



Robert L. Cox III, Mayor

SALTAIRE NEWS

January 20, 2012

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

I hope everyone had a happy and healthy holiday season and new year. With the turn of the calendar the days are once again getting longer, and with the mild winter weather (knock wood), we've actually seen some glimpses of springtime. Another Saltaire summer lies just around the corner, and there is much to do to get ready and our staff has been hard at work. Since my last Newsletter we have tackled a number of capital and infrastructure improvements that are set out in more detail below.

As has become our custom, we have scheduled our first winter meeting, January 26, 2012, in NYC at the London Room of the Hotel Pennsylvania, 6th floor, located at 401 Seventh Avenue, with a video connection linked to the Saltaire Library in the Village Hall. This location is centrally located adjacent to Penn Station and easily accessible by subway. We established this practice to maximize attendance and hope this dual-location format provides the best opportunity for you to participate during the winter season. A complete agenda of items to be discussed can be found at <http://www.saltaire.org/agenda.pdf>. I will focus this Newsletter on the major items on the agenda so you have some background to more fully participate at the meeting, or to raise any questions beforehand if you are not able to attend. As always, I encourage you to voice your opinion on any topic to be discussed at this or any other meeting via email or other means.

Local Law Initiatives

Two local laws will be considered for adoption at the meeting, and another will be introduced for discussion, all three of which can be viewed through links provided directly on the website-posted agenda. Below is a brief synopsis of the each:

- Waiver of Maximum Tax Cap Limit: Last year, New York State adopted legislation that limited the annual increase in the tax *levy* that a local government can assess. Although it has been commonly described as a 2% tax cap, in fact it is the lower of that or the rate of inflation. In our case, that limit is a **1%** increase for our next fiscal year. As we enter the budgeting process for the next fiscal year, we do not anticipate an increase in our tax levy, but we are only just now beginning to review the operating details and state mandated requirements for the next fiscal budget. The adoption of this local law will provide the flexibility for the Board to set the tax rate as necessary to meet its projections, with the full anticipation and hope that no tax increase will be required. That said, the risk of being wrong and being constrained by the State Cap is unworkable. If adopted, we will join an overwhelming majority of municipalities in the state to have passed similar legislation.
- Requirement for Residential Sprinkler Systems in New Structures: As can be seen from the recent catastrophic fires in the Fire Island Pines and Ocean Beach, fire remains our biggest risk to life and property. We have been fortunate in recent years to have been spared the fate of our neighboring communities in this regard, thanks in part to the fire prevention measures that we have instituted the last few years. A case in point is the requirement that the electric service panels in each home be equipped with a surge suppression breaker and be properly

grounded according to State code. However, good fortune also plays a part, so we must remain diligent and proactive in our fire prevention measure and response capabilities.

Recent changes in building codes and a trend toward larger renovations and substantially improved structures has resulted in buildings constructed much higher off the ground and with building materials that make it more difficult for our volunteer fire fighters to access and extinguish in case of a fire. Empirical evidence shows that sprinkler systems will dramatically increase the safety of both the occupants and the responding firefighters in the event of a fire. Concurrently, improved technology has reduced the cost of installation of residential sprinkler systems, making them more affordable when being installed in the open walls of new or substantially improved structures. We will discuss at the meeting the merits of a change to the Village Code that would require the installation of fire sprinkler systems in new or substantially improved residential structures.

Pre-existing, non-conforming structures: There are a number of buildings in the Village that met the zoning /building code requirements when built, but which do not meet the existing Code requirements. As these homes change hands we are frequently faced with issues related to the allowable scope of alteration. In October of 2011, the Board had adopted a revision to §55-16 of the Zoning Code (the section of the code dealing with structures that were built according to previous versions of the zoning code) in order to clarify drafting defects in the old language of that section. That revision process led to further substantive discussions as to how to most fairly deal with proposed expansions of the significant number of residential buildings that were built prior to the setback and lot coverage requirements of the current Code. The policy we are seeking to codify is intended to permit renovations that do not expand the non-conformity and to encourage owners, where feasible, to design their projects to bring structures into conformance where possible. The drafted language was circulated for comment to the Trustees, area contractors, area architects and the Architectural Review Committee. This has led to the version that is posted on the website and will be presented at the meeting. The goal of this process is to find the proper balance between the reasonable expansion rights of these older structures with optimum open space separations between buildings and properties. We feel this draft is a very good effort towards achieving that balance, and look to your input to help us fine-tune it and meet that goal.

Water System Upgrade and Lighthouse Promenade Reconstruction

We continue to work with Suffolk County Water Authority to finalize the language of the contract that will govern our joint effort to replace the water main running under Lighthouse Promenade (from a 6 inch pipe to a 12 inch pipe) to inter-connect our water system with the SCWA systems servicing Kismet and Fair Harbor, and as part of that work, to rebuild Lighthouse Promenade. As we stated at our last meeting, we are planning for the rebuilt promenade to be a uniform width of 8 feet. The water main installation is being planned for an autumn 2012 construction start. In the interim, we continue to work with our engineering advisors to incorporate design elements that will facilitate better control of both the volume and speed of traffic along Lighthouse Promenade. We also continue to work with our engineer to find workable solutions for the protection of the slab-edge and cosmetic improvements for the surface material. We are making progress on these issues and should have them complete well within the timeframe for the start of construction.

Expansion of Saltaire Fire Company Ambulance District and Retention of Paid Personnel

The Board has been working with the Saltaire Fire Volunteer Company (SVFC) to address operational issues related to its proposed expansion of its Ambulance Protection district. The SVFC has for quite some time provided almost exclusive response to Kismet for ambulance service as part of the comprehensive, but informal, mutual aid network that exists on Fire Island. More recently, however, the SVFC has been directed to formalize those arrangements. Therefore they entered into discussions with the community of Kismet and have reached tentative agreement on the terms of a protection contract whereby the SVFC will formally expand its ambulance district to cover Kismet. This arrangement will not significantly increase the response responsibilities beyond what the SVFC currently provides, but it will provide a more formal framework and will also incorporate the payment of an annual fee to the Village. This fee will help to offset the cost of the resources used to cover the Kismet protection district, plus provide supplemental funding to the SVFC which we plan to utilize to hire paid medical response personnel during the coming summer. This resource will supplement our volunteers, provide experienced leadership, and generally enhance our ability to respond to emergency calls. The SVFC and the Kismet District have agreed to terms and authorized contract execution, and at the upcoming meeting, the Board will consider authorizing contract execution as well.

One of the main benefits of hiring paid medical response personnel (which has become commonplace in volunteer fire companies throughout Suffolk County) is that the SVFC will have at its disposal a qualified EMT responder on call on a 24/7 basis throughout the summer. This will eliminate the risk that all of our volunteer EMTs are unavailable for one reason or another, which in the past has required us to seek assistance from neighboring districts, prolonging response times. It will also provide us with a responder who is certified in delivering critical care, which not all of our volunteers are certified to do. Therefore, this initiative will provide a guaranteed critical care level of emergency response throughout the summer, while at the same time providing much needed support and training of our dedicated volunteer staff.

Ferry and Parking Services

Our contract with Fire Island Ferries for passenger ferry and freight services, and our contract with Fire Island Terminal for parking services (both are majority-held jointly-owned companies) terminated December 31, 2011. In the spring of 2011 we formally requested proposals from interested parties for parking, passenger ferry and freight ferry service for the next five year period. The Board found the results of the proposals for passenger ferry service (which resulted in only one proposal for service) unsatisfactory for a number of reasons, and authorized a second solicitation of proposals. This second round resulted in the receipt of two proposals for passenger ferry service, one from our current provider, Fire Island Ferries, and one from New York Water Taxi. We are currently analyzing both proposals, as well as their impact on the parking operation, and should reach a final decision at the January 26th meeting. I realize that this process has pushed the parking application schedule back by one month, but we will still have ample time once we reach a decision on these contracts to send out and receive applications, and have seasonal parking permits issued well in advance of the spring start-up season.

Infrastructure Improvements

Beachfront: Our new dune line continues to hold up well throughout the winter season. Although it has flattened somewhat, connecting the fore-dune and the back-dune, the result has been the creation of a wider primary dune that provides an improved wall of protection. We have completed our dune fencing project for the entire length of the beach, placing the majority of the fencing on the backside of the dune. This has resulted in the capture of sand toward the rear dune, which should increase its elevation and width over time. We are also planning a major dune grass planting project in March that will add some 250,000 plugs to the new dune. The new grass along with the fencing should help stabilize the dune and capture sand during periods of favorable winds.



I want to thank all of those who contributed to the dune grass fund. The funds collected will help offset some of the projected \$60,000 cost of the dune grass planting. The bulk of the projected cost remains unfunded, however. For those who have made donations to this project we are very grateful. To those who might wish to do so there is still plenty of need and time to help out with a donation towards this very important effort. You may contact the Village office for details on how to contribute.

Boardwalk Reconstruction. We are currently reconstructing a 500 foot section of Pacific Walk between Beach Plum and Harbor Promenade according to a new design that will stand up better to the heavier load requirements of the fire and rescue vehicles of the Fire Island fire companies. Poles and girders have been installed by an outside contractor, and our maintenance staff will now commence the installation of the remainder of the understructure as well as the deck surface. It is important to note that the deck will be surfaced with Greenheart lumber, the same material used to build our dock. This material is an important part of the structural improvement of the walk design, but it also has a considerably longer life span than the Douglas Fir which has been used in the past. This will result in lower replacement and maintenance costs of the walk over time, and although it is a more expensive product, it should prove to be a cost-saver over the lifespan of the walkway. It also adds an important safety element in that it is much more resistant to fire than Douglas Fir and therefore it can act as a break in a fire situation.



Building Improvements: Our maintenance staff has undertaken the long overdue and complete renovation of two of the Village-owned residences this off-season. Both are historic structures in the old Coffey-style dating back to the establishment of the community. Although we were unable to save the fireplaces due to their deteriorated condition, we have succeeded in renovating them within the character and style of their original design. Both houses, one of

which is about 95% complete and one of which is about 50% complete, will be brought up to like-new condition, and will enhance the aesthesis of the area and can now continue to serve the Village's needs for years to come.



Bay Beach: After more than 6 years of persistence by the Village in requesting permission from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to reinstall the western wall of the bay beach that was taken down as part of the dock reconstruction project, permission was finally granted in early January. We quickly secured the contractor to install the new wall, which will prevent sand erosion from the bay beach into the marina. The new wall on the west side of the beach in conjunction with the new groin wall installed just last year on the east side of the beach will minimize erosion and provide for a more stable beach. It took years to gain permission for both projects, but we feel the improvement for the beach area was well worth the persistent effort.



In the Upcoming Months

As we get closer and closer to the real springtime, you can expect to see more and more email reminders and communications from the Village office about various applications or deadlines that are approaching for summer services. If you feel you've missed anything, you know you can always call Donna or Nancy, the true repositories of all information in the Village. But in the next two months, you can expect the following:

- In January
 - Parking Applications
- In February
 - Discount Ferry Ticket Applications
 - Propane Permit Applications

Other Matters

If you have any questions about any of the other more routine matters that are listed on the agenda, or about any other issue that is not listed, you should feel free to contact the Village office or any of your Trustees for further details and discussion. I hope to see you at the January meeting.

Mayor Robert L. Cox III

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In Case of Emergency While in Saltaire, Call 911
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