

**Message by the Mayor  
Jason F. Cilento  
February 2020**

I would like to begin this month's message with an acknowledgment of, and a thank you to our emergency services members. We recently had two large and dangerous fires that they were called to: the house fire on Bound Brook Road and the massive fire in Bound Brook to which our police department, volunteer fire department and volunteer rescue squad attended as mutual aid. Dunellen is so fortunate to have emergency service agencies who are willing to run into a dangerous situation, while others are running out. Our men and women show great courage and valor, and we are better off as a community for their service.

Dunellen can also be proud of our student athletes. I speak particularly of two Destroyers basketball players: Drew Johnson achieved 1,000 career points and Tyjé Kelton broke Dunellen High School's all-time scoring record after 35 years with 1,553 points and counting!

On a somber note, it saddens me to inform you of the recent passing, after a long illness, of Robert "Bobby" Madden, an employee of the Dunellen Department of Public Works. Bobby joined us in 2005 and has been a diligent and devoted worker, undertaking all tasks including snow plowing, park maintenance, and sewer repairs. He will be missed.

Now, to continue a theme I began in my January 1st reorganization speech, I would like to tell you of some efforts the borough is making toward achieving greater efficiencies and cost savings. Our Borough Administrator William Robins and I will be meeting with Green Brook Mayor Patrick Boccio and their business administrator, to discuss potential shared services. I will consult with Council following this meeting. Also, meetings with the School District will be held over the coming weeks to finalize a comprehensive shared service agreement for parks and facilities that Council President Kenneth Bayer, Council Member Stacy Narvesen, Recreation Director Alex Miller, Borough Administrator William Robins and I have been composing along with school district representatives. I plan to report back to the Council once there is a more finalized plan.

**What's happening regarding Capital Projects and Infrastructure improvements:** I had an initial meeting with the borough engineers, CME Associates (Consulting & Municipal Engineers Associates), about topics including infrastructure, parks and redevelopment. I plan to hold a comprehensive meeting with CME Associates, our auditors, the CFO, and Borough Administrator regarding the creation of a road/sewer/sidewalk program. This program would allow the town to be better positioned for fixing sewers and sidewalks as we work on road improvement projects. We need to understand the total impact financially on the borough and how we can create a long-term plan that doesn't strain the taxpayer, but also seeks to fix aging sewers, roads and sidewalks. I look forward to this conversation and the creation of a sustainable plan.

**News on the Streets:** Council Member Jessica Dunne and I attended a NJDOT Complete Streets seminar on Thursday, January 9th in Vineland, NJ. The program addressed what a complete street design is and its benefits to a town. The seminar also discussed the Complete Streets Guidelines and Policies the borough may consider adopting. Since we plan to repave South Madison Avenue this summer, I have advised our engineers to look into inexpensive ways such as signage and striping, to implement traffic calming measures. In addition, as we repave South Madison Avenue and work with Middlesex County on the South Madison Avenue Culvert project near the Firehouse, we will consider repairing the retaining wall by the Firehouse and repaving the Firehouse parking lot as extensions to the project.

A topic of high importance is the Mayor's Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Task Force. I will be asking the Council this month to provide consent to form this task force so it can study and advise the Mayor and Borough Council about the Complete Streets program and if it is a viable option for seeking funds to enhance pedestrian safety in Dunellen. I will ask two council members to assist me on this, as well as select members of the public and other municipal agencies such as school district, planning board and police to assist in the task force.

Residents of Park Place have requested that we consider making Park Place a one-way street toward First Street. Former Mayor Robert Seader and I spoke with the residents along that street and they are ecstatic that we are considering this option. It was also requested by the residents if we could place the diagonal parking all the way down towards First Street. I do believe this will ease traffic and parking issues with the church and funeral home. Park Place becoming a one-way street will most likely be in effect by spring time.

**Good news regarding the Dunellen Arts & Culture Commission (DACC):** It has received \$3,500.00 from the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders through a grant award from the Middlesex County Arts and Cultural Trust Fund for its summer arts camp. An additional \$300.00 was granted to digitize historical photos of Dunellen. DACC also met with Tess Hansen – art curator out of Plainfield--about assisting DACC on a public arts strategy – more info to follow. On a related note, Council Member Trina Rios and I, along with DACC, are working with DHS art students and DHS art teacher Larry Roibal for a practicum project in borough hall – a mural that will pay tribute to Dunellen's history along the stairway to the Recreation Office.

**News regarding the Raritan Valley Line:** Governor Phil Murphy signed a bill on January 13, 2020 requiring New Jersey Transit to conduct a feasibility study about the implementation of a peak one-seat ride on the Raritan Valley Line. We should celebrate this step in the right direction of achieving a more equitable service for our residents and commuters who ride the train line. I will continue to work alongside the Raritan Valley Line Mayors Alliance and the Raritan Valley Rail Coalition, advocating for improved services along the line for our commuters and property owners.

Thank you for taking the time to read this month's Message by the Mayor. I look forward to continuing these monthly messages and updating you on the happenings of the Mayor and Council at Borough Hall.

Respectfully,  
Jason F. Cilento, Mayor  
[jcilento@dunellen-nj.gov](mailto:jcilento@dunellen-nj.gov)