

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 27, 2021 SENIOR ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Chairman Ken Miller called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM at the Little Egg Harbor (“LEH”) Community Center.

There was a Flag salute and a moment of silence for our military and world peace.

Roll call was taken. Board members in attendance were: Ken Miller, Ann Mikos, Linda Cicco, Nancy Cotter, Diane Coyle, Richard Dutton and Maryann O’Neill. Barbara Jo Crea, Liaison to the Township Committee, was also in attendance.

The first speaker was Chief (formerly Captain) James Hawkins of the LEH Police Department, who gave the customary update on police-related matters affecting the community. He again mentioned the recent incident in Sea Oaks in which six vehicles were entered and a seventh was stolen and he urged residents to keep their house and car doors locked and garage doors closed, noting that there are smart phone apps available that will provide a reminder to secure things at a certain time of day. He also reported that Citizens on Patrol is currently active in LEH, working with the Police Department and providing another set of eyes and ears to watch out for possible crime in the community.

The next speakers were Michael Di Francia, Superintendent, and Earl Sutton, Jr., Executive Director, of the LEH Municipal Utilities Authority. Mr. Di Francia reported that a \$5 million water treatment plant was recently completed, that the Authority has been continuing to replace water and sewer piping and to add fire hydrants and has also been installing the new blue boxes that can now be seen all over town, which are sampling stations used to take monthly water samples to test for bacteria as required by the Environmental Protection Agency. He added that the water in LEH has always met and exceeded standards and there has never been a violation, and that LEH has very low rates for water and sewer service. Mr. Sutton then said that since taking office as Executive Director about eight years ago he has had to deal with replacing old infrastructure that had not been properly upgraded on a regular basis for about sixty years, and that the MUA is at present involved in a ten-year capital improvement plan, adding new piping on eight to ten streets a year and doing all the work in house, thereby avoiding the greater expense of using outside contractors. He said that when piping is replaced the Township puts in storm drains and repaves streets at the same time so that the streets do not need to be worked on twice. He added that his agency has live people answering the phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to address any water and sewer problems immediately and that water service is never shut off because of any resident’s failure to pay a bill. He also said that the Sea Oaks water tower is scheduled to be painted in about two years and that the murals painted on other MUA towers have been widely praised.

The next speaker was Tim Brewin, Manager of the LEH Walmart store, who reported that Walmart is currently experiencing problems keeping shelves stocked because of delays in shipping from overseas and staffing shortages related to the COVID epidemic, which extend to truck drivers, distribution center workers and in-store help; he said that to avoid shipping delays Walmart is now chartering its own ships loaded entirely with Walmart containers. He then noted that both flu and COVID vaccines (including both Pfizer and Moderna booster shots) are available at the store; that online grocery purchases from the store are growing and booming and it is now possible to shop using the same app for both groceries and general merchandise; and that Walmart now offers “Walmart Plus” service similar to Amazon Prime for \$98 per year,

which can be billed monthly and which provides free shipping and the ability to avoid checkout lines by scanning items right in the aisles of the store using one's phone. He reported that there are currently 300 staff members at his store, 65% of them full-time with benefits, that they are paid a minimum of \$15 per hour, with some positions starting at \$17, and that additional perks currently provided to employees include help with college tuition and provision of phones for business use that can also be used for personal purposes at no cost. He added that Walmart has recently made donations of about \$7,500 in funds to entities in the community, including the LEH Police Department, the West Tuckerton Fire Department and the Military Museum in New Gretna, and also gave about 39,000 pounds of food to food banks last year with a value of about \$75,000.

The next meeting of the Board will be on Monday, October 25, 2021 at 10:00 AM at the LEH Community Center. All seniors are welcome and urged to attend.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:45 A.M.

*Respectfully submitted,
Richard Dutton, Acting Secretary, LEH Senior Citizens' Advisory Board*