**Thank you everyone and Happy New Year. I just want to say that I am both humbled and honored to be asked once again to serve as the mayor of the greatest township in New Jersey and look forward to the challenges that lay ahead of us as we collectively work to recover from the devastation caused by Superstorm Sandy. Before I talk about the coming year, I just want to say a few words about our outgoing mayor. No amount of hyperbole can capture the spectacular job done by Tony Fiore these past two years as mayor. Anyone who sits in this chair knows the enormous responsibility you take on. Mayor Fiore was strong-willed, outspoken and a tireless fighter on Middletown’s behalf, regardless of the issue. His leadership during Superstorm Sandy and its aftermath was phenomenal and made all the difference to Middletown coming through the disaster as well as it did. Under his watch, the Middletown Township Committee was able to save the swim club at no cost to the taxpayers, bring a world class ice rink to town, institute single stream recycling, which doubled the number of pickups while saving hundreds of thousands of dollars, renew Middletown Day with 100% private donations, and secure significant increases in employee benefit contributions, saving hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars, just to name a few. As I have said in the past, anyone who says this is a part time position is sadly mistaken, and Mayor Fiore is living proof of a person who devoted himself 24 hours a day, seven days a week to the job. As a fellow member of the committee I feel fortunate to have him as a friend and colleague and grateful for what he has taught me about leadership and dedication to public service.**

**I also want to thank the Lt. Governor, our own Kim Guadagno for being a part of today’s reorganization. Governor Christie and Lt. Governor Guadagno have made global headlines with the way they have lead New Jersey. As a part of the administration, I marvel at the Lt. Governor’s energy and tenacity in undertaking the huge task of putting New Jerseyans back to work. Folks, we have been eyewitnesses to history in the making, and every citizen and future generation of New Jersey owes the Christie administration a debt of gratitude for helping to turn our beloved state around in the most challenging of times.**

**Now for the coming year. The Middletown Township Committee has always been very aggressive in the dual pursuit of cutting spending and improving our quality of life. To that end, I would like to discuss a number of the initiatives we have planned for 2013.**

**First, the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center project, which began in 2012, will become official at a groundbreaking scheduled this Spring. This is a huge win for the Township, in that it fills a longstanding vacant building while bringing millions in capital investment and nearly 300 high paying jobs to Middletown that will provide an enormous boost to the local economy.**

**Second, the Trinity Hall School will also begin classes this Fall at Croydon Hall. This wonderful institution is an all girls school similar in structure and mission to the Christian Brothers Academy.**

**Third, one of the few bright spots to have come out of last year’s storm was the decision by FEMA to set up its headquarters at the former Avaya property in Lincroft. This will give affected residents a convenient place to connect with FEMA staff, while providing increased revenue to the township and additional economic activity to the surrounding area.**

**Fourth, the new Junior Titans ice rink is also set to open the end of this month. This means a world class ice skating facility will open in Middletown, and best of all, the great ice hockey teams of Middletown High Schools North and South will be able to play all of their home games right here in town.**

**Finally, one our most exciting initiatives will be the “Buy Middletown Property Tax Benefit Card” which, pending legal review, will be rolled out this year. This program will reward residents for patronizing local businesses. It works by reducing your property taxes by a percentage of the amount that you spend at participating Middletown businesses. This is a win/win all around – businesses benefit from increased sales volume and foot traffic, taxpayers benefit in that they have a simple, effective way to lower their property taxes, and the town benefits by stimulating the local economy. We also feel that this program will make Middletown more attractive to businesses looking to open in the area.**

**The new Economic Development Committee and Historic Preservation Commission will be fully operational this year and further the economic growth initiatives for the town.**

**Overall, the Township Committee will continue to aggressively pursue its mission to replace property taxes with other sources of revenue to pay for township services. This can be done in a number of ways, such as additional shared service agreements, for one. The move to single stream recycling has also been a major component in the non-tax revenue sector. In the first few months of implementation, the combination revenue increase/savings to the town was just over $20,000 per month. This staggering sum could easily double if compliance increased across the Township.**

**The spectacular volunteer spirit that exists in Middletown has never been more evident than this past year. It was Thomas Jefferson who once said, “**[**I believe that every human mind feels pleasure in doing good to another.**](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/t/thomasjeff133002.html)**” Certainly that concept was proven true by the enormous outpouring of volunteerism during the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy. Along with the perennial ace volunteer corps that comprise the Fire Department, EMS, auxiliary police, Middletown Drug and Alcohol Alliance, Emergency Management volunteers, CERT members, Fire Police, youth athletic leagues, and the hundreds of people who serve on the numerous boards and commissions, we also had a tremendous response from residents wanting to help after Sandy. I’ll never forget standing in this room and looking at several hundred volunteers, many without power and with damage to their own homes, overflowing into the lobby, anxious to help in any way they can. To all of those fine dedicated men and women I extend my deepest gratitude.
 Perhaps no other task taken on by the Township Committee this year will be as important as rebuilding the areas of the township damaged during Superstorm Sandy. It is clear that after consultation with Federal, State, and County representatives, it will be a lengthy process with new criteria to help residents and businesses avoid future devastation, should another similar event occur. Whatever the parameters, we must be certain to turn recovery into renaissance for every section of town and be sure that we rebuild smarter, safer and better than before.**

**Before I wrap up, I just want to congratulate Steve Massell on his re-election by an overwhelming margin. It was an impressive win and the residents of Middletown are fortunate to have a person of his character and integrity on the Township Committee.**

**Finally, I would like to acknowledge my beautiful wife Geraldine and children Alannah, Daniel and Melanie, who have been so supportive and understanding as I take so much time from them to fulfill my duties on the Township Committee and the various committees and commissions I serve on. I would like to close by reaffirming the promises that I made to the people of Middletown in the past and that is: honesty, an open ear for all your concerns, and a 110% effort every step of the way. Thank you all very much, have a Happy New Year and may God Bless Middletown and God Bless America.**