

STATE OF THE TOWN

February 9, 2006

Supervisor Jon Kaiman

Welcome. I thank once again the League of Woman Voters for hosting this event. I would like to recognize both my wife Kim and mother Regina who are both here, two of the three most important women in my life, the third being my eight-month old daughter Iyana who could not be here today.

I am honored, once again, to give this 2006 North Hempstead State of the Town message. I proudly report to you, as I did last year, that the state of the town is excellent and our prospects continue to look good.

The Town of North Hempstead continues the trend set many years ago by my predecessor May Newburger in pursuing solid fiscal policies with sound fiscal management achieving continued surpluses, a strong fund balance and a reduced debt burden. We continue to do this without increasing our general fund or part-town fund tax levy. Our general fund tax levy, for example, is exactly the same as it was in 2003

Our goals have been and continue to be to watch every dollar, bring in outside resources whenever we can and provide the highest level of services and programs possible.

In 2005 alone the town pursued and received over \$5 million in federal allocations, negotiated a multi-million dollar, multi-year grant to build a community center and obtained millions more in additional state and county funding as well as corporate grants. Already in January of this year, we've been awarded over \$1 million for environmental projects from New York State.

Even while the town reinvests millions of dollars in our parks, our roads, and overall infrastructure, we continue to spend down our debt burden and maintain our fund balance. In fact, our strong fiscal position has resulted in yet another bond rating upgrade, putting the town's rating at Aa2, the highest it is ever been in town history.

And so, the state of the town is excellent. We have a strong financial outlook, improved infrastructure, new and exciting programming, more intensive code enforcement, expanded environmental efforts, and a modernized approach to managing government resources and being responsive to our residents. It is regarding this last point that I would like to address most of my comments today.

The three pillars of the Town of North Hempstead's municipal reorganization are **311/TownStat**, **Community Based Planning**, and our new **Office of Inter-municipal Coordination**. These three pillars represent, in essence, how we respond to individual concerns, how we respond to community concerns, and how we interact with each of the

governmental entities that provide services to our residents. With these efforts, I believe that the Town of North Hempstead has embarked on a new methodology for delivering services, making decisions and possibly shaping the way local government serves the people it represents.

311/TOWNSTAT

I have been talking about the Town's 311 and TownStat system for some time now. We spent the first year of my first term learning about the system and how we can make it work in North Hempstead. Our second year we acquired the funding, selected the vendors and installed the system.

In 2006, our 311/TownStat system is up and running. In these early months of 2006 we are transitioning our personnel into the new operation, easing into our awareness campaign and going live with one department at a time. Presently, our Highway Department and Lighting Division are directly linked to the system with our Parks Department scheduled to be hooked in sometime next month.

The goal with our 311 system is for our residents to be able to make one call to Town Hall and get all the information that they need to resolve any problem that they have. 311 is a number that is easy to remember and represents not just easy access to local government, but an entire information and management system. That system, which we refer to as TownStat, is comprised of technology developed by Motorola and obtained by the Town through a \$500,000 grant from the federal government through the efforts of Senator Chuck Schumer and Congressman Gary Ackerman. The system also includes an emergency management component funded through the efforts of New York State Senator Michael Balboni.

The fundamental principle behind the system is that all inquiries come into a central call center where our call takers are trained to input the inquiry and related information into a specially designed computer screen. Call takers can access information and answer most questions right then and there. Requests for specific action by the town are inputted into the system and then transferred over to the appropriate department. That department then has the responsibility of acknowledging receipt and inputting the actions it has taken to resolve the constituent request. The caller is then notified that the problem is resolved before the matter can be closed.

The TownStat component is the collection of all the data that is going into the computer system in a manner that allows us to make a statistical analysis of the number of calls that come in, where the calls are from, and the types of calls that we receive. We then identify patterns of activity allowing the town to deploy or redeploy our resources. On a daily, weekly, and monthly basis we will monitor the types of calls that we receive and the effectiveness and timeliness of our response. The goal is access, continuity and accountability.

It is a new system, but one that will shape the way government responds to its constituents in the future. Having studied its effectiveness in a number of cities throughout the country, the Town of North Hempstead is the first suburban community in the country to institute a system of this kind.

With the installation of this system in the Town of North Hempstead and with our Highway Department having gone live, I am prepared today to pledge that any pothole complaint that comes in through our 311 system will be addressed and repaired within two business days of receipt of the call.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of our team that made 311/TownStat possible. This team includes Chris Senior, JoAnne Taormina, Helene Beckerman, Tom Harty, Frank Prisciandaro, Shawn Brown, and Sharon Williams, along with our consultants Sidney Bowne, Inc. and Sector Management. We now have Shawn Brown and David Yellin overseeing TownStat and Sharon Little overseeing the 311 call center.

COMMUNITY BASED PLANNING

Where 311/TownStat addresses individual concerns, Community Based Planning is our approach to addressing community-wide issues. We do this through public meetings, public notifications and what is called “visioning” which is when we invite the community to come together to engage one another on a relevant issue.

Visioning involves community dialogue with one another so that instead of 300 people in an auditorium listening to a number of speakers at a podium in the front of the room, the audience separates into small groups and discusses and documents the observations and opinions of each individual through the discussion process.

The discussion is focused on a particular issue or issues with background information provided to foster a more comprehensive dialogue. The small groups are asked to summarize and prioritize their thoughts and observations at the conclusion of this part of the program. We then take this information and present it, table by table, to the larger audience. From this we discern patterns of opinion and, thus, a shared vision relating to a particular issue.

In the Town of North Hempstead we have now had visioning processes in many communities. We started in New Cassel during the previous administration where a visioning was accomplished with the help of Sustainable Long Island and Unified New Cassel. This effort resulted in a visioning document that set out the type of main street and community services the residents of New Cassel would like to see in their community.

During the last two years we have taken that document and begun the implementation process. We now have a number of mixed-use buildings going up along Prospect Avenue that will include affordable housing and traditional stores such as a pharmacy, a supermarket, a bank, and restaurants all previously missing on this once barren

commercial corridor. We've also obtained millions of dollars for the reconstruction and landscaping of the main street in this corridor, from the federal and state government primarily through the help of Senator Hillary Clinton, Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy and Governor George Pataki. Just yesterday, we received a call from HUD in Washington DC advising that we have been awarded an additional \$150,000 for the New Cassel redevelopment and we have received a commitment from local county legislator Roger Corbin to provide the necessary funding for incorporating the street lighting and utility wire relocation into the overall program.

During the last two years the Town initiated a visioning process for the entire Port Washington peninsula where over 1000 people provided input in one form or another. The result was a visioning document that has been adopted by the town board as a planning document for the Port Washington area. The Town now also requires that such visioning documents be incorporated into any new development proposal before the town board. In the Port Washington visioning effort the Town partnered with the Residents for a More Beautiful Port Washington, the Port Washington Business Improvement District and the General Council of Home Owners' Associations of Port Washington. The project was lead by HDR and Sustainable Long Island.

Other visioning projects initiated by the town involve the Great Neck Library; the reconstruction of Donald Street Park in Roslyn Heights; the building of a community center in New Cassel/Westbury; the revitalization of Westbury Avenue in Carle Place; the revitalization of Plandome Road in Manhasset; and most recently shopping center improvements along Hillside Avenue in New Hyde Park.

There is more to be done and more to come, but the process is established here in the Town of North Hempstead and we will continue to include the community in the decisions that we make through this engaging process of community based planning.

I would like to acknowledge our Director of Community Based Planning, April Brown Lake, for pulling these efforts together usually under very difficult conditions and also our Planning Department under Dave Wasserman and now Cecelia Ward. Leslie Gross and Louise Fishman from our BTDC also participate.

OFFICE OF INTER-MUNICIPAL COORDINATION

If 311 addresses individual concerns, and community based planning addresses community wide concerns, our new office of Inter-municipal Coordination will look to improve the way governments and municipal corporations can work together to provide the highest level of services at reduced costs to the benefit of our taxpayers.

Within the borders of the Town of North Hempstead there exists approximately 100 municipal corporations including 31 villages, a number of authorities and quasi-government associations and over fifty special districts. Each year, the Town of North

Hempstead alone approves 45 special district budgets. This does not include school districts or other independent local districts.

In the latter part of 2005, New York State Senator Michael Balboni, Nassau County Legislator Roger Corbin and I had a meeting in town hall where we discussed the responsibilities and opportunities that the town has in regard to our having so many districts and villages within our town. It was from this meeting that the seed was planted for our new program announced here today. And so, with the pledge of assistance and funding from the state and the county for the initial start-up costs of this program, and with the unanimous authorization by the town's bipartisan town council, I announce the establishment of the Town of North Hempstead's Office of Inter-municipal Coordination.

Earlier this week, the Town reassigned existing personnel to participate in this pilot project, which is one that we believe will be a resource for all of the municipal corporations within our town.

Rafael Lieber, who serves as the Director of Legislative Affairs, will now serve as the Director of our Office of Inter-Municipal Coordination and Deena Lesser, who serves as the Director of Inter-municipal affairs, will serve as deputy of this program. An attorney from our town attorney's office will split duties with this program and support staff will be added over time as needed.

It is the purpose of this office to coordinate inter-municipal partnerships with the goal of reducing the cost of government while providing the highest level of municipal service to our respective and mutual constituencies. The office shall serve as a centralized resource for shared information, municipal planning, and budget analysis. It shall be the policy of this program to respect the independent authority, role and responsibilities of each municipal entity participating in this program. The purpose is not to displace or diminish any municipal corporation, but only to establish a mechanism where economies of scale, shared experiences and shared information can reduce the cost of government.

The goal is to interact and communicate laterally with the various districts and villages in a way that helps us all better serve our communities. It is also our intention to work with the state, the county and our neighboring towns to achieve better government at lower costs. We hope to create transparency in what we do at all levels of government so that those who pay for the work that we do can have confidence in the decisions that we make.

I would like to note that the Town of North Hempstead presently works with many villages and districts already, but we can do more. Presently the town has agreements with various municipal corporations to provide code enforcement, clear storm drains, and pave roads, all of which saves taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollar a year. We are negotiating with other municipalities to plow streets, sweep roads, make signs, and restore ball fields all in a way that adds resources to the town while saving other municipal corporations money. We can look for ways to consolidate services, use

economies of scale in purchasing goods or services, and share information in ways that further saves money.

The revenue that the town gets from these services is used in part to expand our own resources in personnel and equipment so that we can provide even better service to our residents and municipal partners.

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting called by and chaired by Nassau County Comptroller Howard Weitzman to address concerns relating to so many multiple layers of government. Also attending the meeting were Hempstead Supervisor Kate Murray, Oyster Bay Supervisor John Venditto, County Executive Tom Suozzi, Tax Assessor Harvey Levinson, New York State Senator Michael Balboni, New York State Assemblyman Tom DiNapoli, and the Director of Suburban Studies at Hofstra University Richard Guardino. It was a very productive meeting where we discussed many ideas. Without going into the specifics of the meeting, it is clear to me that there was and is a shared and bipartisan understanding that we must work together at all levels of government in order to best serve our communities.

It is my hope that the Town of North Hempstead's new Office of Inter-municipal Coordination will be a positive tool used to achieve a better understanding of how government does and can work together at all levels.

The Town of North Hempstead is now utilizing our 311/TownStat system, Community Based Planning, and the Office of Inter-municipal Coordination to promote greater access to our government leaders, dialogue between neighbors and decision makers, and partnerships between municipal providers. While we anticipate some bumps along the road, these efforts will ultimately help make us more effective and more efficient.

CONCLUSION

I close by observing that there is much to be proud of over these last two years. The town personnel have done so much and at every level produced results for our residents. It is the individual efforts of so many who work in government oftentimes going unnoticed that make the programs that I've discussed today possible.

I would like to take just a few moments highlighting some of the exciting and important work that we do in the town. I would note that each individual mentioned does so much more than what I can present in a sentence or two, but I believe the sheer volume of projects, programs and every day responsibilities requires a mention of just some of the goings on around town.

The town recently initiated a model program called Project Independence under Community Services Commissioner Madge Kaplan and Kim Corcoran that will enable seniors to reside in their homes even when they would have otherwise had to leave due to limitations that affect us as we age. The Town partnered with FEGS and North Shore/LIJ with funding provided through Senator Balboni and Assemblyman DiNapoli to provide

various services to the senior population in a particular community. Caisy Goldschmidt has been designated to administer this exciting new program on behalf of the town and will be reaching out to neighbors and businesses to join us in assisting those who helped build our communities stay in their communities for as long as they can.

Also special kudos to Kimberly Corcoran for the wonderful work she does for the Town's Earth Day programming, which is getting better each year. Of course we continue to pursue our other environmental programs, such as our hybrid electric bus pilot program which should result in our first bus being delivered sometime this spring, as well as our goal of adding to our hybrid electric auto fleet, which we will be able to do this year with a recently received grant from Congress.

The Town has been reorganizing and tightening our zoning laws through the efforts of Commissioner David Wasserman and now Planning Commissioner Cecelia Ward. David has been a renaissance public servant over the last six years and will now be going into the private sector which is most certainly a great loss to the Town of North Hempstead and all of our residents. However, we are most fortunate that he will remain at the helm of our Community Development Agency which is the lead agency in our New Cassel Development program. We also have great expectations of those that will have new or expanded roles such as Cecelia Ward, Joseph Madden and Matthew Miner who is coming back to us after a two year absence.

It is worth noting David Wasserman's special and unique contribution to this town. He has been instrumental in so many projects, programs, and policy initiatives providing brilliant insight and constructive analysis on so many levels. The depth of his contribution and the effect of his participation cannot be overstated. His analysis and input in relation to planning initiatives, site plan hearings, and code revisions is always of the highest caliber and he will be sorely missed.

For the first time we now have a Information Technology Department as a stand alone department headed by Tom Harty and his deputy Frank Prisciandaro. They are overseeing many new technological efforts, including our 311/TownStat system, our new phone system which in and of itself is saving the town thousands of dollars a year, and technological upgrades for all of our departmental needs.

Public Safety Commissioner Ed Neidich is working with Nassau County Deputy Commissioner Dennis Monet in the StarCom program providing an integrated safety operation on our bays and waterways. Emergency Management Director Janet Wohlers is upgrading our Emergency Management Operations and Code Enforcement Director John Macedo continues to extend the efforts of our code enforcement officers productivity and output.

Administrative Services Commissioner Ray Levan is overseeing many new construction projects in Town Hall and also our new Sidewalk Maintenance Division, the Green Team. The Green Team goes from neighborhood to neighborhood removing litter and debris from our sidewalks and rights of way improving our quality of life each day.

Commission of Finance Helene Beckerman is continuously striving to improve our purchasing operation and our human resources responsibility dealing with the myriad of issues that arise involving civil service, labor/management, municipal insurance, requests for proposals and the list goes on.

Our Comptroller's office is highly professional and extremely effective at what they do under the leadership of Comptroller Paul Pathe. Presently, this office is rolling out a new computerized finance system and is now handling our payroll system as well.

The Town of North Hempstead has a number of construction and restoration projects underway, most notably that of our Golf Course Club House at Harbor Links. Public Works Commissioner Gil Anderson and his team have done an extraordinary job moving all of these projects forward and we anticipate the opening of our beautiful new club house in April of this year. The list of other projects he is working on is simply too numerous to mention, but each will make a noticeable difference in this town in the years to come.

I spoke earlier of parks and roads. Commissioner Olsen has brought so many of our fields back to their original glory and oversaw the building of our first turf football field at Tully Park which is already the talk of the town and the desired home field of many a team. Tully pool, Clark Gardens, our parks programs and especially our parks concert series are all second to none.

The Town's Spooky Week featuring "spooky walk" and our new "not-so spooky walk" took in 10,000 visitors last Halloween, the most ever, and we will be even better in 2006. Of course we will once again feature our Memorial Day Fireworks with the Help of the Castagnas and the Americana Mall in Manhasset. We will bring back Beach Fest which was a huge success last year and Winter Wonderland which I'm sure will grow in popularity.

For those wildly successful programs I must recognize not only our parks department, but also the Business and Tourism Development Corporation under the leadership of Leslie Gross and Louise Fishman for all the work they put in. We will be hearing much more from the BTDC in this coming year, as it is an important addition to our town operations. As we approach the Centennial of our Town Hall building, I look forward to our second annual commemoration of North Hempstead Day, which is organized primarily through the BTDC with help from Michelle Schimel and our local historians. It was on this day, September 23, 1775 when residents of the northern part of the Town of Hempstead seceded from the Town of Hempstead, rejecting British rule, the first municipality in the 13 colonies to do so back in those dangerous, but glorious times.

Highway Superintendent Tom Tiernan continues to do a yeoman's job with the huge responsibilities of our Highway Department including sweeping our streets, plowing our roads, trimming trees, making street signs, filling potholes and the list goes on. I am proud to say that our annual Spring Cleaning initiated in 2004 performed by our Highway Department is a huge success picking up over 1000 tons of sand and dirt from our roads

each spring. And during those winter months, our new salt brine machines and new plows are doing wonders when it comes to our snow removal efforts.

The Town's chief legal office, Town Attorney Richard Finkel and his entire staff have done an extraordinary job in the most professional manner with amazing results. From the aggressive prosecution of code violations resulting in record receipt of fine revenue each of the last two years, to handling the variety of cases that we get throughout the year, to providing solid legal advice day in and day out, Rich Finkel, his chief deputy Linda Zuech and his team of attorney's and staff have done an amazing job for us.

My staff is headed by Deputy Supervisor Chris Senior who is our director of operations and my chief financial advisor responsible for our budgeting process and financial policies. Working with Paul Pathe and our financial consultants we continue to have tremendous results such as when the town recently received its highest bond rating in town history putting it in the top quarter of the top one percent of almost 1000 towns in the state of New York.

JoAnne Taormina, our Chief of Staff, has the thankless job of administering our personnel issues. She provides guidance on many ad hoc problems and initiatives including those involving utility issues, our cable station, and our housing authority. One initiative recommended by her resulted in the town receiving a multimillion dollar grant to build a community center.

I mentioned some of the directors before, but I will go through the entire team:

April Brown Lake, Director of Community Based Affairs is the key to pulling Community Based Planning together. Dan Nachbar, our Grants Coordinator and Deputy Commissioner of Finance, has been instrumental in our success in obtaining so many grants during these last two years, and also assists in budget analysis; Rafael Lieber, Director of Legislative Affairs and now Director of Intermunicipal Coordination who has made quite an impact especially on our lobbying efforts in Washington DC where we brought in approximately \$10 million in the last two years; Deena Lesser, Director of Intermunicipal Affairs and now also our Deputy Director of Intermunicipal Coordination who also doubles or triples as our resident representative on historical related projects and organizations, not to be confused with Joan Kent who is our resident historian; and David Chauvin, our talented and effective Communications Director who works tirelessly and gets great results. Dave also hosts one of our most popular cable shows and does a great job working with Steve Corrao down at our cable station. We also have Shawn Brown who oversees TownStat working with David Yellin; and Sharon Little who manages our new 311 call center as previously mentioned.

I must also recognize those who work or worked in my office, Christine Michelen, Helen McCann, JoAnne Porello, Sean Coades, and Rosemary Kelly who all have represented my office professionally, which by the nature of the job, can be challenging at times.

Finally, our elected officials include our Town Clerk Michelle Schimel, who also leads the way in our environmental programs including coming up with the idea of adding computer equipment to our STOP program, has been a leader on so many of our environmental initiatives, and is working on new standards for our taxi and limousine regulations. She and her entire staff do such a wonderful job on behalf of our town and so I thank them for all that they do.

Receiver of Taxes Rocco Iannarelli continues to provide new ideas with a solid staff. They have one of greatest responsibilities in the town which involves collecting a billion dollars in tax revenue each year and they too do a great job on behalf of all of our town residents.

The offices of our councilmembers continue to serve our communities so well, and I would like to recognize them for the great work that they do: Councilmembers Tom Dwyer, Angelo Ferraro, Fred Pollack, Lee Seeman, Robert Troiano and Wayne Wink.

I would also like to acknowledge Dan Lomonte, the president of the town's local CSEA unit. He and his team negotiated with us a five year contract and they continue to represent there members with vigor and integrity.

I thank all of those that serve on our advisory boards and commissions. I would certainly like to recognize those that serve on our three major boards: the Community Development Agency under chairman David Wasserman; our Board of Zoning Affairs under Chairman David Mammina; and our Housing Authority under Chairwoman Barbara Blumberg.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution to those who provide much guidance to us in their various capacities including: Myron Blumenfeld, Joel Ziev, Kitty Poons, Roy Smithheimer, Dan DiLucia, Gerard Terry, Bill Weitzman and Bob McDonald.

I thank once again the League of Woman Voters for hosting the Town of North Hempstead's annual State of the Town message and I thank the residents or the Town of North Hempstead for giving me the opportunity to serve such a wonderful town.

Thank you.