

Spring/Summer 2010

OCEAN CITY

NEWSLETTER

Semi-annual newsletter from the Town of Ocean City, Maryland to keep you, the citizen, informed on activities within the resort • www.ocean.com & www.oceancitymd.gov

Town continues to address economic challenges with cost-saving initiatives

By Dennis Dare, City Manager

Over the past several months, town management has been working on a proposed 2011 budget for consideration by the Mayor and City Council. As we did in the current fiscal year budget, the proposed 2011 budget acknowledges that we remain in a time of economic uncertainty.

In the coming weeks, the Mayor and Council will review the proposed budget before final adoption for the start of the fiscal year July 1.

Last year's fiscal challenges were compounded by the effect of the reassessment of real property in Ocean City, recognizing a decrease of \$1.12 billion from \$11.78 bil-

lion to \$10.66 billion. The town will feel the effects of this decrease for some time to come.

To meet these economic challenges, the town initiated a number of cost savings.

A hiring freeze was adopted in September 2008, with 59 jobs currently vacant, or 10 percent of the municipal government's workforce. Salary increases will be eliminated for a second year.

Earlier this year, the town offered a voluntary retirement plan to 84 full-time city employees who are already eligible to retire. The one-time-only retirement incentive program is intended to help reduce the number of overall positions through voluntary retirements.

The reduction in staff led to the reorganization of several town departments. It also allowed the transfer between departments of numerous employees for more efficiency in staffing and operations.

Last year, we instituted once-a-week trash pick-up in the off-season. In addition, we began having our solid waste delivered to energy-from-waste facilities instead of the Worcester County Landfill, which resulted in a savings of \$600,000 annually. While this move resulted in cost savings to the town, it also put Ocean City's 32,000 ton per year waste stream to good use. Most of the waste is delivered to the Covanta Energy from Waste facility in Chester, PA. This facility produces enough electric-

ity to power 8,000 homes annually.

Numerous other cost savings adopted by the town include the delay of capital projects, which reduced the General Fund 2010 budget over \$5 million less than in FY 2009. The number of take-home vehicles has been reduced, and energy savings measures in town facilities have been put in place. Employee travel and training have been reduced. We merged the town's visitor guide with the Chamber of Commerce guidebook.

We will continue to evaluate the services provided and reduce or eliminate all that are not essential to our mission of providing optimal service and meeting the expectations of residents and visitors.

U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds to headline 2010 OC Air Show

The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds will return to Ocean City for this year's OC Air Show. The event will open the town's summer season in style on the weekend of June 5-6.

The Thunderbirds are the U.S. Air Force's elite aerial demonstration team. Each year they perform at over 70 shows per year throughout the country. They are the ambassadors that proudly represent more than 500,000 service men and women of the U.S. Air Force.

"The entire Thunderbird team is looking forward to returning to Ocean City," said Capt. Jason McCree, Thunderbird #12, the team's public affairs officer. "We are humbled at the opportunity to represent service men and women across the globe who defend our freedoms."

The Thunderbirds will headline a four-hour event each day that will include military aircraft demonstrations, low-altitude flyovers and civilian aerobatic performances

and the return of the U.S. Army Golden Knights parachute team. The event will take place from noon to 4 p.m. each day and be visible along the entire length of the Boardwalk, creating an inspiring experience for visitors while they enjoy the resort's beaches and attractions. Rehearsal day is Friday, June 4.

Interactive displays and exhibits will be open to the public on the streets surrounding Show Center at 16th Street on the Boardwalk and in the inlet parking lot. Show Center Beach, extending from 14th to 17th streets, offers premium viewing in the drop zone, waterfront clubhouse and the new VIP viewing stand with bleacher and reserved premium seating.

All tickets will also include reserved parking. For more information and to purchase tickets online, visit www.oceancityairshow.com or call 888-695-0888.



The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds soar over the Ocean City beach during last year's air show. (Photo by Erica Mowbray)

Ocean City property owners will receive just one tax bill

Starting July 1, 2010, Town of Ocean City property owners will get only one property tax bill with separate amounts listed for their county, town and state taxes.

Worcester County will bill and collect Ocean City real property taxes with Worcester County real property taxes. Property owners will no longer get a separate tax bill from the Town of Ocean City. Taxes for properties that are owner-occupied will be due on Sept. 30 and Dec. 31. All other property taxes will be due on Sept. 30.

This procedure will simplify payment of taxes for property owners and mortgage escrow service companies.

Additionally, property owners will be able to view their bill using the county's online program. Go to: www.co.worcester.md.us/trs/realproptax.htm and under the Services heading (located on the left-hand side of the page), click on Account Inquiry.

The Town of Ocean City will still collect personal and corporate taxes as well as real property taxes outstanding from prior years.

Design work under way on Convention Center expansion

Design work has begun on the first phase of expansion of the Roland E. Powell Convention Center. This phase of the project will enclose and expand the existing back deck of the Convention Center to create a new bay-view hall with 20,000 square feet of space.

The second phase of the project will convert a portion of the existing ballroom into a fixed-seat auditorium while maintaining 30,000 square feet of second floor ballroom space in a single room. This phase has not yet been approved and is not funded at this time.

The State of Maryland will fund 50 percent of the projected cost. The total cost for the project is estimated at \$8.2 million, with incremental state tax revenues projected to be \$1.1 to \$1.6 million per year. The Ocean City Mayor and Council voted to support a one-half percent reduction in the food tax to fund the bond debt to pay for the town's portion of the project.

Construction is expected to begin by the end of the year. Completion of the first phase is estimated in the spring of 2012. Project updates will be posted on the town's website, www.oceancitymd.gov.



May 6-9, 2010

Join the fun! Springfest has entertainment, arts and crafts and food under four big-top tents at the Inlet Parking Lot. See Page 5 for information.