

Fairness In Taxes Meeting Minutes 10-3-14

Board Attendance: Leo Burke, Bill & Sheila Harcraft, Michael Hinchman, Don Kerns, Dale Nicholas, Vic Staniec & Jim Tweed

Meeting opened by Michael Hinchman with Pledge Allegiance at 3:00 P.M. followed by the introduction of our guest speaker.

Guest Speaker - Michelle Gillian, Ocean City Chamber of Commerce

Michelle provided some very positive feedback on the Chamber of Commerce, activities in Ocean City and improvement in tourism. Not only do we need to attract more tourists, we need to attract more year-round families. The following points were addressed:

- This year tourism was much better than last. The combined efforts of the Chamber, Tourism Board, businesses and local groups got Ocean City back on its feet after Sandy. Summer vacationing increased by 18% and returning vacationers increased by 18% as well. Our visitors included people from PA, NY, NJ, OH, MA & as far away as CA.
- We are doing a study, highlighting the fact that Ocean City has top notch services and amenities including its high school located on the beach, our airport and golf course.
- The Downtown was recently voted #1 in South Jersey. In Ocean City the "3 B's" have become the "4 B's", beach, boardwalk, bay and the bridge with its new Welcome Center. Michelle credited shop owners for continuing to invest in the community and rebuilding bigger and better after Hurricane Sandy.
- Through the year there were 250+ events, and the last weekend in September, town was packed. The fall and spring block parties (Fall Fest & Spring Fest weekends) have for many, turned into a "girl's weekend"; friends, sisters, extended family gatherings, etc. making these events better than ever.
- The crown jewel of the island is the Ocean City Community Center housing the library, Aquatic & Fitness Center, senior center, arts center and historical museum.
- Ocean City offers 3,000 hotel rooms, including B & B's, but does not include all the rental properties. Generations of families return year after year.
- The advertising was another contributor. TV ads, billboard ads on the Ben Franklin bridge, Walt Whitman bridge & I95, an active website, 20,000 e-mails sent out, 108,000 friended us on Facebook, and the on-line contest which provided a week's vacation and lots of gifts for the winner. We include children in our ads because we are a family resort and "family" represents many different things. It was suggested that a "grandparents" should be featured as they are often providing the vacation for their families. Gillian agreed saying that Family Night on the boardwalk prompted more seasoned workers (translate, older) to dance with the guests when the music began.
- The welcome center at 34th was a much needed satellite, but it could use a face lift. It was suggested that if a permanent welcome center was not feasible, perhaps they could decorate the boat that is there with lights to make it more welcoming.
- One of the FIT members suggested that we offer free concerts as some other shore points do. Michelle vigorously defended the \$15.00 charge for concerts provided by the Ocean City Pops, noting that they often have named entertainers.
- It was also suggested that we need to do better with signage; directing visitors to the interesting and various locations and venues in Ocean City and helping them to navigate better.

Education Report - Vic Staniec

- School Board approved the new 3-year labor contract in a single day. The previous contract took 3 years to negotiate. This contract calls for 2% increase the first year, & a 2.1 % increase for the second and third years. Medical plan remained the same.
- New teachers are required to work 1 extra day this year for orientation.
- Asked about pensions, Vic stated that was a state level issue.
- The School Business Administrator resigned after 9 months. This is the fifth administrator in six years. Asked about the administrator's salary—stated that the outgoing administrator, Pat Yacovelli made \$137,000; did not know what a new administrator would make.
- Asked about teachers' salaries--are they the top paid in New Jersey? No, they're #2. The starting salary is \$47,700 and the top salary is approximately \$120,000.

President - Michael hinchman

- Proposed FIT place a full-page ad in the media—Artificial Turf vs Grass. Unanimously approved.

2nd Home Owner Voting Priviledge - Jim Tweed

- Has a volunteer to do a web survey.
- Has e-mailed the mayor of Rehoboth to speak to FIT membership, but will follow up with a letter.

Minutes from the August meeting were approved.

Jim Tweed moved to elect the following FIT board and officers for another year, seconded by Leo Burke and unanimously accepted by all those who attended as follows:

Leo Burke - Non-resident Member-at-Large
Bill Hartranft - Treasurer
Sheila Hartranft - Secretary
Don Kerns - Member-at-Large

Michael Hinchman - President
Dale Nicholas - Member-at-Large
Joe Somerville - Vice President
Vic Staniec - Education Chair
Jim Tweed - Member-at-Large

Dave McGettigan has resigned from the board citing other responsibilities which prevent him from being as active on the FIT board as he would like to be.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 P.M.

Next meeting scheduled for Friday, November 7, 2014.

Respectively submitted by:
Sheila Hartranft, Secretary