MAYOR'S MESSAGE *February 23, 2023*

Last week, I presented City Council with our proposed 2023 Municipal Budget, which Council will introduce at their next meeting on February 28, and hopefully adopt in March after the public hearing on the budget. If you are not already aware, I am very happy to report that this year's budget comes with a 0% tax increase as well as a 0% increase in our water-sewer bills – for the tenth year in a row.

I hope this news indicates that we understand how important it is for elected officials and city employees to exercise fiscal responsibility at all times – and that we fully realize that every dollar we spend is, indeed, the tax-payer's money. That is how government should be run, and that is how my Administration will continue to operate into the future.

On Saturday morning, I had the pleasure of meeting with many of the homeowners who live on the perimeter of Sea Isle City's former public-school property. I hosted Saturday's meeting to give those residents the opportunity to ask questions about our future Community Center and to review blueprints and renderings of the new facility we intend to construct where the school building now stands. I am happy to report that our meeting was very productive, and I am very grateful to everyone who took the time to meet with me and several other city officials that day.

If you were in town last weekend to celebrate the Presidents' Day holiday, you know that it was a great time to be in Sea Isle City for a variety of reasons. In addition to the beautiful weather we experienced on Saturday and Sunday, many of Sea Isle's retailers and restaurants were open for business and offering discounts and special offers. Additionally, the Mike's Seafood Run-Walk for Autism made a triumphant return after a two-year hiatus – much to the delight of the various charitable organizations that benefit from that wonderful fundraiser. Over 675 runners and nearly 1000 walkers registered to participate in the event – and many children were also there to attend the Run-Walk with their families. The event's Race Coordinator, Mike Givens, has informed us that this year's Run-Walk was the second largest in the event's history, which is obviously very impressive.

I want to thank everyone who traveled to Sea Isle City to enjoy Presidents' Weekend with us. My thanks also go to all of our local merchants, who displayed the warmth and hospitality that our community is known for. Also, my congratulations and best wishes go to Jeannie and Mike Monichetti – and Mike Givens too – for a job well done during the 2023 Mike's Seafood Run-Walk for Autism. We look forward to seeing their event return during next year's Presidents' Weekend, and we hope that it continues for many years thereafter.

I have good news for those of you who have been eager for us to build a Dog Park for your four-legged friends! Earlier this month, we received a letter from the Cape May County Open Spaces Board inviting us to submit a formal application to receive funding for Sea Isle's future Dog Park. Knowing this, our

municipal engineer and city employees are supplying the information that the Open Spaces Board needs to process our funding request; and, in turn, we anticipate that the County will pay for a large percentage of the construction costs for that project. Our goal is to complete our new Dog Park as soon as possible; and, like all our municipal projects, we will keep everyone informed as that effort moves from the planning phase to construction later this year.

As you no doubt heard me mention time-and-time again during the past year, we are exploring every option at our disposal to help address the issue of large groups of teens creating disturbances while gathering on the Promenade during the summer season. As part of our plan for the summer of 2023, we will introduce two new ordinances during next week's City Council meeting that we feel will help curb the problems we've been experiencing with young people who gather at night and get into mischief.

The first new ordinance will prohibit the carrying of backpacks and similar bags on the Promenade and the beach during evening hours. We feel a backpack ban such as this will help deter young people from casually transporting alcohol around town.

The second ordinance will institute a city-wide curfew for anyone under the age of 18 between the hours of 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM, from May 15 to September 15.

I realize that for some, these new ordinances may seem stricter than necessary – but I assure you that we have given this issue a great deal of thought after listening to countless complaints from residents and visitors. Please know that we have worked with Trenton in an attempt to adjust the existing state laws that prevent our police officers from effectively doing their jobs when young people act irresponsibly, but now we feel that it is time to take action on our own for the good of our community.

In addition to the new ordinances I just mentioned, the Sea Isle City Police Department will also be installing a Public Safety Sub-Station near the Promenade at 40th Street (behind the Band Shell), which will also be used to help curb the problems created by young people who simply do not want to follow the rules of our society. In the meantime, we will continue to focus on ways to further address this issue without disrupting the enjoyment we all look forward to each summer.

This week's "Shout Out" goes to Ed and Kelly McNeill, who recently told me how much they love Sea Isle City and that they enjoy reading our E-Newsletter. –Thank you for your kind words, Ed and Kelly!

Smile…You're in Sea Isle,

Len

Mayor Leonard C. Desiderio

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