

1 TOWNSHIP OF NORTH BRUNSWICK  
2 STATE OF THE TOWNSHIP ADDRESS  
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4

5 The *challenges* that confront North Brunswick Township today are  
6 exceeded only by the *opportunities* they present to reshape our local  
7 government and make it more efficient, effective, and affordable.

8 During these past months, we've all grown weary of the unrelenting  
9 barrage of bad economic news. Everyone has to have their say: corporate  
10 executives prepare shareholders for low profits or low revenues; the  
11 governor bemoans the state's tremendous budget shortfalls; and Mayors  
12 worry about local services and property taxes.

13 My daughter attends West Virginia University, where they have a first class  
14 teaching hospital. An old mountaineer there was recently told by his doctor  
15 that if he didn't stop drinking his moonshine immediately, he would go  
16 stone-cold deaf. "Well", says the mountaineer, "tell you the truth, doc, I like  
17 what I'm drinking these days a whole lot better than what I'm hearing".

18 We all feel like that old mountaineer. None of us like what we're  
19 hearing. But one thing is certain: we must deal with things as they are, not  
20 as we wish they were. In his inaugural address, President O'Bama declared  
21 that Americans must "pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again  
22 the work of remaking America". Well, when we bend down to begin

1 picking ourselves up, it is at the local municipal government, where the  
2 lifting must begin.

3 This is especially true in New Jersey, where our state government's  
4 response to the economic crisis has been to curtail virtually all monetary aid  
5 to local municipalities while imposing new costs, expenses and service  
6 demands. In a state where pension expenses for municipalities have  
7 skyrocketed as a result of past payment holidays encouraged by Trenton, the  
8 only significant 'assistance' the Governor and legislature now offer to  
9 Township's struggling to weather the economic crisis is yet another pension  
10 payment holiday: a one-year fix that only increases our future financial  
11 burden and does nothing to solve the continuing financial problem. Yet, in  
12 the absence of meaningful state assistance many municipalities, possibly  
13 even North Brunswick, may be forced to accept the holiday to meet existing  
14 obligations.

15 The dire economic circumstances we face as a nation, a state, and as a  
16 township, deprive my administration and this council the luxury of avoiding  
17 or delaying difficult decisions that *must* be made. We must assess North  
18 Brunswick's options in the harsh and glaring light of 2009's realities. We  
19 must open our minds enough to at least know all of our options. And upon  
20 thorough, responsible, open and transparent analysis of those options, we

1 must be prepared to act in the best interests of our homes, our families, and  
2 our Township. We must be cautious and deliberate, for the decisions we  
3 make will shape the structure, landscape, and character of our community  
4 long after prosperous economic times have returned.

5       During 2009, North Brunswick's governing body will be called upon  
6 to make decisions more difficult than any of us could have foreseen when  
7 we first put our names on the ballot. But in reality, it is North Brunswick as  
8 a community that must make these decisions, and every responsible resident  
9 should ready to speak up and be heard in the process.

10       Every member of your Township Council was elected on principles of  
11 'open government'. Our township meetings are televised and now they are  
12 available on the internet. Every council member has stood steadfast behind  
13 transparency, openness and inclusiveness as critical principles of our  
14 community government. We invoke and implement these concepts not  
15 because they 'sound good', not because they seem popular, but because they  
16 are at the core of representative democracy. And representative democracy  
17 begins, and ought to be strongest, at the local level of government.

18       In 2009, citizen participation in representative local democracy must  
19 be more vigorous and vibrant than ever before. The choices and decisions  
20 thrust upon municipal government by a staggering world economy and a

1 crippled state government is dire. This is a time when action is a mandate,  
2 not an option. Decisions will not be made between clear cut 'good options'  
3 and 'bad options'. More often, the decision makers will be seeking the most  
4 palatable selection from a menu of unappetizing choices. Every resident  
5 has an obligation to keep informed, to keep current and to keep letting their  
6 mayor and council know their position on any given issue.

#### 7 FACTS AND FIGURES

8 Several factors, almost all of them related to either the present  
9 recession or the State of New Jersey's budgetary problems, have combined  
10 to put severe strain on the resources of the Township of North Brunswick.  
11 Of course, far from standing alone, we are joined by virtually every other  
12 New Jersey municipality in this crisis. In fact, we are in a far better position  
13 than many other cities and towns. Responsible budgeting practices by the  
14 council and the Business Administrator provide us a healthy reserve and a  
15 base from which we can address current situation with confidence. It is  
16 important to understand some of the factors that have brought us to our  
17 present situation.

18 First, we have experienced severe losses in the Township's ratable tax  
19 base.

- 1           1. As a result of the decline in property values and reduction in  
2           our industrial base, we have experienced a loss of ratable value  
3           - Our ratable base declined by \$8 million in 2009, the first such  
4           decline in over twenty years. When there are less ratables,  
5           remaining property owners must make up the difference, even if  
6           there is no increase in the cost of government operations. -  
7           **\$75,000**
- 8           2. Economic conditions are delaying our ability to collect taxes on  
9           properties that should be developed. The prime examples are  
10          the TOD site and the age-restricted housing on the former Pulda  
11          Farm. - **\$1.5 million**
- 12          **3.** New Jersey's inability to compete for industry, and the  
13          relocation of industry from North Brunswick.
- 14                  1. Relocation of Johnson and Johnson operations to Brazil  
15                  and the South
- 16                  2. Relocation of Church and Dwight to York, Pennsylvania.
- 17          2. Loss of non-tax revenue to fund budget operations:
- 18                  1. Interest on Investments – The withering of the investment  
19                  markets, and the resultant reduced interest rate on investments  
20                  means that we have been forced to cut \$900,000 in anticipated

1 revenue from the FY2009. As with most people's personal  
2 investments, the interest on North Brunswick's investments  
3 continues to decline.

4 3. State-mandated changes to budgeted expenditures:

5 1. **State Pension Holiday** – Only this year have we finally  
6 absorbed the final installment of previously deferred pension  
7 payments **mandated** by the State Legislature, which began in  
8 FY2004. The consequence has been to go from a \$175,000  
9 appropriation in FY2004 to \$2.7 million in FY2009, an increase  
10 of approximately eight (8) tax points! **Now** the Governor and  
11 Legislature are recommending new pension deferrals, which, if  
12 we defer now, will have to be paid back starting in 3 years.

13 2. **Apartment House Solid Waste Collection** - The State  
14 Legislature mandated that beginning in 2005 municipalities had  
15 to pay or provide for the collection of solid waste from  
16 apartment owners. This unreimbursed state mandate costs the  
17 Township and tax-payers about two-1/2 tax points, or \$660,000  
18 per year.

19 3. **Interest Arbitration of Police union Contracts** – It isn't New  
20 Jersey's requirement that all police and fire contracts be subject

1 to binding arbitration as much as it is the fact that arbitrators  
2 have long been making ever-higher awards that have made  
3 contracts for police and fire astoundingly expensive.

4 4. To all of these must be added the significant cuts in state aid  
5 and federal grants that have resulted from the state's internal  
6 crisis and the federal economy.

## 7 **THE GOAL**

8 Whether times are good or times are bad, the objective of local  
9 government everywhere – no matter how it is expressed – is essentially the  
10 same: to provide an affordable, secure place to call home, offering a high  
11 quality of life and a nurturing environment. These things are not optional,  
12 regardless the budgetary situation, regardless the economy. So the question  
13 before us: how do we, as a community, make them happen?

## 14 **TAXES AND COSTS**

15 Running local government isn't rocket science – although the rocket  
16 scientist doesn't have to make sure the booster rockets are 'comfortable'  
17 with their role before blast-off. Running local government isn't brain  
18 surgery – although the neurosurgeon operates on an anesthetized patient.  
19 Our system is – or should be – simple: *monies raised through property*

1 *taxes, state support, grants, investments and fees are used to pay for services*  
2 *provided to residents.* Ultimately, the formula is simple: when expenses  
3 rise, our income as a township must rise.

#### 4 **FIGHTING BACK**

5 Yes, times are challenging. But in North Brunswick we have the  
6 resolve and the weapons not just to ‘weather the storm’, but to emerge more  
7 stable and secure than ever before. In my ‘other’ job, I work as a lawyer,  
8 and I do some maritime law, so you’ll have to excuse me when I say that the  
9 decision before us is whether we should simply plug leaks and patch holes  
10 so that we can simply ride out the storm; or should we pull into dry-dock for  
11 a complete modernization, redesign and refitting, outfitting ourselves with a  
12 responsive and affordable system that will not only survive this storm, but  
13 carry us safely into the future?

#### 14 **THE WEAPONS**

15 We are lucky in North Brunswick to have significant weapons to face  
16 the present concerns. The first, and perhaps strongest, weapon is a township  
17 council that believes in openness, honesty, and action. I think of my friends  
18 on the council as the railroad crossing bunch. They STOP, and take the time  
19 to be not only involved, but immersed, in the life of our Township. They  
20 LOOK, with each member bringing a unique perspective to Township

1 issues, reflecting their diverse backgrounds. And, perhaps most importantly,  
2 they LISTEN. They listen to you and other residents. They listen to our  
3 professionals. And then, unlike some other levels of government, they take  
4 action. An in this year

5 Our next line of defense is a core of responsible and dedicated  
6 professionals and employees. We can thank these individuals for the hard  
7 work and perseverance has made North Brunswick the quality Township  
8 that it is.

9 **ALREADY MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION**

10 Leadership of the council and the skill of our workforce, is pushing  
11 North Brunswick moving in the right direction. Our Directors and  
12 workforce have been steadily increasing efficiency and improve delivery of  
13 the services our residents require and expect.

14

15 **In the Department of Public Safety, the**

16 1) Civilianization of Director's position has resulted in a \$30,000 annual  
17 savings.

18 2) Civilianization of training officer has resulted in a \$90,000 savings.

19 3) Reduction of police force from 86 officers to 82 officers through attrition  
20 resulted in \$450,000 savings.

- 1 4) We have Disbanded Police and Community Teams (PACT) to redeploy  
2 manpower.
- 3 5) We have reduced take home cars from 14 to 5.
- 4 6) We now assigned patrol vehicles to specific officers, thereby developing  
5 'ownership' and resulting in the increased vehicle life from 3 years to 5  
6 years, thus allowing us to decrease the annual purchase from 6 vehicles to 2  
7 vehicles.
- 8 7) Enforcement of traffic laws is at an all time high in North Brunswick –  
9 although some of you are already aware of that fact.
- 10 8) We have upgraded and expanded the using of technology to increase  
11 efficiency and safety, initiating such programs as Mobile Data Terminals,  
12 Township-wide Computer Mapping, and E-ticket (although, again, I  
13 probably don't need to tell some of you about the e-ticketing).
- 14 9) We continuing to aggressively pursue grant funding to offset costs.

15 **In the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services**

16 we have:

- 17 1.) Saved approximately \$100,000 through staff reductions;
- 18 2.) Initiated a program with our valued youth sports volunteers to allow  
19 volunteers to perform limited maintenance, thereby cutting park staff  
20 over-time by approximately \$60,000;

- 1 3). Entered into an Inter - local Agreement with East Brunswick
- 2 Township for senior pool activities and a Special needs Camp;
- 3 4.) Received Grants contributing approximately \$100,000 toward income,
- 4 and
- 5 5.) Achieved significant savings with the help and cooperation of
- 6 members of the Board of Education and the Board's Administration;
- 7 6.) Continued to hold down costs of our Quality afterschool Child Care
- 8 Program LEAL.

9 **Our Department of Public Works** continues to provide critical  
10 services far beyond the scope of other Townships. In addition to regular  
11 trash pick-ups, specially scheduled trash pick-ups, white goods pick-up,  
12 vehicle maintenance, snow removal, road repair, and sewer operations, DPW  
13 has also brought a new solar hot water system into operation in this building.  
14 This unique project will provide the heat to our hot water system while  
15 reducing the Township's heating bill. This project was partially grant-  
16 funded, resulting in savings to taxpayers both in acquisition and operation.

17 Again, DPW's Buildings and Grounds Department has continued to  
18 work cooperatively on an inter-local agreement with the Board Of  
19 Education, resulting in all-around savings for taxpayers. Through this

1 agreement the Buildings and Grounds is able to reduce maintenance costs  
2 utilizing the staff of the BOE. This program allows the Township to benefit  
3 from the Board of Education's responsible energy reduction projects such as  
4 replacement of emergency egress lighting with LED lights, replacing  
5 fluoresced lighting with energy savings lighting.

6 This year, the DPW staff will provide the landscaping for the  
7 Municipal Building, Senior Housing next door and the senior center,  
8 resulting in substantial savings from work that formerly contracted to private  
9 companies.

10 The Department of Community Development continues to focus on  
11 quality of life initiatives in our neighborhoods. And we're beginning to see  
12 the fruits of this program, which was begun a few years ago. In this effort,  
13 the Township is beginning to perform as a cohesive unit, with every police  
14 officer and every employee on the road working as the eyes and ears of the  
15 Department of Community Development, as we mount a sustained and  
16 vigorous attack on illegal overcrowding and inappropriate neighborhood  
17 maintenance.

18 COURT – EFFICIENT

19 CLERK'S OFFICE –



- 1           -       Do we *have* to do this?;
- 2           -       Should we *do* it?;
- 3           -       Who benefits, who pays, and it is a fair trade-off?
- 4           -       Can we do it more efficiently?

5           A hard and honest analysis will mean that we simply cannot – and  
6 should not – continue to perform some of the services presently offered.  
7 Any cuts in service will be openly discussed and debated, and will occur  
8 only after thorough analysis.

9           **KEEP AN OPEN MIND TOWARD NEW COMMERCIAL AND**  
10 **INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT.** Properties Along Routes 1 and 130 Are  
11 Highly Desirable for Commercial Retail Use. Several Developers/Owners  
12 Claim to Have Tenants for New Commercial Development. During Recent  
13 Years, North Brunswick has: NOT welcomed big box stores and most other  
14 large retail outlets; Attempted to provide a mix of commercial, residential  
15 and office uses that will enhance quality of life; Been skeptical of developers  
16 claims regarding traffic and crowding impacts.

17           At this time it is appropriate to raise two questions about the  
18 traditional approach:

- 19           -       What economic advantages and tax reductions will construction  
20           of the proposed retail developments bring to North Brunswick?



1 Things in Bad Times. And I know that all it seems I've done is focus on  
2 how bad things are. But really, that's not true. Yes, the economy is bad – at  
3 the moment, although I believe it is already turning around. Did you see that  
4 retail sales were up 1% in January over last year after six consecutive  
5 months of declines? That last week there were 8,000 fewer new  
6 unemployment claim filed than in the prior week?  
7 That there are signs of recovery in the housing market due to lower  
8 mortgage rates and confidence from buyers that we have reached a bottom?

9 But that just a little encouraging news, not the “good things” I have in  
10 mind. If you've followed me as I've droned through this talk, you've heard  
11 me say that we have a courageous, committed council, willing to take  
12 whatever steps are necessary to properly see North Brunswick through these  
13 times. You've heard me speak of a Business Administrator and a group of  
14 Directors who have followed core conservative principles that put North  
15 Brunswick in a strong position to weather the storm. You've heard me  
16 speak of a hard-working, professional, and skilled workforce, each of whom  
17 has taken on more assignments as we reduce the size of our government by  
18 attrition. These are all VERY good things, and things that I am very  
19 grateful for.

1           You've heard me speak of the members of our community, and the  
2 public involvement that characterizes North Brunswick. You've heard me  
3 speak of volunteers, who are the fabric that binds our Township together and  
4 helps us work.

5           Bad times..... good things. It is good when our community steps up  
6 to the plate, as it has, for our Food Bank, and the committed folks who run  
7 it. The library board, the friends of the library, and the library staff...  
8 working harder than ever to provide the highest quality service and programs  
9 in this "bad time", when folks who might otherwise be at Barnes and Noble  
10 are discovering the true 'value' of our library. It is good when men and  
11 women who have already worked extra hours at their jobs are still willing to  
12 heed the call for training and service in our Fire Companies and with our  
13 First Aid and Rescue Squad. It is good when people with no time to spare  
14 still find that time to coach or participate in our youth sports programs or to  
15 help out with meals on wheels.

16           It is good... in a way that transcends 'good' during the easy  
17 times...when a Community comes together, as North Brunswick has come  
18 together. The good folks of our Town will surely transcend any bad times  
19 before us.

1           Finally, it is good when your local government becomes more  
2 efficient and more affordable, as has your local government, even if those  
3 changes are brought about, at least in part, by bad times.

4           Thank you.