

TOWN CRIER

This is the 11th issue of what will be a periodic communication to the citizens of Cape Charles. John Burdiss is solely responsible for the content.

Topics addressed in this issue (March 12, 2008) are from the agenda, plus the reassessment.

No "fireworks" - well save the 4th of July version, but ... the reassessment

There are far more questions than answers about the recently received reassessment values for property owners in Northampton County, which of course includes all property owners in Cape Charles. However, I believe that there are two basic issues:

(1) **What rate will the County and the Town ultimately set as the new tax rates to be applied these new values?** [Currently the County is at \$.70/\$100 of value and the Town is \$.3008/\$100.] Initially each entity much set a new rate that only increases tax revenues by 1% compared to the prior year. Nonetheless, the County and the Town can set a new rate - after public hearings - to support proposed budgets that would certainly cause revenues to be higher than a 1% increase and thus a new tax rate that yields substantially more tax revenues.

It is my understanding that the "average" value of properties in the entire County (including Cape Charles) was about 40% of the actual or new (reassessed value). Assuming that is true (we don't have the data yet to be sure), here is some "math" (as Dave Burden called it) to consider. If that "average" was true, assume that two owners owned property that is currently "valued" at \$200,000. Previously, owner "x" was valued at \$80,000 (40% of the new value) and owner "y" was valued at \$100,000 (50% of the new value). Simply put, no matter what tax rates the County and the Town ultimately use, owner "x" will see a greater increase in taxes relative to "y".

Old taxes: "x" was $\$80,000/100 \times (\$.70 + \$.3008) = \806.40 ; and "y" was $\$100,000/100 \times (\$.70 + \$.3008) = \$1,008.00$. **New taxes:** [Rates shown here are based on my best "guess" and not any known or publicly disclosed "facts" - but the new rates will be decided "soon" - stay tuned and go to all County and Town budget meetings/hearings.] Reassessed values for "x" & "y" at $\$200,000/100 \times (\$.35 + \$.15) = \$1,000.00$. Because "x's" value increased more than "y's", "x's" taxes (*in this hypothetical scenario*) went up by \$193.60 (from \$806.40), while "y's" went down \$8 (from \$1,008). Hypothetically total tax revenue went from \$1,814.40 to \$2,000.00, increasing revenues by about 10% in this scenario.

The closer that your old value was to at least 50% of the new value, the less "pain" you will suffer compared to those whose old value was at 40% or even less of the new value - no matter what the new tax rates are. Paraphrasing Dave Burden it is simply recognizing owners whose "old" values were on the lower side (percentage wise) of the "new" values were paying less than they should have been compared to owners whose "old" values were already closer to the new values.

I agree; hopefully this reassessment will achieve the equity that is needed between all County property owners. Without addressing the "fairness" of your particular appraisal, if you were among those whose property increased by 3 fold (or more), you have been paying less than those whose values only doubled and this reassessment intends to remove those inequities.

(2) **Are the new valuations "fair"; both as to the relative value of other "in town" properties and the relative values and the increases in value of the all "in town" properties compared to other properties in the County that are not in Cape Charles.**

The question of “value” is one that each individual property owner needs to address with County officials. To aid your efforts in that process, I encourage you to visit the website where you can find the new values of each property in the County, parcel by parcel.

The website is: <http://northampton.mapsdirect.net/DisclaimerAgreement.aspx> [Click the “box” and then click enter - no password or user name is needed. You can then search by tax parcel and/or owner’s name. Once you find any parcel, you can use the “tools” on the upper right to identify the owners of any other parcel that you select. If you have trouble navigating the site our Town Treasurer, Paul Skolnik, will assist you; call him at 757-331-3259, Ext. 11.

Some of the other matters on the 3/11/08 agenda

Council unanimously approved:

- A resolution changing the date & location of future council meetings to Thursdays beginning on April 10th at the St. Charles Parish Hall. The Cape Charles Hotel has provided an excellent venue over the past several months, but a scheduling conflict was the impetus for the location change; the Northampton County Supervisors’ meeting change to Tuesdays was the impetus for the change to Thursday s.
- Authorizing the expenditure of \$3,500 and the attendant manpower to sponsor the annual 4th of July Fireworks; the CC Volunteer Fire Co. will handle the actual fireworks.
- Updating personnel evaluation forms and process; contracting with the successful bidder for the Town’s ground maintenance; * destroying old records recommended by the Clerk.
- Scheduling public hearings for April 10th on two conditional use permits – height variance on new construction at Bay Shore Concrete and residential use for a 2nd story to be added at 309 Mason Ave.
 - The news that Bay Shore intends to revamp its batch plant, silos and materials handling processes and make a large capital investment is good for Cape Charles and for future employment prospects.
 - Similarly, continued interest in adding reasonable residential projects in the historic district bodes well for long term growth in residents for the Town.
- Jim Wiener was appointed to the seat vacated by Dave Burden on the Wetlands Board.

Reports were heard from various Town staff members, including an update on the expenditures compared to budget for capital projects – all within budget; and the movement to resolve the issues with Bay Mark, the successor to Brown and Root, regarding the various aspects of the ‘annexation agreement’.

Six will vie for three seats for 4 year terms on Council

Councilmen Brown & Dudley did not file, however Bruce Evans is seeking reelection. Again, thanks to Sambo and Melvin for their service. The other candidates are (alphabetically): Steve Bennett, Sophie Harvey, Joan Natali, Larry Veber and Scott Walker. Welcome to each of you as prospective members of Council. To the citizens/voters I encourage you to get to know as much as you can about each candidate; participate in forums, ask questions and above all vote!

My office is at 117 Mason Ave., Suite E (next to Kelley’s Pub) - 5:15 – 6:15 PM on Tuesday, March 18th. This is your opportunity to come, voice opinions, ask questions and learn more about what your Town government and your Council are doing to honor our duty to you by always striving to serve the best interests of the Town with each action we take. ***Please come: we will all benefit.*** Your responses and/or inquiries to anything in the Town Crier or about “Town” business are welcome at johnburdiss@baycrk.net