

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

APRIL 6, 2018 AT 10:00 AM AT THE LEWES TOWN HALL

In attendance at the meeting table were Senator Tom Carper, Lewes Mayor Ted Becker, Bethany Beach Mayor Jack Gordon, Fenwick Island Mayor Gene Langan, South Bethany Mayor Pat Voveris, Rehoboth Mayor Paul Kuhns, and retired DNREC Administrator Tony Pratt.

Audience attendance included Senator Carper's staff of Karen McGrath, John Kane, Kate Wilson, Senator Coons' Sussex and Kent Counties Director Kate Rohrer, DNREC's Michael Powell and Jesse Hayden, Fenwick Island Town Council Member Bernie Merritt, Town Managers Ann Marie Townshend from Lewes, Terry Tieman from Fenwick Island, Maureen Hartman from South Bethany, Bethany Beach Vice Mayor Lew Killmer, South Bethany Councilman & Mayor Pro Tem Tim Shaw, U of D Sea Grant Coordinator Danielle Swallow, CIB's Michelle Schmidt, Lewes Planners Rob Morgan and Tom West

Mayor Becker called the meeting to order at 9:55 am and announced the absences of Mayors Dave Lyons from Henlopen Acres and TJ Redefer from Dewey Beach, welcomed and thanked everyone for coming, particularly Senator Tom Carper and his staff.

Senator Carper thanked the A.C.T. members for their efforts, spoke to the privilege he felt to be a public servant for Delaware, the joy he found in his delegation of partners and gratitude he felt for his hard working staff. He described our state as currently associated with many "C" words – corn, chickens, corporate charters, credit cards and coastline. He elaborated on the Dupont company founded 200 years ago and almost disappearing is now coming back bigger and better than the old Dupont. Many initiatives are in the works in Delaware. Tourism is a big factor for our state and our beaches play an important role in tourism. The importance of the Army CORPS maintaining our beaches and dunes is critical. The Senator acknowledged his staff member John Kane for fostering a good relationship with the CORPS and former Vice President Joe Biden who said politics is personal. Senator Carper also noted diplomacy is personal. He reminded us that drilling off shore is bad idea and not to be fooled again.

Mayor Becker thanked the Senator for his remarks and noted in a small state we have the opportunity to have very personal interaction with our legislators.

Senator Carper said during a recent visit to Bethany Beach he had told R.D. James from the Army's Civil Works that successful, interactive relationships are all about "C" words – communication, compromise, collaboration, civility.

Tony Pratt thanked the Senator for his service and efforts on the EPW (Environment & Public Works Committee). He then began his presentation on coastal issues and the need to address them one at a time. The recent replenishment initiatives address exposure and allow us to witness other perils.

Super Storm Sandy was a wake up call and relief from this storm took a focus to the Back Bays with a comprehensive approach to look at the Inland Bays and entire DE shoreline. The outer coast protects our wetlands, bays, estuaries, fish, and recreation. DE has been approached by the CORPS with a 50/50 non-federal match for a Back Bay Study that will cost \$250,000. It may be possible the Omnibus Bill can be of help for funding, but the Back Bays do not have a solid identified funding. The appropriation process is predicated on the benefit of the investment. We can look across comprehensive system approach of benefits. Break down some managerial silos to consider looking at benefits such as looking at waterways and getting stuck and stirring up sediment. In addition, there could be improved flushing of water coming into the bays. He then handed out his fact paper (attached) and said New Jersey is ahead of us and DE must begin its effort.

John Kane spoke to beneficial use being complicated with the CORPS in this regard since sediment/sand had a diminishing return directly related to the cost of actually moving it. The CORPS needs to do a better job of full analysis. We need a study of mitigation efforts for a declared emergency to create a 100% federal cost. One ounce of prevention is cheaper than one pound of cure.

Karen McGrath spoke to the problem with CORPS silos of not being able to ensure wealth investment. There was a giant beneficial use project done at Prime Hook. The CORPS needs a viewpoint of systems approach. Tony said the ASBPA (American Shore and Beach Preservation Association) values analysis after a storm of avoided expenses.

At 10:40 am Senator Carper said his goodbye and was thanked by the Mayors for his time and attendance, which was very much appreciated.

February meeting minutes were then approved with a motion by Mayor Langan and a second by Mayor Gordon and unanimous agreement by all.

The Mayors then proceeded to discuss recent winter storm effects. Fenwick Island and South Bethany had some bay flooding, Bethany Beach had some damage at the south end of its boardwalk, and Lewes had some minor flooding but canal water never left its banks. Rehoboth Mayor Kuhns arrived at 10:45 am. He said with recent replenishment the dunes held strong and Henlopen Acres also fared well.

DNREC's Jesse Hayden said their post storm survey was part of U of D research to prepare for the upcoming replenishment. DNREC's Mike Powell spoke to his last quarter of a century (since 1991) observations pointing to full maintenance of a project being directly related to the impact of storms. Mayor Kuhns said the addition of beach grass made a huge difference for Rehoboth.

John Kane spoke to each district having flexibility to respond to need. The Senator's office is also looking at another dredge, not to replace private companies but to have ability to respond. The dredge would be 150 million dollars and be housed in Wilmington.

Tony Pratt said when we wait 5 years rather than stick to a 3-year replenishment cycle we end up not just replenishing the berm but also the dune, fencing, and beach grass which doubles the cost. John Kane said R.D. James saw the value of maintaining our beaches not only from an economical point of view but also the importance for recreation and families. He realized maintaining the 3-year replenishment cycle is critical.

The Mayors went on to discuss establishing a formal organization with officers. Mayor Voveris made a motion to nominate Mayor Becker as Chair and this was seconded by Mayor Langan and approved unanimously by all. Mayor Becker made a motion to nominate Mayor Voveris as Secretary and this was seconded by Mayor Gordon and approved unanimously by all. Mayor Voveris noted she was up for reelection and being opposed by a Council member and the results of that election would determine her ability to serve. Mayor Voveris made a motion to nominate Mayor Langan as Vice Chair and this was seconded by Mayor Becker and approved unanimously by all.

Mayor Gordon said it was important at the next meeting to revise and finalize the original Charter of A.C.T. when it was first established. The Mayors agreed their comments would be sent to Mayor Voveris prior to their May meeting.

Mayor Becker spoke to presenting the concept and mission of A.C.T. to S.C.A.T. at the legislative breakfast on Friday, April 13. Vice Mayor Kilmer spoke of concern of the western towns in Sussex County to investment being made in the coastal towns and the Mayors concluded A.C.T. is not a splinter group but rather a group working common cause of coastal towns. Mayor Becker pointed out our coastal towns do have agriculture. Town Manager Tieman pointed out all towns need each other and will benefit from cooperation. Mayor Becker pointed out that anyone traveling to our coastal towns travels through agricultural areas to arrive at our destination.

John Kane said S.C.A.T. needs federal attention. What impacts the coast impacts Wilmington and this is a broad state issue. S.C.A.T. and A.C.T. are intertwined. A.C.T. gives a platform so we need as much attention as S.C.A.T.

The Mayors then discussed the Mission Statement and some minor suggestions for revision that were brought forward. The final version is included herein (attached). Mayor Kuhns made a motion to adopt it and Mayor Langan made a second and all approved it unanimously.

Tony Pratt spoke about the recent ASBPA conference. The Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund has been mismanaged for some time and will take a 15-year recovery rate to have 100% of its money redirected. Ports in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York are not being maintained since the CORPS established a commercial tonnage allotment. There are perhaps 20 channels in DE and only 2, the C&E Canal and Port of Wilmington, are being maintained. The Trump administration put out an infrastructure package including more funding from private entities. There is talk of local tax districts which raises a flag that is a common trend nationally. A public/private partnership.

John Kane said self help will become a bigger issue with budget cuts. Communities will need to make decisions about spending without a guarantee of reimbursements. There is a big debate in Congress now about the federal role of the CORPS. The administration wants to make it private. This has been talked about for decades but the current administration is pushing the hardest. Mayor Becker suggested we study the Sandbridge, New Jersey role model.

Vice Mayor Killmer spoke to private beaches vs, state owned beaches and the Clean Water Bill. How do we know money will actually come back to our community? Mechanisms need to be put in place.

Center for the Inland Bays (CIB) Michelle Schmidt spoke to waiting on an answer if legislation will be needed to allocate money from the waterway fuel tax by DelDOT. She recently met with Fenwick Island on storm water management and dredging. For dredging of the inland bays CIB is seeking funding now to do an analysis. The CIB plans an update on their conservation and management plan on April 24 at the DNREC facility in Lewes. Communities are invited to attend and offer input. There will be 2 sessions on April 24 and an event again on May 10.

Mayor Becker spoke to a conversation he had with Sussex County Councilman I.G. Burton regarding a submission from A.C.T. to the Sussex County Comprehensive plan. I.G. feels a collective voice is a stronger voice. Mayor Voveris provided comments from South Bethany's Chair of Planning Dick Oliver. Vice Mayor Killmer felt these comments mirrored those of Bethany Beach. After discussion the Mayors agreed they would provide Mayor Voveris with their comments at least one week before the next meeting so she could draft a submission representative of A.C.T. for Sussex County's Comprehensive Plan.

DNREC's Mike Powell and Jesse Hayden said they were coordinating with the Philadelphia District of the Army Corps to do a damage assessment from recent storms and the mobilization project for replenishment that will begin in Bethany Beach has moved closer to April 20. The proposed staging areas currently also have projects involving street paving or work by Verizon and for one location an alternative site has been proposed but no word has come from Great Lakes who will be doing the replenishment. Jesse Hayden said it was very important that our 3 towns have representation at all project meetings that will be held Wednesdays at 10:00 am.

U of D Sea Grant Coordinator Danielle Swallow mentioned on May 11 there would be a course entitled "Creating a Flood Ready Community" presented at the Paradee Center in Dover to assess risk and undergo planning preparedness. This course runs from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

The Mayors spoke to agenda items for the next meeting of A.C.T. that will include the Charter, Submission to Sussex County CP, Replenishment Update and the response from S.C.A.T.

The next meeting will be on Friday, May 18 at 10:00 am in Lewes.

Mayor Becker made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:10 pm, followed by a second from Mayor Kuhns, with a unanimous approval by all.