

MUNICIPAL UPDATE

May 20, 2024

Dear Ocean Gate residents,

Summer is almost here and as usual, there is a lot going on in the Borough. This is a busy time as we prepare for our summer activities. As in the past, this update is divided into six of the standing Council Committee's as well as the Mayor/Business Administrator.

Public Safety Committee:

Council President Jim McGrath, 2024 Chairman

Our new fire truck is scheduled for delivery on July 2nd. The need for the new truck was necessary in order for our Fire Department to safely combat potential fires in raised homes. Our current equipment is unable to reach the upper floors for rescue. We are paying for the truck with a low interest 10-year FDA loan.

We have been able to attract new recruits to our volunteer fire department. A number of these (4) will be added to our EMR service, which has done a great job since the dissolving of our EMS service.

We did not have a plan for the purchase and useful life of our police vehicles. Subsequently, the maintenance costs for our vehicles have been exorbitant. We have instituted an acquisition, maintenance and retirement program that will be more cost effective going forward. As part of that plan, we have taken possession of two new patrol cars. Thanks to the diligent efforts of Lieutenant LaRocca, they were purchased and equipped at very favorable prices with 5-year warranties. Based on a recommendation from one of our residents, the lettering on the sides of the cars will be easier to read.

We are establishing new patrol hours and routines for our bicycle officers for the beach and boardwalk from June through Labor day. They will concentrate more of their efforts close to the boardwalk. We are asking our Police Department to focus on bicycles after 10:00 on the boardwalk, dogs on the beach and boardwalk, parking enforcement and unruly juvenile behavior.

Based on new state requirements, we have added a new role within the police department. Officer Rich Zonin will fill the role of Youth Detective. Officer Zonin, an eight-year member of our Department, will be promoted to this role. Officer Zonin has been involved in many juvenile programs and was the SRO (school resource officer) at the Ocean Gate school for 2 years. Officer Zonin's familiarity with current juvenile laws, as well as interacting with juveniles who frequent Ocean Gate will make a substantial difference in how we handle juvenile issues in the Borough. He has already met with parents of some previous offenders.

Finance and Communication Committee: **Councilman Bruce Cox, 2024 Chairman**

The 2024 budget has been approved and submitted to the County. The Borough is projected to spend roughly \$36,000 less than last year on non-fixed cost expenses (where we have control). Unfortunately, municipal taxes will be increasing more than we would prefer for the 2024 fiscal year. Why is this so.

The increase is a result of the previous Mayor and Council using our reserves (i.e.savings) to balance the budget to avoid raising taxes. The reserves accumulated for selling the leases on our water tower, Federal Covid monies, and excess revenue over the years are all gone. Instead of a judicious use of reserves and tax increases, they used our reserves alone to balance the budget. No tax increases are great for campaign literature, but totally irresponsible governance when achieved this way.

Over a 5-year period (2018-2022), 4.1 million dollars in surpluses were used to balance the budget (\$722,350 out of the sewer and water). Between 22% and 27 % of our budget each year, over a five (5) year period, was covered by savings. Unfortunately, this just kicked the can down the road. We now are at a point where we have only a very small surplus, generate very little new surpluses and have no flexibility. Costs for the Borough have risen at the same rate of inflation as everything else. These inflationary times are exactly when surpluses would have enabled us to level out our revenues versus expenditures. Instead, increases must be covered by our limited income streams and tax levies alone.

Your Tax bill breakdown Schools 49% Municipal 34% County 17%

Councilman Cox will be making a power point presentation at our June 26th Council meeting where the budget will be voted on by Council. The presentation will review the Borough's last 11 budget years.

I want to reference one other subject on taxes, our recent reassessment. The reassessed value of your home, only affects your share of taxes paid. It did not affect the overall tax levy of the Borough. The tax levy on the Borough reflects the amount needed to be raised through property taxes to balance the yearly budget. More on this subject later.

Parks and Recreation Committee:

Councilman Mark Haug, 2024 Chairman

You will see 2 inserts accompanying this letter listing the planned recreational activities in the Borough through Spring 2025. As you will see, we have a lot of great activities in store for the Borough! Proceeds from various activities such as the 5K race, Ocean Gate Day, Farewell to Summer, Christmas Tree lighting and others help fund our Park and Rec Trust which sponsors most of our events.

7 Bands and 2 movies give us Saturday Nights at the beach from June 22nd to August 17th, 3 more nights than last year. This summer we are going to show one of the movies at the Anglesea pier beach, JAWS! We are working on some fun ideas to go along with the theme of the movie! We also are going to try something new. The Splash Park will be open for part of the evening on July 13th when we show the movie "Wonka".

Just a reminder that the Splash Park is for children ages 3 – 12 and must be accompanied by an adult. All children in diapers MUST wear plastic pants with snug fitting elastic waist and leg bands. Besides the obvious sanitary reasons, diaper materials that enter the filtration system cause severe damage.

We are bringing back our Farewell To Summer event on September 21st. Beer Garden, Bands, Vendors and Food Trucks. Should be a great day! The Fire company will be manning the beer tent and proceeds will be split between the Fire Company and the Park and Rec Trust.

Public Utilities:

Councilman Jim Fry, 2024 Chairman

We have applied for a \$10,000 Community Energy Planning Grant. This grant will fund the production of the Borough's Energy Plan. Once we have our plan, it will enable us to apply for grant money from the DEP and BPU (Board of Public Utilities) to fund energy efficiencies (think cost savings). It will also allow us to be compliant with the states Master Energy Plan.

We are well on our way to replacing our water meters. We have been working with Van Cleef Engineering, NJDEP and the IBank (infrastructure bank) who is funding the project. We successfully completed all preliminary requirements and went out to bid in early April with a deadline of May 2nd. We received one bid, for \$763,180 and after review by our engineers and attorney, we awarded the bid to MeterTek Utility Supply. The bid has been accepted by the IBank and we are now working on a start date. We are anxious to proceed as

soon as possible and will try to identify seasonal houses so we can install their meters during the summer. Our goal is to be in position to read meters by Jan 1, 2025.

Our water usage is 100 million gallons/year and we only bill for 44 million. Since we don't bill by meter, there is a lot of waste and it is unfair to bill part time and full-time residents the same. Our system is old and we need to reduce waste and build up a reserve for potential repairs.

We are due to clean/paint the inside and outside of our water tower. This is a necessary to insure safe drinking water for our residents. Our engineering firm is contacting the Ibank/NJDEP to see if our approved \$2,000,000 forgivable loan can be used to pay for this project.

Health, Welfare and the Environment:

Councilman Rick Zieser, 2024 Chairman

We had a terrific turnout for our beach sweep. Our annual beach sweeps are part of a national program organized by the Clean Ocean Action organization. Thank you to all who participated. There will be another sweep this fall on October 19th.

House numbers are required by Ordinance on all homes in the Borough. The letters must be 4"-four feet high and in an easily visible location on the front of the house. Emergency services need to be able to quickly and easily identify homes. We have observed many houses not in compliance and will be issuing warning letters to those homes not in compliance.

Just a reminder regarding our trash Ordinance, "garbage must be placed in heavy gauge plastic bags or metal, plastic or vinyl containers not to exceed 32 gallons which are designed for such purpose with handles and a tight lid" (ordinance #369-93). Kitchen garbage bags are not "heavy gauge plastic" and are subject to animals and birds ripping them open and spilling garbage out into the street.

You can contact our Code Enforcement Officer directly for any issues concerning code violations. He can be contacted via email, ogcodeofficial@oceangatenjgov.com or his direct number, 848-326-2896. You can also come to the municipal building and fill out a Complaint/Concern form. These forms can be filled out anonymously if you prefer.

Municipal Buildings and Assets:

Councilwoman Joella Nicastro, 2024 Chairman

We will be replacing the roof on the Comfort Station at the Anglesea pier. It has severe leaks and is in desperate need of repair.

We have updated our Ordinance for the use of Adrian Hall. Please contact our Municipal Clerk, Ileana Vasquez-Gallipoli at 732-269-3166 ext. 121 should you want to rent the hall.

Other

Mayor, Bob Curtin

Unlike most municipalities, the role of Mayor in our town is currently a dual role as our Mayor not only performs the Mayoral duties but also performs the duties of Business Administrator. In all other towns, this is a separate position within the municipal government.

Engineering projects;

\$35,000 2021 CDBG Grant – Naragansette ave. boardwalk handicap entrance. Construction has been completed on the walkway. We will be adding a short knee wall and matting along the bank with seagrass planted in the squares to help keep the sand from the entrance.

\$367,000 NJDOT Grant – Bike path from Asbury to Anglesea. This project will be nearing completion by the time you read this letter. The blacktop is being resurfaced or replaced along the ½ mile path. Three exercise stations pads will be added by Asbury, Monmouth and Anglesea avenues. The exercise equipment will be added at a later date using a separate recreation grant. Each pad will have a theme, Senior, Handicapped and General exercise equipment. All three are capable of being used for general exercise. There will be benches, bike racks and security cameras added along the path as well.

\$259,000 NJOT Grant – Awarded, not started for improvements on Monmouth ave. by the boardwalk

\$750,000 NJOT Grant – Awarded, not started for stormwater management on Anglesea, Newport and Naragansette. Complicated project that involves the Borough, County (E. Longport) and Berkeley Township (Avalon & Seabright).

\$35,000 2023 CDBG Grant – Awarded, designed not bid yet for ADA handicap improvements on Wildwood ave and Asbury/Avalon entrances to the boardwalk. CDBG grants are primarily used for ADA projects and Ocean Gate is eligible every 2 years.

County road repairs in 2024;

Mill Creek rd (Ocean Gate drive)	Full length to W. Chelsea ave.	Re-mill and Resurface
E. Atlantic ave. / E. Long Branch ave.	Asbury – Naragansette ave.	Re-mill and resurface
E. Lakewood ave.	Ocean Gate ave – Naragansette	Re-mill and resurface

Wildwood Pavilion and Comfort Station -We employed an outside contractor to paint the Wildwood Pavilion. It is was power washed, scrapped and sanded where needed, primed, and painted with two coats of oil based exterior paint. The Wildwood Comfort station is also be cleaned, scraped, sanded and painted. This work will be done by our Public Works Department.

Beach Resilience Study/Plan – As mentioned in a previous letter, we are interested in mapping and modeling our beach. We have one proposal from ACT Engineering and are awaiting two others from Collier Engineering and Van Cleef Engineering. This study/plan will enable us to apply for Grants to address the resiliency of our beach. This will not be a piecemeal study, rather it is a complex, sophisticated analysis that will take into account the sand types, currents, tides, wind and any other factors that affect our beach. It will be used to develop computer generated models of proposed beach structures (i.e.: matting, jetty's etc.) and their effectiveness in preserving our beach.

Carrier Lease – We have entered into an agreement with Dish Network to place an array on our water tower. This will generate \$35,000 per year in rental income to the Borough starting this year.

Reassessment – The reassessment of Ocean Gate is officially completed as of April 1, 2024. The effects of the reassessment as well as the 2024 Municipal, School and county budgets will be seen starting with the 3rd quarter 2024 tax bill. The aggregate assessed value of all real estate in the Borough went from \$229,000,000 to \$455,000,000. Since not all properties appreciated in value at the same rate, some houses will pay a higher share of the tax levy than before, some a lower share but most about the same

General Code Ordinance Codification – We are on target to have our Ordinances updated and accessible via our website by the end of year. Our previous administrations had a habit of amending Ordinances instead of repealing and replacing. This resulted in as many as 9 or 10 bits and pieces of Ordinances that you had to gather together to understand the whole Ordinance. The Borough actually paid to have this done in 2012 but

the governing body at the time chose not to put the work in to complete the project. We are now paying for it a second time. The current governing body is committed to completing this project. Many of our current Ordinances consist of a base ordinance that dates back to the '90's!

Ocean Gate School - The Ocean Gate school and Central Regional School system have entered into a study to investigate regionalization from Pre-K to 12. The Rowan University regionalization group will be conducting the study. The study and subsequent referendum, if needed, are fully paid for by the State.

Grant opportunity meeting – On March 15th, the Mayor and Council President McGrath met with our lead engineering firm, Collier Engineering and their grant writing department. We identified areas of need and the grant department reviewed available funding opportunities to pursue on our behalf. The areas explored were; Parks and Recreation, Beach Resiliency, Recycling and Convenience center, Borough roads, Public Utilities and archive digitization. The police dept as well as the garden club were also in attendance for their respective areas. Collier left with a list of projects to work on. Major areas of interest are improvements to the EMS park, beach resiliency and our recycling and convenience centers.

Meet with the Mayor dates – As he did last summer, in addition to his regular hours during the week, the Mayor has added one Saturday morning per month to meet with working and part time residents. Instead of the Municipal Building, the Mayor will be at the Post Office, from 9-11, on June 15th, July 13th, and August 10th. Please stop by with any comments and suggestions.

All past Municipal update letters are available on our website. Many current topics have been discussed in previous letters and you may want to refer back to them. If you have not kept your letters, you can access them on our website, www.oceangatenjgov.com, and look for the heading "Residents", Municipal Update Letters.

Our Council Meetings are the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month at 7:00. Please join us live or watch our livestream broadcast through our website, www.oceangatenjgov.com, GOVERNMENT TAB, 2024 Meetings. Click on the meeting link 15 minutes prior to the meeting to join. Our meetings are very informative everything that you have read in this letter, and more, has been introduced and discussed at one of our council meetings.

Follow the Borough on **Facebook (Borough of Ocean Gate Municipal Page)**. The Mayor started this page for 3 reasons;

1. Inform residents of activities in town
2. Monitor and correct inaccurate information and
3. Educate the residents about different aspects of our Borough form of government

Besides our Council meetings, and these update letters, it is the best way to stay informed.

See you at the beach or boardwalk!

Bob Curtin

Jim McGrath

Bruce Cox

Mayor

Council President

Councilman

Joella Nicastro

Jim Fry

Mark Haug

Rick Zieser

Councilwoman

Councilman

Councilman

Councilman