



From the Desk of Mayor James Bilella

New Year 2016 Message

I wish everyone in the Borough of Berlin a very Happy New Year.

I would like to thank the members of the community for their support and trust in allowing me to serve our town as Mayor. It is truly an honor and pleasure to serve Berlin

I am excited about Berlin's future and the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead. All of Council and I recognize the need to revitalize our towns commercial core by creating places to shop, entertain and dine within our community.

We recognize the urgency our residents feel about revitalization and controlling taxes through controlled commercial economic growth. To that end, we will be changing and reevaluating the way this governing body does business and the way the borough operates in general.

You may not be aware but we have already begun that change. First, today for the very first time, Mayor and Council conducted real government business for the town at reorganization on January 2nd and not just the annual re-organizational ceremonial appointments as usual.

We directed our Planning Board to conduct a study to declare certain properties distressed and in need of redevelopment under the amended New Jersey Redevelopment Law. This will serve as the beginning of the formal process that gives the Borough the authority and latitude to push for redevelopment of those properties.

Additionally we directed that the Planning Board undertake a re-evaluation of the Town's Comprehensive Master Plan. This is the Borough's strategic plan for the future. Zoning that made sense 20 – 30 years ago clearly doesn't make sense today. Planning for future growth allows us to appropriately control that growth.

We introduced ordinance revisions related to our commercial zoning that promotes and facilitates a more friendly welcoming business environment. These needed changes will assist local businesses and make it easier for them to get up and running in an efficient manner.

We authorized our engineer to begin the preliminary engineering and analysis for the installation of new traffic signals on Cross Keys Road to improve safety for our residents that live in the Centennial Square, Lonaconing and Lonaconing East developments that leave and return to and from their homes via Cross Keys Road.

In addition, we authorized our engineer to design improvements to the signal at Clementon road and Franklin Ave intersection, to improve safety for our children that attend Berlin Community School, the Recreation Center and the residents living in the area.

But there is much more to do. We are currently working to get our dormant Historic Commission reengaged and energized. Having an active commission along with the Historical Society

provides our town the opportunity to obtain the vital funding necessary to enhance and preserve our historic district. Settlement of our town began a little over 300 years ago and the Borough as we know it will be 90 next year. We share something special here in Berlin that many towns in Camden County do not possess. It is what sets us apart; that special something is our historical significance. We need to capitalize upon our historical significance in order to create new economic opportunities for our future.

I, along with Councilpersons Pearce, Kupchek, Miller, Badolato, Rocco and Buchanan will be pushing hard to achieve real results. From September through November, I knocked on doors in every neighborhood in this Borough. Over and over I heard the same concerns from our residents, how can we control taxes and improve our downtown area? The delay in tackling these problems cannot wait. Not even four weeks until the next council meeting! That is why we took this unprecedented action. The primary goal of my administration will be to work with Council and address the concerns I have heard from our residents. We not only need to act, we need to achieve.

There are some other things that will also be changing, such as our caucus meetings. They will now become actual working sessions where we achieve our goals, and not serve merely warm up for the actual Council Meeting. This is not an issue of semantics. The format for work meeting will be significantly changed. No longer will we sit at this formal table and give stuffy reports. The work sessions will be much more informal, transparent and open. Council, myself and the Borough's staff and professionals will be sitting around a conference table discussing issues and concerns and also developing the council meeting agenda while charging council committees and staff with items to accomplish. It will be free flowing, dynamic and unlike any council meeting before.... And yes, these are public meetings will be open so feel free to join us because your participation is always welcome.

Council and I are excited about the possibilities and the challenges ahead. We will continue to ask for your support, input and involvement. Frankly, we are overwhelmed by the number of residents that have expressed a desire to volunteer to serve our community. If you offered to help and we have not given you an assignment, don't worry, we will.

I would also like to thank the many volunteers who work for the Borough serving on our various committees and boards. Their willingness to give their time to help make our town a better place is sincerely appreciated and helps make this community so special.

Additionally, I thank the many employees of the Borough for their dedication and efforts to make Berlin safe and great place to live and raise a family, From all of our administrative departments, Dept of Public Works to our Police Department, Fire Company and EMS, all put forth an extraordinary effort.

Once again, I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and I wish you all the best for a happy and prosperous new year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Bell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.