



Ocean Park Echo

Meeting

Meeting

Meeting

Thursday

Sept. 10

7:30 p.m.



Ocean
Park

Fire &
Rescue

www.opcl.org

Reduced speed ahead: A Slower Stretch of Shore Drive

By now, you have seen the message boards announcing a reduction in the speed limit from 45 to 35 mph. This speed limit change covers our residential stretch of road of less than one mile, from Great Neck Road. to First Landing State Park.

The following safety concerns generated this speed reduction, which is in effect from Aug. 3 to Labor Day.

- Families (landside) trying to cross the street to access the beach with children, carts, umbrellas, dogs, etc.
- Excessive vehicle speeds along residential Shore Drive
- Restricted driver's view pulling out of the neighborhood due to parked vehicles (and trash containers)
- School buses, filled with our children, dealing with the above issue.
- Bicyclists using Shore Drive (as per federal/state laws)
- Safety of pedestrians forced to walk on Kendall Street. because there are no sidewalks to offer protection from on coming vehicles.
- Bayside residents crossing Shore Dr. to use state park, bike trails
- Residents and hotel guests trying to cross the street for groceries, dinner\



This 10 mph speed reduction was recommended to promote a safer environment in our neighborhoods. Reducing the speed limit will:

- Allow more time for families to cross safely to the bayside or landside
- Allow more time for cars to pull out onto Shore Drive
- Allow greater "reaction time" to avoid a person or car to avoid a sudden stop.

The 35 mph speed limit is through Labor Day only. Our mayor and city council want to hear from you regarding this change. Your feedback, especially your experiences, is extremely critical to make this speed limit change permanent. Please take the time to email Mayor Sessoms and the City Council at: ctycncl@vbgov.com, or call the mayor's office, 385-4581.

— Marty Schuman, President, Cape Henry Shores Civic Association and David Williams, Project Officer



Sep-

tember



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Message from OPCL President Mike Wills

As another summer in paradise begins to fade, it's time to roll up our sleeves. I'm happy to report that our load is much lighter than in the recent past as some of the major issues affecting Ocean Park seem to have been settled, but we must make sure things continue to head in the right direction.



We need some fresh talent to run for office this fall and fill some key vacancies such as our Citizen Advisory Committee liaison. This representative attends the monthly Virginia Beach Police 3rd Precinct meetings to keep informed and would have been helpful this past spring and summer.

We also have several other initiatives such as Neighborhood Watch that we would like to get re-energized as the temperatures cool. Seagull Bluff was recently the victim of a burglary sweep and demonstrates the need for this type of program. Please consider helping in any way that you can to make Ocean Park the kind of community that you want it to be and that you are proud to be a part of. At the Sept. 10th meeting, Delegate Joe Bouchard and candidate Chris Stolle will speak and answer questions. I hope to see everyone there.

Ocean Park Civic League

7:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 10, 2009

Speakers: Delegate Joe Bouchard & Candidate Chris Stolle

Old Business:

- Pound Net Appeal**
- Neighborhood Watch/Membership Drive**
- Web site-Paypal, Google**
- Email Communications**

New Business:

- Law enforcement**
- July Fireworks**
- Election Committee**

Committee Reports:

- Finance: (Mike Wills) Robbins Account**
- Zoning: (Mike Wills) Jefferson Blvd., Seascape Shops**
- Shore Drive Community Coalition (SDCC): (Grace Moran)**
- Bayside Advisory Committee (Grace Moran)**
- Social: Fall and holiday events**
- VBCCO: (Barb Pritchard)**
- Membership: (Rick Mercadante)**
- Communications (Jim Royall)**



Bayfront News

Shore Drive Community Coalition to Address Safety Issues

The City has formed a committee of concerned residents from Cape Henry Shores, Cape Story by the Sea, the Shore Drive Community Coalition (SDCC) and the Bayfront Advisory Committee (BAC). From this Shore Drive Safety Initiative 2009 (SDSI), a Road Safety Audit Team has begun collecting data to develop measures to make it safer to cross Shore Drive, bike or walk along the roadway and enter and exit the neighborhoods.

Temporarily, the City has reduced the speed limit from 45 mph to 35 mph along this stretch and will furnish a preliminary report to City Council in early September. In the meantime, members of SDSI '09 have been surveying residents and commuters to gauge the support for making the speed reduction permanent.



The Future of Pleasure House Point

In recent weeks, the attention of the Shore Drive Community Coalition (SDCC) and the Bayfront Advisory Committee (BAC) also has been focused on the future of Pleasure House Point. Virginia Beach Vice Mayor Louis Jones has told Mike Wills, president of the Ocean Park Civic League, and Grace Moran of SDCC that the City is engaged in discussions with interested parties, since it appears that the Sandler brothers will not be developing the property as the proposed Indigo Dunes. The Vice Mayor is tentatively scheduled to address the PHP issue at the September 28 meeting of SDCC. (SDCC meetings are the last Monday of each month, at 7:30 p.m. at the Ocean Park Volunteer Fire and Rescue Station.)

Virginia Beach Plan 2009

The BAC and SDCC will furnish the City's Comprehensive Planner with suggested language to include this property in the City's five-year Comprehensive Plan. The draft of this plan will be available to the public in September, at which time citizens are requested to register their opinions. The City will advertise them in the classified section of *The Beacon*, most likely, but you also can find information on the SDCC Website, www.sdcc.info.

If Vice Mayor Jones is not yet able to discuss PHP negotiations at the Sept. 28 meeting, Mary Richmond, of the Virginia Beach recycling division and also a representative from SPSA, will speak on the correct disposal of hazardous materials and where to take them. It is possible that there will be an opportunity to bring old paint cans and other potentially hazardous materials to the meeting for disposal. Go to www.sdcc.info for more information. All of us who live on or near the Chesapeake Bay are no doubt especially sensitive to the need to protect our waters.

Safer Roads for Bicyclists and Pedestrians

The City's Parks and Recreation Department is engaging with the BAC to determine the best way to implement plans for bicyclists and pedestrians in future phases of the Shore Drive improvement. This is long-range planning, and citizen input is welcome. The BAC meets the third Thursday of each month at 3:30 p.m. at the Bay-side Recreation Center. Public comments are entertained at the close of the working session.



Editor's Note: The authors of the article below and the letter on the next page offer their opinions regarding cars and bikes sharing the roadways along Shore Drive.

Shore Drive – Creating a More Livable Community

Distill the case being made for traffic safety improvements by Shore Drive residents, bike groups, and others who regularly visit the beach, bike, run, or walk the area and you will see a desire for change that goes one step beyond the rote world of traffic engineering. For many, taming a roadway with cars moving at an average speed of 52 mph through this dense residential area of Virginia Beach is just one part of a larger problem.

Those backing change reflect a growing national trend at the nexus of transportation planning and urban design. There is an emerging realization that a better approach is needed in transportation than just adding car lanes and putting up 45 or 55 mph speed limit signs. Long term solutions need also address making areas more attractive for bike commuting and local trips by bike and on foot. This can be achieved through a combination of measures, some which address needed physical improvements and others in education, traffic control, and enforcement.

If last summer's gas prices aren't enough to grab everyone's attention then the trend toward obesity and its evil off-springs should be. With the current road, it is hard not to justify getting in one's car when going to a nearby business or to visit someone in an adjacent neighborhood. A substantial percentage of car trips are local in nature, creating missed opportunities for a health improving short walk or bike trip.

A concept known as "Complete Streets," articulates a vision for creating more active, livable communities by design. "Complete Streets" does not dictate the details of what will be done for areas like Shore Drive – just the high level principles and objectives. Improvements may include bike lanes, making pedestrian crossings safer and more available, better access points for transit, and certain traffic calming measures. Some, such as on-road bike lanes have benefits that go beyond their primary role. These include providing a break down lane for cars and giving emergency vehicles extra space to move through when traffic is at a standstill.

Ten states and numerous localities now require a "Complete Streets" approach as part of their transportation and development plans. Last week, the Centers for Disease Control provided their endorsement as a means for counter-ing the national trend toward obesity. Congress has taken notice as well.

For many bike transportation is a choice- an easy way to save money, improve one's health, and lighten our own foot-print on the environment. Still, as of the 2000 Census Virginia Beach had 7,000 households who don't own cars. The Hilltop area alone has 275 such households. A 2008 study by our planning district reports that 26,000 adults aged 18 and over in Virginia Beach don't drive. A significant cluster of non-drivers exists along Shore Drive. For these, bicycling, walking and transit accommodations are more than amenities, a term used in the car-centric vernacular of traf-fic engineering.

Shore Drive is a very walked and biked part of Virginia Beach but it needs our help. The non-motorized use is there and so is the latent demand. Professional guidelines are in place on how to bring about improvements. What is needed is community and political support for drafting a viable plan. A substantially better environment for bicyclists and pedestrians is justified.

— Bruce W. Drees, Advocacy Chair, Tidewater Bicycle Association, Virginia Beach



Resident of Shore Drive
Virginia Beach, VA 23455

August 10, 2009

Ocean Park Civic League
Shore Drive Community Coalition

Dear Ms Grace Moran:

My letter is in rebuttal to the second draft of the "Shore Drive – Creating a More Livable Community" letter you forwarded to me last week.

I would like to first commend those responsible for the beautiful plantings along Shore Drive. Our street looks very nice to us as residents, as well as to the tourists visiting our lovely area.

As far as the author of the letter I am rebutting, to use the obesity epidemic as their foothold to climb onboard the "Complete Streets" concept is ridiculous!! If I so choose to drive a half-mile to my favorite restaurant, then that is my prerogative. If I want to walk or ride my bicycle, then I'll do so at my own risk. I drive these streets daily to and from my work place and if the speed limit is reduced any at all, the congestion will be worse than it is already.

We have sidewalks for pedestrians and I'm all for putting down bicycle paths for the cyclists. However, most of the cyclists I've seen ride in the street. I pay personal property taxes on my vehicle and I shouldn't have to yield to cyclists who think they can ride anywhere they want.

Clearly, those who do not drive during rush hour would be happy to see the "Complete Streets" concept put in place. However, some of us still must wrangle the traffic daily and we shouldn't all have to deal with 35 MPH streets because people need to get more exercise!

The main reason some folks are overweight is because they choose not to eat right and exercise. There are plenty of side streets off Shore Drive that are less congested with traffic, so if the obese people want to walk or ride their bicycles, then why aren't they already doing it? I don't think "Complete Streets" will automatically give obese folks instant willpower to eat right and exercise!

We don't live on Catalina Island, where only golf carts are allowed. We live in a part of Virginia Beach where vehicles should be allowed to drive at a normal rate of speed and not have to worry about driving at a crawl because the cyclists are trying to overtake our streets!

If one thinks that the 26,000 adults who don't drive in Virginia Beach are cycling to get from Point A to Point B and not using public transportation, they are delusional. If they all WERE, we wouldn't HAVE the obesity epidemic in the first place, would we?





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New OPCL Members

The following new members have joined since April 1. If you think you have joined and don't see your name please contact me.

- Ken and Anna Adam
- Don and Denise Allen
- Gary Baillio
- Dan Brockwell
- Carolyn Bugg
- Trent and Jeanne Busch
- Steve and Cathy Carper
- Paula and John Demosthenes
- Jennifer Downin
- Rick and Cherri Feineis
- Joel and Connie Fleck
- Mathew and Charlene Foreman
- Millie Garris
- A. Gaskins
- Paula Genovese-Smith
- Michael and Sharon Grossman
- Raymond and Mary Janezeck
- Gloria Johnson
- Richard and Bonnie Jones
- Locke and Linda King
- Shannon Kisiel
- Richard and Elisabeth Marshall
- Kenneth and Diane Muhlendorf
- James Oleska
- Meghan Ormond
- Bob and Barb Pritchard
- Emmett and Suzanne Smith
- Petra Snowden and Dieter Steinhoff
- Martin and Barbara Thomas
- Jeanne and Neil West



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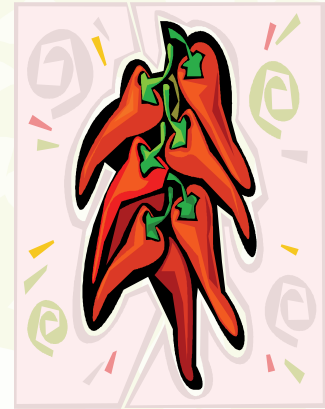
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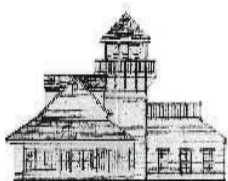
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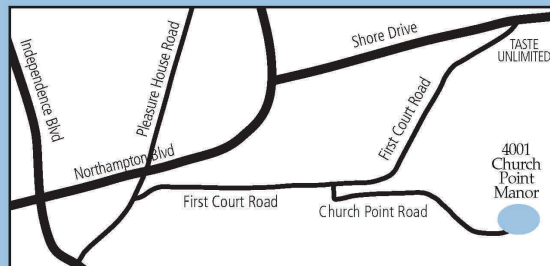
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Confessions of a Shore Drive Bicyclist

Don't hate me. I know it's wrong. I can't help myself. You see, I'm an addict. Even though the law says I can be on the streets, does it mean I should? If only I could kick this habit.



I suppose it started like any other addiction. I remember the day in 1988 when I bought my first “ten speed”. I only bought the bicycle so I would be able to get in a cardio workout on my off running days. It started slowly, a ride after work one or two nights a week. Before I knew it I was riding more than I was running. I knew I was hooked when I went out and bought my first pair of padded lycra shorts and riding gloves. I started doing Century (100 mile) rides. I couldn't get enough. I guess it was the endorphins. By the next year I figured out how to get more miles in. I could commute to work on my bike. I had to get to work anyway, so why not use my bike. Once I worked out the logistics, I tested the waters, riding once or twice a week to work. Before long I was riding to work four or five times a week. I still did the occasional weekend century ride, but most of my riding miles were commuting.

Before the kids were born, I was putting in 5,000 or 6,000 miles a year in the saddle. I even made career choices to suit my addiction. I've tried to quit many times. I've gone months without getting on the bike. With work and family commitments, my mileage has gone down significantly as I've gotten older. There were some years, when the kids were younger, that I hardly rode at all. But I always seem to go back. It usually starts out slowly, but once the old addiction kicks in I wonder why I left it at all. I get hooked all over again. It has been a good year for me and my bicycle. We've gotten to know each other again. My kids have gotten a little older and my job is conducive to commuting to work on my bike. I no longer wear Lycra shorts (some things just shouldn't be seen in public) or padded gloves. I ride a funny looking bike called a recumbent. It's easier on my middle aged body. But the high is still the same. After the first mile or two the endorphins kick in and I feel that same old love of the road.

(Confessions :Continued on Page 14)



Zoning UPDATES

See the items
below for an
update on
current
issues

The Zoning Committee reviewed the requests for a height and front yard setback variance for 3820 Jefferson Boulevard and did not oppose the request. The committee felt that the topographic characteristics warranted a height and setback variance for front steps and proper grading. The building will be 35 feet at the highest point when measured from grade on the northside of the lot.

The committee also had discussions concerning the leasing of space at The Seascapes Shops rear building on 3725 Stratford Rd. The committee was not opposed to adding a dental lab that creates dental prosthesis as a permitted use to the current B-2 restrictions. As the lab is currently a two employee operation with very low on site traffic and will not use or store toxic metals or chemicals on site.

If you would like to express your comments and concerns on zoning issues in Ocean Park please contact Mike Wills or any OPCL officer.

OPCL Finance Committee Update:

As of July 31, the Robbins Legacy Account was allocated approximately 78% Fixed Income/Cash and 22% Equity/Balanced funds on a total account balance of \$180,700. Upon completion of our second dollar cost averaging program, the account should be approximately 75% Fixed Income/Cash and 25% Equity/Balanced funds as targeted by the committee. We are pleased to report since the account was established in March 2008 with \$180,000, over \$8000 in interest has been accumulated and available for distribution of which \$2500 was recently disbursed to various non-profits as voted on by the general membersip.

Your ideas for funding of community projects are encouraged and welcomed.



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Betty Wood — 1930 – 2009

Through the past 65 years, the Ocean Park Civic League has had many devoted leaders that have maintained the value and integrity of the league. On June 3, the community lost one of those leaders.

Betty and Ethan (Pete) were long time residents of Ocean Park - not “just residents” but residents vital to the life of the community of “Sylvan Beach”. Betty was president of the civic league during the 1960s, she was an active Girl Scout leader when troops met in the Ocean Park Fire and Rescue Building, involved with the 4H program, her children’s schools and church. There has to be countless adults today who, as children, were influenced by this unselfish and caring woman. She exemplified what it meant to be a citizen of your community.

How well I remember being in the Federal Court Building in Norfolk with Betty and assorted attorneys in the early 1980s for yet another scheduled hearing on the ownership of the “Reserved Areas” of Ocean Park. These areas included the beach which was eroding to the point that the parking lot of the Chesapeake House was being undermined.

As we waited for the hearing (which was again postponed) Betty made the comment to me that the first time she had been there for such a hearing she had a babe in arms and that babe was now in college. As the then president of the civic league, that remark precipitated my phone call to Mr. Louis Jones, Bayside Councilman, and suggested that it was time for the city to be pro-active rather than re-active on this issue. We discussed the pros and cons of this action and he said he would work with the civic league if this was what the community wanted, also realizing that we could lose.



So started the two years of meetings that two past presidents, and other people more influential than they, had with members of City Council and city staff to present our case for the city to secure ownership of the Reserved Areas. I think it was 1986 that we were successful and the beach received the much needed sand that created an enormous, beautiful public beach.

In celebration, the civic league sponsored the first “Sand Celebration 1987”. I have always credited Betty with spurring us to action. As “Johnnie come latelys” think that they don’t have the time to get involved with the civic league to help maintain the bit of paradise that those before us secured and preserved, please think of Betty Wood and other long time residents and their years of service to this community.



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Confessions (continued)

I know my presence on the road upsets many of you commuting in your cars. Lately there's been a lot of animosity between the bicycling community and those that feel roads are for cars only. I don't want to get in the middle of this; I just want to be able to get my fix. I've noticed lately that a lot of drivers have gotten more aggressive about passing me on the streets, and since the unfortunate incident this past spring when one of my bicycling brethren was killed by a negligent driver, the streets are downright dangerous.

For the first time in my 20 years of bicycle commuting I've had to resort to riding in the middle of the lane. This slows cars by a minute or two from getting to their destination, but it allows me to get to work and back home alive. I know this is frustrating for you drivers and I hate to have to do it, but don't hate me; I'm just an addict trying to stay alive. I also know many of you understand my affliction. You honk your horns in support, and you yell words of encouragement at me every day. Some of you even show your support by giving me the international sign of brotherhood and love (at least that's my interpretation of an extended middle finger). There are some days when I'm tired and my legs feel like jelly, and it's those kind and loving gestures that keep me going.

So now you know. I don't do it on purpose, I just can't help myself. I don't mean to make you upset, but those urges just get the best of me. If your going to work early some morning, or coming home in the afternoon, and traffic on shore drive slows for no apparent reason, try to restrain your frustration, it's probably just me getting my fix. Please don't hate me, I just can't control myself, I need to be out there pedaling my bike.

(Rick Mercadante has lived in Ocean Park for over 20 years, and in the Shore Drive area for 25 years. If you have any questions about bicycle commuting, he can be reached at rmercadante@bigfoot.com)

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I hope you all had a great summer, I know I did. The weather for most of the summer has been fantastic. I could have done without all the rain this past month, but I suppose we need it. It's summers like this past one that make you really appreciate living on the Bay.

Unfortunately It has been a slow summer for membership, we've only signed up 30 new members since April. That's good for me since it means less paperwork, but not good for the civic league because it means less folks are involved. Get out there and ask your neighbors if they've renewed their annual membership.

We need to grow our membership if we want to have influence with our local government. There's strength in numbers. Use guilt if you have to, it always worked when my mother wanted me to do things I didn't want to do. I'm planning a membership drive this fall and I could use as much help as possible. Let me know if you can help out.

Rick Mercadante, Membership Chair

NAME:

ADDRESS:

E-MAIL:

PHONE:

RENT: OWN:

YEARS IN OCEAN PARK:

AREAS OF INTEREST IN THE OCEAN PARK CIVIC LEAGUE

- Newsletter Contributions
- Shore Drive Committees Liaison
- Traffic Committee
- Newsletter Distribution
- Zoning
- Social Events Committee

Mail this application with your dues (\$15 annually) to:

Ocean Park Civic League (OPCL)

P.O. Box 55385, Virginia Beach, Va. 23471

Make checks payable to: Ocean Park Civic League

