

Fairness In Taxes

Meeting Minutes 11-6-15

Board Attendance: Sheila & Bill Hartranft, Michael Hinchman, Don Kerns, Joe Somerville & Jim Tweed

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

Guest – Karen Bergman, New Ocean City Councilwoman Appointed to Mike Allegretto’s Vacant Seat

- Karen stated she was honored FIT wanted to hear what she might have to say and offer.
- There was some grumbling regarding Mike Allegretto leaving Council, then she was approached about taking his seat; they felt that it was important both because she was a woman and had past experience on Council.
- Karen felt that there should always be 7 members on council, for balance, and avoid ties in voting; there would always be at least 3-4 result.
- She stated she missed dealing directly with the people of the city and felt she had always listened to their questions and tried to get them answered.
- She also commented on the great loss that John Kemenosh was to the city and its residents.
- She believes the current administration is behaving responsibly and positively.

Q & A/Comments

- Jim Tweed commented he hopes she was returning with the same curiosity as she had in the past.
- Bob & Carol Hart asked where she fell in the process with the 3 or the 4? Her response she has fallen on both sides depending upon the issue.
- Michael Hinchman asked about the Theater group and the property at 15th Street & West Avenue, asking Karen if she had read the lease and reviewed all the information. He feels the city is “breaking the law”. Her comment was she would need to go to the City Solicitor first before making a judgment; then move forward if necessary.
- Jim Tweed commented at this point that he thought “violating the terms of the contract” instead of “breaking the law”, until further investigation was made and everyone was sure of all the facts. Karen stated she would prefer at this time, to go the city solicitor in private with regard to this.
- She also stated she would like to speak more on issues currently before council.
- Michael Hinchman asked about the Boardwalk reconstruction and why there was no investigation into other types of “wood” for the Boardwalk and why they did not look at alternatives. Karen stated that the majority of the residents did not want alternative materials, they felt it would detract from the flavor of the city. There was much disagreement over this but it did not “break” the city or cause any permanent rifts.
- Debbie Reader, resident and FIT member had a few comments she wished to state:
 - Her home in the 200 block of Wesley Avenue has been in the family since the 40’s though she is not a year-round resident. She hopes that FIT will continue to promote the issue of voting rights for all property owners.
 - Commented that someone who bought up most of the block she is, keeps trying to get her to sell; she feels her ownership may be in the way of his plans.
 - She was for BYOB for the city and as so many actually do drink and have it delivered to their home in Ocean City, what is the big deal? Karen stated she once agreed with Debbie, but has since found she understands why most did not want to vote for it. In her view, the lack of BYOB is a draw for many vacationers.
 - Also asked if Karen knew anything about Ocean City Smart Growth. She is not familiar with the group.
 - She at one time had a “Tabernacle Cottage” on her property, but had to get rid of it; and also asked if the Historic District is shrinking? Answer, yes.

Q & A/Comments Cont'd

- There was additional comments regarding IPE vs wood; does it really harm the environment? Does it really have the “seal of approval”? Also, sod on the football field. Michael Hinchmen commented that the processes of the administration seem to be flawed.
- Karen closed by stating that if you contact her by e-mail, phone or other means she will always respond, will always be honest and will always work to find the answer (s).
- Michael Hinchman further commented both to Karen and Ed Price that he felt council’s job was to oversee the administration and should step up when and if the administration crosses the line. If not, then council is part of the problem, not the solution. He used the Coastal Cottages and the American Legion Post as examples, i.e. he should have recused himself from voting as he is the plumber of record for both.

Fairness In Taxes business

- Jim Tweed made the following nominations of Members-at-Large to the Executive Board:
 - Non-resident Member-at-Large: Leo Burke
 - Members-at-Large: Vic Staniec
 - Donald Kerns
 - Dale Nicholas
 - Jim Tweed
- Michael Hinchman requested nominations from the floor. As none were made, he moved to accept the nominees; seconded by Bill Hartranft. All were in favor.
- Michael Hinchment made the following nominations as Chairpersons of Standing Committees:
 - School Board Revenue & Expenditure Committee – Vic Staniec
 - Membership Committee – Bill Hartranft
 - Public Relations & Press Communications Committee – Himself
 - City Revenue & Expenditures Committee – Himself
 - County Revenue & Expenditure Committee – Requested a Volunteer TBA
 - Flooding & Drainage Committee – Suzanne Hornick
- Jim Tweed moved to accept the president’s appointments; seconded by Bill Hartranft. All were in favor.

Treasurer’s Report – Bill Hartranft

- Received \$7,150.00 in dues so far this year. A reminder in the Fall Newsletter generated additional dues payments and second payments from some members.
- The bank balance is currently \$16,349.34 and there is \$12,630.00 in 5-year CD’s.
- Expenses so far are at \$4,038.35.
- Michael Hinchman suggested planning and arranging for more ads in the media.

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, December 4, 2015. Jim Mallon to be invited as guest speaker. Mike Allegretto volunteered to extend the invitation on our behalf.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by:
Sheila Hartranft
Secretary