

Honored guests, friends, neighbors, visitors in-attendance today, and to all watching at home on Ville TV, Happy New Year and welcome to Somerville 2020.

As our town begins its 110TH year of incorporation, I'd like to spend a few minutes reviewing the successes of the past year. Somerville was truly "on the move" in 2019, as best typified by the number of our new residents. All over town, once-vacant lots have gone the way of the dinosaur as new homes appeared almost overnight. Existing homes were selling at breakneck speed, and at prices often exceeding seller expectations. The rental market remained strong, with apartments filling up quickly as tenants looked to become part of the Somerville community. On Main Street, our commercial engine, new business openings kept our ceremonial scissors busy with one ribbon cutting after another. Under the leadership of the reorganized Downtown Somerville Alliance, Main Street teemed with excitement, laughter, and the infectious spirit of fellowship that you felt at such events as Girls on the Run, Small Business Saturday, and two Octoberfests. Coupled with our traditional bike race, street fairs, parades, and Santa's arrival, Somerville continued to stake its claim as Central Jersey's top destination for food, fun, and family.

Somerville has always prided itself on the quality of its essential services, and last year was no exception. Our Fire Department, Fire Police, and Rescue Squad continued to protect life and property, answering thousands of calls in all kinds of emergencies and in all kinds of weather. Their volunteer members put in countless training hours honing their already professional skills. The Public Works Department worked hard to battle Mother Nature, keeping our roads, sewers and parks clean and safe, and their tireless efforts are to be commended. Our Office of Emergency Management had a very active year. In addition to formulating action plans for countless large-scale events throughout the year, it conducted a series of "Stop the Bleed" training classes. Since its inception, this program has taught over one thousand individuals critical skills that could save lives. Thank you to OEM for its continued commitment to the citizens of Somerville. Our Borough Hall staff continued to serve the public in navigating the sometimes confusing labyrinth of governmental paperwork, and we received many thank-you notes from grateful customers. And finally, our Police Department remained the

guardian of public safety and security around the clock. From regular patrols to presenting school programs to catching bank robbers, our brave officers kept a watchful eye on Somerville's visitors, shoppers, workers, and most importantly, our families. When a black and white cruiser passes by, a friendly wave would surely be appreciated. That's the kind of year 2019 was.

We now turn the page to 2020 as Somerville continues to move forward. Some things that will certainly move are dirt, steel, and concrete. Ongoing projects on Davenport Street, Veteran's Memorial Drive, and at the Somerville Train Station will progress, while new ground should be broken on West Main Street and on Kirby Avenue this year. Private investment brings jobs and revenue into town, and that's good news for homeowners. The Borough will continue to focus on infrastructure improvements, with over one million dollars allotted to road repairs, sewer upgrades, maintenance of public parks and buildings, and various initiatives to improve pedestrian safety both downtown and in our neighborhoods, and we will work with other elected officials to reduce speed limits on all State and County roads in town. The Parking Utility will work on improving conditions at the newest public parking lot on West High Street. With enhanced pavement, new meters, and appropriate signage, needed spaces will be available to employees, shoppers, and residents that will ease the pressures created by the success of downtown. And finally, the Borough will take the next important steps to break ground on the new Emergency Services Complex on Gaston Avenue. With the land now cleared, and a qualified developer in place, the design of the facility and the development of a funding plan should occur soon. This signature project will enhance Somerville's quality of life, rejuvenate the surrounding neighborhood, and return several properties to the tax rolls. The process will take time, but that will surely be one ribbon worth cutting!

2020 will be a busy year, and I look forward to working with the members of the Borough Council here on stage with me today. We will strengthen our partnerships with the State of New Jersey and the County of Somerset, and work closely with the United States Census Bureau to ensure an accurate population count so that Somerville gets every Federal, State and County tax dollar it deserves and needs. We at this table have earned the trust and confidence of our

community, and we must continue to use our collective sixty-five years of government experience to work together to find creative solutions to the problems of an ever-changing world. The good people of Somerville expect and deserve no less.

The holiday mood will soon fade, as our lives return to a comfortable and predictable routine. But as we go about our everyday lives, let us pause once in a while to reflect on what makes Somerville so special-our traditions, our institutions, our families. In a world often darkened by tragedy and hate, Somerville shines brightly, thanks to its people. Continue to care for one another, and our community will ever prosper. May God continue to bless Somerville and all who call her home. Thank you.

Mayor Dennis Sullivan

January 1, 2020