

Mayor's Remarks March 24, 2026

Each of us has heard from residents, business owners and people from other towns about the spectacle they see at Town meetings caused primarily by people who don't live here. I can assure that we would rather to spend time in constructive discussion with our fellow residents but the 1st Amendment allows the public to speak at meetings even if they live elsewhere.

Many of you describe what you see and hear as "self-promoting antics", "rantings by people who don't give a damn about Cranford", "vulgar and embarrassing for our town" and "outside agitators and opportunists using Cranford meetings for their own agenda". Those are the mild comments I could repeat here tonight.

The worst – there are residents afraid to come meetings. Imagine that ...afraid to come to your own Town Hall.

These outside agitators have hijacked our meetings. Your meetings.

Township Committee has had Bylaws since many years with a section specifically about decorum at meetings.

You likely were unaware of these meeting rules because there wasn't a need to invoke them even at meetings where people were passionate and in disagreement about an issue. That changed when people brought loud speakers and blasted music in Council Chambers and props that interfered with everyone else's right to observe and hear the meeting. The Bylaws were amended to include a section to address those issues, the performances and the spectacles. I will repeat this is not a karaoke bar, a comedy club. We are here to conduct official business and we take that seriously.

Let me set the record straight. Cranford has not banned the National Anthem. Ridiculous. Nor did I describe the National Anthem as noise.

We have not banned cell phones unless they're being used as speakers.

We have not prevented anyone from speaking. Mr. Thilly himself has been coming to these meetings for years. Sometimes he spoke. Sometimes he stood silently. Sometimes he sang. No one stopped him.

There is no restriction to free speech. It's rather ironic that some people come to the microphone to complain that we are infringing on their right to free speech ...while they are speaking and exercising their right to free speech.

Carefully edited videos go out on You Tube and people from far and wide view them. As a result, myself and members of the Township Committee have been subjected to some of the most vile, vulgar phone messages and emails. Our employees who answer phones are subjected to this behavior. Some of the rhetoric borders on threatening.

So, to those of you from Plainfield, Fanwood, East Orange, Hudson County, Woodbridge, Edison and elsewhere who come to our meetings you have as much right as anyone to speak but I suggest you take a look at our town and all that it offers to residents, businesses and visitors. Our residents are proud of our history. We are proud of our community. We may sometimes disagree but when someone needs help we don't ever hesitate to step up. We're proud to live in Cranford, warts and all.

And none of your You Tube videos and FB posts can change that.