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Office of  
**Mayor Christopher P. Vergano**

## **2009 State of the Township Address**

Mr. Council President, Council Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of my many duties as your Mayor is to provide you with an annual "State of the Township" report and tonight it is my honor and privilege to do so.

As you are all undoubtedly aware, the Country along with New Jersey is currently experiencing what can best be described as "A recession type period". Day after day the television news shows, and the newspapers all report on the awful economic news of the day. These tough times are not only being experienced by businesses and individuals, however, but also by the government as well and Wayne is no exception.

As your elected officials, we have the responsibility, in good times and in bad, to insure that every dollar that we spend is spent wisely and responsibly. Tonight, I again commit to you that I, along with my administration and the Township Council will continue to do just that.

Before speaking about some of our plans for 2009 I would like to take a few moments to review just a few of our 2008 accomplishments...

Our tax collection rate was in line with our 2007 collection rate with an un-audited rate of 99%. This is very good news for the township.

We continue to have an excellent bond rating of AA plus. This will enable the township to continue to borrow money at a very low cost for projects such as road resurfacing, water main replacements and other necessary infrastructure improvements,

Wayne Township continues to have success securing grant funding through Passaic County's Open Space and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund. In 2008, Wayne Township received \$400,000 for the acquisition of the "Sports Dome Property" land which is located along Valley Road extension, contiguous to High Mountain Park.

We concluded negotiations with the Albanian Associated Fund and are in the process of purchasing, utilizing funds from the Township's Open Space Fund, 11 acres of environmentally sensitive property that borders Colfax Road. This property will remain in its natural state.

We partnered with the Wayne Board of Education and built turf fields at our two public high schools which will not only be used by our school students but will also be used by our Youth sport leagues.

Our Parks and Recreation Department planted 70 new trees along our streets in addition to removing over 300 tree stumps located throughout the township from trees, which fell or died.

Significant renovations to the infield and drainage and new fencing and a new backstop were installed at the ball field at Kilroy Park for the dedication of the new Al Robbins field.

Two additional Defibrillators were added to the police department inventory in 2008, permitting all patrol vehicles to carry with them this all-important life saving device. In addition Twenty (20) personal Carbon Monoxide Detectors have been purchased for use by police personnel who are usually the first on the scene of any emergency. The detectors will alert Emergency Services Personnel of the presence of the deadly colorless and odorless gas that can quickly render a person unconscious in confined spaces.

During the fourth quarter of 2008, we participated in the Morris County Cooperative Auction and utilized an on- line auction service realizing gross sales of \$30,757.00 with only a limited number of our items being offered for sale in this manner. This was the first time we tried using an on-line auction to sell obsolete Township items and we were extremely pleased with the results. In 2009 we expect to be selling more items on-line, including obsolete vehicles.

The Township switched from Verizon to an Internet based phone system and should experience a yearly savings of approximately \$50,000.

The Township continued the Hoffman Grove Flood Buyout Program and has now purchased, utilizing federal and state funds, approximately 70 homes, 35 of which have already been demolished.

In November the Township solicited proposals for employee Health Insurance coverage and on February 1st we will be changing from a self-funded program to a fee-based program. This move will greatly reduce the increase we would have experienced had we done nothing and is in keeping with our philosophy of bidding whenever possible to insure that we are receiving the best prices that we can.

We completed a draft of the Wayne Transit Center Master Plan for the development of commercial businesses centered within a mass transit facility. This plan is for the proposed development located at the current New Jersey Transit parking located on Route 23 south.

Our Economic Development Council hosted a very successful Corporate Breakfast which was attended by over 200 people representing a broad spectrum of the Wayne Business community.

**Our plans for 2009 include the following:**

We will continue to seek ways to save money by partnering with other governmental entities. We have already had discussions with the Wayne Board of Education Administration and are exploring ways to work cooperatively to save your tax dollars.

We will continue to scrutinize every dollar that we spend to make certain that we continue to operate in the most fiscally responsible manner while insuring that we maintain all of the services that you have come to expect from us.

We will complete the negotiations that will allow us to purchase the environmentally sensitive Sports Dome property, which is adjacent to High Mountain Park on Valley Road extension, and add the 17-acre site to our inventory of parklands. The funding for this purchase will come from State of New Jersey Green Acres Funds, the Passaic County Open Space Fund and the Wayne Township Open Space Fund.

We will upgrade our water infrastructure system in the neighborhood of Farmingdale Road by replacing the existing water main.

Construction has begun on our previously funded Animal Shelter and it is expected that this will be open in 2009.

In regards to Planning, The Council will introduce and adopt the revised zoning ordinances that will bring our zoning ordinances into alignment with our master plan. We will also create a "Green Plan" for a sustainable Wayne and develop a new economic development plan for Wayne.

The year 2009 is going to be a very difficult one for the Wayne Township Municipal Government. We pledge to be diligent in preparing a budget that is fiscally conservative while still meeting the needs of our constituency. We have already heard that the Governor is planning on cutting aid to municipalities such as Wayne. This will certainly not help an already difficult situation.

The State of New Jersey is very good at mandating new services yet failing to fund them. Please be advised that your Municipal Government, your Mayor and Council, control approximately 23% of your tax bill. Quite simply if you are paying \$10,000 in property taxes, \$2300, or 23 cents on the dollar is coming here to 475 Valley Road. The balance is going to the Passaic County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Wayne Board of Education.

We have consistently said that Wayne is a great place to live and raise a family. We continue to believe that premise and will strive to do everything we can to keep Wayne affordable and a place we can all be proud of.

Thank you very much for your time and continued support.