

I want to wish everyone in Atlantic Highlands a happy and healthy New Year. I am honored that the voters of our Borough have entrusted me with this opportunity to serve as your mayor. We are truly blessed to have a team of highly competent employees within Borough Hall who handle the daily business of running our town, and they deserve acknowledgement for the long hours they keep. Adam Hubeny, Dwayne Harris, Jerry Gagliano, Elizabeth Merker, Debbie Hough, Michelle Clark, Cindy Bruntz, Chief Jerry Vasto and his officers, and the Borough employees of the Harbor, Public Works, and the Water/Sewer department deserve our thanks. And of course we owe a huge debt to the dedicated volunteers of our First Aid Squad and Fire Departments for their service.

I don't know how many of you begin each New Year as I have by making resolutions which involve some attempt at self-improvement. Usually these are promises to get healthier either by exercising more, going on a diet, quitting smoking, or all of the above. Maybe you resolve to get more organized, reduce debt, or save more money, or to travel or read more books. Whatever New Year's promises we make, statistics show that after a few months, or even weeks, 80% or more of us fail to keep those resolutions.

There are two secrets to successful resolutions. One is setting goals that are realistic and the second is having the support of other people. So as I look at making resolutions for the year ahead I want us to focus on what we can achieve together – and not what we can't. One of the things that make Atlantic Highlands such a great place to live in is the strength of our many community organizations.

1. **Putting First Avenue First:** While campaigning I shared with many of you my concerns about the empty storefronts and unsightly vacant lots along First Avenue, because they don't send a positive message about our town to anyone passing through. Fortunately, in the coming months we will see some new construction providing both residential and commercial spaces along First Ave, but vacancies still exist. Retailers choose where they want to locate, for a number of reasons and unless a business gets customers it is doomed to fail. I will be seeking input from our local real estate companies, the Chamber of Commerce, and the owners of buildings to develop a strategy that convinces businesses to locate here. I feel we can do a better job of "marketing" the Atlantic Highlands we all love, not only as a great place to visit, but also to work in, to shop in, and to live in and raise a family.

2. **What's Going On in Atlantic Highlands?** I want to create a more effective means of consolidating all up to date information about upcoming events in our town to reach the maximum number of our residents, as well as people who reside elsewhere. For our immediate neighbors in Leonardo and Navesink, we *are their* downtown. For such a small town, there is quite a lot going on, but often you only know about programs and events because you're on an email list for the sponsoring organization, whether it's schools, churches, non-profits, or the Borough. A revamped website is a good beginning, and I welcome input from any of you with experience in that field.

3. **I'm not as powerful as you think.** As Mayor, I can propose all manner of resolutions and ordinances, but it is ultimately the elected members of the Borough Council who vote to make or change policy. I only get to vote to break a tie. Our decisions should be guided by what we think is best for our town, and should not be mired in partisan politics. Personal attacks are counter productive and don't belong when conducting Council business. We can disagree without being disagreeable.

4. **And here is a resolution I want you to add to your list:** Become a well-informed citizen by regularly attending either a Council meeting, Harbor Commission or Planning Board meeting. Misinformation and rumors spread easily within a small community, so get the facts and share your ideas and concerns during the public comments session. My only request is that you do so in a respectful manner. Again, we can disagree without being disagreeable. Consider volunteering to help with one or more of the committees that do so much to enhance our community such as the Recreation, Shade Tree, Beautification/Public Relations, or Senior Volunteers.

I am optimistic that Atlantic Highlands has a great future, and I want to reassure you that every decision I make will be guided by my desire to do the very best for our town. Bipartisanship was the theme of our election campaign, and we plan to stick by that. Only together can we turn resolutions into results for the "Jewel of the Bayshore".