

**TOWN OF NORTH HEMPSTEAD  
STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS**

**SUPERVISOR JON KAIMAN**  
**January 28, 2009**

The Town of North Hempstead is a community of almost 240,000 people, covering 58 square miles on the north shore of Long Island. We sit adjacent to New York City to the West; the Town of Hempstead, the largest town in America, to the South; the Town of Oyster Bay to the East; and bays and harbors and the Long Island Sound to the North.

I have been serving as Town Supervisor since January of 2004 and I am proud of the work that we've done, the people with whom I work, and the residents who I serve.

I came to office, and continue in office with the idea that the financial stability of our Town government is paramount, that the environment is a priority, and that quality of life issues are the key to fulfilling our obligations to our residents. In the area of governance, my focus has been on connecting to our constituents, discerning and applying the best practices available to us, and working with the other decision makers at all levels of government and municipal service who affect the communities we serve.

I believe we have done well. And I am proud of the work that we have done.

**Economy and Finance**

For the past five years, I have come before this audience and spoken of the strong economic standing of the Town and its government. Today, the world is a different place than it was one year ago. The economic situation is fraught with peril locally, throughout the state, and throughout the nation.

The Town of North Hempstead, like all of the other 13 towns on Long Island, suffered shortfalls in our mortgage tax and sales tax revenue in 2008. We are well aware that our residents and businesses are shouldering the burden of a sluggish economy and a weak real estate market. Wages are stagnant or falling, businesses are scaling back, and jobs are becoming increasingly more difficult to come by. Ours is a highly educated and market-oriented community and we have felt firsthand the impact of the banking breakdown and the volatility of the stock and credit markets.

The Town has responded to this crisis with a balanced approach; utilizing reserve funds, capitalizing on our large pool of grants obtained over the last five years, finding more ways to share costs and services, issuing a small tax increase, and freezing or reducing our annual expenditures wherever we can. Now more than

ever, our Town government must meet its obligations to our residents, even while operating on a diminished budget.

We are cautiously optimistic that the foundation we have laid over the past five years with the balanced approach we have taken on both revenues and expenditures will allow us to meet the challenges ahead. Precarious fiscal winds and bad markets will tug at us, but we are ready.

The state of the Town in regard to our fiscal situation is solid, storm ready and stable.

### **Economic Stimulus**

As both Washington and Albany make plans to address the economic crisis, we in the Town of North Hempstead are aggressively looking to participate in whatever programs emerge. I have been in touch with our federal and state representatives to highlight the great projects we are looking to fund here in North Hempstead, and I am working on a regional basis as a member of the Long Island Regional Planning Council to monitor the progress of the economic stimulus packages now under consideration.

North Hempstead has a long list of shovel-ready projects set to go. They include a community center in New Cassel; a multi-tiered parking garage in Port Washington; a number of multimillion dollar road projects from Plandome Road to Prospect Avenue; flood mitigation projects in Carle Place and Mineola; sewage treatment plant projects in Great Neck and Port Washington; and the reconstruction of recreational facilities in New Hyde Park and Manorhaven.

These efforts are a continuation of the high-quality projects which have been a centerpiece of this administration: Projects that bring together federal, state and county governments as partners on efforts ranging from the preservation of land along Hempstead Harbor, to the Town's 311 system, to the reconstruction of Donald Street Park in Roslyn and Mill Pond Park in Port Washington. By aggressively seeking out and securing financial support from Washington, Albany and Mineola we have been able to expand our programming, revitalize our natural resources and enhance our communities while making our local tax dollars stretch further than they otherwise would.

### **100 Best Places to Live**

Many in the public and private sectors have invested in our community. That investment takes many forms. That commitment to the communities within our town, when combined with the beautiful natural resources, great restaurants, historic places, the high level of services available, the cultural access, the libraries, the shopping, the superior schools and, the people - it should be no surprise that CNN/Money Magazine named the Town of North Hempstead one of the 100 best places to live in the United States of America. We are the highest ranked community in New York, one of only three in the State to make the list.

Our high performing schools have also won national recognition. The Intel Science Talent Search recently named 19 students from eight schools in North Hempstead as semi-finalists in one of the nation's premier academic competitions. And we can even take credit for an out-of-towner, as one of our very proud staff is the mother of another semi-finalist. In fact, North Hempstead had more semi-finalists in the Intel competition than 33 other states. Each year North Hempstead schools are disproportionately represented in competitions such as this and we are proud of the students, the teachers, the school administrations and the families whose commitment to excellence shows so clearly in competitions such as this.

As reflected in the CNN/Money Magazine survey suggests, North Hempstead is clearly an outstanding community in which to live, conduct business, and raise a family.

### **Department of Services for the Aging – Project Independence**

To build on these successes, I believe it's time to reorganize how our Town provides services and programs to our residents. With the participation of so many in our community programs, it's appropriate to restructure our Community Services Department to better meet the needs of our constituents. Therefore, I am proposing that we create a new Department of Services for the Aging while simultaneously redefining our Community Services Department.

The new Department of Services for the Aging will have under its umbrella our innovative program, Project Independence. We initiated Project Independence in 2005 as a pilot program in New Hyde Park. The idea was to provide coordinated services and assistance to seniors who lived in a defined area and wanted to remain in their homes and familiar surroundings as they grew older. We established a community steering committee and partnered with local medical and mental health professionals. We identified needs and found ways to address them including medical transportation, personal interaction and support.

In 2008 we announced that we were taking this program town-wide, expanding the effort in a variety of ways. We've connected it to our 311 and TownStat systems, providing easy access into the program, and a framework by which we can analyze, monitor, and enhance it as it develops. I am happy to announce that we will be opening a Project Independence office at the Great Neck Senior Center this spring.

A program such as Project Independence is not just for seniors. As I understand it, every resident in our Town is either a senior or hoping one day to become one. Addressing senior issues affects not only those that have reached that designation, but those that are caregivers, family members, neighbors, friends and providers of the panoply of services and programs that enhance one's quality of life.

According to the last national census, the Town's population of residents aged 75-84 increased 40%, and those older than 85 increased 60%. As we all live longer and healthier lives, these figures are only expected to increase. Creating a Department of Services for the Aging will allow the Town to provide much needed services to this fast growing segment of our population.

## **Department of Community Services – Events, Outreach and Education**

The new Department of Community Services will also be providing much needed services to residents of all ages, with a focus on events, outreach and volunteer coordination. The "events" function of this department is clear enough. We have dozens of festivals, events, and programs, all of which require a consistent effort to make successful.

In the months ahead, tens of thousands of our residents will participate in our Town programs: from our Winter festival and Special Olympics Polar Plunge in February; to our EcoFest in April; our Memorial Day commemoration and fireworks display in May; our Beach Festival in September; our North Hempstead Day celebration in September; our Spooky Week fun in October; and our Winter Wonderland in December.

Five of those seven events did not even exist five years ago. A sixth, the Memorial Day fireworks, had been discontinued and so we brought it back. The last, our Halloween Spooky Walk, was expanded to a five day program and enhanced with the addition of the Not So Spooky Walk for those a little less adventurous. I am proud of the creativity and hard work of our Town personnel who make these events such an important part of our Town experience. Add the Earth Day programs, concert series, senior programming including Funday Monday at North Hempstead Beach Park, and all of the other events and programs that we have launched, and it becomes clear that this Town is active and energized as ever.

Community Services will also expand its outreach and education efforts. The Town is a source of information about many areas important to our residents, including the environment, recycling, animal safety, health, energy, and so much more. We need to dedicate the appropriate resources and personnel to communicate this information to our residents and businesses.

The third component of this expanded department is "volunteer coordination and activities." In the spirit of President Obama's words at his inaugural address which I had the privilege to attend, we have begun "a new era of responsibility." Add to this our Governor David Patterson's words at his State of the State address earlier this month where he also discussed volunteerism and community service as being "more important than ever." To put those words and ideas into action here in North Hempstead we will empower our Community Services staff to seek out, develop, and expand volunteer opportunities for our residents.

Much like the mission of AmeriCorps, our own local version – call it North Hempstead Corps – can provide the framework for those who have the time, ability, and desire to volunteer and make a difference in their community. Many give generously of their time already such as those that volunteer for the Shelter Connection at our animal shelter or those that volunteer in New Hyde Park for Project Independence, or those that volunteer at our Botanic Garden in Albertson. It is my hope that we can expand the opportunity to volunteer to all who wish to participate and to do so in a manner that is both meaningful and substantive.

## Connecting to the Community; Improving Management Practices: Working together

During the last five years, we have consistently pursued three themes in how we organize the administration of this government. The three themes involve 1) connecting to our constituents, 2) finding the best practices and methods for managing our resources and running our departments, and 3) working together with others whose responsibilities overlap or connect in one way or another with ours.

The first theme, connecting to our constituents, led us to 311, to community based planning and visioning, and to the expansion of our communications efforts through North Hempstead TV and other means of communication.

The second theme, finding best practices and management methods, led us to TownStat, to the establishment of our auditing and control division, and to the expansion of technology as a management tool.

The third theme, interacting with the varied decision makers, led us to the establishment of the Office of Intermunicipal Coordination, and to our aggressive efforts in Washington DC and Albany as well as the constant dialogue that we've maintained with our county government.

Each year my State of the Town speech has included an update on these efforts. When I introduced these concepts in prior years it was hoped that they would grow into programs, become institutionalized, become part of the fabric of our local government. I am proud to announce that after five years, they have. There is still a long way to go before we have a final product in any of these areas, but we now incorporate these themes in everything we do in town government.

### **311**

Our 311 system is now producing real results on a level that has exceeded our original expectations. In its first year of operation, the 311 call center took in approximately 40,000 calls. In 2007, its second year of operation it took in just short of 100,000 calls. Last year, 2008, the center took in over 114,000 calls. I would note that the system still is not presently hooked up to our Clerk's office or our Receiver of Taxes office. In addition, Project Independence is just now going live which will grow the system even more.

Not only do we now know how many people are calling into town government, but we know what they are calling for and we know how we are responding to them. In regard to those 114,000 calls coming into Town Hall in 2008, each one was logged in, the information preserved, the request responded to, and the query resolved. Each call assigned a service request number and directed to the appropriate department or office. When looking at the scale of contact that we've established with our residents, the results are simply awesome.

### **Visioning**

In regard to our community based planning and visioning, we continue to build on our original efforts. In Port Washington, we are following up by working with Residents for a More Beautiful Port Washington on the new Clean Green Zone; finally reconstructing Mill Pond; moving forward on the construction of a tiered parking garage at the train station; acquiring and preserving more open space, expanding our waterfront trail system; and improving our recreational fields and facilities on the Port peninsula.

In Carle Place we rebuilt the sidewalks along Westbury Avenue and will be installing our new flags along the corridor.

In Manhasset we obtained a \$400,000 grant in conjunction with the Manhasset School District to improve the Plandome Road corridor making it safer and more attractive.

In New Hyde Park we are in the process of beautifying the Hillside Avenue corridor at New Hyde Park Road and have addressed some, albeit not all, drainage and facade issues in that area.

In Great Neck we have finally worked out the details with the Nassau County Planning Department so we can move forward on that long overdue visioning effort.

And in New Cassel, the Town's original visioning, we are prepared to begin the reconstruction of Prospect Avenue as well as Grand Blvd. We are going out to bid shortly on our multi-million dollar Community Center that will feature two NBA sized basketball courts along with an internet cafe, a dance studio, a seniors lounge, meeting rooms, study rooms, a television studio, a game room, a party room, while also housing our Public Safety Department and our Emergency Management operations.

Earlier this month along with County Executive Tom Suozzi and community and spiritual leader Bishop Lionel Harvey, we cut the ribbons on three of the seven mixed use housing and commercial development projects that will beautify Prospect Avenue, be an economic engine for the New Cassel community, and provide much needed affordable housing in our Town. And we will finally get the local supermarket, bank, and pharmacy that the New Cassel Community said that it wanted during that visioning process begun so many years ago.

## **TownStat**

Our constant focus on improving management takes us back to 311. As I've said in the past, however, 311 is not simply a hotline. It is a connection to our new technology and performance management software that we call TownStat. TownStat is North Hempstead's version of Baltimore's CitiStat which was instituted by then Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley who looked to New York City's pioneering policing software called CompStat for his inspiration.

TownStat is a performance measurement system that allows us to see how we perform as individuals, departments, and as a Town. After several years of study, acquisition, installation and activation, we are now able to see the patterns that emerge from our statistical data.

Years ago, when serving as the Commissioner of Public Safety, I was told that there was no mechanism or ability to discern how many inspections were conducted by my Department each week or even how many summonses were issued by each inspector. The resulting frustration led me and, ultimately, the Town of North Hempstead down the path to where we are today. It was incredible to me that we could not do a statistical analysis of our code inspectors work product in terms of cases open, inspections conducted, tickets issued and cases closed.

My first priority as Town Supervisor five years ago was to address that problem. In order to manage, to set priorities, to dedicate resources, to improve practices, we needed statistical data in real time. We needed to know who was doing what and how long it was taking them. We needed to know how much money was being collected, how our money was being spent, how many permits were being issued, how many people were coming to our events. We needed to know what we did and when.

As I stand here today, I am happy to be able to tell you that we can now identify productivity through statistical data. For example:

In 2008 we filled 798 potholes; issued 18,909 parking tickets; adopted out 209 dogs and reunited 118 lost dogs with their rightful owners. We issued 4407 buildings permits; 1139 marriage certificates; 5650 birth certificates, and 1631 death certificates. We logged in 5144 helicopter noise complaints; collected 35,309 pounds of litter off our sidewalks; and our Public Safety Department conducted 2177 inspections.

We are slowly, but surely, getting to where we need to be and knowing what we need to know.

### **Auditing and Control**

Our performance management doesn't stop at 311 and TownStat. We have now fully activated our internal auditing and control division, allowing us to seek, find and address lapses in operations while looking to apply best practices to all of our operations.

We now regularly review our operations and policies looking for faults and problems. We also look for things that we are doing right so that we can replicate such processes elsewhere. We have learned that it is helpful for all to know that we are subject to oversight and review, not for punishment sake, but to keep ourselves focused on and cognizant of what our mission is and that we are part of something larger than ourselves.

Our Buildings Department is an example of where new technology and oversight ultimately lead us to major fault areas that revealed overwhelming problems. The Department has now been totally deconstructed, rebuilt, and reconstituted. It is now fully operational, transparent, and downright efficient in its work product. Permits and certificates are now available within weeks, sometimes even days, as opposed to years. People are treated professionally as it is now clear that our personnel are

professionals. Our new software systems are up and running, our checks and balances are operational, and the integrity of our files is now paramount.

All departments and divisions, in fact, have made changes to catch up with modern management practices. The technology that we now deploy helps in that vein as well. We have come a long way, remaining open to new ideas with a willingness to improve.

### **Office of Intermunicipal Coordination**

In regard to the third theme of which I spoke earlier, intermunicipal coordination, I look back to 2006 when I proposed to the Town board that we establish an Office of Intermunicipal Coordination. This office was to be used as a vehicle for us to work together, each municipal entity working through a central town office which served as a repository for information, history, and analysis. Personnel would be permanently assigned to this office to create continuity and establish the office as a true resource.

This has come to be. In a town with approximately 100 municipal entities within our borders (villages, special districts, school districts, authorities and associations) it seems obvious now that a town such as ours should have an office dedicated to the coordination of our interacting roles and responsibilities.

To date, the Town of North Hempstead presently has forty nine intermunicipal agreements between the Town and various government entities. Thirty more agreements are pending approval. Seventy nine intermunicipal agreements is, I believe, a true indication that we can come together for the common interest and in fulfillment of our individual and collective responsibilities.

These agreements cover a broad range of services including the provision of salt, fuel, street sweepers, paving crews, street signs, emergency services, information and technology services, human resource information and the list goes on. In these agreements, our municipal partners save time and money while the Town brings in additional dollars to be reinvested in town operations.

I believe that I can safely say that we have saved millions of dollars through our Office of Intermunicipal Coordination since that office was established.

In regard to the intermunicipal efforts that we have been working on, I would like to highlight a number of important programs or situations where we are making a significant impact.

### **School Recycling**

Last year I announced that the Town was going to launch a school recycling program that will be more comprehensive and cost effective than we've ever done before. We then reached out to the eleven school districts located within the Town of North Hempstead and offered to put recycling bins in every classroom and public area in each district while also picking up their recyclables and having them brought to the

Town's transfer station. To date, seven of our school districts are up and running, with several more agreements in the works.

In fact, I recently took a trip to Albany with our recycling team at the behest of our own recycling maven Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel, who wanted us to see the program set up by an innovative administrator in the Albany school district. We were duly impressed with the school's energy, creativity and commitment to making recycling as comprehensive as possible.

Our team is taking what we've learned and incorporating it into our program. We will soon be going back to our local school districts to share these new ideas to provide a more comprehensive method of meeting our goals in conjunction with the investment that we've already put in place.

This, I believe, is one of our finest initiatives in the Town of North Hempstead and the key to it is intermunicipal cooperation and coordination. The Town and the school districts, working together are saving money and greening our community.

### **LIRR Recycling**

With this intermunicipal recycling effort being such a success, I've now proposed to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority that the Town partner with the Long Island Railroad in putting recycling bins at each of our 12 Long Island Railroad stops here in North Hempstead. We will put in Homeland Security approved bins and pick up the recyclable materials ourselves, using the money we get from the recyclables to pay for the program.

### **Flow Control**

Connected to our recycling efforts is the larger issue of solid waste removal. This is an area where the town, villages and districts are better served, I believe, when we work together. The Town's solid waste removal contract expires in April of 2010 and we have been working the better part of two years preparing for the next 25 years of waste removal. We began the process of selecting our waste management operator in 2007 and will be ready to make a selection in the next few months.

As part of our responsibility to safely dispose of solid waste while discerning the environmental impact of such waste removal, the Town Board in December adopted a flow control ordinance. Flow control allows state and local governments to designate where and when all solid waste is transported for disposal. For us, the law opens the door for our schools, businesses and 31 villages to be part of the same Town-operated system. I would note that all of the villages within the Town, most of which currently are contracted to dispose their waste at the transfer station in Port Washington, will have the option of continuing their relationship with us or making their own arrangements to dispose of their waste.

We look forward to working with our villages, businesses and districts to ensure that all of our residents are assured of safe and environmentally friendly waste disposal plan within the entirety of the Town. We will also pursue expanded recycling efforts and more programs like E-Waste disposal of computers and other electronic equipment while continuing to offer STOP programs which safely dispose of household hazardous waste.

### **Sewage Treatment Plants**

The Town has also been working for the past year with the Great Neck Water Pollution Control District and the Village of Great Neck to consolidate their two plants into one. Both entities are required to completely rebuild their plants to meet modern standards. It makes no sense to build two separate plants right down the street from one another, and so I pushed to have the two plants and systems consolidated into one. Unfortunately, the least expensive solution and the one that I believe is the most environmentally friendly was rejected by the district commissioners. That solution would close both plants and divert the sewage to the County's Cedar Creek facility which has the capacity to handle the additional waste and in so doing, save tens of millions of dollars.

Nevertheless, the consolidation, if it works, and we are still working on it, will remove one sewage plant from the bay and save millions of dollars for Great Neck taxpayers.

This only touches on the extent to which we are working towards achieving savings in the area of intermunicipal activities.

I would note that last year alone we embarked on a number of efforts that involved: obtaining a grant funded ambulance service study; meeting with two fire protection districts in regard to their possible merger into one district; consolidating a number of county parks and roads into the Town parks and road system; obtaining a grant for inter-municipal intranet websites throughout the Town; coordinating a town and housing authority steering committee in order to better coordinate housing authority projects; connecting our 311 system to the local housing authority in order to better monitor its service and response capabilities; partnering with the County in reseeding Hempstead Harbor with shellfish; acquiring a fireboat to be used in conjunction with the 8th Battalion Fire and Rescue Service; and the list goes on and on.

### **Environmental Projects**

There is, of course, so much more that I can speak about. For example: Our environmental efforts remain a priority. A list of some of those efforts is long, but important to share. Last year we passed Energy Star legislation requiring that all new homes be constructed to the energy efficient standard set by Energy Star; we acquired several parcels that will be preserved as open space; we continued to remove debris from Sheets Creek, a project I started when I was Harbor Master of Manhasset Bay in 1998. ( In the last ten years we have removed over 600 tons of debris from Sheets Creek and Manhasset Bay). We recently purchased additional hybrid electric cars bringing our hybrid fleet to 24 vehicles and we collaborated with the Town of Huntington and the City of Long Beach for a joint request for proposals

for new Hybrid electric buses, the money for which we obtained through federal grants. We also expanded our comprehensive recycling program to every Town park and Town building, placing containers in public areas and workspaces including on several locations along our championship golf course at Harbor Links.

As I've already highlighted, we have initiated our comprehensive school recycling program and will be expanding the program to all Long Island Railroad Train Stations this year. We continue to implement project Clean Sweep each spring, picking up thousands of tons of dirt and debris from neighborhood streets with our fleet of street sweepers. Our Green Team continues to pick up litter and garbage off our curbs and sidewalks, nearly 35,000 pounds in 2008 alone. We celebrate Earth Day and environmental education at Ecofest, and continue to look for ways to educate and communicate the importance of protecting and restoring our environment to all of our residents.

I've no time to speak of all the work of the various departments within the town, but I can tell you that each one is fully committed to the highest level of public service. I could speak of the work performed by our town attorney's office, our planning department, our public works department and so on. Our comptrollers office is doing great things as is our Receiver of Taxes office and Clerks office both ably led by Rocco Iannarelli and Leslie Gross respectively.

I can speak of the work that we are doing in Public Safety, Code Enforcement, and our Animal Shelter. I could speak of our Finance and Human Services department and the incredible feats accomplished by our Information and Technology Department. I've spoken of our Buildings Department and Community Services, but there is more to tell even still. Our Administrative Services team is amazing and I can go on for hours about our Parks Department and our Highways Department and all the hard work and great results that they produce.

I can speak of my office and the grants that we get and the constituent service that we provide. Our communications staff and budget folks, and business development folks and legislative affairs division and, of course the intermunicipal office all work hard and true on behalf of this administration and our town.

I can speak of the Deputy Town Supervisor and Chief of Staff and how indispensable they really are.

I can speak of the town workforce itself which is second to none. Our town personnel do the peoples' work day in and day out with real results and the reward of knowing that they are serving the public good.

I can speak of all those that serve on our various advisory boards and agencies such as Community Development Agency, our Housing Authority, and Board of Zoning and Appeals.

And, I can speak of our town council members who work so hard for their districts and really do make a difference in the lives of our residents.

I can speak of all these things in great detail and for some time, but instead I will leave you with this:

## **Closing**

What we have accomplished during these last five years speaks volumes about this town's commitment to effectively serve you, our constituents. While the dire economic downturn will make our work more difficult going forward, I pledge to do everything in my power to continue on the path of keeping North Hempstead one of the best places to live in the land.

I am confident that with the people that comprise the Town of North Hempstead, its government, and its diverse and vibrant population, (both residential and commercial), we will continue to succeed. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to lead this town government and I look forward to a productive, challenging, and exciting year.