

ORTLEY BEACH VOTERS AND TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION

General Membership Meeting

Saturday, July 15, 2023

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order – A call to Order was conducted by President, Anthony Colucci beginning the July OBVTA general membership meeting.
2. Moment of Reflection - A moment of silence was conducted by the OBVTA Directors to remember those who have died in violence around the world and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Roll Call – Roll call was conducted by the Secretary, John Clarke, and the following Board of Directors were present; Anthony Colucci, Debbie Barton, John Clarke, Joe Cantalupo, Cathy Crisafulli, Joan Strathern and Mike Stramandinoli.
4. Quorum – President, Anthony Colucci requested Secretary John Clarke to determine whether or not a quorum was present. Upon review of the members present for the General Membership meeting, it was clearly established that a quorum had been reached as far in excess of 40 members of the membership were present at the meeting thereby establishing a quorum.
5. Minutes – The minutes from the June 17, 2023 General Membership meeting were presented and accepted by a unanimous vote from the Board of Directors.
6. Treasurer’s Report – The Treasurer’s Report was presented by the OBVTA Treasurer, Debbie Barton. So far, through June 2023, the net income from dues payments amounts to \$11,046.00. Year-to-date membership stands at 631 and the year-to-date members are at 825. We currently have 15 new members in our last reporting period, in addition to 1 new business member. Year-to-date business membership renewals have amounted to 16 although last year the total business memberships were at 20. The money market year-to-date income is \$5.00 and with the \$2,863.00 received from the lawyer retainer, the total operating income year-to-date is at \$11,052.00 and for the month was \$3,160.00. Expenses year-to-date for refreshments are \$687.00 and for the month of June was \$206.00. The hall rental and zoom rental related expenses year-to-date is

\$600.00 and \$200.00 for the month of June. There are a variety of other miscellaneous expenses including a donation for \$100.00 to save the Barnegat Bay and \$125.00 for the Memorial Day wreath to the Seaside American Legion included therein. Total expenses year-to-date are \$7,470.00 and \$2,694.00 for the month of June. That leaves a net income year-to-date of \$3,582.00. Cash to date includes \$28,260.00 in a money market, and \$33,934.00 in the checking account which leaves \$62,195.00 cash in TD Bank. In addition, there is the \$20,000.00 at the First Internet Bank of Indiana which leaves what is referenced above as the total cash of \$81,794.00.

There were questions from the membership concerning the outstanding amount of cash on hand for the OBVTA. Some suggestions were made with regard to possibly spending down some of that money and included therein is one of the ideas that was floated was to have a scholarship awarded from the outstanding monies in the OBVTA funds. The Board of Directors acknowledged this and other ideas and will discuss the same at the next Board of Directors meeting.

7. Bay Blvd. Speed Limits & Pedestrian Crossing Areas – Our newest Board of Director, Michael Stramandinoli presented the General Membership with information concerning the Bay Blvd. speed limits as well as pedestrian crossing issues occurring on Route 35 northbound. Mr. Stramandinoli brought to the attention of the General Membership that he has in the past made efforts with the town and the county to have a reduction in the speed limit on Bay Blvd. The current speed limit is 35 mph and everyone seems to drive on it for in excess of that, probably closer to 50 mph. There was some discussion on how to proceed with this and that Mike has been told by Lou Amoroso in the past that a traffic study needs to be conducted to get this done. In the past, Lou Amoroso has used this excuse and has not pushed for safety concerns like speed limit issues that the OBVTA has requested. There was some discussion that the speed limit in Lavallette on Bay Blvd. is actually lower than that in the county and that it may be worthwhile to petition the county to have it lowered to match or reduce it to that which exists in Lavallette.

In addition, Mike Stramandinoli indicated that he has petitioned the town previously that the area on 35 South at the north end of town has become a real safety hazard. He has spoken to Toms River about the installation of lights and flashers in the area and we will monitor the success, or lack thereof, of these

issues before petitioning Toms River and/or the State to have safety measures in place before a serious injury occurs in that area.

8. Beach Update – John Clarke provided a beach update for the General Membership. Mr. Clarke indicated that he has been in communication with the Army Corp. of Engineers concerning the upcoming beach replenishment. The Army Corp. of Engineers has advised Mr. Clarke that there is still an ongoing bid protest filed by one of the bidding contractors that is holding up the beach replenishment contract at the current time. This could take a couple months to resolve and until that is ultimately resolved, the replenishment program going forward will be in limbo. Mr. Clarke reported that President Colucci was at the council meeting on Wednesday, July 12, 2023 and addressed several issues with the town. Included therein was the lack of access for the 5th Ave. beach. The town has informed us that DPW has worked on the 5th Ave. beach access and that has reopened although in a very steep manner. In addition, the OBVTA has brought to the attention the issues of tents being placed on the beach in Ortley. These tents are large, take up a great deal of space, and block vision for those behind the tents limiting their enjoyment of the beach. This issue is being raised to the Recreation Department of Toms River as are issues concerning the placement of garbage cans as well as the placement of badge checkers. Once these issues have been addressed by the town, one way or the other, the Board of Directors will be in a better position to report on these outstanding issues to the General Membership.

A further issue has to be the ongoing saga concerning the implementation of rails along the beach access points especially the steep areas from the tops of the dunes to the actual beach berm. The General Membership has had many questions concerning this and despite the OBVTA's repeated requests to Toms River, Toms River has not adequately addressed these issues to the satisfaction of the Board of Directors or the General Membership OBVTA in general. The Board of Directors will continue to follow up with the rail issue and report back to the General Membership.

9. Community Solar – The Board of Directors advised the General Membership of a new program in our area that you can sign up for to lower your electricity bill utilizing a state program and solar power coming from the new Solstice solar farm in Toms River.

The New Jersey Community Solar Energy Program enables electric utility customers to participate in the benefits of a solar energy generation project that is not located on your property, but instead at a nearby solar farm.

This solar energy benefit is **not** a telemarketer calling you to put solar panels on your roof so he can make money. Rather, this is a New Jersey state project to make solar power available to everyone.

This program was implemented because the belief is that everyone should benefit from solar energy but not everyone can afford their own system, or has a house that can accommodate solar panels.

The reason this is of interest now is that the Solstice Solar Farm in Toms River, on a portion of the Ciba Geigy superfund site, is just now going online – and residents of Toms River and Ortley Beach are eligible to apply to participate in the program. If you are accepted, part of your power would be billed from the traditional JCP&L power sources, coal, natural gas and nuclear, but part of your billed power will come from the solar farm. There is an estimated 20% reduction in your electricity bill as a result of the state subsidies if you are accepted into the program. There is no cost to you, although you do need to sign a contract. My understanding, however, is that it can be cancelled at any time, so you or a future owner of your home are not locked in.

One caveat is that the program has income limits for participation and a percentage of participants are required to be low and moderate income. However, we have been told that a smaller percentage of the participants will have no income limit. At this time, the final splits are probably not determined, and it may depend on who applies. One thing for sure is that the sooner you apply the better your chance of getting a spot.

In some way, we are all paying for the damage done at the Ciba Geigy contaminated chemical site, whether it be because of the successful tax appeals for that property which we as taxpayers were burdened with, or whether it be a future Township liability. So, this is your opportunity to get a little bit back of the price Toms River has paid for what happened on that site.

Of note, Ortley Beach residents are actually eligible to participate in about 6 programs in Ocean county, but our best chance of acceptance is probably the Solstice solar farm here in Toms River.

There are some brochures here on the table if you are interested and we will include all of this information and links to the program website in a future member email communication.

10. Streetscape and Bay Boulevard – Cathy Crisafuli reported on the streetscape progress. Much progress has been made with regard to streetscape. Bob Hudak, the town planner for Toms River, emailed Joan to report that the additional money for the streetscape plan that had been requested from New Jersey DOT was approved by them. Drew Markewitz from NV5 emailed to explain that their request for additional construction funds so all of the proposed improvements for streetscape could be included was approved by NJDOT because NV5 provided proper justification. Drew indicated that the final design documents are completed and now NV5 will be able to submit them to NJDOT without having to remove anything since the funds have already been approved. NV5 will be packaging up the submission over the next two weeks. This is good news. It means that the project is moving forward but of course, we now have to wait for NJDOT to once again approve the final design plans.

With regard to Bay Blvd., as was previously reported, the curbing in front of Mia's has been completed. Joan Strathern has observed that some fill has been added to the median across from Mia's. She will be following up with the county about the grass planting there but she has previously been told that the best time to plant grass is in the fall so it may not happen until then.

11. Guest, Lt. Gene Bachonski – Lt. Bachonski addressed the General Membership as he most always does in his usual informative and entertaining manner. Lt. Bachonski indicated that the beach season is fully upon us and with it is the increase staffing which began over the Memorial Day weekend. As the Toms River Police Department expected, there has been an increase in police calls for service with the summer months. Lt. Bachonski acknowledged that there has been a couple of pop-up parties involving juveniles which have occurred most recently the weekend prior to this General Membership meeting. He did indicate that this particular pop-up party was a surprise and that the Toms River Police

Department quickly reacted and moved the juveniles off of the beach and boardwalk area and out of town. Lt. Bachonski is aware of some property damage and issues involving that but overall felt that the Toms River Police Department handled the matter quickly and efficiently. Lt. Bachonski did indicate that there have been a couple of other pop-up parties that have been forwarded in advance and feels that they are getting a better handle on dealing with juveniles and the pop-up parties in particular.

Lt. Bachonski did indicate that the curfew from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. for juveniles under 18 has been placed back in effect and that they hope this will help alleviate the pop-up party situation moving forward.

Lt. Bachonski also reminded the membership that there has been a recent rash of car burglaries and asked that the membership please lock their doors and do not leave any valuables in their vehicles in plain view. He also reminded the membership that fraud remains rampant in the State of New Jersey and across the United States and if you get a call and do not recognize the number that you should not answer it. Do not trust anyone and certainly be very suspicious of emails. If there happens to be an email from a service or provider that you utilize, make sure you look at the bill and contact that agency by the number located on the bill and not the number located on the email.

There has been a recent rise in electric bicycles in the Ortley Beach area. Low speed vehicles are allowed to be on roads that at 25 mph or less and are allowed to cross higher speed roads like Route 35 and Bay Blvd. but are not allowed to drive along these roads. These people must have a driver's license, registration, insurance, headlights, taillights, brake lights, turn signals, speedometer, and odometer on the vehicles. There are several types of these vehicles including Class I bicycles that are equipped with a motor to provide assistance when the rider is pedaling, and the maximum speed is 20 mph. There are Class II bicycles that are equipped with a handle grip actuated motor with a maximum speed of 20 mph. Class I and Class II motorized vehicles are regulated like bicycles, no registration required and they may ride on bike paths but not on sidewalks and like bicycles, must abide by New Jersey Title 39 motor vehicle laws. There are Class III bicycles that are defined as motorized bicycles that travel in excess of 20 mph. A person operating this vehicle must be 15 years or older and have a motorized bicycle license. Class II bicycles must also be registered and be insured.

12. Member Comments – A good number of OBVTA members spoke and had questions regarding a variety of issues at the meeting. Included therein was Mel Persi who spoke and thanked the members who voted for him at the recent Board of Directors election and indicated that he would be running again in the future. Mel Persi made comments indicating that not a lot is being accomplished with the current regime both on the OBVTA as well as the current regime in Toms River. Mr. Persi suggested that perhaps it is time to re-look at the secession issue if, for no other reason, to at least put pressure on Toms River and that this pressure may be useful in having Toms River address some of the many issues that Ortley Beach has including the EMS issues, railing issues, beach replenishment issues, and the like. Mr. Persi felt that with the knowledge that Ortley Beach may be looking to secede from Toms River, this may give us more bargaining power in our dealings with Toms River.

Dr. Maureen Persi also addressed the Board of Directors. Dr. Persi reiterated her extensive work last summer in having Ortley Beach residents sign her petition where she was promoting the possibility of using the McDonald's property as a community center, as well as the idea of secession by Ortley Beach from Toms River. Dr. Persi felt strongly that the Board of Directors acted inappropriately towards her including a disclaimer in her statement that the Board of Directors included as an attachment to the September, 2022 minutes. The disclaimer, which in part read that some of the information included in the statement were inaccurate, was disrespectful to her and to her efforts and should not have been included as an attachment to her statement.

Another one of the members brought up that a flyer/letter was being circulated at the beach advising beachgoers that it is not permissible to set up beach chairs, umbrellas, towels, etc., without the actual owners being present. Given the lack of space on the beach, apparently the letter intended to convey that it was not appropriate to take up beach space while leaving such property unattended. The letter indicated that if the beach staff notices these types of activities going on, they will pull up and put the unattended property in a pile to allow more space for other beachgoers.

Ms. Debbie Martin also addressed the Board of Directors. Ms. Martin felt that the OBVTA Board of Directors are not doing enough to push the town to agree to some of the demands of the OBVTA. Ms. Martin reminded the Board of Directors

that they need to have a greater presence at the town council meetings, communicate more directly with the Toms River administration, and reminded the Board of Directors that in the past in order to get anything accomplished, actual protests or in person involvement has been the only way that Ortley has been able to achieve some of its goals with Toms River.

13. Close of Meeting - A motion was then brought to have the July 15, 2023, General Membership meeting brought to a close and that was unanimously approved.