**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SPEECH**

**FOR**

**PAUL PAGLIA**

Hello everyone, and thank you all for being here to support the Setauket Fire Department. The one thing we learn as we live that is **certain** is that things change. Nothing lasts forever, nor should it. In life, all seasons and reasons evolve and with each shift and each adjustment, improvement, and election, it’s important to acknowledge the foundations that inform us, the challenges we faced, and the progress that we made as we did our best to fulfill our mission and support all of the people .... our fellow firefighters as well as the residents of this community. To be of service is the greatest gift one can give to others... and to him- or herself.

As I step down from my duties as Fire Commissioner, I have been spending a great deal of time thinking about my past tenure and the partnerships and support of this great team. No one works in a vacuum and no one achieves anything of value on their own. I’m definitely no exception and I’d like to acknowledge the great members of our Setauket Firefighting team....

Jay Gardner, to say that we’re all better off to have benefited from your leadership as Chairman of the Board would be an understatement. When you were brought in as Commissioner, we were impressed with the thought of you... with your knowledge, skills and experience in both business and EMS. I think in looking back, we can see that hindsight is sharper than 20/20. Your appointment was the best thing for the community as well as the board. You have a special gift that leaves your colleagues and co-workers better off for having known and worked with you and believe me when I say I am definitely speaking from experience!!! Your professionalism made my job easier. You lifted and encouraged our team and for that, thank you.

Kevin Yoos.... ahhhhh Kevin!!! We’ve known each other since you were a kid.... I witnessed your growth from that boy to a young man and I saw as your knowledge and skills grew along with you. Your experience with the FDNY, your understanding of just what it means to be a Fire Chief, your abilities, and your considerable contribution to the betterment of the department has been great for the community and for the Board. It’s easy to understand why everyone appreciates you! Thank you for all that you’ve done and will continue to do.

Chris Paglia, with your considerable experience and with over twenty years of service as a firefighter in New York City and as a volunteer firefighter, I can easily say that I am grateful you’ve been on my team. Your contribution to this town and its well being... as well as all you do elsewhere, seals the deal... we all know your value and honestly, I can’t think of the words to really fully express my gratitude, so, maybe get this on tape and repeat it many times, and you’ll begin to get the appreciation! (**Wait for the laugh**). I also have to say, on another note, that while it’s been my pleasure to work with Chris professionally, on a personal note, it’s meant the world to me to have my cousin Chris sit with me on the Board and work with me side by side. Chris, we may be cousins, but I love you like a brother... (**If you want to make a joke you can say**)... you know... the kind that get along!!! (**And wait for the laugh**).

Anthony Tadarro, since your election to the Board last December, I have found you to be a person who is keenly aware of his responsibilities, determined to advocate for his causes and mandates, and enthusiastic, passionate, and dedicated to the position you’ve been holding for the past year. Thank you for all that you do to make our community a better, safer place.

David Sterne, you’re the District Manager, but I hope you know you’re more than that to me. When I first became Commissioner, you patiently and generously taught me the procedures... you **REALLY** showed me the **ropes** (**If you want to make a joke you can say**).... and the schedules... and the requisitions.... (**or name some of the items associated with the job and wait for the laugh).** All jokes aside, you taught me to be fair and impartial... and this may not sound too impartial, but to me, you were one of the best past managers I’ve had the privilege to work with. I watched as you took your job to heart... really...and you proceeded with a rare and respected passion. I’m so grateful that, over our professional time together, you became more of a friend and I want you to know that as I take all that I’ve learned from you in the past five years of our term, I also take with me your voice in my conscience, reminding and encouraging me to do the right thing.... thank you for that!

Steve Albanese, our District Accountant... since you’re our **numbers** man, I want to express **one thousand thanks** while simultaneously recognizing and letting the world know that you truly are **one of a kind**... you kept the district balance, you did your best to hold us down under the cap, and while a couple of times we may have somewhat over-shot our goal.... like twice.... but **who’s counting**??? (**Wait for the laugh**) we all saw that your knowledge of accounting, your integrity, your wise choices and wiser investments continue to leave us in better financial shape than we would have projected. I really appreciate your contribution. And I must add that on a personal note, man, you know how to make me laugh!!! I’m glad we’ve become good friends. Thanks!

To Howard Bergson, our Attorney for the district, in appreciation of your counsel... your watchful eye and ability to field adversity... all of which allows us to focus on our jobs, Thank You!! .

And I must say...Where would we be without the keen observation and the helping hands of our support staff??? To all of you District Office employees, thank you for the endless hours you worked and did whatever was needed to see to it that in my roll as Commissioner, I had whatever was needed at any given time. I think it’s really important for our neighbors... taxpayers... members of this community really know, unequivocally, that we have a support team that is honest and thoughtful and those traits have real value in this world...And in this profession.

I was elected to protect our community, and let me just say, and I mean this in the best way possible, our community got **what it deserved**.... quicker response times, volunteers and paid firefighters ready, around the clock, 24/7 to protect and serve this great community of ours. During my tenure, we made significant strides.... After several attempts, we got a bond passed to build a new firehouse.... that project took a while, made itself known to several prior boards, but the tenacity of this board finally bore fruit... we broke ground on that new firehouse and it’s almost complete. We got new branding, new uniforms, great looking patches....And now our team proudly represents. With a fresh new look comes a fresh spirit and our firefighters continue to rededicate themselves to the safety and well being of our neighbors every day. Our accountants continued to do impeccable work both within our offices and in cooperation with external audits. Our audits are always approved and we are proud of the honesty and integrity practiced by this group.

During my tenure, the village of Oldfield became a part of our fire district.... we are proud to protect and serve our neighbors in that town. We were able to purchase new Scot packs. This is clearly a priority and they’re especially needed in crises... should they arise... We also passed a referendum to purchase an entirely new radio infrastructure.... all new portable radios. Of course the irony is that we pray every day that we **never** have to use this equipment, but its presence is critical to our effectiveness and success as a firefighting team.

Our department was also the first district in Suffolk County to hire paid, professional fire fighters. Response time was reduced significantly. Our timing went from an average of twelve minutes down to **FOUR** minutes.

I don’t know how many of you know this, but ever since I was a kid... from the time I was just fourteen years old, I wanted to be a firefighter and it has always been my mission in life to serve. It has been my honor to serve **WITH** and **FOR** all of you. There’s an expression that teaches us, “I am part of all that I have met.” My time in service in all capacities in the Setauket Fire Department has been one of the highlights of my life. I got to learn from the best. I got to walk in the footsteps of those dedicated commissioners, marshals, and firefighters who preceded us and taught all of us. I am proud to be a part of this community and I am even prouder to have all of you... and all of this immeasurable experience and connection be an important, integral, part of my life.

Although I bid farewell with a considerable amount of sadness, I am confident that my contribution, in partnership with all of my colleagues, has left all of us in the department, and in Setauket and surrounding communities, in a better, safer place.

To Paul Rodier, Chief Elect, your adaptability and professional respect for everyone is encouraging and your patience and restraint have been a model to emulate. Micromanaging was fortunately not something you did, and really, you stepped in only when someone’s well being was at stake, which was rare. To Jay Wasterwitz, our Commissioner elect, I would like to congratulate you and wish you all the best with your new responsibilities. Remember that you, too, are part of all that you have met and will meet. The beauty... and the challenge of what we do is that we work within a legacy... and we don’t operate in a vacuum. If any job ever called for teamwork, it’s any function in a fire department. Our lives are literally in each other’s hands, and as Commissioner, you are the guide, the Yoda, the voice of reason. Fulfilling this position is a process. It takes layers of experience and diplomacy, while working with the legacy of those who preceded. As you adapt to the conditions of the present. It’s so important to get a real sense of who you are within the picture of the department, how to inspire, and most of all, how to listen and respond. I wish you all the best and I am confident that the foundations that have been built before you will serve you well.

Thank you all and may God bless!