

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 29, 2024 SENIOR ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Chairman Ken Miller called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM at the Mystic Shores Clubhouse.

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

Dan Maxwell, a member of the Little Egg Harbor (“LEH”) Township Committee and Liaison from the Board to the Committee, then swore in five Board members for new terms on the Board, Diane Coyle, John Edmunds (a new member), Ken Miller, Donna O’Brien and Lisa Stevens.

Roll call was taken. Board members in attendance were: Mr. Miller, Chairman, Linda Cicco, Nancy Cotter, Ms. Coyle, Richard Dutton, Mr. Edmunds, Ms. O’Brien and Ms. Stevens. Mr. Maxwell was also in attendance.

The minutes of the last meeting of the Board on November 27, 2023 were then approved by motion duly made, seconded and unanimously carried.

The first speaker was Chief James Hawkins of the LEH Police Department, who began by reporting that he had recently completed an eleven-week law enforcement executive training program with 197 other trainees from the United States and around the world at the FBI National Academy at Quantico, Virginia, founded in 1935 by J. Edgar Hoover, and that he had developed an amazing network of resources while attending the program. He then discussed his Department’s recent investigation of three arson fires in LEH, in which a stakeout resulted in apprehension of a perpetrator. He also said that the Department had received a grant for a new piece of investigative equipment, a license plate reader camera, that led to the arrest of an individual who had shoplifted merchandise of significant value from Shooters, and he added that he hoped to use the device at locations such as the intersections of Mathistown Road and Route 9 and Green Street and Route 9 to capture images of license plates of individuals driving in and out of town. He then reported that Shooters has been acquired for use as a shooting range by Ocean County and, in response to a question from the audience, he said that in his opinion LEH currently has only a very small homeless population, fewer than ten people and none of them children, and that they cannot be forced to go to shelters or be arrested unless they are committing crimes. He also said, in response to another question, that there is a standing 10:00 PM curfew in LEH but it is enforced only as necessary.

The next speakers were Ocean County Commissioner and Director and longtime LEH resident Barbara Jo Crea and Maria LaFace, Director of the Ocean County Senior Services Department. Commissioner Crea first noted that the County has a Homelessness Trust Fund that is financed by a surcharge of \$5 on filings such as the registration of deeds in the County, \$3 of which is used to fund programs for the homeless and \$2 of which goes to Code Blue, which provides information about shelter options during extreme weather. She reiterated what Chief Hawkins had said about it being difficult to relocate homeless individuals if, for example, they prefer to remain in tents in wooded areas rather than going to shelters. Ms. LaFace then spoke about programs her Department funds from grants received from the federal government, as supplemented by what the Department receives from the County Commissioners. She noted that with the increase in life expectancies over the years, some people now receive food at home from one such program, Meals on Wheels, for decades, so that the program has outgrown its kitchen and each month approximately 40 people come off the program but 80-90 new applications are received. She said that senior housing is also now a troublesome issue, with monthly rents being increased dramatically--\$700 in one case--for residents on fixed incomes, and accordingly the State is being asked to consider providing housing subsidies for seniors. She explained the difference between Section 8 housing, in which qualifying individuals receive a voucher that pays all of the individual’s rent in excess of 30% of his or her income, and housing in LMI (low and moderate income) buildings, a federally-subsidized program in which a qualifying individual must pay only a maximum of 30% of his or her income as rent. She said that her Department is constantly advocating for additional support for seniors and that the Ocean County Bar Association will be encouraged to take on matters that will help seniors, in particular the preparation of wills, trusts, powers of attorney and related documents. Once again, her Department’s 24-page Consumer Resources

Directory of services available to seniors in the County may be viewed online on the County's website, www.co.ocean.nj.us, and her office's telephone number is 732-929-2091.

The third speaker was Darol Tucker, an LEH resident and Local Taxpayer Advocate with the Internal Revenue Service's Taxpayer Advocate Office, an independent organization within the IRS that helps protect the rights of taxpayers. He said that his office covers the area from Trenton south to Cape May and he explained that if a taxpayer calls the IRS more than once about a tax problem he or she will very likely end up talking with a different person each time, but if the taxpayer contacts his office it will step in and take care of things until the taxpayer's problem is resolved. He said that it is harder and takes a longer time for his office to render assistance to taxpayers who have filed paper returns, and that for this reason and other reasons he recommends that taxpayers file electronically, and he also noted that if you contact your federal congressional office first about your tax problem, his office, when it steps in, will only be able to communicate with that office, rather than dealing with you directly. He invited anyone who has any questions or has any problem with the IRS to contact him directly by phone at 609-858-7950 or by email at Darol.Tucker@irs.gov.

LEH Committeeman Dan Maxwell then reported that the Township's annual Senior Expo will take place on Wednesday, May 1 from 9:00 AM to noon at the Community Center. He also said that there would be a town-sponsored spaghetti dinner for seniors on February 24, that LEH's Recreation Director, Kathy Tucker, was organizing senior card games, and that Fire District elections with voting for budgets as well as Commissioners would take place on Saturday, February 17, from 2:00 until 9:00 PM.

The next meeting of the Board will be on Monday, February 26, 2024 at 10:00 AM at the Sea Oaks Clubhouse. All seniors are welcome and urged to attend.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:55 AM.

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