

## May 2026 Municipal Update

Dear Ocean Gate Residents

We are busy preparing for the summer season and the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our nation! Included in this update is the **2026 Events Schedule** as well as a special insert outlining the Boroughs direction to designate the school properties as a "Redevelopment Zone". This will enable the Borough to create a plan that directs any future use and or development of these properties.

### **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE:**

**Council President Jim McGrath, 2026 Chairman**

Two of our CERT team members (civilian emergency response team) were recently recognized at an Ocean County CERT training session. During the recent blizzard, Mike Gerrity responded for a call to assist in Barnegat to open a Warming Center. After additional resources arrived, Mike returned to the OEM Operations Center at Miller Air Park and continued to assist there. In addition, Stephanie Mata's training and quick action led to saving a life. While in a restaurant when a medical emergency occurred, Stephanie took charge, had the restaurant call 911, retrieved the AED and provided CPR with another patron (a doctor) until the EMS arrived. Thanks to Jeff Flatt, our CERT coordinator, under the direction of the Ocean Gate police dept, Ocean Gate has one of the largest and best trained CERT teams in Ocean County.

Our 4 seasonal Bike Officers have been hired and are now in training. You may notice they have new bikes this year. The old ones were almost 30 years old. The new bikes were purchased out of the Police departments forfeiture fund. These are monies that our department receives from sharing in the money generated by our involvement in the seizure of goods or monies from criminal activities. These funds also pay for our police cars and other expensive equipment in lieu of using tax dollars.

The County Health Department has introduced a program to supply municipalities with free Narcan boxes and Narcan inhalers. We will receive two and are deciding where they will be located in town.

### **FINANCE COMMITTEE:**

**Councilman Jim Fry, 2026 Chairman**

Our 2026 Municipal Budget was introduced at our April 23<sup>rd</sup> Council meeting. Our 2026 Budget is \$4,950,543, which is an increase of 3.28%. Our 2026 budget increases Municipal taxes by 3.11%, which is \$.019/ \$100 of assessed value. The average home in Ocean Gate (\$424,000) will see an increase of \$80.00/year. We have applied again for Transitional Aid from the state for \$977,000, which is a decrease from last year of 15%. With good fiscal management, we have been able to decrease the amount of Transitional Aid, absorb most of the large increases in medical benefits, utilities, etc. as well as begin to generate some surplus.

### **PUBLIC UTILITIES:**

**Councilman Russell Ernst, 2026 Chairman**

We have read our meters now for two quarters and continue to work out the kinks with the billing software. Please remember that we have changed to a postcard that is both your water and sewer bill.

We will award the contract for the cleaning and painting of our water tower at the May 27<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. The work will start in October after the summer season. Our water will be supplied to us through our connection with American Water (previously Aqua). Water pressure and supply will not be affected. The work on the tower is being paid for by a forgivable (FREE) \$2,000,000 loan by the New Jersey Infrastructure Bank.

The new filtration system is a separate project that will also be paid for by the \$2,000,000 loan. Lead time on the equipment for the new state of the art green sand system is considerable and we will give you a better update on the timing when it is available. We are hoping to have it installed by the end of next year . It requires extensive work on the pump house itself since there is no easy way to remove the old equipment and install the new.

We are working with TRC and JCPL Energy Solutions for Business to evaluate electric efficiencies that might qualify us for no interest loans or grant monies that will allow us to replace outdated costly fixtures like the lights on the front of the Municipal building.

We have entered into an agreement with the Toms River Municipal Utilities Authority to service and inspect our sewer system. The TRMUA has very sophisticated equipment that will allow us to inspect and repair our lines with little or no damage to our streets.

### **BUILDINGS and ASSETS:**

**Councilman Rick Zieser, 2026 Chairman**

The Building and Assets Committee is new and was put in place so we make sure we manage the Boroughs assets properly. Councilman Zieser has cataloged and photographed all of our buildings and other Assets in order to create a maintenance and repair plan for each. As part of this effort, we have two projects that have recently been started and/or completed.

Our CFO has been able to repurpose Capital funds in order to let us proceed with the repair to the Western end of the boardwalk. Because the previous administration wasted our surplus funds, we did not have the “rainy day” savings to complete the repairs. We searched for grant opportunities but none were available.

We have finally made much needed repairs to the Public Works Building roof. The skylights are being eliminated and the roof surface is being recoated. This repair is long overdue.

We are upgrading the electric service on the two piers. The moisture and salt in the air wreak havoc on the outlets. We are also in need of additional outlets near the stage as well as lights for the bands. The work will be completed before the summer season.

We have continued to receive requests from residents regarding placing memorial benches on the boardwalk. We have maxed out the Boardwalk itself and have decided to utilize the 2 Piers as well. We have determined how many benches can be placed and where, picked out a bench/plaque and have determined a price of \$750.00 per bench. If you are interested, please contact Ileana at extension 121 in the Municipal building.

### **HEALTH, WELFARE and the ENVIRENMENT:**

**Councilman Mark Haug, 2026 Chairman**

We are tightening our construction permitting process as well as our permit fees. We are actively closing out temporary CO's that have been open too long.

Please remember to place your moorings in the allocated places along the beach. The areas where moorings are allowed are listed in the application paperwork. Make sure you take the “swing” into account not just to others boats but also into the area outside the allowable zones.

Please remember to separate Brush and leaves while doing your spring cleanup. The County landfill will not except brush and leaves mixed together. We have designated separate days for this reason.

**RECREATION:****Councilwoman Joella Nicastro, 2026 Chairwoman**

We have two movies again this year, one of which will be at the second pier. We again have our first band on the beach Memorial Day weekend. "No Direction", a town favorite, will kick off the 2026 season! We have additional August dates this, so we will have bands through August 22<sup>nd</sup>!

Beach badges have remained the same price again this year. We raise the price every 3 years by Ordinance. Next year is the year they are set to increase.

The County Connection van will be parked in front of the Municipal building on June 9<sup>th</sup> from 1-6 PM. Various County services (not passports, however) will be available to our residents.

In celebration of the country's 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday, the Borough will hold an "All American Picnic" on July 25<sup>th</sup> (rain date July 27). Hot Dogs, Lemonade, Pie Eating contest, Bobbing for Apples, etc. More specifics to follow.

We will also be participating in a national event, Bells Across America. At 2:00 on July 4<sup>th</sup>, bells will be wrung across America. You can participate via an app. We will announce specifics at a later date.

**MAYOR:****Bob Curtin**

Our contract with our trash hauler, Meadowbrook, is expiring at the end of this year. We are anticipating a dramatic increase (as much as double according to the DCA rep) in any new contract with a private hauler. Because of this, we are working with our state monitor and one of the DCA Public Works experts regarding entering into a shared services agreement with the Borough of Beachwood to provide our trash service. We have applied to the state for LEAP grants that would pay for the ROBO cans that we would need as well as fund the majority of a new trash truck. The balance of the cost of the truck would be shared by both towns. We have been able to work out service terms and pick up dates that closely match what we have now. The DCA's Public Works expert has estimated that we will save approximately \$50k - \$75k from our CURRENT cost. When you calculate in the new contract costs, this is a huge savings to the Borough. We are awaiting word from the state as to the disposition of our LEAP grant application since the shared service hinges on the grant.

The new sign has been up and running. We are able to have as many messages running at the same time as we want and we have chosen to have them last for 10 seconds each. It has allowed us to be much more efficient at both placing the message as well as communicating to our residents. If you are part of a club or town association, please contact Ileana Vazquez-Gallipoli at the municipal building to have a message added.

We had a very productive meeting in April with the County road department. Cape May from Atlantic avenue to Narragansette is due to be surveyed this fall and will be re-milled and re-paved either this fall or next spring.

We brought up Jeffries Creek and the fact that the entrance is completely silted up. After calling up the images on Google Earth, it was decided that the creek will be dredged by the road department. They originally assigned the design and work to the Barnegat Bay Partnership but the silt buildup is so severe that they do not want to wait.

We spent the majority of the meeting talking about the DOT funded project at Anglesea, Newport, East Longport and Narragansette. Our engineering firm, Collier, has been working with the County in the last 6 months. We presented the County with the cost proposal and design for both the County and Borough portions of the project. The County engineer approved the County costs and our grant covers our costs, so we

are now going out to bid. The bid needs to be awarded by September 6<sup>th</sup>. This is step one and will replace all storm drains and collection boxes in order to have a tightly sealed close loop system in this area. Phase two will be this year's grant application with the DOT. It will be to add the cistern, pump and WAPRO check valves to move the water out of the system during times of flooding. This approach eliminates the original plan to raise the roads and should be much more effective in eliminating the severe flooding that occurs in this area. We plan on holding a special meeting this summer with our residents to better explain the plan and answer questions.

Lastly, the county informed us that they are finally designing all new outflow pipes for the storm drains that empty into the bay.

In order to maintain close and cooperative relations with our neighboring towns, the Mayors of Beachwood, Pine Beach, South Toms River and Ocean Gate have started to meet on a somewhat regular basis. Beneficial shared service opportunities have presented themselves and we are pursuing many of them.

We are still waiting to hear whether we will receive the \$70,000 Local Recreational Improvement Grant. This grant will be used to install public bathrooms in the old EMS station house. The bid to install the cement pad, electric etc. has been awarded and will begin sometime in the next few months. This is being paid for by the 2025 LRIG & CDBG grants we received.

No Knock registration. We have received our no-knock stickers. To register, please contact Emily x.110 or Ileana x 121. 732-269-3166. Once you register you will receive a sticker for your window and be placed on the do not knock list given to permitted vendors.

The state has recently changed the requirements for Municipalities to advertise Public Notices. Because newspaper circulation has been dramatically reduced, we are now required to only advertise Public Notices on our website. We have created a banner across the top of our home page indicating this, as well as adding a new drop-down box, **PUBLIC NOTICES**, on the home page of our website.

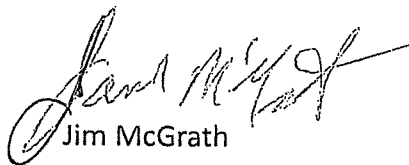
Our Council meetings are the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month @7:00. Our Council Workshop meetings are the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month in March, June, September and December. **All meetings are livestreamed at our website, [www.oceangatenjgov.com](http://www.oceangatenjgov.com).** We have a new sound system (\$\$ from a Comcast grant) so the meeting is easy to hear and understand. Please follow us on **Facebook @ Borough of Ocean Gate Municipal Page**.

Everything reviewed in this letter and more is discussed in greater detail at our Council meetings plus you have the opportunity to participate during the Public Comment portion. Please join us either in person or online.



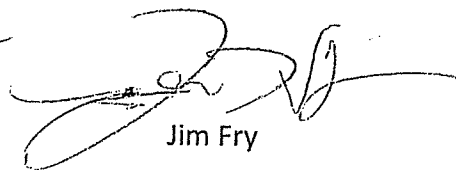
Bob Curtin

Mayor



Jim McGrath

Council President



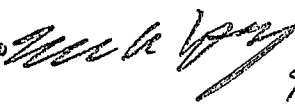
Jim Fry

Councilman



Joella Nicastro

Councilwoman



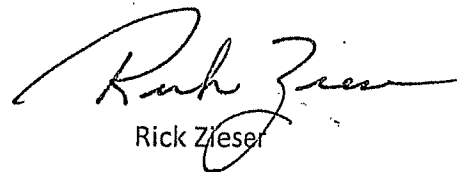
Mark Haug

Councilman



Russell Ernst

Councilman



Rick Zieser

Councilman

## Ocean Gate School Property

There has been much speculation as to what will happen to the Ocean Gate school property and buildings. Unfortunately, because of social media, there have been wild accusations and warnings about the disposition of the buildings and grounds. This letter will address these concerns and the steps the Mayor and Council are implementing.

Let's start with some facts. The ownership of the property is divided between the Borough and the school board. The Borough holds title to Lot 4, which is the lot from Ocean Gate avenue to the school buildings (the open space and playground). The Borough also owns Lot 6, the playground to the west of the Kindergarten building. The BOE owns Lot 5, which is the school buildings and the land under them.

This amounts to a large tract of land and buildings in the heart of the borough. The eventual disposition of this area needs to be well thought out and part of a comprehensive plan.

In order to achieve this, the Mayor and Council have decided to create a new zone as part of the Boroughs Master Plan. We have decided to take advantage of the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law and designate the school properties as a redevelopment zone. This will allow the Municipal Government to decide what uses will be allowed and those that will not.

The Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (LRHL, N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1), provides municipalities with a comprehensive framework to address underutilized, obsolete or no-longer needed properties, including former public facilities such as elementary schools. The LRHL provides flexibility to tailor redevelopment to the community needs.

The LRHL is intended to:

1. Promote redevelopment of underutilized public or private land
2. Encourage economic development and community revitalization
3. Enable communities to guide reuse of obsolete public facilities
4. Provide tools for public-private partnerships

Courts have emphasized that redevelopment must serve a legitimate public purpose and cannot be based solely on general economic benefit.

### **Who is responsible to create the redevelopment zone and what are the steps to be taken.**

As with all final zoning determinations, the Mayor and Council are responsible for implementing redevelopment plans and carrying out redevelopment projects. The Land Use Board acts in an advisory and quasi-judicial role.

Governing Body Responsibilities include:

1. Initiating investigations
2. Designate redevelopment areas
3. Adopt plans
4. Select developers
5. Structure redevelopment of the school property

The Land Use Board responsibilities include:

1. Conducting investigations
2. Holding hearings
3. Making evidence-based recommendations
4. Reviewing plans and granting development approval

## Redevelopment process

### 1. Initiation of the investigation

The Governing Body starts the process with a Resolution directing the Land Use Board to hire an accredited Town Planner to investigate whether the property qualifies as an area of Redevelopment. The Council passed this Resolution at our April 8, 2026 meeting.

### 2. Land Use Board Investigation

The Board works with the Town Planner and prepares a report for the Governing Body.

### 3. Notice of Public Hearing.

The Land Use Board holds a specific public hearing where residents can express their opinions, ideas, concerns, recommendations, etc.

### 4. Land Use Board Recommendations

The recommendation must be supported by evidence, usually the Town Planners recommendations.

### 5. Governing Body Designation

The Governing Body adopts a resolution determining the area in need of redevelopment.

### 6. The Redevelopment plan is prepared

The plan functions as a project-specific zoning plan, such as:

- a. Specific residential use, public use, or mixed-use redevelopment of the school site
- b. Establish design standards
- c. Address parking, traffic and neighborhood compatibility

### 7. Land Use Board Review of the plan

The Land Use Board reviews and reports on the consistency of the plan with the Boroughs Master Plan.

### 8. Adoption of the Plan

The Governing Body adopts the plan by Ordinance.

### 9. Select a redeveloper

Designation is by Resolution and may be conditional upon entry into a redeveloper's agreement within a stated period of time.

### 10. Redevelopment Agreement

The Redevelopment Zone process will proceed according to the New Jersey State statute. All aspects of the above listed steps will be discussed in public at either the Municipal Council meeting or Land Use Board meetings. Please attend our meetings to keep up to date as to what is really being discussed instead of relying on misinformation and malcontents on social media.

The Governing Body and Land Use Board will proceed with the best interests of the Borough, its residents and the preservation of what makes Ocean Gate the special community that it is.