Working Together Toward Our Goals

There is so much good you can do for a community and the people by being involved, whether it be as Mayor, Councilman, or any of the many positions available to serve on in government.

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James L. Cassella
NJLM President
Mayor, East Rutherford
Show off your City! 
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Send us photos of your municipality! Help us showcase our beautiful state by sending photos of your tourist attractions, downtown areas, economic development initiatives, parks, city halls and new projects.

All entries will be posted on the League’s Facebook page, website and some featured in the April issue of NJ Municipalities, and possibly other issues. A winner will be choosen and receives a free League publication of their choice!

Photos should be high resolution jpegs, at least 1MB in size. Please provide photo credit if necessary.

Photos can be submitted to aspiezio@njslom.org, or mailed on CD or flash drive to 222 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608.

Deadline to submit is February 1.

Entry details: Unfortunately stockphotos and images that are too low resolution will not be considered. By submitting a photo you are agreeing that you own the rights to the photo and that NJLM has permission to use the photo in NJ Municipalities, on NJLM’s social media and website, and on other printed materials. A winner will be chosen at random on February 15. Please include your Facebook profile name and we will tag your photo on Facebook!

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New Jersey State League 
of Municipalities

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Give Voice to Your Priorities

As you prepare for and celebrate your local reorganization keep in mind that the public, State agencies, and lawmakers all need to hear from you about the issues most important to your community and local government. Your governing bodies and professionals are an important part in that effort. Keep them actively involved so your communications reflect the most accurate details.

The local meetings, press, radio, and access television are always important ways to voice local government priorities. Along with them also keep in mind the need to communicate with and through various media outlets, including social media. Since your residents no longer rely on just one, single source of information exchange, learn how they consume and exchange information so you can meet them there. For an example, find the League on Twitter @NJ_League

The League helps you by giving voice to the consensus issues agreed upon at the Annual League Conference. See the 2018 resolutions on page 44 that were voted on and are now part of the League’s policy. Use the advice provided in this issue to assist you in planning your communications. Refer to the background materials found on the League website, njlm.org, and The Town Crier blog, njlmblog.wordpress.com

Take a moment to share and include valuable League opportunities on your calendars, including the Saturday Orientation Programs for New and Re-elected Officials on January 6 and 20, as well as Mayors Legislative Day on March 14. And watch for upcoming opportunities to become even more directly active in the efforts organized by the League.

This year the new administration in Trenton is working through its own transition. Part of that will include the League President, Mayor James Cassella of East Rutherford, meeting with cabinet members and agency heads as they become available. He will be sure to communicate the League’s priorities while also opening our channels to learn their priorities. He will work with, and through, the League Vice Presidents and the full League Executive Board, which you can review on page 1 of this issue.

All of this effort is meant to support your own involvement and the involvement of your elected colleagues and professionals as we move forward together into a New Year and bright future for the Garden State.

And this month Governor Christie will return to private life after eight eventful years serving as Governor of our State. We thank him for his service and wish him and his family the best in whatever lies ahead. ☒

Michael Darcy
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– Chanté, 2015 graduate

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– Mike, 2013 graduate

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Sweet Deal
How Hackettstown and Mars Wrigley work together as good neighbors

By Maria DiGiovanni, Mayor, Hackettstown

The Town of Hackettstown is one of the sweetest towns in New Jersey. Located in a valley along the banks of the Musconetcong River in Northwest New Jersey, Hackettstown is 3.5 square miles with almost 10,000 people calling it home.

Also calling it home is Centenary University, Hackettstown Medical Center, and Mars Wrigley Confectionery U.S. Hackettstown has been home to Mars Wrigley since 1958 when Mars moved its national headquarters and plant to Hackettstown from its original location in Newark.

The sweet smell of chocolate drifts through the town most mornings, replaced only by the smell of roasted peanuts once or twice a week. It’s a gentle reminder of our Mars Wrigley neighbor—a neighbor that employees approximately 1,000 associates, many of whom live in Hackettstown.

Good neighbors
Being a great neighbor, Mars Wrigley sponsors many town events, including the annual Springfest where tons of its candy, snack food, and product is given away, and the company is a welcomed participant in Hackettstown’s Community Day every October. More recently, Mars partnered with the Hackettstown Police Department and the Hackettstown Business Improvement District to co-sponsor Hackettstown’s Halloween Downtown event.

A Mars representative also has a seat on the Hackettstown Business Improvement District’s Board. However, until 2012 you would have been hard-pressed to actually recognize Mars Wrigley Headquarters and Plant—the plant where half the M&M’s in the United States are made.
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Sweet Deal

Those of us who live in Hackettstown know that we can turn over a pack of M&M’s and see it says “Made in Hackettstown, NJ,” but there were no distinguishing signs or characters on their buildings or within the Town.

Building partnership

When I was elected Mayor in November 2011, my goal was to partner with Mars Wrigley, then called M&M Mars Chocolate, N.A., to brand Hackettstown and Mars together. I wanted to showcase how much having a worldwide company, and such a well-recognized one at that, in our town meant to me and the residents of Hackettstown.

Meeting with Mars Wrigley executives in March 2012, I presented my vision on branding. After discussion on several ideas, the renaming of the street that the headquarters and plant are located (High Street) was the first initiative we wanted to take on. It was agreed that residents would participate by voting on the five top names that we settled on. The vote took place over two weeks and finally a winner was selected: M&M’s Chocolate Avenue. The street signs along the road from Main Street (State Highway 46) past Mars Wrigley and to the town boarder would have new street signs with the new name.

On October 16, 2012, the new signs were unveiled in a ceremony at Mars Wrigley headquarters. In attendance were Mars Wrigley executives and associates, then Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno, State and County Officials, Town Council members, and the director of the Hackettstown Business Improvement District, among others. On that same day, an M&M’s World “pop up” store opened on Main Street for two weeks a few blocks away, featuring products that boasted “Made in Hackettstown.” People lined up for blocks to purchase candy and products. Our first branding initiative was a great success; it was a wonderful day in Hackettstown.

Along with the new benches, new sidewalks, and decorative lamp-posts, new street signs with M&M characters would be a welcome sight.”

On the entryways into the Town, “Welcome to Hackettstown” signs with the Town’s logo on them announced that people were coming into Hackettstown. The signs were older and wooden and needed repair.

For two years conversations between Mars, myself, and our Department of Public Works were held concerning the specifications of the signs, the characters on the signs, and our budgets.

We knew we wanted the Red and Yellow M&M characters holding up the words “Welcome to Hackettstown,” to be consistent with street signs within Town. In addition, a hanging sign underneath would proudly boast “Made in Hackettstown with pride since 1958” showcasing M&M’s.

About a year after, I was invited to a team-building event for Mars associates. At that event, it was revealed that benches would be built and placed along Main Street with various Mars characters and product pictures. The benches were placed throughout Main Street. It is great to see people walking on Main Street and stopping to take pictures of the benches, especially with their children.

By Halloween 2014 we were completing yet another branding idea. Hackettstown has a wonderful, walkable Main Street, thanks to a revitalization effort that
started in 2009 and completed in 2015. Along with the new benches, new side-walks, and decorative lampposts, new street signs with M&M characters would be a welcome sight.

Once again we went to work with ideas of what we wanted to have the street signs look like. It was decided that all street signs on Main Street and the cross streets would be changed. At the town’s Gazebo Park at the Hackettstown Downtown Halloween event, the new street signs were unveiled. Hackettstown now had new street signs up and down Main Street and side streets with the Red and Yellow M&M characters on them.

The sweetest town
Leighanne Eide, Hackettstown Site Director for Mars Wrigley Confectionery U.S., said the company and the community have a strong, longstanding relationship. “We're proud to make M&M’s in Hackettstown for almost 60 years and what better way to show our pride than by partnering with the town on new welcome signs, benches, and street signs with our iconic characters” Eide said, adding, “Being part of the Hackettstown community and having multiple generations of residents be part of making M&M's is an essential part of our history and success.”

In August of this year, the welcome signs went up. As the Red and Yellow M&M welcome people passing through the town, people visiting our town as well as the people who work in town, and those of us who are lucky enough to live in Hackettstown—one of the sweetest towns around.
Throughout the century-plus history of the League Conference, the NJLM team has strived to make each Conference a success story for every attendee. Over the years, that has meant different things to different people—but there has always been the overarching goal of endeavoring to create a time of professional growth and development, where municipal officials can work together to sharpen their governing saws and move into the next year with fresh ideas and inspiration.

This year was no exception, and as you can see in this issue’s features, the League Conference attracted a wide range of participants, from the Governor Elect Phil Murphy and Lt. Gov. Elect Sheila Oliver to newly hired Municipal employees. Each attendee had the opportunity to meet new people and learn more about how others in the Garden State meet their challenges. The classrooms were filled with delegates prepared with questions about the future ranging from pension reforms and Chapter 78 to the nuts and bolts of running a community’s infrastructure, as well as keeping the lights on affordably and the water flowing consistently.

The League also had the pleasure of welcoming a new slate of Officers and Executive Board members who will endeavor to guide the League in their efforts to Realize Tomorrow’s Potential. Throughout 2018 NJ Municipalities will revisit the topics of greatest interest to attendees to the Conference, keeping League Members up-to-date on the latest strategies and developments in this year of changes to come.

Have any topics you’d like to see in the magazine’s pages? Please contact Managing Editor Amy Spiezio at aspiezio@njslom.org. Know any companies from the Exhibit Hall whose businesses would enhance the operations of other municipalities? Please drop Advertising Manager Taran Samhammer a line at tsamhammer@njslom.org. We all look forward to another happy and successful new year in the Garden State!

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1918 “We were organized for business, we are performing that business and, it is my candid opinion, that we can best continue to carry on our business of promoting the welfare of the people of our municipalities by developing the work in which we are now engaged and by having but one convention each year, with that convention built on the idea...of giving the municipal officials something which will make them more efficient, stimulate them to greater endeavors in rendering service to their people, and perhaps enlarge our vision of the part which the modern municipality must play in the great work which is opening before us, of making America efficient for the citizens of our great democracy, thus supplementing the work that is now being done to “make the world safe for democracy.”

—Frederick Donnelly, Mayor of Trenton and then-retiring President of NJLM

1977 I assume that as other conventions are attracted to Atlantic City because of the gambling, that at least for one or two years, rooms will be at a premium. The housing situation should ease considerably, however, when the new hotels and motels which are presently still on the drafting boards are constructed and opened.

The executive Board has also acted by shortening the Conference from its present four-day format so that it would encompass only three days; that is Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, November 14, 15, and 16. The Conference would conclude on Thursday with the business meeting and possibly a final workshop scheduled on Thursday afternoon following the League Luncheon. —Robert H. Fust, League Executive Director

2016 “I’ve been Mayor for 21 years and was on Council for 11 before that, so I’ve been coming [to the League Conference] for 30 years and I’m still learning.” —Mayor James Cassella, NJLM President, then-2nd Vice President
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