

STATE OF THE WEST WINDSOR TOWNSHIP ADDRESS 2017

By Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh (May 8, 2017)

This is the last time I stand before you to deliver a state of the township address. First, I would like to thank West Windsor residents for allowing me the opportunity to serve this community for as long as I have.

It has been my honor to serve as Mayor of West Windsor Township for 15 years and 10 months since July 1, 2001. By December 31, at the end of this current term, I will have been in this position for 16 and ½ years. If I add to this my terms as a Member of Council starting July 1, 1993 (where I served as Council President 4 times), it will have been 24 and ½ years. As a new resident moving to West Windsor in December 1985, I began as a member of the Board of Health and later, the Environmental Commission until June 1993.

When I ran for mayor in 2001, I promised you that integration and connection for West Windsor was my goal – a clearer sense of community and a sense of place. Specifically, I proposed a Farmers Market, preservation of West Windsor’s heritage, an Arts Center, bicycle/pedestrian friendly roadway design, traffic improvements, an efficient and effective government, a community with a Triple-A Bond Rating, a senior center with the best programs for the Township’s seniors and retirees, and parks providing the best sport/recreational facilities for residents of all ages. All of these plus a stable municipal property tax that would be predictable and sustainable under changing NJ State mandates, and would provide full municipal services including emergency services, garbage collection, recycling, leaf and brush pick-up for all West Windsor residents.

We attained a triple-A bond rating in 2007 and continue to maintain the same rating to this day. Our next question is: how are we going to be able to keep this system sustainable moving forward? A healthy fund balance and decent reserve surplus is always a temptation to elected officials who have some say about it. Taxpayers like a tax cut, but is the cut sustainable? We need to have a clear consensus about a “fund balance” policy to resolve the issue about how much “fund balance” the Township should retain. I think it is

short-sighted to sacrifice the stability of our triple-A bond rating for a cut that is not sustainable.

On April 24, 2017, Council members voted 4-1 to adopt a budget with a 2.51% increase over last year's budget. The increase also allows for a new police officer's position to be added to the current police force. This adoption will result in an increase of one penny per \$100 assessed property value in municipal property taxes.

As you can see, what we have accomplished in the past 16 years has been in support of this goal – a clearer sense of community and a long-term sustainable financial system in West Windsor. We have been named by *America On-Line (AOL) NeighborhoodScout* project in 2009 as the most family-friendly neighborhood to raise kids in New Jersey, by *Business Insider* in 2017 as the best municipality in New Jersey to buy a home, and in the March 2017 issue of *New Jersey Family Magazine* as the best town in Mercer County. West Windsor has continuously achieved the highest ranking as a Sustainable Community in New Jersey. We now have almost 50% open space and farmland preserved, and it is anticipated that by the end of this year, we will have more than 50% open space preserved.

As shown in the article “Mercer County Municipal Property Tax Changes from 2000 to 2015 (NJ.com, February 9, 2016) ,” among all 12 municipalities in Mercer, where the average tax increase over the 15 years was 32.9%, West Windsor had a 13.9% increase. And, I am very proud to say, this is the same community I began to serve as your mayor 16 years ago – a community of diversity in terms of age, ethnicity, religion, and economic status.

Last year, with the full financial support from the American Legion Post 76, we had the first American Legion Centennial Memorial in the nation dedicated on Veterans Day. An international standard cricket pitch field was formally opened in the summer, and a new 120-acre Duck Pond Park was officially open to the public with all new sport and recreational facilities. We also made a very successful effort with the County government to accept the 26-acre Conover sport compound as one of our 7 recreational parks. One week ago, we celebrated the first West Windsor Community Day, on the last Saturday of April at the new Duck Pond Park. It was a huge success. Thanks to all the Religious Leaders of

West Windsor for their commitment and support with the Township. The religious Leaders of West Windsor as an organization is an outgrowth of the former Interfaith Community Bridge initiated about six years ago. We have all the major religions of the world in West Windsor involved in this effort. This is a new chapter that will be added to the history of West Windsor.

As you know, one of the best Chiefs of the Police Departments in New Jersey, Joe Pica will retire on June 30. Lt. Robert Garofalo had been selected through a thorough vetting process to take over on July 1, 2017 as our next Police Chief. All your support will be needed.

By the end of my tenure, I expect the following projects will be accomplished:

- 1. West Windsor will have exceeded 50% of its open space preserved. This will ensure that West Windsor will continue to stay as one of the most attractive Greentowns in the USA.**
- 2. The Canal Point Boulevard will be reconstructed to be a bicycle/pedestrian friendly roadway as was planned for in 2005.**
- 3. Major landscaping projects in Nash Park will be completed. It is a place that will serve as a reminder that once upon a time, we had a “beautiful mind” (Dr. John Nash) and a “loving heart” (Mrs. Alicia Nash) who lived in this neighborhood for most of their life together.**
- 4. A green energy resiliency program to support critical municipal services will be started to review alternative approaches including the possibility of using a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). This action would substantially reduce the carbon footprint of the municipal complex. A conservative estimate of additional savings on electricity costs and avoidance of the FEMS building generator over a 15-year period could go up to \$654,000.**
- 5. All legal issues related to the Redevelopment of Princeton Junction Area will be resolved, and construction activities will be moving forward to create a new downtown in West Windsor.**

- 6. Our position and strategy with respect to the constitutionally mandated affordable housing issues will be finalized to provide direction for the future development.**
- 7. Working with the County, a plan to improve the intersection where Edinburg Road joins Old Trenton Road will be completed. This is a proposal that TID money can be best used to share with the County traffic improvement budget to improve traffic circulation in the community.**

Yes, there is more we need to do, and we can do, to keep up with all the good things going on in this town. In the near future, new leadership will take it from here to make West Windsor an even greater community.

I would like to thank my family for their unselfish and tireless support over these past 24 years, especially, my wife without whom none of this would have been possible. And I also want to thank all of those who have voted for me and supported me over the years. I want to express my deep appreciation to our many resident volunteers for their dedication in lending their expertise, time and energy enabling West Windsor to be formally recognized as one of the best towns in which to live. I would also like to thank the talented and dedicated municipal staff who have supported my vision for West Windsor Township during my tenure as Mayor.

Tonight, I'd like to recognize three outstanding volunteers for their tireless hard work in the community, as well as four outstanding employees in the municipal government for their personal commitments above and beyond their responsibilities.

Dr. Andrew Kulley

Andrew Kulley has been one of the Environmental Commissioners since 2008. He was appointed to the West Windsor Township Planning Board as the liaison representative since 2012. He also serves as the Planning Board Representative to the Site Plan Review Advisory Board. Andrew has been instrumental in providing information, assistance and ideas in the areas of Sustainable Jersey Program, Energy Conservation, Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Areas, and Park/Recreation Program. Currently, he also serves as President of FOWWOS. His contributions are appreciated.

Mr. Drewe Shoenholtz

Drewe Schoenholtz has been a resident and neighbor of the West Windsor Community for 25 years. He has been serving as the Shade Tree Commissioner and Advisor since 2000. He is currently serves as Agricultural Committee Member since 2016. Other volunteer services include: Planning Board Member from 1998 – 2001. Drewe runs a landscaping business in West Windsor and has been a contributor and consultant to many important projects in West Windsor. Thank you, Drewe for your continued dedication to our community.

Mrs. Cyndi Kawabata

Cyndi Kawabata joined my Tai Chi class as a new student at the West Windsor Senior Center more than 20 years ago. She became proficient in the art of Tai Chi and also took initiative to assist in the administration and coordination of the class. Cyndi volunteered her time to be the substitute leader of the classes when my duties as Mayor prevented my attendance. With her help, the class proceeded with very little interruption over the years. Thank you, Cyndi.

Chief Joe Pica

Chief Joseph Pica began his career with the West Windsor Township Police Department in 1974 as a patrol officer. First time I met him in 1993, he was Patrol Lieutenant after going through a series of promotions. In 1997, he was assigned to Investigative Lieutenant's position, and then promoted to Captain in July, 1998. In 2001 soon after I took over mayor's office, he was appointed Chief of Police until now. During his tenure, he has been the impetus for many of the dynamic changes of the Department. Joe has always served West Windsor Township with integrity and honor. We all wish Chief Joseph Pica a well-deserved, happy and healthy retirement with his family.

Mr. Dan Dobromilsky

Dan Dobromilsky has been the West Windsor Township Landscape Architect since September 1998. He is the Staff Liaison to the Environmental Commission and Shade Tree Commission and Staff Liaison to the Boy Scout Eagle Projects and Girl Scout Gold Award Projects. Dan was able to secure a \$300,000 grant from the New Jersey Forestry Department to assist West Windsor Township in its goals and objectives as stated in our Community Forestry Management Plan. This grant will fund the replacement of numerous ash trees affected by the Emerald Ash Beetle infestation.

Dan's contributions and dedication to West Windsor Township Shade Tree Commission, Environmental Commission, and more recently the research and implementation of energy savings programs for municipally-owned facilities are numerous and invaluable. On behalf of the Township, I wish to thank you for your excellent service and going above and beyond the call of duty.

Mr. John Jackson

John Jackson has been an excellent employee of the Department of Public Works for 10 years. He is being recognized by his supervising staff and peers for his dependability, efficiency and dedication to our community. John represents his fellow employees in providing the vital necessities ensuring the health, safety and comfort of all West Windsor Township residents. Thank you, John for your dedication and service to our community.

Mrs. Gay Huber

Gay Huber is Deputy Township Clerk and a community volunteer. She was the key person in the coordination of the first American Legion Centennial Memorial in the nation dedicated on Veterans Day last year. Gay served as Secretary of the Princeton Junction Volunteers Fire Company and chaired the fundraising committee. Being a lifelong Township resident, she is always available regardless whether it is official duties or volunteer contributions. Her great-grandfather was a charter member of the Fire Company when it was formed in 1926. She and her family members are always visible in all kinds of community events. Thank you, Gay.

At this point, I'd like to recognize a very special volunteer and a very good friend who has, perhaps, held the record of being the longest serving Chairperson on the West Windsor Township Planning Board.

Mr. Marvin Gardner

Last but not least, my greatest appreciation goes to this wonderful country of ours. As many of you know, I came here as a young man from Taiwan with \$300 in my pocket, knowing very few people living here. The United States gave me opportunities I would never have imagined. Mine was the American Dream and our country allowed me to fulfill my dream. Upon acquiring my citizenship in this country, my heart beat with intense pride. I am proud to be an American and happy to show my love for our country by giving back as much as I can, knowing that whatever I do, it will never be enough.

Thank you and good night

God bless America.