



Mayor Brindle's Opening Remarks September 25, 2018

It's been a very busy three weeks in Westfield!

I want to begin by thanking everyone who attended and participated in our 9/11 ceremony, including Father Sapporito, Rev. Boyea and Rabbi Sagal, and to our DPW team for beautifully maintaining the memorial, and to our Fire and Police Departments for their efforts in closing North Ave to traffic ensure a peaceful and reflective service.

I also want to congratulate the Greater Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce for a wildly successful FestiFall on Sunday, which many have said was the best one ever. I particularly want to thank Exec Director Gene Jannotti for changing the layout of the booths and kids zone to ensure our downtown merchants could benefit from this huge event.

I also want to thank the Westfield PBA for holding a great car show at the South Avenue Train station this past Saturday. The only thing better than seeing the amazing cars and trucks was seeing our Police Dept. personnel have a great time interacting with the community.

ONE SEAT RIDE

I have not let up on efforts to get a peak one seat ride. As Co-chair of the RVL Mayors Coalition, along with Mayors Colleen Mahr of Fanwood and Bob Fazen of Bound Brook, we continue to advocate for an equitable allocation of dual locomotive trains that would enable peak one seat ride into NYC and have been meeting with the legislators along the line to make our case.

I recently met with Sen. Mike Doherty in Somerset County, Sen. Nick Scutari in Linden, and just today, Sen. Joe Cryan in Union to gain their support for this initiative. And of course our own legislators, Sen Tom Kean and Assemblyman Jon Bramnick have lent their support. We are asking our legislators to direct NJ Transit to create an implementation plan for RVL peak one seat ride service to be in place by 2020. Stay tuned...

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As part of our RVL initiative, I also met with Mayor Ellen Brain in Somerville, a town that has gone through significant revitalization and redevelopment over the last few years. While we discussed the economic benefits of a peak one seat ride to her community, she gave me a tour of Division Street which was closed to traffic several years ago and converted to a pedestrian plaza. On any given weekend, Division Street is filled with music, art, and festivals which has driven a 100% occupancy rate for their stores along the plaza. The tour served as a great source of inspiration as we begin our Master Plan process.

I also recently co-hosted a meeting with DWC Director Sherry Cronin for commercial brokers that represent property in town as well as tenants far and wide. It was a great opportunity to tell Westfield's story, including our aspiration to be the most business friendly town in the state, the shared vision that

will emerge from our Master Plan, and the creative solutions we are considering to address some of our most pressing challenges like parking. I offered to talk to any potential tenant that may be on the fence to tell them first hand why now is the time to invest in our community.

You may have noticed that stores are starting to fill up, and I'd like to welcome Excel Orthopedic Physical Therapy, Farmer's Insurance, and Westfield Shoe Repair to our town. We also have many new openings coming soon, including J. McLaughlin and Warby Parker on Quimby, and the new Westfield Station Café on South Ave across from the train station.

You will also be noticing some very ookie and spooky windows cropping up on our storefronts as Wicked Windows of Westfield kicks off AddamsFest over the next two weeks. Councilwoman Dawn Mackey, who is the Chairman and tireless leader of this amazing event, will be providing an update later.

SHARED SERVICES

I am continuing to work with Mayor Mahr and Scotch Plains Mayor Al Smith to identify the potential to share services, focusing specifically on DPW. We have engaged Governor Murphy's appointed shared service czars, former Mayors Jordan Glatt and Nick Platt, and we are all meeting in Trenton on Friday along with folks from Gov. Murphy's staff to identify a process for figuring out a solution and identifying what is possible. It's a great bipartisan collaborative effort with a common goal...delivering better services to residents more efficiently.

MASTER PLAN/PARKS PLAN

As Jim mentioned, the Planning Board will be awarding the contract to a Master Plan consultant at their meeting next week which will kick off a very exciting process and opportunity for our Town. The biggest priority in selecting a consultant, beyond extraordinary planning competency, was their ability to engage and solicit input from the entire community and I think you'll share my excitement when you see the plans for how they're going to do that.

The strategic plan for the Parks will follow a similar process with a kickoff meeting scheduled for next week to assess the four proposals that were received. The Recreation Commission will be leading this process, and is also prioritizing community input and engagement. More to come as that moves forward.

ICE RINK

The foundation for new sidewalks has been laid at Gumbert Park in anticipation of the ice rink installation next month. As part of our neighborhood reachout, Garwood Councilwoman Sara Tedisco will serve as the rink liaison with our Town on behalf of the Garwood neighbors that live in proximity to the rink.

NEW MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION

And lastly, and very importantly, tonight I am announcing the formation of a Youth and Family Mental Health Commission to be established and directed by a steering committee comprised of myself, School Superintendent Dr. Margaret Dolan, and Westfield Health Department Director, Megan Avallone.

The goal of the commission is to bring members of our community together with mental health stakeholders to accomplish the following:

- Coordinate and align efforts amongst the various organizations that provide mental health services
- Create awareness for existing community resources
- Break the stigma that exists around mental health
- Identify best practices for support and crisis prevention measures and make recommendations accordingly
- Establish additional mental health programs and support for Westfield families and youth as identified by the community
- The 10 member commission will be comprised of members of the faith, education and mental health communities as well as resident volunteers. Concurrently, we will be forming a Junior Mental Health Committee comprised of teens in our community that will be tasked with making their own recommendations.

It seems only appropriate to announce this commission in September, which is National Suicide Prevention Month, with the hope and expectation for delivering actionable recommendations in time for Mental Health Awareness Month in May. It is very likely that every person in our community has personally experienced or been affected by mental illness. It is time to bring all of the resources of our community together to make Westfield a model in providing comprehensive youth and family mental health support, intervention, and prevention services. The steering committee will be soliciting volunteers to participate in the next weeks and we will be seeking significant public participation in the weeks and months ahead.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

I want to remind everyone that today is National Voter Registration Day. As part of my pledge for Mayors For Our Lives, I committed to lending my time and resources to ensure that we maximize voter registration efforts and will be working in the weeks ahead to ensure we do just that. Please do your part too. It is our most important civic responsibility.

One last public service announcement. Lock your cars! We had another three cars stolen in the last two weeks which brings a total of 19 this year. Additionally, there were 104 reported motor vehicle burglaries. Each stolen car had a key fob located inside at the time of the theft, and every burglary was to an unlocked vehicle. Did you know that there is technology available that can identify key fobs in cars? These thieves know a crime of opportunity when they see one. Unfortunately, our absent mindedness creates an unfair burden on our police department who then spend precious hours tracking down these stolen vehicles or reporting burglaries instead of focusing on meaningful crime prevention. Let's work together to ensure Westfield is no longer an easy target.