

From the Desk of Mayor Coffey

Sept/Oct 2021

And, just like that, summer is over. But what a summer it was for Oceanport. Early on, we were faced with an unprecedented fish kill and an equally unprecedented cleanup of 6,000 pounds of fish along our 11 miles of Shrewsbury River shoreline. Just a few days after that, over 100 volunteers gathered together and, by hand, removed so much debris from our shoreline that it ended up filling a 30 yard container. On May 31st, the Borough's biggest Memorial Day Parade in years took place, followed by a memorial ceremony at the Borough's new municipal complex. On June 5th, four Oceanport residents – Chris Macioch, Jeremy Julio, Bryan Zinski and John Majeski – paddleboarded thirty miles from The Marina in Oceanport to Battery Park in New York City to raise money for local charities. At about the same time, OPort Partners, LLC (a company owned by Denholtz Properties) began the first phase of its transformation and redevelopment of Parcel A on Fort Monmouth (this includes the former Commissary and PX, the Post Office area and Warehouse District) which will end up as a 26 acre mix of commercial uses, including a micro-brewery. On June 16th, the Borough of Oceanport entered the 21st century when we launched our own Facebook page and two weeks later renovations began at Maple Place School and Wolf Hill School in furtherance of the 33 million dollar referendum passed overwhelmingly by Oceanport's residents in 2019 so that Oceanport's schools could be transformed into 21st century learning environments.

In July, the Borough returned to "in person" Council meetings and Planning Board meetings at our new municipal building (although they can still be watched live on FIOS's Channel 28 and via the internet through the Borough's website). Then, on July 31st, the Borough of Oceanport honored the most important civil servant in our Borough's history by renaming Borough Hall the "Clement V. Sommers Municipal Building" as part of a day-long celebration of his incredibly full life. Over 225 residents and dignitaries attended the dedication ceremony, and we are sure Clem was smiling down on everybody in attendance.

On August 18th the Borough approved the sale of the first two of four liquor licenses available for new facilities located in the Fort Monmouth section of Oceanport (bringing in \$500,000 of much needed revenue). On August 25th, New Jersey City University officially opened its 76,000 square foot college campus in the renovated Squier Hall building in the Oceanport section of Fort Monmouth. NJCU will maintain a state-of-the-art nursing education center and will offer degrees in cybersecurity, fire science and business.

History was made in late August when the "Oceanport 1" softball team (pictured below), led by Joe "I'll Play For Any Team That Will Have Me" Iannuzzelli, captured its FOURTH consecutive Two Rivers Over 40 Softball A League championship, and "Oceanport 2", led by Craig "I Can't Believe Iannuzzelli Plays in the A League" Sears prevailed in the championship game in the B Division. Admittedly, winning the B Division is like being selected as the smartest kid in your home school class, but a championship is a championship. And both teams raved about the condition of the softball field at Blackberry Bay Park during the playoffs, which may be even more impressive than the championships won. Kudos to our DPW for that.

The fact is, however, that if you look closely at most of our parks, you'll notice that there has been a vast improvement in how they look and that is all due to the herculean efforts of the Borough's Department of Public Works. In June, the Municipal Council opted to terminate a third-party agreement for lawn maintenance in favor of, once again, having our DPW staff perform these tasks. Take a walk through Old Wharf, Evergreen, BlackBerry Bay and Charles Parks and you will see the obvious and tangible results of DPW's efforts over the past couple of months. And improvements to Community Center Park, Trinity Park and Gatta Park are in the works! Our parks haven't looked this good since Buddy Brocklebank was a young man. But, in our eyes, Buddy is still a young man.

Finally, our Police Department has had a very busy summer implementing its summertime radar enforcement campaign. The OPD conducted 238 radar details, stopped 460 vehicles and issued 205 summonses during July and August. Fixed radar recognition/display units have been placed on Port Au Peck Avenue near Shrewsbury and at East Main Street near the First Aid Building, a radar speed signboard will be placed in various places throughout town in the very near future and a radar speed data collector will soon be tracking vehicle speeds and volume on targeted roadways. The Oceanport Municipal Court is going to be very busy, very soon!

We will be closing out our summer on September 11, 2021 with a 9/11 Memorial Service at the Clement V. Sommers Municipal Building at which time we will be installing a piece of the World Trade Center as a permanent part of our municipal memorial area. This item was donated to the Borough in 2012, but Hurricane Sandy prevented it from being dedicated at our old municipal building. Details about the ceremony will be posted on the Borough's Facebook Page and website. Later that evening, at 8:46 pm, Oceanport's annual Summer's End event will go dark for three minutes as we participate in the "Light Up The Shore" event honoring the lives lost in the terrorist attacks of 9/11/01 and remembering the heroism displayed by citizens and first responders in response to these horrific events. Summer's End is a communal, small-town function that brings all of Oceanport together and, given what we've had to endure these past 18 months or so, I can't help but believe that something that reminds us all of what we have in common will be a welcome respite from all that has recently divided and isolated us. Let's make this year's Summer End one to remember as we, at once, celebrate our freedoms and honor those innocents who died at the hands of people who would deprive us of them.

Enjoy the relatively empty beaches, restaurants and waterways for the next few months and I hope to see you on October 16th at the Borough's 100th Anniversary Party at Monmouth Park Racetrack. The Oceanport Centennial Committee (check out their Facebook Page) will be putting out more information on this gala very shortly!