

MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 27, 2025 SENIOR ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Chairman Ken Miller called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM at the Cranberry Creek Clubhouse.

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, Chairman, Barbara Jo Crea, Richard Dutton, John Edmunds, Rosemarie Martelli, Donna O'Brien and Lisa Stevens. Township Committee Liaison Ray Gormley was also present.

The minutes of the last meeting of the Board on September 29, 2025 were then approved by motion duly made, seconded and carried, with Lisa Stevens abstaining from the vote because she had not been present.

The first speakers were Earl F. Sutton Jr., Executive Director, and Michael DiFrancia, Superintendent, of the Little Egg Harbor ("LEH") Municipal Utilities Authority ("MUA"). Mr. Sutton said that he is a local native, having been born in Tuckerton and now living in LEH, and that he has been with the MUA for over 12 years. He then showed a picture taken at a ceremony in Chicago at which an award for "Water Tower of the Year" was presented to the MUA for the tower that adjoins Sea Oaks along Frog Pond Road. He then reported that funds are constantly appropriated to maintain and replace infrastructure, that new piping and other improvements are planned to last for 100 to 150 years, that because LEH is located in a lower income area funding can be obtained with principal forgiveness, and that there was recently a savings of \$4 million by using such funding. He also said that the MUA has been adding new fire hydrants where there were none before and that proximity to a fire hydrant can affect a homeowner's insurance rates. He then reported that storm water management has been an issue in LEH because storm drains do not work properly, in some cases because concrete pipes were used with holes on top that have not been plugged, and that the MUA assists LEH Township with repairs to these. Finally, he noted that our water source is 800 feet underground.

Mr. DiFrancia said that he was an LEH native and has worked for the MUA for over 30 years. He reported that the cost of a complete rehabilitation and painting of a water tower is currently about \$1 million, that the work on the one adjacent to Sea Oaks cost \$750,000, and work done on the "Wildcat" tower behind the LEH Library cost under \$600,000 in 2019. He said such a renovation is expected to last for about 25 to 30 years and that the interior as well as the exterior of the tank gets completely cleaned, with the interior taken down to the base metal. He said that during Superstorm Sandy LEH did not lose water pressure because he insisted on continuing to operate the MUA's equipment to divert water using the different wells.

An audience member then inquired about the expected impact upon the MUA of the new residential community proposed by the builder Lennar for a large area off Center Street, and Mr. Sutton responded that we do have the capacity to serve the development if it is approved, but as things now stand the MUA did not give the tentative approval requested several months ago because it felt that the proposed plan was deficient in some respects, and there are still unresolved issues in this regard. The State of New Jersey DEP and Ocean County also both have their own rules relevant to the development and will also have to give their approval, and there are in addition storm drain issues not within the purview of the MUA. A new water tower will also be needed in any event and it would cost about \$2 million to build. Another audience member then asked about letters of the kind that are often received by mail from entities that want to sell to homeowners insurance coverage for their water lines. Mr. Sutton said that he does not recommend that it be purchased and he added that if you call the MUA they will check your system first if there is ever a concern about apparent loss of water and frequently the cause is just a small leak in a toilet or a hot water heater problem rather than a leak in a water line. He urged those present to check their current homeowners insurance to see what is covered; sometimes it is possible to add protection against a plumbing leak or water backup for a small additional premium if it is not already included. He said that the underground area from the curb to the house is generally the homeowner's responsibility, and he closed by saying that if you have a question about unusual-smelling or colored water, call the MUA first and they will promptly address it.

Senior Advisory Board member Barbara Jo Crea then once again urged homeowners to avoid home title fraud by signing up for the Ocean County Clerk's Office's free property alert service to receive an email alert if any document is filed with that Office relating to your property. Board member Jack Edmunds then urged all those present to attend the LEH Planning Board meeting on Thursday, November 6 to register opposition again to the pending construction of the Lennar residential community.

The next speaker was LEH Township Committee liaison Ray Gormley, who provided further information about some of the issues that had been previously discussed. He said that the Mystic Island section of town had been built about fifty or sixty years ago on what had been marshland and the underground piping that was used was concrete or ceramic with slip joints. At the time, the effects of the pipes being submerged in salt water and the settlement of the pipes in the soft earth were not anticipated, so that in some cases PVC pipe was subsequently put inside the pipes to provide a temporary fix and over time this has evolved into a "nightmare". He then reported that salt water has now permeated wells in the area behind his store, My Three Sons on Route 9 near Parkertown Road, and it was necessary to drill down 105 feet to get good water. He added that this indicates that LEH will eventually have to be completely connected into the water and sewer system; as of now, about a third of the town still uses wells and septic systems. He then spoke briefly about the affordable housing issue in LEH and said that the average family income is about \$58,000, but many homes in LEH that were destroyed in Superstorm Sandy were torn down and replaced by very expensive homes that the average LEH family cannot afford, giving rise to an affordable housing obligation for the Township. He said that Waretown's affordable housing units can be seen along Route 9 opposite the ShopRite supermarket and that similar housing has been built along Route 9 in Barnegat.

The next meeting of the Senior Advisory Board will be on Monday, November 24, 2025 at 10 AM at the Sunrise Bay clubhouse. All seniors are welcome and urged to attend.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:35 AM.

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