

Reverend Clergy, Members of the City Council, Elected Officials, Members of the Elizabeth Board of Education, friends, family and residents:

Being prepared requires:

- Planning
- Resources
- Equipment
- Training
- Dedicated Personnel

Each playing an important role in the ability to face the unexpected and take necessary action when needed.

Our City rises to the occasion in:

- Protection
- Response
- Treatment
- Assistance
- Service

Increasing opportunities and improving the quality of life.

As we begin 2017, the efforts, achievements and impact of our departments and partners continue to impress – making the differences that change lives.

With a double a3 (Aa3) bond rating from Moody's Investment Service – the highest of the largest cities - the state of our municipality is strong.

Preparation is:

- Applying what we know
- And learning from experience

Accomplished through:

- Communication
- Information sharing
- And defined leadership

Enabling assessments to be made and responsibilities assigned - setting a course of action that most successfully mitigates potential challenges.

From the impact of climate change to increased user demands, maintaining power in public buildings during emergencies can be difficult– especially when regional power surges and outages occur.

So being prepared is essential and our Housing Authority has been spearheading efforts with emergency generators:

- Ordered for 205 First Street
- Installed at O'Donnell Dempsey
- And Ford Leonard Towers

Replacement of the heating system and weatherization of Farley Towers will also begin this year with funding from the Department of Community Affairs.

As technology advances, our partners are prepared to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

The Parking Authority:

- Upgraded their website
- Added cameras and LED lighting at garages
- Accepting online payments for monthly permits

Creating more opportunities, safer environments and improved customer support.

Whether:

- Planning a day out
- Going away for a few
- Or taking an extended vacation - preparation is key to maximizing your time.

There are many exciting places to visit and enjoy throughout our municipality and the Elizabeth Destination Marketing Organization is working hard to make every experience a memorable one.

- Redesigned the GoElizabethNJ Mobile App
- Increased visibility of Kiosk at The Mills
- Hosted Waterfront Cocktail Reception - highlighting our diverse culinary offerings

EDMO also created new promotional pieces:

- Flyers and video productions
- Targeting group tours and meetings

And in 2016, their innovative approaches were recognized with the New Jersey State Tourism Digital Outreach Award.

Utilizing resources, incentives and expertise enables our business communities to grow through:

- Attraction and retention
- Maintenance of districts
- Outreach efforts

The Elizabeth Avenue Partnership continues to improve the quality of life for consumers, merchants and residents, with publications and celebrations:

- Restaurant/Dining Guide
- Sidewalk Sales
- Hispanic Heritage Month

- Removing 500 graffiti incidents
- Changing over 3000 garbage cans

And extra duty officers continue to patrol and safeguard the area.

While enhancements and aid continue on the Avenue, the Midtown Special Improvement District is transforming landscapes and presenting crowd-pleasing events such as the 11th Annual Car and Bike Show:

- Featuring over 170 antique, custom and imported vehicles
- Drawing over one thousand visitors

When you or a loved one are not well – only the best in care will do:

- Trained professionals, state-of-the-art facilities

- Where the value of preparedness is upheld
- And always the standard for excellence

Trinitas Regional Medical Center continues to upgrade – with the Phase I completion of the emergency room expansion:

- New CT scanner
- Low Dose Lung Screening Program
- Providing first responders with Narcan:
 - Used 116 times by our EMS since June
 - 148 times by Trinitas EMS in the field

The commitment they display, along with doctors, nurses and staff - continues to exceed expectations and deliver results.

When an epidemic strikes:

- Fears are heightened
- Concerns are raised
- Prompting protection and preparedness

The Zika virus made national headlines throughout the world and cases within the United States rose, bringing with it the need to:

- Increase awareness
- Educate
- Take preventative measures

In July, I joined representatives from Trinitas and the Health Department for a forum on our community response – where expertise and experience were shared:

- Policies and protocols relating to Zika preparedness
- Precautions highlighted
- Informational pamphlet designed

The Health Department continues to monitor these activities throughout our municipality.

Whether addressing global medical threats or preparing residents for a life of good health, our public health nurses are there to assist:

- Nearly 1000 children and adults immunized
- 400 flu shots administered
- More than 300 assisted at our clinics

Supporting personal preparedness and encouraging others to protect themselves by receiving check-ups and living healthy lifestyles, the Health Department initiated programs and events:

- National Public Health Week
- Autism and Breast Cancer Awareness Walks
- Women’s Health and Wellness Brunch

Participated in community-wide endeavors:

- Annual Service Fair
- Playstreets
- L.E.A.D. Day Jamboree - Assisting through skill and care

From physical fitness and professional access to technology and training, enriching the lives of our seniors includes providing the opportunities and preparation to maintain self-sufficiency and meet daily demands:

- 8000 participated at the computer lab
- 9000 took part in dance/exercise classes
- 22,000 utilized Visiting Nurse services

Treatment and preventive medicine, along with proper nutrition, are important factors in preparing to address conditions as well as achieve quality living. More than 22,000 residents participated in our nutritional program - because getting to the doctor and food store can be:

- Costly
- And if they do not have family or friends to depend on- near impossible

Our Health Department knows all too well these challenges and is prepared to help. In 2016, the Transportation Division provided:

- 3600 seniors with rides to doctors' appointments
- Over 8000 rides to local supermarkets
- Transported 8600 to our senior centers

Getting from point A to point B can be difficult at any age if the ability, means or support are not there.

That is why more than 3700 children were provided with rides to and from after-school programs and events - Because no matter how old you are, no one should miss out on the important things because they did not have someone to take them.

Preparing our youth for success tomorrow requires a strong foundation today. Through the:

- S.O.A.R.
- Safe Haven
- Building Future Leaders Programs

Our Office on Youth is transforming lives.

Working closely with:

- Teachers
- Counselors
- Social Workers

To:

- Hone abilities
- Encourage talents
- Impress upon our young people the importance of giving back to our community

Leading by example, these professionals share their knowledge, experience and guidance with our children after the school day has ended, helping them:

- Develop problem solving techniques
- Long-term planning
- Recognize the empowerment that comes from communication and creativity

They support safe, positive environments - provide forums for participation and unity-building with:

- Harvest Festival

- Holiday Toy Giveaway
- “I Have a Dream” Contest - highlighting the life and contributions of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

From the written word and artistry to showcasing gifts and displaying aptitude - expression in all its forms is powerful. The Recreation Department nurtures these talents through free, diverse classes at its five centers - where members of our community can:

- Interact, build relationships
- Create new memories

For many of us growing up in the city, playgrounds were everything. They were our backyards and one of the first places we learned how to:

- Share and develop skills
- Solve problems, work together as a team
- Celebrate the outdoors

The playground continues to be as much a social and learning environment as a recreational one.

Understanding the vital role it provides in preparing our community, 18 can be found throughout our wards along with:

- 5 day camps
- 7 spray fountains
- 2 splash parks
- And a heated, in-ground, handicapped-accessible pool

Childhood hunger is a national concern and our Recreation Department remains prepared to offer the assistance that counts. Through the summer food program, more than 1500 children received free lunches and snacks per day during July and August.

Fields and parks continue to provide opportunities and prepare our athletes to embody sportsmanship and competitive drive in state-of-the-art environments including:

- 2 new synthetic turf soccer fields and a Tee Ball field at Kenah
- New spray fountain feature, equipment, lighting at Jackson Park
- Fitness zone at Carteret Park with funding from Trust for Public Land

In addition, over 300 participated in the 2nd annual Playball USA at Drotar Field and hundreds were on hand for the naming of Waterfront Field in honor of Elizabeth native and NY Jets Coach Todd Bowles.

Nearly \$1.7 million was dedicated to the Mickey Walker recreation center - expanding opportunities, increasing preparedness with:

- Upgrades, renovations
- Locker rooms, showers
- Emergency generator – used along with Peterstown and other centers for sheltering in times of need

Exciting things are on the horizon and preparations are being made to meet growing demands at:

- Erxleben Center
- Miller, Green Acres and Carteret Park Playgrounds

Increasing more access to local services is the Elizabeth Municipal ID Program.

If individuals are:

- Retired or not currently working
- Employed at a place, where identification cards are not issued
- Disabled or community members in need— producing an official picture ID can be challenging

Acknowledging the difficulty this creates, the City has partnered with the Elizabeth Public Library to:

- Develop a photo identification and library card
- Including name, address, date of birth

And with more people choosing our city to live, the population continues to grow - along with increased demands on:

- Roadways
- Drainage
- Public spaces

One of the ways we increase sustainability and become more resilient is through comprehensive approaches to management - and our leadership was supported by FEMA's approval of the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan.

- Increasing funding eligibility
- Reducing incurred costs, improving readiness

Preserving the structural integrity of our local streets requires constant preparation:

- Restoration
- Reconstruction
- Improvements - are continuous

Including upkeep - to advance the flow of traffic as well as integrating technology to safeguard residents:

- 2.5 miles of street resurfacing

Soon, new traffic lights:

- Intersection of East Jersey and Winfield Scott Plaza
- Jackson and Monroe

And design underway for:

- Elizabeth Avenue at High Street and New Point Road
- South and Jaques Street

Part of preparation for our streets is ensuring that when the bad weather arrives, enough salt is available to:

- Address ice and slippery conditions
- Provide more traction
- Make roads safer

In addition to the existing salt silo, a \$2.3-million-dollar additional storage location was completed:

- Adjacent to City Yard
- Capacity to store 6,700 tons of salt
- Enabling reserve resources to be accessed when needed

Just as preparations have been made to treat our streets, efforts are ongoing to preserve open space, green our community:

- Completion of Elizabeth River Trail Phase 2
- Extending from Bridge to South Street along South Pearl

- Featuring scenic, paved route with lighting for biking, walking, running

And with Phases 3 and 4, project will continue from:

- South to Clifton Street
- South Broad to West Grand Street

The Public Works Department also cared for our trees:

- 378 maintained
- 150 planted through Greening Union County Grant

Providing more shade, improved air quality and beautification of our neighborhoods.

More than 3300 additional man hours were completed through the Clean Communities Program:

- Picking up litter and illegal dumping
- Installing and replacing trash cans
- Educating the public about the environment

Helping to increase ecological benefits are Future City, Groundwork Elizabeth, who are partnering with us and local agencies to:

- Raise awareness
- Increase fresh produce
- Expand agricultural programs

With initiatives including:

- Environmental and Estuary Days
- Come Grow with Us!
- Green Workforce and Youth Green Team

Creating environments, where food can be harvested and cultivation programs introduced, is preparation at its core.

As our population continues to grow – so does the need for more housing and services. We are addressing these demands through exciting initiatives:

- 350 new market rate apartments
- More retail options

Including Food Bazaar on West Grand Street:

- An 11 million-dollar investment
- 106,000 square feet
- Providing 75 residents with jobs – 13 from the former Pathmark

Although slowly, progress continues on the new Midtown Train Station – this month NJ Transit is bidding the design/build for the state-of-the-art facility:

- Acceptance of a proposal by May
- Notice to proceed by summer

Economic development also on the rise with:

- Fedway Building under construction on North Avenue East

- Sale of Cashman South Front Street Property to Waste Management - anticipated to produce over \$1 million dollars in revenue to our city by 2018

These former, underutilized spaces will provide:

- New jobs
- Services
- Opportunities - to foster growth

Everyone deserves a chance at greatness – however, the road to reaching that goal, can often be paved with a significant financial cost. This April, the Rotary Club of Elizabeth will turn 100 and their initiatives are helping young people achieve their fullest potential:

- Dedicating over half million dollars in scholarships
- Funding assistance to 338 graduating high school students
- Reinforcing the value of:
 - High ethical standards
 - Ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise
 - Advancement of international understanding and good will

Maintaining lasting success is a reflection on:

- Preparation
- Investment

Once viewed by many as a dream that would never be realized, The Mills at Jersey Gardens has become a 200 store, name-brand shopping destination, drawing consumers and visitors from all over including:

- Brazil
- Argentina
- Germany
- France

To experience all the mall has to offer, including new stores:

- Kate Spade
- Alex and Ani
- Elizabeth Arden

Adding to this excitement, a 411,000 square-foot expansion, which will go before the Planning Board in March, with more:

- Outlet shops
- Dining
- Entertainment

Scheduled for completion in 2018

As a true partner, the mall continues to support our community:

- Color Vibe
- Jingle Bell Run
- Concerts, Scholarships

Obtaining an education prepares us for life:

- Building strong foundations
- Acquiring knowledge
- Gaining access to employment

Young people are most at-risk when learning does not remain a priority and for some individuals, the typical school structure poses challenges. The Mills at Jersey Gardens recognizes this need and will work in conjunction with area schools on a new collaborative effort to prepare students for success.

If Juniors or Seniors drop out of school, an opportunity will exist for students to earn their GED through the Workforce Innovation Business Center, which also helped 212 residents receive jobs last year.

In partnership with The Mills, the Center will serve as a satellite educational institution during the day and enable:

- Credits to be earned
- Retail Training to occur
- On-the-job experience obtained

Whether seen on:

- The Internet
- TV
- Or in the newspaper - there are more stories about terrorism in towns big and small across our country.

From TSA screenings at airports and removing your shoes to bag checks and metal detectors, we do our best to take precautions and prepare to identify potential harm.

First responders within Elizabeth and throughout our region train for these kinds of dangerous situations - including the ones most only heard or read about. The value of that preparedness was never more evident than when terrorism came to our city. On September 18th a suspicious backpack was found at the Midtown Elizabeth Train Station. The contents included pipe bombs - one of which was discharged at the scene by a bomb detonation robot.

Two residents, Mr. Lee Parker and Mr. Ivan White, were the first to locate the bag and notify law enforcement. Their actions initiated an immediate response from local, county and federal agencies.

Combined efforts demonstrated:

- Impressive expertise and leadership
- Collaboration to protect and secure

As with anything worth doing, being prepared requires time and resources - the key - is to be ready when it counts. In Elizabeth, our police, fire and EMS were ready because we continue to:

- Undergo training
- Advance technology
- Enhance operations - to more effectively serve residents

Just last week, that preparation was called into action when a fight broke out at our mall. Inaccurate accounts, shared on social media, led the public to believe a shooting had occurred – although the sound came from a chair being thrown.

Elizabeth Police and Fire, Neighboring Law Enforcement, State Police, Port Authority quickly responded:

- Evacuating shoppers

- Securing the scene
- Determining the cause - enabling operations to be restored

The ability to be prepared also means having qualified personnel and in 2016 the city hired:

- 8 EMTs
- 18 Police Officers
- 21 Firefighters - through the receipt of a \$5-million-dollar SAFER grant

And more first responders will soon join their respective departments:

- Law enforcement ranks will increase by 13 this week
- And 15 more firefighters will begin in February

Preparation also contributed to a reduction in violent crime – and as the first major city in the state to equip police officers with body-worn cameras, the program continues to be a success – improving court testimony, reinforcing partnerships and decreasing:

- Excessive force and officer demeanor complaints

These advances, combined with an aggressive Juvenile Curfew Program, which assisted 150 young people last year, are examples of the successful approaches that:

- Enhance communication
- Produce results

While preparing our youth for life-long positive relationships with police.

Working with the Elizabeth Youth Theater Ensemble:

- A police and student collaboration was produced
- Entitled “Walking the Beat”
- Real discussions, effective outcomes

Achieving results are also supported by efficient, rapid response:

- 3 new ambulances
- Refurbished aerial ladder
- And the new Fire Station on Catherine Street – home to Engine and EMS 6

Reconstructed to include upgrades that will improve function and quality of life, the building:

- Was designed to be LEED-certified
- Can store three pieces of apparatus and an ambulance
- Contains facilities for both men and women

Along with:

- Bi-fold doors
- And a back-up generator - to remain operational in the event of power loss

This year the EFD will welcome:

- Mid-mount tower
- Skyboom
- Two, 2000 gallon pumpers - increasing current fleet and overall preparedness

Benjamin Franklin once said, “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” From innovative efforts and enhanced services to the investments positively impacting our neighborhoods, the value of preparedness can be seen throughout our great city:

- Responsible leadership
- Dedicated partners
- Sound financial decision making

Are:

- Improving safety and security
- Reinforcing infrastructure
- Elevating technology
- Maintaining health and wellness

Providing the best in service to prepare for a bright and inspired future. May God Bless the City of Elizabeth and May God Bless America.

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