

AHLOA ANNUAL MEETING - 2009

The President introduced Congressman Frank LoBiondo, who represents the Second Congressional District. He commented that there are many challenges and issues being dealt with in Washington at this time. Two of these issues are national and one is a local issue.

Locally, some day it may be possible to do beach replenishment without pumping sand. After 1996 the Office of Management and Budget suggested that the federal government back away from beach replenishment. Since that time no money has been set aside in the budget for that purpose. Avalon has taken the lead in working things out with the Army Corps of Engineers and the Appropriations Committee to get finances in place. The discussions do not stop and it is to be hoped that money will become available. Beach replenishment is not about a suntan, but jobs and must be considered in the same light as tornado and hurricane damage in other parts of the country.

Jobs and the economy are still a major issue. In September 2008 President Bush gave the Wall Street bailout, however, there was no accounting or accountability of how the funds were used. The President's original idea was well founded but poorly implemented. Congress whittled the size of the bailout for other uses down and those that needed help did not always get it.

The healthcare proposal is also big. We need to improve access to healthcare. The Bill has not passed the full House, and the Senate has not printed a Bill. In the House Bill, the doctor/patient relation is very important. A third party should not review the process.

The Congressional Budget Office puts the cost at \$1.7 trillion. The Congressman related the case of his mother in the decision as to who gets treatment. The Bill, as proposed could cause hospital closures. In his opinion no medical group felt the proposals would keep healthcare in good shape. The Congressman felt we should take a step back from the original concepts and bring in people from the AMA and hospitals to discuss the situation. Defensive medicine is the most costly. He also felt that tort reform is needed.

The Congressman agreed to answer a few questions:

In answer to a question about the financial problems it was felt that the Congress did not rein in the process or hold people accountable.

How will the Cap & Trade Bill be managed?

One has to go back to the Arab Oil Embargo. In the late 80's and early 90's the idea came from the problem of acid rain due to sulfur dioxide from coal fired electric plants. The bill did not have oil production control. The Congressman is not in favor of drilling off the New Jersey coast there are 70 million acres under federal lease that could be developed.

He feels we have to use alternative energy, e.g., nuclear, wind and solar. An energy bill has passed the House, but not the Senate.

HEALTHCARE

The House version is ambiguous on how Medicare will be affected. A government commission may be formed and make decisions for everyone. Counseling needs to be given on "end of life" issues it is a family issue, not a government one.

STATE OF THE BOROUGH

The Mayor stated that a beach was needed this year to counteract the effects of the winter storms. Under the Corps of Engineers project 140,000 tons of sand were brought in and an additional 40,000 tons were brought in by the Borough. The Borough is looking at a process of back passing sand in the winter. \$300,000 has been appropriated to look into the process which, if successful could be an interim between federal projects.

There has been a meeting with Vice President Biden about the need for beach fills. From the effects of hurricane Katrina it has been determined that for every \$1 that is spent \$4 of protection is obtained.

The piping plovers nest between 40d' and 58th Streets and this causes problems. The Borough has negotiated with the USFWS and the NJ DEP not to rake the beach in the nesting season rather than close the beach altogether.

Water Conservation The Avalon quota is 75million gallons per month; this cannot be exceeded. At the moment the 2009 numbers are slightly below those for 2008. The Gibson bill required the rate of salt water intrusion (SWI) into the aquifers be monitored; it also looked at options, such as a desalinization plant. SWI is not as rapid as first thought.

DUNE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

In the secondary dunes vegetation, such as dune grass, is dying out, invasive plants are taking over. Several grants have been obtained to develop the plan and to come up with and implement pilot projects.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

There is a 2.5% fee on commercial construction and a 1% fee on residential construction to be set aside for affordable housing. Under the state formula Avalon would have to raise \$72 million for 42 affordable units. The Borough has hosted several meetings to discuss the situation.

BEACH ACCESS RULE

The Borough won the case against the NJDEP regarding these rules.

Green Initiative: A Green Team has been formed and is looking into a program. One item under consideration is an energy audit of all Borough buildings.

Avalon Budget: The budget is very stable and taxes were raised by only 2 cents in 2009. Salaries and wages have been stabilized at 27% of the budget for many years.

New Public Safety Building. There will be an open house in late September or early October. The County donated \$750,000 to the project.

Other milestones are: A new well at 67h Street; The water tower at IP Street has been repainted; Some of the board walk has been replaced with the remainder scheduled for later this year, The south bound side of Dune Drive between 12th and 19'h Streets was repaved as a result of a grant being obtained.

AVALON GREEN TEAM

Jim Collins, Chair of the Avalon Green Team stated that Avalon was on the cutting edge of environmental protection. The team is drafting a Master Plan on energy and water conservation. Studies are being carried out to make maximum use of federal and state funds. Energy audits will be carried out on Borough facilities. Members of the team have attended many meetings to find out what programs are available; many facilities have been visited. There will be a Green Fair on Saturday, October 10 from 10:00 am. until 3:00 p.m. in the Community Hall

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: Why not consolidate Avalon and Stone harbor school systems for obvious reasons?

A: This is a decision that has to be made by the School Boards in the two communities, although over the years the Borough has tried to bring something about. The State appointed County Superintendent may be looking into consolidation of school districts. Studies have been carried out by the two Boards, but the data has not been made available. Michael Matt indicated that AHLOA has taken the position that a voluntary amalgamation should be achieved rather than have something forced on the schools.

Q: Are you going to extend the beach fill to 28th Street as 24th Street is now the shortest beach? At high tide there is almost no beach at 20th Street. The last two beach refill programs ended at 16th and 18th Street. Will the next refill/replenishment program extend to 20th Street and beyond?

A: In 2010 Avalon is due for a beach fill that would put a 350 feet deep beach as far as 30th Street. There are complications in that with the federal/local payment schedule of 65% -35% the state is still responsible for a proportion of the residual. Unfortunately the state has been siphoning money from the real estate tax fund, money that was for beach replenishment projects. If the state does not have its share the federal money goes away.

The Borough is looking at alternative methods to retain sand on the beach. One such method is a groyne field, however, it appears that if one or two groynes are installed it may be necessary to install them on the whole island.

Q: Is any harm being caused to the beaches at the south end when sand is transferred? Where will the sand from the south end come from to keep the north end replenished? Between what streets will sand be removed?

A: Sand will be moved from the beach, but it is not known from where. Sand moves from the north to the south so the beach is accumulating in that area. A study is being considered that would be similar to the Indian River project in Delaware where sand is pumped from one area to another as needed. This could require putting a structure at the south end and running pipes under the dune line with discharge ports at various locations at the north end. This is something the Corps of Engineers would look into.

Q: When will dune fence be replaced in the fill area?

A: The fence will be replaced in the fall.

Q: What can be done to stop the growing skunk population? Why isn't there a more active role to control and feral cat population? What is the Borough doing about the skunk problem?

A: There is an epidemic of skunks in the Borough. They are considered to be a non game species of wild animal. If such an animal is invasive i.e., is under steps, in the crawl space, etc., steps can be taken to have them removed. Fish and Game has been asked if Avalon could hire a company to do a massive trapping of skunks, but was told that that could not be done. There has been an indication that predators have been around the bird nests on the beach. Those predators have not been identified. Predator enclosures were installed around the nests.

Q: Why can't we hand rake the beaches that are protected by community service people?

A: No raking of any kind is permitted in the area. Unlike other bird species when the piping plover chicks hatch the parents take the chicks to the water's edge to feed unlike other bird species where the parents bring the food to the chicks. As the Mayor said earlier, if we do not follow the directives of the Endangered and Non game Species staff the whole area of the beach between 40t' and 58th Streets could be closed off to all human passage.

Q: The sewer smell is still with us. Can something be done?

A: Although the MUA has carried out considerable work on the plant at 37th Street there can still be problems. If odors are noticed during the week end the Police Department should be called (using the regular number, not 911), MUA will be contacted.

Q: What can be done to keep bicycles and skateboards off the sidewalks, particularly in the business district on Dune Drive? The current situation is hazardous. Can the ordinance of no bike riding on the boardwalk after 10:00 am. be enforced? The crosswalks are great; unfortunately cars don't stop if you are in the crosswalk. Are the police monitoring this?

A: Officers on bikes are at the boardwalk from 10:00 am, every day to keep cyclists off. If a pedestrian steps onto a crosswalk and there is no traffic coming, the pedestrian 'owns' the crosswalk and approaching traffic must stop. If there is traffic coming, the pedestrian should wait until the traffic thins and it is safe to step onto the crosswalk. From a police point of view this is not easy to enforce, however, if a car registration number can be obtained and if a complaint is filed the police will follow through. Bikes in New Jersey are governed identically as cars and riders should follow all sections of the motor code.

Skateboards are less regulated. Police will respond to complaints.

Q: First Avenue has become an expressway through Avalon. It is the same vehicles year round speeding up and down. Is there anything that can be done to slow these vehicles down??? It is a very dangerous situation.

A: First Avenue is very busy and is used by motorists to avoid the business district of Dune Drive. The police do enforce traffic laws and have issued some 1200 tickets. The Borough has purchased several mobile speed signs that are moved around the community to aid in speed control.

Q. Mayor thanks for your creative leadership on many issues affecting the Borough. What is your plan for the protection of the high dunes between 40th and 58t' Streets?

A: While the Borough eventually lost the case regarding pools in the high dunes the Borough can regulate things in the high dunes. To this end a Dune Vegetation Master Plan is being developed to control vegetation in the dunes. The Borough Dune Ordinance will also be modified as needed.