

Clifton Journal 1/9/15

GUEST VIEWS

Councilwoman's outgoing message to Clifton residents

By Mary Sadrakula
Former City Councilwoman

I would like to thank the citizens of Clifton for allowing me to serve as your councilwoman for the last four years and seven months. It was my pleasure and honor to serve you.

Some of the accomplishments I am proud of include: introducing City Green to the city to manage Schultheis Farm; introducing the city manager portion of the public meetings; the \$150,000 annual savings to the taxpayers by eliminating the need for the overtime to man the boilers in City Hall; fighting to eliminate the over \$200,000 indirect costs charged to the library and using this savings to push for the library to reopen on Sundays; making the motion to eliminate texting on the dais by Council members during meetings; voted (along with Councilman Hatala) not to reduce the Table of Organization in both the police and fire departments because doing so would greatly increase the overtime costs in each (which has exactly happened since this was done); making the motion to finally hire the quality of life officers to find the illegal apartments

and other quality of life issues like uncut grass; pushed for more transparency with the figures (like the budget, overtime and recycling costs) and wanting the budget meetings televised; the only member to vote not to hire our previous city manager at the inflated salary of \$168,000; fought to have Nick Villano appointed the city manager; pushed to have the arborist look at trees before they were blindly cut down and protect our tree infrastructure; and voting not to establish the sewer utility.

I am extremely proud that I had the courage throughout my term not to betray my convictions and stay true to my campaign promise to "be the voice of the people."

The only compensation I received was \$3. I was required to take a dollar a year salary so that I would be considered an employee and not a volunteer like the other Council members who took their full salary. In fact, one year I wasn't paid so that is it why it was \$3 not \$4. I also fulfilled my campaign promise and did not take the health care and dental benefits believing that the city simply cannot afford this perk any longer. I was dismayed

to learn only a few weeks left in my term that as a council person I was entitled to a \$50,000 life insurance policy which I was never told about.

I wish both the two new members of the Council as well as the five returning council members well in their next term. This council faces difficult decisions - like the budget, crumbling sewer infrastructure, significant contamination costs, large tax appeals, and the redevelopment of the Hoffmann-La Roche site, which will require strong leadership.

I wish the city manager well in preparing his first budget. For example, this Council will have to find over \$2.775 million in this year's budget to just replace the \$1.3 million that was borrowed from the condo reimbursement fund and the reserve for the liability for accumulated sick time to cover 2014's increased cost of medical coverage for all city employees and find \$875,000 for the expected increase in this year's medical coverage cost for city employees as well as finding another \$600,000 to cover the expected increase in the city's pension costs.

Our zoning laws are also in great need of being updated

according to a Passaic County Superior judge. Two of our firehouses (Station 1 and Station 3) are in need of significant costly repairs to just to maintain the safety of these buildings and a third (Station 6) has environmental issues which require costly monthly monitoring.

Ride around the City Hall complex and see the poor condition of most of the barns with rotten wood soffits. Look at the condition of most of our parks and ball fields - they are badly in need of repair. Not to mention the continuation of our road repaving projects.

They also face the problem of the infamous sewer fee where the majority of the costs are born by the residential users rather than the commercial and industrial users and by creating a sewer utility and removing those costs from the general budget there is no mechanism to fund the much needed repairs to our sewers other than to raise the rates (which will be mostly born by the residential users) - it the estimated cost for such the Patricia Place and Hoffmann-La Roche sewer repairs is over \$5 million.

The previous year was a year of endings and new beginnings in

my life and I look forward to this new chapter and continuing to serve the people of Clifton as their voice as a private citizen.

Over the next several weeks, I will be forming a citizen's watchdog group. I vow to continue to fight for the causes I believe in. I may be contacted via cell 201-314-5380 or email at marysadrakula@aol.com.

With my real estate taxes approaching over \$23,000 annually plus my \$800 yearly sewer fee (and I learned over the course of these four years my home is not even tied into Clifton's sewer system but rather tied into Passaic since I live on the borderline), I have a major investment in this city and intend to remain an active member in the local political scene.

As a resident recently reminded me the entire reason I entered the not-so-nice world of politics was to protect my home - protect my investment and be the voice of the people. I did not consider myself a politician and never wanted to be referred to as one.

When history looks back at my term in office I hope I will be remembered an honest person who devoted four years of her life to serve the citizens of Clifton and tried to make a difference.

CLIFTON JOURNAL
1.9.2015