

Good morning everyone and Happy New Year!

Thank you all for being here today. Seeing so many familiar faces reminds me exactly why this community is so special.

Before I begin, I want to congratulate my running mate and friend, Kevin Settembrino, who was sworn in again today. It has always been an honor to run alongside you. Thank you, Kevin.

I also want to thank Peter Carton and Maureen Raisch for swearing me in today. It's an honor to have two people I deeply respect administer this oath. Peter, thank you for your leadership and dedication to this town. Maureen, thank you for all you do for our wonderful county.

As I begin my sixth year as Deputy Mayor, I want you to know how grateful I am for the trust you've placed in me once again.

Middletown is not just the town I serve; it is the town that raised me. I was born here, grew up here, and have spent my entire life calling Middletown home. I went to school on these streets, learned the values of hard work and service here, and eventually raised my family and small business here. My connection to this town isn't political – it's personal.

Serving as a volunteer fire chief taught me that neighbors look out for one another, leadership means showing up when it matters most, and service is a responsibility we all share. Those lessons guide me every day as Deputy Mayor and shape the decisions we make as a township.

This past year, Middletown continued moving forward while staying true to the values that have always defined us. We earned Silver-level certification through Sustainable Jersey, proving that responsible growth and environmental stewardship can go hand in hand. Our Parks & Recreation programs received statewide recognition, strengthening the sense of community that I grew up with. And once again, Middletown was recognized as one of the best places to live in New Jersey – not because we chase trends, but because we protect what makes this town feel like home.

None of this happens by chance. It happens because of residents who care deeply, volunteers who give selflessly, first responders who protect us, business owners who invest locally, and township employees who work tirelessly every day. This is the same spirit that raised me, and it's the spirit that continues to move Middletown forward.

I'm grateful to serve alongside my fellow Township Committee members and Mayor Tony Perry. Every meeting is a pleasure, as I get to work with people I truly consider friends while focusing on what matters most: serving the town that has given so much to us. Mr. Perry and I have served together for six years, making us the longest-serving mayor and deputy mayor duo in Middletown's history. I couldn't ask for a better partner to navigate running this town with. Thank you, Tony.

To my family, especially my wife Kelli and our children, thank you for your unwavering support and for sharing me with the town that has always been our home. Your love and patience have been the foundation that allowed me to give my best to this community, and I am endlessly grateful.

And to the people of Middletown: thank you for trusting someone who was shaped by this community to help lead it. As I begin this sixth year as Deputy Mayor, I promise to keep listening, to keep working, and to always put Middletown first.

Looking ahead to 2026, we have exciting opportunities: enhancing our parks, supporting local businesses, expanding programs for our youth and seniors, and continuing to ensure Middletown remains a safe, welcoming, and vibrant community. Together, we will keep moving forward while preserving what makes our town so special.

This town raised me. Serving it is the greatest honor of my life.

Thank you, and God bless Middletown.