

# The Avalon Home and Land Owners Association

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2006 MEMBER SURVEY

AHLOA conducted a survey of its membership during May and June of 2006. The survey was mailed to 1,678 members and we received 616 returns. Any member who wishes to see the detailed tables supporting the report may do so by sending a note to AHLOA SURVEY, Box 21, Avalon, NJ 08202

### DEMOGRAPHIC RESULTS

18% are full time residents, up from 16% in 2001. The average length of ownership is 20 years. Almost 1/3 of the members have owned more than one property.

### USE OF PROPERTY

The survey validates what we have all known – there are more people here on weekends into the fall and early winter months. Of the non-resident owners, 74 % report being here part time or on weekends through October, while 35% report using their properties through December. An interesting survey result demolishes the “Snow Bird” theory – that everyone leaves town in the winter. Not so. 82% of resident owners use their properties from January through March.

A large majority of members, 78%, Use their property solely for personal use, indicating that AHLOA should focus on quality-of-life issues.

### MEMBER ACTIVITIES

According to the survey, events and programs offered at The Library, Museum, and Community Hall top the list for member participation. 60% of members reported participating in Avalon civic activities other than AHLOA

### ATTITUDES REGARDING THE BOROUGH OF AVALON

AHLOA has a mission, in part, “to encourage, promote, foster and protect the physical development, environment, and general welfare of the Borough and its citizens.” The quality of life of Avalon residents is greatly dependent on the effectiveness and economy with which Borough government performs.

The 2006 AHLOA Survey asked members about experiences with various Borough departments and operations.

The questions were:

1. How often do you have PERSONAL contact with the department?
2. How knowledgeable are you about the functions of the department?
3. How good a job does the department do IN GENERAL?
4. If you have dealt with the department personally, how satisfied were you with the result?

### RESULTS

Members, and by extension, property owners and taxpayers in Avalon have little contact with and knowledge of Borough operations. 26% reported frequent contact with Public Works trash operations and 15% with Parks and recreation. All other departments were below 5%.

### COMMENT

AHLOA believes an aware citizenry actively engaged with local government is a desirable condition. AHLOA has provided platforms for various Borough officials, but they seem to have had minimal impact, possibly due to low attendance.

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## RESULTS - PERFORMANCE

The general attitude is positive. Over half of members gave "Excellent" or "Very good" scores to all departments except Zoning Enforcement, which received a 49% score, and Code Enforcement with 48%. Scoring highest were Rescue Squad and the Fire, Police, and Recreation Departments. (All over 80% excellent or very good).

Familiarity with a department improves the performance scores in all cases, some dramatically, such as the Borough Clerk's office.

## COMMENT

There are some red flags here. Over 50% of members or more give "adequate" or "poor" scores to two departments, Zoning Enforcement and Code Enforcement. The Construction Office scored 46% "adequate" or "poor." The survey did not attempt to determine the underlying issues that generated these attitudes. AHLOA recommends that the Borough initiate a program aimed at learning the source of such opinions. This could be done in a series of town meetings, for example.

## SATISFACTION WITH SERVICES

The survey asked if members had dealt with departments personally. There were 1,385 reports of such personal dealings and in 56% of these, members reported they were "very satisfied" with the results. The higher-ranking departments were the Rescue Squad (102 reports/89% "very satisfied"), Fire Department (63/84%), Recreation (118/69%), Police (249/66%) and Clerk's Office (87/68%).

Lower scoring departments were Code Enforcement (107 reports/ 26% "very satisfied) and Zoning Enforcement (101/37%).

There were 194 reported dealings or 14% in which the member reported they were "Not satisfied" with the outcome. Again, we did not attempt to determine the underlying issue.

## COMMENTS

One personal encounter in seven received a "Not satisfied" comment. The area of citizen satisfaction should be a matter of pride for the Borough. AHLOA recommends that departments be provided with a protocol for dealing with the public, including some means of determining the level of satisfaction.

## AHLOA ISSUES

Members were asked to indicate where AHLOA should be putting its' efforts. Tax and assessment issues were not included in the list, since AHLOA cannot effectively deal directly with them.

Overall, the survey indicates quality –of-life issues are important to Avalon residents and owners. AHLOA must be mindful of these issues when developing strategies for the organization.

Those issues that received an "attention needed" from over half the membership were:

- Quality of Beaches; replenishment of eroded beaches; 72%
- Monitoring Borough spending and reporting to Membership; 66%
- Quality of Beaches - general maintenance and cleanliness; 65%
- Parking in Business District; 63%
- Seasonal issues - Noise, Traffic, Personal Behavior; 63%
- Enforcement of Zoning Codes; 59%

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- Improve Communications between Property owners and Borough Management - The Mayor, Borough Council, the Borough Administrator; 57%
- Construction site factors ; Noise, Trash, Appearance, Vehicle congestion; 53%

There were differences in the top responses for residents and non-resident owners.

## FOR FULL TIME RESIDENTS

Those issues receiving 50% or more "attention needed" scores were:

- Enforcement of Zoning Codes; 61%
- Parking in Business District; 58%
- Construction site factors ; Noise, Trash, Appearance, Vehicle congestion; 58%
- Monitoring Borough spending and reporting to Membership; 54%
- Control of feral cats and other feral animals; 54%
- Seasonal issues - Noise, Traffic, Personal Behavior; 51%

## FOR NON-RESIDENTS

Those issues receiving 50% or more "attention needed" scores were:

- Quality of Beaches - replenishment of eroded beaches; 66%
- Quality of Beaches - general maintenance and cleanliness; 59%
- Monitoring Borough spending and reporting to Membership; 57%
- Seasonal issues - Noise, Traffic, Personal Behavior; 55%
- Parking in Business District; 55%

## CONCENSUS ISSUES

There are three areas where both groups agree: Monitoring Borough spending, Seasonal issues and Parking in the Business District

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Officers and Trustees will review the results and develop a strategic agenda. Some steps that may be considered are:

Improve direct communications between members and Borough managers and departments.

Initiate discussions between AHLOA officials and Borough officials to review issues.

Develop policy positions on issues and communicate them to Council and the Mayor.

Initiate projects to support proposals to Council, such as the Construction Site survey done in 2002 and 2003.