



Town Council Opening Remarks October 12, 2021

(The following remarks were delivered Mayor Brindle at the October 12, 2021 Town Council meeting.)

Good evening, everyone, and thanks to all who are joining us in person and online tonight.

As a reminder, public comment will be accepted in person only. As always, the replay will also be available afterwards on Facebook, YouTube, and TV 36.

WIRC

I want to thank all of the residents who applied for seats on the newly formed Westfield Infrastructure Resiliency Committee (WIRC). As expected, we received a number of impressive applications that represented a diverse range of both personal and professional experience with flood-related issues, and I am very grateful to the many residents who took the time to complete their submissions. Tonight, we will appoint eight resident representatives -- two from each ward -- whose perspectives will be extremely valuable to us as we undertake this effort to assess our current Town wide stormwater infrastructure and make short and long-term recommendations for how best to fortify it. These residents are:

Ward 1

- David McAlister
- Brad Noack

Ward 2

- Steve Dombroski
- Rich Ellsworth

Ward 3

- Robin Browning
- Susan Dinan

Ward 4

- Adam Marsh
- Georgia Marino

It's also my expectation that these resident volunteers will serve as critical liaisons to neighborhoods with historical flooding issues so that we have a direct line of dialogue to those most affected. The work of this committee will be no small task, and one that is imperative as the frequency of severe weather events continues to increase. Thanks to these residents for their volunteerism and willingness to assist us with this undertaking.

Public Art

Did you notice anything new along the walls of the Central Avenue underpass? The Central Avenue Mural Gallery was installed last week, showcasing the work of local artists to help beautify and reimagine the use of this public space. Side one is centered around the theme of Welcome, and side two honors famed Westfield native Charles Addams -- and the work is incredible. We will host a ribbon cutting ceremony tomorrow to publicly acknowledge the contribution of the artists to this special initiative, and I'd like to thank the Westfield Public Arts Commission for making this vision a reality.

Prior to the mural installation, the Commission's most recent project was the outdoor photo exhibit, "Through the Lens," which has been on display on Central Avenue alongside the Rialto since July. This display of local talent features photo submissions from residents and area artists that convey what community means to them. As the exhibit reaches its conclusion this week, the prints are being made available for sale on our website (westfieldnj.gov/publicartscommission), with all proceeds to fund future projects of the Public Arts Commission.

Union County COVID Testing Site

On Wednesday, from 4:00 - 6:00 PM, Union County will bring its COVID Testing and Vaccination Mobile Unit to the South Avenue parking lot. This site is open to all County residents for free testing and vaccinations. With the much anticipated return of Charlie's Ale Garden this Saturday as part of AddamsFest, I'm very grateful to the County for making this site easily accessible. Saturday's event requires proof of vaccination or a negative test to enter, and we are highly encouraging all attendees, even those who are vaccinated, to test as an extra measure of precaution. And of course the site is open to anyone in the community who can benefit from these services.

AddamsFest

Speaking of AddamsFest, I hope you've had a chance to check out the Wicked Windows throughout the Downtown area, or to drive through Town to cast your votes for your favorite Haunt Your House entries. And while the Ale Garden is for our 21+ crowd, don't miss the Addams Family Fun Day on Quimby this Sunday for the kids. There's also an upcoming lecture by official Addams biography Linda Davis on October 20, the amazing Complements art exhibit at The Rialto every weekend in October, and more details coming this week about Dudley's Drive-In at the South Avenue station. For all of the latest, be sure to follow AddamsFest on social media or subscribe to updates at addamsfest.com/updates.

Westfield Senior Housing Center

On a more serious topic, by now most of you have seen the statement I issued jointly with Councilwoman Habgood, as Chair of the Finance Policy Committee, and Councilman Parmelee, as Chair of the Code Review and Town Property Committee, in response to false claims made by the Westfield Senior Housing Center.

While we don't typically comment on pending litigation, the dishonesty of the claims made by the Westfield Senior Housing Center needed to be addressed -- both for the residents of the center, and for our taxpaying base at large. I want to make it abundantly clear that the senior citizens who reside at the WSHC will not be displaced, the building is not being converted into luxury condos, and we remain committed to providing affordable senior housing in that location indefinitely. The WSHC owes the Town of Westfield at least \$1.7MM, and has the ability to pay it -- all of which is documented in their publicly available audited financial statements -- and the Town is well within its rights to be made financially whole prior to renewing a lease that does not expire until 2026.

This administration continues to place an unprecedented focus on our seniors, as indicated by our Lifelong Westfield initiative, and the very notion of them being unduly alarmed about their housing security is something I take very seriously. Rather than accepting a false narrative being driven to stir up controversy, I encourage you instead to look at the facts and review the documents we've posted on our website, which include the audited financial statements, leases, financial agreement, and mediation agreement -- all of which can be found at westfieldnj.gov/WSHC.

Voting Registration Deadline

You still have time to register to vote in New Jersey through midnight tonight! You can do so on The New Jersey Division of Elections website (<https://voter.svrs.nj.gov/register>).

As a reminder, you will have three options for voting in New Jersey:

- Early voting at various locations around the county between October 23 and October 31
- Vote by Mail
- Voting at your regular polling place on Election Day

Full voting details are available at unioncountyvotes.com.

With that, let's get to work on tonight's agenda. Before we get started, I'd like to ask Chief Battiloro to provide an update on our crossing guards and recent car thefts.

As a reminder, I will be enforcing Robert's Rules this evening to ensure we stay on topic and the meeting runs efficiently. Thank you.