

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

Mayor Disappoints Taxpayers with a Proposed 8% Local Tax Increase And a Large Increase in Water & Sewer Rents

Notwithstanding a 15% increase in local purpose taxes for 2008, at the City Council meeting on January 13th, Mayor Leonard Desiderio proposed an 8% increase for 2009. Additionally, the proposed Water and Sewer budget calls for a large and undeterminable increase in rental rates in 2009, following a 60%+ increases two years ago.

The 2009 increase in local taxes results from an approximately \$1.4 million decrease in expected revenues from sources other than the local tax levy. These special items, which were available in 2008, will not be available in 2009 to the extent of \$700,000. Additionally, withdrawals from the City's Surplus that were budgeted prior years' is decreasing and will be \$440,000 less for 2009. Finally, interest on invested cash is expected to decrease by \$200,000 while construction fees are anticipated to decrease \$79,000.

The current economic climate is the primary cause of the shortfall, but taxpayers, who are also experiencing pain from the recession, are being asked to make up a large portion of the shortfall.

2009 Appropriations are approximately \$350,000 less than the 2008 budgeted amounts. To reduce expenses, the City has a hiring freeze in effect, successfully conducted an early retirement program and reduced benefit costs somewhat in 2008. Still, this is not enough. Based on comparisons to other municipalities, the city has 1) too many employees, 2) its group insurance program, with a total cost of \$3.0 million, is excessive at roughly 44% of payroll, 3) average salaries are too high and 4) there are too many supervisors.

The report recommends that the BOE partner with a larger district and develop a strategic plan that supports stability for the students of SIC. The phased plan would send grades 5-8 to the partner school resulting in more educational opportunities for them. The plan also provides for individual classes for grades 1-4. Partnership is responsive to regulatory pressure, provides better education and solves the administration issues. It provides flexibility for the future that does not exist with our present program.

It is the intent of the Committee to suggest the BOE make a statement of intent at a regular meeting on January 20, 2009. Then, serious negotiations can be started for the grades 5-8 program in 2009-2010. The separation of grades 1-2 and 3-4 would then be done in accordance with the strategic plan.

(As we go to press, there was a resolution approved at the January 20th board meeting to send Grades 5-8 to Ocean City and a formal request was made to Ocean City to respond; the legislature is contemplating moving School Board elections from April, 2009 to November, 2009 to fit into state-wide elections. They may also remove the opportunity to vote on school budgets.)



Board of Education Activities

At a special meeting of the BOE on January 14, 2009 the Shared Services and Consolidation Committee presented a report on the challenges facing the Board - A severe decline in enrollment (under 70 pupils), a complicated regulatory environment and a state legislature committed to consolidation. Regulatory constraints on administration limit the hiring of full time/long term personnel and cap administrative costs per pupil. That leaves only retired administrators for the work. They are limited in duration and that leads to high turnover.

Small districts like Sea Isle City are limited in resources but no concession is made in meeting all the bureaucratic necessities. Efficiency standards are based on cost per pupil which is a problem for SIC. The best advice for K-8 districts is to share services with a K-12 district while remaining a separate district. This partnership gets the benefits of regionalization while remaining a separate district. This is critical for flexibility as legislative plans evolve.

(cont'd in right column)

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CONFERENCE ON ALTERNATIVE BEACH STABILIZATION PROCESSES

Approximately 75 interested taxpayers from Sea Isle City and other local communities attended the conference on Saturday, January 10, 2009.

Dr. Steward Farrell, Director of the Center for Coastal Research of Stockton State College, along with his two associates gave us the history of the attempts to stabilize our beaches using the conventional methods. They monitor 100 beach sites along the entire New Jersey shorelines from Raritan to Delaware Bay twice a year. (Email at crc@stockton.edu.)

Kenneth Christensen, President of Eco Shore International introduced us to a different method called PEM or Pressure Equalizing Modules. This system has been used with success in Europe, Africa and Asia under conditions such as we have on the Atlantic Coast. This is primarily a drainage system that allows water to drain underground and therefore limits the sand that is pulled back into the ocean when the water recedes. This system is leased from the company and can be removed when desired. (Email at www.ecoshore.com)

Doug Gaffney of Ocean & Coastal Consultants spoke about Dune Stabilization using dredge spoils. The presentation touched on other technologies such as wind turbine sites, power generation from seawater and coastal and structural engineering. (Email at www.ocean-coastal.com)

Presentations are available at the individual websites

George Savastano, Sea Isle City's Business Manager, updated us on the efforts for beach replenishment. If all goes well, Sea Isle will get \$2.6 for the project this Spring. Some 400,000 cubic yards of sand will be deposited on our neediest beaches.

As a result of this meeting and the enthusiastic response from the audience, SICTA plans to continue the educational process with more speakers in the future. The City will sponsor a workshop in February to build on this initial effort. SICTA will contact other organizations and adjoining towns to begin a concerted effort on local, state and federal legislators to preserve our beaches.



Assessment and Planning for Sea Isle City Beach to Bay Corridor



The City has contracted with the firm of Remington Vernick to perform a planning analysis of the land corridor from the beach to the bay along JFK Boulevard. Through an intensive public input and information gathering process, the consultant is tasked with developing and providing recommendations for improvements to the land corridor to address marina facility, recreation, information, restroom, and storage needs. The consultant is tasked with developing and providing concepts to tie into the planned walkway along the 42nd St. lagoon. The recommendations must address all public property and lands along the corridor. The recommendations must include disposition and/or alteration of existing facilities, additional facilities (including recommended functions, size, and location); and recommended site amenities and landscaping.

Sea Isle City
Beautification Committee
Fund Raiser



SUNDAY - APRIL 19, 2009
LOBSTER LOFT
4 TO 8 PM
\$25 PER PERSON

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Chill out at the 15th Annual Polar Bear Plunge – The 15th Annual Polar Bear Plunge has been expanded to a three day event, February 13-15, beginning with craft and food vendors under a tent on Friday from 5-10 PM; Saturday, 10 am – 8 pm and Sunday, 10 am – 3 pm.

Friday – 7 pm at LaCosta Complex - The 2009 Polar Bear King and Queen contest.

Contestants will be judged on money raised and personality. Come cheer on your favorite.

Saturday – The Plunge – 2 pm at 40th & Promenade

La Costa Complex – Costume Contest at noon; Motorcade Procession at 1:15 pm; Awards Ceremony at 4 pm.

Sunday at JFK & the Promenade – Run/Walk to benefit Autism Speaks at 11 am.

Pre-registration by February 8th is \$20 (\$25 after that date and on-site)

Go ahead,
I Dare Ya!



Plan to come early for all activities.
It is going to be the **BIGGEST** event ever.



Don't listen to him!
C'mon in
it's GREAT!

Properties in the Dark – Town Watch/Town Pride (TW/TP) has implemented a volunteer Neighborhood Patrol program in conjunction with the SIC Police Department. Too many properties are left in total darkness which make them targets for burglaries and vandalism. TW/TP advises home owners to keep outdoor lights on from 5 to 11 pm. If you purchase the so-called green light bulbs it only cost \$.35 a month to protect your property. Compare that to the cost of vandalism or burglaries.



Gone with the Wind – It is a violation to leave trash out over the weekends. Take trash home with you or drop it off at the Recycling Center on your way out of town. There have been some wicked winds resulting in “blowouts”. Trash containers must have lids and trash may not be put out in plastic bags. Help keep Sea Isle City beautiful.



Beautiful Sea Isle City - Here is another way you can help. The Beautification Committee is sponsoring a fundraiser on Sunday, April 19th at the Lobster Loft from 4-8 pm. Tickets are \$25. To reserve tickets or get information on this and about the Beautification Committee go to sicmemorial@aol.com



Beautification

Avalon vs. DEP – Avalon won the case against the NJDEP on the new provision that beaches had to be open 24 hours day and public restrooms and beach access every one half mile in order to qualify for DEP permits for beach projects. The appellate court judge said that the DEP had overstepped its authority. The DEP has indicted that it will appeal. Cheers for Avalon!!



What's Going On? – They are digging up the street at Park Road and 42nd Street to make way for the huge sign that will proclaim the area “Historic Fish Alley”. The sign, costing \$30,000, was paid for by a grant from the State. At Central and 39th Street, South Jersey Gas is clearing the site of hazardous materials and using a tent-like structure to contain dangerous materials. Across the street, at 40th and Central the SIC Department of Public Works is upgrading a property removed by South Jersey Gas and given free to the City for use by Public Works.

The Scoop!



Sea Isle City Library Project Advances

The future library site needs to be cleaned up before the process can move forward. During a survey of the site, engineers found traces of lead, arsenic and zinc – compound that could contaminate well water. At a December 17th meeting, Library Director, Deborah



Poillon, told members of the Cape May County Library Commission that the project would involve the removal and disposal of contaminated soil from the proposed site. The new 12,000 square foot, state of the art library will feature a ground floor children's library, a 225 seat community meeting room as well as coffee bar. The facility will replace the city's existing branch located downtown on JFK Boulevard. Originally, the county offered to demolish and rebuilt a new facility at this site, but the city held months of public hearings to determine the best site for its new library.

(*excerpts from CMC Herald, 12/13/08*)



SICTA

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Revision to Commercial Zoning Ordinance



Although it was updated last year, changes are planned for the ordinance affecting commercial property. Current changes include revising the parking requirement, restricting offices on a portion of Landis Avenue and changing the boundary of the commercial zone on the North End. These changes should be introduced in February. At a later date changes are anticipated to the boundaries on the Sound End and perhaps introduction of neighborhood commercial zoning standards.