



Mayor Brindle's Opening Remarks March 10, 2020

Good evening, everyone, and thanks for joining us. We have a very busy agenda tonight, and I'd like to first spend a few minutes on several key items.

RVL MAYORS' ALLIANCE

Since our last Town Council meeting, the RVL Mayors' Alliance hosted a meeting with over 20 mayors in attendance to hear speakers representing Governor Phil Murphy, Senator Cory Booker, and Congressman Tom Malinowski. We also received an update from NJ Transit executives on the RVL peak one-seat ride feasibility study and planned service improvements. The feasibility study should be completed by June which will provide us some clarity regarding peak one seat ride possibilities. I remain optimistic about the possibility of finally getting the RVL service that we deserve and will keep fighting for our commuters and residents.

HUMAN RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMISSION

In January I announced the formation of the Human Relations Advisory Commission, whose focus will be on fostering an environment of inclusivity, mutual understanding, and respect. We received numerous applications from the community, demonstrating the real need and appetite for this commission. To enable us to maximize the diversity of the Commission, we are introducing an ordinance tonight to expand this commission from seven to nine members who will be appointed in April. Many thanks to all those that applied to serve on this commission, which I expect will play a critical role in our community.

CORONAVIRUS

In our Conference session down the hall tonight, we heard from our Regional Health Officer, Megan Avallone, about the latest update on the coronavirus. Obviously this is a situation that is evolving daily, and I want to remind everyone that Megan, as Regional Health Director for 8 municipalities, is in regular contact with state and federal health officials, and also sits on Governor Murphy's coronavirus task force in her capacity as President of the NJ Association of County and City Health Officials. Megan is also advising the Westfield Board of Education and is in touch with them multiple times a day. Please check out our dedicated coronavirus information center on the Town's website -- westfieldnj.gov/coronavirus -- where we will be posting regular updates as necessary.

UCC CELL TOWER

Last night, the Cranford Zoning Board met regarding the UCC Cell Tower proposal with a second meeting scheduled for next Monday. I spoke to Cranford Mayor Patrick Giblin yesterday, and reached out to the Board at Fairview Cemetery to encourage them to attend the meeting since Verizon is now contemplating moving the proposed tower closer to the cemetery, which is a national arboretum. Ward 2 Councilman Mike Dardia attended the meeting to advocate for affected residents.

DOWNTOWN PROPERTY OWNERS/BUSINESS OWNERS MEETING

Thanks to all of the downtown property and business owners who came out last Thursday to meet our new DWC Executive Director Bob Zuckerman, and to hear updates from our Town Planner Don Sammet. These stakeholders will be critical to the revitalization of our downtown, and I look forward to sharing with you some significant steps we'll be taking in that regard in just a few minutes.

LOCAL CHAMPIONS

But first, I'd like to acknowledge some champions in our midst tonight. In the past two weeks, many of us have been inspired by some amazing high school athletes who have taken home championship trophies. Having just celebrated International Women's Day on Sunday, it only seems appropriate to recognize these female athletes tonight.

- I'd first like to congratulate WHS junior Katie Hamilton who just won the state championship in the 1600m, the first Westfield girl to win a track and field state championship. She posted a winning time of 4:57! I'd also like to congratulate her coaches Jen Buccino and Joe Berardi for their support of Katie, and to thank Katie and her coaches for making our community so proud.
- I'd also like to acknowledge the WHS girls junior varsity and varsity basketball teams who each won Union County championships. The varsity Blue Devils, winning the championship for the first time since 2008, were led by senior captain Caroline Dwyer who had 14 points, and sophomore Chloe Kreusser who had 18 points and 10 rebounds in the championship game over Governor Livingston, winning it 64-37. Congratulations to all of these amazing athletes, and to varsity coach Liz McKeon and to JV coach Brian Ciemniecki for their historic wins!

While we're recognizing extraordinary achievements, we now get to move on to recognizing the promotions of some of Westfield's finest as they are officially sworn in this evening. Congrats to Piotr Wierzbicki and Elizabeth "Betsy" Savnick on their promotions to detective, and to Marcin Kapka and Nicole Stivale on their promotions to lieutenant. It is worth noting, in the spirit of International Women's Day, that Lt. Stivale is now the highest ranking female in the history of the Westfield police department as she becomes the first woman in their history to reach the rank of lieutenant.