

April 18, 2011

On April 2, two days before I was to be sworn in as your new Mayor, I had the privilege of joining other elected officials, firefighters, EMS personnel, 9-11 families and friends at a ceremony at Reliance Firehouse. That day, the Patriot Flag was to be flown in honor of those lost on 9-11. The ceremonial arch, which we saw too often after the attacks of 9-11, where two fire apparatus, their ladders fully extended, suspend the flag between the two towers. However, the gale force winds that day proved too strong for the anchors and the now untethered flag floated softly to the ground. Immediately scores of those attending rushed to lift the flag from the ground. The relationship we shared to the flag changed. We were no longer dwarfed by the enormous flag towering high above us but instead, we supported it. We held the flag, that tactile sense was now uniting us. As we held the flag facing each other, one was drawn to thoughts of each other's experience and relationship of that day. The reverence and silence after each dignitary spoke was moving. That enormous flag was not the iconic vision it was intended to be that morning, but instead an intimate symbol of what it truly represents. That flag pulled us together as one that morning, united by the principles that identify us as Americans and the event that defines us as New Yorkers. As the NCPD helicopter flew low and slow over the solemnity, there was a collective mournful reflection over the loss of so many. But the strength we drew from each other, the dignity as we stood united, physically connected to each other by our flag, our freedoms and our country could not have been more appropriately expressed than they were on that gusty morning in Floral Park.

Reorganization Night is always an enthusiastic and exciting event. It is a new beginning and beginnings are enriched by the sense of possibility. Our elected officials take their oaths of office and neighbors are appointed to committees. This year recently re-elected Village Justice Douglas J. Hayden was sworn in by his father, our former Mayor, the Honorable Tom Hayden. Judge Hayden then swore in me, Trustees Mary-Grace Tomecki, Dominick A. Longobardi and Kevin M. Fitzgerald, who I appointed to complete my unexpired term. Following some remarks, friends and neighbors accepted important roles on our various committees and boards. Truly many functions of our Village government would grind to a halt without their voluntary contributions of their time and talent on behalf of our Village. Their commitment in accepting such important positions to the future of Floral Park is heartwarming. They have my and my Board's deepest gratitude.

I would like to conclude my first Mayor's Message with a salute to our greatest volunteers, our Fire Department. Each year the Fire Department honors those who have answered their last call with the ceremonial laying of Wreaths at the Firemen's Memorial at Village Hall, followed by Mass and a Communion Breakfast. This year we honored two men: Ex-Chief Kenny Lynch and Ex-Firefighter Ed Sieban. Kenny, a member of the greatest generation who fought in WWII: he was an old salt and a respected and valuable member of our department and served this village for over 50 years as a fireman. Ed, a former member of Active, moved to East Rockaway where he went on to become a trustee and eventually its Mayor. His call to serve his neighbors in East Rockaway was met with the same passion and vitality with which he and his family served this village. Kenny Lynch and Ed Sieban are a credit to their families and they served our village and the Floral Park Fire Department with distinction and pride. Requiescat in Pace.