



This is SICTA's annual free mailing of its newsletter to all property owners of Sea Isle City

## A Note from your Board

We at SICTA hope that you had a fun-filled summer in Sea Isle this year. As you probably know, our major function is to provide our members with information about what is happening in Sea Isle with a goal of making it a better place. The accomplishments over our 25 year existence have demonstrated our ability to do this, and we will continue to do so. We are the only non-government organization with the resources to "spread the word" when pertinent topics arise.

Soon the Garrison study on the uses for the old school building, and the review of the City's capital plan will be discussed by the City's administration. There are a lot of important decisions to be made. Stay informed by attending city meetings whenever possible and checking the city's website as well as the SICTA website which provides links to articles from the local press. We are also working to improve our website for 2018.

Most of you appreciate the information we provide regarding the goings-on in Sea Isle that are pertinent topics to us as taxpayers. We would like to take this opportunity to be sure everyone knows how this information is provided. Your dues provide for the costs associated with maintaining our organization and its requisite governmental filings and official Open Public Records Act requests, as well as the costs associated with maintaining our web site, and mailing this newsletter to you. The far more daunting task is the gathering of the information that is disseminated, and organizing it. For this we rely solely on volunteers. As with most volunteer organizations, a small percentage of our members provide the labor necessary to gather this information.

This past year we ran into a series of operational setbacks due to many of our volunteers moving and no longer being available to us. Replacing them has been far more difficult than imagined. Currently we find ourselves shorthanded and in dire need of assistance if we are to continue the level of service we have provided in prior years. Newsletter research and production are extremely labor-intensive and were the first things that we had to cut back. In addition, because of the lack of a newsletter mailing, we did not send out a billing for our 2017 dues. We have sufficient financial resources to skip the 2017 dues and are billing now for 2018 to build up our reserves.

The work required to keep our organization functioning at a high level would be far less of a burden if we can spread it out among more volunteers. We are taking this opportunity to ask for volunteers. We know people are busy and time is a valuable commodity, but we do not require 100% of your spare time -- just a little. We have numerous tasks that need to be done, so whatever you can commit to would be welcomed. We need to not only replace our lost staff, but also hope to add some depth to our volunteer team.



Please consider donating some of your precious time to SICTA. You will meet some of your fellow homeowners, gain insight into the operations of our organization, and have the satisfaction of knowing that you are doing your part to make Sea Isle a better place. Please email [volunteer@sicta.org](mailto:volunteer@sicta.org).

**If you haven't been a member or are a returning member, please be sure to send in your dues for 2018. See the enclosed form or visit [www.sicta.org/aboutsicta](http://www.sicta.org/aboutsicta) to register online.**

## Where are the crabs?



They're in Sunk Creek. Where is Sunk Creek? It's that place that you crabbled as a kid and the place you took your kids to crab right next to the Sea Isle Boulevard. So why did you crab at Snunk Creek? For me, it was a great way to bond with family and friends without breaking the bank.

So why aren't we doing that today? Could the answer be Hurricane "Sandy"? You might think so. After all, that's when it was decided that the Boulevard be raised 4 feet. Originally a three year project, , it may take an additional two or three years to complete. So that's why we're not crabbng, right? I don't think so, and remember this is just my opinion.

So, then what is it? Almost three years ago the Boulevard construction company replaced the rickety old wooden bulkhead with a much stronger steel bulkhead. All that's left to do is cap the top for safety reasons. Okay, so why aren't we crabbng? Well, you can't. There's an eight foot fence blocking it. Why? Maybe to prevent people from stealing one of the 12 pieces of 6 inch diameter pipe being stored there. Why does it need to be stored there? Okay, this is where it gets tough. Ahhh...

So, what's the alternative? Well, there are several places in town that will rent you a boat to crab from about \$74 to \$125 for four hours. A bit scary for me trying to fit a family of five into a 16 foot skiff. You can buy crabs in town for just \$160 a bushel, but then there's that "bondng" thing. Maybe we'll all just wait the six to ? years it will take to complete the Boulevard project. I just hope we're all still around to see it and that our children and grandchildren will still appreciate the art of crabbng. So, those are the alternatives. Wait! I know what you're thinking. There's one more alternative. Why not just move the pipes?

Well, I'm just one SICTA member like you. I learned a long time ago that opinions are like 'noses'. Everybody's got one. What's yours?

**Note:** *The article above is from one of our members. When we called the CMC Public Works Department we were told that because the area is an 'active construction site' it is off limits to the public to ensure public safety. We do not know at this time if there are plans to resume this site for crabbng in the future. If you have an opinion on the subject please email the Cape May County Public Works/Engineer at Email: [countyengineer@co.cape-may.nj.us](mailto:countyengineer@co.cape-may.nj.us)*

## Sea Isle City Council Meeting Schedule

Generally the second and fourth  
Tuesdays of the month  
Meetings are held in the  
Council Meeting Room at City  
Hall, 233 John F. Kennedy Blvd,  
3rd Floor, Sea Isle City, NJ 08243  
from 10am to 11:30 am  
to confirm check city website:



<b>OCT</b>	October 10, 2017	10:00 AM	October 24, 2017	10:00 AM
<b>NOV</b>	November 14, 2017	10:00 AM	November 28, 2017	10:00 AM
<b>DEC</b>	December 12, 2017	10:00 AM	December 26, 2017	10:00 AM

<http://seaislecitynj.us/city-council/city-council-meeting-dates-agenda.aspx>

## SICTA Attended Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders Meeting on August 8, 2017

A SICTA Board member attended the Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders meeting and during the public comment session addressed the following matters of concern to Sea Isle City residents:

1. Follow-up to SICTA October 2014 comments at a meeting of the Board concerning Ocean Drive bridges.
2. The seemingly endless construction project on Sea Isle Boulevard and citizens' concerns over the safety of traveling on the Boulevard during the construction period.

### Ocean Drive Bridges

In October 2014 a board member of SICTA suggested that the County float a \$500 million bond issue to replace the old Ocean Drive bridges. This would come out to about \$360 average (for a home with a \$700,000 appraisal) annual increase in real estate taxes. *(At the time, SICTA thought its suggestion would not be accepted because the County would hope for help from the State or Federal government).*

Three years have elapsed, and the bridges have continued to deteriorate. We cannot expect help from President Trump's \$1 billion infrastructure proposal because it is based on private investment, with only a one-sixth guarantee from the Federal government. A private firm would not take on an investment in the Ocean Drive bridges because they bring in less than \$3 million in annual revenue compared to possible debt service cost of about \$28 million.

SICTA asked about the recent increase in state gas taxes but was told that so far none of it has been sent to the county and that only \$3 million a year is expected.

Mr. Thornton stated that the tax increase that we see as small would be seen as very large to poorer residents and those older people on fixed income. He does not feel they can afford the increase necessary for replacing the bridges.

SICTA asked about the \$125 million of available capital that we were informed of by Mr. Foster at our July 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of Cape Issues. SICTA did not get a direct answer, but Mr. Thornton did say that the county is considering a total refurbishment of the bridges that he expects will decrease the expense of repairs and improve safety.

*continued on page 4*



### Sea Isle City Council E- mail Addresses

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## **Sea Isle Boulevard Construction**

Travel conditions on Sea Isle Boulevard are unsafe and after three years the work is only about 50% complete. The Sea Isle City Newsletter recently stated that the project will be completed in spring 2019, Since it has taken three long years to do the first half of the project, how can we be certain that the next half will be completed in less than a year? We fear that the project completion date could slip even more.

One reason for the length of the project is because the roadway is being raised four feet by using natural compaction of the new soil. Several feet of sand, referred to as surcharge in the industry, are added to the top of the new soil in order to compact the new soil. This process took about two years for the westbound side of the road. Compaction for the eastbound side of the road has not yet begun.

A SICTA Board member suggested that the new soil on the east bound side be compacted manually with heavy duty construction equipment. Mr. Dale Foster, County Engineer, stated that excavation of about two feet would be required for this method and it would be more expensive, although he did not say how much more expensive.

Mr. Foster noted that the second impediment, discussed below, created the time to allow for the surcharge method of compaction.

The second impediment to progress is the State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection requirement that the project be suspended from March 15 until September 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. SICTA noted that it obtained a copy of the DEP's permit<sup>1</sup> for the project and that the wording was incomprehensible. Although SICTA did not read the pertinent clause to the Board, it referred to one osprey platform.. If not occupied, the suspension would not be necessary. The clause referred to "this" platform, although "this" platform was not previously mentioned. Nor was it referred to elsewhere.

The clause is contained under "Special Conditions in Addition to the Standard Conditions" and it is listed as item 5, on page 4 of the permit<sup>1</sup>.

*"In order to protect nesting Osprey pairs, the permittee must verify occupancy of this platform prior to the commencement of work in this area. If the project is occupied during the breeding season, all work within 1,000 ft. / 300 m of this platform must be suspended from March 15 until September 1 of given work year and the applicant must contact the Division of Land Use Regulation."*

As it turns out, there are three osprey platforms. The DEP will allow their removal when it is not breeding season. Mr. Foster indicated that this is not feasible because it is expensive to do and the DEP requires that three new platforms be built for each platform removed. Surprisingly, Mr. Foster indicated that he thinks the Boulevard project would not harm the ospreys if work was done during the breeding season.

When asked if a waiver to the DEP condition is possible, Mr. Gerald Thornton, Director of the Board, explained that is very difficult.

<sup>1</sup> Copy of the DEP permit can be found at <https://goo.gl/mEgmv6>

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Please see the following e-mail sent to Matthew Resnick, the Sea Isle Boulevard Project Manager for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Land Use Regulation of September 20, 2017

Dear Mr. Resnick:

As a member of the Board of Directors of the Sea Isle City Taxpayers Association and of Cape May County's Cape Issues team, I am writing you to express our concern over the safety of Sea Isle Boulevard during the construction of the raised highway. This project commenced around September 2014 and is not yet 50% complete. The City projects that the new causeway will be completed in 2019 but if Murphy's law holds true, it won't be finished until 2020.

Each week during the summer months, tens of thousands of people cross the temporary lanes on the south side of the construction work. The lanes are incredibly narrow and leave no wiggle room should one need to avoid another vehicle coming from the opposite direction. There have not been any fatalities yet but there have been accidents resulting in injuries. The recent Sea Isle City Newsletter stated that the project will be completed by Spring 2019. If this project is delayed longer than that, it is too much to ask Sea Isle City residents and visitors to continue to endure this risk.

The project has taken much longer than projected because construction must be halted during the Osprey nesting season. The following paragraph listed as item 5 on page four of your permit PI#0504-10-0004.1 is the reason that work must be curtailed:

*"In order to protect nesting Osprey pairs, the permittee must verify occupancy of this platform prior to the commencement of work in this area. If the project is occupied during the breeding season, all work within 1,000 ft. / 300 m of this platform must be suspended from March 15 until September 1 of given work year and the applicant must contact the Division of Land Use Regulation."*

We have been told that there are three platforms causing the construction delays. We ask that Item 5 be modified to permit the relocation of the three platforms to locations outside the 1,000 ft. boundary and that construction be permitted all year round.

We very much appreciate the efforts of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to protect our lands, waterways and wildlife, but we believe that people need to be protected as well.

Regards,

Joe McDevitt  
Vice President,  
Sea Isle City Taxpayers Association  
Cape May County Cape Issues Member

## Ocean Drive Bridges - Everyone Agrees there is a Problem SICTA Proposes a Solution



In 1939, through New Deal programs under which a grant in the amount of \$744,000 was received from the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works and \$910,000 was borrowed from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, the Cape May County Bridge Commission awarded a single contract for six bridges to connect the County's barrier islands. Except for the Corson's Inlet Bridge which opened in 1946, all of the bridges were constructed before World War II.

Currently four bridges connecting the county's barrier islands are structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. On February 1, 2011 two Ocean City High School students, under icy conditions, crashed their SUV through a guardrail and plunged into the frigid water of Corson's Inlet. Miraculously, the students survived. Sadly, four years later, our Ocean Drive bridges continue to deteriorate. In September 2015, The Press of Atlantic City reported that Tom Keane, sales manager of Stone Harbor Marina, said "boaters have a better appreciation for the deteriorating state of the county's bridges than most people." He is quoted as saying "Look at the Townsend's Inlet Bridge. It's in horrible condition. If you looked under it, you might not want to drive over it."

The County has taken responsibility for the maintenance of the bridges. To its credit, it has kept the bridges opened by making necessary repairs under difficult fiscal circumstances. Nevertheless, this Band-aid approach is not sustainable and SICTA has suggested to various powers-that-be that the County might be throwing good money after bad. Additionally, the Bridge Commission operates at a deficit. Operating losses were approximately \$533,467 and \$3,620,427 in 2015 and 2014 respectively (these are the latest audited amounts available—see page 8)<sup>2</sup>. In 2015 employment costs (salaries, fringe benefits and payroll taxes) alone of nearly \$2,055,307 (see page 12)<sup>2</sup> topped toll revenues of approximately \$2,752,885. (see page 17)<sup>2</sup> - CMC Bridge Commission Report link below.<sup>2</sup>

In the fall of 2014 and the summer of 2017, SICTA attended meetings of the Bridge Commission and the Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders. We suggested that the County float \$500 million in bonds to replace the Ocean Drive bridges. This would create an estimated \$27.4 million in annual debt and interest payments. A sizable chunk of this amount would be offset by savings by substantially reducing repairs and maintenance and eliminating the need for toll collectors and perhaps the Bridge Commission.

Assuming an increase in the County budget of \$27.4 million (30 year bond at 3.65%), a tax increase of 5.8 cents per \$100 would increase County taxes from 22.5 cents to 28.3 cents. Based on Sea Isle City's average assessment of \$700,000, this would cost the average taxpayer \$406 per year... \$1.11 per day. For a home on the mainland assessed at \$200,000, the increase would be \$116 per year or 32 cents a day.

When asked by the Press as to why we were proposing this tax increase, we said "Safety, safety and safety." Other benefits of new bridges include elimination of the need for extensive bridge closings for repairs and temporary closings resulting from high tide. We envision state-of-the-art structures that can support buses and are wide enough for modern fire equipment to cross. With add-ons such as fishing piers and bike and pedestrian paths (on the Ocean City causeway, for example), our County would protect and expand its desirability for residents and visitors.

Nevertheless, safety is the main issue -- and the time to act is now.

<sup>2</sup> The Bridge Commission Audit can be found here <https://goo.gl/1rf7T5>

*The following is an excerpt of the article that appeared in the Cape May County Herald on October 4, 2017.*

## Rehab Weighed for Townsend's Inlet Bridge

By Al Campbell

CREST HAVEN – Buy new or rebuild? That question often puzzles homeowners if the family grows. Like homeowners, the county is seeking an engineering firm's advice to answer that query about the Townsend's Inlet Bridge.

At the Sept. 26 freeholder meeting, the board authorized modifying a contract with Greenman-Pedersen Inc. for \$150,000 to perform a "brief bridge replacement feasibility study."

According to County Engineer Dale Foster that firm's diver spotted the cracked piling that resulted in the closure of the span last spring.

The substructure was repaired, and the bridge subsequently reopened.

As with an aging house, Foster told the board the bridge linking Avalon and Sea Isle City on Ocean Drive was built of steel in 1939-1940 and was designed to carry trucks weighing 17.5 tons. The average modern truck is 40 tons, Foster said.

"The thought process went to looking at replacement of some of those spans (sections)," said Foster as he explained the proposal. "It might be worthwhile to replace them."

That will be Greenman-Pedersen's task: explore what's feasible and report back by mid-November.

Due to the alignment of the bridge, particularly on the north side, with a park and homes nearby, a different slope is not feasible there.

Greater latitude exists on the Avalon side, since it is situated between the ocean and marshes.

Foster said the firm would look at "step-by-step replacement of some of the seven spans, seeing if it's cost-effective."

Replacement would speed the permitting process because permits for a new bridge might take years.

"We should be looking at the future of the bridge," Foster added.

Such a view to the future could include a sidewalk and slight widening that would give bicyclists and joggers more space. Additionally, it would give anglers a place "out of harm's way" when fall fishing season beckons many to the bridge.

Freeholder Will Morey apparently liked what he heard about the possible pedestrian enhancements.

"It is really important to move between the islands," Morey said. "From a recreational standpoint, we are in a different time." Such amenities would add to the enjoyment of the area by residents and visitors, Morey added.

*Link to the full article:* <https://goo.gl/h7y7SE>

### SICTA ANNUAL TOWN HALL MEETING with Mayor Desiderio

**Saturday, November 11, 2017 — 9:30 am**  
**Welcome Center (Lodge) Meeting Room, 300 JFK Blvd**



### Your SICTA Officers

Mary Tumolo, Acting President  
 Joe McDevitt, Vice President / Secretary  
 Ben Tartaglia, Treasurer

### Board of Directors

- Marye Ruzila
- Mike Stein
- Larry Lentini
- Steve Howard

If you would like to join SICTA and receive all newsletters and e-alerts, complete and send the application below, or visit our website:

[www.sicta.org/aboutsicta.htm](http://www.sicta.org/aboutsicta.htm)

- OR -

from your mobile device



#### SICTA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

#### MEMBERSHIP \$25 PER HOUSEHOLD

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 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ **P O Box 82**  
 SIC Property Address: \_\_\_\_\_ **SIC, NJ 08243**  
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#### Adult Household Members – List names and email addresses below:

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I would like to receive electronically:  All communications  Newsletter only  
 I would like to:  Serve on the Board  
 Volunteer to help with activities  
 I can't attend meetings but will help with research Contact me at: \_\_\_\_\_

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