



3rd Quarter 2008

Ventnor City Voice

Ventnor City, New Jersey Newsletter • 6201 Atlantic Avenue, Ventnor, New Jersey 08406 • www.ventnorcity.org • 609-823-7900

LETTER TO THE CITIZENS OF VENTNOR

Dear Ventnor Residents and Friends:

On behalf of Commissioners John Piatt and Steve Weintrob, I take this opportunity to speak with you. We would like to thank the many volunteers who work in City Hall, on the phones and the courts, as well as, our transition team, the beautification committee, the citizens and communication committees, and the other volunteers for committees that are presently being formed.

Many thanks to our residents and friends who have e-mailed, phoned and/or visited us in City Hall to wish us luck and promise support to and for us. You have made our first two months in office exciting and pleasant.

In these first two months, we have removed the threat of Eminent Domain for personal, private gain, stopped the potential dumping of dredge spoils in Ventnor West, and have instituted a greater code enforcement presence in many areas of the City. Change is in the air!

The opening of the fishing pier has allowed thousands of residents and visitors the right to tour the pier without paying a fee. The staff of the public works department has taken up the gauntlet and is working diligently to respond to citizens' requests and needs. Plans for improvement in many areas are being developed—an exciting time for the City!

While passing the budget created by the previous administration due to time and revision constraints, we have put "stops" on spending in areas called "other" and will attempt to save up to \$1,000,000 this year. The closing of the driving range, which lost money every year, and elimination of several part-time positions, has helped us begin our task to save money to stabilize taxes. We have a long way to go!

Our objective of instituting a "zero-based budget" process in 2009 (all departments start with zero dollars and are required to justify each employee and request for department expenses) will begin in a few short months. Also, we have corrected and will avoid in the future the past practice of using Current Funds to pay for Capital Projects. We will, as promised, have the monies available prior to beginning a project.

Our town party on May 26th brought out over 1,000 residents. Our pledge for an Open Government is alive and well! Please, please come to our workshop and commission meetings on the 2nd and 3rd Thursdays of each month, respectively, 7:00PM. Your thoughts, comments, suggestions and needs are welcomed and appreciated.

Our accomplishments will be recorded with your assistance and cooperation.

Thank you!!
Respectfully yours,
Theresa D. Kelly, Mayor

VENTNOR CITY-WIDE YARD SALE: AUG. 16 & 17

On August 16th and 17th Ventnor will hold its city-wide yard sale. No permits are required. Just clean out your closets, drawers, and attics! Don't have enough to make a sale worthwhile? Then get together with a neighbor or organize a sale for your entire block. Make it even more fun!

If you would like your address added to a list being compiled, please call Linda at 822-9393. This master list will be available at City Hall August 13th.

VENTNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Library/Cultural Arts Center,
6500 Atlantic Avenue E;
487-2226
by Melinda Kaplan

Founded in 1996 by the late Dr. James H. Mason IV, the Ventnor City Historical Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of the history of Ventnor City. It was Dr. Mason's vision to form a historical society and museum to display and store the city's treasured articles, photographs and artifacts. It was his determination that brought us out history museum today, which opened in 2006.

Exhibits include the early history of Ventnor City titled "Summer at the Carisbrooke Inn", which was Ventnor's first hotel. Showcasing a display of enlarged photographs of Ventnor beach (circ. 1909), it shows early trolley cars, the water wagon and Ventnor City Lifeboat No. 1 with the lifeguard and a group of bathers. Other displays include the Ventnor City Beach Patrol, seashells and items collected along the Ventnor beach, and maps. An exhibit planned for the future will be about the trolley cars that once ran along the center of Atlantic Avenue from the Atlantic City inlet to Longport. Other historical programs for the community are also in the planning stage.

The large display gallery in the hall outside the museum is open on Wednesday evenings 5 to 8 PM, Thursday and Friday 10 AM to 4 PM and 10 AM to 1 PM on Saturday. Support for the museum can be made by membership in the historical society or by volunteer time.



EMINENT DOMAIN NO MORE

On July 21st 2008 history was made in Ventnor, New Jersey when our newly elected officials, Mayor Theresa Kelly and Commissioners Steve Weintrob & John Piatt stepped up to the plate and passed an ordinance disallowing the use of Eminent Domain for private gain. No one in Ventnor will ever lose their home so some developer can profit at their expense. Ventnor is now only one of three Communities in New Jersey to ever do so.

By taking this action the Commissioners are making a statement loud and clear that they do not agree with the action taken by the United States Supreme Court on June 24th 2005. That is when in a 5-4 ruling they found that local officials could use their "eminent domain" powers to condemn homes in a working-class neighborhood for private development in hopes of boosting tax revenue and improving the local economy.

Over 100 property owners in the Northeast section of town were targeted for demolition back on September 6th 2001 with an estimated 321 families and businesses to be displaced. For almost 7 years the residents lived in fear on a daily basis that their homes would be taken from them. Weapons of mass destruction pales in comparison of the fear of someone taking your home from you. The promise by the previous administration of "We will only use Eminent Domain as a last resource" fell on deaf ears as all of these properties were targeted for demolition. Not one homeowner was given the opportunity of rehabilitation. We were not speaking of a depressed neighborhood of run down properties but homes that were valued between \$250,000 to \$500,000 ... truly not what Eminent Domain was ever designed to be used for in the United States Constitution.

Eminent Domain Abuse became a major issue in the local Election and the Commissioners campaigned on the platform if elected they would put an end to this issue. After the election, in an Editorial a County newspaper encouraged the newly elected Commissioners to "Beware of taking this action". As a long time opponent of Eminent Domain Abuse I praise the Commissioner for this very gutsy action and especially for refusing to fall prey to the norm in elected officials who often make pre-election promises but then have post-election amnesia. Maybe I am a little old-fashioned but this is still America where a man's home should be his castle. No one should ever be able to take that right away from us. Not even the United States Supreme Court.

Richard Gober

OUTSTANDING CITIZENS OF VENTNOR

Michael Conte long time resident and local business over (Conte Carpet and Upholstery Cleaning) became involved in local politics because he was appalled with what he was seeing happening in this city he has lived in for 23 years. He worked diligently along with other members of the community to overcome plans for eminent domain for private developer's gain which was supported by the previous Mayor and commissioners. He attended meetings being willing to say what is right and willing to do whatever was possible to do what was right and fair. In this effort he devoted himself participating at commissioner meetings speaking his mind in addition to writing letters to the newspapers weekly and routinely calling into radio talk shows bringing information to the residents of our city making known facts that were widely unknown and bringing awareness to the residents of Ventnor which had not been available during the previous Ventnor administration and how government was being run.

He worked passionately and endlessly in the campaign for the present Mayor Kelly and commissioners and was extremely influential in the success of that election.

He is a respected member of the Hispanic community even though he is not Hispanic himself and he personally gave his time and energy to enlighten and promoted residents to register to vote along with personally bringing people who had not registered to register to vote. He most certainly was a major player in making a difference in Ventnor.

Michael continues to volunteer in any committee and does whatever needs to be done for the benefit of this city and community in the North end. His efforts have been unending involvement in every issue concerning making Ventnor better.

His devotion and hard work was and continues to be a significant plus for the present administration winning the election and he is definitely is an OUTSTANDING CITIZEN of the City of Ventnor.



NEW BUSINESS: SPANISH AMERICAN CAFÉ & BAKERY

Spanish American Café & Bakery;
5213 Ventnor Ave;
Open Daily at 7am;
822-4664 or 822-4662;
by Jude Yost

If you ate pizza on Wednesday and a sub on Thursday you just may be looking for a change. The new Spanish American Café opened June 30th for eat in and take out. Located on Ventnor Avenue across from Wawa, just two blocks from the beach, they also offer limited local delivery.

Owners Yazmin Rojas and David Barone are definitely the Spanish/American heart of the small but spacious cafe. David is originally from Atlantic City and was the owner of Jamaican Me Crabby in Margate 10 years ago. This is Yazmin's first restaurant endeavor and she is certainly passionate about serving genuine homemade Spanish dishes.

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are on the menu with 50/50 mix of American and Spanish favorites. Everything is prepared fresh on the premises and nothing costs more than \$9.99! Hard to believe as the portions are generous. The best seller is the 1 1/2 lb. portion of roast pork (\$9.99). Yazmin explains that all the sauces are made from scratch and highly recommends the coconut skewers with mango sauce (8.99). If seafood is your preference, you'll find crab cakes, flounder, scallops, calamari, or tilapia and all accompanied by fries or rice for under \$9. Large party trays are available and children will be happy with old favorites like Salchipapas (hotdog and fries) for \$2.99 or chicken tenders for \$5.99.

David said that they have daily specials and that they will soon be offering homemade breads, croquettes, and miscellaneous Spanish/American specialties. The empanadas (\$1) are currently a sample of what's to come. So next time you are sitting on the beach and feel that "hunger pang" give this Spanish American Café a call.

NEW ADMINISTRATION FACES FINANCIAL CHALLENGES IN VENTNOR

The new administration came to office with the primary mission of stabilizing property taxes. Once in office, the Commissioners and the transition team assisting them diligently began the arduous task of deciphering the complexities of the municipal budget in great detail. That task began less than two months ago and, unfortunately, required more time than they had, given the necessity to pass a budget to keep the municipal departments running.

The budget wasn't the only problem. They also found that the previous administration had been paying for the reconstruction of the Ventnor Fishing Pier out of current funds needed to pay employees and run departments. The City's cash position had been depleted to a critical level. While they have taken temporary measures to correct the cash situation, new financial issues have risen to the surface almost on a daily basis. One example is that it was discovered that about 4000 of the City's 6000 water meters are inoperable, measuring no water consumption by homeowners, and potentially costing the City dearly in unrealized revenue.

Since their swearing in ceremony on May 20th of this year, Mayor Kelly and Commissioners Piatt and Weintrob and their transition team have been diligently examining the 2008 Municipal Budget which was presented, but not passed, by the previous administration.

In an effort to immediately control spending, the administration did not approve any of the capital expenditures presented to it for approval, including early requests for vehicles.

The administration believed that it was necessary, because of time constraints and the depletion of temporary appropriations to pass the budget of the previous administration, but instituted additional internal restrictions on the level of spending within the budget. Departments were advised that their approved level of spending would be less than the approved appropriation in the budget and those levels of spending will be carefully monitored at all levels of management. Those restrictions may save as much as one million dollars by year's end, unless an emergency occurs.

The new administration has indicated many times that in the first year that it has to present its own budget, next year, that the budget process will be "zero-based", which means that every municipal department will be required to indicate in great detail exactly what they will need to operate for the year, eliminating miscellaneous, unidentified appropriations wherever possible and reducing the overall budget.

The Mayor and Commissioners took office at a time when the City's cash position was severely depleted by the practice of the previous administration of paying for construction projects out of Current Funds. Simply stated, that means that cash budgeted for departmental operations was used to pay for the reconstruction of the Ventnor Pier on an ongoing basis, leaving a severe cash shortage in the City's operating accounts. Ordinances passed to reconstruct the Pier dating back to 2006 remain unfunded, although the contractors have been paid from current funds in the amount of \$2.4 million thus far with more due during the balance of this year.

To correct this and restore the City's cash position, this administration believed it was necessary to immediately secure financing to immediately restore the current fund. That process is now complete via a financial instrument known as a Bond Anticipatory Note. The Bond Anticipatory Note is seen as a temporary measure, which will require a "rolling over" in the future, but it is an appropriate measure to enable the City to continue operations and meet its payroll. With an interest rate of approximately two percent it was seen as an affordable cash correction plan.

Questions have been raised regarding the collection of certain revenues, particularly the Water Department revenues. The Mayor and Commissioners have learned that in excess of 4,000 water meters are currently inoperable, registering no consumption. Those residents have been charged the minimum water bill charge, regardless of their usage. The new administration expects to restore those meters as soon as possible.

Recently the administration was forced to face a severe cash shortage in its attempt to meet about ten million dollars of liabilities for the month of August. Because of delays in the State certifying the budget and a subsequent delay in sending out tax bills, along with very low cash reserves in the City, another short term remedy had to be provided.

Commissioner Piatt and the City's CFO applied for a Tax Anticipatory Note amounting to slightly less than five million dollars to fill the shortfall. That note has not been finalized at this time, but is expected to be a 120 day note at approximately the same interest rate as the Bond Anticipatory Note.

Mayor Kelly and Commissioners Piatt and Weintrob agree that the next year will continue to be difficult, but with diligent management, the City's financial picture will improve over time and they will be able to meet their goal of stabilizing property taxes in Ventnor.

- Commissioner John Piatt



NEW BUSINESS: ICE CREAM PLACE

ICE CREAM PLACE; 7312 Ventnor Ave; 487-5969; Open Daily at Noon; by Sondra Klinger

I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream and you can get it in endless flavors at the new ICE CREAM PLACE right here in Ventnor. The small shop opened July 1st by Ron Costigan and his mother, Donna Costigan. Ron, who owns the building where the shop occupies the first floor, grew up in Ocean City and remembers frequent trips for ice cream during the summer months. He loves ice cream and saw the need for a store in this neighborhood.

The Ice Cream Place offers the famous Philadelphia Water Ice, has soft serve and hand-dipped ice cream in more than 20 flavors. In addition, they sell gelati and their famous "banana whip," which is a frozen banana which is whipped into a custard.

They open at noon and close at 11pm weekdays and stay open until midnight on Friday and Saturday. After Labor Day you will still be able to get scrumptious treats on weekends until mid-October. They are ready to give you the scoop!

VENTNOR CALENDAR – AUGUST THRU OCTOBER 2008

Aug 5	Neighborhood Night Out at the Library/Cultural Arts Center
Aug 6	Recycling Collection
Aug 6	Cape Atlantic Women's Invitational Lifeguard Race – 6:30 p.m. Suffolk Ave Beach
Aug 7	Commission Meeting 6pm — Commission Chambers City Hall
Aug 7	The Irish Music of the Flynn's – 7pm Newport Ave. Beach
Aug 8	South Jersey Championship Lifeguard Race- 6:30 p.m. Suffolk Ave Beach
Aug 9	Movie on the beach - Newport Ave. GREASE 8:30 p.m.
Aug 9 & 10	Chuck's 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament - for details contact recreation at (609) 823-7950
August 11-15	Viking Soccer Camp
Aug 12	Recreation Board Meeting 6:30 pm Recreation Building Surrey Ave.
Aug 13	Planning Board Meeting 6:30 pm Commissioners Chambers — City Hall
Aug 14	The Chris Sooy Swing Band 7pm - Newport Ave Beach
Aug 15	John Goudy Memorial Lifeguard Race - 6:30 p.m. Suffolk Ave Beach
Aug 16 & 17	City Wide Yard Sale-no permit required. Any questions contact City Clerk Office at (609) 823-7904
August 18-22	Hoop Mountain Girls Basketball Camp
Aug 20	Recycling Collection
Aug 20	Zoning Board Meeting 6:30pm Commissioners Chambers — City Hall
Aug 21	Commission Meeting 6pm — Commission Chambers City Hall
Aug 21	The Rubber Souls Band - 7pm Newport Ave. Beach
Aug 23	Movie on the beach- Newport Ave. JAWS 8:30 p.m.
Aug 23	First Day of Surf Contest (contingent upon surf conditions); \$15 entry fee; Ventnor Pier beach
Aug 24	Ventnor City Junior Talent Show - Contact Mr. Larry Pacentrelli for details at (609)487-7817
Aug 25-29	U.K. Elite Soccer Camp
Aug 28	Jim Craine's Farewell to Summer Concert - 7pm Newport Ave. Beach
Labor Day Weekend	Labor Day Weekend-Open bar-b-que on the beach from 8/30/08, 8/31/08 and Mon 9/1/08, open fire pits not allowed
Sept 3	Recycling Collection
Sept 4	Commission Meeting 6pm — Commission Chambers City Hall
Sept 8	Starting CORE Signups for Fall session - Through VECC
Sept 9	Recreation Board Meeting 6:30 pm Recreation Building Surrey Ave.
Sept 17	Recycling Collection
Sept 17	Zoning Board Meeting 6:30pm Commissioners Chambers-City Hall
Sept 18	Commission Meeting 6pm — Commission Chambers City Hall <i>VECC Adult Ed will start in October - look for flyer and web info in September</i>
Oct 1	Recycling Collection
Oct 2	Commission Meeting 6pm — Commission Chambers City Hall
Oct 8	Planning Board Meeting 6:30pm Commissioners Chambers — City Hall
Oct 14	Recreation Board Meeting 6:30 pm Recreation Building Surrey Ave.
Oct 15	Recycling Collection
Oct 15	Zoning Board Meeting 6:30 pm Commissioners Chambers — City Hall
Oct 16	Commission Meeting 6 pm — Commissioners Chambers — City Hall
Oct 25	Ventnor Heights Mother's Club Halloween Parade 12:30pm
Oct 29	Recycling Collection

VENTNOR LINKS & RESOURCES

Atlantic County Government:

www.aclink.org

Atlantic County Utilities Authority:

www.acua.com

Downbeach Current:

www.shorenwstoday.com

NBC 40:

www.nbc40.net

Press of Atlantic City:

www.pressofatlanticcity.com

Ventnor Bulletin Board:

www.ventnorevoice.com

Ventnor Business Association:

www.ventnormerchants.com

Ventnor Community Association:

www.weloveventnor.com

Ventnor Public Schools:

www.vecc.atlnet.org