



CITY COUNCIL MEETING REPORT

There was a large crowd in attendance at the City Council meeting on Tuesday September 13th. The topic that was the responsible for this large turnout was the possible extension of the promenade to the length of the city. Of course this is a topic that is of vital interest to those whose homes are on the beach, as well as those who are interested in the dunes and their ecology. The stated purpose of this extension was to provide a safe place for bicyclists and pedestrians.

A group that was opposed to the extension mobilized and met, started a Facebook page and was on the way to obtaining a website. They attended the September 10 SICTA meeting and discussed numerous issues. There appeared to be major concerns that the proposed extension would damage the integrity of the dunes and their fragile ecosystem, but not provide their intended benefit to the bicyclists. The extension was not to be a masonry and asphalt structure like the existing promenade, but a compressed sand and gravel path. Some of the bicyclists that were in attendance doubted the practicality of this type of surface. Some of the attendees were not confident that all of the alternatives to providing safe biking for the six weeks or so of heavy bicycle traffic had been explored.

The extension proposal was quickly dismissed by the Mayor who stated that discussions with the DEP indicated that it was not a possibility. It was acknowledged that it was “outside the box” thinking that is sometimes beneficial when addressing difficult problems and should be encouraged.

During the meeting there were comments that demonstrated a great deal of support for providing a safe place for bicyclists to ride. Modifying the parking on Pleasure Ave to provide room for them and using the old city dump in the north part of SIC were mentioned.

There was a presentation that shed some light on the progress and difficulties that exist with respect to raising Sea Isle Boulevard 4 ½ feet to provide a safe evacuation route. One interesting fact was the reason that construction and paving is limited to the fall. From March 15th through August 15th there can be no activity within 1,000 feet of 3 active osprey nests. The current plan is to reduce the height of the fill on the north side to 4 ½ feet, add culverts (larger than the standard 30 inches to provide egress for turtles), replace a gas main, raise manholes and pave the north side of Sea Isle Boulevard. The north side will then become the roadway and the south side will be cleared of paving and covered with fill for 1 ½ years prior to paving. Eventually (2020) the project will be completed and we will enjoy the benefits of this permanent improvement. Being kind to the environment has its drawbacks, but it is appreciated by those who love this island and its flora and fauna. There will be a chain link fence outside the new guard rails to keep turtles off the roadway and force them to use the special culverts and special care will be taken to insure there is no reduction in wetlands or turtle nesting grounds.

In addition to the two items noted above there were interesting presentations regarding the proactive efforts made by SIC to lock in low interest rates for our bonds (only 50 communities have done so) and adopt the first local water management plan in the state that will help us reduce our flood insurance costs. There will be future discussions with Uber management to see if some accommodations on both sides will make this service a viable transportation alternative here.

The above are topics we believe would be of interest to our membership but represent only a few of the items that were discussed. Go to <http://new.sea-isle-city.nj.us/city-council/city-council-minutes.aspx> for the official minutes when they are available.