

State of the Township



Council President Bob Lewis
Bristol Township
January 15, 2015

Welcome

Good evening, members of Township Council, residents, staff, friends and family. Thank you for joining us this evening. I wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year. It is a great pleasure to be able to present my third State of the Township address. I would like to thank my colleagues for allowing me to serve as Council President for a fourth year. As always, I would like to thank the residents of Bristol Township. I appreciate your support and it is most certainly an honor and privilege to serve you.



Three years ago, a new Township Council took office and saw the need for drastic reforms in the finances and operations of the Township. The organization had \$73 million in unfunded liabilities from previous Councils giving away lucrative wages and benefits that they could not afford and for which they did not pay. The budget adopted by the previous Council had a tax increase and \$725,000 more in expenditures than current revenues. After spending \$11 million on a Sewer Plant, they could still not gain compliance with environmental regulations. The Township's infrastructure was a disaster; Township highways were notoriously the worst in Bucks County and in desperate need of repaving, street lights were old and costing a fortune to operate and maintain, and Township buildings were falling apart. Meanwhile, the Township's payroll was padded with make work jobs for the family and friends of Bristol Township politicians. This was the sad reality of Bristol Township in January of 2012.

When the new Council began their term in 2012, we laid out a vision for the Township – a vision to make Bristol Township relevant again, improve the quality of life, and invest in Bristol Township first! This vision of the Administration could be described very simply as “Cutting to Invest” and improve the quality of services delivered and customer service. We have worked diligently to achieve our goals. These goals have been and continue to be:

1. Living within our financial means, reduce spending and making decisions in the best interests of all taxpayers.
2. Improving customer service in all departments, but especially the Building & Planning Department and reduce all bureaucratic impediments to home ownership and development.

3. Improving the infrastructure of Bristol Township as we needed to invest in our own Township before private investors would.
4. Encouraging economic development to create jobs and grow the tax base.

Tonight, I want to declare that the Township of Bristol is confident and optimistic! While this Township's success story is still being written and not quite complete, I truly believe that anything is possible if we work hard and work together. I will talk about where we are going, but first I want to recap what we've accomplished over the past year.

SO HOW DID WE DO IN 2014?

The winter of 2014 saw more snow in total than the past combined years and it was the second snowiest winter ever in Philadelphia's recorded weather history. Fortunately, the proactive steps taken by this Council helped lessen the strain. Those painful yet necessary steps included the decision to downsize staff as well as scrutinize spending at all levels. At the same time, the Township's investment in brining application equipment



paid great dividends. The public's feedback to the Township's salting and plowing efforts was overwhelmingly positive. Despite the unanticipated high costs for winter road maintenance that strained the Township's budget, we were able to pay for this without impacting the Township's overall financial picture.

LIVING WITHIN OUR FINANCIAL MEANS

After lowering the millage rate in 2012 and holding the real estate tax millage steady in 2013, Council once again adopted a balanced budget in 2014 without raising taxes or using fund balance as revenue. We have been able to do this because we are always looking for new and innovative ways to control spending and find new sources of funding that don't include the wallets of property owners! As a matter of fact, last year, we secured \$1,565,363 in grants.

We reduced the residential trash fee by \$20 last year and we can guarantee you that this Council will not increase residential trash fees for at least a five year period, which is the total length of the contract.

We also began aggressively collecting delinquent sewer fees thereby reducing the financial burden on those residents who pay on time. The Township contracted with Portnoff Associates to address this long standing problem with sewer delinquencies.

It is our commitment to you, the taxpayer and our genuine love for Bristol Township that has enabled us to hold the line on taxes.

In April of last year, a lovely senior citizen named Catherine Gudknecht came to a Council meeting seeking our help. She told us she has been working part-time on an assembly line for the past 18 years and earns only \$8.05/hour. She is scared that she will lose her house, if her school taxes keep going up as she doesn't have any money in her savings account. Catherine told us she paints her own home and shovels her own driveway in the winter. She'll do anything to save enough money so she can afford her school taxes and won't lose her house. We were really moved by her story and will continue to press the School Board to change the way that they do business.

Seniors like Catherine are the reason we are fighting to improve this Township and hold steady on taxes. We will continue to make the tough decisions on any spending that is proposed and remain sensitive to the already high tax burden on our residents, and, in particular, to senior citizens like Catherine in our community!

The best budget news is that I fully expect that we will finish 2014 with positive fund balances in all of the major Township funds when the books are closed for the year. The credit for these accomplishments goes to the amazing efforts of our township administration – and most importantly our Township Manager, Bill McCauley. In fact, as a result of his ingenuity, The Township saved \$838,780 last year from refinancing our Township's long-term debt obligations and, as a result, will also save another \$353,416 in 2015! Despite our occasional joke or poking fun at him, we know that Bill, without a doubt, always has the best interests of Bristol Township at heart!

Despite drastic cuts implemented in spending and the drastic reduction in the number of employees, we have continued to work with and train our municipal workforce making it more efficient in the delivery of services to our residents. In this way, we are all working harder and smarter, while continuing to provide excellent services to our residents and business community.

IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE AND REMOVE IMPEDIMENTS TO HOME OWNERSHIP

The Township is working hard to attract new residents to the Township! More and more, our Township is becoming the first choice of individuals and families who want to

live in a community that controls spending; while at the same time expands services to its residents with an ever improving quality of life!

In 2012, the Township Council adopted several amendments to the resale inspection process and eliminated the burdensome \$500 escrow for home buyers. How do you measure the success of these changes? Let's take a look at vacant houses. In 2012 prior to these changes, the Township had 223 vacant houses. We ended 2014 with 167 vacant houses. While we've made significant progress, we realize there is still much work to be done in this area. One abandoned house is too many, but the ultimate solution will require the recovery of the economy.

IMPROVE THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF BRISTOL TOWNSHIP

At my first State of the Township address in January 2013, I told you it was unacceptable that we found 88 miles of crumbling Township roads in desperate need of resurfacing upon taking office.

Due to an unprecedented \$9 million investment that we've made over the past three years, we've now repaved over 68 of the 177 miles of Township highways without raising any taxes! This includes the 22 miles of roadways that we paved last year! Bristol Township is making significant progress in meeting the Road Maintenance Program goal to provide excellent and safe street conditions throughout the Township.

Take a look at this photo (see map on page 12) showing the roads that have been



re-paved from 2012-2014. You can all see what we can achieve by working together as a team! And, more and more businesses and people are starting to notice these improvements and are choosing to relocate to Bristol!

We have and will continue to rebuild our once-crumbling infrastructure. There's more to come and we are doing exactly what we said we would do!

We nearly completed the conversion of all of the Township's 4,367 streetlights to environmentally-friendly LED technology, a move that will save the Township more than \$1 million in maintenance costs alone over a five year period.

We also made conditions safer for pedestrians with the new "smart" street lights. The "starsense" control system will remotely notify the Township when a streetlight malfunctions and enable us to quickly make repairs.

Consistent with our commitment to the environment, we will reduce energy consumption with the new LED lights.

We exceeded our budget projections by \$2 million and secured a \$1.2 million grant from the County Redevelopment Authority to help control costs. And, because the project came in under budget, the Township started converting other outdated lights at the Township municipal building and parks to LED as well.

As an innovator, Bristol Township now has the first “smart” LED street light system in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and has attracted the attention of municipalities across the United States who want to replicate Bristol’s success. Towns and cities now regularly call our offices seeking guidance on how to implement their own LED street light system. This amazing success story could not have happened without the courage and commitment of our forward-thinking Council members and our capable Township Manager!



Other major accomplishments include the Township securing additional capacity of 100 EDU’s as a result of the Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) maintenance work that was completed on the Township’s wastewater collection system in 2013. This additional capacity will help to pave the way for even more development and growth in Bristol Township!

Most importantly, the Wastewater Treatment Plant, which has remained under a consent decree by the U.S. EPA as a result of mismanagement from prior administrations, has remained in compliance with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regulations for two years in a row! Three years ago, it would have been incomprehensible to imagine operating the sewer plant for even two months without any violations.

Through our efforts, Township parks and playgrounds continue to enhance the quality of life in our community for our families. The safety of our Township’s youth and families matter! Last year we completed a comprehensive site inspection and safety audit of all the Township’s 31 parks, playgrounds, and recreational areas. In addition to the many improvements and repairs that were made at the recreational sites, the

Township is also developing a five-year capital improvement plan that will create a roadmap for future improvements to our Township's parks!

Last year, the Levittown Pacific Little League came to us about installing lights at their baseball field so they could play night games. I'm happy to say that by the spring we had the new LED lights installed on the baseball fields. Now more than 400 Township youth are enjoying safe recreational fun at night!

Then the Wardogs Athletic Association came to us about installing new lighting at the



Bristol Township Municipal Complex fields so that the national champion Wardogs football team could play at night. After reaching a cooperative agreement for the lights, the Wardogs were soon playing football at night under their new LED Carolina High Mast lights! These are great partnerships that not only provide safe recreation and fun for our Township's youth, but also

enable us to save tax dollars through cooperation and working together with these private athletic associations!

We will continue to build Bristol Township's reputation as a "green" community. In an



effort to prevent illegal dumping of electronic items, the Township began its free electronics drop off collection site at the Municipal building, and in the process we recycled more than 141,564 pounds of electronic waste!

In 2014, we implemented a new trash and recycling program that is now light years ahead of other communities that still rely on older diesel trash trucks for collection and haven't been able to increase their residential recycling rates. We opted to use environmentally friendly natural gas trucks that promote a cleaner environment in Bristol. Our new recycling program that was introduced last year, has also increased residential recycling rates by more than 47.38% during the first 12 months of the program. Our residents should be proud of their recycling efforts and the fact that they are contributing to a cleaner "greener" environment by helping to keep trash out of our landfills!

In an ongoing effort to beautify and cleanup Bristol, The Township also began an intense litter removal program by hiring an environmental officer and by instituting free scheduled cleanup events where residents can drop off household trash and other junk. The last cleanup event was held on November 1. We ask that you mark your calendar for the next free cleanup event on May 16, 2015.

The Council's commitment to cleanup Bristol Township is tremendously successful, but we must not stop there!

ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO CREATE JOBS AND GROW THE TAX BASE

Since January of 2012 this Council has created 1,602 jobs! Let me be clear, keeping and creating jobs is essential to the Township's long-term financial health. Job retention and creation has been the Township's focus for several years and will continue to be our #1 priority!

The past three years we have worked tirelessly to return a vibrant business-friendly environment to Bristol Township. We have changed the way business is done in Bristol Township, and removed all impediments to opening a business. Major companies and smaller businesses are making their way into Bristol to take advantage of our able workforce.

We are seeing results! This past year has provided us with countless examples of businesses looking to call Bristol Township their home.

The recently-opened Taco Bell on Veteran's Highway and Skyzone, the world's first indoor trampoline park are examples of this renewed interest. And in November, my fellow Council members cut the ribbon at the new Wawa on New Falls Road in Levittown. The new store looks great and we couldn't have done it without the help of the Planning Commission and Zoning Hearing Board.



Our other successes include the expansion of American Breadcrumb, a breadcrumb manufacturing company located on Hanford Street. The Township worked diligently to not only approve an 18,000 square foot expansion of their facility but also to create an additional 20 job opportunities for our economy.

The Croydon Streetscape project was finally completed in 2014 and will provide a more attractive gateway into Bristol Township and will help to breathe new life into the business district and surrounding areas. New sidewalks, curbing, shade trees, benches, and LED street lights on Bristol Pike (Route 13) from Walnut Avenue to Newportville Road were installed.

The transformation is not complete! The business district will continue to grow into a vibrant downtown with the addition of \$1 million in federal transportation grants as part of the second phase of the project that will begin in 2015. While businesses such as the Dog and Bull Brew and Music House, located near the Croydon Train Station, have decided to invest in this new vibrant area, we are now starting to receive calls from other prospective businesses who want to be part of the action as well! That is why we will continue to place a strong emphasis on projects and programs that will attract businesses and just as importantly, shoppers to the area.

WHAT IS AHEAD FOR 2015?

We have accomplished so much this past year. We have accomplished all these things and more because we are a Council that meets its challenges head on, finds cost-effective, workable solutions and grabs a hold of the opportunities that come our way. We have to be in order to be successful!

As I've stated many times before, our challenges are many and we can't pretend that they don't exist. Bristol Township still sits under a "black cloud" of \$83 million in unfunded liabilities despite having gone to Act 111 arbitration to seek relief from these crippling obligations. As a result of one ill-advised decision to provide post-retirement health insurance to retired police officers, Bristol Township has been financially hamstrung for years. I say these things, some of which are hard to hear, not to scare you or discourage you, but in the firm belief that if we are to take charge of our future then we need to understand and be honest about our present situation.

It would be easy to act like politicians and minimize these challenges, kick the can down the road or even bury our heads in the sand. This strategy may sound good to some, but that is the old politics. This Council has chosen a much different approach and we are far past that point!

We will courageously continue to move this Township forward one step and one day at a time. At my first State of the Township address in January 2013, I told you that this is indeed a rebuilding effort and we must continue to rebuild and build on the successes of the past year. I also told you we must maintain the course and seek new ways to be more efficient, enhance our image, and improve our quality of life while we maintain an affordable budget. We are not stopping!

Inspired by the difficult circumstances of Senior Citizens such as Catherine Gudknecht, Council adopted a \$68-million budget this year that once again decreased millage in the Township's Real Estate Tax rate from 23.9875 to 23.98. Keep in mind that there has actually been a Real Estate Tax DECREASE for two out of four years as it was unchanged in 2013 and 2014 and then lowered in 2012 and 2015.

Most importantly, the safety of our residents is of the utmost concern to the Council.



The good news is that the crime rate in Bristol Township has decreased every year from 2012. The 2015 Budget calls for 62 sworn officers, an increase of one officer. In addition, several positions vacant by attrition will be filled. The budget also allows for the replacement of several police vehicles this year. Bristol Township is also moving forward with an expansion of its highly successful

camera surveillance system, an extremely valuable tool that will continue to help investigate and deter crimes in our community.

This year, we will continue the transformation of Bristol Township by continuing to rebuild our infrastructure!

We are investing another \$5 million to rebuild or pave another 24 miles of Bristol Township highways! By the end of 2015, we will have achieved our goal to resurface at least 88 miles of once-crumbling highways! We aren't just talking; we are making this goal a reality!

To continue the growth and transformation of Bristol Township, the Township will also invest \$3 Million in the Township Municipal Building and Public Works facility. Both of these facilities have been neglected for years and are in dire need of improvements.



Improvements at the Municipal Building will include the construction of a Police sally port, extensive building rehabilitation, a new roof and an updated HVAC system. Improvements to the Public Works facility will include a new barn to house equipment and vehicles, drainage and paving of the yard. The funding for these projects has already been secured and will not require any increase in taxes.

Thanks to a \$400,000 Bucks County Redevelopment Authority grant that the Township received last year, The Township will also update and improve its aging traffic signals to ensure our roads are safer for pedestrians and motorists!

Bristol Township is looking ahead and embracing the many benefits of cutting edge technology. In 2012, the Township joined Facebook in an effort to enhance communication between the Township and its residents. In an effort to reach residents



not proficient with technology, the Council published the, "Bristol Township Bulletin", this past November. This is an old-fashioned newsletter packed with useful information and devoid of the annoying advertisements that took away from the message of past Township newsletters.

In 2014, The Township joined YouTube and began offering email "E-News" blasts to our residents. E-News offers residents up to the minute information about Township events, special alerts, activities and happenings at

the senior center, and other valuable tidbits of news. In 2015, the Township will begin to completely revamp its website to make it more user-friendly and visually appealing. As always, we encourage you to tune into our public meetings on cable channels, Comcast Channel 22 and Verizon Channel 45, visit our website, and sign up for E-news alerts to learn more about what's happening in Bristol Township!

The vision that the Council brought to the Township three years ago remains unchanged. The goals that we set are sound even though not yet fully realized. 2015 will very likely offer new challenges and opportunities, but with our collective ability, creativity and brainstorming we cannot fail. We must stay focused on our task, be goal-oriented and work collaboratively as a team if we are to stay on this charted course!

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Council members. While we may not always agree, there are never any questions about



each member having only the best interest of Bristol Township taxpayers at heart. Next I would like to recognize Bill McCauley, who I love to tease every month. Bill accepted an almost impossible challenge in January of 2012 and operates in a thankless and unappreciated environment. However, there is no Bristol Township success story without his guidance.

It would be remiss of me to not thank all of our volunteers serving on Boards and Commissions. Last but not least, I must thank the people who deliver our services. Despite severe reductions to the Township's workforce, our employees have somehow been able to increase the level and quality of Township services. This is a remarkable accomplishment!

God bless Bristol Township and all of its employees and residents.

Since 2012 all roads in pink, orange, and blue have been repaved.

Legend

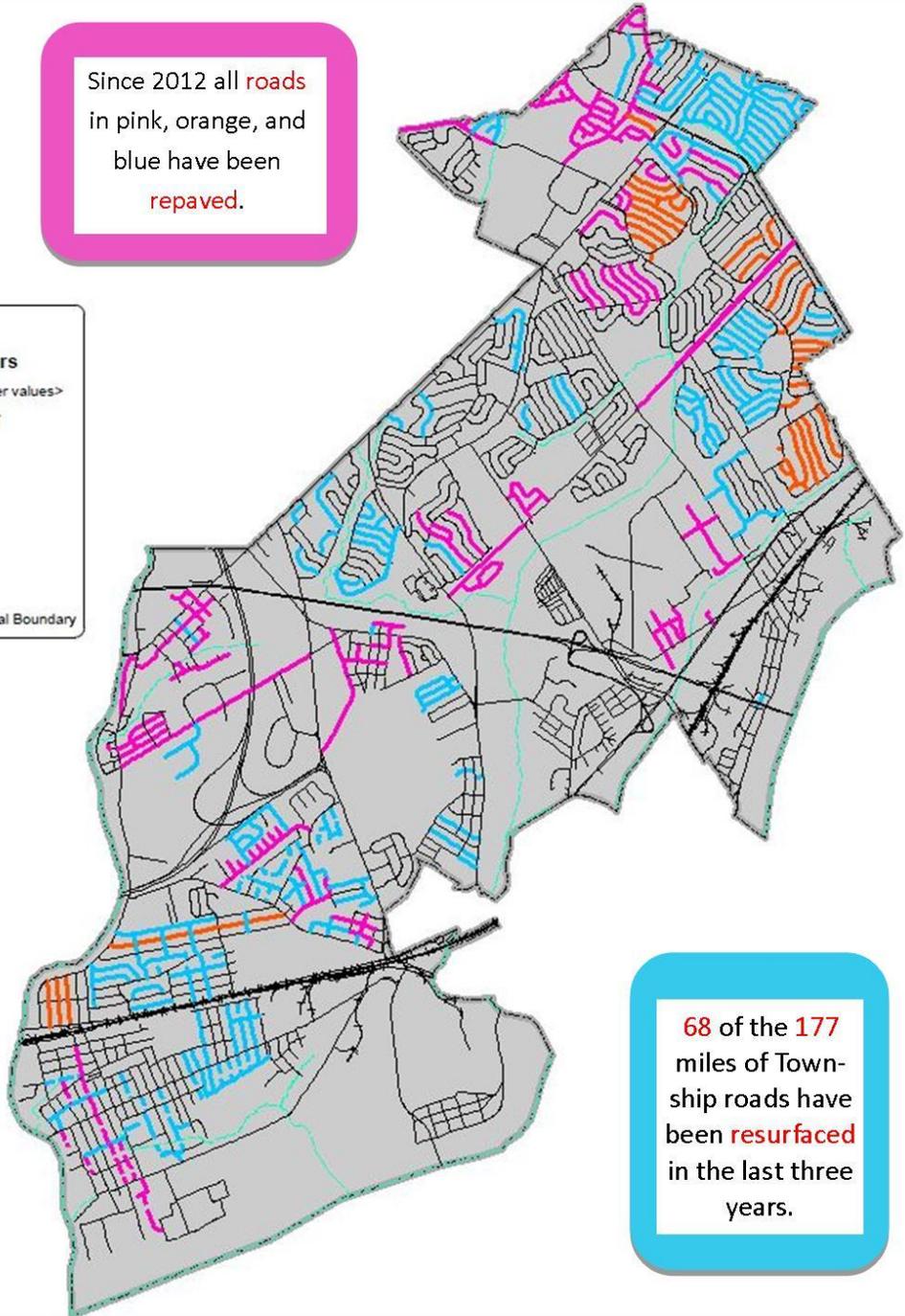
Paving Years

— <all other values>

Paving Year

- 2012F
- 2013F
- 2013H
- 2014F
- 2014H

■ Municipal Boundary



68 of the 177 miles of Township roads have been resurfaced in the last three years.



Road Resurfacing Project