

SICTA

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Sea Isle City Taxpayers Association, Inc. – A non-profit taxpayer advocacy organization

PROPERTY REVALUATION

At their June meeting, the Commissioners introduced, without comment, an Ordinance (Ord.1396) calling for a revaluation of all property in the City. In response to a question from SICTA, the Commissioners indicated that the City had been directed by the County to undergo a new revaluation. When SICTA attempted to obtain a copy of the County Directive, it was indicated that, contrary to the Commissioners statements, the City had not been directed to do a revaluation. Rather, The Board of Commissioners were acting upon a recommendation of the City Tax Assessor.

The Assessor's recommendation is due to the fact that the ratio of property value to assessed value has decreased to 83.07% for the 2006 tax year. Taking a proactive role and performing a district wide reassessment for the 2008 tax year would be accomplished at a substantially less cost than if the City were to wait and be ordered to complete a full property evaluation.

In a related story, The Philadelphia Inquirer reported on June 26, 2006 that the median home price in Sea Isle City had increased from \$630,000 in 2004 to \$746,000 in 2005. This represents an increase of 18%.

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PETITION

TO CHANGE SEA ISLE CITY'S FORM OF GOVERNMENT

A petition to change the City's Commission form of government to a Mayor/Council form is currently in circulation. The petition seeks to place a question on the November 2006 election ballot, which will ask voters to approve a change to a form of government that would provide for the direct election of a Mayor and Five (5) Council members. Presently, voters elect three (3) Commissioners (Public Works, Public Safety, and Revenue/Finance) who then determine which of them will be designated as Mayor. Each Commissioner is independently responsible for the management of their respective operational area and they vote as a group in legislative and fiscal matters.



Under the proposed change to the Mayor/Council form, the Mayor is responsible for the entire administration of all city operating departments and submits the City's budget to the Council. The Mayor will also hire a Business Administrator who will be responsible for all administrative matters, including purchasing and personnel systems. The Mayor negotiates municipal contracts and may veto ordinances.

The Council will have responsibility for ordinances, resolutions, planning and zoning boards, city codes, passing/modifying the city budget and may override the Mayor's veto by a 2/3 vote.

To be placed on the November ballot, the petition must have the signatures of 25% (535) of the city's 2140 registered voters. If the voters approve the change to the Mayor/Council form, an election will be held in May 2007 for a Mayor and the Five (5) Council Members who would assume office July 1, 2007.

If you are registered to vote in Sea Isle City and would like to sign the petition, please contact any of the following: John Fee 263-6817, J B Flora 263-9357, Gerry Faiss 263-1462, Kevin Deely 263-0684 or Mary Tighe 263-6736.

Signing the petition does not commit you to a position on this issue at this time. Your signature will assure that the question will be on the ballot. Public meetings will be held in the Fall to provide additional information to assist you in your decision in November.



JUDGE REAPPOINTED

At their June meeting, the Board of Commissioners reappointed the Municipal Judge to a three year term. The Judge is known for telling homeowners that they should move out of town on weekends in order for group rentals to party without complaint all weekend. In 2005 SICTA estimated that the City lost a minimum of \$500,000 because of the Judge's refusal to impose the fines called for in the Rental Permit Ordinance.



YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE IN SEA ISLE CITY

The most common complaint SICTA receives from its non-resident members is that they have no voice in the operation of the City. However, a review of the Judge's decision in the challenge to the May 10, 2005 municipal election, appears to allow individuals the right to register to vote from their Sea Isle City address if they have a financial interest in the City. Judge Joseph Kane ruled 25 individuals, whose eligibility had been challenged, to be residents of the City even though they lived elsewhere and, in some cases, had drivers licenses with out of town addresses.

Since owning property in Sea Isle City represents a significant investment that affects one's financial interest, SICTA is asking couples owning property to consider having one person register to vote in Sea Isle. Approximately eighty percent of the properties in the City are owned by non-resident taxpayers. Having one person from each property register to vote would go a long way to breaking the hold local, special interest groups have on City matters.

The decision to where to vote is a personal issue for each person to determine. The decision could be influenced by one's financial and legal circumstances, therefore each person should carefully consider such a decision and seek legal and financial advice as necessary.

Please rate the following services 1 = Very Dissatisfied 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Neutral 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very Satisfied		
Maintenance of	City Streets	1.9
Maintenance of	City Buildings and Facilities	2.8
Overall Quality of	Police	2.3
Overall Quality of	Fire & Emergency Services	3.6
Overall Quality of	City Storm Runoff Management	1.8
Overall Quality of	Marina Facilities	2.8
Quality of	Traffic Flow	2.1
Adequacy of	Parking Facilities	1.4
Enforcement of	City Codes & Ordinances	1.5
Effectiveness of	City Communication with Public	1.4
Overall Quality of	Customer Service from City Employees	2.7
Overall Quality of	City Parks & Recreation Programs	2.8
Overall Quality of	Beaches & Lifeguard Services	3.3
Overall Quality of	Trash Collection Service	3.0
Overall Quality of	Water & Sewer Utilities	3.2
Overall Quality and Hours of	Library Service	3.2
Overall Quality of	SIC Public School	1.9
Please rate the following 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Somewhat Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Somewhat Agree 5 = Strongly Agree		
It is important that businesses maintain a presence in town		4.6
It is important that City Hall maintain Saturday morning hours		4.1
It is important the public elementary school be maintained in town		2.4
It is important that park and recreation facilities be expanded in town		4.1
The quality of life in SIC is improving		2.1
SIC is becoming a more attractive place to visit		2.0
The SIC elementary school is too expensive		4.4
The SIC elementary school provides a high quality education		2.4
The SIC Taxpayers receive a great deal of value for their tax dollar		1.7
The City of SIC is doing a good job planning for the future		1.3
There is a reasonable level of public involvement in local decisions		1.5

SICTA Survey Results from May 13th Meeting

We received 28 completed surveys from the May 13th meeting. In the interest of disclosure, we think it is important to publish the results, even as we caution against extrapolating too much from such a small sample. More detail regarding the survey and comments received can be found on www.sicta.org.

SICTA QUESTIONS LIBRARY TAXES & SERVICES

As part of the 2006 Budget process review, SICTA observed that we taxpayers are contributing significant taxes to the Cape May County Library system. Indeed. Subsequent research revealed that the 2006 library taxes will be about \$1.2 million.

As shown on the analysis sheet below, SICTA is concerned about a number of issues:

- SIC library taxes are growing rapidly
- SIC library services received are not commensurate with our taxes paid
- SIC is vulnerable to another town pulling out of the county system
- SIC also funds a separate library facility within our elementary school



Our town will need strong leadership to manage this situation. SICTA believes that SIC should request county library services that are more commensurate with our tax bill or, alternatively, create a separate municipal library to gain greater control over the services bought by our tax dollars.

There is the potential for this library discussion to tie into our town's school plans. SIC City government has committed to conducting a 2006 feasibility study of the school, as part of their master plan activities. Assuming that the demographics and BOE planning produce a viable, economic educational plan for a SIC school facility, then it might make sense to discuss library facilities at that school. One vision might include a single town library at the school, similar to the Avalon approach. This could create both economies of scale in managing the library as well as open up a whole host of possible opportunities for library services available to our community:

- Laptops for every school child
- Media rooms / meeting rooms with audio/visual equipment available to school and community groups
- Cyber-café for our residents and visitors
- You fill in the next one _____, and submit to SICTA (see our logo for website or PO Box addresses)

Sea Isle City - County Library Tax Analysis

Municipality	Library Taxes					Tax Growth Rates				Share of County Taxes				
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*	03/02	04/03	05/04	06/05*	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
Sea Isle City	552,007	631,497	753,683	989,123	1,218,644	14%	19%	31%	23%	12%	13%	12%	16%	16%
Avalon	1,001,473	1,097,878	1,245,699	0	0	10%	13%			23%	22%	21%	0%	0%
Cape May	345,177	400,754	482,106	562,722	693,299	16%	20%	17%	23%	8%	8%	8%	9%	9%
Lower Township	485,989	553,264	680,513	845,428	1,041,605	14%	23%	24%	23%	11%	11%	11%	14%	14%
Middle Township	317,728	355,015	407,991	535,479	659,734	12%	15%	31%	23%	7%	7%	7%	9%	9%
North Wildwood	219,406	278,244	377,779	487,347	600,433	27%	36%	29%	23%	5%	6%	6%	8%	8%
Stone Harbor	557,433	634,221	721,150	849,657	1,048,815	14%	14%	18%	23%	13%	13%	12%	14%	14%
Upper Township	277,541	303,525	349,872	427,269	526,415	9%	15%	22%	23%	6%	6%	6%	7%	7%
Wildwood	159,410	177,273	258,432	375,307	462,395	11%	46%	45%	23%	4%	4%	4%	6%	6%
Wildwood Crest	239,950	283,197	387,486	454,729	560,246	18%	30%	24%	23%	5%	6%	6%	8%	8%
6 Other Municipalities	844,578	966,266	1,138,661	1,464,279	1,804,057	14%	18%	29%	23%	19%	19%	19%	24%	24%
Total Library Taxes	4,448,665	5,048,637	6,029,689	6,002,217	7,395,000	14%	19%	0%	23%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* 2006 apportionment has been estimated by SICTA using 2005 taxes. Final apportionment will vary.

Observations

1. SIC's library taxes have increased at 22% annual growth rate since 2002, primarily due to overall county taxes growing 14% annually and Avalon's secession
2. Avalon's 2005 secession caused SIC and other municipalities to shoulder a greater tax burden, increasing the shares for the remaining towns.
3. Overall 2005 county taxes were held at \$6 million, perhaps to minimize Avalon secession trauma, and reverted to a large growth rate of 23% for 2006
4. SIC is now the single largest contributing municipality with a \$1.2 million tax bill
5. SIC's town library facility and overall county library services received by SIC are not consistent with our \$1.2 million tax bill
6. All remaining towns are vulnerable to another town leaving the county library system ("Last one at the table pays the bill"). 2005 was a good example of this. While county taxes remained flat, SIC taxes went up 31%, largely as a result of Avalon's withdrawal.
7. Secession rules require a 2 year notice, with the clock starting on January 1 of the following year
8. Any separate Municipal Library requires a minimum spending of 1/3 mil by state law. For SIC, this would be about \$1.4 million
9. SIC has a separate, additional library facility housed within our elementary school, which is funded as part of our Board of Education budget.

Conclusion

SIC should request county library services more commensurate with our \$1.2 million tax bill or, alternatively, create a separate municipal library to gain greater control over the services bought by our tax dollars.

The Quest for North End Sewers and FEMA Discounts for Everyone

Have you looked at your Flood Insurance bill lately? Would you like to see it cut by 10% or 15%? Who wouldn't? Chances are your bill from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) tops \$2,000. That means for all of Sea Isle City we are paying about \$15M in premium. So a 10% or 15% discount means \$1.5 to \$2M more in our citizens' pockets **EVERY YEAR!!!!**

FEMA gives discounts to communities based on their flood preparedness. Listed below are the discounts currently available to surrounding cities.

Avalon	Ocean City	SIC	Wildwood	W. Wildwood	Cape May	N. Wildwood	Stone Harbor	Wildwood Crest
15%	15%	0%	Unknown	0%	10%	15%	10%	10%

So what's keeping us from our discount? FEMA has indicated that they will not give SIC an improved rating due to the lack of sewers in the area from 1st thru 21st streets.

For more than 20 years, a number of SIC's most stalwart citizens have struggled in the pursuit of sewers for the North End. The extension of sewers to this area has been an objective in the City's Master Plan all this time. Now, 20 years is a long time to come up dry. So the obstacles must be formidable. They are and they are spelled NJ DEP (New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection).

Back in 2000, sewer extension to the North End was part of the County's 208 Water Quality Management Plan. But the DEP held the Community College's CAFRA permits hostage, until the freeholders ultimately threw SIC's North End over the side.

There are about 100 houses in the North End, and roughly 25 privately owned undeveloped lots, not all of which would be judged developable. So why doesn't SIC throw the North End over the side, and get the discount for the rest of the town? Well, Northenders can breathe a sigh of relief, since the FEMA discount program is a community program, and no redlining is allowed. So it would seem that ALL of SIC has a financial interest in seeing the sewers extended into the North End.

The NJ DEP has repeatedly opposed the extension of sewers in the North End, since they believe that the sewers will bring with them unchecked development. Yet one has to wonder how much unchecked development could go on when the City has maintained that only 17 of the lots are developable.

The NJ DEP had asked the City to purchase the undeveloped lots, through Greenacres. One lot was sold to NJ DEP by its owner back in 1999. The NJ DEP had also asked the city to rezone the North End to R-1 (Single Residence). Of the roughly 100 houses, 33 were single family, and the rest condominiums. Most are 2 or 4 unit condominiums and the Dolphin has 18 units. Obviously, rezoning these to single residences would be very problematic. Were any of these residences to be lost to a fire or storm, only a single family residence could be built in its stead. The Mayor has stated that the City would implement deed restrictions so that existing buildings could be replaced with a structure of the same density or less. To our knowledge this hasn't been pursued.

It has been 10 years since a house has been built in the North End. Strathmere, which is the only other NJ coastal town without sewers, has had 28 houses built in that time. It's time for Sea Isle City to say **Enough is Enough!**

We urge you to write letters to the officials listed below and ask them to express their support of Sea Isle City's efforts to get sewers extended in the North End and to help identify what is needed to gain NJ DEP support. In 3 short years, the County will have the chance, once again, to put SIC on its list for expanded sewers. But we need to make sure the NJ DEP will support us in this pursuit. Three years may seem like a long time but ask Irene Jameson, Gerry Faiss or Mayor Desiderio, and I think they will tell you that it goes fast. So keep those cards and letters coming to:

Assemblyman Jeff Van Drew	Assemblyman Nelson Albano	Senator Nicholas Asselta	NJ DEP - Commissioner Lisa Jackson
21 N Main St - CMCH, NJ 08210	1450 Chestnut Av - Vineland, NJ 08361	401 E State St - PO Box 42 - Trenton, NJ 08625	

So let's recap:

Sewers = FEMA Discount

FEMA Discount = Potential Savings of \$1.5 to \$2M per year

Cards & Letters = Action on the Discount

Even if you don't miss the money, think of what this town could be, if we were to pump that \$1.5 to \$2M per year into additional Capital Improvements.

NEWT
newtsic@yahoo.com - or -
P O Box 563 - SIC NJ 08243

NEWT (North End Working Team) wishes to express their thanks to SICTA for allowing us this space in their newsletter to present this issue. We also ask that you take just a minute and send an e-mail or drop us a card expressing your support of NEWT'S efforts to pursue the North End Sewers and FEMA discounts. This will allow us to demonstrate, to our elected officials, the depth of support for this effort by the taxpayers and residents of Sea Isle City.

SICTA Reviews 2006 City Budget

At our May 13th membership meeting, SICTA presented an overview of Sea Isle City's 2006 budget proposal. As examples, we have included two sample slides in this newsletter, which show five years of town revenues and appropriations by a few useful categories.

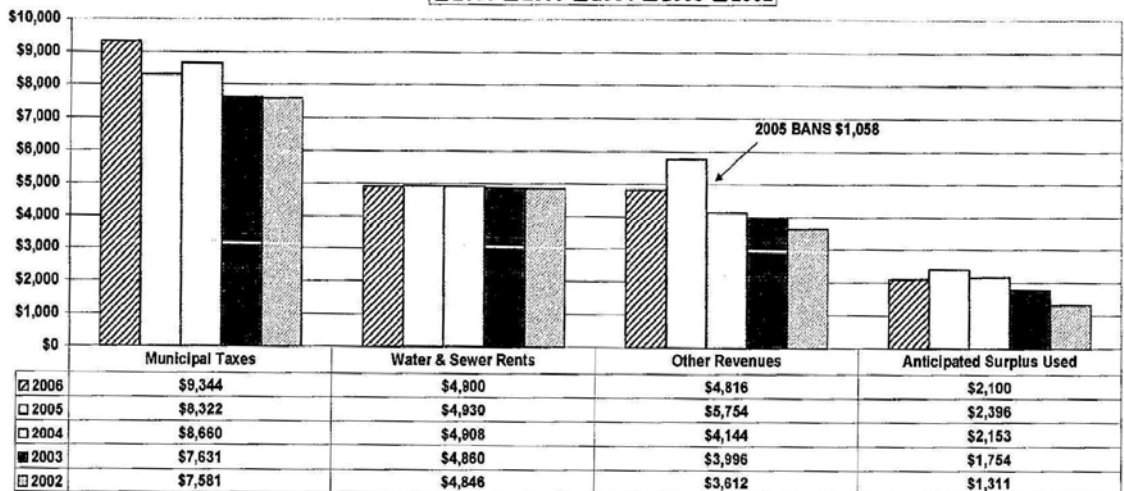
A much more revealing and complete SIC

Budget analysis is on our website, including:

- Revenues, appropriations & salaries details
- Municipal, county and school property taxes
- Avalon, Stone Harbor & North Wildwood comparisons
- Capital spending plans
- Individual service comparisons of revenues with corresponding appropriations (e.g. Beaches, Water & Sewer, etc)

Sea Isle City - Revenues by Year (\$000)

2006 2005 2004 2003 2002

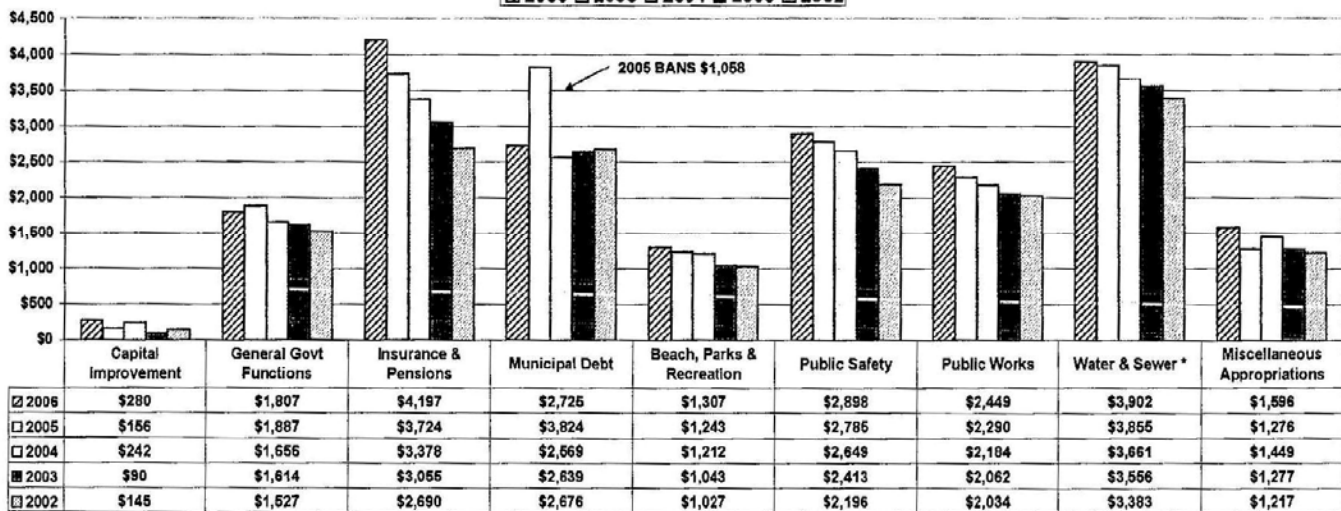


* Significant portions of water & sewer utility are included in other categories

Sea Isle City - Total Appropriations (\$000)					
	2006	05/05	05/04	04/03	03/02
Capital Improvement	\$280	79%	-36%	168%	-38%
General Govt Functions	\$1,807	-4%	14%	3%	6%
Insurance & Pensions	\$4,197	13%	10%	11%	14%
Municipal Debt	\$2,725	-29%	49%	-3%	-1%
Beach, Parks & Recreation	\$1,307	5%	3%	16%	2%
Public Safety	\$2,898	4%	5%	10%	10%
Public Works	\$2,449	7%	5%	6%	1%
Water & Sewer *	\$3,902	1%	6%	3%	5%
Miscellaneous Appropriations	\$1,596	25%	-12%	13%	5%
Total Appropriations	\$21,160	1%	11%	7%	5%
Excluding BANS	\$21,160	6%	5%	7%	5%

Sea Isle City - Total Appropriations by Year (\$000)

2006 2005 2004 2003 2002



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SICTA



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Jim Malloy	(609) 263-6208
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John & Marye Ruzila	(973) 742-4724
Greg Schoultz	(609) 263-0094

2006 SICTA Meeting Dates

Public Safety Building Commissioner's Meeting Room

ALL MEETINGS ARE ON SATURDAYS

August 12	10:00 am	Board Meeting
September 9	10:00 am	Board Meeting
October 14	10:00 am	General Membership
November 11	10:00 am	Board Meeting
December 9	10:00 am	Board Meeting

**** All members are invited to attend the Board Meetings**

**PLEASE CHECK www.sicta.org FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS OR
LAST MINUTE MEETING CHANGES**

Join the SICTA:

Membership applications
available on the website or
by calling 609-263-3784



Sea Isle City Taxpayers Association, Inc.

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