

SEA ISLE CITY
GOVERNMENT REFERENDUM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why do we need to change the form of the Municipal Government?

We need a 21st century government for the 21st century. Sea Isle City has grown considerably from what was once a cozy small-town environment into a much larger and more complex city, with a budget over \$21 million. Our current form of government has served us well in past generations, but in the last several years has begun to show signs of weakness. Comparing Sea Isle City with other shore communities, it is easy to see the need for municipal improvements in five areas:

***P*lanning** Do we have a clear path in front of us for dealing with the town's evolving issues? Why have we not executed on past plans? Are we investing in our town the way we should be?

***I*mage** Is Sea Isle City a family-oriented, noise-free and attractive place to visit or live? Tourism is the life-blood of our city's economy, but are we losing our appeal as a major seashore resort?

***E*fficiency** Are we providing quality governmental services at reasonable costs? Are municipal projects effectively prioritized and built at reasonable costs?

***C*ommunication** Does government provide municipal information in a timely and open manner? Does it solicit and respond to public input before taking action or simply go through the motions?

***E*nforcement** Are we enforcing our building codes, noise and other regulations in a consistent and effective manner? Are codes in compliance with County, State and Federal requirements?

Certainly, you also see many opportunities for improvement in these areas. Our current form of government is just not getting it done. Like the song: "*All we are saying is give **PIECE** a chance*"

What is being proposed as the new form for the Municipal Government?

The new Mayor/Council form is proposed as an improved government structure, with a directly elected Mayor, a full-time Business Administrator, and the checks and balances of a separate City Council. It would provide for a voter elected Mayor and five Council Members. An attached exhibit provides a listing of their responsibilities.

What is our current form?

Presently, voters elect three *part-time* Commissioners (Public Works, Public Safety and Revenue & Finance), who select the Mayor from within their ranks. Each Commissioner is independently responsible for the management of their respective operational area, but they vote as a group on legislative and fiscal matters. Oh, by the way, there is no *full-time* Business Administrator currently.

What happens if the Referendum passes in November?

The Referendum passes with a simple majority of the voters approving it. 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 Council Members who would assume office July 1, 2007.

Those elected will serve "staggered terms" in the future. The Mayor and two Council Members (the two receiving the most votes in the May 2007 election) will serve an initial four year term and then will be up for re-election every four years. The other three Council Members will serve a two year term and then start a separate staggered re-election process every four years. Thus the voters have an opportunity every two years to make changes to their representatives rather than the current four years.

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How did this become a November Referendum?

Earlier this year, a petition to change the current "Commission" form of government to a "Mayor/Council" form was circulated. To become a November Referendum, the petition required signatures of 25% (544 signatures) of the city's registered voters. 634 of Sea Isle City's registered voters thought that the issue deserved to be brought before everyone, triggering the November 2006 Referendum.

Has the Mayor/Council form been tried elsewhere?

Currently, 67 municipalities use the Mayor/Council form, making it the most used under the Municipal Charter Law. On a population basis, 36.5% of New Jersey is represented by this form, which is twice as high as the next highest form (Township). In our area, *Avalon and Ocean City both use the Mayor/Council form.*

Will taxes increase to pay for all these new officials and their staff?

It is estimated that the additional officials and their staff will add approximately \$150,000 to \$200,000 of expenses to the town budget (separate material details the Commissioners larger estimates). While this is a significant amount of cost, it is less than 1% of our \$21 million budget expenditures or about \$30 per property.

However, it will be money well spent, as *there will be opportunities for savings from a more effective government, which will more than cover the additional cost, so this change should not be the cause for increased taxes.* This proposal has not been made to add governmental bloat, but to foster municipal efficiency and effectiveness.

Will city employees lose their jobs because of the change of government?

It is not the goal of this proposed change to eliminate city employee jobs. The Mayor will have the responsibility to assure that City departments are organized, staffed and supervised to provide the most effective and cost efficient delivery of City services.

Is this just a reaction to the last election of Commissioners?

The proposal is not intended to target results of the last election nor is it aimed at individual Commissioners. Indeed, they may choose to run again in the May 2007 election, either for Mayor or Council Members. *This change is aimed at creating an improved government structure, with a directly elected Mayor, a full-time Business Administrator, and the checks and balances of a separate City Council.*

Haven't attempts to change the Form of Municipal Government been tried before this?

In both 1980 and 1988, there was enough interest to propose a change in the form of government and both attempts were defeated by the voters. Since that time the budget has increased ten-fold and concerns regarding a non-responsive government still exist. *Times change and we need a 21st century government for the 21st century.*

Is this change being driven by outside influences?

All the members of the original petition group are registered Sea Isle City voters, and only registered Sea Isle City voters will be able to vote on this Referendum.

Who can I call to get additional information?

Please contact any of the following original petitioners: John Fee 263-6817, J B Flora 263-9357, Gerry Faiss 263-1462, Kevin Deely 263-0684 or Mary Tighe 263-6736. Public meetings will be held this fall to provide additional information to assist you in your November decision. Please watch local newspapers for announcements of these meetings.