

FROM THE PRESIDENT Cont'd

About 2 years ago (it might have been 3) the City razed the skateboard park at 6th Street & the Boardwalk. Since then other locations have been under consideration. The City faced a deadline for site selection for Green Acres funding in April and a well-attended workshop occurred.

Stepping back, there are several observations: 1) the City razed the old skateboard park without a plan and it took years to decide on a new location; 2) the City at one point in its recent "Capital Plan" wanted to put the new police station next to and above the fire house at 6th Street for \$9 million (which I opposed because of the outlandish price); 3) the parking at this site was promised to the neighbors and is also where the Primary School teachers park; and finally, 4) it became a rushed process in April to meet a deadline.

For other capital projects there are similar instances of poor planning:

- 1) one block of the Boardwalk being redone in 4 years, and then pine chosen which guarantees years of maintenance.
- 2) the now defunct 2nd Street Marina rebuilding.
- 3) the lack of a master plan for the drainage issue.
- 4) the ridiculous overpayment and conflict of interest with the purchase of the 8th Street parking lot.

We will continue to push for better planning—Coming soon is the 2nd Street & Palen Avenue project on the waterfront.

TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION—Jim Tweed

Over two hundred years ago, "taxation without representation" started a revolution. Ocean City celebrates itself as a patriotic town. That is why this is the perfect community to take the lead in a movement for fairness that has long been neglected. Every year it is our good fortune to receive millions of dollars in tax revenues from fellow citizens who are not afforded any opportunity to vote for the representatives to decide how much they will be taxed or how those dollars will be spent. The question: why should a community which celebrates our American values tolerate this injustice when it is possible to take action to change it? Opponents will correctly tell you that municipalities do not have the power to expand the franchise. States, however do. Although residency is typically the cornerstone to the right to vote, a growing number of states are delegating authority to municipalities to allow non-residents to vote in some elections. For example, Colorado authorizes municipalities having a population of at least two thousand inhabitants to allow towns like Telluride to give property owners who hold at least fifty percent property interest the right to vote in municipal elections. Connecticut allows any adult citizen who is assessed for taxes of \$1,000 or more the right to vote in municipal elections (although municipalities may limit that right). Other states like Arizona and Montana allow special districts like agricultural, water or power to conduct property-based voting. The core value to all is fairness. Citizens who are most impacted should have a voice in how they are represented.

Opponents will also argue that we should not give non-resident property owners the right to vote because they don't live here and aren't familiar with our local politics. However, my neighbors whose primary residence is Florida or Pennsylvania or other parts of New Jersey follow what's happening in Ocean City closer than some who live here and can vote. It is natural to "guard your own rice bowl," but when you receive most of your rice from others and you don't let them have a say on who gets to eat, that's just plain selfishness.

TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION Cont'd

Ocean City recently held an election and there were several debates or candidates forums. None of the locals asked the question whether any candidate would support a resolution requesting the State of New Jersey to grant municipalities the authority to grant non-residents the right to vote in municipal elections. We did recite the Pledge of Allegiance at each of those programs. I wonder if there are enough Americans living here who would be willing to support "justice for all." If fairness In Taxes does not raise the questions, who will?

FROM THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE—Vic Staniec

After intensive lobbying and negotiations with the Education Committee, Ocean City Business Administrator, Pat Yacobelli decreased the proposed tax increase due from Ocean City tax payers for the 2014-15 budget from 1.65% to 1.5%. While this might not seem like a large amount, it signifies a change in policy. In the past, whenever the Ocean City School District was able to obtain additional State or Federal funding, it would always stash the entire amount in a surplus funds budget rather than applying any of the amount for tax relief. This year \$78,000 is being used to reduce the tax increase due from Ocean City tax payers. This change in policy can be attributed to the constant monitoring the Fairness In Taxes Education committee applies to all School District expenditures and budgeting. The total School District budget for 2014-15 is \$40.9m, of which \$24.68m must be supplied by the tax payers of Ocean City. The remainder of the budget comes from federal and State aid and from tuition charged to the sending districts (Upper Township, Sea Isle City and Corbin City). The School Choice program provides \$2.7m funding from the State. 72.24% of the budget is required to pay for staff salaries and benefits. The Ocean City teachers are the 2nd highest paid in the State of New Jersey, with a mean average salary of \$92,400 per teacher for the current school year.

FROM THE TREASURER— Bill Hartranft

We are still financially solvent, but the dues returns are less than 50% of the membership and considerably less than last year. I would entreat those of you who haven't yet sent your dues to do so. If perchance you don't have our address, it is as follows:

**Fairness In Taxes
P.O. Box 565
Ocean City, NJ 08226**

This year we've supported Mayoral and Council-at-Large debates by bearing the full freight of the expense in our efforts to provide candidates' views prior to the election. Unfortunately, only a little over 35% of eligible voters went to the polls. I believe apathy is a sadness. I also fully support the idea of 2nd home owners voting, although this is my personal view. This administration spends your taxes and I firmly believe you should have a vote.

We've spent monies to advertise the debates, fund the debates, including costs for the Mayoral debate that was not attended by Mayor Gillian because of other commitments. As an aside, he was unable to provide an alternate date for a debate with Mr. Price. What was even more unfortunate was that the administration did not allow the airing of the recorded hour and fifteen minutes of non-stop questions presented by Mr. Bergen and Mr. Nahan.

FROM THE TREASURER—Cont'd

Some of our current activities include attempting to revitalize a long dormant web site, returning phone calls to our telephone contact number requests and attempting to increase membership by identifying new home owners. This has a frustrating endeavor. We also placed an ad in the Sentinel supporting the School's bond for new HVAC equipment. FIT saw this as an imperative capital expense.

What can you do to help? Do you know any of your neighbors who would be interested in supporting our efforts to be the "watchdog of your tax dollars? If so, I would appreciate it if you would e-mail me their name and home address. I would be glad to send a welcome letter explaining our organization's activities. My e-mail address is wdhartranft1@comcast.net.

FROM THE SECRETARY—Sheila Hartranft

We are making every effort to put out our newsletter at least quarterly. We realize that we have been lax in this effort; but will strive to keep you better informed in future. If you have any thoughts or information you would like to see included, please feel free to let us know. It is as much your newsletter as ours, and we would like you to be as informed of our activities and efforts as possible.

OUR WEB SITE IS BACK UP AND RUNNING, DUE TO THE EFFORTS OF OUR WEB SITE GURU, JIM RUDOLPH. HE HAS GRACIOUSLY OFFERED ME HIS ASSISTANCE IN KEEPING THE SITE CURRENT AND UP TO DATE AND I AM VERY GRATEFUL.

PLEASE VISIT THE SITE AND USE THE "CONTACT US" ICON TO FORWARD YOUR E-MAIL, ASK QUESTIONS, AND VOICE YOUR CONCERNS FOR HOW YOUR TAX DOLLARS ARE SPENT.

THEY WILL BE FORWARDED TO THE APPROPRIATE BOARD MEMBER.

AS ALWAYS, OUR SINCERE THANKS FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT.

The Fairness In Taxes meetings are held on the 1st Friday of each month as follows:

*3:00 P.M.
Ocean City Library
17th Street & Haven Avenue
Room #110
Ocean City, NJ*

Very often we have guest speakers from various Ocean City municipal offices and local companies, providing valuable and informative dialogue among all attendees, and information on how your tax dollars are being used.

We are pleased to have Peter Madden, newly elected Councilman-at-Large as the guest speaker at the upcoming meeting of June 6.

Remember, FIT is there for all tax paying home owners in Ocean City.

We would love to see you there!

FAIRNESS IN TAXES

P.O. Box 565

Ocean City, NJ 08226-0565

FAIRNESS IN TAXES

Is organized for the purpose of serving the taxpayers and residents of Ocean City, NJ as an advisory and fact finding group in areas such as city budget, school board budget, taxes and other related civic activity in the interests of owners of real estate in Ocean City.

Hotline 609 398-6411

Email www.fairnessintaxes.com and select *Contact Us*.

Please notify us of any address changes

FAIRNESS IN TAXES WEBSITE

www.fairnessintaxes.com
CHECK FOR UPDATED INFORMATION!!

A list of phone numbers of Council Members and the Mayor is as follows: (area code 609)

1st Ward	Michael DeVlieger	861 Asbury Avenue	231-8987	mdevlieger@ocnj.us
At-Large	Pete Madden	421 Battersea Road	399-0041	peter.madden@foxroach.com
At-Large	Michael Allegretto	1423 Simpson Avenue	432-8739	Mike@michaelallegretto.com
2nd Ward	Antwan L. McClellan	448 West Avenue	545-7660	amcclellan@ocnj.us
Mayor	Jay Gillian	861 Asbury Avenue	525-9323	jgillian@ocnj.us
At-Large	Keith Hartzell	720 Asbury Avenue	399-5324	keithhartzell@hotmail.com
3rd Ward	Tony Wilson	23 West 15th Street	363-8669	awilson@ocnj.us
4th Ward	Peter J. Guinosso	4815 Central Avenue	398-2560	pguinosso@ocnj.us

Regular council meetings are held the 2nd & 4th Thursday of every month @ 7PM in Council Chambers @ City Hall.