

DEPUTY MAYOR RICH SMITH

I'd like to congratulate Pat on a successful year as Mayor and welcome Ed back to the position, I'm looking forward to another exciting year. 2016 was certainly a busy one, I counted over 50 meetings that I attended with the building related departments so I know they were busy and I'd like to thank Donato and his staff for their excellent service to this community, particularly; Lori and Joe in Planning and Zoning, Roy in Code, Gail in Engineering and Art in Public Works. I also thoroughly enjoyed working with our police department to help redesign their new space which they desperately need and deserve that hopefully that will become a reality soon.

My focus again this year will be on the building and development side of things. But before I get into that I'd like to address something that I have been hearing and reading a lot about lately, the objections about our recent building projects. When I talk to people in Montgomery about what's going on the most common question I get (and I'm sure my colleagues do too) is why are our taxes so high and what can we do to turn it around? And of course, when is the Dunkin Donuts going to get built! The first part of the answer is the fact that the school system makes up about 70% of your taxes and the Township just 12%, so on the spend side we have a much smaller

part. However on the income side we pretty much have the full responsibility. There are two ways to drive taxes down, spend less and/or generate more tax revenue from new businesses. I can tell you that we do all we can to spend less and provide the necessary services, but with huge increases in pensions, healthcare, salaries, benefits and escalation it's nearly impossible to accomplish this and stay under the 2% cap each year, but we do! So that basically leaves it to bringing new business to Montgomery to help generate revenue, but doing it in a smart way consistent with our master plan.

There has been a lot of discussion around town about the development at Bellmead-Griggstown Road and 206. There are a few things to keep in mind about why this project moved forward; 1) Montgomery approved a master plan decades ago that included commercial development at two major hubs, this one and at 206 and 518, 2) the retail development for the Belle Mead hub was approved almost two decades ago when Pike Run started and 3) when completed the development will generate over \$5million in tax revenue each year. The deal we negotiated with the Developer is a much better deal for us than his original plans.

You may have also heard about the recent developments at the southern hub at 206 and 518. The Montgomery Promenade has been scaled back from its original design and is expected to break ground this year. Visit their website and you will see that it truly gives Montgomery some of the family-

focused amenities that we have been asking for, for a long time. And to the north, across 518 we are closer to approving the overlay development that will continue the transformation of the Village Shopper, the former Kepner-Tregoe property and the corner properties around Tigers Tale into an exciting mixed-use, village-themed center. An integral part of these projects is the carefully planned loop roads and traffic enhancements that will greatly improve movement thru this intersection. When completed Montgomery will have a first class local shopping, dining, living, sporting and public space that we all will enjoy and be proud of.

This Administration and Committee have worked hard to get these projects to this point, we believe they fit into the fabric of our community, represent a modern Montgomery that will benefit from the services and amenities far into our future and will contribute in a huge way to our tax base. So, if you have concerns or suggestions about these developments or anything else we'd like to hear from you.