

## Fairness In Taxes Meeting Minutes 8/7/15

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

Meeting opened by Michael Hinchman with Pledge Allegiance at 3:00 P.M.

**Guest – John Loper, Planning Board Chairman, Historical Society Member**

**Life Saving Station – John shared much information with us on the history of the Life Saving Station.**

- The Life Saving Service has been around since approximately 1850. From 1850 to 1871 was a volunteer service.
- John displayed artifacts used by the service and provided an explanation for their use.
- Became a paid service in 1871. Six to eight men worked the station 24-7 365 days a year. Their pay was \$7.00 per month.
- There was one sleeper for each station in existence at that time, approximately 30 total. Most were lost to the sea.
- The station has been at its current site since 1875.
- A lantern was used to search the beach and water for foundering vessels. They Used a small cannon to attach a pulley line to a foundered vessel pulling passengers in one at a time. In the 1850's approximately 250 passengers were rescued from the Asher (I believed I have the name right).
- Used surf boats (much like the life guard boats of today) manned by 7-8 men to rescue passengers from larger ships.
- Those on "watch" were required to stand, hence the term "standing watch" used today.
- For additional light they used a kerosene torch can (a pre-battery flashlight).
- Currently preparing a grant to have 2 surf boats built for the existing station which is being restored.
- Eventually the service station was equipped for living, with beds, chairs, cook stoves, etc.
- From 1905 to 1915 it was a living history museum of the Life Saving Service.
- In 1945 the station was sold to the public. All owners since have been sensitive to the historical value of the property and worked to preserve it.
- The city has authorized \$80,000 to hire an architect (Watson & Henry) to refurbish the station.
- The Christian Brothers have donated original chairs and hardware to the Historical Society for the Station.
- The service eventually evolved into the Coast Guard making that branch of armed services the oldest.
- The station should be open and making money by the summer of 2016.
- The National Heritage Association has been invited to participate and they are hoping to create a National Life Saving organization.

### Q & A

- **Will there be reenactments?** Hoping to be able to re-enact rescue operations from one of the Jetties. When the boats are built, one will be kept at the beach. At one time they had a McClelland, virtually unsinkable, but difficult to maneuver. Jersey Boats were then used as they were easier to row.
- **Were women ever in the Service?** Yes, and one received the Congressional Medal of Honor for single-handedly rescuing 21 people from a 2<sup>nd</sup> wreck because the rest of the men were rescuing passengers from a 1<sup>st</sup> wreck. As whole families were often involved, it was not unheard for an entire family to be lost in a single rescue operation.
- **Will base flood elevation affect the station?** Not sure as the question would be whether elevating the station would affect the historic value.

## Q & A Life Saving Station Cont'd

- **Finances of the station?** A Green Acres grant would offset the purchase of \$1m; 50/50 percent shared between the city and the state. Sandy mitigation could provide an additional \$150,000, and a \$130,000 handicap grant. This would reduce the city's expense to \$750,000. Once it is operational and a gift shop is opened it should realize \$50,000 to \$160,000 per year, allowing the city to be paid back what is a bridge loan. \$120,000 has been spent on antiquities. They currently have 85 members each of whom have contributed \$250.00.
- **Does being in the historic area add value to the properties located there?** Does not seem to. John also stated his property (B & B) is currently worth \$2.5m.
- **Would it help if there were incentives?** There is a tax abatement but no one has availed themselves of it. The exteriors need to be maintained in their original form, but not the interiors.
- **Have they probed with metal detectors or anything else to discover artifacts?** Yes, but there is really nothing there.
- **Do they have cork vests in the memorabilia?** None of the originals (individual corks sown all over the vest) which would cost about \$10,000 if you could even find one. They do have one from the 1920's which is solid cork covered with fabric. They are acquiring a swan decoy.

## Planning Board

- Did not have much information on the details of how the Planning Board operates. As chair he only covers the meetings and agendas. The Board looks at all new development and where variances are required, it is referred to the Zoning Board.

## Q & A

- **Affordable Housing?** Ocean City in the strictest sense does not have "affordable housing".
- **Palermo's Corner – why not a single family home?** John stated he voted no but the majority ruled yes. Michael Hinchman commented he did not like 30' lots. John stated that in 1933 the original plan was for tri-plexes and high rises south of 14<sup>th</sup> Street. In 1917 the Lake Brothers (original founders) bought multiple blocks and erected cottages because as they were inexpensive, they knew they could sell them.

## Education – Vic Staniec

- School Board elections coming up; they have 5 openings and 5 are running. There are three 2-year seats and two 1-year seats. Those running are Tiffany Prettiman for Ray Clark's seat, Greg Whalen, Jim Bauer, Tom Oves, and Jackie McCallister for Pet Madden's seat.
- \$450,000 of the budget to go to tuition.
- \$2,950,000 to go to capital reserve.
- There is a 0.015% tax increase.
- Dr. Christine Lenz, Athletic Director resigned early and will not receive full pension. She has been charged with stealing e-mails and misconduct. Richard Fognano, Computer Tech was terminated July 4<sup>th</sup>, but it was changed to a resignation on July 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- For Upper Township School District, school choice is not automatic. Only eligible if they live in Upper Township. If nothing changes, the son of the superintendent will not be able to attend Ocean City High School.
- Asked how many can apply Vic stated that the state capped it at 2% per year. Siblings of current students get the first shot. There are currently 192 choice students in Ocean City.
- Upper Township seems to question everything causing some bad blood. They are limited to 3 representatives on the Ocean City school board.
- The ratings for New Jersey High School are out. Ocean City finished at 56.

## Ocean City Flooding – Eric Sauder

- OPRA'd information from Ocean City. They seem to have a procedure in place for the inspection of check valves.
- Hatch, Mott, MacDonald report 24<sup>th</sup> to 34<sup>th</sup> Street with Baker echoing their findings seems to be comprehensive and positive.

**Ocean City Flooding – Eric Sauder Cont’d**

- Funding will be critical and the hope is the city will man-up.
- City has set monies aside; but ratable should go up to cover it.
- It was commented that the Baker Study should be for the whole island. Need to keep after the city on this issue.

Meeting adjourned 5:00 P.M.

Next meeting scheduled for September 4, 2015

Respectively submitted by

Sheila Hartranft

Secretary