



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.

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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.



Funland

Dick Knapp Photo

Letter from the President

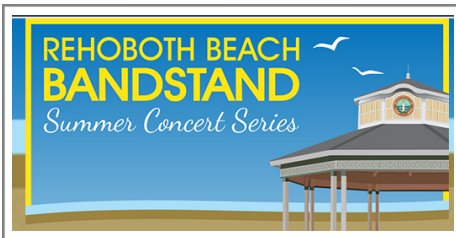
Normally, during these “dog days of summer” we would have held a Candidates Forum to introduce those seeking office. However, Rehoboth did not hold an election this month. One person for each open position petitioned for election and the Board of Commissioners certified the three petitions on June 16th. Stanley A. Mills, Jr. petitioned for Mayor, J. Patrick Gossett and Donald G. Preston, Jr. petitioned for the two open Commissioner positions. We will introduce the new and returning petitioners to you in this newsletter. We’d also like to thank retiring Commissioner Jay Lagree for his years of dedication and tireless work on the Board of Commissioners. We know you are stepping down but do not believe you are stepping too far away from the issues that face our city. Thank you, Commissioner Lagree, for your commitment, it has been greatly appreciated.

We hope that our members will spend time working their way through this newsletter. It is our goal to keep our membership informed of issues that are occurring within Rehoboth Beach. (continued on pg. 2)



Rehoboth Beach Farmers' Market

The market is held every Tuesday (rain or shine) in Grove Park from 10 am to 2 pm May 2 - Oct 31



Rehoboth Beach Bandstand Summer Concert Series

Sept. 1 @ 8 pm - The Fabulous Hubcaps

Sept. 2 @ 8 pm - Still Surfin'



Aug. 31 @ 9 am - Walking Tour Bandstand at the Boardwalk

Sept. 4 @ 5:30 pm - Piping Out on the Boardwalk

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In addition to our newsletters we have routinely been publishing City Issue Updates both on our website and through Constant Contact. Also, we have worked to publish an overview of our monthly board meetings. We hope that this type of communication will help you to make informed decisions about city issues. In addition, it is your role as a member to tell us when and how you want us to speak up as an organization. To get your feedback, we are working toward using short surveys on key issues. We recently asked you for your feedback on the possible relocation of the Rehoboth Beach Library. We then published our findings and forwarded the information to the Library Task Force. I hope you participated and will continue to keep an eye open for additional surveys. The information gathered from your feedback is valuable and will allow us to better work on your behalf.

Please also take the time now to mark your calendars for our favorite **Annual Fall Picnic, Saturday, September 23, in Grove Park.** Yes, it is a Saturday this year and we are looking forward to seeing you there!

Stay cool,

Pamela Baker

President, RBHA

Sign up for Beacon Alerts

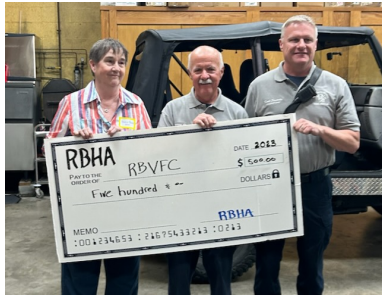
These text and email notices will inform you of road closures, bridge maintenance, weather cancelations, and other important notices.

TEXT

REHOBCH to 888777



City Issues



RBHA Spring Meeting - Success!

RBHA joined the Rehoboth Beach Fire Department on May 13th for our Spring Meeting. We were treated to a fantastic tour of the fire department and introduced to an interesting array of equipment as well as the committed staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to serve our community. RBHA presented the department a check for \$500.



The City of Rehoboth Beach launched a new digital engagement platform on August 25th. The platform is designed to allow residents and other stakeholders to learn more about city projects. In order to interact with the platform users will have to register. Registered users will be permitted to provide comment, take surveys and share parking/traffic concerns.

Go to:

reachout.cityofrehoboth.com

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 following is a summary of any official RBHA Board of Directors correspondence to City officials as well as ongoing topics within the city that the Board is continuing to monitor on behalf of our general membership.

RBHA Board of Directors Correspondence:

1. **Subject: Stormwater Task Force. Board Position Statement May 2, 2023**

Elise Burns, Board Member, participated on the Stormwater Task Force and kept the RBHA directors up-to-date on progress of the task force. The Board of Directors issued a position statement by letter to Mayor Mills and the Commissioners indicating “that it is premature to form a utility with accompanying fees before a stormwater management plan has been fully developed and publicly vetted”. The work of the Task Force and discussions by the Board of Commissioners are ongoing and we will continue to follow this issue.

2. **Subject: Library Survey Data. Letter dated July 10, 2023**

In response to the ongoing discussion about the library's plans to build a larger library outside of the city limits of Rehoboth Beach, the RBHA polled its 750+ membership on their interest in keeping a library presence in Rehoboth. We had a high level of response to our survey - almost 20% of our members responded to the survey. Of that 20%, an overwhelming percentage indicated that they favor a library remaining in town. RBHA was contacted by the leadership of the Country Club Estates Property Owners Association (CCEPOA) to determine if the survey could be shared with their members, which we were pleased to be able to do. Country Club Estates is the City of Rehoboth neighborhood roughly bordered by Scarborough Avenue, Scarborough Village (not included), State Road, and Silver Lake.

The survey also asked members what types of services they would like to see in the library and not surprisingly, respondents want it all from the menu of services. Respondents would like to browse new books and pick-up and return books and media.

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City Issues

Continued from pg. 3

Respondents would also like to have child and adult programming, access to the internet/computer workstations, the opportunity to read newspapers and magazines, and rooms for small meetings, classes, etc.

Two charts were attached to the letter to the Library Task Force separating RBHA member data from Country Club Estates Property Owners Association data. The charts included bar graphs showing response data for the survey questions. We emphasized that this was a non-scientific survey that shows the results of an informal preference assessment. With that said, our findings show that our respondents would like to see an in-town physical library with a broad range of associated library services. Steve Curson continues to represent RBHA on the Library Task Force. Please go to rbhome.org for his update.

3. Subject: Basement Heights. Email dated July 21, 2023

It came to the attention of the Board of Directors that the Board of Commissioners had scheduled a Public Hearing on the matter of code changes regarding basement heights. The proposed code changes were intended to address multiple issues which are described elsewhere in this newsletter edition. At the authorization of the Board of Directors, an email was sent to the Board of Commissioners requesting that any action be deferred pending an opportunity for our members to study and respond to the proposals. The Board of Commissioners voted against moving forward with the proposed revisions at that time.

City Issues We Are Following:

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 (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

Backflow Prevention Devices (BPDs). This topic was introduced in a recent Board of Commissioners meeting. These devices prevent contaminated water from entering the City's water supply system and are required in certain installations by State regulations and City Code. What is new is a state regulation that requires inspection of BPDs in "high risk" applications including, but not limited to, home irrigation systems, home fire suppression systems, home pools and spas, and several commercial applications.

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City Issues

Continued from pg. 4

The State requires that municipalities have inspection plans in place, and the deadline for the City of Rehoboth is February, 2024. Annual inspections will be required and must be completed by a plumber who has been certified for this purpose. Cost to the homeowner for this inspection is anticipated to be about \$100.00. Not all residential water customers will be affected. The City is developing a list of residential water customers who meet the criteria for the “high risk” category and those households will be notified by the City.

Basement Heights. The Board of Commissioners declined to move forward with a proposed revision to City Code at the July 21, 2023, meeting. RBHA expects that discussion will continue as important issues remain unresolved and we will continue to follow this topic.

Cannabis. The Board of Commissioners has met in workshop sessions to discuss possible changes to City Code to mirror State of Delaware restrictions on cannabis consumption in public spaces by considering modifications to our existing Code regarding smoking in public spaces. The Board of Commissioners is also considering legislation to prohibit the growing or manufacturing of cannabis or cannabis products, as well as retail sales of same within City limits. Note: Legislation was approved by the Board of Commissioners on August 18th.

Parking. The Board of Commissioners did approve some minor modifications to Code regarding commercial parking. There were adjustments in language regarding hotel parking, but no net increase in hotel parking requirements. Also, parts of the Code regarding commercial parking were revised to eliminate ambiguities and other minor adjustments. The Board of Commissioners had previously asked the Planning Commission to develop proposals regarding hotel parking and residential parking. The Planning Commission proposal to increase the minimum requirements for hotel parking, as previously noted, was rejected. RBHA anticipates that discussions regarding residential parking will occur in the near future and we will follow those developments.

Tree Code. After years of work including input from all stakeholder groups, the City Tree Code has been significantly revised. Included in the revised Code are recommendations regarding the use of native tree species as well as a requirement for at least one canopy tree as part of the three-tree residential lot tree plan. The replacement of dead or diseased trees has been simplified and the size requirements for replacement trees has been significantly reduced, resulting in costs savings for homeowners.

Planning Commission

330 Rehoboth Avenue Hotel Proposal. The City had rejected the developers’ request to rezone a R-1 parcel that is part of the property to C-3 some months ago. The developer filed suit as a result. There is no information regarding the status of the court case at this time. Updates will be provided to our members as new information becomes available.

Atlantic Crowne Hotel Proposal. This proposed hotel would be located in the beach block of Baltimore Avenue across from The Admiral Hotel. The developer has completed the Project Concept Review, which is a more informal review and discussion of the project “first draft” plan. The next step will be a formal Site Plan Review before the Planning Commission, which has not been scheduled as of our print deadline.



Commissioner's Corner

By Commissioner Bunky Markert

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Rehoboth Beach Homeowners. I want to bring you up to date on the discussions and meetings that have taken place since we learned, in late January, that the Board of the Rehoboth Beach Public Library (RBPL) had decided

to expand and seek land for the construction of a new library outside the city of Rehoboth Beach in order to serve their designated service area. You may recall the surprise when this erupted, raising many questions, most importantly whether the library would remain in the city. It is worth noting that the library has served our community for about 100 years, in some capacity.

I will not dwell on the public relations debacle this became. The Board had their reasons to be secretive while in the process of real estate negotiations, but it left a level of distrust that the Board has recognized and has taken steps to repair. First, they organized a Task Force of 29 people from the greater community, half residing more closely to the city of Rehoboth, and the remainder representing the RBPL board plus people situated closer to the location of the site they have since acquired on Warrington Road off Rt. 24. The group includes, among others, the city's library liaison, Commissioner Patrick Gossett, RBHA Treasurer Steve Curson, Andrea Hoffman, and myself. We have had five Task Force meetings thus far, most recently on July 26th. We have learned about how the library is funded, operated, and staffed, the programs that are offered, the seasonal variations of the schedule, and the condition of the current facility completed in 2000 (it needs work). We listened to a presentation by the Lewes library board about building at a new location. Due to the timetable of the funding currently available to the RBPL and the outcry from the community, the RBPL is committed to having a branch in Rehoboth and has directed the focus of the Task Force's attention solely to its needs. The Library Board has yet to make any decisions about the facility and services that will remain in the City, but the Task Force has now completed a survey of "wants and needs", (RBHA members were polled and included in the discussion), which were later prioritized. From this effort the library's architects have been tasked to develop a space and adjacency plan to determine how the existing space could function. We expect this will provide us with options for renovating all or part of the current Rehoboth Beach library building, and guide the discussion in determining the size, scope, and cost of renovations. The anticipated time for completion of this phase is September, at which time the Task Force will have a better grasp of what the possibilities are.

Also, Commissioner Gossett and I were invited to attend the RBPL board meeting on July 11, and to their meetings in the future, which is another step towards transparency and improving communication with the city.

I urge all RBHA members to continue their involvement in this process. I feel that having a library as a resource and a social meeting place is a vital ingredient in any community. Ours has a long history and it needs to continue to enrich us. The Mayor and Commissioners welcome your input as does the Board of the library.



Basement Proposal Rejected

The Board of Commissioners met on July 21, 2023 to consider a revision to City Code regarding basements. The proposal failed to get the support of the commission, with one member voting in favor and six against.

The Assistant Building Inspector has been educating the Board of Commissioners over the last few months regarding discrepancies between our local City building codes and International Building Code (IBC). Specifically, City Code differs from IBC in that our current code limits basement height such that “the vertical measurement from the basement floor to the bottom of the first-floor floor joists does not exceed 6 ½ feet...”. IBC allows for basement heights of 6’8”, this is not just a two-inch difference since the IBC uses a different method to measure basement height. The proposed Code revision would have moved our Code to match IBC at 6’8”.

While two inches may not seem like much, a closer look shows that this change may have led to unintended consequences. There is a phenomenon in town called the Rehoboth Basement. Homes are built to code, then, after the Building Inspector completes a final inspection and a Certificate of Occupancy is issued, the basement is remodeled without anyone obtaining a building permit. This leads to homes that exceed the City’s Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and square footage limits, as well as potentially hazardous situations. Basements with unpermitted living, bathing, recreation and sleeping areas may lack the otherwise required human safety requirements of smoke and fire detection and safe escape.

The proposed revision included language that would have not only changed the maximum height of the basement ceiling, but, more importantly, how that height would be measured. The proposal included measuring the basement height from “the basement floor to the (basement) ceiling”. This could have led to a scenario of a new construction home with an eight foot distance between the basement floor and the first-floor floor joists, with a code-compliant drop ceiling with tiles set at the legally specified 6’8”. (continued on page 8)

Code Enforcement

City of Rehoboth Beach Staff Spotlight



Howard Rothstein

is the city’s code enforcement officer.

Rothstein “concedes that much of the city’s code enforcement is reactive and in response to complaints received.” In an attempt to be more proactive the city is working to hire a second code enforcement officer. Rothstein brings a 24 year career with the U.S. Air Force to the position and notes that with more than 50 chapters of city code governing residents, rental properties, businesses, etc., he believes that “reasonableness and civility go a long way toward resolving issues.”

**Email code
concerns to:**

**[code.enforcement@
cityofrehoboth.com](mailto:code.enforcement@cityofrehoboth.com)**

Basement Proposal Rejected continued from pg. 7

Following city inspection and the awarding of a Certificate of Occupancy, the owner could then remove the drop ceiling and have a much higher basement height than intended by the proposed Code change.

The Board of Directors had been following the conversation during City meetings regarding the possibility of code changes to bring us into alignment with IBC. When the board became aware that the proposed Code revisions had in fact been scheduled for a Board of Commissioners Hearing, the RBHA Board provided a written request that any action on the proposed revisions be delayed pending an opportunity for our membership to analyze and respond to the proposal. While this most recent proposal failed, the RBHA Board of Directors does anticipate that there will be further discussions between the Office of the Building Inspector and the City. Our board members will monitor the public meetings on proposed Code revisions and welcome your input as information becomes available.

Stormwater Utility Task Force Update

In March, the Commissioners agreed to allocate funds for the development of a stormwater management plan. The stormwater management plan was recommended by the Stormwater Task Force as a necessary first step prior to implementing a stormwater utility. This plan would prioritize the projects that the City needs to undertake to address the City's stormwater infrastructure needs. The consultant, GHD has been hired to develop a first draft of the stormwater management plan by the end of the year.

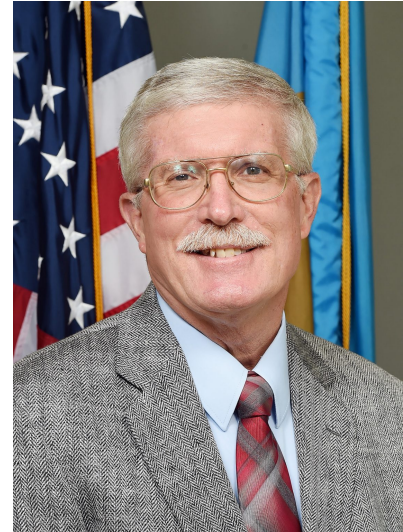
Staff has also begun work on developing an ordinance on permeable surface alternatives for commercial and residential properties. These types of surfaces would take the place of impermeable surfaces such as asphalt and concrete, that don't allow stormwater to soak into the ground.

At a Commissioners' special meeting on April 19, the Board agreed to move forward on investigating the implementation of the stormwater utility along with the eventual adoption of the utility.

City staff have deferred a decision on hiring a consultant to implement the stormwater utility until the fiscal year 2025 budget discussions at the beginning of next year. RBHA will continue to monitor the development of the stormwater management plan and provide updates.

Interview with Mayor Stan Mills

By Susan Gay



Why did you decide to run again?

I received feedback from constituents and commissioner colleagues supporting my continuation as Mayor. I believe I am in the best position to provide continued leadership in the mayoral role. I have a continued desire to have a vote in maintaining RB as an attractive destination for residents, property owners, business owners and visitors and a desire to continue representing those constituencies. I would also like to stay onboard to complete ongoing projects like the Rehoboth Beach Patrol/Public Restroom facility on the boardwalk at Baltimore Avenue, implementation of the Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP), wastewater improvements and more.

I would like to preface before responding to your next question, that the city's recently adopted CDP is a well thought-out planning guide articulating future visions for the city. Many of my thoughts are gleaned from the CDP. I am proud of the fact that, in my administration, a method for prioritizing the CDP action items was developed for the first time. We are well underway addressing those priority CDP action items.

What are the 3 most important issues you plan to address during your tenure?

a) **Communications.** It is critical to have an educated constituency and then receive feedback from them so we can make well informed decisions. Since serving my first term 15 years ago I have been a champion of two-way communication between the city and our constituencies, including conferring with the city secretary on the creation of a dedicated portal for archiving agendas, minutes, other documents as well as video recordings of our meetings.

But we can do more and we continue to seek to improve two-way communications between the city, residents, businesses and visitors. An upgrade to our city website is underway. We have email bulletins outgoing to constituents via "Lines in the Sand." We are preparing to roll out "Reach Out Rehoboth" – a new program designed to inform and solicit feedback on important issues - much more powerful than a simple survey program.

b) **Review of codes** and seeking to amend codes for clarity and to conform to the visions of the CDP, including building codes – houses, basements, fencing; zoning codes which regulate uses of properties so we can maintain our charm and character and maintain our draw to future generations of residents, business persons and visitors; site plan criteria; some specifics in the CDP: Define impervious and consider any new regulations.

c) **All things/everything water.** There are many facets to address, including backflow valves to maintain healthy, pure potable water supply; lead & copper improvements inventory to better protect children and communities from risks related to lead exposure in drinking water; implementing a new tree code and promoting a healthy and expanding tree canopy, recognizing value of trees for absorbing water and more beneficial impacts; managing stormwater; and lakes management. In addition, we must address resiliency by addressing flooding impacts, identifying vulnerability to climate change and undertake a climate change/sea level rise vulnerability assessment and mitigation plan for the city.

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Interview with Mayor Stan Mills (continued from pg. 9)

What are the most pressing budget issues facing the city in the next 5 years?

Maintaining a balanced budget while providing the highest of standards and best services to all of our constituencies is my main goal. We must provide sufficient funding for maintenance of all of our facilities and infrastructure, including a healthy maintenance program for all new projects. We must maintain annual capital improvement projects (CIP)– annual street paving, public sidewalk ADA upgrades.

We also need to anticipate funding sources for larger CIP projects – for example, the ongoing wastewater treatment plant improvements projects which will likely require increases in water/sewer fees.

At the same time, we must exercise frugality in projects to minimize need to increase property taxes while recognizing that the users need to pay their appropriate share for what they consume (wastewater treatment, beach raking, public restroom construction and maintenance)

We will also continue to seek grant monies especially for the larger projects.

What are the greatest environmental challenges facing the city now and in the next 5 years?

Lake health and stormwater runoff - We need to focus on reduction of pollution by controlling runoff of water from streets, lawns, canal and other waterbodies. Also, we need to initiate Lake Gerar accretion project.

Stormwater - We need to continue the investigation of how to establish and identify benefits of a stormwater utility.

Trees - We have to continue to seek protections through the newly adopted tree code. Act on a desire to expand the tree canopy. Increase education to promote the benefits of trees and provide more incentives, like free tree giveaways, and direct planting. We can move forward with preparations of a community forest plan and continue to promote our commemorative tree program.

What issues regarding city planning and growth should the city be most concerned about in the next 5-10 years?

My overall goal is to take action to maintain RB as an attractive destination for residents, property owners, business owners and visitors well into the future.

- 1) Ensure adequate infrastructure for growth in visitation through the budget and CIP. Provide safe and adequate public utility services: a) WWTF infrastructure – plant overall phases 3B and 4, rebuild State Road pumping station, sewer lines. b) Water lines – backflow connections. c) New drinking water well #6. d) Annual paving program
- 2) Address perception of inadequacy of parking specifically in the downtown commercial areas and also how to address traffic congestion within the city and congestion caused by challenges getting into and out of the city. A Parking and Traffic study is already underway.
- 3) Address transformation of the downtown commercial area via tear-downs with new construction in its place. a) Review zoning codes that regulate land use for the purpose of seeking to clarify codes removing any ambiguities, with our CDP as a guide. b) Advance streetscape improvements in the seven commercial blocks surrounding Rehoboth Avenue c) Implement first phase of a new combined Rehoboth Beach Patrol (RBP)/Public restroom facility to include new ADA compliant design and remedy current substandard design of the RBP facilities. d) Per CDP, evaluate the creation of a new mixed-use zoning classification.

Interview with Commissioner Patrick Gossett

By Patrisha Davis



Why did you decide to run again?

I decided to seek another term as Commissioner because I have the experience, institutional knowledge and common sense needed to continue to address current and future issues facing our city.

Year-round, Rehoboth Beach is busier than ever, and this year's annual city budget is \$37.5 million. This is no small operation, and the city needs to be guided by experienced and knowledgeable individuals, with a vision towards the future and sustainability of Rehoboth Beach's unique character and brand.

What are the 3 most important issues you plan to address during your tenure?

Key issues that I will continue to address as Commissioner include:

- As a member of the Library Task Force, I will work to ensure that this vital public asset continues to have a significant presence in the city.
- Streamlining the permitting process in the Building and Licensing Department, combined with improvements to ensure fair and equitable code enforcement.
- Implementation of the 2020 Comprehensive Development Plan, with a focus on the Baltimore & Wilmington Streetscape and the development of the ocean block of Baltimore Ave as a model for this project.

What are the most pressing budget issues facing the city in the next 5 years?

Even though we are a year-round community, the budget needs in the summer season are much higher than through the winter months. This is especially true of our seasonal staffing needs, and the budget for staffing needs to reflect the pressures of the employment market. We need to be sure that we offer competitive wages and benefits, so that our city staff can maintain a high quality of life, including affordable housing.

In hiring Laurence Christian, as our new City Manager, we have a capable, skilled leader of our staff. I headed the search for our new City Manager, and look forward to working with him to address the goal of appropriate staffing and managed development in keeping with our reputation and vision.

We must also carefully consider and budget for current and future projects, such as: the stormwater utility; redevelopment of our downtown business district, especially Baltimore and Wilmington Avenues; and the new Beach Patrol Headquarters. Planning is the key to our success in budgeting for the future.

What are the greatest environmental challenges facing the city now and in the next 5 years?

Certainly, the creation and implementation of a stormwater management plan and a stormwater utility must be a key focus. Stormwater affects the health of our lakes, canal, and ocean, and we have to make provisions to fund a responsible plan.

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Interview with Commissioner Patrick Gossett (continued from pg. 11)

The Mayor and Commissioners have just passed an updated and more flexible tree ordinance, and we should carefully monitor its impact. Our tree canopy is a major asset, and we cannot allow it to deteriorate.

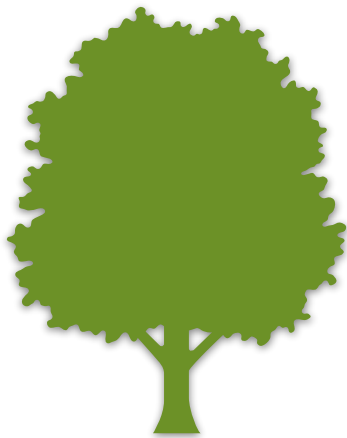
We must coordinate with Sussex County and the State to try to mitigate the impact of the runaway development in the County. The enormous growth of housing, building, and traffic has a direct effect on our environment, and answers must be found that work not just for Rehoboth Beach, but for the entire County.

And finally, we cannot ignore the threat of sea level rise. It is real, and we must prepare, or else our entire city will be affected, threatening our residential neighborhoods, our local businesses and our thriving tourism industry. Working with other coastal towns and the State, we must create common sense plans that will protect us from this coming threat.

What issues regarding city planning and growth should the city be most concerned about in the next 5-10 years?

We must focus on implementation of the 2020 Comprehensive Development Plan, with particular attention to the Baltimore & Wilmington Streetscape and the development of the ocean block of Baltimore Ave as a model for this project. We need to involve citizens and our business community to create a vision that will make these streets welcoming and vibrant, not only now, but for decades to come. We can draw on our example of the Rehoboth Avenue streetscape, the product of many years of planning and construction, completed in 2006. By planning and implementing long-needed and carefully planned improvements, these streets can help personify the charm and character of our city and be a key to our prosperity.

The influx of developers and the proposals for several new hotels, totaling a little over 300 new guest rooms in our downtown core poses the most critical test of our planning processes. They will have enormous impact on traffic, and all other aspects of the infrastructure of our city. If they are developed with coordination and cooperation, they can be great assets. If they are not carefully planned, they can create negative impacts that will be impossible to manage.



The Board of Commissioners adopted a revised tree code on June 16th. The goal of the revision was to increase flexibility, focus on heritage tree preservation and allow for quality over quantity. One change allowed for a reduction in the size of planted trees. The new required tree size is 8' tall and 2" in diameter.

Go to RBHome.Org for a List of Approved Trees

Interview with Commissioner-Elect Don Preston

By Sharon Sherwood

Why did you decide to run?

The simplest answer is that Rehoboth Beach is home. For thirteen years we stayed at the Silver Lake Guest House before purchasing our home in Schoolvue in 2009. In the old days, at the conclusion of a long week of work in the DC area we welcomed the calm that washed over us as we crossed the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, headed for the shore. The explosive nature of growth in Sussex County has altered that magical experience and now as a fulltime resident of



Rehoboth Beach I no longer make that commute. I retired after 35 years in the financial services sector and many years with the Swiss Re Group, one of the oldest and largest reinsurance companies in the world. I believe I have the experience and passion to bring new ideas to our now well discovered little town.

I graduated from Virginia Tech with a degree in Finance and Political Science. I worked in the Virginia state legislature throughout my college career and joined Don Beyer's successful Lt. Governor's Campaign post-graduation. DC was where I wanted to be, so after the campaign I made the move to the financial services sector. In the last many years of my career at the Swiss Re Group, I led a regulatory team of actuaries, accountants, and lawyers who engaged routinely with governments in North America. At some point in my career, Roger Ferguson, former Vice Chair of the Federal Reserve, impressed upon me that, "economic arguments always win". His words continue to stick with me today. I know that it is important to recognize that the substance behind your arguments matter. In one way or another my entire career has involved legislative work. In a way I am coming home to local government.

My decision to run was also influenced by my introduction to the new City Manager, Laurence Christian. Very transparently, I think he is the right person to pick up where the previous city manager left off. The city is facing important issues and he comes to the position with lots of ideas and, just as importantly the energy to execute them. He is genuinely a good human being, and I am excited to work with him.

What are the 3 most important issues you plan to address during your tenure?

I would say efficiency in our deliberations and our operations. I have observed the process as a citizen and discussed the efficiency issues with those that serve the city. To say that our town hall could run more efficiently is a broad and sweeping statement. It is not meant disrespectfully, and I don't mean it to suggest that anything is broken, but there are frustrations. One of my goals is to push for issues that can and should be dealt with quickly and deliberate in a timely manner the issues that are more complex. I know the city manager and some commissioners are keenly interested and excited about actively engaging the public in the process and I also view this as a worthy cause.

We also have to make sure we are preparing for the future and attracting the people to our town that will shape the type of growth we want. For me, part of that equation means a focus on the arts. We have an opportunity right now as we negotiate the fate of the library to build a coalition around this and we should. In my fantasy world, we would combine the library property and the senior center into, let's just call it, The Joe and Jill Biden Center for Arts and Literacy. A library component remains intact, of course, because the public is demanding it, but let's not allow a library board that is comprised of non-Rehoboth residents to decide the direction of this project. I am sure they are wonderful and

(continued on pg. 14)

Interview with Don Preston (continued from pg. 13)

well-intentioned people, but they do not live here, so their focus is just not the same as ours, because it can't be. I don't think this idea is unique to me, but it needs to be said out loud. Also, we have the financial means and local talent to take on a project that can truly define our city. With a focus on the arts, we can create opportunity for all our citizenry, both young and old, and provide a space for education and creativity, and growth - one that can both define our community and enhance it. We have a President and First Lady of the United States who call our great town home, so why would we not use that as an opportunity to build something meaningful and everlasting?

What are the most pressing budget issues facing the city in the next 5 years?

I cannot speak to the budget directly because I have not yet had the privilege to participate in the process. I do understand budgets though from a long career, and my sense is that we may be very conservative with our rainy-day funds. These funds must be balanced against the needs of our public. This summer for example, we operated with half the seasonal police officers required. Why? Because there isn't affordable housing and better salaries were offered in other municipalities. Lifeguard staffing, municipal services like trash collection, maintenance, parking, etc. all struggle to fill seasonal positions because people can no longer afford to live and work in the area.

I also see an opportunity for more engagement on grants. If we had a professional staff member dedicated to grant writing it might prove to be a significant financial resource for city projects. It is a balance we have to work on.

The extensive growth happening in Sussex County also directly impacts our city and we can't ignore the growth. It seems that we could do more to develop our relationships with our county, state, and even federal partners. Someone told me recently that this little town of Rehoboth Beach is one of the most important economic drivers in the state, whether we see ourselves as that, is another question, but we are. We should however, crow like that, not in a braggadocio's way but accept the influence we rightly have. We need to lead and benefit from that leadership.

What are the greatest environmental challenges facing the city now and in the next 5 years?

We must develop a forward-looking plan to deal with the reality of our climate and its impact on us. The frequency and severity of storms are going to continue to rise. We have to look at the data and plan for it. Plan with all the resources we have and that includes grants, and well-developed relationships at all levels of government. There are experts that will advise us for free, like my former employer, because they have a vested financial interest in mitigation issues. For them it is a matter of economics, and we need to take advantage of these types of resources. When all hell breaks loose, we want to know that we can fix what's broken quickly without damaging the economic engine that drives us.

What issues regarding city planning and growth should the city be most concerned about in the next 5-10 years?

Efficiency, infrastructure, environmental issues and the arts need to stay at the top of the list. For me, efficiency has to begin with the Building and Licensing Department because it's so central to the other top priorities. If we are going to manage growth, we need a department that is supported by strong building codes that are enforced, leadership, depth of knowledge and character that leaves little room for interpretation and miscommunication.

I also believe that we need to view Baltimore and Wilmington Avenue in conjunction with Rehoboth Avenue. The three streets should be viewed together as the main avenues within the city. The revitalization of these streets has to continue with greater emphasis and energy, in my opinion. Another thing that I'm confounded by is the discordance of our tree policy and the reluctance to move power lines underground.

Finally, one last time, let's take advantage of the opportunity we now have to build an arts center that could define our city.

Meet the Mayor and Commissioners



Annual Fall RBHA Picnic

When: Saturday, September 23rd

Time: 11:30 AM

Place: Grove Park

Food provided by Frank & Louie's

Our Favorite Event of the Year!

BIO - STAN MILLS

Mayor Stan Mills holds a BA degree in English, with a concentration in Theatre from Bucknell University.

Following a career as owner of an exhibit and woodworking company, and later, a home remodeling business, Stan and his wife Marcia moved to Rehoboth Beach, Delaware in 1998. Until recently, they operated a rental accommodations business in Rehoboth Beach. Today, they live five blocks from the ocean with one cat and one dog – both rescues.

Stan served 12 years as an elected City Commissioner in Rehoboth Beach (2007-2019), four years as vice-president. He was elected Mayor in 2020 and will start his second three-year term as Mayor in September. Throughout his years of service, Stan has had many accomplishments. He is past chair of Communications Committee and the Beach and Boardwalk Committee. He is the current chair of Wilmington-Baltimore Avenue Streetscape Task Force. He oversaw total reconstruction of boardwalk. Stan has championed audio and video recordings of meetings, developed recycling and yard waste recycling programs, sponsored ADA accessibility throughout the city, sponsored legislation designating No Smoking areas on our beach, boardwalk and parks, and managed storm drain marking and education program to protect our water bodies. He has also developed trusted relationships with county, state and federal officials.

BIO - PATRICK GOSSETT

Commissioner Gossett is about to serve his *fifth* term as a City Commissioner in Rehoboth Beach, DE. He was first elected to the City Commission in 2004 and was re-elected in 2012, 2015, 2020 and 2023.

Patrick is a native of Washington, D.C. and has lived in the Washington area most of his life. He has vacationed in Rehoboth Beach since childhood, and he and his husband purchased their Rehoboth Beach home in 1996.

Before retiring from his professional career, Patrick worked 12 years in an executive capacity for the American Association of Museums (AAM). Prior to joining AAM, Patrick built over 25 years' experience in the hospitality industry.

Patrick holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Hospitality Management from Florida International University and attended the Wharton School of Business. An accomplished cook, he also completed graduate work at The Culinary Institute of America!

BIO - DON PRESTON

Don Preston and his family have been a part of the City of Rehoboth Beach community for decades, and they have called it home since 2009.

Don was born in Virginia and grew up there. He completed his university studies in political science and finance at Virginia Tech, and then moved to Washington, DC, where he worked for 35 years. His career in the financial services sector focused on legislative and regulatory engagement at various levels of government, first in the US and eventually all of North America.

Don always has been an advocate for diversity and inclusion. His life was shaped by the arts, and they are near and dear to him still today. Don enjoys domestic and international travel with his partner and friends.

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

August 27, 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 8 a.m. (via Zoom)

Friday, Sept. 22 at 8 a.m. (RBMS & Zoom)

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 - Cancelled

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