

# Sea Isle's Pending Government Form Explained

By JOE HART

SEA ISLE CITY — Ernest Reock of Rutgers University Center for Government Services visited the community lodge to explain the new mayor-council form of government the city will have in July.

Reock was invited by the Sea Isle City Taxpayers Association (SICTA) and another group known as We the People to discuss the new form of government and answer questions the public had about it.

"Reock also gave a presentation before the May referendum and was instrumental in helping residents decide on the mayor-council form of government," said Tom Henry of SICTA.

Henry said the meetings were set "to provide residents the opportunity to voice their ideas, plans and dreams for the future of Sea Isle."

At the Jan. 20 meeting, Reock circulated a handout comparing the current commissioner form with the newly-adopted mayor-council form.

The handout broke down the two into categories explaining duties and responsibilities of the governing body, mayor, chief administrative officer and the departments.

In the current government, the handout explained that the governing body consisted of a board of commissioners with three members elected to four-year concurrent terms in non-partisan elections.

As a group, the commissioners enacted ordinances and passed resolutions to establish policies for the city. They also prepared and adopted the annual city budget.

Individually, the commissioners acted as department heads appointing personnel and supervising departmental work: Leonard Desiderio, administration; James Iannone, public safety; and Angela Dalrymple, public works.

In the new form, the governing body will consist of a five-member council elected to staggered four-year terms in non-partisan elections to be held every two years.

As in the commissioner form, the new group will enact ordinances and pass resolutions to establish the policies of the city.

Although the mayor may veto its ordinances, vetoes may be overridden by a two-third vote of the council.

In the new form, council appoints a city clerk, approves or rejects the mayor's nominations for department heads, and votes on the budget proposed by the mayor.

According to clerk Theresa Tighe, 18 people have picked up informational packets to run for city council.

In the current form, the mayor was selected from among the commission members and served for four years after selection. Desiderio, the current mayor, presided at commissioner meetings and supervised the city's administrative department.

In the new form, the mayor will be elected separately from council for a four-year term.

The mayor will act as the chief executive of the city and will be allowed to attend and to speak at council meetings, but cannot vote.

The mayor will supervise all city departments appointing department heads with the advice and consent of the council and will be responsible for preparing the city's annual budget.

Tighe said only two people have collected packets to run for mayor, Desiderio and local real estate broker Don Laricks.

While in the current form, no chief administrative officer was necessary, the new form calls for a business administrator to be in charge of the administration department and the other departments if authorized by the mayor.

The administrator will be responsible for budget preparation, purchasing, personnel and other duties prescribed by council.

The city has set the salary for the business administrator at \$80,000 and will soon begin the search to fill the position.

In the current form, all city functions were completed by three designated departments: administration, public safety and public works.

In both forms, officers of the city (clerk, attorney, engineer, etc.) are appointed by general laws.

Regarding the administrative code, the new form calls for a department of administration and up to nine additional departments with department heads appointing the personnel under them.

When concerns were raised at the meeting regarding changes in the administrative code Tighe said, "I've been working with the code company to help provide a smooth transition to the new officials and the administrative structure they choose, whether it be one department or nine."

The schedule for the upcoming election is as follows:

- March 15, 2007 – Filing deadline for candidates under the new form of government. (54 days before elections.)

- May 8, 2007 – First Election of mayor and five council members. (Second Tuesday in May)

- July 1, 2007 – At noon all offices existing under the commission form are abolished and newly elected officials under the mayor-council form take office. New council members draw lots for two or four-year terms. Interim resolution may be adopted to provide for officers, organization, and administration of city government, pending enactment of a new administrative code.

- Sept. 28, 2007 – By this date, 90 days after organization, council must adopt and mayor must sign an ordinance providing for an administrative code stating the major provisions of the charter and describing the organization and operation of the city government.

- Nov. 7, 2000 – Three years after the vote to adopt the new form of government is the earliest date that a referendum could be held to revert to

the commissioner form of government or to adopt some other form of government.

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