

State of the Town Address

January 6, 2026

Good morning, folks, and thank you all for being here.

At the beginning of a new year, it's important to pause and take stock. To reflect on the work we've done together, and to be clear about the responsibility we carry into the year ahead.

Now before I report on the State of the Town, I want to take a moment to recognize the people who carry this work forward every single day – our Town staff.

You are often the first people residents turn to when they need help, guidance, or reassurance. You show up day after day, often quietly and without recognition, and this Town depends on you. Thank you, all, for your service to our community.

And to our nonprofit organizations and community partners. Your work is essential. You extend the reach of local government in ways that truly matter. East Hampton is stronger because of you.

Serving in local government teaches you very quickly that responsibility is about being accountable to the people you serve. Under my leadership, that accountability has guided every major decision this administration has made. The choices we make here at the dais – do not stay in reports, resolutions, or meeting rooms. They show up in people's lives every day.

They show up in whether a high school student can access mental health services.

In whether a senior can get the support they need to remain independent in their own home.

In whether a family can safely spend a hot summer's day at the beach.

In whether a homeowner can afford to install a low nitrogen septic system without putting their finances at risk.

And in whether working parents can count on stable, dependable childcare.

Fiscal Responsibility

To show up for people consistently, we have to make sure the Town itself is strong, prepared, and able to do its work well. Care is not only about intention. It is also about capacity.

Over the last ten years, East Hampton's year-round population has grown by 35%. That growth brings energy, opportunity, and new voices into our community, but it also brings responsibility.

It means more families relying on Town services. More calls for help. And more daily interactions with local government. Caring for our community, today, requires us to make sure

our services, infrastructure, and staffing keep pace with the people who call this place home, year-round, and we have made deliberate choices to do exactly that.

Over the past year, under my administration, East Hampton maintained its Aaa credit rating and received a clean independent audit of its financial statements. This financial strength allows us to plan responsibly, invest in long-term priorities, and move into the year ahead on solid footing.

We closed more than one hundred capital projects, strengthened core services, and continued modernizing Town operations so residents can interact with their local government more easily and efficiently.

During my time as Supervisor, East Hampton has secured more State investment than at any point in our history. That did not happen by chance. It reflects consistent advocacy, credible planning, follow-through, and real relationship building with our friends in government across all levels. And next week, I will be traveling to Albany for Governor Hochul's State of the State Address and will continue pressing for New York State to invest in our town, because these partnerships translate directly into facilities, services, and opportunities for our residents.

Care also means communicating clearly and consistently. This past summer, our administration launched the Town's first community-wide newsletter. In 2026, that newsletter will continue to reach every home, because clear, accessible information is one of the simplest and most important ways local government shows respect for the people it serves.

Care also means modernizing the way we do business. Over the past year, and continuing into 2026, we are expanding opportunities for residents to pay by credit or debit card.

Water Quality

Protecting water quality is one of the most important ways we care for our environment and the health of our community.

In 2025 alone the Town approved 174 applications through our septic incentive program. Since the program began, nearly 1,000 nitrogen-reducing systems have been installed across East Hampton, representing more than \$14 million invested in protecting groundwater, ponds, bays, and harbors. Behind each of those systems is a homeowner making a real decision. A decision to invest in their property, to protect our waters, and to do their part for the larger community. Our goal in the coming year is to increase septic installations by 20 percent, focusing on priority watersheds where improvements have the greatest impact.

Caring for our community also means capturing and treating stormwater runoff before it enters sensitive waterways. Through the Community Preservation Fund Water Quality Program we have invested nearly \$10 million across 55 projects designed to do just that.

In 2026, several CPF Water Quality projects are moving from planning into construction.

At Cove Hollow, the Town will advance a nature-based solution to mimic natural hydrology that will capture and treat runoff before it enters Georgica Pond. This drainage system will enhance water quality, mitigate flood risks, and bolster resilience by protecting surrounding infrastructure and ecosystems against storm events and tidal surges.

Water quality improvements are also planned at the West Lake Boat Launch, where stormwater controls will be installed to reduce pollution entering Lake Montauk. These improvements support access while protecting one of the Town's most important working and recreational waterways.

In Three Mile Harbor, the Town will continue advancing oyster reef construction as a tool to improve water quality and support marine habitat.

Coastal Resiliency

We also have a responsibility to care for our shoreline which safeguards our neighborhoods and business districts and is the foundation of our local economy.

As part of FIMP, the Montauk Coastal Storm Risk Management Project was engineered to protect Downtown Montauk from coastal storm damage. This federally authorized \$184 million project focuses on planned dune nourishment, strengthening natural defenses over time rather than relying on repeated emergency repairs. Under my administration, East Hampton has committed nearly \$28 million over 30 years to secure consistent protection for the Montauk community.

That same sense of responsibility guided other coastal actions this past year.

At Ditch Plains, the Town completed dune reconstruction using approximately 20,000 cubic yards of sand. Funded in part by New York State, this work restored a critical protective barrier while preserving public access to one of our most beloved beaches.

At Lake Montauk, when federal funding for planned inlet dredging fell short, we made the decision to step in. Under my leadership, we approved \$1.1 million to fully fund the project using South Fork Wind Host Community Agreement revenue. That investment protects commercial fishing livelihoods, supports safe navigation, and helps preserve one of the region's most important working harbors.

In 2026, the Sustainable Planning Coastal Communities work in Montauk will take center stage. This work is funded by a \$600,000 grant from New York State and will underwrite a community-driven planning process focused on reducing coastal risk, guiding future zoning and building code updates, and protecting the natural resources that support Montauk's economy and quality of life.

Natural Environment

Caring for the place we share also means recognizing new risks.

Our forests are home to a rich diversity of plants and wildlife, but they are also increasingly vulnerable to wildfire due to a warming climate. To reduce risks, Governor Hochul awarded a \$2.2 million contract for wildfire mitigation work in Napeague and Hither Hills State Parks. For Town-owned properties, we too have hired Star Tree Prescribed Fire LLC to assess fire risk and improve conditions so fire loads can be reduced and fire access improved.

This work is about safety. It is about giving our volunteer firefighters clearer access, fewer hazards, and safer conditions when they are called into dangerous situations. And it's about protecting lives and property at nearby homes.

In 2025 the Town preserved nine properties totaling more than 36 acres. Today, East Hampton manages more than 5,800 acres of preserved land, protecting habitat, supporting agriculture, and ensuring public access for future generations.

That responsibility also means investing in the tools that help us make thoughtful, informed decisions about our land and natural resources.

Last month, under my administration, the Town received a \$200,000 award through New York State's Climate Smart Communities Program. This funding will allow East Hampton to develop a Natural Resources Inventory, creating a centralized, townwide resource that brings together data on our land, water, and natural systems.

This inventory will guide conservation efforts, support land management strategies, and inform land use planning, helping to ensure that decisions made today are grounded in a clear understanding of the resources we are responsible for protecting.

Affordable Housing

Caring for our community means providing stable housing opportunities for Town residents while ensuring it fits and functions within the larger community.

Just two weeks ago, the Town received new funding that directly supports this work. We have been awarded more than \$3 million through the State's Pro Housing Supply Funds Program to build the public water and waste water treatment infrastructure needed for the new affordable housing development along Route 114. This development will be owned and operated by the East Hampton Housing Authority, with all 50 apartments reserved for individuals and families who live and work here. This grant will be matched by monies from the Community Housing Fund for a total investment of \$6.3 million.

At 109 Hampton Street in Sag Harbor the Town committed \$1.5 million of Community Housing Fund monies to preserve four existing rental units for local residents. That project was made possible through a close partnership with the Village of Sag Harbor, including the mayor and village trustees, the Town Board and the East Hampton Housing Authority. This purchase keeps

these units affordable in perpetuity and demonstrates what can be accomplished when we work together.

As we move through 2026 we will continue encouraging accessory dwelling units as a way to create modest, neighborhood-scale housing. In the coming year, we will also launch an ADU construction loan program, funded by the Community Housing Fund, to help homeowners turn these opportunities into reality.

We will also look to expand the First-Time Homebuyer Down Payment Assistance Program, offering interest-free assistance of up to \$30,000 to qualifying buyers.

These tools are about adding housing thoughtfully, in ways that fit our community and help people stay close to family, work, and the places where they grew up.

Human Services

Support for seniors is another essential part of caring for our community.

In 2025 the Human Services Department provided 12,500 transportation rides to seniors, helping residents reach medical appointments, grocery stores, and essential services.

The Nutrition Program prepared and served more than 28,000 meals, while offering a choice for seniors – dine at the center or enjoy their meals at home. In 2026, Suffolk County will be providing funding for 40,000 meals, enabling the Town to expand these programs and serve even more of our community than ever before.

Through Wellness 60+, residents took part in programs that support strength, balance, nutrition, and social connection. As we move into 2026, the Town will continue to expand these offerings in collaboration with the YMCA and the Springs Improvement Society, adding classes and increasing access so more residents can participate.

The Montauk Playhouse is a powerful example of what sustained local leadership can deliver. After years of uncertainty, our administration provided the support to move this project forward and saw it through to completion.

Today, the Playhouse is a year-round center for recreation, senior nutrition, childcare, and the arts. The addition of the new section means swim lessons for children, therapy and wellness programs for seniors, and a space for cultural programming. The Playhouse, with nearly 50,000 square feet of finished space, now serves as a community gathering place that brings people together across generations.

Building on the success of the Montauk Playhouse, we will be rethinking the future of the Senior Center, as a reimaged Community Center for all ages. The Town Board will be creating an advisory committee made up of community members to help guide how this expanded, reimaged space can best serve people at every stage of life. This is about making sure the

Community Center reflects how people recreate, socialize, and support one another today, and about shaping a space that belongs to the whole community.

Caring for families also means making sure working parents have the support they need. In 2026, the Town will continue advancing childcare support for working families, building on partnerships with organizations like Project MOST and Eleanor Whitmore Early Childhood Center to expand access, affordability, and stability for parents and caregivers across the community.

Latino Community

Caring for a community starts with listening, and making sure people know they are not alone.

Our Latino and immigrant neighbors are an integral part of our ‘one’ community. They are raising families, showing up early to work, attending religious services, and doing everything they can to build a better future. East Hampton is their home.

But I know right now, many of these families are living in fear. The fear of being separated goes against the values we try to live by here: compassion, dignity, and keeping families together.

That is why, in 2026, under my leadership, the Town will establish a Latino Advisory Committee. This committee will advise the Town Board, help identify barriers to access to information, services, and resources, elevate community concerns, and provide guidance on policies and public safety practices so that Town government better reflects and serves all our residents. It will be a place where voices are heard, experiences are understood, concerns are shared, and trust can grow.

Recreation

Caring for our community also means investing in the shared spaces where people gather, play, and connect. One of the moments that best captured the spirit of this past year was the completion of the new year-round athletic field at the Honorable Fred W. Thiele Recreational Facility. This was a project our administration committed to, prioritized, delivered, and is already seeing come to life. The field was built to serve our students, our athletes, and our families. It provides a safe, high-quality, year-round home for school sports and community use, and reflects a clear belief that investing in young people and shared spaces strengthens the entire community. This fall, we were proud to host Bonac Football's homecoming game on the new field. Under the lights, that night captured the pride of our students, our families, and local government delivering on its promises.

In 2026, the Town will expand recreational opportunities at several of our parks including a larger, ADA accessible playground at Maidstone Park, upgraded playground facilities and multi-sports areas at the Lt. Lee Hayes Youth Park, the completion of a full 18-hole disc golf course at

Buckskill Meadow, and ten new pickleball courts – two at Abrahams Path and eight at the Honorable Fred W. Thiele Recreational Facility. These investments support recreation for residents of all ages and help ensure our public spaces remain safe, welcoming, and well cared for.

Historic Preservation

Caring for this community also means honoring its history. In 2026, the Town will continue advancing restoration work on several historic structures on CPF properties, including the Carl Fisher House, the Edwards House at Duck Creek, the Osborn House on Wainscott Main Street, and the Parsons Dodge House on Springs Fireplace Road. These efforts help preserve East Hampton's historic character while ensuring these properties can be stewarded responsibly for future generations.

Public Safety

To support safe and responsible use of our waters, the Town will increase Marine Patrol staffing in 2026 and continue investing in boat safety education. These efforts help protect residents, visitors, and first responders while preserving the working and recreational character of our harbors.

We are also seeing real safety improvements on our roads. The new roundabout at Stephen Hands Path, Two Holes of Water Road, and Long Lane has replaced a high-risk intersection and is already improving traffic flow and reducing conflict points. This is the kind of practical infrastructure investment that protects residents and keeps people moving safely.

In 2026 we will also hire three additional police officers to strengthen coverage and support the growing demands placed on our department. And later this week, the Town will officially assume primary responsibility for 911 call answering. This transition reflects careful planning, investment in personnel, and a clear focus on making sure help is there when residents need it most.

Staffing

Caring for people also means caring for the workforce that delivers these services every day.

That care must be tangible. Through our collective bargaining agreement with the CSEA, we have put more money directly into employees' pockets. These agreements recognize the value of the work our staff does and ensures that Town employment remains a viable path for people building their lives here. Investing in our workforce is not separate from fiscal responsibility. It is how we deliver reliable services and justify the investments reflected in our budget.

In 2025, the Town adopted paid parental leave, flex time and remote work policies, invested in leadership across departments, and continued building stability within the workforce.

Today the Town employs 335 full-time employees, with 9 open positions, meaning more than 97% of our positions are filled. That stability matters. It means residents are being served, institutional knowledge is being retained, and departments are able to plan and function effectively.

It also tells an important story about who is choosing to work here. Twenty-one percent of our year-round workforce is age 30 or younger. By comparison, that same age group makes up roughly 7 to 9% of the federal workforce. That means East Hampton is attracting younger people who want to build careers in public service, stay in their community, and see local government as a place where they can grow.

That is not an accident. It reflects intentional policies, supportive workplaces, and a belief that investing in people is essential to strong public service. As we move through 2026, we will continue to focus on training and workplace support, recognizing that strong services, thoughtful decision-making, and care for our community all depend on the people doing the work.

Conclusion

Everything I have shared today comes back to something very simple. East Hampton works when we care for one another.

When we remember that behind every program, every budget decision, and every long-term plan are people. People who want to stay, who want to contribute, and who want to feel that this place cares about them in return.

Local government, at its best, is present. It listens. It responds. And it treats people with respect and compassion. That is the kind of government we are committed to here.

This is not one person's work. It is not one year's work. It is the work of a community that believes in showing up for one another.

As we move through 2026 together, my hope is that we continue to lean into what makes East Hampton special. A deep love of place. A respect for one another. And a shared responsibility to care for this community we all call home. If we do that, I am confident in what lies ahead.

Thank you for being part of this community. Thank you for showing up. And thank you for the privilege of serving as your Town Supervisor.