

Taxpayers Association of Cape May

Our Mission.....

To hold accountable any and all governmental entities which raise and expend public revenues within the City of Cape May

Our Goal.....

A transparent relationship between the taxpayers and their governments.



www.capemaytaxpayers.com

Email: prescmtpa@gmail.com

TPA Update and 2009/2010 Board Initiatives

2010 Meeting Dates
Cape May City Hall
Auditorium
1:00 – 3:00 PM

January 15, 2010
 February 19, 2010
 March 19, 2010
 April 16, 2010
 May 21, 2010
 June 18, 2010
 July 16, 2010
 August 20, 2010



The Taxpayers Association of Cape May (TPA) held the 2009/2010 Board reorganization meeting at the September meeting. The current TPA Board members are: Tom Atherton; Harry Bellangy; Dagmer Chew; Dennis Crowley (VP); Peter Iurato (Treasurer); Kevin Maloney; Bill Murray; Steve Todd; Kate Wyatt (President).

Last summer, the TPA Board accepted the resignation letter from Audrey Conant. Audrey has been an important member of the Board serving as the Recording Secretary and strong supporter of the TPA. We miss Audrey and her fair and insightful commentary. The Board currently has nine members. The TPA By-Laws stipulate a twelve member board. But, more on that topic later in the newsletter.

We also recognized **Harvey Williams as Citizen of the Year** for his community support and volunteering for over 60 years. Again, thank you, Harvey.

The TPA Board selected the following initiatives for important tax implications: Convention Hall, the Temple Contracts, Master Plan/Energy Audit, Water Rates, City Website, 2010 City Budget, Alternative Energy, and the 2010 City Council Elections. Three Council seats are up for election this Spring. We will be hosting Candidate Night in April, 2010 and, as always, we will be soliciting your questions for the candidates.

- **Convention Hall.** Still on hold based on approvals. Not much current information is available at the writing of this newsletter. Convention Hall has a Management Committee representing City Council to oversee the permitting, construction, and funding of the new multi-purpose facility. The Committee consists of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, City Manager, and a permanent resident of Cape May who recently retired after 40 years as a mechanical engineer with expertise in geothermal systems. (continued on page 2 and 3)

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City of Cape May Ordinance regulating Abandoned Vessels

A Taxpayer alerted the TPA to a potential issue regarding abandoned boats and a proposed city ordinance. The TPA Board voted to submit a statement regarding the proposed Ordinance No 185-2009, an “Ordinance of the City of Cape May to regulate Abandoned Vessels within Municipal Waterway’s last summer.

The proposed Cape May City Ordinance would unwittingly *relieve* the State of New Jersey of its obligation set forth in the State of New Jersey’s recently adopted P.L. 2008, c.52, which further amends and re-titles N.J.S.A. 12:7C-7 et seq., known as the “Abandoned or Sunken Vessels Disposition Law”.

The TPA Board believed that our waterways, and scenic harbors that surround our city should be kept free and clear of abandoned vessels, and we, under no circumstance, wished to diminish our resolve, as taxpayers of this City, to maintain the natural beauty of the harbor for all citizens and we acknowledged

Taxpayer Initiatives (continued)

- **Temple Contracts.** There are two Temple Contracts. The first agreement is with the **Temple University School of Environmental Design** which will initiate the process and procedures in planning for the development of passive recreational and educational activities for the soon to be acquired 78 acre tract of preserved wetlands known as the Sewell Point Sanctuary. The design areas are: 1) Rotary Park, 2) Harbor View Park, 3) Sewell Point Sanctuary, and 4) the Pedestrian City Trail. The total value of this contract is \$78,500. The City provides \$48,500 and Temple \$30,000 (in kind contribution). The Taxpayers should make every effort to follow these designs to ensure your tax dollars are used effectively and efficiently. The designs are all beautiful and well done. However, the sustainability and support of some designs could require additional expense to maintain. The subject of the Rhodeside and Harwell Study has been broached to the Temple faculty and students by Cape May community members during on-site visits to Cape May and also at the October 21st Town Meeting. **The effort is underway now.** Please make every effort to attend the meetings to voice your opinions. They need your interest and feedback... and you should be interested. These are your tax dollars.

The second agreement is with the **Temple University School of Tourism and Hospitality Management.** The City has entered into a partnership to manage Cape May's future Convention Hall and coordinate tourism promotion for the seaside town. Convention Hall will be managed in a very professional manner with support from a new, enlarged Department of Civic Affairs, retaining the four current employees. Convention Hall will need to be a self-sustaining facility financially. Temple will work with the Tourism Commission to come up with a focused long-range plan for the marketing and promotion of Cape May. The second agreement has a long list of deliverables. This agreement has a start date of September, 2010 with an end date of March, 2011. This agreement was approved by City Council on 09/18/09. The total value is \$83,000 with the City of Cape May providing \$53,000 and Temple offering \$30,000 (in kind contribution). **The total city cash outlay is \$101,500 for both agreements.**

- **2010 City Budget.** The TPA Board will be reviewing the 2010 City Municipal Budget. We will be looking for the **top 10 efforts on how** the City plans to save money and how each department has maintained their cost centers. To review 2008 and 2009 municipal budgets—see the information on the Herald web site.

- **City Website.** Harry Bellangy and Kate Wyatt have volunteered to work on this committee that will begin in January, 2010. The TPA has always maintained the City Website needs to become user friendly in order to find city information, committee reports, agendas, metrics, council reports and voting metrics, attendance and so on. The lack of technology and the skills to support technology is a drag on the efficiency and productivity of the city. Information is cobbled together from an array of newspaper articles. We need the facts and the metrics.

Abandoned Boats (continued)

“The waterway is currently the sole responsibility of the State of New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission.

the danger of wrecks to boaters, either as a novice, or an experienced boater, however the implications of the new ordinance regarding expense of removing and storing the boats would be assumed by the City.

The ordinance did not pass and the responsibility to manage abandoned boat issues remains with the state of New Jersey—rather

than a local municipal issue. The waterway is currently *the sole responsibility of the State of New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission.*

THANK YOU TO THE INTERESTED TAX-PAYER WHO TOOK THE TIME TO ENLIGHTEN THE COMMUNITY.



Taxpayer Initiatives (continued)

- **Water Rates.** The TPA met with the Mayor on December 18 to get an update on the Water Rates Committee activity. We understand that the city is performing due diligence and research into each and every water bill that will provide the information to create a new method of billing.

- **Alternative Energy.** The roles of the Mayor's Energy Committee were taken over by the Environmental Commission. We are interested in their projects for saving tax dollars while going green. We appear to be doing very little!! In addition to saving money; we might suggest investing more now for what promises to be big gains financially and environmentally.

- **Energy Audit.** We are interested in the start of the energy audit for the city for potential tax savings. Substantial long term gains are being realized by other communities investing in renewable energy initiatives and taking advantage of government incentives.

- **2010 Candidate Night .** Three council seats will be up for election in May. It is always insightful to hear a potential candidate's platform. This night is not a debate. It is an evening of questions for the candidates and their thoughts on current issues facing the city. We will be interested in your input for questions.

MEETING TOPICS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE- CHECK WEBSITE OR AD IN NEWSPAPER- WEEK PRIOR TO MEETING:

- JAN—MASTER PLAN ENDORSEMENT
- FEB—2010 CITY BUDGET
- MAR—ALTERNATIVE ENERGY
- APR—CANDIDATE NIGHT
- MAY— OPEN
- JUN—ROUNDTABLE WITH MAYOR
- JUL—MEET NEW COUNCIL
- AUG—CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Master Plan

The Master Plan provides a vision for the municipality. The Master Plan provides direction and guidance for the growth, resource preservation, and land use decisions. A good comprehensive plan recognizes the needs of the municipality; *the municipality's relationship to neighboring communities*, the County, State and other regional agencies; and existing constraints and opportunities such as circulation patterns, environmental conditions, and development patterns; and includes projections and anticipated development trends. The Master Plan is a document that is adopted by the municipal Planning Board. After the plan is adopted, implementation of the plan is achieved by means of three (3) interrelated actions: legislative action by the governing body, capital improvement planning and continuing planning efforts.

The next step in the planning process is to have the plan endorsed by the State of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs State Planning Commission Office of Smart Growth. The Guidelines for achieving this level can be found on the New Jersey State Web Site. It is a fairly comprehensive straightforward document that guides the endorsement process.

Did you happen to read the article on the Rutgers students design work for West Cape May in the Herald? Search on--global warming, West Cape May

RHODESIDE AND HARWELL COST THE CITY -\$178,684

TO VIEW THE PLAN FOR CAPE MAY— GO TO HTTP:// WWW.RHODESIDE-HARWELL.COM/ THE PICTURE BELOW IS THEIR CONCEPT OF THE PROMENADE.

Master Plan Endorsement

SO, WHY IS THE TPA INTERESTED IN THE ENDORSEMENT PROCESS?

The City of Cape May would be joining eleven other municipalities in NJ that have made it through this process including Upper Township, West Cape May and Cape May Point in Cape May County. Ocean City (OC) has been working toward this goal for more than three years and was recently endorsed. The OC Planning Board has adopted a conservation element, environmental resources and a recreation inventory as part of the Master Plan. This new approach to Master Planning allows OC to be designated as a **smart growth community** with many advantages for OC and its residents. **Master Plan Endorsement** opens the door to successful grant applications and additional opportunities in the smart growth community designation from the State of New Jersey. The City of Cape May's Master Plan needs to include the additional items mentioned above. The TPA believes the Master Plan is the City's most important document. It is the guideline, the plan for structure and the future. We believe we are missing opportunities and we need to work smarter and harder. Planning with our neighboring communities will help to achieve the vision of living in this beautiful area rich with natural resources and beauty.



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TPA – REPRESENTING THE
TAXPAYERS
SINCE MARCH 8, 1948

Are you interested....

...In helping the TPA Board track down and determine the metrics and data that can validate an taxpayer issue? I know there must be a number of town folk who have excellent skills in developing insight, ask questions at City Hall, get answers and report back to the board with substantiated facts. I believe we are a organization of “trust but verify”. We have a number of issues that could use some heavy lifting from time to time. In the future, we are going to have to do more with less. Volunteering to help with a project or a committee may be a good use of your time. If the TPA is not your cup of tea, call City Hall and speak with the Mayor or Council Member to offer your skills, knowledge and expertise to a current committee, or one that is newly formed. There are extraordinary opportunities that can provide support for projects that would be a *savings to the Taxpayer*. You will learn more about the town and the staff who work at City Hall. If you are not a resident, please become involved in your local community tax dollar information-who spends its and on what.

LOOKING FOR INFORMATION:

Looking for reports—a “searchable database”, the city budgets, some investigative reporting, and community news—

There are a number of newspapers that I use for research:

For the Herald Newspaper: <http://www.capemaycountyherald.com/>

For the Gazette Newspaper: <http://thecapemaygazette.com/>

For the Atlantic City Press: <http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/>

The Herald maintains a number of reports on line for the county and local government—the 2008 and 2009 City of Cape May Municipal budgets are on line under PUBLIC RECORDS. All the news articles are maintained on line and searchable.

Check out the ACPress for local non-profits and government pensions —scroll down the home page to ACCESS INFO. You can always stay informed no matter what state you are in.

Letter From the President—TPA Reduces Board Membership

The Board of Directors has finally accepted the “snow bird” affect on Board Membership. A number of Members who served on the Board have either moved south or head south when the winter winds blow across the bay.

Therefore, we have decided to reduce the Board to nine members-seven regular members and two alternate members. A quorum will be five members. Additionally, the Board can be called for a meeting by a request of three directors—rather than five.

By action of receiving this newsletter, the notice of the

change to the By-Laws will take place no later than February 28th. If you are opposed to this action, please send your vote to the TPA mail address no later than February 28th. We will post the new By-Laws on the website for your review and then finalize them.

The reduction of the Board means some of us have to double up on our assignments. We need to keep this organization moving forward for a few more years to follow the local municipal government actions to stay informed.

If you would like to send your comments or corrections to any

aspect of the newsletter, please do at the email address or send a note to the PO box. I will post corrections on the website.

I would like to thank you for your support during our membership drive last Spring and your notes and kind comments for our efforts.

Take care, stay warm, and I hope to see you at the next meeting.

Regards,

Kate Wyatt

President

