



# REHOBOTH BEACH HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION

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The Rehoboth Beach Homeowner's Association (RBHA) newsletter is an informational and educational tool published three times a year for its members and members of the community including City Officials.

We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Editors - Sharon Sherwood  
& Susan Gay

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RBHA is a 501c(3) tax exempt organization. Membership and donations to RBHA are tax deductible in accordance with applicable IRS regulations.



## Letter from the President

Gee, it seems just like yesterday that I was writing this letter for the Fall 2022 Newsletter. Hope each and everyone had a very happy and peaceful holiday season. Since that writing, we participated with our friends at Rehoboth Beach Main Street in Wreaths Across America, a program designed to honor our local veterans with wreaths on their gravesites. As always, a very moving event.

There may not have been many RBHA sponsored events during the winter months, but the RBHA Board has been busy. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, we published our inaugural edition of our City Update. Hopefully, you found the information helpful. As our Mission Statement tells us, we are here "to promote the common good and general welfare of the homeowners and residents of the City for their mutual enjoyment and benefit, to preserve the quality of life, to foster the spirit of community and to provide a forum for the full and free discussion of all matters of interest." We hope to bring this summary to you each month via Constant Contact and on our Website, [www.rbhome.org](http://www.rbhome.org).  
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## Rehoboth Beach Farmers' Market

Come to the opening of the Rehoboth Beach Farmers' Market on May 2, 2023. The

Market is held every Tuesday (rain or shine) in Grove Park from 10 a.m to 2 p.m. A non-profit, it is in its 17th year of operation. Here, you will find vendors selling seasonal produce, eggs, meats, fish, breads, pastry, coffee, jams and jellies, and so very much more. In addition to food there are also soaps, body lotions, candles, pottery, wooden cutting boards, imported cheeses, even pet food. You can purchase brunch, lunch or a snack to eat in the Park while you enjoy one of the many live musicians invited to entertain you as you shop. This Market has been recognized as one of the best in the State. Come and you will surely see why!

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Mark your calendars for our Annual Spring Meeting, Saturday, May 13th. Join us at the Rehoboth Beach Volunteer Fire Company, at 219 Rehoboth Avenue, for refreshments and guided tours. Our local government officials, including Mayor Mills and members of the Board of Commissioners will be there between 10 a.m. and noon to meet with you. Come for the food, enjoy a tour of the fire station and take the opportunity to meet your local officials. It is a great opportunity to learn more about our community.

Also, mark your calendar for the Candidates Forum, scheduled for Saturday, July 22<sup>nd</sup> at 10am. Be sure to watch for further information.

Recently, members of the RBHA Board met with our new City Manager, Laurence Christian; Evan Miller, Assistant City Manager, and Matt Janis, Building Inspector. Our main topic was code enforcement. Our meeting went well, and hopefully opened a line of communication that will lead to more meetings.

In closing, remember that Spring is the season when the landscape comes to life after a cold winter. Be sure to step out and enjoy all the wonders that the season has to bring.

*Pamela Baker*

President, RBHA



Spring Cleaning  
Visit the city's website for a list of acceptable  
items for bulk pickup.  
[www.cityofrehoboth.com](http://www.cityofrehoboth.com)



## Q & A with City Manager, Laurence Christian

City Manager, Laurence Christian began his Rehoboth Beach duties on the last working day of 2022. So far, 2023 has been a deep dive into learning about the Rehoboth Beach community, understanding city programs and processes, and preparing for the summer season.

Christian took a little time recently to answer a few questions from the Rehoboth Beach Homeowners' Association.

### What attracted you to Rehoboth Beach and the city manager position?

Why Rehoboth Beach can be summed up in one, perhaps unexpected, word: Pops. Pops is my wife's father, and he lives in Fenwick Island. We wanted to be closer to family and give our three children the opportunity to be close to their grandfather. Previously, we've always lived away from family because of my military service (23 years with the U.S. Army).

We've been coming to this area for 15 years. Rehoboth Beach is one of the nation's premier coastline communities. To experience – and now to work for – Rehoboth Beach and its residents is amazing.

I discovered my passion for communities while in the Army. As I worked with Army civil affairs teams to help re-establish local governments and communities in Iraq, I realized: "This is what I want to do – help people improve their quality of life on a daily basis."

### What are your top three goals this year?

Providing an answer to this question is a little complicated because so many goals are intertwined with one another. But I'll give it a shot:

1. Truly understanding the current systems and processes being utilized across various city departments and working with department heads to help refine those processes and align them with the Comprehensive Development Plan. Once we have a clear understanding of where any friction points are, we can address those, whether that be through technology, training, or something else. Of course, we'll be doing this while effectively managing the city's largest-ever capital improvements budget.
2. Getting to know the Rehoboth community and understanding stakeholders' needs as related to the Comprehensive Development Plan. We'll be working to better communicate with residents, business owners, and visitors in part through redevelopment of the city's website and deployment of community engagement software.
3. Being fully prepared so that we all have a fantastic summer season.

### What are the top budget challenges for the city over the next few years?

The city's aging infrastructure is one of our biggest budget challenges. We've been working already for several years to address this issue. We're a little more than midway through our wastewater treatment plant improvement program. Other large capital improvement projects are being considered by commissioners and, while they will come at a cost, they have the potential for truly enhancing quality of life and experience for our residents and visitors.



## Commissioner's Corner

By Commissioner Toni Sharp



### “Rehoboth’s Railroad” Rehoboth Beach History Lecture

**Thursday, May 11th  
from 7:15 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.**

Rehoboth's railroad tracks extended up Rehoboth Avenue from 1884 through 1940. In the summer, in addition to two regularly scheduled daily trains, small excursion trains came into town with day trippers. These excursion trains brought visitors, from the major cities, but also special trains would pick up folks along routes that stopped at a sequence of Sussex County towns.

**Call Paul Lovett at  
302-893-9391 to reserve your  
spot. Cost: \$25 Location:  
Sussex Room, Boardwalk  
Plaza**

All proceeds support the  
"Railroad Era Rehoboth  
Avenue" diorama."

Enjoy dinner in the beautiful  
Victoria's Restaurant (not  
included in lecture fee)  
Call Victoria's at 302-227-0615  
to make a 5:00 to 5:30 dinner  
reservation.

The job of a city commissioner is multi-faceted with duties and responsibilities all vying for importance with the most important component - listening to the concerns of our residents. Over the past few months the Board of Commissioners have heard your concerns related to lack of code/violation enforcement for noise, refuse/recycling collection, motorized scooters and skateboards, and sidewalks, loud and clear. The Board of Commissioners have relayed these concerns and a sense of urgency to our new City Manager, Laurence Christian, who took on his new role at the beginning of the year. He is currently leading the city staff through an assessment phase designed to determine the best means to address these enforcement concerns and other outstanding issues. In the interim, he has responded with a simple request - when you are at your wits end and have no patience left, the very thing he and the city staff need the most, is your patience!

Our city team is rapidly working toward improving the situation on many fronts. We are taking a hard look at the systems and processes in place in the building and licensing department and working to improve those processes. Perhaps the answer will be some combination of additional staffing, training, and a full realization of our technical abilities. But, we are not at the "solution" stage yet - that's going to take some time.

I want to assure you that we hear you - and we have taken notes on your enforcement concerns. And, you know when something is in my notes, I'm not about to overlook it! I also want to assure you that the city staff is doing a thorough assessment and working toward solutions, even if those solutions may not be able to be implemented as quickly as you or I would like. In addition to taking a hard look at several of our city departments over the next several months, it may be time for the city to take a holistic, comprehensive review of our city code. Throughout the years, our city code has been band-aided so much that part of the answer might be to review our code top to bottom and see what changes are needed.

Our City Charter confers the commissioners the authority "to be exercised by...the Commissioners in the interest of good government and the safety, health, and welfare of the City, its inhabitants and affairs". I take this charge very seriously and want to reassure you that I will exercise my patience but will maintain vigilance to ensure these issues are addressed.



**By Elise Burns**

In mid-February, the Rehoboth Beach Library Board of Trustees announced that the library would be moving out of its Rehoboth Beach location. The desire to find a new home outside of the City limits came up during a recent City budget

meeting where the library made its annual request for City funding. For FY 23/24, the library is seeking \$75,000 to help fund the library's personnel costs for the upcoming year.

The Library is basing this decision on a 2019 needs study that showed 90% of the library users live more than two miles from the current location. According to a January 30 resolution approved by the Board of Trustees, the library's service area encompasses 32 square miles and about 16,000 people. This resolution states the Board's desire to seek a minimum 6 acre parcel of land within its service area to construct a new library to serve the needs of the County's growing population. The resolution also calls for a "satellite" facility to remain in downtown Rehoboth.

The RBHA Board of Directors submitted a letter to the Commissioners prior to their March 6<sup>th</sup> budget discussion. In the letter, RBHA expressed its dismay and disappointment in the Library Board's decision to leave its downtown location and urged the Commissioners to obtain a clear understanding of the details of a "library presence" in the City before committing to the \$75,000 contribution to the library.

At that meeting, Library Board VP, Kay Wheatley and Secretary, Tucker Kokojohn stated that the Board had recently signed a letter of intent to purchase a 5 acre parcel off Warrington Road across from the new Beebe Healthcare Surgical Center. In addition, they stated they had recently learned that deed restrictions on the City property donated to the library in 1993 require the Library Board to keep the portion of the land closest to Summer House as a library. Of course, details have not been hammered out, but Wheatley confirmed that a library will continue to operate out of that space. Commissioner Jay Legree also requested a Task Force be formed so that interested parties could be included in further discussions on future funding options and plans for the satellite library. There was also agreement to appoint a Commissioner liaison to the Board of Trustees. Hearing those guarantees, the Commissioners seemed satisfied that the Board of Trustees will live up to their commitments and moved to include the library's \$75,000 request in the FY23/24 budget.

The RBHA Board will continue to monitor the library move and provide updates as needed.



# Stormwater Utility Task Force Update - April 2023

By Commissioner Jay Lagree

The Stormwater Task Force met in February to review the draft report developed by AECOM, the city's consultant. The Task Force members were insistent that a stormwater utility not be formed and financed until the completion of a stormwater management plan. That plan must also include a management plan for Silver Lake and Lake Gerar. The latest FY 23/24 City budget includes monies for the development of a stormwater plan and it is the hope of Chair Jay Lagree that the plan is completed within the next year before a utility is created and fee is implemented.



The Task Force is recommending that the City implement a stormwater utility to pay for stormwater maintenance and related projects. This new stormwater fee should cover 100% of expenses including capital and operations and maintenance. Included in the report are three fee structure options which are: 1) funding all capital and operations and maintenance expenses through a \$423 annual fee; 2) funding only operations and maintenance expenses through a \$225 annual fee which would require identifying other sources of revenue for capital expenses; and, 3) funding only 61% of the capital expenses and

operations and maintenance through a \$251 annual fee and covering the remaining costs with the General Fund. In addition, the Task Force urged the staff to review alternative sources of funding including rental fees, transfer fees, parking fees along with grants and loans.

**The draft report will be presented to the Commissioners at a special meeting on April 19 at 9 am. Members of the public are welcome to attend.** The City is also developing a communications plan which will provide numerous avenues to create general awareness about the stormwater management plan and utility and provide opportunities for property owners to discuss their thoughts and concerns.



## City Issues



### Rehoboth Beach Arts Festival at Grove Park

Saturday, May 20th  
from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

The Rehoboth Art League is proud to partner with the City of Rehoboth Beach to present this new event as another way to entice creative minds to coastal Delaware. Stop by and support regional artists while taking in the spring beauty of Rehoboth Beach.



A reminder to all members that you can sign up for the city's digital newsletter, **Lines in the Sand**, which is published approximately twice a month, at <https://www.cityofrehoboth.com/lines-sand>. You can also sign up for **Rehoboth Beach Beacon alerts**, which are texts and emails that go out when something isn't as it should be. Do this by texting REHOBCH to 888777 or via this webpage: <https://www.cityofrehoboth.com/rehoboth-beach-beacon-alerts>.

The RBHA Board of Directors will, from time to time, take a position on a matter that it believes to be a critical area of interest for our members including, but not limited to, Code changes, Code enforcement, development and quality of life issues.

The RBHA Board of Directors has adopted an ongoing monthly agenda item to review and discuss major topics coming before City boards and commissions, in particular the Board of Commissioners, Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment, and the Stormwater Task Force. As the City takes on other major project areas that the RBHA Board of Directors believes should be followed on behalf of our members, those project areas will be added to our ongoing topics. Our members can look forward to receiving periodic updates from the RBHA Board of Directors through email outreach via Constant Contact as well as updating information on the RBHA website, [www.rbhome.org](http://www.rbhome.org). Examples of topics or issues the directors are monitoring on your behalf include, but are not limited to, the following.

### Board of Commissioners

1. Proposal to allow live music and loudspeakers on dining patios. Following discussion at a public meeting, the Board of Commissioners did not move this discussion forward and is no longer an active consideration.
2. Demolitions: proposed Code change. Process and procedures for Demolition Permits was updated by the City in response to concerns regarding the process leading to the demolition of the Rehoboth Avenue frontage of the former Sandcastle Hotel.
3. Basement Heights: proposed Code change. Discussion continues regarding alignment of City Code with the International Building Code. Further consideration is needed regarding how to address basements that have been converted to living space without the required permits or approvals.
4. Board of Adjustment Variances: proposed Code change. The Commissioners are considering increasing the length of time that a variance remains valid in recognition of the length of time needed for a complete project review and possible approval by the Planning Commission. (continued on pg. 9)

# Hazards of Ivy in Your Yard

By Susan Gay

## Do you have English Ivy in your yard?

The botanical name is Hedera Helix. Many homeowners use it as ground cover because it looks pretty and is easy to maintain. But the ivy causes a number of problems, for people, animals and trees. It is now banned for sale in Delaware as well as other states as a harmful invasive plant.



English ivy leaves and berries are toxic to humans and the sap can irritate skin. The ASPCA warns that it is also toxic to dogs and cats, causing vomiting, hyper-salivation and abdominal pain.

Ivy causes even more trouble when it begins to climb on vertical surfaces. It digs its roots into walls, mortar and fences and climbs up tree trunks, literally strangling them. On the ground, it can also smother any saplings or plants in its way.

## So, how do you get rid of English ivy from your yard or trees?

For safety, experts recommend wearing gloves, long sleeve tops, long pants, socks, work shoes, and eye protection. For tools, depending on whether you are tackling a yard or tree, you may need pruners, loppers, a long flathead screwdriver, an ax or hand saw and a hard rake.

**Do's and Don'ts:** For lawn English Ivy ground cover that has matted, it is recommended that you **Do** "loosen" the Ivy with a hard rake. "English ivy on the ground is usually easier to pull up after rains have softened the soil. If pulling is done during the winter any perennials in these beds are less apt to be damaged while they are dormant. The ivy stems are strong and not deeply rooted; therefore, long sections can be pulled up at a time." **Don't** just cut back the ivy, you need to pull up the roots as much as you can. **Do** put all the Ivy removed in bags and leave none in your yard or the Ivy will return with a vengeance.

To remove English Ivy from a Tree, **Do** cut the vines at chest level using pruners, making about a 4 foot ring around the tree. If needed, use a long flathead screwdriver to loosen the vines from the bark. **Don't** use a saw or ax that may damage the bark on the tree. Once the vines are cut, **Do** pull those down to the base of the tree and follow the vines on the ground, cutting them using loppers or an ax or saw, creating a 2 to 3 foot perimeter around the base of the tree. The severed Ivy left on the tree will die and eventually fall off. Again, **Do** bag all the removed Ivy.

Many thanks for Rehoboth Beach resident Jennifer Duncan for bringing this important issue to the City's Tree & Green Infrastructure Committee. At our last few meetings, we have been discussing ways to disseminate this information to homeowners, thus this article for RBHA members. Looking for alternative plants? City Arborist Liz Lingo recommends Plants for a Livable Delaware, from the University of Delaware. <https://www.udel.edu/academics/colleges/canr/cooperative-extension/fact-sheets/plants-for-a-livable-delaware/>





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## Planning Commission

1. Beachwalk Development. The developer has exhausted all state and federal court options that may have been available to them to pursue their efforts to overturn the decision of the Board of Commissioners regarding the project proposal. The developer will need to start at square one with any new proposal for the former shopping center property on Route 1.
2. Bellhaven Hotel. The developer has been offered the opportunity to complete an Initial Site Plan Review, likely at the regular April meeting of the Planning Commission.
3. 330 Rehoboth Avenue hotel proposal. The developer filed suit against the City for its decision to not allow rezoning of the residential portion of the parcel to commercial zoning. There is no additional information as of our print deadline.
4. Atlantic Crown Hotel proposal. A Concept Review was conducted before the Planning Commission on February 10, 2023. The next step in the process will be a Site Plan Review. The date for this step has not been published as of our print deadline.
5. Hotel Parking. The Planning Commission has forwarded a proposal to the Board of Commissioners that would simplify the current Code requirements as well as provide for a modest increase in the number of parking spaces required on a per-room basis. Residential parking is a topic for future discussion.

## Board of Adjustment

The developers (Grotto Pizza and others) of a new hotel at One Rehoboth Avenue have requested a variance from the Board of Adjustments (BOA) for an increase in the floor-area ratio (FAR) above the 2.0 level specified in the building code. The general position of the RBHA is to support development of all types within the limits of the building code. Therefore, in response to the variance request, the RBHA Board issued a letter to the BOA recommending a variance not be granted. Some of the reasons cited for not approving the variance request include:

The generous city building code which includes:

- No required setbacks – front, side or rear,
- No required green/open space,
- No special regulations for sensitive-area development,
- No architectural restrictions, and
- A 42-foot height limit.

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Moreover, the letter pointed out that the hotel project could readily go forward without the variance but the developers would be required to compromise on the number of rooms or having balconies and a swimming pool. Finally, it was noted that variances are to be granted for the relief of hardships with good and sufficient cause that deal solely with the physical characteristics of the property. The requested variance is clearly financially driven rather than difficulties imposed by the building code.

### Code Enforcement

Members of the RBHA Board appeared before the Mayor and Commissioners on December 16 to raise concerns related to the apparent lack of code enforcement in a number of areas. Specifically, the issues covered:

Noise – residential rental property noise, noise from commercial areas particularly restaurants and noise from construction sites

Trash cans and yard waste – particularly trash/recycling/yard waste cans that are left curbside for days or weeks...well beyond the timing specified in the city code

Motorized scooters & skateboards – There is clearly an increase in the use of electric (stand on) scooters, however both the State of Delaware and the City of Rehoboth prohibit the use of motorized scooters or skateboards on any public property (roads, sidewalks, highways, etc.)

Broken sidewalks – Many sidewalks are sufficiently damaged by tree roots, construction or otherwise to the point that people prefer walking and running in the street (also a code violation). Property owners are responsible for the upkeep of sidewalks on their property.

Obstructing sidewalks – Sidewalks in commercial areas are being obstructed in a variety of ways to the point of making passage difficult for pedestrians. Similarly, there are numerous cases of people parking across sidewalks which forces pedestrians with and without mobility issues into the streets.

### RBHA Meeting with City Manager

Pam Baker, RBHA President, John Dewey, Secretary, and Clif Hilderley, Board Member, had the Association's first meeting with new City Manager, Laurence Christian on March 31, 2023. Also in attendance was Evan Miller, Assistant City Manager, and Matt Janis, Building Inspector. Code enforcement both broadly and specifically was the topic of discussion.

Mr. Christian acknowledged that past code enforcement had been lacking in many ways and that he recognized the critical need to correct that situation. He explained that numerous efforts

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had already been undertaken to broadly increase code enforcement. These include more regular inspections throughout the City by himself and by his direct reports as well as correcting long-ignored permit reviews and inspections. Moreover, he and his staff are working on a comprehensive program to identify all of the City's code enforcement requirements as well as the plans and processes needed to meet those requirements.

Pam Baker stated that the RBHA desired to have a close and ongoing relationship with the City Manager's office to collaboratively work to identify and develop workable solutions to code enforcement for the benefit of all those living, working and visiting the City. Mr. Christian was very receptive to the offer and described numerous ways he envisioned support from the RBHA that could aid in enforcement improvement. News about ongoing efforts with the City Manager's office will continue to be communicated to the membership.



## April & May Rehoboth Beach Calendar of Events



**Saturday, April 22, 10 am - 2 pm** - Rehoboth Beach Police Department will participate in the National Prescription Drug Take Back initiative.

**Saturday, April 22, 8 am - 2 pm** - Residents may bring household hazardous waste to the Rehoboth Elementary School, 500 Stockley Street, for free, safe disposal. Visit the Delaware Solid Waste Authority website for a full list of accepted items.

**Saturday, April 22, 9 am** - City of Rehoboth Beach Annual Auction, Convention Center

**Friday, April 28, 6:30 pm** on the Boardwalk - PAWS for People's Doodle Parade

**April 27 - 30** - CAMP Rehoboth Women's Fest

**Saturday, April 29, 1 pm - 4 pm** - Rehoboth Beach Gumbo Crawl

**May 5 - 7, 10 am - 8 pm daily** - Downtown Rehoboth 40th Annual Spring Sidewalk Sale

**May 13 & 14, 8 am - 6 pm** on the beach - First Rites of Summer Volleyball Tournament

**Saturday, May 13, 10 am - Noon** - RBHA Annual Spring Mtg. & RB Fire Hall Tour

**Friday, May 26** - kicks off the Rehoboth Beach Bandstand Summer Concert Series. To see the full summer concert schedule go to [www.rehobothbandstand.com](http://www.rehobothbandstand.com)

**May 29 - Sept. 4, 5 pm - 9 pm, Monday & Friday** - West Side Creative Market

**Rehoboth Beach  
Homeowners' Association  
P.O. Box 41  
Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971**

April 18, 2023



## 2023 Board Meetings

All board meetings are open to the public. The meetings are held in the Rehoboth Beach Main Street office conference room, at Grove Park, but are also available via Zoom, if requested at least one week in advance.

Saturday, January 7 at 9 a.m.

Saturday, February 11 at 9 a.m.

Saturday, March 11 at 9 a.m.

Saturday, April 15 at 9 a.m.

Saturday, May 13 at noon, following Spring Mtg.

Friday, June 9 at 9 a.m. (via Zoom)

Friday, July 21 at 9 a.m. (via Zoom)

Friday, August 11 at 9 a.m. (via Zoom)

Saturday, Sept. 23, following the Fall Picnic

Saturday, October 21, following the Annual Mtg.

Saturday, November 11 at 9 a.m.

## 2023 RBHA Special Events

### **Annual Spring Meeting**

Saturday, May 13 10 a.m. - Noon  
Rehoboth Beach Fire Hall

### **Candidate Forum**

Saturday, July 22 at 10 a.m.  
Rehoboth Beach Fire Hall

### **Annual Picnic in Grove Park**

Saturday, September 23 at 11:30 a.m.

### **Annual Fall Meeting**

Saturday, October 21 at 10 a.m.  
Rehoboth Beach Fire Hall