



TOWN OF EAST HAMPTON

159 Pantigo Road
East Hampton, New York 11937

PETER VAN SCOYOC
Supervisor

(631) 324-4140
pvanscoyoc@eamptonny.gov

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“State of the Town” Address for 2019 by East Hampton Town Supervisor Peter Van Scoyoc

Good morning and welcome to the Town Board organizational meeting for 2019.

The beginning of the New Year is filled with hopes and aspirations, resolutions and reflections about the challenges we face and the promise of good things to come.

2018 presented many challenges. By working together, we were able to meet those challenges and to achieve and advance the goals I identified in last year’s State of the Town address.

Protecting and improving water quality was and continues to be a top priority. Drinking water contamination in Wainscott and harmful algal blooms in our waterways highlighted the fragile nature of our most precious resource. The creation of the Wainscott Water Supply District, which consists of 8-1/2 miles of water mains and will serve over 520 households, was completed in record time and will ensure safe drinking water for Wainscott residents. We were able to offset the cost of the water mains by securing nearly \$10 million dollars in State grant funding, alleviating that financial burden from town residents.

Our comprehensive wastewater management plan identified cesspools and septic systems as a primary source of nitrogen pollution threatening our ponds, creeks, harbors, and bays. This year we implemented the strictest wastewater regulations on Long Island and influenced several other communities to take similar action, including East Hampton Village. Our Town has the highest rate per capita of installation of low-nitrogen waste treatment systems in Suffolk County. In 2019 rebates from the Town and additional grant funding from the County and NY State will cover nearly all the costs of upgrading septic systems to low-nitrogen technology. We will increase our efforts to educate and inform residents of this opportunity, because this will significantly contribute to the improvement of our environment and our quality of life.

We are working on additional water quality improvement projects with the Friends of Georgica Pond Foundation, Concerned Citizens of Montauk, East Hampton Village, Sag Harbor, and other

community and environmental organizations in an effort to mitigate sources of pollution throughout the town. Many of these projects are being funded with Community Preservation Water Quality Funds.

This past year we purchased land adjacent to our Aquaculture facility in Three Mile Harbor where we hope to consolidate operations into one location, expand shellfish production, and increase efficiency. We were recently awarded a \$400,000 dollar grant from NY State for this effort. 2018 was the third consecutive year of our Community Oyster Gardening Program, which teaches town residents how to grow oysters in our local waters. This program has been wildly successful, growing from 15 participants in one harbor to over 80 participants in three harbors. Community engagement in this habitat restoration project continues to produce valuable results in addition to providing delicious table fare.

Coastal Erosion and Sea Level Rise will continue to be a topic of focus for the coming year. In 2018 we experienced 4 Nor'Easters in March alone, causing erosion along our coastline. The bluffs at Shadmoor receded 15 feet, Gerard Drive was breached several times, and the Army Corps Of Engineers' beach stabilization project on the Downtown Montauk beach was damaged, requiring sand replenishment to restore the beach prior to the summer season. Gerard Drive, which is currently being raised and fortified with FEMA reimbursable funds, suffered another breach this Fall, closing the road again for a period of time. These weather events are predicted to continue to increase in frequency and severity, and will require innovative solutions and funding to minimize future losses.

To address the ever greater threat of sea level rise and erosion we continued the Coastal Assessment and Resiliency Planning effort. By understanding what is at risk we are planning adaptive strategies to protect critical infrastructure, economic assets, and our beautiful beaches. We have authorized funding to study the feasibility of creating an erosion control district for downtown Montauk. An erosion control district could fund a large scale "sand only" beach replenishment project. Coupled with the Fire Island to Montauk Point (FIMP) sand replenishment project, this could be a critical interim step to ensure a viable beach is maintained as we develop a long-term, sustainable approach to protect the vitality of our beaches and businesses.

The Town adopted a goal of 100% renewable energy in 2014. We have made significant strides this year by supporting offshore wind and solar initiatives. Offshore Wind promises to provide a significant source of clean, renewable energy. We are in the process of negotiating an easement with Deepwater Wind/Orsted to land its proposed wind farm transport cable in Wainscott. Solar initiatives include East Hampton's new solar farm off Accabonac Road -- the first megawatt-scale solar installation on the South Fork. We are also working with the New York Power Authority to install rooftop solar panels on several municipally owned buildings. We have incentivized rooftop solar panels for local residents and businesses by offering reduced prices on purchase and installation. We will continue to promote energy conservation through the use of Nest thermostats and high-efficiency pool pumps, both of which are eligible for significant rebates. Free home energy audits are also available. The town has purchased a number of electric-powered cars to replace aging fossil fuel counterparts within the town's fleet. We will also be expanding the number of charging stations for electric vehicles. Both the cars and the charging stations are fully grant funded, do not impact the budget, and continue to add value to the Town's clean energy portfolio.

With regard to the Town budget, we retained the highest credit rating in the Town's history for the second straight year, Moody's (Aaa) "Triple A".

The 2019 budget stays under the 2% tax cap, while maintaining funding and staffing levels in all departments. We intend to continue reducing overall indebtedness while making significant investments in infrastructure and community oriented projects such as:

- Building a new senior center
- Acquiring the former CDCH building for use as a community center
- Partnering to complete the Montauk Playhouse
- Reconstructing the Pavilion at Boys and Girls Harbor

We will also be making significant capital improvements in other town buildings by replacing roofs, windows, and increasing energy efficiency.

In 2018 we continued our efforts to modernize town operations by digitizing records in various departments. This will continue in 2019 and eventually all public records throughout every town department will be available electronically. We have also focused on staff development by holding several training seminars to improve efficiency and ensure the best possible customer experience. Our goal is to better serve the public.

2018 culminated in public hearings on the Hamlet Planning Studies. Adopting the studies early this year will help guide future development and redevelopment in each hamlet and act as a vision statement for zoning and planning decisions as part of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

We are all aware of the ever increasing costs of housing within East Hampton and while this may be good for those fortunate enough to own a home, it has become a nearly insurmountable barrier to many hard-working residents. The number of year-round rentals is also critically low. These pressures impact both local families and employers alike. I am pleased that we have completed the first Town-sponsored affordable housing project in many years. The 12-unit Manor House condos on Accabonac Road will be fully occupied early this year. The 37-unit Gansett Meadows Project in Amagansett on Rte. 27 is expected to break ground in April of this year. The Town Board will hold a public hearing on January 17th to acquire 4 acres in Wainscott on Rte. 114 for the purpose of developing an affordable housing project that could yield between 20 and 30 units. We will continue to search for opportunities to address this critical need throughout this year.

In 2018 we experienced a 20 % increase in air traffic at East Hampton Airport. Helicopters generated the vast majority of noise complaints. We continued our efforts to gain meaningful relief from excessive aircraft noise by beginning an application to the FAA through a Part 161 Study, an administrative process that seeks to gain restrictions at our airport. We also retained the Washington lobbying firm *Signal Group* to pursue legislative relief through Congressional action on the FAA reauthorization bill. We will continue to seek Congressional action to allow reasonable restrictions that address frequency of airport traffic and provide meaningful noise relief.

East Hampton prides itself on its long and illustrious history and has managed to preserve many important structures. In the past several years I have been proud to have contributed to the restoration of Fort Pond House and Duck Creek Barn. This past year we embarked on the restoration of Second House and the recently acquired George Fowler House. Second House in Montauk will be undergoing the first phase of its restoration this year. The George Fowler House was completely restored in large part through the generosity of the late Ben Krupinski. Ben also

played an instrumental role in the restoration of the Amagansett Lifesaving Station. It is a sense of place, love of our community, and generosity that has inspired individuals to contribute to our town. We encourage new partners to step forward and take up this noble cause.

A short list of other efforts and achievements in 2018 include:

- Upgrades to Townwide Emergency communications
- LIRR Commuter Connection and Last Mile Service
- Montauk Free Shuttle, which provided over 23,000 rides
- 15 Community Preservation Fund Land Acquisitions totaling 43 acres
- Signed Agreement with Southampton Hospital to build an Emergency Care Center at Pantigo
- LED lighting upgrades
- Shared services with Suffolk County and other municipalities
- ADA compliance upgrades
- Lighted Crosswalks project
- Improved parking in Amagansett and Ditch Plains
- Southern Pine Beetle suppression
- Substance abuse and mental Health Task force

I am honored and blessed to be the Supervisor of a town that comes together in support of those in need, gathers to rebuke hatred, seeks to protect its environment, and honors its history. We can rise to any challenge as long as we respect each other, and work together for the common good. I appreciate the support I have received this year from my fellow Town Board members, our many Town Department Heads and employees, particularly my staff, Joanne Pilgrim and Anne Bell. I would also like to thank my wife and best friend Marilyn for her sound counsel and unwavering support. While I am pleased with the progress we have made this year, there is clearly more to do. So let us get on with it!