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Around the Towns We're All Over

DEC 20, 2011 5:30 PM

2011 has been a year to celebrate for Cherry Hill

BY MELISSA DIPENTO



Mayor's Message: Bernie Platt

This past year has been a tremendous one for our community. Set to the backdrop of Cherry Hill's 50th anniversary celebration, 2011 was a year to celebrate our community's heritage, while preparing to jump head-first into the future.

Throughout the year, my administration has worked diligently to continue improving and delivering the top-quality services residents have come to expect. We've done so even as we've learned to work with a smaller headcount in Town Hall and tighter purse strings in place. With the Township on solid financial ground, my administration this year focused largely on infrastructure; public safety; shared services; and continuing our work in sustainability.

Our annual capital program once again focused on critical infrastructure improvements – including, among other projects, repaving of several local roadways under our road maintenance program. The Engineering Department completed a project to stabilize an eroding streambank wall behind several homes on Hillside Drive in Downs Farm, and replaced a high-traffic pedestrian footbridge in Knollwood.

In shared services, "trash" was again the name of the game: in October, we secured a joint contract for disposal services with several other Camden County towns that, when combined with a similar agreement on trash collection, saves the taxpayers of Cherry Hill about \$675,000 this year alone.

And as we moved into the fall, the DPW and the Police Department coordinated to complete nearly 5,000 feet of crosswalks and other road painting as part of ongoing traffic-calming efforts. That project was combined with investments in new technology for use by our traffic safety unit, to maximize our officers' ability to combat speeding and other traffic-related concerns throughout the township.

Twenty-eleven has also been a year to celebrate our parks, trails and open spaces. Throughout the year, we sponsored a number of public clean-up days on our more

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highly visible swaths of green space.

In June, I received word that two of our biggest local trail systems – those at Barclay and Croft farms – were named National Recreation Trails by the federal government – a tremendous distinction given to just 41 sites nationwide this year.

And anyone who drove down Route 70 this summer noticed one of our most visible projects of this year: the wildflowers. Planted in partnership with the state Department of Transportation and the South Jersey Transportation Authority in June, the colorful flowers that dotted the highway's median in the warmer months made the road more aesthetically pleasing, while reducing the need for mowing by the DOT – and in turn cut back on the unsightly overgrown weeds and grass we had grown accustomed to seeing.

During the month of September, Town Hall in combination with the Cherry Hill Fire Department had the honor and privilege to dedicate our own 9-11 memorial. We marked that solemn and somber day by unveiling a structure that symbolized the twin towers being held together by a piece of steel from the south tower of the World Trade Center.

Finally, in November, we were once again awarded for our work in sustainability, finally achieving Sustainable Jersey's silver-level certification – the organization's highest level of distinction.

Throughout the year, we celebrated new businesses opening and new development across town.

In August, Kennedy Hospital christened its expanded Emergency Department, a \$9.7 million investment in the 51-year-old hospital. Farmers Insurance Company and DeVry University moved into the near-capacity Garden State Park in October. A new, standalone Wegmans Liquor store opened adjacent to Wegmans Supermarket in November.

Residential development came to life in the second-half of the year, with construction resuming on the 13-acre "Dwell at Cherry Hill" site on Route 70, with dozens of luxury garden-style apartments slated for completion in the next year. And the former Sheraton Poste site on Route 70 was completely overhauled this year by Spring Hills, luxury senior-living facility that I had the pleasure of touring last week. When it opens, Spring Hills will provide seniors from around the region with a true full-service experience without leaving the property.

Of course, a theme throughout the year was the celebration of our town's 50th anniversary. We reached the height of our celebrations from October through December.

In October, we joined the folks at the Cherry Hill Mall to celebrate their 50th anniversary and kick off our own festivities with a special historical display that stood in the Grand Court until after Thanksgiving.

And on Dec. 7, hundreds of community members and elected officials past and present joined together at Cherry Hill High School West to mark 50 years under



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the name Cherry Hill Township.

That date was the anniversary of the first time the Cherry Hill Township (rather than Delaware Township) Council met – and we celebrated in grand fashion, with a special birthday cake, singers from Cherry Hill's elementary schools, and a time capsule that represents life in our community in 2011.

Of course, these are just a few of the things we accomplished in Town Hall and across Cherry Hill in 2011.

As I look back, it has been quite a year, and quite a ride. On behalf of all of us here in Town Hall, please have a safe, happy and healthy New Year!



About Melissa DiPento

If it happens in Cherry Hill, I want to know about it. I'm a South Philly resident/South Jersey suburbanite and will see the story first-hand, even if that means riding my single-speed bike along Route 70. I especially enjoy writing about politics and sustainability. | [View all posts by Melissa DiPento](#) →



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