

Borough of Wildwood Crest Tourism Commission Meeting

Wednesday, February 17, 2021

Crest Pier Recreation Center

Meeting called to order by Brian Cunniff at 4 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Reading of the Sunshine Ordinance – In compliance with the Open Public Meeting Act, Chapter 231 P.L. 231 175, the notice requirements have been classified as to the time, place and date of holding said meeting by posting notice of the same on the bulletin board in borough hall and by mailing the same to the Press of Atlantic City and the Cape May County Herald.

Roll Call:	Don Cabrera, Mayor/Commissioner	not present
	Joseph Franco, Tourism Commission	present
	Dennis Hall, Tourism Commission	present
	Lester Klayman, Tourism Commission	present
	Bob Patterson, Tourism Commission	present
	Frank Basile, Recreation Supervisor	present
	Brian Cunniff, Asst. Rec Supervisor/TDC secretary	present

A quorum is present.

Dennis Hall made a motion to accept the minutes from the January TDC meeting. Lester Klayman seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

Bob Patterson gave a presentation about Christmas events in Wildwoods. He said that GWTIDA board members looked at the success of Christmas events in 2020. A lot of people who own second homes and condos maybe because of pandemic were here and took part in events. Many of the events were way more successful than many thought they would be. Idea is to get together and coordinate all the events so they don't overlap. Have more of an island-wide approach. Looking for more ideas for events. GWTIDA plans to set up a steering committee.

Bob Patterson handed out a list of current Christmas events and ideas for other events that could be added. Brian Cunniff stated that the borough recreation department had already thought of some of these same ideas and would be happy to get involved with the committee.

Bob Patterson added that the goal is to not double up with events and market each event better. Not have too many of the same events on weekends. He added that municipal representatives and business people are needed for the committee and that GWTIDA would be reaching out to people.

Brian Cunniff stated that it would be good to have a list of Christmas events available for us to promote at the borough's Christmas in July celebration. Dennis Hall said this might help us bring back summer visitors at Christmastime.

Brian Cunniff stated that beach box rentals for last year's box holders are complete. Only a handful of people didn't renew. Joe Franco asked if the borough has gotten any new boxes. Brian stated that there are 92 additional rentals available for this year and they will go on sale Friday. Joe Franco asked what the max might be on adding boxes before the beach looks too cluttered. Brian Cunniff stated that that is something the borough certainly has to keep in mind. Dennis Hall stated that this is great revenue coming in and a great program for those who use the boxes.

Bob Patterson asked what was going to happen with the old street signs that were removed in place of new ones. Frank Basile said the borough is in the process of choosing prices and will sell them to those interested. Frank added that the recreation department hopes to have the program in place by the borough wide yard sale in May. Inventory will be done when all signs are finished and old ones collected. Mayor Cabrera added that money generated from sales of street signs will be put toward a preservation of artifacts of what was the old historical society. Could be used toward setting up a new historical area at the old library site.

Lester Klayman asked about the cost of the new street signs. Mayor Cabrera said it was about \$16K. Joe Franco asked if the borough was planning on keeping some of the street signs. Mayor Cabrera stated not at this time.

Mayor Cabrera announced that the upgrades to Sunrise Park are nearly complete. Waiting on an electrical permit to finish the work. New playground equipment has been installed, and surfacing and landscaping work are being finished. Everything should move quickly once the weather breaks and all work should be complete before Memorial Day weekend. A grand opening will be held sometime in June.

Mayor Cabrera said the borough is awaiting a CAFRA permit for beach bump-out work. New decks with ramps going down to the beach. Work will start at Washington Avenue and move north. DPW will make all new wooden walkways that extend another 120 feet toward the ocean. Will also replace bad walkways. Project will be done in house. Keeps a more natural look.

Mayor Cabrera said a project to extend and raise the fishing pier at Heather Road could be on the horizon in 2023. Looks like a \$6.5 million project. County open space has committed to funding \$2 million. The Army Corps of Engineers could also fund about \$2 million due to the pier having to be raised over the new dunes. He added that additional grants will be sought in order to try to cut the borough's cost.

Mayor Cabrera announced that upgrades to Scoop Taylor Park are set to begin next month and should be in place prior to the summer season. New playground equipment, new landscaping, better signage and a shade structure. Much of project paid for by NJDCA ADA grant.

Mayor Cabrera announced that funding for renovations of the old library building is in place. \$1.6 million project -- \$400K paid for through ADA grant and the rest funded by canceled bond appropriations going back to 2009. No additional cost to taxpayers. Plans are online on borough website.

Mayor Cabrera announced that the borough is finishing conversations with the county in an effort to determine specific costs of the New Jersey Avenue project. Stakeholder meetings have already been held. Another may be scheduled for May. Wildwood Linen has found another property to move to in Rio Grande. The borough, along with Cape May County, Middle Township and the state, could assist with

that move. Project will happen with or without a liquor consumption license going into the area. County could be paying for as much as 80 to 90 percent of the work.

Mayor Cabrera announced that the Crest Best Run Fest will still take place Columbus Day weekend. Delmo Sports is also looking to add a freedom swim in Sunset Lake on July 4. Details coming. In addition, the Mudhen 10-mile race April 16-17 will start and finish at Rambler Road due to road construction in Wildwood.

Mayor Cabrera stated a discussion has been held with North Wildwood on beach fees and tourism taxes. Last year was a tough year maintaining beaches. Some discussions about raising tourism tax. Don said he doesn't believe this is a good idea during a pandemic. A lot of the discussion was centered around needed work for the boardwalk, which is in poor shape in many areas. North Wildwood also in dire need of beach replenishment.

Mayor Cabrera said thoughts on beach fees seem to be split. Each town would lose \$300K from GWTIDA if beach fees are brought in. Could cost \$300-400K for staff to handle beach tags. Might be very hard to do in the borough since we already have trouble filling seasonal jobs. From a numbers standpoint, have to look at pros and cons. Traditionally everyone knows the Wildwoods' beaches are free. Some would look at it as another tax. Don't see it happening for at least two three years, if at all.

Joe Franco stated that he feels all three towns would have to institute beach tags if one does. Mayor Cabrera said that there's always been a gentlemen's agreement to that. Joe Franco asked what the next step is. The mayor indicated that Wildwood and North Wildwood may continue to push for an increased tourism tax or beach fees. Maybe everyone would be more interested in raising the tourism tax, because that can go directly toward tourism related items. Hotel-Motel Association has already come out against beach fees. Mayor Cabrera added that the governor vetoed a bill that would have earmarked money toward boardwalk reconstruction. Perhaps the governor changes that.

Dennis Hall stated that perhaps the communities could get more active in fighting for money from the state rather than looking to add more taxes. Mayor Cabrera agreed, stating he doesn't want to see the Wildwoods price themselves out of the tourism market.

Joe Franco asked about the status of Wildwood Linen. Mayor Cabrera stated that they are interested in moving and are trying to find a property offshore where they could get a steel fabricated building. The state, county, Middle Township and the borough could help with the move. Trying to put together a plan to move it offshore, possibly to an area behind the Joe Canal's complex in Rio Grande. Nine acres there. Mayor Cabrera said a move by Wildwood Linen offshore could help bring New Jersey Avenue to life. Dennis Hall said he appreciates the progressive thinking. Cited projects such as the library building, the fishing pier and New Jersey Avenue as worthwhile projects. Believes it's money well spent.

Dennis Hall asked if it is feasible to hold a bonfire on the beach after one of the Centennial Park concerts. Brian Cunniff responded that there are probably too many people here to hold something like that in the summer. Would probably be difficult from a public safety standpoint. Brian added that perhaps it could be done in the fall. Bob Patterson said it might be a good idea for after the Crest Best run on Columbus weekend.

Meeting adjourned at 4:58 p.m.