

BACKBAY DREDGING—Michael Hinchman Cont'd

I find the dredging problem is different from the beach replenishment problem in two ways: 1) beach replenishment enjoys state and federal funding support.; there is no identifiable funding source for dredging; 2) there is no obvious solution yet to the lack of spoils availability for dredging.

The accumulated debt of the city totals about \$60-\$70m. The price tag to dredge tip to tip is many times that number. This is a long-term problem that was identified years ago.

“A TALE OF TWO CITIES”—Bill Hartranft

Just a fast comparison between Somers Point Gateway Theater and the Ocean City Amateur Theater at 15th Street & West Avenue.

Somers Point Gateway Playhouse Repair/Rebuilding:

- ◆ City owned building.
- ◆ Contracted lease at \$1/year.
- ◆ \$400k in state grants, as well as monies raised through community support.
- ◆ Web site available to show fund-raising efforts.
- ◆ All of these things helping to make this happen in Somers Point.

Ocean City Amateur Theater Repair/Rebuilding:

- ◆ City owned building.
- ◆ “As Is” contract signed in December 2014 to lease at \$1/year.
- ◆ City spent more than 45k in renovation after “as is” lease is signed, as well as providing city employees to work on the building.
- ◆ Building fails state and city fire inspections. More monies will be spent.
- ◆ No apparent web site or community fund raising efforts.
- ◆ Already, the city is planning to pay an architect \$15k for building plans. These are all taxpayer dollars being spent.

In the interest of sharing services between cities, maybe Somers Point would offer to share its administration with Ocean City. Somers Point seems to be doing it right.

EDUCATIONAL REVIEW - Vic Staniec

At a special Ocean city School Board meeting on July 9, 2015 High School Vice President & Athletic director , Dr. Christine Lentz retired at the age of 53 after 30 years service with the school district. Her salary was \$123,197/year, and by retiring before age 55 she will suffer a penalty to her pension, which is believed to be about \$64,000/year. On August 4, 2015 Dr. Lentz was charged by the Cape May County prosecutor’s office with official misconduct and computer criminal activity for allegedly hacking District Superintendent Dr. Kathleen Taylor’s e-mail account. Each charge carries up to a 5-year term in jail. Conjecture is that since Dr. Lentz was the head of the negotiating team for the Ocean City school district administrators, she might have been seeking to gain an advantage in the ongoing negotiations.

Jack Pfizenmayer has been hired as the interim Athletic Director with a stipend of \$400/day for working 3 to 5 days per week as needed. Wendy Weber-O’Neil was hired as the new High School Vice Principal at a salary of \$100,000/year. She previously was the Athletic Director for the Bordentown Regional School District, and Vice Principal at the Kent Place School in Summit, NJ. Timothy Kelly, an Ocean City High School graduate was hired as the new Business Administrator at a salary of \$135,000/year plus an additional \$3,500 from the Corbin City School District and \$10,000 from the Sea Isle City School District.

EDUCATIONAL REVIEW - Vic Staniec Cont'd

He previously was the Galloway Township School District Business Administrator.

The construction at the Ocean City Primary School was completed at the start of the new school year at a cost of \$6.1m; \$2.4m came from a New Jersey state grant, \$2.4m from a bond issued approved by the Ocean City tax payers, and \$2.3m from the school district capital reserve fund. The 26-year old roof, the hot water boiler and all windows and doors were replaced with new high-efficiency units. In addition, duct work was installed throughout the school in order to accommodate a new air conditioning system.

There are 4 openings for the upcoming School Board elections in November. Current School Board members Jim Bauer, Tom Oves, Jackie McAllister and Tiffany Prettyman, who replaced Ray Clark when he resigned, were the only candidates who applied to run in the election.

OC FLOODING—Eric Sauder

I was asked to submit a recap on the OC Flood Committee. I'm not sure how informative I can be at this time, as I am contemplating a move to Virginia where two-thirds of my family reside and my OC property is on the market. When you know you're going you tend to detach; I'm looking ahead.

There was a public presentation of the Baker study in August. Those of us from the OC Flooding Committee who attended were encouraged by the comprehensive nature of the study. In comparing it to its predecessor the Hatch Mott McDonald report, I found that it was of similar scope and came to many of the same conclusions. To those of you who haven't seen the Baker study, it is now on the city's website. It is a reputedly massaged version of the original. Suzanne Hornick and I submitted several OPRA requests for the study that were denied.

The Baker study covers the area of town from 26th to 34th Street. The scope was expanded somewhat to cover the entire drainage area encompassing those streets. To date, no commitment has been made by the city to address the findings; nor is there an anticipated timeframe. The Mayor stated at the meeting that "something will be done this year." Preliminary cost estimates for the work reportedly exceed \$10m.

The north end pumping station construction is slated to begin next year. The project has been delayed and the OC Flood Committee has not been tracking its progress. As for Merion Park, several OPRA requests revealed that the Baker recommendations for that project were not faithfully followed, and that some work that was recommended was not performed. All of this makes you wonder why we pay for studies. It also suggests that vigilance will be required to ensure that the Baker recommendations for 26th thru 34th Street are followed.

What we were hoping for was a study of street flooding across the entire island. The approach so far has been to pick and choose various parts of town for study and possible remediation. To those of you who are experiencing recurring street flooding, and are on the outside looking in, a word of advice; YOU need to plug into the process and MAKE it happen. I can tell you why this area was studied; there was a groundswell of people from that area who were actively petitioning the city to DO something about their street flooding.

There are many opportunities to redress street flooding that only require a little progressive thinking. Many of you are second homeowners and know from experience that flood water management is an integral part of new development in most communities. It hasn't been pushed here because this town is run by real estate and development interests intent on building on every square inch of land. It is a lucky raindrop indeed that can find its way to the ground in OC. Other opportunities include pervious road surfacing, particularly in alleys. Another is greenspace. We should seriously consider building parking garages so we can get rid of some of the asphalt parking lots and use them for greenspace.

What I will most about OC are the many friends and acquaintances I made here.

Best of luck to everyone!

NON-RESIDENT VOTING RIGHTS—Jim Tweed

This time last year the issue of non-resident property owner voting rights was a hot public discussion topic. Although the membership survey showed 85% of Fairness In Taxes supported the Resolution,* it would take a groundswell of support beyond a single civic organization in Ocean city to move the New Jersey State Legislature to correct this injustice. Neither the State Senator from South Jersey (Jeff Van Drew) nor Governor Christie expressed support when the issue was in the spotlight.

If this idea is ever to move forward it will take the passion and effort of those who really do have a dog in the fight—the non-resident property owners themselves. Until that happens the smug supporters of “taxation without representation” will continue to take millions of dollars in tax revenues from their fellow citizens who cannot vote for the representatives who decide, not only how much they will be taxed, but more importantly how those dollars will be spent. Just ask yourself how well did “local only” spending your money work out? Do you think we would have under-invested in roads, alleys, flood drainage, dredging and boardwalk deterioration for decades if politicians had to answer to our non-resident property owners instead of to our very highly paid city employees? Think about it.

Now consider how your opponents think about it. Some say they just don’t want “outsiders telling them what to do.” They believe that non-residents don’t know local issues and are interested only in cutting costs. I guess they assume that the items mentioned above, which affect the long term value of your investment, just don’t occur to you. If being fully informed of local issues was a requirement for voting, there would be a lot of people here who would lose their franchise. Others just feel that an injustice they once endured should just be perpetuated; “they didn’t get to vote until they moved here, so neither should you.” If everyone followed that logic, we’d all still be serfs. I’m glad that homeless people who pay no taxes can vote; but, I’m still waiting for the explanation of how it is fair for citizens who pay thousands of dollars per year in property taxes cannot.

Until non-resident property owners take action, your opponents will continue to gloat that “it’ll never happen.” they believe that you just haven’t got what it takes to accomplish here what has been accomplished in Telluride, Colorado, Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, Connecticut and other states. We say the Pledge of Allegiance a lot in Ocean city. At the “justice for all” part they repeat the words just like they were the walking dead.

FAIRNESS IN TAXES RESOLUTION

**** Resolved: “Fairness in Taxes supports the right of non-resident property owners who are citizens of the United States, at least eighteen years of age, holding fifty percent or more ownership interest in real property located within the municipal boundaries of the City of Ocean City, and paying a minimum of one thousand dollars per year in property taxes to vote as an individual for the elected offices of Mayor and City Council members. Owners of multiple properties shall choose one location to determine the ward in which they may be registered.”***

FROM THE TREASURER— Bill Hartranft

With regard to our finances, very little has changed since our last newsletter in June. We have added a few new members and, sadly lost a few. Our current membership is 897 households.

We have so far received \$6,650.00 in membership dues representing a little more than 40% of our total membership. Without the support of all our members through their annual dues, we are limited in how much we can do relative to media advertising on current issues affecting our member property owners (translate—taxpayers), providing our newsletters, paying our insurance, covering our bank expenses and other things that crop up occasionally through the year.

Currently our printer, Allegra handles all aspects of our newsletter including the postage. Because we have consolidated this function, we have realized a considerable savings in postage, since they use a bulk mail account.

If you have not yet sent in your 2015 dues, I encourage you to do so and offer thanks from the entire organization for your generosity and support.

FROM THE SECRETARY— Sheila Hartranft

Fairness In Taxes meetings are held on the first Friday of each month as follows:

Time 3:00 P.M.
Place: Ocean City Library
17th Street & Haven Avenue
Room #110

Very often we have guest speakers from the Ocean City administration or from local organizations keeping us updated on many issues affecting our city.

We would love to see you there!

Our annual membership and business meeting is scheduled for Friday, November 6, 2015.

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. Keep in touch via E-mail to our web site or to individual board members listed on the site.

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	Peter V. Madden	4 W. Aberdeen Road	513-4781	pmadden@ocmj.us
At-Large	VACANT			
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	khartzell@ocnj.us
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.