

# TOWN CRIER

This is the 12th issue of what will be a periodic communication to the citizens of Cape Charles. John Burdiss is solely responsible for the content.

In this issue (April 11, 2008) are items from the 4/10/08 agenda and the reassessment.

[**Note:** The annual Council Retreat April 16 - 18<sup>th</sup> is at the Legion Hall in Cheriton; it is open to the public. Some key issues include the old CC High School, prospective new municipal center and the budget for 2008/2009 - plus many topics that I believe are inappropriate "retreat" items.]

In what I have dubbed as a trend toward "council light", we only truly deliberated on two issues last night. First, moving the tennis courts and the basketball court to (4) Town owned lots on Madison - north side of school (estimated to cost the Town \$18k in matching funds for a grant of \$72k for this part of the project). Second agreeing to spend \$10k for a study the feasibility of a Town operated Emergency Operations Center (EOC). *I voted no on both issues and here's why.*

Some of the changes to the "conceptual plan" for Central Park and the "Community Trail" *may be* defensible, but there are many unresolved issues. (1) The problems with the basketball court are operational - when built there was no commitment to funding of supervision and since built there has been very little commitment to supervision. Moving the court only moves the problem, it doesn't fix anything. (2) The future of the old school is unknown, but must be decided upon soon. Whether it's a rehab - parking could easily be on the 4 town lots now designated for the relocated tennis and basketball courts, or a tear down, the movement of these courts without a plan for the school & the 4 lots is at best premature. The vote to approve was 5 to 1 (Burdiss, no).

EOC - while it may be desirable to plan for every eventuality, we are a town of less than 1,000 people. Our taxes support a County EOC that's been in existence for years for all for 14,000 people including the Town. \$10k to "study" the engineering needs for this duplicative concept is wasteful & also premature. Here are just a few reasons why: (1) The \$10k was not in the current year's budget. (2) The estimated costs range upward of \$150k just to add hurricane shutters to the current municipal building and to buy and install a generator. (3) The "plan" also assumes use of the CC Vol. Fire Co. space, too - yet no written agreement exists. (4) The 2008/2009 budget will be developed in the next 6 - 8 weeks. Is this a priority that warrants the \$150k+ spending next year? (5) We continue to assess the need to build (or acquire property and remodel) to accommodate a "new" municipal center to serve the Town for years to come. If a separate, in Town EOC is really necessary, then it could be better positioned, better planned & better financed as part of the development of that project. The vote to approve was 4 to 2 (Burdiss & Evans, no).

## ... the reassessment - part duex

The *nearly final* numbers are in; there may be some more changes based upon appeals and adjustments, but here are the numbers presented to us by Paul Skolnick, Town Treasurer:

	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>Increase</u>
Northampton County Total	\$1.379 Billion	\$2.793 Billion	102.5%
Town of Cape Charles Total	\$ .311 Billion	\$ .580 Billion	86.6%

[Note: I first recall seeing the total assessed value for Cape Charles in about 1998; it was just over \$40 million; 10 years later it is \$580 million! Talk about your exponential growth in assessed values! Also note that the Town's portion of the County total fell to 20.77% from 22.55% in 2007.]

Approximate new estimated tax rates just to maintain same revenues as last year (cents per \$100 of appraised value): NH Co. - \$.35/\$100.00; Cape Charles \$.16/\$100.00; last year's rates were \$.70 and \$.3008 respectively. County officials and rumors have suggested the County needs at least \$.04, maybe \$.08 (or more) in an increase to cover bond debt (courthouse/jail/etc.) plus school capital and operating fund problems.

HYPOTHECTICAL SCENARIO: If you were the "average" property owner in Cape Charles and your value went up 86.6%, here's an idea of what you may expect to happen to your tax bill. **Old value**: \$100,000 - Combined NH Co. & Town Taxes = *approx.* \$1.00/\$100 = **total tax of \$1,000** (\$700 to NH Co. and \$300 to Cape Charles). **New value**: \$186,600 - likely combined NH Co. (\$.43 - best guess - see above) and Town (\$.16 assumes no increase and no decrease either) = \$.59/\$100 = **total tax of \$1,102** (\$802 to NH Co. and \$300 to Cape Charles); about a 10% increase overall.

The above scenario projects about a 14% increase in what the "average" property owner in Cape Charles will pay to just NH Co. and about a 10% increase in total taxes. It also assumes no increase in revenues to the Town of Cape Charles. You have my pledge that it is my intention to hold Town spending to no increase, and if possible, try to find ways to cut the 2008/2009 budget. Holding the line is not easily done and cutting is even harder, but we must be austere and practical. But please understand even if we could find a way to cut our Town property taxes by 10% - *highly unlikely* - that would only lower the taxes in this scenario by \$30 (10% of \$300 due the Town). That still means the property owner in this scenario would pay \$802 to NH Co. + \$270 to Cape Charles = \$1,072 vs. \$1,000 the year prior, resulting in an overall increase of about 7%.

#### **Some of the other matters on the 4/10/08 agenda**

Council unanimously approved: Two conditional use permits: 309 Mason Ave. for 2<sup>nd</sup> floor apartments; and height limit - 86' for new batch plant at Bay Shore Concrete. John Dobbs, CEO of Bay Shore reported the new plant will be a \$3.5 million investment. Thank you Bay Shore! And by a vote of 5 to 1 (Dudley, no), adding positions for two alternate members to the Wetlands Board, versus a recommended increase in the board to 7 vs. 5 (current number), plus 2 alternates.

#### **Five will vie for three seats for 4 year terms on Council**

The candidates are (alphabetically): Steve Bennett, Bruce Evans, Joan Natali, Larry Veber and Scott Walker (Sophie Harvey withdrew her name, apparently related to complications with her out of town employment). Election Day is just over three weeks away - Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup>. There will be a debate at 7 PM on May 1<sup>st</sup> at the fire hall. Try to turn out, ask questions, listen to each candidate and meet each candidate there and/or at other times. Then be sure to vote!

I encourage you to ask each candidate questions about some key issues of the past (especially those who have served on council), today (their knowledge of key issues facing the town) and tomorrow (where they see the Town in 5 years). Inquire about their commitment to: fiscal responsibility; ethical leadership; avoidance of even the hint of a conflict of interest; open & transparent government; youth & senior programs; continued development - residential, commercial & industrial; uniformity in the application of all laws to all citizens; hiring, training, promoting and retaining competent employees; expecting excellence from town staff; and so on.

#### **DATE CHANGE FOR CONSTITUENTS MEETING - NOW ON THURSDAY**

My office is at 117 Mason Ave., Suite E (next to Kelly's Pub) - 5:15 - 6:15 PM on Thursday, April 17<sup>th</sup>. 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](mailto:johnburdiss@baycrk.net)