

REMARKS OF COUNCILWOMAN HEATHER HOWARD
PRINCETON COUNCIL REORGANIZATION MEETING
JANUARY 2, 2018

I am pleased to be here today as we embark on a new year, bidding farewell to our colleagues Bernie Miller and Jo Butler and welcoming David Cohen and Leticia Fraga to the Council.

So much has already been said so eloquently about our successes and challenges, so I will be brief and note that we certainly have our work cut out for us this year.

I hope we will continue to be a bulwark against regressive actions from Washington, D.C. – whether it is tax legislation that targets communities like ours, abandonment of efforts to address climate change, or attempts to shred the safety net.

That means standing up for our values – including being a welcoming community and supporting a police department that exemplifies our conviction that law enforcement should be guardians of the public, not warriors, the standard set by President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing. Hopefully, standing up for our values will get a little easier now that we have new friends in Trenton and opportunities for partnerships.

Finally, I hope we can continue to demonstrate that progressive government is good and effective government.

None of this would be possible without the great work of our dedicated staff and the many volunteers on our boards and commissions, who make Princeton such a special community. This has been epitomized by the recent response to the tragic fire at Griggs Farm. The mayor mentioned the first responders – fire, first aid, police and OEM – who have worked around the clock in response; I also want to call out the remarkable community response, as our staff and so many volunteers and civic institutions have come together to help address the needs of the families affected.

Our administrator Marc Dashield leads a tremendous team of dedicated staff. In particular, I want to call out several with whom I have the pleasure of working closely. Assistant Administrator and Health Officer Jeff Grosser has shepherded the health department through the accreditation process this year, a process that has helped strengthen our efforts to promote a healthy community. Elisa Neira, our director of our human services, works tirelessly and with poise and good humor to help the most vulnerable in our community. And Chief of Police Nick Sutter leads a department that is recognized statewide for its focus on strengthening ties to the community, making us all safer. They embody the best of Princeton.

Looking ahead to 2018, I’m honored to be serving on the Princeton Council and look forward to working with my colleagues and so many engaged citizens to ensure a vibrant, welcoming and sustainable Princeton.