

# MUNICIPAL UPDATE

December 4, 2023

Dear Ocean Gate Residents,

As we come to the end of 2023, and my first year as Mayor, I want to take this opportunity to update you on the state of the Borough and the efforts of the Governing body.

As I stated in the May letter, 2023 has been a busy one for Mayor and Council!

## **Public Safety Committee: Councilman Jim McGrath, 2023 Chairman**

As was mentioned in our May letter, the Ocean Gate EMS is dissolving. As a result, the EMS service is transferring their property to the Borough. In October, the Borough passed an Ordinance accepting the donation of the park and station house. Section 1 of this Ordinance designates this property to be for the public use in perpetuity. Our attorney is working on the paperwork to deed restrict this property so it can never be developed. The OG Fire Company EMR service is performing this important service now and doing an excellent job. The Borough is also being covered by the EMS services of our surrounding communities.

Our Fire Company is awaiting the delivery of our new fire truck. Currently, delivery is expected in mid-February, 2024.

Ocean Gate has been designated to be part of a new project that is being rolled out across the state. It is called ARRIVE Together. It pairs law enforcement officers with mental health professionals to more effectively respond to mental-health crisis calls. It is totally funded by the state through the County prosecutor's office. Bright Harbor will be working with the OG Police department in this new program.

We have promoted Sargent Vincent LaRoca to Lieutenant. Lieutenant LaRoca has been a member of our department for 15 years. His promotion is well deserved and part of the departments' succession planning.

We have updated our parking Ordinance. New signs will be installed within the next two months. We have consolidated 9 Ordinances that dated back to 1998, and were confusing and incomplete.

## **Finance & Communication Committee Council President Bruce Cox, 2023 Chairman**

We have started working on the 2024 Budget. Each department submitted their initial requests to the committee by November 15<sup>th</sup>. We are on track to submit our budget by the end of March, as in 2023.

We are in the process of putting together a Capital Plan for the Borough. We are approaching it in increments of 3-, 5- and 10-year needs. All 6 committee's and the mayor have submitted their suggestions and or requests for review. Based on the approved plan, we will review funding needs and develop a debt plan.

We have a 20-year Bond that is being retired at the end of this year. This will reduce our debt service by \$182,218.74/ year. We do have a new USDA loan being added next year for the new fire truck. The loan is for \$930,000 over 10 years.

We are issuing a Special Emergency Note (SEN) to pay for our reassessment and Codification of the Borough Ordinances. Reassessments are driven by the state, so they cannot be planned for. Because of this, we are allowed to spread the cost of the assessment over 5 budget years. The actual full payment however, must be paid upon completion (April 2024). The SEN will allow us to spread the actual payment over the 5 years as

well. Spreading the cost of the Codification over 5 years is beneficial to our budgeting as well. The SEN will be for approximately \$150,000.

Our new Auditors' have completed their review of 2022. They were asked to make an unusually deep review of the Borough's financials. They have not given us their official statement yet but unofficially, they have said they have not found anything troubling. They do have some procedural recommendations that we will implement.

Our Council meetings are now being live streamed on our **website** [www.oceangatenjgov.com](http://www.oceangatenjgov.com), Government tab, 2023 meetings. Click on the link listed 15 minutes before the meeting starts. All meetings start at 7:00. Meetings are view only. If you have a question or comment, please go to the "contact us" feature on the website. The email you generate goes to the mayor and he will address it during the public comment of the meeting as if you were present at the meeting.

Just a reminder, that the Borough has its' own Facebook page, **Borough of Ocean Gate Municipal Page**. We use this page for announcements and Borough information. It is to inform and is read only. Please consider joining if you have not done so already.

### **Parks & Recreation Committee**

**Councilwoman Joella Nicastro, 2023 Chairwoman**

Kudos to the Garden club for their tireless efforts to clean and beautify the town. In particular to Lynda Doremus, for her enthusiastic leadership and tireless efforts on behalf of the town. This club is what "volunteerism" looks like!!

Fees for our Pickleball and Tennis courts go into effect on January 1, 2024. A current Beach badge or Recreation badge (new for 2024) will be required to play. Fees for both will be listed on the order form we send out in late December. All rules for use of the courts are listed on the new signage that was posted on the gates in early fall.

We held an "after action" meeting the last week of August to review the 2023 beach season. All areas were discussed and changes / improvements will be implemented next summer.

We will include a calendar card with our summer activities in the next resident mailing in May (2024). We are planning more activities next summer that will be funded by our Parks and Rec Trust Fund.

We will be advertising to the general public for badge checkers and lifeguards after the first of the year. If you or someone you know would like to apply for one of these positions, please forward a resume to our Municipal Clerk, Ileana Vazquez-Gallipoli at the Municipal Building.

### **Public Utilities Committee**

**Councilman Jim Fry, 2023 Chairman**

Our water department pumps 92 -100 million gallons of water a year from our wells, through our tower and through the distribution system. We put 92-100 million's gallons of stress on the system but only collect revenue for 46 million gallons. Seasonal residents and full-time residents with heavy use patterns pay the same flat rate. This is not fair, nor does it make any financial sense for the Borough. It is estimated that the Borough has lost over \$500,000 in revenue since 2016. After much research, we will be scrapping our current water meters and starting from scratch. After reading all meters in the Borough, it has been found that approximately 50% of the meters do not work for one reason or another. More fail each month, due to bad batteries that cannot be replaced, a new meter has to be installed.

We have been able to obtain a \$1,400,000 H2loan from the New Jersey Infrastructure Bank.

**The loan is TOTALLY forgivable, i.e.: no cost to the Borough. It covers ALL costs, Legal, Engineering, Equipment and Installation.** This is much better than a grant, because with a grant, the Borough must participate to some degree in the cost and only 15% of a grant can be used for engineering costs and 0% for legal costs. Van Cleef Engineering is putting the specs together for bid and we anticipate awarding the contract sometime next spring. We are not planning on increasing our water fees after installation. We will, however, start charging for water usage over the allotted 10,000 gallons per quarter. These fees have been in place since 2017 but because meters were never read there were never excess charges.

Now that the water meter issue has been addressed, we are starting to evaluate our sewage costs.

### **Public Works**

**Councilman Mark Haug, 2023 Chairman**

As part of our Capital Plan, we will be replacing the roof of the public works building. It has been leaking badly and it is well past time to replace it.

A special "Job well done" to our public works department for their efforts to clean up and maintain the Boroughs property. We have moved the junk Hummer into the impound yard and sent back the beach sweeper to Seaside. With the addition of a part time employee, we are better able to mow and maintain our property.

### **Health, Welfare and the Environment**

**Councilman Rick Zeiser, 2023 Chairman**

Our new Code official is making a real difference in the Borough. If you drive through town, you will notice a distinct difference in some chronically disheveled properties. We still have a way to go, but there have been improvements.

Please take a close look at the back of the 2024 Garbage schedule. There have been changes to recycling that have been dictated by new dumping regulations.

Just a reminder that we are no longer accepting TV's or electronics at our recycling center. You can take them to Tri-State Recycling on route 166 in Beachwood.

### **Other**

**Mayor, Bob Curtin**

#### **Engineering Projects;**

\$35,000 2023 CDBG Grant - New Handicap corners and striping on Wildwood and E. Longport –  
New access ramp to boardwalk from corner of Avalon and Asbury

\$259,000 NJDOT Grant – Boardwalk, Sidewalk, Stormwater drain, Roadway improvement on Monmouth ave.

\$367,000 NJDOT Grant – Bike path from Asbury to Anglesea avenue. This is a previously obtained grant that we have restructured. Instead of just replacing the blacktop with cement, we will be rehabbing the blacktop path and adding exercise stations, benches, bike racks and cameras along the path. We will also be re-milling and re-surfacing Stone Harbor from E. Cape May to E. Long Branch. All crosswalks will also be re-striped.

\$750,000 NJDOT Grant – Stormwater management on Anglesea, Newport & Naragansette ave. The County is also participating with additional resources for their assets on these streets.

**Comcast Grant** – We negotiated a \$8,000 grant from Comcast as part of our new franchise license agreement. This money was used to pay for the equipment purchased to live stream our Council meetings. We will use the balance to revive our municipal cable channel 22.

**Stormwater Outflows** – The County Engineering department has inspected all the Borough stormwater outflows into the river/bay. They are going to either replace or repair ALL outflows that are in disrepair (such as Stone Harbor ave.). This, along with the above-mentioned grant(s) should start to help manage our flooding problems. Additional NJDOT grants will also be pursued for other trouble spots in the Borough.

**Reassessment** - New assessments were sent out the week of Dec 4<sup>th</sup>.  
Informal appeals are to take place in December, as per the reassessment letter  
Final assessment postcard will be sent out February 1, 2024  
Final date for formal appeals is April 1, 2024  
The new tax valuation will be reflected in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2024 tax bill

**Internship Program** – We are entering into an internship program with Central Regional High School. Students will spend time helping our Borough employees while gaining familiarity with the wide range of professional careers within Municipal government. This is a new program for Central Regional and they are very excited about its potential.

**Ordinance Codification** –We are employing a company, General Code, to codify our Ordinances. Codification will ensure that the Borough Ordinances are up to date, uniform and in line with current New Jersey statutes. Our Ordinances will also be available and searchable online through a link on our website. We are starting this process in December, 2023.

**Parks and Recreation Trust Fund** – The Borough has a Parks and Recreation Trust. Funds in this Trust are exclusively for the use of these activities. It is separate from the General Fund and Budget. The Borough has never had a plan to generate additional monies, or for their use. They have just been accumulating, apparently unbeknownst to previous Councils. In 2023, we added to the fund with fees from the 5K Race and OG Day vendor fees (approx. \$10,000). Moving forward, we will sponsor more events where the proceeds go into this fund and plans will be made for their use. In 2024, you will see a noticeable improvement in the Borough’s recreation efforts!

**Hope to see you at our Council meetings!! 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month In person or Live Stream**

**Happy Holidays!!!**

**Bob Curtin**  
Mayor

**Bruce Cox**  
Council President

**Jim McGrath**  
Councilman

**Joella Nicastro**  
Councilwoman

**Jim Fry**  
Councilman

**Mark Haug**  
Councilman

**Rick Zieser**  
Councilman