

EDUCATIONAL REVIEW - Vic Staniec

Dr. Christine Lentz, the former Ocean City High School vice-principal and athletic director who resigned after being accused of hacking into Superintendent, Dr. Kathleen Taylor's e-mail account is suing the school district for \$2m. She claims that the school administration disapproved of her marriage to her partner two years ago, and provided a hostile work environment for her. The Cape May County prosecutor who brought charges against Dr. Lentz was awaiting the results of a grand jury investigation, which has since resulted in her indictment on several charges which include the hacking of Dr. Taylor's e-mail.

Below is a list of the current salaries for some of the administrators in the Ocean City School District:

- Dr. Kathleen Taylor, Superintendent—\$157,000 plus eligibility for another 18% in bonuses.
- Dr. Matthew Jamison, High School Principal—\$157,057.
- Thomas Campo, High School Vice Principal—\$136,477.
- Wendy O'Neal, High School Vice Principal-\$105,000.
- Matthew Carey, Special Services Coordinator-\$130,000.
- Curt Nath, Curriculum Coordinator-\$130,000.
- Geoffrey Haines, Intermediate School Principal-\$124,000.
- Cathleen Smith, Primary School Principal-\$124,000.

OC FLOODING - Suzanne Horniak

The OC Flooding Committee now has nearly 500 members resulting from e-mail distribution and our Facebook page. People want results not excuses.

The city continues to be unresponsive, while the mayor is still saying that the city wants transparency and a good working relationship with the community.

At the City Council meeting of February 11 seven people spoke to council on the flooding issue; 4 at the start of the meeting and three at the close, all stressing the need for flood remediation as soon as possible, the city involving the community in its plans, and that raising the roads may not be the best solution. Burt Diamond, a member of Fairness in Taxes and the OC Flood committee suggested we put our property taxes into an escrow account instead of paying them to the city until such time as the flooding has been remediated. We stand behind his suggestion.

We have ordered 60 new "No Wake" signs which we expect to be available as you read this newsletter. We continue to ask all property owners and residents to please attend council meetings, e-mail City Council and the mayor and make phone calls to City Hall to express not only your disapproval with the lack of results on this issue and the unwillingness of the administration to work with our committee as we represent the community-at-large on the flooding issues.

We were initially promised the Baker report by the end of November; then the end of December; now they are saying maybe by mid-March. ?.

We will be holding another community meeting before Easter weekend, if possible. We invite you to attend, participate with us and/or become a member of our core committee.

THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY—Eric Sauder

There's little good news in the world today, so I'll start with the good news. The North End project will be getting underway soon. A pumping station will be built and storm water pipes redirected to feed into it. Around \$8m is committed to that project this year as part of the 5-year capital plan. A \$4m commitment was also made for the area between 26th & 34th Streets, which I believe has been expanded to include 24th Street. An approximate \$600k contract was negotiated last year with Baker Engineering for a remediation plan for the area which was supposed to be delivered to the city at the end of last year. No one in the public sector has yet to see the plan. Approximately 50% of the capital budget for this year is being committed to roads and drainage. Next year it drops to around 21%. Over the 5-year period roads and drainage accounts for approximately 40% of the capital budget.

The bad news is that while the commitment is to roads AND drainage, there is no breakout between the two. All indications are that the commitment is essentially to road repaving and not drainage improvements. When you consider the amount of money committed to the North End project, and the need to remediate flooding island-wide, it begs the question whether we're committing enough of the capital budget to this issue. What's worse, we're budgeting blind. There has never been a city-wide study of flooding. The closest we came was the Hatch-Mott-McDonald study many years ago; but, for some reason the city called off the study at 34th Street. The only reason we know about this is because a member of our group had a copy. It's no wonder the city doesn't want anyone to see it; it is quite detailed and specific as to what needs to be done to remediate the flooding, the point being, island-wide we don't know what the state of our storm water system is, nor do we have any idea what it will cost to fix it.

If that's not already ugly, you must be wondering what is. The first project under the new roads and drainage program is about to get underway. There was no study and no recommendation for what needs to be done to address flooding. Instead, the plan is to elevate the streets 9 inches and repave them. Just what will that do to the property owners who are already suffering property damage from flooding is not too difficult to imagine. In some parts of the city the road beds are collapsing due to standing water not being removed by the present storm water system. Many of the storm water pipes are deteriorated and leaking; others just don't have the capacity.

One of our two remaining WaWa stores is closed yet again due to flooding and will probably remain closed for months, as a result of a fairly moderate nor'easter which also forced the closure of all our causeways. I don't remember that ever happening before. The last flooding event wasn't even caused by a storm; it wasn't even raining. It was just the result of high tides much of which was due to water coming up through the storm water system. We have a mess on our hands, and people are just not happy about it. An indication of that is that the membership in OC Flooding, a sub-committee of Fairness In Taxes, more than doubled in the last month.

We are acquiring more "No Wake" signs for residents and are planning a major awareness campaign for the spring. We'll keep you posted. If you want to get involved, and we hope you do, you can reach us via e-mail at ocflooding@gmail.com.

IS THERE GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION IN O.C.?—Jim Tweed

Many years ago I was having a conversation with a group of people and an attorney in the group started bragging how he could get traffic tickets “fixed” because he had a good relationship with a certain judge. He assumed that he was impressing his audience and failed to even realize he had lost our respect. Several years later he became a judge and you can imagine how much trust attorneys felt toward him.

By all other accounts he seemed worthy of respect— good job, attractive family, an elder in his church; but, whenever I saw him, I always remembered how clueless he was. Corruption is like that. The people who indulge in it not only feel no shame, they’re proud of it. It makes them feel special.

I am not aware of any corruption in Ocean City. That is why it is important for people who hold public office not to act like they have something to hide. Administrative Site Plan Reviews (ASPR) is a procedure for applicants to make minor changes to a development previously granted site plan approval by the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Adjustment. The ordinance authorizes the “Director of Planning” to determine if proposed changes to a development previously granted site plan approval are minor enough to fall within the ordinance. Examples of eligible changes are exterior lighting, landscaping, screening, fences, buffers, drainage, signs, parking layout, HVAC, and solid waste containment. Several months ago I reviewed 45 ASPR’s that were approved by James Mallon when he served as Director of Community Services. Most seemed to me to be within the scope of the ordinance, but I did have a couple of questions. Mr. Mallon was personally very professional and I had no reason to believe that there was not a reasonable answer to my questions. I simply wanted to know if any authority existed that allowed the “Director of Community Services” to act as the “Director of Planning”; and secondly, if some of the approvals that did not fall within the language of the ordinance were justified on other grounds. Although he was willing to talk to me, Mr. Mallon let me know that he would not be responding to those questions beyond his assertion he was confident the decisions were proper. I like to give people the benefit of the doubt and was surprised that Mr. Mallon did not take the opportunity to make me go away with a more authoritative answer.

There are two points of view on how to handle questions. One is to answer them; the other is to stonewall. Stonewalling is actually a smart strategy when you have something to hide; but, when you have a strong case the best way to make a questioner disappear is to hit them with the provable truth. I would prefer to give Mr. Mallon the benefit of the doubt; but, by not simply answering those two basic questions Mr. Mallon leaves the answers up to the imagination of others.

I’m not personally offended by corruption because the price is ultimately borne by the ones corrupted. When the decisions lead to an un-level playing field, the public good is poorly served. If awards or contracts are granted on the basis of personal relationships instead of the public good, the offenders need to be exposed so that justice prevails.

Two things happen when a culture becomes corrupt: first, someone with knowledge of the corruption eventually gets so sick of it they find the courage to go public, and second, since that possibility always exists, the ones in power grow suspicious of the very people trusted to do the public’s work. You’ll notice talented employees start leaving because good people don’t enjoy working in a paranoid environment. That may or may not be the case in Ocean City. All we have to do is wait and see.

Jim Tweed
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Ocean City, NJ 08226
609-398-3124

FROM THE TREASURER– Bill Hartranft

Where does the time go? Already it's the middle of February. We're sending this newsletter out via USPS to be certain we've made it easy for you to pay your dues which keep our efforts on your behalf afloat (no flooding pun intended).

We will be making every effort to have our Spring Newsletter distributed via email to offset printing/ mailing costs. As part of this effort we ask when you send in your annual \$15 dues, please provide, validate or update your email address.

In an effort to continually challenge spending and future spending I addressed City Council last week. I challenged Resolution 20 which was to spend about \$500,000 for Carey Fields' artificial turf and pointed out the city has spent over \$56,000 over 33 months at \$1,700 a month for temp housing at the 29th Street firehouse, instead of working to make the firehouse habitable.

YOUR DUES ARE CRITICAL TO OUR EFFORTS.

***PLEASE HELP US TO CONTINUE TO HELP ALL THE TAXPAYING
PROPERTY OWNERS OF OUR CITY.***

JUST \$15.00 A YEAR, PER FAMILY HOUSEHOLD GOES A LONG WAY

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 affect-
ing 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	Karen Bergman			kbergman@ocnj.us
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.