

RBHA BOARD MEETING

On Saturday, February 21, 2009 Beach Mayor Sam Cooper was the featured speaker at the RBHA February Board meeting. Mr. Cooper fielded questions from 15 interested attendees, including County Councilwoman Joan Deaver [who indicated she was attending in an effort to improve County relations with communities], and City Commissioners Lorraine Zellers and Stan Mills. The Mayor spent well over an hour addressing the City's wastewater project.

The Mayor opened his presentation with a prop. He showed a micron filter that he said is used in the processing of wastewater. He illustrated how the device will not permit anything but water and only the smallest particles pass through. He said he brought it to dissuade the notion that any form of waste product is allowed out of the treatment process.

Then the Mayor responded to questions and the following are highlights. **OCEAN OUTFLOW** Mayor Cooper said a price in the range of \$35-36 Million could be expected. It could feature new technological advances, such as direct drilling—placing the pipe underground all the way to the dispersal point. **LAND APPLICATION** The Mayor mentioned the ongoing County/City study, but also noted that there could be some benefit to reducing nutrient levels at the County's Wolfe Neck facility by pumping the City's treated wastewater and blending it with untreated matter that the County generates. **WEIGHING OPTIONS** Mr. Cooper displayed his breadth and depth of knowledge on the wastewater topic in responding to an inquirer's reference to a decision by the state of Florida to prohibit ocean outflow. The Mayor asserted that Florida's decision is founded on a concern for its coral reefs. Similarly, he referred to similar decisions, for similar reasons, in both California and Australia. He went on at length about how each entity came to its decision and why. Mr. Cooper made it clear his top criterion is cost. He said environmental issues are next. He said, "I'm not convinced that putting wastewater on the land is any more environmentally sensitive than putting it in the ocean." Asked if the City would consider the preferences of the citizens, Mayor Cooper replied, "That's a bit premature. It may be very obvious what the choice is when the time comes." **COSTS** The Mayor expressed reservations about what he termed the "cost model," the steps necessary to allocate expenses between the County and the City. He also noted that the City has added bargaining power as a result of the water services it provides to other communities, i.e., Dewey Beach, North Shores, and Helopen Acres. In the end he said that residential consumers might expect to pay 109% more for their wastewater costs (based on his overall project cost estimate of \$36 million). Ms. Kauffman questioned his estimate, referring to the Clean Water Advisory Committee—the state funding source—which projected an increase of over 300%. In response to why there was such a large difference, Mr. Cooper suggested there were a number of false assumptions. He cited one example; he said the water department operating revenue is about \$1.7 million; expenses are about \$1,242,000 and that money could be used to reduce the overall cost to the citizens. Ms. Kauffman pointed out that the excess goes into the general fund, which would create a deficit there, if the monies were reallocated to the water department. Unfortunately, the discussion drifted and the Mayor never finished his example.

In other RBHA business President Kauffman noted that the Newsletter has been disseminated and added that electronic editions will be distributed starting with the next publication. Treasurer Maldeis reported that the total account balance at the end of January was \$14,343. Membership is currently at 342, well ahead of last year's renewals.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

City Commissioners met on Tuesday, February 17, 2009, addressing several significant items, including the wastewater project, Boardwalk construction, and an alternative recycling program. The Commissioners also decided to change its meeting schedule; the Commission will meet on the first and third Fridays of the month starting in April.

Concerning wastewater, the Mayor reported that an engineering study with the County has begun. A first meeting with County officials and study engineers was held on February 10th and a second meeting is scheduled for March 6th. The study will take 60-90 days to complete and will evaluate the feasibility of transferring treated or raw sewage to a County land application facility. The results—it is hoped—will produce financial data that will enable the City to compare costs with other options, primarily ocean outflow.

Commissioner Mills reported on the status of the next phase of the Boardwalk project. The Boardwalk project may be the recipient of as much as \$7.4 million in Federal stimulus funds. In order to qualify the City must be "shovel ready" in a very short period of time. Surveying was recently completed, the permit process with DNREC has commenced, and engineering drawings are being developed. The Board decided to replace the concrete section at the end of Rehoboth Avenue with the pine wood boards being used on the balance of the Boardwalk. The vote was 6-1 with the Mayor dissenting. Because of Federal requirements, work will likely begin during the summer season. Construction would commence toward the south end of the Boardwalk; beach access would be assured in a manner similar to the practice used during the most recent beach replenishment project.

City Manager Greg Ferrese announced the recycling collection bid and the Board of Commissioners approved it. As noted below the \$1/pick-up fee will be absorbed by the City for the coming year.

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

The City held its final budget meeting on February 17, 2009. City Manager Greg Ferrese presented a draft of a balanced budget of \$14,354,000. The Commissioners agreed to the draft with only one change. Mr. Ferrese had included a recycling collection fee of \$1/pick-up, or \$38,000 per annum, in the budget as directed at the previous meeting. However, the low bid was \$38,000, half the anticipated amount; so the Commissioners opted to absorb the expense again for this year. The cost will be adjusted and reflected in a lower Contingency Fund amount. The Commissioners are expected to adopt the FY 2010 Budget at its March Regular meeting. The City operates on a fiscal year, which begins April 1st.

RBHA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING (CORRECTION)

The last edition of the RBHA News misstated the meeting time; the Spring General Membership Meeting will be held on Saturday, April 18, 2009, 10:00 am. There will be a brief Board of Directors meeting starting at 9:00. The meeting will be held at All Saints Episcopal Church, 18 Olive Avenue. Dr. Pal Littleton, Chair of the City Planning Commission, will present the proposed update to the City's Comprehensive Development Plan.