

PRESS RELEASE

Mayor Owen Henry Says “The Lightshow Was Always A Go!”

The Mayor Vows A Safe and Happy Event for Residents and Attendees.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OLD BRIDGE, New Jersey, December 5, 2018 - The Christmas light display on Central Ave. was always a go says Old Bridge Mayor Owen Henry. “Contrary to the inaccurate media reports that have gone viral across the nation, I have always held the same position stating that the show was a go, but with the proper safety measures in place” said the Mayor.

The Christmas display has grown enormously popular over the past 3 years due to television coverage and the event organizer’s promotions on social media. Local residents of the narrow, dead end street where the display is located have been growing increasingly concerned as each holiday season approaches and has necessitated the need for additional police resources.

The attraction, according to the organizer himself, draws thousands of spectators. This has caused major traffic jams along dark, dead end streets which have only one way in and out, leaving many residents’ driveways blocked and their cars trapped. This naturally has caused the Police Department and residents to be alarmingly concerned since it would be difficult to reach someone in an emergency at the end of the long narrow dead end street. The Mayor’s office has also received emails and numerous calls from concerned residents who are worried about the streets being blocked and being trapped with no way out.

The Mayor’s office stated, “Mayor Henry is a strong advocate for all holiday celebrations, and has always reveled in the Christmas spirit having the public complex decorated with Christmas trees, a Menorah, lights and even a nativity scene. However, it is his civic duty and responsibility to listen to the concerns of all residents. When having thousands of spectators and hundreds upon hundreds of cars bottlenecked on a dead end street with no outlet, forcing people to double park in the middle of the road and potentially blocking emergency service vehicles in the event one was needed. This also forces pedestrians to walk down the middle of the dark narrow street, which is also a public safety issue, especially when there are very young children.”

It was only last week when a resident on that very same block required emergency medical services and was transported to a local hospital. If this had occurred during the time of the display and the police were not keeping order, it would have been a nightmare trying to get through the gridlock and the resident's well-being may have been compromised.

The media coverage has ignored the Mayor's safety concerns. When in reality, he has ensured that the show will go on, just with the proper safety personnel and measures in place. At no point did the Mayor cancel or suggest cancelling the display. It is the Mayor's his job to listen to all residents and ensure not only their safety, but the safety any Township visitor, which he has and will continue to do."

The media has treated the Mayor "particularly unfairly", and they are not reporting the whole story. The Mayor does not have the authority to mandate that taxpayers cover these burdensome costs, when existing Township policy in similar type of events requires the event organizers to cover the additional costs.

Mayor Henry released the following statement:

"As Mayor of our beautiful town, I rejoice in seeing families enjoying the holidays together, which is why it's so important to ensure these families, many with young children, who attend this event are provided with the proper safety measures in place. My first and foremost duty as Mayor is to make sure our residents are safe, and that's why I have made sure we have adequate Police coverage, including Auxiliary police, together with other township resources, to work the event. These precautions do not come without an added cost. Like other events throughout the year, the organizers typically are required to cover the cost for the extra police detail that is needed. This occurs for similar events regardless of the organizer, and it would not be fair to force residents to pay tax dollars for events where organizers refuse to pay for the added security costs. With that being said, I have done everything within my authority as Mayor to find an amicable solution, and have instructed the Old Bridge Township Police to ensure the safety of the event for residents and attendees. I love this town and our residents. One thing you can always count on is that I strive to do the right thing of ensuring that public health and safety are paramount, and no amount of false news or quips from those looking to score political points will stop that. I wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season and a very Merry Christmas.

A spokesperson at the Mayor's office can be reached at 732-721-5600 ext. 2040 or by email at ilar-moore@oldbridge.com