



## President's Message

Winter 2014

As you know, 2013 was a very busy year for Bethany Beach and BBLA with attention focused on several significant projects and issues, including: construction of the new water tower; Streetscape; beach replenishment; rezoning and other issues related to the proposed new hotel; and development of a park on the Church-Neff property. The BBLA Board was actively engaged in addressing those matters by gathering information; keeping our members informed and soliciting their opinions; presenting their views and representing their interests, sometime in an advocacy role, before the Town Council; and promoting public awareness and participation in the decision-making process. For example, BBLA hosted a public information session with the Town Planning Commission to address issues and concerns related to the proposed new hotel. The Board also urged the Council to conduct a non-binding referendum to determine public opinion about the hotel proposal before making a decision, which the Council later decided to do. The BBLA Board greatly appreciates the time and responsiveness of the Town Council and Committee members, as well as the Town Manager and staff, to our questions and requests.

Consistent with our basic purposes, the Board will continue to monitor, report on and address those and other areas of member concern in 2014. In addition, the Board will further emphasize BBLA's traditional support for various worthwhile community service endeavors. This year, for example, in addition to our long-standing support for the Farmers' Market and other causes, BBLA will provide support for "Operation Seas the Day" to facilitate its plans to provide a second annual beach week vacation for our wounded military service members and their families, from September 2 (the day after Labor Day) through September 7, 2014.

More detailed information on these and other items of interest follow in this newsletter, together with an application to renew or start your BBLA membership and a mini-survey on a new issue—the possible widening of the boardwalk. We need your membership support and participation to achieve the core purposes we pursue based primarily on our understanding of your views and interests. Working together we will have a stronger organization and influence for good in the community.

In addition, I want to draw your attention especially to the articles concerning the need for volunteers to help with the Farmers' Market on Sundays during the 2014 summer season and the need for donations (vacation homes and monetary donations), volunteers and support for the Operation Seas the Day scheduled beach week.

As always, I want to express my appreciation to all our volunteers for their efforts on behalf of our members and community. We welcome all who want to volunteer. You can contact me by e-mail at the link provided at [www.bbla.us](http://www.bbla.us) or by mail to BBLA, P.O. Box 401, Bethany Beach, DE 19930.

Hope you all have a healthy, safe and enjoyable 2014.

John Himmelberg, President

## **Possible Widening of the Boardwalk**

As reported in the November Newsletter, the Town Council has preliminarily discussed the possibility of widening all or part of the boardwalk from 12 to 20 feet.

One option discussed is to widen the boardwalk along its entire length, at an estimated cost of \$993,000, if done as one project. The cost would increase if done in separate phases over time. Another option is to limit the widening to the area from Hollywood Street to Campbell Place, at an estimated cost of \$313,000. A third option is to postpone any decision on the matter until after completion of other possibly higher priority projects. And, of course, there is always the option of doing nothing.

Those who favor widening all or part of the boardwalk point out the difficulty the public encounters while walking because of crowding and numerous areas of congestion. The problems are especially severe during the tourist season from May through September, particularly in the bandstand area during performances and around the benches, which take up a considerable portion of the existing 12 feet of width. Unimpeded walking is usually impossible. Moreover, regular walkers report similar problems during other times during the year when the boardwalk is crowded. Widening would be a cost effective measure that would improve the enjoyment of the boardwalk for both residents and visitors. And the cost could be amortized over a number of years and would not prevent investment in other worthwhile capital projects when and if deemed appropriate.

Those who oppose widening maintain that the money could be spent on more pressing projects, such as addressing the flooding problem on North Pennsylvania Avenue. They also argue that serious crowding on the boardwalk is rare; that even during bandstand performances the far ends of the boardwalk are not congested; and that the performances only take place during a short period of the year. Furthermore, some opponents believe that a 20-foot wide boardwalk is not consistent with a "quiet resort" look and atmosphere for Bethany Beach.

The BBLA Board would like to know what property owners think about the issue and the options under consideration. Toward that end and to present those views to the Town Council, please fill out the enclosed opinion survey and mail it back with your membership renewal/application form and dues payment.

## **Future Park Survey**

At its January meeting, the Town Council approved a proposed survey of Bethany Beach property owners regarding the development of the six-acre parcel on the Northwest corner of Route 26 and Coastal Highway, often referred to as the Church- Neff site. You should receive soon a postcard from the Town explaining how to complete the survey.

Some members of the Council and the Town staff appear to favor limiting the features of the park to open spaces, trees and flower beds, walking paths and benches, and perhaps a fountain or small pond. Perhaps this is how most property owners would like to see the property developed. But perhaps not.

Some people believe that using this valuable site in such a limited fashion would be a mistake. They point out we already have wonderful places to walk and sit outdoors (the boardwalk and beach) and many visually pleasing flower beds. A park that offered only passive activities might be pleasing to the eye of a passing motorist but would not attract regular or frequent visits by any significant number of people. Instead, this group would argue that the parcel should include features such as recreational facilities that would add to rather than merely repeat what we already enjoy. The parcel is big enough that it could include several features for active use in addition to trees, flowers and grass.

For example, there is room on the site for some activities such as tennis, volleyball, badminton, horseshoes, bocce ball, shuffleboard and others. A multi-use area could be set aside for some of those. The site could also accommodate a tiny tots playground and a labyrinth area for meditative walking.

Perhaps the most important question in the survey is the first one in which respondents are asked whether they agree or disagree that development of the site “should be limited to natural features”. But other questions pose the issue too, although not quite so sharply.

The question for the BBLA Board is, as always, what do our members want? Therefore, we urge you to consider your answers to all questions carefully. And please note that the Town’s survey invites and provides space for any comments or suggestions you may have about development of the park. So you are not limited to the features identified in the survey form. There is no other parcel of land in our town that offers so much potential for adding to the attractive features of our community.

### **Farmers’ Market Transition**

BBLA is providing advice and assistance to facilitate a transition for the Bethany Beach Farmers’ Market to enable the Market to continue to be the great success it has been. This transition became necessary when the volunteer Market Master advised the BBLA Board that he had to scale back on the many roles he had been fulfilling since the Market started.

Seven years ago BBLA and Bennett Orchards, in concert with the Women’s Civic Club and with support from the Town Council and staff, established the Market. Since then BBLA Board members Dan Costello (as Market Master), Steve Wode and Margaret Young have played key roles.

For the transition, a number of Board members and the farmers’ representative identified the tasks and roles needed for the Market. This will allow for continuity as different volunteers step into those roles, and also establishes a single point-of-contact liaison with the Town staff.

At its February meeting, the BBLA Board established a committee to “ensure the continuation of the Farmers’ Market.” The Committee will consist of the positions and volunteers identified below. The Board will appoint or identify individual volunteers to fill those roles each year. The Committee Chair and at least one other member will be BBLA Board members. The Committee Chair will maintain a list of the needed tasks and roles and will provide periodic reports to the BBLA Board. The reports will include the finances and any Committee review

of the market rules defined by the Committee Co-Chair from the farmers. The BBLA Treasurer and Recording Secretary will be available to the Committee for assistance.

### **Farmers Market Committee Roles-(Meets about Feb, April and Oct)**

Committee Chair (from BBLA Board)	(John Himmelberg)
Committee Co-Chair (Farmers' representative)	(Henry Bennett)
Advertising and Promotions Chair	(Dan Costello)
Treasurer	(Fred McNally)
Head Market Master- all Sundays	(Steve Wode)
Sunday volunteer recruiter for delivery, set up, and take down	(To be determined)
Women's Civic Club member and Tent volunteer recruiter	(Margaret Young)
Liaison from Bethany Beach staff	(Laren Hughes)

This year the Market will operate in the mornings on 12 Sundays, from June 15 to August 31. Volunteers are still needed for various tasks and do not have to commit to helping out every Sunday morning. For more information or if you want to volunteer you can contact Dan Costello at: [dancostello2@verizon.net](mailto:dancostello2@verizon.net).

### **Operation Seas the Day**

The Operation Seas the Day Foundation provided a beach vacation week for 25 wounded military service members and their families in Bethany Beach last September as a way of demonstrating community appreciation for their service and sacrifice. It was a great success. Homeowners donated their homes for the week. Local businesses and individuals donated funds, services and gift cards. Other local residents volunteered to help in various ways.

Operation Seas the Day is preparing for a second and expanded event for September 2-7, 2014, and is again seeking home donations and other support. As part of our community service role, the BBLA Board met with representatives of the organization in December to determine how BBLA might help this worthy cause. Subsequently, BBLA donated \$1000 to help the organization in event preparation. In addition, BBLA offered to help the organizers advertise the event and their needs for community support. As part of that effort, we have printed and are including an Operation Seas the Day flyer with more specific information regarding donations, volunteering and contact information. Please consider joining together in supporting this very worthwhile cause.

### **Flood Insurance in the News**

Major changes are underway regarding flood insurance for coastal properties. Regular homeowner's insurance policies do not generally cover damage from floods. Those who purchase flood insurance get it directly or indirectly from the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Due to unusual demands on NFIP reserves because of Hurricane Katrina and Super Storm Sandy and concerns about possible increased flooding in the future, Congress passed the Biggert-Waters Flood Reform Act of 2012. One purpose was to end subsidies that kept the price of flood insurance policies below the actual cost of the coverage. The resultant shock of the Act's higher insurance rates began to be felt recently. In addition,

the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was required by the Act to change the way it maps flood risk areas, which greatly increases the number of properties subject to the much higher flood insurance premiums. The resultant flood (pun intended) of complaints from constituents has encouraged the U.S. Senate to pass a measure (S. 1926) which, if passed by the House and signed into law by the President, will afford temporary relief to some local landowners. The relief act, according to news reports (see, for example, Senate Votes to Delay Flood Insurance Hikes, The Boston Globe, January 31, 2014), would postpone the higher insurance premiums for four years for owner-occupied homes built before the Act of 2012. Note that second-homes and newer homes are not relieved by this measure and continue to be subject to the premium rate increases. These increases can be quite large, phasing in the true, unsubsidized cost of flood insurance at a rate of 25% per year.

To see the preliminary FEMA flood-threat maps, that re-categorize lots according to updated calculations of risk, and how they affect your own property, look online at the following link: [http://hazards.fema.gov/femaportal/prelimdownload/Map\\_10005C0516K](http://hazards.fema.gov/femaportal/prelimdownload/Map_10005C0516K).

Also, as a result of Sandy and Katrina recovery publicity, more people have become aware that regular homeowner's insurance policies do not cover damage from flooding, but also that flood insurance does not necessarily cover damage that one might commonly consider to have been caused by flooding. Insurance policy wording has specialized meaning which can affect coverage decisions. Check your insurance policy, read the definitions section carefully, and speak with your insurance agent to determine whether damage from wind-driven or velocity-driven water, among others, are covered. The following link has suggested questions to ask your insurance agent as a start: [http://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/residential\\_coverage/questions\\_to\\_ask\\_your\\_agent.jsp](http://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/residential_coverage/questions_to_ask_your_agent.jsp).

The BBLA is watching the news concerning the rate increases and coverage issues, and plans to pass along information when obtained. Tools that you can use to inform yourself include the Town of Bethany link <http://www.townofbethanybeach.com/faq.aspx> (see, under Building Inspector, question 5, "what flood zone is my house in?"), the NFIP link: <http://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/> and the FEMA link: <http://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program>.

### **Status of New Hotel**

The hotel project is in the midst of the design and permit approval process. In November 2013, the Town Council passed an ordinance that clarified certain Town requirements. In December, after several meetings and changes, the Town Non-Residential Design Review Committee approved the core exterior design plans for the hotel. See [www.coastalpoint.com/content/bethany\\_beach\\_hotel\\_design\\_vote\\_approval\\_vote\\_dec\\_13\\_12\\_12\\_2013](http://www.coastalpoint.com/content/bethany_beach_hotel_design_vote_approval_vote_dec_13_12_12_2013).

The developer is in process of obtaining State permits so that the Town Building Inspector can complete final plans review and issue a building permit.

If everything goes as presently anticipated by the developer, he expects to start demolition of the Bethany Arms around the end of February or the beginning of March, and construction of the new hotel would start immediately thereafter.

### **Streetscape Project**

Notwithstanding winter weather-related delays, the project is still expected to be completed before the 2014 tourist season. More information is available on the Town website at: [www.townofbethanybeach.com/](http://www.townofbethanybeach.com/)

### **Route 26 Construction**

Work on the Route 26 widening project, which is expected to take at least 2-1/2 years, has begun on certain segments of the 4-mile stretch of road from Clarksville to Glen Drive in Bethany Beach. As we previously reported, individuals can register for e-mail updates or download a smart phone application at [www.SR26.deldot.gov](http://www.SR26.deldot.gov). They can also contact the Del Dot public relations office at 1-800-652-5600 or (302) 760-2080, or by e-mail to [dotpr@state.de.us](mailto:dotpr@state.de.us).

### **NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS**

Robin Baxter, Jerry & Rosemary Hardiman, John Himmelberg, Mike Horne, Claire Loftus, Patrick McGuire and Tracy Mulligan.

## BBLA Mini Survey

### Issue: Possible Widening of the Boardwalk (from 12 to 20 feet)

Your response will help the BBLA Board to present your views and represent your interests before the Town Council.

First Owner

Co-owner (if applicable)

I favor (check one):

I favor (check one):

Widen entire length

Widen entire length

Partial widening  
(from Hollywood to Campbell)

Partial widening  
(from Hollywood to Campbell)

No widening

No widening

Comments:

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### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL OR NEW APPLICATION

Please renew or start my (our) membership in the Bethany Beach Landowners' Association for 2014. Membership is considered a household membership. My name (or our names) are as they appear on this newsletter mailing, or as corrected below. For renewing members, please provide changes only.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Bethany Beach Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

I prefer to receive the BBLA Newsletter by:  U.S. Mail  E-mail  Both

Enclosed is my (our) \$15 dues for 2014.  I'm also including a contribution to help with BBLA expenses and community support activities.

Bethany Beach Landowners Association  
Post Office Box 401  
Bethany Beach, DE 19930  
[www.bbba.us](http://www.bbba.us)