

## Mayor's Message

May/June 2023

Let's talk turkey. In particular, the wild turkeys that have taken up residence in Oceanport and have been causing quite a stir in town due to their change in behavior. This run of turkeys (there are about five of them) had been peacefully meandering throughout Oceanport for several months, but recently began taking a bit more of an aggressive stance with our human residents, especially those humans driving slowly in motor vehicles. There is no shortage of Facebook and Instagram videos of cars being pecked at or charged into by turkeys because they see their own reflection on the side of a car and think it is another turkey. Why do they do that? Because they are wild turkeys and wild turkeys have little or no experience with how mirrors or reflections work. They are, after all, wild turkeys.

Having little or no previous experience with marauding wild turkeys, I contacted the NJDEP's divisions of Wildlife Management and Wildlife Control and spoke to their incredibly enthusiastic and knowledgeable representatives and learned more about wild turkeys, their history, habits, and habitats than I could have reasonably imagined. I also spoke to a representative of the USDA's Wildlife Services Department, who was kind enough to visit Oceanport and assess our wild turkey situation to see if they should be relocated. The long and the short of it is that Oceanport's wild turkey population is here to stay, and we are going to have to adapt to their presence.

Having said that, the **NUMBER ONE** thing that each wildlife expert told me is that we need to make sure that we aren't feeding these birds. The wildlife experts, moreover, believe that our turkeys are being fed, intentionally or unintentionally, by one or more of our residents. As such if you have a bird feeder or some other food source on your property that the wild turkeys might be accessing, it is recommended that you remove the food source for a few weeks. If you would like to know more about how to deal with wild turkeys and the State's wildly successful Turkey Restoration Project, please go to [dep.nj.gov/njfw/hunting/wild-turkey-in-new-jersey](http://dep.nj.gov/njfw/hunting/wild-turkey-in-new-jersey). Wild turkeys are beautiful, albeit somewhat foul mannered, birds, but to see them running on our streets and through our yards is, as Buddy Brocklebank is fond of saying, "poultry in motion."

While we're on the topic of motion, this month's heavy rains have given us a chance to evaluate the impact of the Borough's efforts to control the flow of water along our streets so that incidences of recurrent flooding are reduced. Historically, Genesee, Gooseneck, Shore, Seneca, Oneida, Cayuga, Myrtle, Monmouth Boulevard, and Pocono have had large amounts of water on them during storms and, under the right conditions, even during high tides without storms. This past year, the Borough installed 10 check valves (out of a projected 30 or so) on our storm water outflows pipes to see if there would be an appreciable reduction in flooding. As a matter of fact, we started the process of identifying, engineering, purchasing, and installing the check valves close to five years ago. I am happy to report that it seems as though the check valves have been successful in reducing the volume of river water backing up onto our streets during high tides and significant weather events. Seneca, Myrtle, Gooseneck, Shore, and Monmouth Boulevard all had significantly less water than usual during the wild and wet weekend of April 29/30. We will be installing more catch basins over the next two years.

Additionally, our DPW has been cleaning out catch basins — something that has not been done regularly in decades — on a regular basis. We are also upgrading our roads and curbs all over town to help direct water where we want it to go. As we review the results of the mitigation provided by the 1st phase of the check valves, we will be analyzing which outfalls are best suited for the 2nd phase of the project. Oceanport is surrounded by water on three sides, the number of waterfront properties has grown over the past here decades and there is no doubt that water levels are rising, so we are never going to eradicate flooding issues completely. Nonetheless, it is heartening to know that we are able to lessen the water's impact and that our efforts to date are not for naught.

As Netflix continues to move ahead with its proposed purchase of close to 300 acres of property in Eatontown and Fort Monmouth, it is important that everyone understands that an incredible amount of development has taken place in the Oceanport section and that, if and when Netflix closes, there will be no more property to be sold within the Oceanport section of the Fort. For a up to date summary of all transactions within the Oceanport section of the Fort, please visit the Boroughs website and look for the "Fort Monmouth Development Summary" connected to the Mayor's Message section. Also, keep your eyes peeled for an announcement about a bike and/or walking tour of the Fort that will take place in early July!

We lost a very important and highly active member of our community in March with the death of Pauline Poyner. Our hearts and prayers go out to the Poyner family. Their loss is Oceanport's loss, too.