

## **MEETING OF A.C.T. (ASSOCIATION OF COASTAL TOWNS)**

**JANUARY 19, 2018 AT 10:00 AM AT THE LEWES TOWN HALL**

In attendance at the meeting table were Lewes Mayor Ted Becker, Henlopen Acres Mayor Dave Lyons, Fenwick Island Mayor Gene Langan, Dewey Beach Mayor TJ Redefeer, South Bethany Mayor Pat Voveris, DNREC Administrator of Shoreline & Waterway Management Section Tony Pratt, Sussex County Administrator Todd Lawson, CIB Executive Director Chris Bason.

Audience attendance included Leah Gallagher from previous DEDO – Department of State Division of Small Business, Development and Tourism, Michael Powell from DNREC, Sussex County Council President Michael Vincent, Fenwick Island Town Council Member Bernie Merritt, Town Managers Kristy Rogers from Milton, Ann Marie Townshend from Lewes, Terry Tieman from Fenwick Island, Maureen Hartman from South Bethany, Kate Rohrer from Senator Coons' office, Karen McGrath from Senator Carper's office, U of DE Sea Grant Coordinator Danielle Swallow and Coastal Point reporter Laura Walter.

Mayor Becker called the meeting to order at 10:08, announced the absences of Mayors Jack Gordon from Bethany Beach and Paul Kuhns of Renoboth, welcomed and thanked everyone for coming, and acknowledged first time attendee Danielle Swallow from the U of DE.

Minutes from the November meeting were approved by all after a motion from Mayor Voveris, and a second from Mayor Redefeer.

A discussion took place about formalizing A.C.T. with officers. Mayor Becker proposed a cohesive effort with the Sussex County Council and going back to S.C.A.T. for their support. Mayor Voveris spoke to the initial resistance of S.C.A.T. to offer support and expression of lack of agricultural support but now one year later and with a show of solid working efforts the group may feel differently. Mayor Lyons suggested that members within S.C.A.T. consider formation of a group to pursue agricultural initiatives just as A.C.T. has focused on coastal town initiatives. Tony Pratt said Bob Frederick of Dewey was the first President of A.C.T. and perhaps he could provide details on how they established formalization years ago. Mayor Voveris spoke to a document Mayor Gordon had supplied when he first presented a revitalization of A.C.T. and in it details included a nominal financial consideration. Tony further spoke to the A.B.C. (Association of Bay Communities) with the President being from Broadkill Beach and they may be a group (as the Sussex County Council) to outreach for involvement with A.C.T. Consensus evolved to having all Mayors present for further discussion on both formalizing A.C.T. and again approaching S.C.A.T.

Mayor Becker reported on the productive meeting in Dover the day before where Senators Carper and Coons provided statements on opposition to offshore drilling (attached). Mayor Voveris spoke to Resolutions all the coastal towns passed in 2015 or 2016 in opposition to

offshore drilling. Mayor Becker said that the Mid-Atlantic was 42<sup>nd</sup> on the list with immediate consideration focused on the west coast. Karen McGrath suggested A.C.T. send a letter to the Secretary of the Interior questioning why Florida is being given more quantitative value than Delaware. Kate Rohrer suggested we visit the BOEM website to see the posters and video trying to sell the idea for offshore drilling. She complimented the staff representing that agency as knowledgeable and friendly. Mayor Lyons said the #1 priority of A.C.T. should be dredging our waterways and securing Washington support and money. The opportunity for offshore drilling is a long way away. Mayor Becker pointed out the comment period for towns has been extended from January 8 to March 9. Todd Lawson said there has been no talk about offshore drilling at the county level. Tony Pratt said the Governor has come out in opposition.

Mayor Becker pointed out the need to get upstate legislative support for A.C.T. dredging efforts and to begin we identify those legislators having homes in our coastal towns. Mayor Redefer said he has talked with some state legislators and both he and Mayor Becker said they would provide some names we could contact. Kate Rohrer said it was important to capture information that affects legislation and include day trips, businesses, and identify well placed higher ups in any agencies. Karen McGrath cited the Sea Grant study and Tuesday's presentation by the Division of Arts that spoke to ticket sales and restaurant sales as an economic investment and not charity. Danielle Swallow offered to send us the presentation for review. Tony Pratt said there is messaging vs. effective messaging and Secretary Garvin said we need more on economic development to push for dredging. Tony cited the need to inform, involvement in ASBPA (American Shore and Beach Preservation Association) and their field trip to DC during the first week of March, the follow up of A.B.C. meeting held with Secretary Garvin by phone, and the value of boating both in recreation and commercial that would be a good ask for the General Assembly that seems to be ignoring the issue. At U of DE Sea Grant a good contact would be Jim Faulk. Chris Bason expressed interest of the CIB in funding and providing information on the value of the inland bays for not only boating but the real estate surrounding the bays. Tony Pratt expressed concern that people cannot boat and Mayor Becker said that means people will leave the area. Chris said he would send representation from the CIB Board to support A.C.T. efforts.

Tony Pratt reiterated the contract was awarded for beach replenishment slated for Bethany Beach, South Bethany and Fenwick Island. Start of the work has been delayed to now begin in April. Mayor Voveris expressed concern about the replenishment disrupting the tourist season.

Tony then spoke to back bay flooding issues and the CORPS being authorized after Sandy to conduct a study. The feasibility study will require a state match of \$250,000 and DNREC cannot find this money. We don't want to be the one state that doesn't do this study since that would leave us vulnerable and unprepared if a Sandy came again. Todd Lawson said it would be hard to find \$250,000 and was not certain the county ever funded a study. Chris Bason said the utility of what you get from a study is worthwhile. Tony said flood abatement is key and not just identifying how to generate a warning. Multi decade flooding issues exist. He further

spoke to the Dutch and the North Sea and their implementations having solid benefit vs. cost over the long term. Todd suggested calls to Sussex County legislators to find a match.

Tony Pratt reported on the completion of work at Roosevelt Island.

Chris Bason reported on the excellent study of the DE Geological Survey and their recommendations for Sea Level Rise (SLR). Danielle Swallow served on the committee that did the work and spoke to the outcome that we should prepare for 3 feet by the end of the century. The study makes projections and not predictions. The study offers plans for intermediate or ultimate levels and a very wide latitude. The study is based on both global and local factors. She offered to send us the study for our review.

Chris Bason spoke to HB 270 Clean Water Act and the plan to initially raise \$20 million annually with a plan to eventually raise \$30 million annually for the cause. He said this is critical to restore water quality and the funding will help voluntary projects. It will levy a \$40 maximum fee to individuals and \$45 to businesses. There is Republican sponsor on the bill and eleven sponsors in all on the bill. He reported the Secretary of DelDOT is not opposed to some transfer of money from the roads to the waterways. He recommended A.C.T. send a letter to support the FY 2011 – 2015 marine fuel tax of \$325,608 over 5 years yielding approximately \$60,000 each year. Every little bit helps towards the current 2 to 4 million dollar deficit. Tony Pratt said Secretary Cohen will take another look at the numbers. Mayor Lyons asked how we can get these numbers and value. Tony said under WAWA one has the right to pursue unclaimed reimbursements, about 1 million dollars per year. DelDOT says this is much less. Tony said if fuel at the dock is not being charged for non-highway use reimbursement can be made of the Highway Tax. Mayor Becker asked Chris get a letter to us and we will talk among Mayors.

Danielle Swallow introduced herself as a Coastal Hazard Specialist on flooding issues and SLR. She is currently working with Mike Powell and Greg Williams of DNREC with the CRS (Community Rating Service) user group. She is Co-Chair of RASCL (Resilient and Sustainable Communities League), an ad hoc professional networking group that includes Councilman Lew Kilmer from Bethany Beach and officer in the DLLG. Their role is to convene agencies and organizations to promote information sharing and technical assistance.

Todd Lawson spoke to the Comprehensive Plan and the importance of input from towns, the CIB, and DNREC. All comments are welcomed. For A.C.T. the Conservation Group and Economic Development Chapters are most important. They are anticipated to come about in late February or early March. As Mayors we should go and speak to the five member County Council. The Mobility Chapter was started last Wednesday and will be tied into the Land Use Chapter during several meetings. Draft Chapters are now on the county website. Mayor Becker said the A.C.T. members should review the Plan and Todd agreed this review and input is critical for coastal communities with 85% of the county on water.

Mayor Becker thanked Senator Carper's office for the legislative handouts. He also spoke to the letter from Climate Mayors concerned about the retreat from climate efforts. Mayors signing the letter are not all from coastal areas and Lewes and Rehoboth have signed the letter.

Mayor Langan spoke to the Fenwick Dredging Committee and asked his Councilman Bernie Merritt to reiterate their efforts. Bernie said the committee met with John Kane from Senator Carper's office and Chris Bason from the CIB. Economic input is needed and Senators Carper and Coons are fighting for the DE shoreline. Kate Rohrer added that a summary is forthcoming from the EPW Committee. Tony Pratt said that ASA understands the working issues of the CORPS is challenging. New Jersey and New York get attention by making noise at both the Philadelphia office and the North Atlantic Division.

The next meeting of A.C.T. will take place on February 23 in Lewes at 10:00 am.

Mayor Becker noted only 15 people are needed to conduct a local class for the EOC to cover incident command and by including Mayors and Town Managers this should be manageable to accomplish rather than having to travel out of the area.

The meeting ended at 11:22 am.