergency with courtesy and respect. We appreciate your service, thank you.

On behalf of all our Council Members and myself, I want to wish everyone a Happy, Healthy and Peaceful New Year.

May God Bless us all and God Bless America.

**Sincerely,
John E. Ekdahl
Mayor**