



**Raymond A. Giacobbe**  
Mayor

# City of Rahway

Office of the Mayor

One City Hall Plaza  
Rahway, NJ 07065

Tel (732) 827-2009  
Fax (732) 574-0477  
mayor@cityofrahway.com

## Mayor Raymond A. Giacobbe's 2019 State of the City Address

Good Evening, Fellow Citizens of Rahway. I welcome you here tonight with a great sense of pride standing before all of you, excited to share with you the strides we've made in the past year and foreshadowing our pathway for the year ahead.

Before we move on, at this time, I would like to express how truly impressed I am with all of the talent that was represented here tonight. To see such thriving demonstrations of dedication and commitment to the Great City of Rahway is remarkable.

I would take another moment to acknowledge all of our performers and honorees. Thank you so much for being here tonight- let us give them all another round of applause.

In the audience tonight, we are amongst greatness. I would like to take this moment to recognize the dignitaries present, who represent our State, County, and local government with the same leadership characteristics I hold in high regard. Among us here today are:

Congressman Donald Payne, Jr.  
Assemblyman James J. Kennedy  
Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders members Angel G. Estrada, Sergio Granados,  
Andrea Staten, and Rebecca Williams  
Mayor Derek Armstead of Linden

The members of the Rahway City Council, who walk this walk with me day in and day out:

Council President, First Ward Councilman Rodney Farrar  
Council Vice President, Councilman At Large Jeremy Mojica  
Second Ward, Councilman Michael Cox  
Third Ward, Councilman Robert Bresenhan  
Fourth Ward, Councilman Dave Brown  
Fifth Ward, Councilwoman Jennifer Wenson-Maier  
Sixth Ward, Councilman Joseph Gibilisco  
Councilman At Large James Baker  
Councilwoman At Large Joanna Miles

I am beyond thankful to have such positive, dependable, and approachable leaders, who I can rely on at the beginning of my journey as Mayor. Not only do I consider them exemplary colleagues, I consider each and every one of them a friend. Thank you very much for being here tonight.

Speaking about my friends and family... I would like thank my beautiful wife, Laura, my children, Anabella and Raymond, my mother, Gina, because without her none of this would be possible and my stepfather Joe Bost for their ongoing support. Thank you to my brother Joey, my sister in law, Melissa, my grandparents, Raffio and Lorraine Giacobbe and my late

grandparents Vincent and Marianne Cimilluca. I want to further extend my thank you to: my father Ray, my in-laws—Calixto and Yolanda Guerra, my brother in law Manny, my sister in law Wanda, and to my cousins, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, and, especially, my uncle Vito. Thank you, thank you, thank you for always being there for me- I can never express enough gratitude for the care you all invest in me.

I want to express my deepest appreciation to the Union County Performing Arts Center Board Members, Staff, Volunteers, and Executive Director, Brian Remo for their ongoing partnership with the City of Rahway and for providing our space tonight, helping make this event possible.

Last year, I stood before you after a dream of mine came true at an unexpected rapid pace. Today, a year later, I can take a deep breath, take a moment to look back and share with you what we together as a community achieved with strides of harmony and success.

I want to especially acknowledge members of personal staff that are with me for the daily rise and grind. At this time, I would like to take an opportunity to announce to our City the newest addition to my team, our new Business Administrator, AJ Jalloh. AJ comes to Rahway with over 16 years of State and Local government experience and I believe he has a sense of vision and leadership that will serve the City well for many years.

In addition, I would also like to extend my sincerest gratitude to one of the most dedicated and hardworking assets on my team, our Human Resources Coordinator, Michelle Dalesandris. Also working alongside of me and helping to achieve our City's mission are Joe Brown, Heather Russo, and Matthew Pukavich. I truly appreciate all of your hard work and dedication.

Unifying symbols of our community emerge through collaborative efforts. This past year, I have had the privilege getting to know many of you. As you know, I pride myself on my open-door policy- and many of you took me up on that offer!

Through the elements of teamwork, commitment, and friendship, many of you here tonight have guided me in the direction of what is important to the community as a whole. As a result, the City of Rahway's operating departments have really gained an improved amount of traction, community responsiveness, and creating a direct positive impact to those who matter...you!

Last year, I shared my vision for Rahway's 2030 Initiative. Today, I would like to share with you how far we have come in just one short year.

Our Operating Departments are the backbone of local government and are always hard at work. They are the foundation my administration. I would like to take some time and recognize, acknowledge, and extend my appreciation for their contributions.

Let us start with the gentlemen and ladies we all know and love. Without them this place would be an absolute mess, literally. I am of course talking about our Department of Public Works. I cannot be prouder to stand before you today and share with you, that our Director, Mike Smalling, was named Director of the Year by the American Public Works Association. Furthermore, under his leadership, the City of Rahway was re-designated as a Tree City through the Arbor Day Foundation and planted over a 100 new trees. Mike is truly deserving of our acknowledgment and appreciation.

Not only does the DPW serve our city, but we also extend our efficiencies and resources through shared services agreements. For example, our Bulk Waste pick-up with Kenilworth. Earlier this year we enhanced our shared serviced initiative by adding the City of Linden to our already

existing “Brine Maker Program.” That agreement also includes Clark, Kenilworth, and Roselle and enables us to share expenses and reduce the amount of salt placed on municipal roads.

However, Public works is more than trees and roadways. Looking forward, we are exploring initiatives to utilize solar power on viable municipal buildings. In addition, we are looking into replacing inefficient lighting in such areas as City owned parks, parking lots and tennis courts with much more efficient LED lighting. Using these Rahway 2030 strategies will have a positive economic impact, lower maintenance costs and provide more light in these areas.

On a larger scale, I would like to share with you, a series of meetings that took place a few weeks ago. I represented the City of Rahway at the Mayor’s Council for the Watershed Flood Control, in Washington, DC. By the way, the support and steadfast advocacy from our Senators and Members of Congress was outstanding. One of the initiatives discussed that day will be to repair and improve the Rahway River Levee system and the Department of Public Works will take the lead. I look forward to seeing the huge positive impact this will make on the community as a whole.

All of our efforts at DPW start at the rank and file. They are among the hardest working and most efficient members of our work force.

Many of our children dream of becoming police officers. When I look at our law enforcement officers, I think, rightfully so. We have the most respected force of men and women in New Jersey. With crime rates dropping each year, decreasing by almost 20% in 2018, Chief John Rodger implemented effective strategies not only to keep his entire force safe but also to ensure the safety of our entire community, and that is no easy task.

With a focus on community policing, our Rahway Police Department will continue to conduct Reach Out Rahway event that will coinciding with Rahway Youth Soccer opening day and the National Night Out Against Crime event in August.

In 2019, our police department will undertake several capital projects focusing on upgrading our 911 center and the completion of the Emergency Operations Center at the Parking Deck. In collaboration with the fire department, they will also replace all police, fire, and emergency management radio equipment. They will continue to implement successful campaigns such as Click it or Ticket, Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over, and partner with the New Jersey Motor Vehicles Commission to conduct Vehicle Inspection Check Points.

To compliment the Rahway 2030 Initiative of installing new bikeways, our traffic officers are going to be developing Safe Bicycling Training. We look forward to seeing them out and about.

At this time, I would like to recognize and show my respect and appreciation for the service that all our officers provide on a daily basis. Thank you!

A discussion of our emergency service providers would be far from complete without singling out our Fire Department. It has been said that “Under pressure, you don’t rise to the occasion, you sink to the level of your training and that’s why we train so hard.”

One of the exciting things as a new mayor is working alongside men and women who not only train themselves, but also train others to be the best they can be. Without skipping a beat, Michael Roberts, was formally sworn into his new role as the City of Rahway’s Fire Chief in June 2018. Thank you Chief Roberts for all your hard work and the seamless transition.

In the past year, the Fire Department attended to 2,584 total alarms. The most in the history of the Fire Department. When not attending this historical amount of calls, our department trained all members in “Ice Rescue” and four members completed “swift water technician rescue training.”

In response to the opioid epidemic that is tragically impacting our nation, I am proud to say in addition to the police department each and every member of our Fire Department is trained in administering Narcan. As a 2019 Mayor’s Initiative, the Fire and Police Department joined a partnership with the Union County Prosecutor’s office to obtain their own host of Narcan kits to administer in case of an overdose. Additionally, the Rahway Prevention Coalition hosted free Narcan trainings open to all members of our community.

We are all grateful for the amount of time and commitment that our fire department personnel spend to hone their expertise to assist our community in times of need. I truly appreciate seeing them engage with our community at the ground level. Our Firefighters have visited all of our elementary schools and pre-schools for fire prevention week and participating in reading programs and career nights.

You are true role models for our youth! Thank you and keep up the great work.

The City of Rahway has a unique way of tying together our arts and businesses, through the Rahway Arts and Business Partnership. Although not an operating department, under the leadership of the Executive Director, Amy Garcia Phillips, and Managing Director, Ann Marie Williams, Rahway saw a big boom in businesses opening in 2018.

The Rahway Arts and Business Partnership working in collaboration with the Rahway Chamber of Commerce, provides an extremely supportive presence in our City. I am proud to say that last year the Chamber had their first female president, Audra Loccisano, followed, this year, by the youngest president in their history, Ralph Bahram. Working together these organizations supported the opening of 34 local businesses! These businesses range from restaurants, personal service providers, administrative offices, an art gallery, and Rahway’s very first yoga studio. I know we have all noticed that we have a couple of new cafés in town as well. An exciting metric of booming business in Rahway is that four businesses expanded and two of them expanded within the first year of their initial opening! Over the next few months, at least seven new businesses are preparing to open their doors. I cannot wait to welcome them to Rahway.

2018 was also a great year for events in Rahway hosted by the Rahway Arts and Business Partnership in collaboration with the City of Rahway to organize numerous events such as, Culture Crawl, Restaurant Week, and the Taste of Spring. I hope you will continue to enjoy the live music at the Paseo and Storytime on the Go at the Train Station Plaza from June through September. Of course, we can all look forward to our Big Thursdays events this summer, including Baile Latin dance parties in June, Movies on the Plaza in July and Mayor’s Concert Series in August, which this year will bring a diverse lineup of performers, including some of our great local talent.

Now at this time, I would like to direct your attention to the screen behind me for a depiction of how we fuse arts and business here in Rahway, narrated by UCPAC’s Executive Director Brian Remo.

Rahway is definitely happening!

The next department I would like to recognize is our Recreation Department. As a first year Director, Anthony Deige has been the epitome of working hard in silence and letting his success be the noise. Within the Department of Recreation, he oversees the Division of Senior Services and the Gallery Space.

In 2018, for the first time, Rahway offered free programming for those with special needs, such as sensory friendly films and an all-inclusive open gym. In addition to running these programs again this year; we've been in collaboration with the "Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders" and "Office for Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs" to debut more programming and not only for children but for adults as well.

The Recreation Center's private rental revenue saw an increase of 25% in 2018. This revenue goes directly back into the facility to cover the cost of new equipment, free programming and events to offer all Citizens of Rahway!

In 2018, in collaboration with our school district, we commenced a pilot program for summer baseball and softball camps for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. This program successfully introduced our young student athletes to future peers and teachers, easing their transition into high school. Because of the positive feedback from this program, we are excited to expand our summer camp programs to include basketball, track, soccer, volleyball, football, and wrestling.

I hope many of you participated in our Annual Ready Set Glow 5K Race. 2018 was the first time we organized the race internally and the result was an expanded event with lower cost. Last year's race involved 500 runners, which tripled the number of runners from the previous year! This year's race takes place on Thursday May 23 and will have an emphasis on making the race route more energizing with lots of glow decorations. I started training, so hopefully I will be running it this year. I will probably finish last, but I promise I will finish. I encourage you to sign up and I will see you at the starting line.

The State of New Jersey has an emphasis on "Mayor's Live Well Campaigns." This year, at the League of Municipalities, the City of Rahway had an opportunity to present our campaign at a seminar and I participated in a Comcast interview regarding a few of our initiatives. We had our first ever fitness crawl during Winter Wonderland despite the freezing cold. Thank you to The New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute for the donation of \$5,000 to making this event possible.

Of course, since it has always been a passion of mine, the focus on health and wellness will continue to expand in 2019. Aligning with our Rahway 2030 Initiatives, members of the Rahway City Council passed an Ordinance designating bikeways throughout our City and we are hopeful that we are going to participate in a "Bike-Share" program with fellow municipalities. I am extremely excited for this program and will keep you informed as details are revealed.

I have always believed that our senior citizens are among the treasures of the community, because they supply the foundation and the knowledge for us to continue moving forward. Focusing on their health and wellness is the Division of Senior Services. With each passing year, it is important to keep a balanced, active, and healthy lifestyle. Offering fitness programs such as walk and tone, gentle-cise, and line dancing. The Division of Senior Services also offers mentally stimulating activities such as cross-stitch, garden clubs, and quilting. We also offer an array of life skill activities for our seniors such as free income tax help, property tax reimbursements, and AARP Driver Safety Courses. The Senior Citizen Center organizes many events. A few of my favorites are the, Senior Citizen Prom, Holiday Luncheons, Bingo and the

Mayor's Birthday Breakfast Club Celebration. I always look forward to seeing our seniors at one of our many seasonal programs.

The Recreation Department also oversees the Gallery Space, which was greatly expanded this past year. In 2018, we saw the debut of Art Classes and workshops such as sculpture, cartooning, portrait painting, stained glass, and drawing classes all came to fruition thanks to the H.E.A.R.T. grant, which we were awarded by Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Last month we had our second annual exhibit celebrating African American art and culture. The artists' reception was extremely well attended, with those on hand viewing the beautiful artwork and impactful performance. In September, we will host our first annual Hispanic Heritage Exhibit, at the Gallery Space in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month.

I would like to speak next about a department that touches nearly every aspect of our community, the Department of Community of Development. I have gotten to know Director Jackie Foushee, extremely well. I have heard it said that "The mind is like water. When it is turbulent, it is difficult to see. When it's calm, everything becomes clear." Her clear and calm sense of leadership cannot go unnoticed. Overseeing the Divisions of Health, Engineering, Building, Planning, and Zoning, her role is extremely dynamic and her department achieved many successes in the past year.

Throughout my years in construction, I visited the Rahway Building Division many times. I was always greeted with a smile and treated professionally by the staff. Our inspectors are working hard on continuing education, to obtain and maintain multiple discipline licenses to make our enforcing agency more versatile. Their friendly professional approach makes the process of inspections effortless for everyone involved.

Our Division of Health helps ensure our community's wellness. I have always felt that if health is a gift then prevention is the key. We have and will continue to offer free flu shots to all uninsured and underinsured residents. We also provide free immunization clinics for children missing immunization requirements entering or enrolled in the public-school system.

Perhaps most importantly, we have substantially completed an upgrade to the City's Water Treatment Plant. This includes the filtration system and an upgrade to the facility campus. The purpose is to utilize the state-of-the-art equipment for cleaning and monitoring our City's potable water, which helps assure continued compliance with the stringent standards of the Safe Drinking Water Act and provides high quality water for our residents.

Projects such as these require the constant diligent oversight provided by the Division of Engineering. This past year, we have received \$700,000 in grant funding and used that for roadway improvements including sealing more than 77,000 linear feet of roadway cracks, resurfacing 7,000 feet of roads, and repairing sidewalks in front of approximately 50 properties. While the Engineering Division's work is often not visible and may not be glamorous, it is vital and is greatly appreciated.

Fiscal Responsibility. Diligence. Accuracy. Foresight. When you are describing a municipal finance department, this is exactly what you want, and this is exactly what you get in the City of Rahway. Under the Leadership of Chief Financial Officer, Frank Ruggerio, the department prepared meticulous annual budgets, and has diligently worked on a daily basis to prepare, analyze, and review monthly reports on a consistent basis. Frank and his staff were integral to

the successful transition from Parking Authority to the Division of Parking. This organizational change will provide an enhanced revenue stream and efficient use of our parking assets.

There is a huge intersection between law and government, and the City of Rahway's Legal team, Rainone Coughlin & Minchello Attorneys at Law, does an impeccable job furthering our mission. Director of Law, Lou Rainone, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, and Partner Dave Minchello all bring unique attributes. Their knowledge, sophistication, and clear approach enhances our community as a whole in each and every way.

However, the point person that must deal with me on a daily basis – and trust me it's not easy – and moves at the Rapid Rahway pace, is Anne Rowan, Esquire. She understands how we as a City think and operate because she is one of Rahway's Daughters. I want to thank our entire Legal Team for their never-ending support not only this year but for many years to come.

While we are talking about law, I would like to mention, Rahway's municipal court staff. Despite their mandated separation of duties, under the leadership of Marylene Sheppard, they always conduct themselves in the utmost professional, courteous, and thorough manner.

Leadership is never singular. In a good organization, it is plural. Guided by Rayna Harris, the City Clerk's office maintains the archives of Public Records, such as books, deeds, bonds, contracts, and records of the municipal corporation. The office acts as the critical conduit between the City Council and myself. If you come to the City Council Meetings, and I encourage you all to do so, you will see the City Clerk's office in action!

Before closing, the final entity, I would like to recognize is the Redevelopment Agency. Rahway has become a leader in development of transit-orientated projects. With the train station and the UCPAC as the cornerstones of our City. Through a responsible redevelopment plan, we turned our downtown area into a thriving transit village.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce our new Executive Director of the Redevelopment Agency, Bob Landolfi. Bob is extremely precise, detail orientated, and attentive, which as you can imagine, is required at this point in our phase of redevelopment here in Rahway. Partnering with Mr. Landolfi is Cindy Solomon our newly appointed Deputy Executive Director. She possesses the institutional knowledge to know where we came from and help guide us where we are going.

So, let me share with you where we are headed. The first major project, I would like to highlight is located on East Cherry Street- the Gramercy, which has 45 units, and is now open for business! On Elizabeth Avenue, the 487-unit Brownstone development is under construction, with its doors expected to open in 2020. The Reva complex is located on Main Street will supply 219 units and is planned to open October 2019. The Monroe Project, located on the corner of Monroe and Main has 196 units and is expected to open their phase one in fall 2019.

We look forward to welcoming all the new residents into our town.

One of the most frequently asked questions I am asked as Mayor is "How are you going to stabilize taxes?" Using our redevelopment strategies optimizing PILOT programs, will strike a long-term balance between public and private economic needs ultimately helping in the stabilization of taxes.

The second question I receive surrounds the issue regarding parking. With the growth we are fortunate to experience comes an increased need for parking. The City is currently in the midst

of a comprehensive parking study, which will yield short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations to optimize our parking resources.

Tonight, I spoke to you about the inner workings of our City and how the relationships of each departments works together to build a firm foundation for this City. Being in the field of construction, I can appreciate the nuts and bolts operation it takes and how a productive community interacts at every level beginning from the ground up.

Rome was not built in a day, but they were laying brick every hour. The moral of the story is that if something is worth doing, do it well. The same can be said for Rahway. We are working hard each and every day to make this the best City for every one of us, and the sense of pride I have standing here before you will never be diminished.

Focusing on finalizing a new master plan, honing precise redevelopment plans, and ensuring the safety and welfare for all of our Citizens. I am excited to work with you in moving Rahway forward in 2019 and beyond. I would like to close with a quote from George Bernard Shaw:

“I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long I live, it is my privilege, to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live.”

Ladies and gentlemen, the state of our City is strong! Thank you for joining me this evening. God bless and have a good night!