



Town Council Opening Remarks September 28, 2021

(The following remarks were delivered Mayor Brindle at the September 28, 2021 Town Council meeting.)

Thanks to all who are joining us in person and online tonight. If you are here in the Council Chambers with us, please note that we have added a mandatory sign in sheet, the purpose of which is to be able to effectively contact trace if the Health Department is notified of a COVID exposure within this room. Please make sure we have your name and contact information.

As a reminder, public comment will be accepted in person only. As always, the replay will also be available afterwards on Facebook, YouTube, and TV 36.

WIRC

Resident applications are open for the Westfield Infrastructure Resiliency Committee (WIRC), which I introduced at our last meeting. The WIRC, to be chaired by Councilwoman Habgood and Councilman Contract, will be tasked with assessing our current Town wide stormwater infrastructure and its capacity to handle these severe weather events in the future, and making short and long-term recommendations for how best to fortify it, as well recommendations for ensuring we are proactively thinking about climate resiliency in everything we do going forward.

The committee's work will be significant and comprehensive, taking all contributing factors into consideration -- such as engineering and current zoning and construction practices, future development, and input from public works and finance. In addition to the several Town professionals who will sit on the committee, we are also seeking residents for the WIRC across each ward who have relevant personal experience in local flood prone areas, and/or professional experience in engineering, flood control, infrastructure, and other relevant fields that can supplement the Town's expertise.

Applications will be accepted through Wednesday, October 6, with appointments expected to be announced at the October 12 Town Council meeting. For additional details and an online application, visit westfieldnj.gov/wirc.

New Business Openings

I'd like to welcome our newest businesses to Town! I had the opportunity to visit Victoria's Cakes on Westfield Avenue and Wallitsch Art Gallery on Elmer Street, both of which are wonderful additions to Westfield. The Westfield Pharmacy will open shortly on Quimby, next to the new Custom Ink and across

from Spice Bazaar V to open this fall. For the ice cream lovers, we will soon welcome Surreal Creamery to the space that was previously Midtown Authentic on East Broad, as well as Salty Paws, an ice cream bar specifically for dogs that will be located in the former Omaha Steaks location. Also coming to East Broad is Blissful Beauty, an independent cosmetics and fragrance store. They will occupy the former Ella Allure space, after Ella Allure relocated to the Central Avenue space neighboring the new Ralph's Ices. In addition, our amazing Mimi & Hill will also be opening a pop-up location on Elm Street, across from Addams Tavern, this fall. In speaking to the business owners I interact with regularly, they have mentioned that there is a renewed energy in our downtown, sparked by what I hope will be the end of this pandemic on the horizon.

National Voter Registration Day

Today is National Voter Registration Day, and it's not too late to register to vote for the upcoming November 2 election. You can do so on The New Jersey Division of Elections website (<https://voter.svrs.nj.gov/register>) or in person at the Union County Board of Elections. Residents who already registered to vote can check their registration status by visiting the New Jersey Division of Elections website.

As a reminder, you will have three options for voting in New Jersey:

- Early voting at various locations around the county between October 23 and October 31
- Vote by Mail
- Voting at your regular polling place on Election Day

Vote by mail ballots begin going out to Westfield residents later this week so be on the lookout for the yellow envelope in your mailbox. Full voting details are available at unioncountyvotes.com.

Edison School Fields Project

Thanks to everyone who participated in last week's public input meeting regarding Edison Fields. Since then, members of the Board of Education and the Recreation Commission had a meeting to align on next steps, and the next monthly meeting between the Recreation Committee and the Neighborhood Advisory Group will take place next week.

Councilman Katz will now provide some additional details as well as share a recap of the wildly successful first ever Tour de Westfield.

[Comments by Councilman Katz:

Thank you, Mayor. Since our Last meeting, the Neighborhood Advisory group met for the second time. We also had our third formal input and feedback session on September 20, where Russ Howell from the Recreation Commission gave a detailed presentation, and we also had held our third public input session.

The presentation addressed the many questions submitted from multiple sources, including the public input sessions, emails, Town Council meetings, and the neighborhood advisory group meetings, as well as presented the revised conceptual plan for the fields. The revised plan, along with the entire presentation, are published at westfieldnj.gov/edison-fields-project.

During the public input session, we heard from 28 residents. Some next steps moving forward for the remainder of 2021:

- There will be monthly neighborhood advisory group meetings, with our next meeting scheduled for October 5.
- The Recreation Commission is planning on meeting with user groups.
- We are looking forward to the parking assessment from Spiezele in the beginning of December.

I want to thank all of the residents that have chosen to have your voices heard, as you are a very important part of this process. I would also encourage all those interested to review the presentation posted on the website.]

Downtown Events

Green Energy Week continues with two more upcoming events. On Wednesday night at 7:30, The Green Team is partnering with the Central Jersey Electric Auto Association for an EV 101 virtual information session. This webinar will discuss the many benefits of driving electric, including state and federal incentives, cost efficiencies, and the health and climate advantages. Sign up to receive the Zoom link at bit.ly/EV101web.

The Green Team will also host its first Alternative Energy Fair on Saturday, October 2, at the South Avenue Train Station Lot, where attendees can view electric vehicles, electric bikes, and lawn equipment, and learn all about alternative energy and sustainability programs available in Westfield. The event will also feature live music by local band Save Mary, as well as food offerings from some of Westfield's restaurants for attendees to enjoy. Full details are available on our website.

Tomorrow, we'll be hosting a job fair in partnership with the County, DWC, and Chamber of Commerce in the Community Room from 11:00 to 3:00. Job seekers in Union County will have the chance to explore job opportunities with local businesses and meet with prospective employers -- part of an effort aimed at helping employers and job seekers connect with each other. Pre-registration is required online through the Union County Department of Human Services, at ucnj.org/dhs/2021-job-fair.

And don't miss the rescheduled Girls' Night Out this Thursday night! Thanks to our downtown businesses and the DWC for organizing this annual tradition -- be sure to come out and shop local!

Prospect Street

I want to thank the residents on Prospect Street who have reached out with their concerns about the placement of the double yellow lines following the recently completed paving job. As co-chair of the Raritan Valley Mayors' Alliance, I am fortunate to have a working relationship with NJ Department of

Transportation Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti, who was here most recently with Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg just last month. I reached out to the Commissioner to get clarification on what the state would allow, and was very pleased that she was in the area and able to come to Prospect Street this afternoon to meet with Councilwoman Habgood, Councilman Boyes, Chief Battiloro, Town Administrator Jim Gildea, Town Engineer Dave Battaglia and myself. I'm going to ask Councilwoman Habgood to provide an update on what we learned at that meeting today.

[Comments from Councilwoman Habgood:

Thank you, Mayor. I'm very grateful that Commissioner Gutierrez-Scaccetti took the time to meet with us today on Prospect Street to address the questions we have received from residents living along that road.

To clarify, the paving of Prospect was not paid for by the Town, but was funded through the New Jersey State Transportation and Trust Fund Grant. Our former Town Engineer, who had many years of experience in overseeing our road resurfacing program, submitted the project's plans for state approval with the understanding that, due to that funding, the state's marking guidelines for a collector road must apply.

The Mayor, Councilman Boyes, and I have been fielding a number of understandable questions and concerns in Ward 1 about the double yellow line striping. Today, Commissioner Gutierrez-Scaccetti graciously offered the State's DOT's Traffic Division resources to obtain the average daily traffic count on Prospect – a process we had already begun last week with Town equipment, but we will gladly rely instead on an independent analysis as the basis of our decisions. She is asking a state team to come out and install them this week.

If the data determines that we have the discretion to remove the yellow lines, the Commissioner offered state funding to do so, which we very much appreciate. I think we all agree that safety comes first and that will be our main priority. If the data gives us discretion, and only with the support of the police, we are prepared to ask the state to remove the yellow lines. I will continue to keep the Prospect Street neighborhood updated as we undergo this process driven by data and with the support of the State's DOT Commissioner. I want to echo the Mayor's thanks to the area residents who have expressed their concerns, and I'm pleased that we had the opportunity today to speak on their behalf.]

Tonight's Agenda

We have another busy agenda tonight, which includes an ordinance on second reading to address the issue of renting out private property amenities, including backyard swimming pools, as well as one to increase fines for bias crimes, from what was previously up to \$200 per violation to up to \$2,000 per violation.

We also have some public safety items on the agenda -- extending some existing no parking areas on Central Avenue by Washington Street and on South Avenue by Tuttle Parkway to create better lines of sight, adding a handicap space on Cacciola Place, and, importantly, awarding a contract to begin the much-needed lighting repairs in Mindowaskin Park.

Before we get started, I'd like to ask Chief Battiloro to provide an update on our crossing guards and recent car thefts, as both are important issues that remain top priorities.

With that, let's get to work. I want to remind everyone that I will be enforcing Robert's Rules this evening to ensure we stay on topic and the meeting runs efficiently.

Thank you.