**THE STATE OF THE CITY 2019**

**Good Evening Council President, Elected Officials, Family, Friends and Residents. Let me begin the yearly State of the City address by wishing each of you the Happiest and Healthiest of New Years.**

**MY SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS TO MICHELLE YAMAKAITIS, OUR NEWLY ELECTED COUNCIL PRESIDENT AND FIRST FEMALE TO HOLD THAT OFFICE IN THE HISTORY OF OUR CITY (AD LIB). CONGRATULATIONS TO LISA ORMON ON HER SUCCESSFUL RE-ELECTION AS COUNCILWOMAN OF THE 1ST WARD. AND TO ARMANDO MEDINA ON HIS RE-ELECTION AS COUNCILMAN OF THE 9TH WARD.**

**I am deeply humbled that you, the great people of Linden, had the faith in me to provide me with the opportunity to serve as your Mayor for yet another term.**

**This honor that you have bestowed upon me to serve the residents of the city I love and hold dear to my heart, is one of the greatest privileges one could hope for./ In Life, I have learned, we must always thank and be grateful to God and the people who have given us our start in whatever career path we may find ourselves and 4 years ago you gave me that opportunity.**

**AS I BEGIN MY SECOND TERM AS YOUR MAYOR, I AM EVEN MORE COGNIZANT OF THE FACT THAT WHATEVER AUTHORITY I HAVE COMES FROM YOU, THE ELECTORATE.**

**THAT AUTHORITY COMES WITH RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS.**

**I ACCEPT THEM AND TAKE THEM VERY SERIOUSLY.**

**I PLEDGE TO YOU THAT I WILL CONTINUE TO WORK TIRELESSLY TO MAKE OUR CITY THE BEST IT CAN BE. MY DOOR AS YOUR MAYOR IS OPEN TO YOU TO MAKE SURE YOUR VOICES AND CONCERNS WILL BE HEARD. I WOULD BE REMISS IF I DID NOT CONGRATULATE OUR NEWLY ELECTED BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS:**

**MARIANTHE MANGANELLO**

**PATRICK GARGANO**

**DORIS JOHNSON BROWN**

**I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH THEM IN A COOPERATIVE EFFORT.**

**I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO CONGRATULATE THE NEW MEMBERS OF OUR POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS. WE INCREASED THE COMPLIMENTS BY 11 AND 10 RESPECTIVELY & TWO OF THE NEWLY SWORN-IN FIREFIGHTERS ARE THE FIRST FEMALE FIREFIGHTERS IN THE HISTORY OF LINDEN. OUR ON-GOING PLANNED RE-DEVELOPMENT MAKES IT NECESSARY FOR THE INCREASED MANPOWER.**

**I WANT TO MAKE IT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR THAT THE SUCCESS OF OUR CITY IS NOT JUST ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE MAYOR, BUT A SHARED COMMITMENT BY EVERYONE ON THIS COUNCIL.**

**I AM A FIRM BELIEVER THAT IN UNITY THERE IS STRENGTH. I ASK EVERY MEMBER OF THIS ADMINISTRATION TO STAND ALONG SIDE OF ME, MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS AND PUT POLITICS ASIDE SO THAT TOGETHER WE CAN SOLVE ANY PROBLEMS THAT CONFRONT US. IT WILL MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD; I PROMISE YOU.**

**AS IN YEARS PAST, WE HAVE ONGOING PRIORITIES. LET ME SHARE THEM WITH YOU.**

1. **TAXES**
2. **SENSIBLE WAYS TO INCREASE REVENUE AND DEVELOPMENT**
3. **SAFETY**
4. **A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT**

**LET’S START WITH TAXES. IN MY FIRST TERM AS MAYOR, I TOLD YOU THAT I DID NOT BELIEVE THAT INCREASED TAXES WERE A WAY OF LIFE. I ALSO PROMISED YOU THAT I WOULD STABLIZE OUR MUNICIPAL TAXES. I AM HAPPY TO REPORT TONIGHT THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS WE HAD NO MUNICIPAL TAX INCREASE IN THE CITY OF LINDEN AND WE ELIMINATED THE GARBAGE TAX. THE ONLY CITY IN UNION COUNTY TO ACCOMPLISH THIS. I WOULD NOW LIKE TO REPORT TO YOU THE REDEVELOPMENT THAT IS IN PROCESS AND THE PROJECTS THAT WILL BEGIN IN 2019:**

* **CYPRESS EQUITIES, WHO IS DEVELOPING LEGACY SQUARE ON ROUTE 1 & 9 SOUTH, IS MOVING FORWARD AND HAS ALREADY BROKEN GROUND AND STARTED BUILDING THE SUPER WALMART AND HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS. IN ADDITION THEY CURRENTLY HAVE INTEREST IN 10 TO 15 WELL-KNOWN FRANCHISES/BUSINESSES, SOME OF WHICH ONE WOULD HAVE NEVER THOUGHT WOULD HAVE INTEREST IN THE CITY OF LINDEN.**
* **PARK PLASTICS ON PARK AVENUE ACROSS ROUTE 1 & 9 AT BEDLE PLACE AS YOU KNOW HAS BEEN DEMOLISHED AND THE**

**RE-DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT WILL BE FINALIZED AT THE JANUARY COUNCIL MEETING. THIS PROJECT WILL BRING 14 TOWNHOUSES AND, HOPEFULLY, GROUND WILL BE BROKEN THIS SPRING – THE DEVELOPER IS PEAK CONSTRUCTION.**

* **THE 2ND PHASE OF THE CAPODAGLI/MERIDIA PROJECT IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION WITH A PROPOSED COMPLETION TO BE IN THE 4TH QUARTER OF THIS YEAR. THIS SECTION OF SOUTH WOOD AVENUE WILL CHANGE THE WHOLE DYNAMIC OF THE AREA AND WILL HOUSE A HIGH-END RESTAURANT WITH PARKING BELOW. (AD LIB – ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN)**
* **ON THE UNITED LACQUER SITE, LOCATED ON W. ELIZABETH AVE. THIS CONTAMINATED SITE HAS LAID VACANT FOR OVER 30 YEARS AND THE CITY HAS RECEIVED ZERO TAXES DURING THIS PERIOD. CAPODAGLI, THE DEVELOPER, HAS STARTED DEMOLITION AND THE PROPERTY CLEAN-UP HAS BEGUN. THIS PROJECT WILL INCLUDE BOTH RETAIL AND RESIDENTIAL AND WILL FINALLY ELIMINATE THIS CONTAMINATED SITE. (AD LIB $1MILLION)**
* **AT THE FORMER JTG SCAFFOLDING SITE, THE RE-DEVELOPER, ACCURATE BUILDERS LLC, HAS SECURED THE FINANCIALS TO BUILD THE LINDEN STATION PROJECT WHICH WILL BE RESIDENTIAL AND RETAIL AND GROUNDBREAKING WILL BEGIN AS SOON AS ALL UTILITY DISCONNECTS ARE FINALIZED AND THAT SHOULD BE VERY SOON.**
* **CITIVILLAGE, WHICH IS THE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT BEING BUILT BY VVR/RAMANI GROUP, WHICH IS LOCATED ON EAST ST. GEORGES AVE BETWEEN EAST BALTIMORE AND CHARLES ST. THIS PROJECT IS ALREADY UNDER CONSTRUCTION AND THE PROJECTED COMPLETION DATE PROPOSED IS FALL OF THIS YEAR. THIS PROJECT WILL REVITALIZE THIS BLIGHTED SECTION OF E. ST. GEORGES AVE.**
* **LINDEN CHLORINE PRODUCTS HAS A DEVELOPER INTERESTED IN THE 26 ACRE PROPERTY AND THIS IS THE ONLY SUPERFUND SITE WITHIN OUR BORDERS. THIS SITE HAS NOT BEEN ON OUR TAX ROLLS FOR OVER 25 YEARS. HOPEFULLY, THIS WILL CHANGE IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.**
* **DEVELOPER DC HOSPITALITY WILL BE DEVELOPING A 122-ROOM EXTENDED-STAY HOTEL, KNOWN AS WOODSPRING SUITES ON THE FORMER INFINIUM PROPERTY ON E. LINDEN AVE., ALONG WITH A CUBE SMART STORAGE FACILITY.**
* **ON THE FORMER PATHMARK PROPERTY, HOWARD LEE HAS STARTED RENOVATIONS TO OPEN A NEW SUPERMARKET KNOWN AS SUPER FRESH. THIS PROJECT WILL CREATE 70 NEW JOBS AND WILL OPEN IN THE SPRING OF THIS YEAR. THIS WILL PROVIDE RESIDENTS IN THIS AREA WITH THE CONVENIENCE OF A LOCAL SUPERMARKET.**
* **ADVANCED GREEK IS THE RE-DEVELOPER FOR THE FORMER DUPONT AND ISP PROPERTIES. THIS PROJECT WILL BE A 4.1 MILLION SQUARE FOOT WAREHOUSING DISTRICT WHICH WILL TOTAL 5 BUILDINGS IN ALL. IT IS PROJECTED TO CREATE APROXIMATELY 3000 JOBS. THE 1ST PHASE WILL BE COMPLETED AT THE END OF 2020 AND ONCE ALL IS COMPLETED, THIS CAN POTENTIALLY BECOME THE LARGEST WAREHOUSING DISTRICT IN THE NORTHEAST. IT IS NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER FOR US TO REACH OUT TO THE GOVERNOR TO HAVE THE TURNPIKE CONNERCTOR ROAD BUILT.**
* **ON THE LINDEN ROSELLE SEWERAGE SITE, ARIES ENERGY WILL BE BUILDING A SLUDGE REPOSSESSING PLANT TO TURN SLUDGE INTO COAL. A USE AND OCCUPANCY AGREEMENT HAS BEEN SIGNED AND CONSTRUCTION WILL BEGIN 1ST QUARTER OF THIS YEAR.**
* **RNG ENERGY IS BUILDING AN ANAEROBIC DIGESTER PLANT ON THE OLD CLAYTON BLOCK PROPERTY. THE SITE IS BEING PREPARED IN ANTICIPATION OF THIS PROJECT.**
* **JERSEY MARINE RAIL IS A COMPANY THAT IS WORKING ON OPENING THE SHORT RAILS TO OUR PROPERTIES ALONG THE WATERFRONT ON THE ARTHUR KILL. (AD LIB – INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES)**
* **THE LINDEN FIRST PROGRAM, WHICH I STARTED WHEN I FIRST TOOK OFFICE, HAS BEEN A CONTINUING SUCCESS UNDER THE DIRECTION OF PAMELA JONES, WHO IS A PART OF OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM. SINCE ITS INCEPTION, THEY HAVE HIRED OVER 400 LINDEN RESIDENTS AND WILL BE WORKING WITH OUR RE-DEVELOPERS TO SATISFY EMPLOYMENT NEEDS.**
* **WE RECENTLY RECEIVED A FREIGHT IMPACT GRANT FOR APPROXIMATELY $1.5 MILLION WHICH WILL BE USED TO REPAIR SOUTH WOOD AVENUE FROM ROUTES 1 & 9 TO TREMLEY POINT ROAD AND SOUTH STILES STREET FROM ROUTES 1&9 TO 21ST STREET.**
* **TRANSIT VILLAGE HAS BEEN RECEIVING A FACELIFT. I WANT TO GIVE SPECIAL THANKS FOR THE EFFORTS OF JERRY BISHOP. HIS PERSISTENCE AND DEDICATION AND COOPERATION WITH NJ TRANSIT HAS BEEN THE CATALYST FOR THE MUCH NEEDED RESTORATION THAT HAS STARTED.**

**AS YOU HAVE HEARD, WE HAVE AN AGGRESSIVE AGENDA FOR 2019. I WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALEX LOSPINOSO, THE DIRECTOR OF THE LEDC, FOR HIS CONTINUING EFFORTS ON PROJECTS UNDERWAY AND WORKING ON NEW PROJECTS TO BRING TO OUR CITY. HIS MOST RECENT EFFORT HAS BEEN TO ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNOR MURPHY’S OFFICE TO HELP US GET STARTED WITH A CONNECTOR ROADWAY FROM THE CARTERET TURNPIKE EXCHANGE TO THE RE-DEVELOPMENT AREA OF TREMLEY POINT.**

**MANY OF THE PROJECTS I HAVE MENTIONED WILL BRING IN TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN INCREASED REVENUE.**

**A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FIRE AND POLICE DEPARTMENT. IN MY OPINION THEY ARE TOPS IN THE STATE OF NJ.**

**I WOULD BE REMISS IF I DID NOT MENTION OUR DEPARTMENT HEADS AND CITY EMPLOYEES; THEY, TOGETHER, ARE THE MACHINE THAT KEEPS OUR CITY RUNNING AT A HIGH LEVEL.**

**I AM PLEASED WITH THE PROGRESS OUR SID PROGRAM IS MAKING, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF MICHAEL BONO.**

* **I HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT THEY ARE GETTING BIDS ON ARCHITECTUAL DESIGNS TO CHANGE THE LOOK OF OUR DOWNTOWN SHOPPING CENTER. IT’S BEEN MORE THAN 24 YEARS SINCE OUR LAST UPGRADE. ALSO WILL BE ADDING A POP-UP THEATER IN THE OLD RUSSELL BRIDAL & TUXEDO STORE, TO SHOWCASE LOCAL ART TALENT AND PLAYS.**
* **THE VETERANS’ BANNERS AND THE DINNER FOR OUR VETERANS WAS A HUGE SUCCESS. A THANK YOU TO S.I.D. CHAIRMAN, PETER BROWN, FOR MAKING THIS A WELL-RECEIVED UNDERTAKING.**
* **UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE LINDEN CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMITTEE OUR ANNUAL SEPTEMBER TO REMEMBER EVENT AND WAS SO WELL ATTENDED AS WAS THE TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY. A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE COMMITTEE.**
* **OUR 3RD ANNUAL BREAKFAST WITH SANTA BROUGHT OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER AND THE MAYOR’S YOUTH COMMISSION DID AN OUTSTANDING JOB ONCE AGAIN.**

**I COULD GO ON, BUT SUFFICE TO SAY, OUR CITY IS MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.**

**I’D LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU THAT THERE ARE TIMES, WHEN I AM SITTING IN THIS CHAMBER, THAT MY EYES DRIFT TO THE PICTURES ON THE WALL OF FORMER MAYORS – ALL OF THEM OUTSTANDING PUBLIC SERVANTS – HOWEVER, THERE IS ONE THAT I WILL NEVER FORGET, THE LATE MAYOR JOHN T. GREGORIO AND HERE IS WHY: HE TOLD ME ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS THAT HIS PRIORITIES IN LIFE WERE HIS FAMILY AND THE CITY OF LINDEN. HE MEANT IT AND HE LIVED IT. I THINK EVERY DAY OF WHAT HE SAID. (AD LIB).**

**AT THIS TIME I WOULD LIKE TO THANK MY OFFICE STAFF, REBECCA TATTOLI AND LEANNE WHITE, FOR THEIR PATIENCE AND PROFRESSIONALISM.**

**MUCH THANKS TO MY FAMILY FOR THEIR PATIENCE, UNDERSTANDING AND LOVE.**

**IN CLOSING, IN 1960 JOHN F. KENNEDY SPOKE OF OUR NATION’S NEW FRONTIER HE REFERRED TO IT AS OUR NATION’S PLACE IN HISTORY. HE SPOKE OF AN ERA CHARACTERISED BY ACHIEVEMENT AND CHALLENGE. I FEEL THAT SAME SENSE RIGHT HERE IN LINDEN. THAT CHALLENGE IS ONE THAT WE SHOULD ALL WELCOME AND ONE THAT WILL TRANSFORM THIS CITY AND CARRY US INTO A BRIGHTER FUTURE.**

**MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL AND MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS THE CITY OF LINDEN.**