

**BOROUGH OF ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS
REORGANIZATION MEETING
JANUARY 5, 2022**

**ANNUAL ADDRESS OF
MAYOR MARIO M. KRANJAC**

Good evening and welcome to the Borough of Englewood Cliffs' 2022 Annual Reorganization Meeting. Thank you for joining us virtually. I truly hope that we can meet together in person again very soon.

As you know, like 2020, 2021 was an incredibly challenging year for our community and our state. Our public health workers, police officers, firefighters, public works employees, and our teachers have worked extremely hard this past year to overcome some of the most challenging situations in recent history. We are so grateful for all they have done for our community last year and what they will do for us in the future. Thank you for rising above and beyond the call of duty.

On this Governing Body, we've always been deeply opinionated and have had disagreements over a variety of issues and projects – okay over most issues and projects, but it's our community that keeps me working for our residents. Many of the disagreements, theatrics, abhorrent behavior from some on Council and the reporting of that behavior by those at Eye on The Cliffs and the Record is all an act. A sham. It's all part of the political theatre that I live in. That you live in. Politically driven and money driven feigned hatreds, virtue signaling, disparaging comments, and as recently demonstrated by Mr. Luciano, physical intimidation and thuggery; are all an act to get control and power. That's it. Once they have control and power the political theatre ends and the corruption begins as we witnessed in 2019 and 2020 with the Democrat controlled majority and the suspect affordable housing settlement. Those are all actions of the weak. My strength comes from always being driven to do what is lawful (no matter how the press is told to portray it by our Local Political Machine Democrats) and to do it with consistency. I love Englewood Cliffs, I love our residents and I love living in the great Borough of Englewood Cliffs. When I am in the political majority, and because of those passions, we achieve great things together even if it takes a few months for the dust to settle as we have just seen happen. We are now on a clear course and those that are not going to work with us are of absolutely no consequence. Remember: I have always said that I will work with whomever will work with me regardless of political party.

In 2021, we accomplished many wonderful things for Englewood Cliffs and its residents:

1. After over 40 years, we finally commenced our own affordable housing project and we were awarded with 9% tax credits from the state of NJ. Those tax credits were critical and were hard fought for. We had an extremely tight time frame with dozens of deadlines that the prior Council majority and their cronies abandoned as they often have done since I became Mayor in order to try making me fail and then writing about it in their partisan propaganda and newsletters. That's how they wanted it to work, but they failed again and, I succeeded. You missed reading about this victory in the Record because of course the Record ignores my accomplishments. I saved the town \$4 million by getting the 9% tax credits instead of the paltry 4%. While I certainly don't agree with the NJ affordable housing regime, I complied with it as I always said I had to because it's the law and with the incredible help of one person we met every deadline. She answered every question. She provided every document requested and re-requested. She worked on this project around the clock for months. We did it to save you money in a corrupt system; a system not of our residents' making, but of our residents' burden. The person who did all that work was our former Borough Administrator, Carrol McMorrow, who this Council took for granted, failed to ever thank and treated terribly. Despite all that, she did her job and she did it well and we have \$4 million more in our coffers to show for it.
2. The \$4 million saved will now be translated into an incredible recreation park, athletic fields with lights, a dog park, and other services for our senior citizens and other residents. A pedestrian bridge or tunnel to the Rockefeller Lookout is also possible.
3. I kept the town open for business despite being surrounded by state and local government officials mandating shutdowns and other authoritarian demands. Unfortunately, Governor Murphy was re-elected, but fortunately, he must have read my recently published opinion piece in the Star Ledger and will not shut down New Jersey again.
4. We accomplished a COVID 19 vaccination rate of over 92%. We did so, not with mandates, but with our neighbors making their own life decisions consistent with the way America was established. Yes, individual freedom and liberty are paramount and have become even more important when politicians are trying to run every aspect of your life. Our residents are

intelligent hard-working and full of the intellectual curiosity that makes are melting pot great. Of course, we all questioned science, had our questions answered, and then made the decision to be vaccinated and now boosted.

I take this opportunity to inform you that as of yesterday, there were 34 new COVID-19 cases in Englewood Cliffs over the last seven days. Last week there were 28 new COVID-19 cases in Englewood Cliffs. The good news as we all now understand that this Omicron variant has milder symptoms if any at all.

The number of new cases in Englewood Cliffs increased approximately 1.1 times from last week.

Surrounding towns that have increased their new COVID cases between 1.1 times to 2.7 times the previous week. Englewood Cliffs has the lowest rate of increase again.

The total number of cases in Englewood Cliffs from the beginning of the pandemic is 558.

Very sadly, we have had 9 residents die of Covid 19 with the last death being over a year ago. I offer my condolences, thoughts and prayers for them and to their families.

5. The LG Electronics' new North American headquarters is now fully functioning and we continue to welcome LG as a wonderful neighbor. I believe it is the most technologically advanced building in New Jersey and perhaps the East Coast. You can't miss it when driving by.
6. We continue to seek justice for residents from the results of four former attorneys that represented the Borough during the Democrat Council majority's suspect affordable housing settlement. I understand that the owners of 800 Sylvan threw their hands up and ran out of town recently selling off the property at 800 Sylvan in order to cover their debt positions on the property. We welcome the new owner and will welcome them even more if they pivot back to a commercial re-development of that property. Perhaps the property can be transformed into a technology and life sciences start-up alternative to New York City — think of Silicon Cliffs, rather than Silicon Valley or Silicon Alley. I understand the new owners wish to meet with me and I will gladly do so.

7. The Englewood Cliffs Police Department is once again the police department that other towns wish they had. Well done Chief Henkelman and all officers and staff.
8. The Englewood Cliffs Fire Department has been incredibly busy during 2021 and when I see and hear them around town doing all their great work, it's even more impressive that they are all volunteers. I thank them and I ask everyone to listen to their warnings about fire safety as so many fires are avoidable with vigilance and care.
9. I thank our DPW Superintendent Mark Neville and his department for all their work keeping the town always looking great. They are outside working in rain or shine, hot or cold weather.
10. Our Borough Hall employees continue as the unseen heroes of the Borough making sure all the administration, tax, finance, public health and building departments are fully functioning and I thank them.
11. I recently received a Certificate of Recognition from The Nature Conservancy in recognition of my championing the environment. So you see, it's a common misconception to believe that Republicans do not care about the environment.

I also want to personally thank Rosemarie Weber, currently the person who is really running Borough Hall. Rose had such a difficult year for many heartbreaking reasons, but she continues serving our community with professionalism and poise in a most pleasant manner. We as a community are grateful to Rose for all she does. Thank you Rose.

Now, it's important that while America is deeply divided, we find common ground at the local level. We must recognize that fixing America starts with local action. As mentioned, throughout this pandemic, we've been able to keep businesses in Englewood Cliffs open. We've gotten our children back in the classroom to learn together instead of spending long days on Zoom. We've made great progress together on some of the most sensitive issues that unite us in Englewood Cliffs, but quite frankly, divide the rest of the country.

And while it's easy to dwell on our differences, at the start of this exciting New Year it's important to focus on what unites us. Englewood Cliffs is a beautifully diverse community and home to many first, second, and third-generation immigrants.

Despite our political differences, it's clear just by walking down our streets that our community is united in our love of country and our love for the spirit of America. I would bet that more than any other town in NJ, our residents have come to America and are living the American dream. My goal is to make certain that America is always appreciated and cherished.

There is no country in the history of the world with as much organic opportunity as the United States. There are no governmental barriers on anyone's potential except for recently imposed barriers seeking equality of outcomes which must be rolled back. America is a beacon of hope for billions of people across the globe and our neighboring city across the Hudson River is known for its ability to take the hard-working, savvy, and entrepreneurial men and women from rags to riches. This is only possible in America. Don't ever doubt America's greatness, don't stand for anyone telling you otherwise, and don't ever think America's greatness resides in the domain of her elected or appointed officials. America's greatness comes from its citizens and the freedoms and liberties those citizens have to fully participate. I often chuckle when I see one of our Councilman promoting the United Nations, and not America, on his lapel pin with sustainability goals that seek to knock America down to the mediocrity and feudalism of many other countries. Wake-up Councilman DiGregorio.

In 2021 I lost my father after a brief illness and a broken heart from losing my older sister a few months earlier. Both were incredible engineers and their loss has gravely impacted my family, their work families and in the case of my sister, her NYU students. My mom and dad came to America with very little. They came from a communist country. They came from a country where property rights, religious rights, rights of assembly, and individual liberties were non-existent. When my father came to America he designed machine tools at his first job and ended up owning the company and working there for 65 years up until the time of his death. He started from nothing, provided for his family, and educated my sisters and me. My mother and father learned English with us and took us to Mass every Sunday and never looked back. That ladies and gentlemen is the America Dream. It is not the dream of any other country. It is not the dream of the United Nations. And it is not the dream of any Marxist, socialist or authoritarian ideology. It is the American Dream and my family and I are overwhelmingly thankful to this great country. Rest in peace dad and Suzanne.

And that's why we must preserve and protect America's spirit for the next generation and generations to come. We owe it to our children to give them the opportunities

that we were afforded, and it's my belief that in order to do this, we must undergo a deep cultural shift at the national level.

While our community values what our country has afforded us, it's clear that this belief is no longer held by many in our government, or in our schools and universities and of course in the mass media.

There's a new disdain for our country and a feeling of guilt that stems from some of the most evil and failed political teachings that every now and then have a resurgence dressed up like the proverbial pig with lipstick – it's still a pig David. And whether or not you believe that America must atone for our nation's past wrongdoings, it is critical that we build our country up rather than tearing it down.

It is critical that we inspire a nation of victors rather than a nation of victims.

It is critical that we empower rather than prohibit.

We owe it to our children and grandchildren to stop this destructive cultural propaganda that is eating away at the American spirit. If we destroy the spirit and the promise of America, we destroy America, and all that goes with it.

And this cultural restoration begins inside of our classrooms. It begins with inspiring students to do their best, to strive for greatness, and aspire to excellence. As you know, in Englewood Cliffs, the teaching of radical critical race theory is not part of the curriculum. I thank the strong leadership of Dr. Jennifer Brower for her professionalism and leadership.

The hateful teachings of critical race theory are sadly taught or projected on students throughout our country and those teachings are at the root of America's cultural collapse and signal the possible end of the American spirit.

Critical race theory pits neighborhood kids against each other. It sorts children into buckets by race and ethnicity. It tells minority students that they are a victim of their circumstance. Not only is critical race theory morally wrong, it's also psychologically damaging to young children.

This teaches children that there is no hope for racial equality and that no matter how much we treat each other as equals, minorities will always be oppressed. You and I know that's simply not true.

These teachings demonize meritocracy and they distract from critical learning. Even more than that, they tear at the fabric of our cultural unity as American people.

We've stopped critical race theory here in Englewood Cliffs and it's imperative that we stop these teachings in New Jersey and in other states. We need to share the message that children have a better chance of learning to succeed in America, when they first believe in America.

We must highlight the stories that make America an inspiration to the world. We must teach our children that no matter who you are, what you look like, or where you come from - you can achieve greatness.

As we move forward into a new and exciting year, it's important that we focus on what unites us: our beautiful community, the entrepreneurial hardworking people of New Jersey, and our exceptional nation.

In Englewood Cliffs and New Jersey, we have the opportunity to help shape the culture and the future of the nation. Remember: politics follows culture so when we believe in America, our leaders will return to honoring their oaths of office. Our students here in Englewood Cliffs are incredibly bright, and if they're empowered, they will go on to do incredible things. Many of our schools in New Jersey are some of the best in the nation, and when we focus on teaching excellence, our students will excel.

That's why I hope Governor Murphy will work to remove critical race theory from all our schools. It's what is right for the future of our students, our state, and our country. We cannot allow minority students to ever feel like they are less than their peers - we must empower them. In another recent opinion piece I pointed out that parents do not want to co-parent with Government or Governor Murphy, and they want to be very involved in their child's education.

Critical race theory is just the tip of a spear thrust into the heart of America. Consider how much over the past two years was taken away from us in an attempt to contain the COVID-19 virus. Far beyond what was necessary, many of the liberties that we never knew we could lose were stripped away in broad stroke policy decisions that should have been left to the local level.

We should not ignore the fact that never before in the history of the world have there been more significant life-saving therapies, treatments and enabling technologies, than we are living with today. We are indeed fortunate and blessed to possess the

tools to defeat diseases. We must utilize these medical and scientific advances without lockdown interruption to heal patients, and we can't allow people's health to deteriorate into dangerous situations by making them take a backseat to each and every new COVID strain and elected Democrats' lust for power over citizens.

Running your business or making a wage is not elective either and it's elitist for the Democrats to continue this bold face lie. We've all seen and felt the effects of inflation at the grocery store and the effects of supply chain bottlenecks because workers in the transportation industry were taken for granted and left without a job for months. Politicians, their staffers and the bureaucrats running the administrative state have never missed a paycheck during the pandemic. Think about that.

Our message to out-of-touch politicians who would impose their will upon communities is that democracy and a free society is not one unilaterally ruled by a centralized government. It is one that respects the rights of the individual, their families, parental rights, and the rights of communities and states. Only with this foundation does the spirit of America thrive.

Nancy and I wish you all a safe, healthy, happy and prosperous New Year, and I look forward to working with you to make our community, our state, and our country the best they can possibly be for our generation and the ones to follow.