

Thank you: Andrew; staff; Council, family,

Four years ago, we gathered together in this room – united as Princetonians -- to usher in our newly consolidated government and celebrate a milestone in our town's history. With consolidation, Princeton has become a model of more efficient and effective government. Working together, we've exceeded the financial savings target set by the Consolidation Commission and Transition Task Force (over \$3 million of taxpayer savings a year), while significantly reducing the size of our municipal staff without sacrificing services. Princeton was once again rated AAA in 2016– making us one of only six municipalities in the state of New Jersey to receive the highest bond rating from both S&P and Moodys. Beyond financial savings, we've been better able to respond to challenges, whether digging out after a winter blizzard or building productive relationships with the school district, the University, and other community institutions.

Today, as we gather to reorganize our four-year-old government in the annual tradition, we face a new set of challenges on the national front. After the recent divisive election, more residents than ever are energized and eager to engage at the local level to protect the progressive values this town holds dear.

We are home to many of the best and brightest minds, and benefit from a community-minded spirit of giving back. I am grateful to all the exceptional volunteers on our boards and commissions, whose expert advice helps the Council make better informed decisions. This past year we created two new commissions -- Princeton's first Youth Advisory Committee to give official voice to the high school students in our community; and a new Civil Rights Commission to develop mutual understanding, and prevent discrimination.

We have focused on issues that impact the quality of daily life within our community with an increasing emphasis on the use of updated zoning practices to preserve neighborhood character. In recent years, Princeton has become one of the top 10 municipalities in the state of New Jersey for its volume of construction. In 2016 alone, Princeton's construction office issued 2,427 permits, 2,043 certificates of approval, and conducted 11,087 inspections.

While this level of activity is a sign of our economic vitality and attractiveness as a place to live and operate a business, it also calls for structured planning and a vigorous effort to preserve the very sense of place that makes Princeton so special. In 2016 Council launched an initiative to address the spate of teardowns and out-of-scale, out of character new construction and we've already adopted many of the first round of recommendations. The neighborhood zoning initiative will continue in the coming year, and be shaped by further discussions as the Planning Board completes a comprehensive re-examination of the Master Plan.

In 2016, the Council recognized the Witherspoon Jackson neighborhood as Princeton's 20th historic district. The designation came after an outpouring of support from neighborhood residents, who shared their stories about the personal impact of Princeton's history of segregation, the perseverance of the African American community, and the significance of the neighborhood to their lives. After the vote, Leighton Newlin said "for the first time in my life I feel like I'm not just from Princeton but I belong here, and I am now more proud than ever to call it my home."

Princeton's sense of place is perhaps most famously captured by our tree-lined, historic, and authentic downtown. In 2016, the American Planning Association awarded Nassau Street its coveted "People's Choice" designation as one of the Great Places in America. Princeton has received widespread recognition for its quality of life, with Nassau Street and the central business district as part of the appeal. This past year was no exception. WalletHub gave Princeton the "Overall Best" spot in their ranking of over twelve hundred Small Cities and Towns; and the financial website [smartasset](#) named us the "Best College Town to Live In" for a second year in a row. Keeping the central business district picturesque and thriving requires maintenance and investment. Last year, in an effort championed by Councilwoman Jo Butler, we developed new design standards for Nassau Street and applied for funding to implement the improvements. In the coming year we will review parking ordinances, adjust parking meter rates, and complete a parking study of the downtown area, with the help of a \$65,000 grant.

We've also been turning to the professors and students at Princeton University to bring their latest research and thinking to bear on civic challenges. The students benefit by having real-world problems to work on, and the town benefits from new perspectives and innovative approaches. The project team One Roof, for example, is using the latest in design thinking theory to simplify and humanize the bureaucratic process of applying for affordable housing. In another effort to solicit new ideas, we held our third municipal hackathon, where computer programmers and designers -- most new to the political process - devised creative solutions to municipal challenges.

Our staff is consistently looking to adopt best practices, and be strategic about how best to deploy limited resources. This past year, Princeton's police department implemented de-escalation strategies in use-of force-training, launched RAIDS online, providing real time crime reporting for citizens, and collaborated with researchers at Rutgers to more comprehensively analyze our department's traffic stop data. The Department of Public Works embarked on a strategic operations review, and Corner House began a 5-year strategic plan. The Princeton Health Department, with the help of Councilwoman Heather Howard, had an exceptional year, mounting a vigorous response to the Zika virus in partnership with municipal health departments around the state and medical providers in the community. The department was active in educating the public about transmission risks and distributing over 1,000 brochures in both English and Spanish on how to keep yards mosquito free.

Reflecting a national shift in best practices toward road design, Princeton adopted a Complete Streets policy in 2012 that aims to make streets safe and accessible for all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians and those with disabilities. We have continued this past year to systematically review transportation policies through this lens. Councilwoman Jenny Crumiller spearheaded the restructuring of our transportation-related committees, placing them under the umbrella of a newly-named Complete Streets Committee and convened an additional committee tasked with recommending traffic calming measures designed for maximum effectiveness in Princeton.

In the past year Princeton was recognized by the Greater Mercer TMA with a Safe Routes to School Gold Award and a Smart

Workplace Gold Award; and the Mount Lucas Road project, which featured bike lanes and an improved pathway system, won Project of the Year Award from the NJ Society of Municipal Engineers.

Pedestrian and bicycle safety improved with the installation of rapid flashing beacons on Washington Road at the Canal Path crossing, Route 206, and Witherspoon Street, and with the installation of a new traffic signal at Mountain and Great Road intersection.

We completed a bicycle master plan for a fully connected bicycle network of on-street facilities and off-road trails, and will be incorporating it into the Master Plan this upcoming year. Princeton also received a grant to establish a joint bike share program with Princeton University.

Last Spring the town rolled out a new 21-passenger freeB shuttle bus, paid for by Princeton University. The shuttle has grown in popularity, with close to 30,000 rides logged between January and October. We also erected eight new bus shelters, with solar panels to power LED lights, including a flagship bus shelter at Palmer Square.

Safe pedestrian and bike facilities, as well as convenient public transit, are especially important to our seniors. Princeton was the first community in NJ designated as Age Friendly by the AARP and World Health Organization, and in 2016 we worked with the Princeton Senior Resource Center to put together an action plan to prioritize our seniors' most pressing needs, many of which involve transportation.

Environmental sustainability has been another top priority. Thanks to Councilman Bernie Miller, we moved forward with a solar project on the old landfill at River Road that will generate energy to power the adjacent sewer plant. We are looking to place another solar array on the roof of the Spring Street Garage where Sustainable Princeton recently obtained a grant to help defray the cost of two electric vehicle charging stations. We commissioned a report that will guide efforts in controlling invasive species in our open space lands, our Shade Tree Commission drafted a more robust Shade Tree Ordinance and is developing a plan to manage the Emerald Ash Borer's Impact on our tree canopy. In 2017, we will lay the groundwork for a Climate Action Plan.

Princeton has a proud history of working to ensure an economically diverse community and of building affordable housing long before it was required by the state. We are currently in court to determine our obligation for the next decade, but in the meantime, continue to make progress. Last Spring we cut the ribbon on a new group home for adults with developmental disabilities; Avalon Bay, will offer 56 affordable housing units; and the University's Merwick-Stanworth development will offer another 56 affordable units open to the entire community.

The Affordable Housing Department organized financial literacy workshops to help residents, and Councilman Lance Liverman is working with Princeton University on a local jobs program to be rolled out in the next couple months. Our own Princeton Recreation Department employs 175 people, including summer help, most of whom are Princeton residents including many Princeton High School students and faculty members. These jobs created more than \$365,000 in wages in 2016.

With the national elections behind us, new and serious challenges confront us, especially for vulnerable communities such as immigrant groups. Recognizing the need, our Human Services Department quickly convened a community meeting at the library immediately after the election as well as follow-up sessions at the Arts Council led by a senior attorney at the ACLU. Human Services also played a key role in helping to resettle two refugee families who are being sponsored by local groups. And Human Services extended its reach by placing a masters level social work intern in the public library where she provides satellite services to those in need of support.

We've also strengthened our community ties through creative culture and the arts. We brought additional art into the municipal building with the unveiling of the Margaret Johnson piece, "Where?"; and the Arts Council's Interwoven Stories community stitching project, a portion of which will be installed on a permanent basis in the hallway later this year. We are also partnering with the Arts Council and a local business to bring back Princeton's parklet this spring.

2016 saw the retirements and moving on of many beloved long time employees. We said goodbye to Dept Administrator Kathy Monzo, Engineer Bob Kiser, Clerk Linda McDermott, Affordable Housing Coordinator Christy Peacock, Health inspector Randy Carter, Police officers Carol Raymond, Ken Riley, Steve Riccitello, Marshall Provost, and Lt. Bob Currier, as well as Raymond Jolly and Jason Morgan from Public Works.

We welcomed Jeff Laux to our engineering department, Konstantina Tsintsifas to Health, Ian Mahar to Public Works, and Ryan McDermott to Dispatch. And we celebrated the promotions of Jeff Grosser to Assistant Administrator, Deanna Stockton to head engineer, Kathy Bryzinsky to municipal clerk, John Bucchere and Geoff Maurer to Lieutenants, Mervyn Arana and Matt Solovay to Sergeant, and Ben Gering to Captain.

On Council, we said goodbye to Patrick Simon, and are very excited to welcome our new colleague, Tim Quinn. I also want to thank Lance for being a terrific Council President, and congratulate Jenny. I look forward to working with you as Council President!!!

While we have accomplished a tremendous amount, there is still more work to be done. Council will be back here for our regular meeting on Monday night, and again next Tuesday for our annual goal setting meeting. I expect we will have another busy year. In this uncertain time, we have the ability to rebuild trust in civic institutions by succeeding locally, and to serve as a model for others. At a conference in DC last month I was thrilled to hear that the White House had shared best practices from Princeton as an example of how to implement the President's Task Force Report on 21st Century Policing.

I'm excited about the work we are doing to position Princeton for a healthy future and to ensure we remain a walkable, bikable, affordable community with great restaurants and shopping, a culture of intellectualism and innovation, a strong sense of place and connection to one another rooted in the knowledge that we are stronger because of our diversity, not in spite of it.