



Joe Hart

According to Mayor Leonard Desiderio, a new building is planned to replace the current county library branch in Sea Isle City, pictured here.

## *In Sea Isle City* **County to Fund New Library**

By JOE HART

SEA ISLE CITY — Mayor Leonard Desiderio arrived late to the city's first regular council meeting, but he came bearing good news.

The mayor — also a county freeholder — announced to council and over 50 citizens attending the meeting that the county has agreed to fund the construction of a new library in Sea Isle.

"They will build us a state-of-the-art facility that we can be proud of," he said, "and it won't cost the city any money."

He said the modern building will have the latest high-speed Internet capability as well as upgraded general services.

Desiderio's announcement came at an opportune time as the city's lack of adequate library facilities had already been discussed prior to his arrival at the meeting.

Tom Henry, of SICTA, the city's taxpayers association, said that Sea Isle's branch was not up to snuff compared to other county

facilities. He suggested the city residents paid too high a price for what they get from the county library system.

As part of a list of questions SICTA submitted to council, the group asked, "Are we sure that we are getting all of the county services and funding to which we are entitled?"

After council members said they thought the city was getting its fair share of services especially with the mayor's position in the county, Henry put forth the idea of connecting a community center and library to the elementary school, which would open up additional funding from different sources.

The audience seemed receptive to the idea, but the plan Desiderio announced afterwards called for the new facility to be built at the library's current site on JFK Boulevard.

Desiderio said the library's central location would serve the city best and with a location already picked out the proj-

ect would start soon and could be completed by next spring.

The county has also agreed to build a new branch in Stone Harbor, but that town has a problem with its current library location. Its library is connected to borough hall, so a new location must be found before their project is started.

Councilman William Kehner said he was familiar with Garrison Associates — the architects contracted by the county to work on the library projects — from his work on the school board as liaison to the school district in Ocean City. Garrison was the firm that worked on the Ocean City High School design.

As a part of their process, Garrison holds informational sessions with residents to hear their ideas and concerns, Kehner related, which will give Henry and others a chance to be a part of the design process.

The county plans to borrow \$5 million for the construction of both library branches.