



## Mayor Brindle's Opening Remarks November 26, 2019

Thanks to everyone who came out tonight in advance of the upcoming holiday. I just have a few brief updates before we get underway.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

Our annual call for volunteers is now open for 2020 boards, commissions, and advisory councils -- as well as for our upcoming Westfield 300 activities. We have a big year ahead of us, and I know I can count on our residents to step up and lend their time and expertise for the benefit of the Town. You can find full details and an application on our website -- the deadline is December 13!

### **PSE&G**

Hopefully by now you've seen our update about PSE&G's proposed 69kV project, which has been placed on indefinite hold due to logistical challenges they are facing with both the preferred Conrail route and viable alternatives. I will continue to collaborate with Cranford Mayor Giblin and Garwood Mayor Todisco in our united opposition to routing this project through our residential neighborhoods to ensure that any potential future route represents an optimal outcome for our communities.

I would like to thank the many residents and business owners who demonstrated the power of community engagement, as well as Councilmen Contract and Stokes for serving as point persons with PSE&G throughout this process and maintaining the lines of communication.

### **TOWN RECOGNITION**

I was very gratified to see Westfield substantially recognized several times during last week's New Jersey League of Municipalities Conference. Seven Westfield Police Officers were recognized by the New Jersey State PBA at its annual valor awards for their actions at Tamaques School this past June. Congratulations to Officers Jeffrey Johnson, Michael Pollock, Joseph Habeiche, Elizabeth Savnik, and Tiffany Kenny, along with Detectives Nicholas Bruno and Jason Merritt.

In addition, I was thrilled to swear in our Regional Health Department Director, Megan Avallone, for an additional term as President of the NJ Association of County and City Health Officials. Megan does a tremendous job overseeing the Health Departments of eight municipalities, and we are very lucky to have her representing us at the State level.

And lastly, at the Mayor's Luncheon, I was presented with the Innovation in Governance Award for our implementation of The Westfield Rink as a public/private partnership providing a broad community benefit at the expense of a private operator.

## **UNION COUNTY DEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

Tonight, the Council is voting on a resolution to join the Union County Deer Management Program for the first time. Since there seems to be substantial misinformation circulating online, I'd like to take a minute to give you some of the facts on this issue. This information is available on our website, and we've also brought some hard copies tonight for distribution.

First and foremost, this is not an easy decision, and one we would not consider if we thought that participation in this program presented any danger to residents. Union County has vast experience in implementing this program to ensure resident safety, and currently has 12 other participating municipalities.

While I have traditionally been opposed to previous deer management programs in Union County for many of the same reasons residents have expressed concern, I believe this year is different in terms of the deer population and its consequences. For context, experts recommend that for deer and residents to coexist safely, it is ideal to have 20 per square mile, and an unofficial count shows that there are about 160 per mile.

Our Police Department has been called to homes to put down deer who have been injured. In addition, there have been approximately 100 accidents in which deer have been struck by cars -- including 49 deer fatalities -- since January 2018, not only endangering residents but killing deer often slowly and inhumanely.

And while we've heard the story of our DPW rescuing the fawn from the storm drain, the reality is that such a situation utilizes significant Town resources while also stressing the deer. Most recently, the DPW was called to rescue a buck who was trapped in the batting cages at Gumbert Park. When they arrived it was bleeding from the mouth, and after it was finally freed it dropped dead from the stress.

If something isn't done to manage the overpopulation our problems will multiply. The Council and I have heard the concerns raised from numerous residents about the public health and safety questions related to this issue, which is what led to the Public Works Committee's recommendation to the full Council tonight to vote on this resolution to leverage an established and County-funded program.

This is a challenging issue that we do not take lightly, as we seek the right balance between ensuring the safety of our residents while supporting Mother Nature.

## **MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION REPORT**

The proposed final Master Plan Reexamination Report is now available on our website in advance of its presentation and vote for adoption at the December 2 Planning Board meeting.

Thank you to every resident, local business, and property owner who took the time to provide valuable and detailed feedback during one of our community workshops and via our extensive online survey. The scope of this undertaking was truly unprecedented, not only with its substantial, ongoing emphasis on community input, but also the parallel efforts of the Pedestrian & Bike Plan and the upcoming Strategic

Parks Plan. Together, these surveys and data will give us an integrated and holistic view of Westfield's greatest opportunities to map out an even brighter future.

As you can see, the final report is quite substantial and goes well beyond a traditional Master Plan Reexamination. Since we would like as many residents to read it as possible, we will be creating an abbreviated executive summary version that will be posted in the next few days.

### **HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES**

Finally, as you kick off your holiday season this weekend, please remember that the next few weeks are some of the most important all year for retail and dining businesses. I've pledged to do at least 75% of my holiday shopping locally, and I hope you'll join me in this commitment to support our Downtown and shop small. Remember, parking is free on Black Friday and Small Business Saturday, and then again from December 14 through January 1.

The DWC has a fabulous line up of holiday festivities that kicks off this week, including the Second Annual Gingerbread Contest and the new Westfield Elfie Selfie Contest. All of the details are on their website, along with a comprehensive list of Downtown Westfield deals for this weekend.

And of course I hope to see you all on Sunday at the Westfield Winter Wonderland and Tree Lighting, complete with ugly holiday sweaters, snow globe selfies, Westfield 300 merchandise on sale, the Westfield Community Band, and Santa and Mrs. Claus. The festivities begin downtown at 3:30 with the tree lighting at 5:30. There will also be public skating sessions at the Westfield Rink before and after at 2:30 and 6:30.

I'd like to close by wishing everyone a happy Thanksgiving and expressing my gratitude for the wonderful residents of this community and the town we all call home.