Mayor Desiderio’s Message to City Council on August 9, 2022

Over the years, we’ve faced many challenges. Some of these have been from Mother Nature and some have been from the normal tension that occurs in all communities where consensus is not unanimous - when we struggle to come up with an agreed upon plan of action.  In the end, we always come together to overcome these challenges, to deal with adversity, to forge solutions to whatever challenge is before us.

Nearly 30 years ago, Sea Isle faced challenges to our quality of life in the summer season.  I’m sure many can recall the issues of problem rental units, excessive noise, and unsavory references to the party scene.

We faced those challenges head-on. We created noise free zones; we educated the public; we worked with our neighborhoods; we increased police presence; and we held those who were responsible accountable for their actions.

From these efforts, things changed - for the better.  It didn’t happen overnight, but it happened.

Last year, it became apparent that some of the laws and guidelines put into place at the state level were clearly hindering law enforcement agencies from most effectively doing their job.

At the local level, we did what we could to maintain and enhance our police presence; however, there remain crippling laws at the state level that must be amended.  Last summer, I started discussions with the governor’s office, New Jersey’s attorney general, and the county prosecutor, to try to obtain their support in providing us with the tools necessary to handle the large crowds, and the mechanisms to hold those who violate the law accountable for their actions.

We followed up on those discussions with a meeting with our state legislators on those important issues this past February.  We were hopeful that meaningful legislative amendments would be enacted by the state that would allow for responsible police enforcement, particularly as it relates to juveniles and young adults.

The fact is that our concerns are shared by many shore resorts, and that law enforcement IS being hindered by current state laws.

I understand the concerns people may have with ensuring that the police are also held accountable; and held to appropriate standards.  I can tell you without hesitation that our police ARE accountable and ARE held to the HIGHEST standards.

Unfortunately, the problems we’ve brought to the state’s attention for the past year remain unaddressed.  While this is disappointing and poses continuing difficulties for law enforcement, we will not stop our efforts to effect change at the state. That remains an important part of the solution; but we can’t rely on that, so I am proposing that we enact local legislation to provide tools to our police to deal with unacceptable juvenile and adult behavior.  I understand there are limits to what we can enact locally, but just like we did with the noisy parties in the 1990’s, I know we can do something in 2022.

Enough is enough.

Many years ago, before Superstorm Sandy and before Covid, we outlined a vision for our city; and we developed a mission statement. It was very clear - we said:

“We want Sea Isle to be a place where everybody wants to be.”

“We want Sea Isle to be the home that everybody dreams of when they dream of living at the shore.”

And we said that the mission of our local government is to provide the necessary public services required to maintain a safe community; to provide a prudent system of laws and regulations; and that our ultimate goal is the protection of our community culture and values.

I will not give up the fight in Trenton, and I am charging my administration with doing everything possible to research and determine laws that can help to level the playing field - in favor of those who abide by the law and in favor of all of the citizens of Sea Isle City - our residents and visitors alike - who simply want to enjoy their life in peace.

I am committing this administration to look into potential legislation and report back before the end of this year on what we can do at the local level to hold those who would do harm to people or property accountable for their actions.

I am asking for council’s support of this initiative; and I’m asking for the public’s support, as well as asking our citizens to contact their state legislators and make it clear to them - enough is enough.

On a separate topic, the City intends to amend the rules and regulations for fishing off the beaches of the City as authorized by our ordinance to prohibit shark fishing in, on, or near the beaches and within 600-feet of the beaches of the Sea Isle City. The prohibition includes shore-based shark fishing by chumming, the use of unmanned drones, or with the assistance of any water vessel.

The City will contact the local fishing community and the surfing community to look at long term solutions to shark fishing off the City shore to ensure reasonable regulations promoting the continued long term harmonious sharing of surfing and fishing beaches by the stakeholders in these desired beach activities.

Finally, please remember that we are one Sea Isle City and together we will be stronger than ever.

Mayor Leonard Desiderio