

GOVERNMENT

Mayor Rustin talks about state of borough

Community center, senior van, roads and tree planting discussed at first meeting of the year

BY ROBERT CHRISTIE
Staff Writer

TENAFLY – Mayor Peter Rustin, returning Councilman Anthony Barzelotto and Councilwoman Shama Haider took their oaths of office during the during the Jan. 2 reorganization meeting.

“To answer the many inquiries I received during the recent campaign as to why I would like to continue to serve as your mayor for the next four years, I can simply say, ‘I love Tenafly,’” said Rustin during his State of the Borough address. “I think you will agree it’s a great town in which to live and raise a family and I look forward to working with the members of the Borough Council to overcome the challenges we face.”

“I am honored that the residents elected me to this job,” Haider said. “I am going to do my very best to meet the high standards this council holds and I look forward to a good working year and serving Tenafly.”

“It’s a distinct honor for me as a third generation [Tenafly resident],” Barzelotto said of the opportunity to serve again as a councilman.

“It’s always nice to continue to give back,” he added. “That’s why I do it and it’s enjoyable to be able to say that we’ve done something for the borough of Tenafly.”

During his address, Rustin discussed major topics in the borough including the proposals to build a community center, acquire a senior van and fix Tenafly’s roads.

Discussions for a community center have occurred sparingly throughout the past year-and-a-half but ramped up once again during the Nov. 23 Mayor and Council meeting when communi-

ty members, lead by Sara Levinson, approached the Mayor and Council attempting to garner support for a community center.

Rustin said a community center is a “grand idea and one he would like to support” but adds all interested parties must consider the cost of the center.

He added the council must define a community center and decide whether or not Tenafly needs one. Residents must also consider if the center can realistically be paid for through only contributions, he said.

Currently, when the borough has an event it is held in the library, Borough Hall, the football field or another location depending on the size and importance of the event.

Speaking on the senior van, Rustin said the governing body is “determined to provide our seniors with a van which will provide those in need with a level of accessibility that until now has been lacking in Tenafly.”

During previous council meetings the governing body has discussed how the county’s bussing system for seniors only runs once-a-week and does not offer the traveling flexibility and freedom a borough van would provide.

In his address, Rustin said the “purchase of the van is only the beginning of the cost of this service.” Because of this, Rustin proposed shared services as one way the borough can address the needs associated with providing transportation for seniors.

As for the borough’s roads, Rustin said the borough is in “process of increasing the amount budgeted for street repair by at least threefold. We can no longer afford to fall farther behind in maintaining our streets.”

He added, “We must charge our borough engineer with making sure the money is well spent

and the streets we repair are done properly.”

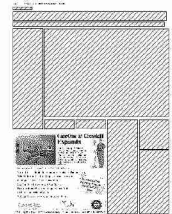
Rustin also outlined two goals for 2016: finding another location for an additional special needs project and planting more trees in the borough.

The borough partnered with Bergen County United Way and the Madeline Housing Project to open affordable housing for adults with special needs in 2015 at 311 Tenafly Road.

“I believe the partnership with the Bergen County United Way on Tenafly Road was a total success,” said Rustin. “Besides making Tenafly more inclusive, its impact on our COAH requirements was substantial.”

Rustin said wants to use the borough’s tree fund to put more trees in town, adding the fund would “allow [the municipality] to do so without putting the burden on taxpayers.”

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KEVIN J. RILEY/PHOTO

Shama Haider is sworn in as a councilwoman in Tenafly by Sen. Loretta Weinberg, D-Teaneck, as family members watch during the borough's Jan. 2 reorganization meeting.