

Mayor's New Year Message, 2015 Reorganization

Good Afternoon and welcome. I'd like to thank you all for giving of yourselves for the betterment of Sea Bright, and I offer my prayers for peace, prosperity and good will in our community in 2015.

This time last year I came home from the Reorg meeting, packed my bags and drive into the polar vortex to trace the path of Hurricane Katrina along the Gulf Coast. I visited Waveland MS where I was able to tour with Mayor Tommy Longo, our disaster ambassador, and see first hand how, up and down that coast, the scars of the hurricane were still evident, 8 years later. Beachfront lots with pilings where homes once stood. It was heartbreaking, but it was also inspiring, that here we are in Sea Bright, a mere two years from the storm, and we are already so far ahead from that. I was recharged.

My journey also brought me to the still abandoned neighborhoods of 9th Ward New Orleans, St. Bernard Parish. There I met Zack Rosenberg, founder of St. Bernard Project, a nonprofit that comes in after a disaster to help rebuild storm damaged homes. His story is incredible, he and his wife, lawyers in DC, went to volunteer for a few days after the hurricane. They couldn't believe how, despite the hundred of millions in disaster aid, so many people remained displaced from their storm damaged homes. Sound familiar?

Zack and his wife founded SBP and they developed a proven model using AmeriCorps and trained volunteers to rebuild almost 500 homes in New Orleans so far. They responded to the disastrous tornado in Joplin MO and established a presence in NY after Sandy. By March 2014, SBP had partnered with Sea Bright Rising to begin work at the Jersey Shore, and they have rebuilt homes here in SB and surrounding communities. Their secret? Zack calls it constructive discontent, a mindset, a way of being, that keeps people in action and produces positive results.

Of course that struck a chord with me. I'm from SB, after all. The place where things are always moving, the sand, the land, the water, the air. I saw, time and time again since Sandy, how we have been most successful when we take matters in to our own hands and Do.

And we did. Our town is AMAZING.

Every street has elevations and reconstructions in progress. A small number of primary homeowners still remain unacceptably displaced, but it is getting slowly better. Many of the second homeowners are now beginning repairs on their properties, and the code enforcement staff are working to remediate the abandoned properties. Exciting new projects were approved by the planning board, McLoones DOnovans, Rooney Plaza. Sea Bright will have a new Park at Anchorage thanks to a DEP/Green acres buy out, and funds to maintain it thanks to chairitable donations by the neighbors. The dune committee built walkovers to protect the new dunes, The Benjamin Moore main street Matters project gave our downtown a facelift, the bathrooms and ramp at anchorage

beach were completed, and the municipal parking lot was finally repaved. We got a record number of grants, most notably the FEMA DEP sea wall reconstruction project, the NJ EDA Streetscape grant project, NJ Community Affairs grants for a more in- depth Hazard Mitigation Plan, a redevelopment study and a new, modern Master Plan, underground GIS mapping, continuity of operations planning, and marketing to promote Sea bright tourism. FEMA continues to work with us to fund the majority cost of a rebuilt firehouse and police station. The permits are in process to begin constructing higher bulkheads and pump station to help alleviate downtown flooding. SB is participating in a regional grant application with Shrewsbury river towns to address the outfall pipes. When you compare SB in this way to other communities recovering from SSS, our progress is robust. The very difference in our physical landscape is marked when you enter Sea bright from the southern border. No sand. Thank you Sea brighters Embracing Action.

All of these notable accomplishments, and yet we/I remain unsatisfied. Constructively discontent. As we all know, there is much more to be done. We must continue to look forward. We'll build on what we've accomplished so far but we also must take the lessons of this last year and apply them to our plans for 2015 and beyond.

For me the most striking theme this year is movement, how important it is to be in action, to be moving forward no matter what. Even in the face of a disappointing or frustrating setback.

This will be the year we determine the municipal facilities for SB's future, the use of the beachfront, and the look of our downtown. We will continue to seek shared service opportunities and achieve savings for our taxpayers. We'll keep pressing on unjust regional school taxes while we fight to protect Sea Bright's next generation. Important and exciting work lies ahead.

As a community we've seen how when we band together towards a common goal we succeed. When I took the oath of office in January 2012 I invited all comers to be part of the process, and when I see how many have accepted that invitation, my heart is glad. We have three new citizen led committees, new faces on the Planning Board, new faces on the borough council

I believe in the big tent, and I welcome all comers. If you have a heart to work on something to make our town better, I sign you up. But often, as amazing and diverse as we are as individuals, so amazing and diverse are our opinions. Sometimes people get territorial. Inevitably, people disagree. So it gets messy sometimes. It takes longer to find the common ground sometimes. But as long as we respect each other and not disparage each other, as long as we work collectively through our differences, as long as we have in our heart the best for Sea Bright, Sea Bright will be its very best.

At the end of the day, we know our greatest strength is our people, we are resilient by our very nature, the wave knocks us down and we get right back up.

So in 2015, let us be constructively discontent together. Let us be in action together. I encourage all Sea Brighter's to work with me and with the good people on this dais to secure a brighter and more sustainable future for our children and ourselves. I have hope and confidence for 2015 and all the potential it holds for our beloved hometown. God bless Sea Bright.

Sincerely,

Dina Long

Mayor of Sea Bright, New Jersey

January 3, 2015