

Ortley Beach Voters and Taxpayers Association
Annual Membership Meeting
Saturday, June 19, 2021, 9:30 a.m.
Via Zoom

Meeting called to order at 9:33 a.m. (Anthony Colucci)

Pledge and Moment of Reflection for victims of Covid and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country (Mike Wymbs).

Present: Anthony Colucci, Debbie Barton, Cathy Crisafulli, Joan Strathern, Toni Tomarazzo, Mary Ann Giordano Wallis, Mike Wymbs, Paul Jeffrey. Joseph Cantalupo was attending a funeral.

Membership attendance: 40 participants at start; 60 participants at peak. Membership quorum established.

Minutes of the May 15, 2021 Association meeting. Motion to accept. (Mike Wymbs, Debbie Barton). Accepted.

Treasurer and Membership reports: Debbie Barton
2 checks cleared: For database, Event Bank
NJOP Contribution

Cash on hand: \$66,212

Membership reached a record high of 736 (936 members)
About 150 members have not paid their dues for this year

Anthony noted that the organization started with 12 people. It grew to 102 and today is over 700 families, an "outstanding" figure that gives us agency with local officials.

Motion to approve membership and financial reports (Paul, Mike): Approved.

Annual Election of Directors:

Under the recently approved by-laws, three board seats are up for election: those held by Anthony Colucci, Joseph Cantalupo, Debbie Barton. There were no other nominations for those seats. Therefore, under the procedures established in the by-laws, the secretary, Mary Ann Giordano Wallis, cast votes for Anthony Colucci, Joseph Cantalupo and Debbie Barton.

Under the revised by-laws, the Board of Directors will meet in June to determine its officers.

Return to the Moose?

A poll was posted on Zoom to gauge the membership's interest in returning to in-person meetings in July at the Moose Lodge, now that the risk of Covid has dissipated. The poll asked members if the OBVTA should stay on Zoom; hold the meeting at the Moose Lodge only; or hold it at the Moose Lodge with an audio feed to members who do not feel comfortable meeting in person.

At the time of the vote, there were 52 members online. Two more joined during the vote and were invited to cast their ballots.

The vote tallies were: Stay on Zoom 27%
Moose Only 26%
Moose with an audio feed 48%

The membership voted to approve holding the July meeting at the Moose Lodge, and providing an audio feed for those who do not want to meet in person.

Paul said, under the current Covid guidelines, the Moose CAN host meetings, but we will have to find out if there are limitations re: capacity.

Anthony said members who are not fully comfortable meeting in person should wear a mask. Members who are not vaccinated are asked to wear a mask. He said the BOD will work with the Moose to make sure there is sufficient room for a safe meeting.

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Council Member Maria Maruca

Council President Kevin Geoghegan

Mayor Maurice "Mo" Hill

Lt. Gene Bachonski

- 1. Litter on Boardwalk:** Ms. Maruca said the recreation staff was in full operation as of this day and is addressing the litter problems reported by the OBVTA along the boardwalk
- 2. Surf Club:** The attempt by Toms River and the State of New Jersey to purchase three parcels of Surf Club property along the beach is awaiting further state approvals. Ms. Maruca said, on the acquisition side, there are two remaining issues to be worked out before the deal can be signed. Once it is signed, demolition of the remaining duplex house and club and parking lot rubble can begin. The town council already awarded a contract to a consultant, T&M Associates, to assess and prepare for the demolition. As part of the acquisition process, the town presented its plan to the state for usage of the land and Bob Chankalian, the town engineer, told her that 95% of what was in the plan was approved by one part of the state Department of Environmental Protection. The town's plan is now under review by another section of DEP and other state departments. Anthony asked how much of the plan (which he shared onscreen) that had been shown to OBVTA officers a few years ago is still alive. Ms. Maruca said most of it, but the state nixed a playground in the low area near the dunes because Blue Acres funding calls for maintaining properties in as natural a state as possible.
- 3. Rusty metal posts on boardwalk fencing:** The posts were inspected by township employees, and it was determined that a full replacement of the fencing is required. Money has been allocated in next year's township budget. She said the garbage cans are also fading and there is some rust, but there is still life in them.
- 4. Walkover repairs:** Ms. Maruca said the recreation department grounds staff and DPW responded with all hands on deck to repair and regrade the dune walkover that had been damaged in the Memorial Day weekend storm.

5. **Pickle Ball courts:** Work has begun on the pickle ball courts at the shell parking lot on Route 35 South. A portion of the lot was paved for the courts. The project is now on hold because the contractor is waiting for materials.
6. **Fire and emergency services:** Anthony reported on a meeting he and other board members had attended that was organized by residents of the north beaches to address fire and ambulance response times. The meeting was prompted by the slow response by the Toms River Fire Dept to a burning house where a 92-year-old man was trapped inside. The man was rescued by a neighbor. He recounted other recent incidents in which there were delays: In Ortley, a bicyclist was hit by a car and injured on First Avenue; people who responded to help said they waited a long time for paramedics to arrive and Lavallette Police, who responded to the scene, said they did not have jurisdiction to help. Further, there was an incident on the beach at around noon on a recent Saturday, and residents reported that the paramedics were stuck on the open bridge. Anthony said during the summer season, in particular, there is high risk of the bridge being open and other delays could back up traffic for 10 or 20 minutes, based on what he often sees on the town's information signs. Anthony repeated a request by the OBVTA for the township to sign an agreement with Tri-Boro ambulance in Seaside to make them the first responder. Mr. Geoghegan, who has a background in the Toms River ambulance services, said the first phone call a dispatcher makes after getting a call for emergency response on the barrier island is to the bridge crew to tell them to keep the bridge open. Further, he said Tri-Boro already responds to all calls if the Toms River paramedics are delayed. Paul said whatever system is in place, it's not working. He said the incident of the young man on the bike was widely reported on social media. Mr. Geoghegan said it was outrageous that the Lavallette police did not help the bicyclist. He also said there are dispatch and radio frequency issues and that he has appealed to state legislators to address them. Toni Tomarrazzo said she had been told that a major issue was that Toms River's pay for paramedics was substantially lower than for other municipalities, and that as a result there are too-few crews to service the community. Mayor Hill said contracts are being negotiated this year and the problem would be taken into consideration. Lt. Bachonski said that Toni was right – that the main issue was the pay rate for part-time ambulance workers. He said towns like Manchester and Brick were paying \$25-\$26/hour while Toms River is only paying \$16.50. He said this is a very pressing issue and it is being addressed. Toni said the issue should be addressed immediately, not wait for contract negotiations. She said the town has to give Chief Little the tools to perform. Ms. Maruca said it was priority No. 1 and the town was not waiting for the contract negotiations to resolve at the end of the year. "Rest assured, we'll get this done. Anthony repeated the call to make Tri-Boro the primary responder. He said communication also has to be fixed. And he said the issue needs to be addressed not just during the summer months but also for the entire year, given that the full-time population of Ortley continues to increase. Mike Wymbs said he supports the effort to make Tri-Boro the primary responder and that they have indicated that they would be interested in doing so.
7. **Curfew:** Lt. Bachonski was asked whether Toms River was thinking of imposing a curfew on young people, as had occurred in the North Beaches. He said Ortley has not really experienced the problem of young people congregating in large numbers, but if it became a problem the governor's Covid emergency order would allow the town to impose one. He said parents were split about the curfew in the North Beaches. "At this time, we don't see any need for that" in Ortley.
8. **Fire Volunteers:** Is the township looking for fire volunteers? Yes, always.

9. **Maintenance of area businesses:** A member asked whether the town could get the laundromat and Bakin' Bagels on Route 35 North to maintain their storefronts. Ms. Maruca said the town can only act if someone files a complaint and that the complaints cannot be anonymous.
10. **Route 35:** A member thanked Ms. Maruca for helping to get Route 35 North and South cleaned up by the state, which owns and maintains the roadways. She said this has been an ongoing issue and the state must be pushed to provide maintenance services.
11. **Sign:** A member asked if something could be done about the large LED sign owned by Seaside Heights on Route 35 North. The member said it shines very bright. Ms. Maruca said she would follow up.
12. **Beach Badge sales:** A member asked if sales were up. Ms. Maruca said they were ahead by \$170,000 from this time last year.
13. **Sustainable materials:** A member suggested that the town use alternative materials – ie, non-corrosive or rusting – when it replaces the trash cans and railings on the boardwalk. Mayor Hill said the township was looking into alternatives, but there is a cost factor.
14. **Litter in dunes:** A member asked who is responsible for cleaning litter that blows into dunes, as residents are not allowed in there. Ms. Maruca said she would ask Bob Chankalian, the town engineer.
15. **Parking meters:** A member asked if a rumor was true about the township installing parking meters along Ocean Avenue. Ms. Maruca said the town had not had a decision on that.
16. **Cable service:** A member inquired about the status of complaints against Altice. Ms. Maruca said she is still asking for specific incidents and complaints to make a case for better service. So far she has only received complaints about cost.
17. **Beach:** A member noted that the size of the beach shrank because of winter storms and was not restored during the recent renewal project. Paul said we had tried to get the Army Corps of Engineers to come in and build out the beaches but they have not declared that the recent storms caused “substantial damage” to Ortley’s beaches, a condition for emergency replenishment. They said they would wait until their normal replenishment cycle – next year – to address the shrinkage issue. Mayor Hill said one result of the storms is that the Army Corps now considers Ortley a “hot spot” which will garner it special attention.
18. **Parking:** A member asked if overnight parking could be prohibited on ocean blocks. Paul said it was an ongoing issue that should be taken up offline.
19. **Surfing:** A member asked if the beach at 2nd Avenue was designated a surfer and kayak section. Ms. Maruca said no. Mary Ann said it has traditionally been used by surfers and kayakers, as lifeguards usually are placed further south.
20. **Homeless shelter:** A member asked whether it was true that the Surf Club property would be turned into a homeless shelter. Paul said absolutely not. Green Acres money can only be used to preserve open land. Mayor Hill said it was part of a vicious political campaign and was wholly made up. Paul pointed out that Mary Ann has written an article about detecting misinformation, and her article is posted on the OBVTA website.
21. **Police:** Lt. Bachonski mentioned that a team of police officers on bikes and on foot have been dispatched to Ortley for the summer. He said there are also officers on ATVs who can respond more quickly to problems on the beach. He mentioned a golf outing for police fundraising and a junior camp being run by the TRPD for 8th graders this summer. He said the department is accepting applications for officers. A National Night Out will be held in Huddy Park on Aug. 3rd between 5 and 8 pm. The Friends of Ortley Beach will be hosting several kite nights over the summer that police will assist with. He said there is a helmet rewards program; kids who wear helmets might be rewarded with a coupon for a free ice cream. And he again warned members about the many phone scams going on and advised: Don't answer your phone.

Paul noted the continuing dangerous behavior of bicyclists riding the wrong way on Route 35 North. He also said the issue of traffic pulling out when cars are parked at Jerry's market on Route 35 North remains dangerous. Anthony said he noted recently that someone placed cones outside Jerry's so cars could not park too close to the corner. No one knew who placed the cones.

BOD COMMENTS

Debbie Barton said there are so many new members that many might not know about the kayak launch area opposite the docksider which is open to the public.

Cathy Crisafulli invited all members to attend the next meeting, so we could see each other, catch up.

Mike Wymbs said the corner near Jerry's remained dangerous and he disagreed with the township's decision to maintain the flow of traffic as it is.

MEMBER COMMENTS

One member noted that people are parking very close to the corner outside Mia's, and that it posed a safety hazard. Paul asked the police to intercede and nip the practice in the bud early in the season.

Anthony said a member had sent a message saying he never received notice of this meeting. Mary Ann urged members to regularly check their spam, given that the notice is sent out via bulk email. Anthony urged members to check the website: OBVTA@ortleybeach.org. The next meeting will be held on Saturday, July 17, at 9:30 a.m. at the Moose Lodge on Bay Boulevard.

A member asked whether coffee would be served at the in-person meeting at the Moose in July. Paul said that was still being worked.

A motion was made to adjourn (Anthony, Mary Ann). The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.