

Municipal Update

Dear Ocean Gate Residents,

May 31, 2023

As we enter the 2023 summer season, the governing body would like to take this opportunity to update our residents as to what we've been up to these last 5 months!

2023 has been a busy one for the Mayor and Council.

Public Safety:

Our Police Force has now been trained and certified on the use of our Radar gun. We are making a concerted effort to reduce speeding in our town, particularly on Bayview Avenue and Ocean Gate Drive. Safety is paramount and our goal is for drivers on those roads to be cognizant of the speed limit because there is a very good chance of receiving a summons. We have deployed the electronic sign on our busy roads to alert drivers.

The cardboard boat race will be sponsored this year by the police department and in 2024 it will be jointly sponsored by the Police Department and Ocean Gate School.

We have hired 3 new Class 1 bicycle officers for the summer. This will give us 4 bicycle officers as we had last year.

The Borough has purchased 2 new patrol cars. Our current fleet is very old and we are incurring huge repair bills. At one point we only had 1 available car as the others were in for repair. Future needs will be addressed as part of our Capital plan that will be addressed in the next section. We need to plan for large purchases, not react as we have been.

Our Fire Department is anxiously awaiting the arrival (summer 2024) of our new fire truck. In the meantime, we have been preparing by rebuilding one of the doors on the fire station as well as obtaining grants for the purchase of equipment that needs to be updated, replaced or added.

After decades of service, our EMS service is dissolving. The lack of volunteers has finally taken its toll. Our EMS service answered only one call during the last two years. The town has been relying on the EMR service from our fire department as well as reciprocal agreements with the surrounding towns. Volunteerism for EMS and Volunteer fire services is in a crisis state wide. Our experience is similar to towns all through the state and a county solution needs to be addressed. The assets of the EMS service will be transferred to the Borough.

Finance & Communication:

The 2023 budget has been approved and submitted to the county. For the second year in a row, we have had to increase taxes. This was not an easy decision, and many factors came into play. In regards to the Municipal portion of your property taxes, the previous administration completely used the towns surplus in order to artificially avoid small tax increases year to year. We are now at a point where the Boroughs' surplus has been spent, costs have dramatically increased and we receive reduced state and Federal aid. The following is a breakdown of your 2023 Tax bill;

School 49% Municipal 34%, County 17%

The lack of a comprehensive method to communicate important information to our residents became apparent when the town was ordered to reassess. We have taken steps to correct this through a multistep process that is passive and proactive. We have updated our website so it is easier to navigate. More importantly, it will be maintained on an ongoing basis so it can be relied on to contain the most current information and announcements. We have also added an official Borough Facebook page. The FB page will be used for announcements and alerts and will not be interactive for comments. The Facebook page will also be used to direct residents to the web page for more information.

. www.oceangatenjgov.com

(Facebook) Borough of Ocean Gate Municipal page

We are also asking residents to sign up for a service called NIXL. This is an alert system that the town can use to send a mass text or email message. Residents can sign up by going to the home page of our website and scrolling down to the NIXL icon.

The town currently has neither a long-term debt plan nor a long-term Capital improvement plan. The Mayor and Finance Committee are putting together both so we can plan the amount and structure of our debt based on the long-term Capital needs of the Borough.

The Borough is now in compliance with New Jersey statutes regarding the archiving of all Borough communication (phone, email, text, council meetings). Email addresses have been changed and are available on Borough website. The system we have purchased also will allow us to finally broadcast our council meetings. We will be employing the same hardware that the Ocean Gate school has successfully used to broadcast their meetings and a grant from Comcast will more than cover the cost of acquisition. Also, on the radar to be addressed is the renewed usage of our Borough cable channel 22 which has not been updated since 2015

Parks and Recreation:

We have a great summer and fall planned for the town! The event schedule is included in this mailing.

What's new?

The car show that was previously hosted by the EMS service will now be hosted by the Borough. We will combine the Farewell to Summer event with the car show to have one terrific event. We will continue to host the Car Show during the day but the evening will feature food trucks, a beer garden and musical entertainment. The proceeds will go into the Parks and Recreation Trust account which is separate from the Municipal account and can only be used for related purposes. A new emphasis is now being placed on the towns' efforts in both these areas. The Parks and Recreation committee is developing two 3-year plans, one for our Parks and the other for our Recreation activities.

Public Utilities

The town installed new meters in 2016. **They have never been read.**

Our water department pumps 92 million gallons of water a year from our wells and through our system. We put 92 million gallons of stress on both 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 town. It is estimated that the town's water department has lost over \$500,000 in revenue since 2016.

Accordingly, the inspection, replacement and installation of meters will be accomplished this year. We will start to visit residences this June to validate the placement and working order of our meters. The flat fee of \$200.00 for 20,000 gallons every 6 months will remain the same. After the meters are installed and read, the 2017 Water Ordinance will be enforced and a fee of \$3.00 for every 1,000 gallons over the 20,000-gallon allotment will be billed.

Health, Welfare and the Environment:

We have ended a shared service agreement with Berkely Township for a part time code enforcement officer. We have employed our own part time officer which gives us more coverage and control for about the same cost to the Borough. The mayor has also given our code officer direction to inspect our Borough properties and hold us to the same standards that we are requiring of our residents.

Public works:

We have hired a 3rd public works employee. He will start part-time and transition to full time after a 30-day period.

36 street signs have been replaced with new signs. Please notify the Municipal office if there any additional signs that you think need to be replaced.

We have entered an agreement with Tri-State Carting and Recycling to recycle our cardboard. They supply the dumpster and pick it up and replace it when full. There is no cost to the town, in fact, depending on the value of recycled cardboard, we can generate a profit. This agreement dramatically cuts down on our public works departments trips and we save an enormous amount of time and gas expense. Our two blue dumpsters are to be used exclusively for cans and bottles ONLY. Not household plastic.

Road re-surfacing; County

W. Cape May – Asbury	2023 – Milling and re-surfacing	
W. Long Branch – Asbury	2023 – Milling and re-surfacing	
East Lakewood – Narragansett	2023 - Prep	2024 - Milling and re-surfacing
East Long Branch – Narragansett	2023 – Prep	2024 - Milling and re-surfacing

Borough

Stone Harbor – East Cape May – East Long Branch 2023 – Milling and re-surfacing

We received a NJDOT Local Aid grant for \$114,420.00 to fund the milling and resurfacing.

Other:

Beach restoration and resiliency - The Mayor has put together a committee to work with one of our new engineering firms, ACT Engineering was added as a Borough engineering firm because of a specialty niche. They have an area of expertise in beach preservation, tide and current modeling. ACT Engineers will develop a hydrodynamic model of the Ocean Gate shoreline to examine impacts and effects of resiliency and restoration solutions. The modeling will be used to simulate existing conditions and to simulate potential solutions and their effectiveness. We will then go out to obtain grants to implement solutions. This will also give us a current map to use as a guide with FEMA for restoration after any new devastating natural event. We had our first meeting on April 28. The committee is comprised of the Mayor, Council Finance committee and 4 residents who were on the committee to evaluate the last effort regarding the beach.

Stormwater management – We are applying for a grant from the NJDOT discretionary fund to deal with the stormwater problem on Narragansett, Newport and Anglesea avenues. We are limited to 3 streets for this grant. Collier Engineering, our engineering firm of record is spearheading this grant application.

Community Development Block Grant 2023 – The HUD, CDBG application has been submitted. We will receive approximately \$35,000 to be used mainly for handicap assessable projects through town.

Employee Job descriptions and Reviews – The Mayor is writing job descriptions for all full-time employees and conducting reviews along with the appropriate Council persons. Going forward, employee reviews will be conducted twice per year. This has not been the practice of the Borough in the past.

East Chelsea Avenue – The guardrail at the end of East Chelsea Avenue and the boardwalk has finally been replaced with a sturdy metal rail and bold new signage. The original railing was destroyed in 2019 by a car speeding through it and across the boardwalk. Every year, 5 – 6 cars drive onto and across the boardwalk here. After 2 cars drove onto the boardwalk on April 14th, the Mayor was finally able to convince the County that someone was going to be run over just because they were walking on the boardwalk in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Reassessment – The Ocean County Board of Taxation ordered the Borough to conduct a reassessment of the town. The last reassessment of the Borough was in 2016. According to the New Jersey Division of Taxation records, the average Borough property is assessed at only 67.9% of its market value. The State requires 100% or no lower than 80% before reassessment occurs. A reassessment does not mean an increase in taxes for every homeowner. The tax rate will go down to compensate for the increase in the assessed values. Since not all properties have appreciated in value at the same rate, some tax bills will go up, some down and some will stay the same. No additional revenue is received by the

town because of a reassessment, it just re-adjusts the portion of the total Borough tax levy each property is responsible for.

Council Meetings – We would like to urge our residents to attend our Council meetings. They are held on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month at 7:00. They are well run, very informative and conducted professionally. Please take the time to join us. Please visit our website for exact dates.

Beach Cleaning – We have been able to arrange for the Toms River Public Works dept to clean our beach 3 times this year as opposed to once. They will be cleaning on May 25th, June 29th, and August 3rd, just before all major holidays and OG Day. PLEASE NOTE THESE DATES AND MOVE ALL WATERCRAFT so we have a clear path.

Ordinances – The Beach, Boardwalk, Pier and Bathing ordinance, along with other pertinent seasonal ordinances, are listed below and are available for your review on our website under the “Government” drop down box.

675-23 Beach, Boardwalk, Pier and Bathing

678-23 Splash Park

679-23 Curfew ordinance

364-93 Noise ordinance

621-19 Parking

657-22 Mooring

618-18 Underage Drinking

Meet with the Mayor – In addition to his regular hours during the week, the Mayor has set aside one Saturday morning each summer month to meet with working and part time residents. Please come to the municipal building between 9 – 11 on June 17, July 15 and/or August 19. No appointments necessary, just walk in.

See you on the beach or boardwalk!!

Bob Curtin

Mayor

Bruce Cox

Council President

Jim McGrath

Councilman

Joella Nicastro

Councilwoman

Jim Fry

Councilman

Mark Haug

Councilman

Rick Zeiser

Councilman