

From the Desk of Mayor Coffey

November/December 2020

We are about to close out one of the strangest and unsettling years ever and, inasmuch as I am writing this message before the election, my guess that it has probably gotten even more strange and unsettling after November 3rd. Having said that, we here in Oceanport have weathered the coronavirus better than most.

On October 25th, the Oceanport Parks and Recreation Committee hosted a phenomenal “Trunk or Treat” Halloween celebration at Blackberry Bay. This event was very well attended (an estimated 300 people) and provided our residents with an outdoor, COVID-19 compliant venue for trick or treating in a somewhat controlled environment. Most neighborhoods had a fair number of kids trick or treating on the 31st and, overall, the day seemed to go along swimmingly. I was very surprised and pleased, furthermore, with the number of kids and adults – mostly adults -- who came to my door dressed as Buddy Brocklebank. One can never get enough of Buddy Brocklebank, especially on Halloween.

Our municipal council, planning board, and board of education meetings have continued unabated, albeit remotely, and the beneficial unintended consequence of the remote meeting setup is that it has actually become easier to watch, attend, and participate in public meetings than ever before. Despite the fact that the interior of our municipal building on East Main Street has been closed to the public for seven months, our municipal staff and residents have adapted well to the COVID-19 compliant arrangement at the building and the business of government has gone on pretty much uninterrupted. We are confident, moreover, that our new municipal complex on Oceanport Way will be up and running by January 1, 2021 and that the size and layout of the building will permit us to allow for greater public access while remaining COVID-19 compliant. Our DPW staff has more than ably responded to everything Mother Nature has thrown at them these past seven months and they are ready for anything she has in store for them this winter. Oceanport’s parks, playgrounds, fields, and courts remain open and, notwithstanding the lack of organized recreation leagues, our children have been able to enjoy a modified outdoor fall sports season. Monmouth Park, in addition to being the most beautiful, historic racetrack on the East Coast and a better alternative to Atlantic City for sports betting, proved that it can serve as a world class entertainment venue via its successful, summer long partnership with the Count Basie Center for the Arts.

Redevelopment at the Fort Monmouth property has not stopped, and the most recent property sale will have a very positive impact on the Borough of Oceanport. OPort Partners, LLC, an entity owned by Denholz Properties, closed on the first of two properties it has contracted to purchase from FMERA. The first of the sales closed in mid-October. This property, known as District A, is comprised of the former Commissary, PX, Post Office, and Warehouse District. Under the terms of the purchase agreement with FMERA, OPort Partners will pay \$4,350,000 for a total of 26 acres and will invest over 60 Million dollars into the overall project. OPort Partners plans to develop a

mix of commercial uses on the site, including 215,000 square feet targeted for medical and general office uses, light fabrication, and technology. The centerpiece of the project will be the renovated Commissary Building, which will house 53,000 square feet of commercial space. The rehabilitation of the Commissary Building is expected to begin in the first quarter of 2021 and is projected to be completed within 12 months. These new commercial developments will serve to diversify our tax base and provide jobs for our residents. The fact that Denholz Properties, a privately-held real estate development, investment, and management company with more than 60 years of commercial real estate experience, has committed to establishing a large presence in Oceanport will help to drive additional, much-needed commercial development at the Fort.

On behalf of Oceanport's entire Governing Body, I want to extend our condolences to Karen Long and the family of Richard Joline, Sr. who passed away on October 27th. Karen and Rich have regularly attended and participated in our Municipal Council meetings over the past five years and Rich's calm, cool and collected presence will be sorely missed when we return to our live meetings.

Enjoy your Thanksgiving, have a merry Christmas and let's all have a VERY, VERY Happy New Year!