MAYOR'S MESSAGE: *February 25, 2021*

I am very happy to report that construction of Sea Isle City's much-anticipated Fishing Pier and Kayak Launch at Dealy Field is nearly finished. I visited the pier earlier this week – and it is beautiful! Later this spring, we plan to officially dedicate the pier in memory of Jim Iannone, a former commissioner who devoted much of his to life to bettering our community and supporting Sea Isle City's recreation programs.

In addition to completing our wonderful Fishing Pier and Kayak Launch, plans are also in the making to create a kayak storage facility just steps away from the new pier, where 112 kayak berths will be made available to Sea Isle City property owners and year-round residents. To determine who gets to use the berths each year, during the springtime our Division of Recreation will hold a digital "lottery," which we feel will be a fair and unbiased way to allow people to store their kayaks at the limited number of berths we have to offer. Online registration for the lottery begins March 1, and information about the registration process can be found in this week's newsletter. I wish "Good Luck" to everyone who enters our lottery!

Also in this week's newsletter, there is a special section that outlines the need for volunteers at our County's COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic. I realize that this is a challenging time for many people, but I encourage anyone who feels they may be able to donate some time to that important endeavor to please do so.

In other news, Sea Isle City's proposed 2021 municipal budget was officially introduced during the February 23 City Council meeting. As I explained to Council on Tuesday, this year's budget comes with a very slight tax rate increase that amounts to approximately one-quarter of a penny, which translates to an increase of about $17 per year per average-priced home. Obviously, no one wants a tax increase – no matter how small it may be. However, we feel that the proposed budget represents responsible financial management considering all of the obligations and projects we have in front of us, including the addition of lifeguards at Sea Isle's north-end, adding a paid duty crew to our Fire Department during the busiest times of the year, continually maintaining and improving our town's infrastructure, and growing as a community in various other ways. All things considered, the tax rate that was introduced to City Council earlier this week is slightly less than it was four years ago due to a rate decrease two years ago; and I can say without hesitation that this year's budget is sound and worthy of adoption.

Armed with strong financial planning skills and recognizing the importance of improving our infrastructure and providing all of the services the people of our community need and desire, we always strive to make Sea Isle City better and better with each passing year. One way to accomplish that goal is to continually address an issue that affects every barrier island in New Jersey – flooding.

In 2019, we constructed a storm water pumping station at 38th Street and Sounds Avenue, which now helps remove flood water from the streets in that area. Now, on the heels of that successful project, we have begun plans to install an additional storm water pumping station that will help alleviate flooding between Landis Avenue and Park Road, from approximately 44th to 47th Street. As you can imagine, the mitigation of flooding can be quite costly, so to help pay for this newest effort we have applied for a FEMA Grant, which we hope will be awarded to Sea Isle City in the not-too-distant future. So far, our grant application has been approved by the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management, and now it is on its way to Washington, DC, where it will be reviewed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. As with all of our municipal projects, we will keep everyone informed as plans for this newest flood mitigation effort progress.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic is still a major influence in our daily lives and it is obviously taking longer than we had hoped to distribute the vaccination – but things are getting better! That being said, even though we are slowing the spread of the virus here in Cape May County, we must still make some difficult decisions that aren't always popular. Case in point, earlier this month we cancelled this year's Saint Patrick's Day Parade; and now, I am sorry to have to say, we are also cancelling our 2021 Easter Program and Egg Hunt at Dealy Field.

As I have said in the past, the decisions we make today will help us more quickly reach our goal of safely emerging from this pandemic; and even though we have made some amazing strides, this is not the time to let down our guard against COVID-19. So, I want to thank everyone for their patience as we travel through these uncharted waters together – always remembering that we are one Sea Isle City, and by sticking together we will be stronger than ever!

This week's "Shout Out" goes to all of our nation's military veterans, especially those who call this community their "home" or "home away from home." Here in Sea Isle City, we recognize the importance of honoring our veterans on Veterans Day – and every other day of the year! So don't forget to say "thank you" when you see a veteran, and always remember the sacrifices they have made for this nation.

PS: If you have not yet done so, please check-out Sea Isle City's newly updated municipal website: www.seaislecitynj.us – I think you're going to like what you see!

Smile…You're in Sea Isle!



Mayor Leonard C. Desiderio