

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

SICTA's mission is to keep its membership informed on issues related to fiscal responsibility and quality of life in Sea Isle. But, we are also here to promote the interests of all Sea Isle City taxpayers and serve as their voice in government and community affairs. **And so, once a year, we send our newsletter out to all Sea Isle City Taxpayers to raise awareness, provide insight, and, yes, to express our opinion on the City Budget.** SICTA volunteers spend countless hours monitoring meetings and researching issues and then getting this information out to you, the taxpayer. If you are not currently a SICTA member, **we hope you will join us.** An application form has been provided with this newsletter or you can join online at [www.sicta.org](http://www.sicta.org).

### **2009 TOP 10 SALARY LIST**

1. Police Chief	\$132,471	6. Police Sgt/Detective	\$112,028
2. Business Administrator	\$125,131	7. Police Sergeant	\$111,961
3. CFO/Comp/Dir Pur	\$124,238	8. Supervisor Mechanic	\$109,805
4. Police Captain	\$124,236	9. Police Lieutenant/TAC	\$108,803
5. Police Lieutenant	\$114,206	10. Police Officer	\$106,992

This list was compiled based on information provided to SICTA by the City. The salary data is from Line 16 of the W-2's of individual employees, and may include overtime pay and other sources of income in addition to base salaries.

### **Sea Isle City Budget – On the Money or Missing the Mark?**

It's budget time again! Typically, once our Mayor announces the budget, there are many public meetings and much discussion but almost no change by the Council. So we are sorry to report that in all likelihood, there will be **an 11% tax increase based on a spending increase of 7.5% (that's a new \$1.8 million, folks) and no reform of water & sewer rates.** We'll let you be the judge on whether the priorities are appropriate in this "tax and spend" budget.

**First, some positive news.** Government understands that our south end needs sand and will have a beach replenishment project. They will also eliminate a few full-time positions through attrition, and plan a Beach-to-Bay project to enhance our entryway. And they have also strengthened the town's financial surplus for emergencies. Good stuff! However, there are many questionable priorities underlying this budget:

**Do they understand this economy?** In case anyone cared to look, we've got a recession going on right now. Everyone is tightening their belts. Many folks are out of work. Social Security payments are staying fixed. State Government is about to unload a combination of tax increases and spending cuts on all of us. Is this City budget proposal just out of step with the times?

**Beach-to-Bay is full speed ahead!** The project planning started almost two years ago, and our Government sees no need to alter course and slow this down. Even the quickly developing, high priority need for a \$7M south-end beach project did not cause a reevaluation of Beach-to-Bay and all of its components. Let's just do it all!

**Desi-Dome to the rescue!** At the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, Mayor Desiderio proposed adding a new dome over a portion of Dealy Field. Construction, maintenance and staffing costs are unknown, but the proposal also includes the creation of a new Recreation Department Head position. None of this was mentioned during months of Capital Planning, but it's now being thrown into the mix in response to parent

complaints about lack of kid activities. Kids need recreational activities, and they should be a high priority. However, we already have a recreation department with its own commission and trust fund. Why can't they provide the wintertime services needed for after-school hours and weekends and, why not use our half-empty school, community lodge and new library to provide them?

**Water & Sewer Rates need reform badly!** The MUA charges us over \$16 for sewerage treatment in the summer, but our excess rates are only \$1.50. Politics are overruling facts to protect the largest water users from paying their fair share. Adding insult to injury, the City is considering a program that pays to replace the high-flow fixtures of this protected class. If these high-costs users were paying their own way, they'd have plenty of motivation to replace their ice machines themselves.

**Union Contracts are sacrosanct in Sea Isle!** While attrition and buy-outs have reduced positions, underlying salaries march onward to the tune of 5-6% every year. Employee pension and health insurance costs continue to skyrocket. Family insurance now costs us over \$32,000 (twice the cost of State plans), and employee prescription co-pays are still only 50¢. Retiree health benefits have already created a \$40 million unfunded/unrecorded liability for us. Other towns have opened up contracts so that everyone shares the pain together!

**Contracting & sharing services, not in Sea Isle!** Other cities have used these tools to provide high quality low cost services for police dispatchers, municipal courts, trash pick-up and water. Our City has studied these, but has a long list of rationales against pursuing them.

**Taxpayers pay, all others go free!** While taxes may be up 11%, there will be no increase for Beach Tags, Parking Meters or Marina Boat Slips fees. While it's important to be tourist-friendly, economic reality suggests that non-taxpayer costs have to be raised a bit, too. Rental permit fees are increasing from \$84 to \$125. Some of these you might agree with, some not. So we ask,

**"Is the budget on the money or missing the mark"?**

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## Recommendations for Collective Bargaining

At the request of City Council, SICTA has prepared recommendations for the upcoming negotiations with the various City collective bargaining units. In developing its recommendations, SICTA established an overall goal to bring about a 12% decrease in the cost for salary and benefits over the next three years. The decrease should be measured against the salary and benefits in the 2009 budget.

To achieve this Goal, it is recommended that:

- The three year salary increases be: Yr.1 - 0%; Yr. 2 – 0%, and Yr. 3 – 2.0%
- The City's health benefit plan be switched to one of the State Plans.
- Personnel reductions be enacted, especially in the areas of Administration, Finance, and Vehicle Maintenance.
- City employees contribute to their health insurance plan at the same rate as their counterparts in State government.

To achieve other cost reductions and operating efficiencies, the following contract changes are recommended. It should be noted that most of these items are based on Recommendations proposed by the State Commission on Investigation.

1. Personal Days: establish a maximum of 5 days.
2. Holidays: reduce number to 12
3. Vacation Days:
  - 3.1 Maintain current schedule of allowable days based on years of service
  - 3.2 Reduce carryover to a maximum of one year's entitlement.
  - 3.3 Institute a strict "use it or lose it" policy.
  - 3.4 Eliminate pre-payment of vacation pay.
4. Sick Days:
  - 4.1 Reduce number of allowable days to 15

**Recommendations for Collective Bargaining (continued)**

- 4.2 Eliminate provision of 1 year of extended sick leave after 10 years of service.
- 4.3 Eliminate practice of cashing in prior to retirement
- 4.4 Eliminate practice of using sick days as pre-retirement leave.
- 5. Temporary Leaves of Absence: Eliminate because of duplication with Personal days.
- 6. Compensatory and Call-in Compensation: Compensatory time should be allocated strictly based upon the hours actually worked beyond the normally scheduled hours of employment as confirmed by daily attendance sheets. Such time must be used within one year of its allocation or it is lost. Under no circumstances should compensatory leave be exchanged for cash payments. Call-in compensation must be calculated on the basis of the clock-in and clock-out time.
- 7. Overtime: Overtime calculations must be based on the actual time worked in quarter-hour segments. Rounding up to the next full hour is not permitted.
- 8. Eliminate the provision for paying spouse health benefit premiums upon the death of the employee or retiree except in cases covered by Article VI, Section 5 of the Police and Superior Officers Contracts.
- 9. Salary:
  - 9.1 Salary Steps: Eliminate all Salary Steps. With the establishment of salary ranges under the Position/Salary Study and the calculation of range mid-points, salary steps become unnecessary since annual increases are negotiated. Under such a system, salary steps become an extra form of annual raises.
  - 9.2 Red-lining: Language must be included to indicate that when an unit member’s salary exceeds the salary range no increase will be awarded until the unit member’s salary again falls within the salary range.
  - 9.3 Police Salary Arbitration: In anticipation of a demand for arbitration by the police unions, the City should compile data to refute the basic argument for higher salaries for police, namely, the inherent danger of the position. Injury and salary range data should be collected from cities such as Atlantic City, Camden, Philadelphia, Trenton, and Vineland to show that Sea Isle’s salary structure is significantly higher than those cities and police injury rates much lower.
  - 9.4 Salary Adjustment: Salary adjustments, such as that for the possession of a CDL license or EMT certification, should be eliminated. If a license or certificate is a job requirement it should be included in the position job description.
- 10. “Me Too” Clauses: All contract language that automatically grants a bargaining unit benefits granted under other negotiated contracts (see Middle Management, Article XV, Section 1) must be eliminated.
- 11. Bans on Future Negotiations: All contract language that bans the re-negotiation or removal of any contract provision including benefits (e.g. See Middle Management, Article XVII, Section 3, e) or restricts Management Rights must be challenged as an illegal subject of negotiation as per the Ridgefield Park Decision.

**2009 TOP 10 VENDOR LIST**

Source: City of Sea Isle City Vendor 1099 Listing

1. Baldini, Paul PA Attorney	\$250,841	6. Ford, Scott & Associates Auditor	\$ 60,600
2. Federated Emergency Service, LLC	\$145,874	7. Garrison Architects	\$ 31,965
3. Previti, Andrew PE Engineer	\$ 99,000	8. Weldco Lumber & Timber Co	\$ 19,706
4. SOSH Architects	\$ 87,484	9. KGA Studios LLC	\$ 18,238
5. Pedroni Fuel Co	\$ 67,407	10. First Due Emergency Supply Co	\$ 17,120

Note from Town Watch/Town Pride - Every complaint must be accompanied by a call to the police. So if it’s too noisy, etc., call 609-263-4311 and COMPLAIN. If you don’t, the problem can’t be addressed, and it’s YOUR FAULT.



**Your SICTA Officers**

- Gary Egnasko, President
- Mary Helen Hoffman, Secretary
- Ben Tartaglia, Treasurer

**Board of Directors**

- Mike Stein
- Greg Schoultz
- Larry Lentini
- George Marinari
- John Ruzila
- Marye Ruzila
- Tom Henry
- Jim Malloy
- Mike Tumolo
- Pete McWilliams
- Joe McDevitt
- John Fee
- James Sofroney

SAT JUNE 19 - SKIMMER WEEKEND  
 BE A PART OF SICTA'S "MEET&GREET"  
 BE A VOLUNTEER AT SICTA'S PROMENADE BOOTH  
 FOR (1) HOUR BETWEEN 8:30AM - 2:30PM  
 CONTACT "THE RUZILA'S" AT  
 973-742-4724 OR 609-263-1192

**Cape May Gets It!**

Cape May changed their excess sewer rates to \$16.50 for each 1000 gallons in excess of 5000 gallons, after a six month study to find a "fair and equitable rate system." Their City Manager said the new rates will redistribute the revenue pie and not unfairly impact low-end water users and not reward high-end consumers.

SICTA has been pressing our City for this kind of rate reform for more than a year. In his December message, our Mayor talked about our City's new policy to "Go Green." That's just one more reason to reform the rate structure to one that encourages conservation of water.

**SICTA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

**MEMBERSHIP \$25 PER HOUSEHOLD**

CHECKS PAYABLE TO: SICTA PO BOX 82 SIC, NJ 08243 DONATIONS WELCOMED  
 YOU CAN REGISTER ON OUR WEBSITE WWW.SICTA.ORG AND WE WILL BILL YOU LATER

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING STREET \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ST \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

SIC PROPERTY ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

ADULT HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS LIST NAMES & E-MAIL BELOW

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RECEIVE NEWSLETTERS ELECTRONICALLY