



BBLA Board Note: Due to page limitations for the January membership solicitation mailing, this is an abbreviated newsletter. It provides brief information on a few significant developments since the November newsletter. In future newsletters to members, in addition to coverage of current issues and developments, we hope to provide special articles on important matters such as beach replenishment efforts in Bethany and the recurring flooding problem.

MAJOR DAMAGE TO BEACH AND DUNES PLUS FLOODING

Winter Storm Jonas, the nor'easter from Friday, January 22 to Sunday, January 24, 2016, compounded the damage to the beach and dunes from the 5-day storm in October 2015. With exceptionally high tides over multiple cycles, high winds and waves over the course of the January storm, major sections of the dune were carved off and lost. Anthony Pratt, the state shoreline and waterway administrator, reported that state crews will begin rebuilding the dunes when sufficient sand moves back on the beach. However, until the dunes are rebuilt, the boardwalk and oceanfront properties are more vulnerable to damage in the event of another significant storm. As of this issuance, the beach cannot be safely accessed and Town officials have warned that any attempt to climb or jump from a dune could result in serious even fatal consequences if a dune collapsed on the individual. Recent pictures of beach conditions are on the Town's website or linked at BBLA's website. (See www.bbla.us). As with every similar storm, neighborhoods along the Loop Canal again experienced troublesome street and residential property flooding.

TOWN TO ACQUIRE HISTORIC DINKER COTTAGE—RELOCATION TO TOWN PROPERTY PENDING

In a Workshop on November 16, 2015, the Council discussed and heard public comment on the question of whether to accept an offer from the Edgar family, owners of the locally historic Dinker Cottage, to donate it to the Town, provided the Town, among other things, moves the house from the property. The house, located on Garfield Parkway east of Route 1 since 1922, is listed in the Town's Comprehensive Plan in the inventory of historic and cultural resources. It was built around 1903 by William A. Dinker, who was the first to sign the petition for incorporation of Bethany Beach in 1909, and served as the Town's first mayor. The house also was the Bethany Beach post office for a period of time. The Edgar family purchased the house around 1925 and has owned and maintained it since that time. The house reportedly is in excellent condition.

The Council also discussed and heard comments on the question of where the house should be moved, if the donation offer was accepted. The possible relocation sites included the Town park and an underdeveloped Town property identified as Maryland Avenue Extended. The latter property has been maintained by the Town but never paved for use as a street.

Other possible uses have been considered by Councils over the years, but never implemented. Instead, the property has been used by homeowners in the vicinity for recreation and social purposes.

The Town Manager recommended accepting the donation offer, moving the house to the Maryland Avenue site, and using it as a Town museum. The matter was subsequently scheduled for further public comment and Council discussion, consideration and possible vote in January.

At the Council meeting on January 15, 2016, following further and more extensive public comment on the issues, the Council discussed the proposed donation and using either the Town park or Maryland Avenue property as possible relocation sites. It was noted that the Cultural and Historic Affairs Committee strongly supports acquisition of the Dinker Cottage for use as a Town museum and has voted to contribute \$46,300 (from the funds raised through its annual June Seaside Craft Shows) to pay for moving the house, if acquired. The total estimated cost to move and refurbish the house for use as a museum was \$102,800.

Particularly noteworthy in discussion of the most suitable location for the house was the record of strong public opinion that enclosed structures with HVAC should not be permitted in the park, as expressed over time, including in a 2013 BBLA survey. Rather, Town survey results favored limited features and a more natural setting. After discussion, the Council voted unanimously to accept the donation of the Dinker Cottage and to relocate it to the Town's Maryland Avenue property, with relocation contingent upon completion of a legal process in the Town's Charter.

WETLANDS DEVELOPMENT OPPOSED

On January 15, 2015, the Town Council voted unanimously to oppose a Bethany Beach property owner's proposed plan, currently under review by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and DNREC's Delaware Coastal Programs office, to fill in 1.92 acres of state and federal designated wetlands to facilitate development of a residential housing project. The property is located north of Route 26 between Hudson Avenue and Weigand Lane adjacent to the Loop Canal. The Council essentially determined that destruction of the wetlands would exacerbate the already serious flooding problem in the area of the proposed development. It is noteworthy that the Town previously rejected the property owner's development plans in 2008 and 2012, due in large part to community opposition to destruction of the wetlands and its adverse effects. After consideration of the matter, the BBLA Board likewise decided to oppose filling in the wetlands.

COMMUNITY RATING SYSTEM BENEFITS HOMEOWNERS

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community Rating System (CRS) can provide a discount on homeowners' flood insurance. Thanks to the efforts of the Town Building Inspector in the application process, the CRS rating for Bethany Beach is eight (8), which will allow homeowners to now receive the maximum 10 percent discount. The Town will not have to update the CRS rating again until 2017.

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