



TOWN OF EAST HAMPTON

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State of the Town Address 2022 – Supervisor Peter Van Scoyoc

Good morning. I would like to welcome everyone to the Town Board Organizational meeting of 2022, especially newly elected Board member Cate Rogers, and Kathee Burke-Gonzalez, who begins a third term. It is my pleasure to be here to serve another term as your Town Supervisor, and I am excited to work together with this board and the community on the many issues and challenges we face as a town.

Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused economic and human losses, supply chain issues, anxiety, fatigue, and frustration. I genuinely believe that the pandemic will wane and that someday soon we will be able to resume many of the activities that we must now avoid. In the 2021 State of the Town address I mentioned that there was hopeful news about the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, as the FDA had approved two new vaccines. Since February of 2021, the Town has provided residents with over 10,000 vaccinations at Town facilities, resulting in East Hampton having among the highest rates of vaccination on Long Island. It is now known that the effectiveness of these vaccines wanes over time, and it is of foremost importance to get booster shots to prevent serious illness or death from this insidious disease. The appearance of the Omicron variant has caused a sharp increase in the infection rates here and across the country. Over 1 million new cases were reported yesterday. This new variant is vastly more contagious and is causing breakthrough cases in vaccinated individuals. Fortunately, serious Covid illness is rare in those who have been vaccinated. People who have received a booster shot have the greatest chance of avoiding this illness altogether. We will continue to provide access to Covid-19 booster vaccines, as well as first and second doses, and we have already scheduled Town vaccination clinics through February, 2022. Check our website, ehamptonny.gov, for the latest information or to sign up for alerts.

Testing for Covid-19 also remains a valuable tool in combating the spread of this disease. The Town has provided access to testing since April of 2020, on Town property, through partnerships with various entities. Currently, CareOne Concierge in conjunction with ProPhase Laboratories is providing testing at the East Hampton Town Center for Humanity, 110 Stephen Hand's Path in Wainscott. Due to the surge in infection rate, flu and cold symptoms, and holiday travel, testing resources here and elsewhere are in short supply. Traffic and wait times have forced us to relocate testing to the Stephen Hands Path location from Town Hall. We ask for everyone to be patient and thoughtful during this current surge.

Airport

With the recent expiration of FAA grant assurances, we are finally able to address the longstanding issues of aircraft noise, traffic volume, and environmental impacts of aircraft at our airport. Our goal is to gain meaningful relief for the ever-growing multitude of people whose quality of life is negatively affected by aircraft noise. To further this goal, the Town conducted a series of public workshops and studies in 2021 to engage and inform both the public and the board to better understand the benefits and detriments created by our airport. With the knowledge gained, we feel the best approach is to transition to a private use airport, which will allow us to put in place restrictions that are specifically targeted to improve residents' quality of life and improve the environment by reducing emissions. We have been meeting regularly with FAA officials to better understand the mechanics of this transition. Our intention is to move to a Prior Permission Required (PPR) model for our airport, which we believe will give the town the most flexibility in crafting restrictions that balance the needs of the entire community. We expect to begin the transition this winter, so that these new restrictions will be in place for the upcoming summer season.

Housing Affordability

The dramatic rise in housing costs and declining inventory of year-round rental properties is threatening to unravel the fabric of our community. Businesses, school districts, and municipal government are all struggling to hire and retain staff. Restaurants and other businesses are operating fewer days of the week and commute times from more affordable areas are becoming unbearable. Our volunteer Fire and Ambulance emergency services are having trouble recruiting volunteers. East Hampton continues to lead Long Island in the number of affordable housing units per capita at over 600, but we also lead Long Island with a high cost of living, and the highest poverty rate in Suffolk County. I see the housing problem as one of the most serious and immediate threats to the well-being and sustainability of our community.

Beginning immediately, I am announcing "ALL HANDS ON HOUSING," an initiative to advance solutions to address the housing crisis as fast as possible. Each board member will be working on a specific aspect of this problem: development of the Community Housing Fund Plan, zoning changes, land acquisition, and project development. This will be the town's most significant housing effort to date and crucial to ensuring that we have people to police our streets, educate our youth, respond to emergencies, and provide services and continuity to the community.

The Town will be moving forward with plans to build affordable single-family homes on 12 acres of town-owned property at 395 Pantigo Road. We will also begin planning for a rental apartment project at the former Triune Baptist Church site on Route 114 in Wainscott.

Building Projects

There are several other building projects that are slated to get under way this year. The East Hampton Town Planning Board recently approved the long-awaited Stony Brook Southampton Hospital Satellite Emergency Department, which is to break ground in the first quarter of this year, adjacent to the East Hampton Healthcare Center on the Pantigo Ballfields. The Town will be constructing two new baseball fields at the Town recreational property on Stephen Hand's Path. The hospital will be contributing \$1.75 million dollars for the construction of the new ballfields in exchange for the long-term lease of the Pantigo site. Town committees selected

these locations several years ago as part of a multi-year feasibility review which considered multiple locations for these projects.

The Town Board recently purchased property next to the town-owned Terry King Ballfield as the site for construction of a new Senior Center. This also is the culmination of a multi-year search for a property large enough and well situated for the new Senior Center. We have hired an architectural and engineering firm that will conduct a public engagement process to fully assess the needs of seniors and the community to better inform the design for the center. We are extremely excited about this project which will be the first “net zero” building project undertaken by the Town of East Hampton. The new center, which will produce as much energy as it uses, will be in alignment with our Climate Crisis Declaration and sustainability goals.

Renewable Energy and Sustainability

On the renewable energy front there are several milestones to report.

First, environmental review and issuance of permits for the South Fork Wind project has been completed, clearing the way for construction to begin later this month. We will monitor the onshore cable portion of the project to ensure consistency with the Environmental Management and Construction Plan (EMCP) and the conditions the Town has imposed in our agreements with the project sponsor.

In 2021 the town entered into a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) for the solar array on the roof of the town’s Parks Department, which is combined with a battery energy storage system. In addition to the estimated \$10,000 in annual energy costs savings, this system will provide clean backup power at Town Hall in the event of power outages. We received a \$300,000 grant from the New York Power Authority (NYPA) for this project, the first municipal project of its type in New York State.

We are also planning additional EV charging infrastructure on the Town Hall campus, which will support our transition from a fossil fuel-powered fleet of vehicles to electric and electric/hybrid vehicles consistent with our Climate Emergency Declaration and new vehicle acquisition policies. This charging infrastructure will also be available for use by town residents. Town-wide LED streetlighting upgrades are planned for 2022 as part of our ongoing effort to reduce energy consumption and achieve cost savings. We are partnering with the New York Power Authority (NYPA) to help us complete this project.

On December 21st Governor Hochul signed legislation that clears the way for Long Island towns to participate in Community Choice Aggregation, CCA. We will now be able to choose the source or blend of sources of the electricity we consume. This will allow consumers to participate more directly in the energy marketplace. By choosing renewable energy, we expand the demand and encourage growth of renewable energy production, helping us transition away from the pollution and climate impacts of fossil fuels. This is another way in which we can effectuate meaningful progress towards a cleaner, greener future.

Planning initiatives

We are pleased to have recently hired Jeremy Samuelson as Director of East Hampton’s Planning Department. Jeremy’s in-depth knowledge of the town and of the issues we face will bring renewed focus and energy to one of our most important departments. Long-term planning initiatives such as addressing sea-level rise and coastal erosion through our Coastal Assessment and Resiliency Plan (CARP), as well as the Town’s hamlet studies and Downtown Montauk Community Wastewater treatment will be among the list of priorities for 2022.

Town Finances

The town's finances are currently in excellent shape. Despite significant unbudgeted expenses in 2020 largely in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, we were able to meet those financial challenges because of healthy fund balances. Moody's **again** gave East Hampton its highest bond rating, Triple A (Aaa,) in 2021. Through careful and conservative budgeting, we have met our budgetary targets and stayed below the 2 % tax cap for 2021.

It is important to note that our community has experienced significant growth in year-round residency the last few years, and with this growth, increasing demands for services. Increasing expenses coupled with greater demand for services means that we must raise additional revenue to maintain infrastructure, services, and our quality of life. We will be looking into ways of increasing non-tax revenue to help balance necessary future increases in property taxes.

This month we will be reviewing and updating our 3-year Capital Plan which will prioritize bonding for the purchase of vehicles, machinery, and construction projects such as ballfields, the new Senior Center, affordable housing, and other infrastructure improvements.

We have worked hard to provide the very best in services to the community, none of which would be possible without our dedicated employees. We negotiated and settled all four collective bargaining agreements in 2021, with contracts that reflect fair and competitive wages.

I am honored to have been re-elected to another term as Town Supervisor by the people of East Hampton. I am very fortunate to be able to serve with such an outstanding group of public servants: my fellow Town Board members Sylvia Overby, Kathee Burke-Gonzalez, David Lys, and I am excited to have Cate Rogers now join us on the board. Cate's environmental and sustainability expertise coupled with her work ethic and positive demeanor will be a refreshing and welcomed addition. I want to also give a special thank you to our Town employees and my personal staff who together with us keep our local government functioning well.

In closing, 2021 has been a difficult year. The Covid-19 pandemic has infected millions of Americans and has caused the loss of over 800,000 lives in the U.S. It has brought about some of the greatest challenges in many generations. As we continue to confront challenges in the year ahead, it is the resiliency, and the depth of caring in our community that truly makes East Hampton such a special place. I feel honored and blessed to be the Supervisor of a Town that comes together to support those in need, gathers to rebuke hatred, seeks to protect its environment, honors its history, and celebrates its diversity. We can rise to any challenge as long as we respect each other and work together for the common good.

Let us work together for a better world and Happier New Year in 2022.
Thank you and stay well!