

PIBPOA – July-2019 PIB Gazette Article

PIBPOA MEETING: New Plans and Old, Details and Perspectives

President Jim Duffy called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. June 15th, at the PIB Senior Center. After the State of the Island and the replay for the Chamber you might think there was no more to be said. Wrong! Peter Huston from the Chamber of Commerce, Police Chief Steve Riddle and PIB Village Councilman Jeff Koehler brought new plans and fascinating insights into the Police Department and the Village Council.

Peter wants to expand the notion of a Splash Down Day on July 20th to create a new event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the famous splash-down of the Apollo 11 Astronauts returning from the moon. This coincides with Jeep Weekend and would be a perfect time to celebrate the contributions of Ohioans to the nation. He needs help in developing the idea and bringing it down to the Earth on Put-in-Bay. He also reported that the Safe Island group suggested reusing those old "Ask Me" t-shirts (from 2013) which you have in the very back of your closets. "Ask Me" volunteers would work an a.m. or p.m. shift at such places as the Jet Dock, DeRivera Park and Tipper's parking lot on busy weekends. They might even ride the ferries to answer visitors' questions.

Jim then introduced Chief Riddle who said that the evolving Traffic Plan is on the web. He also asked that people watching cart drivers avoid down-town on busy weekends so as not to contribute to traffic jams. Saying "We have come a long way since last year" the Chief explained that tour busses must notify the Miller Boat Line before arriving and that multiple busses would be staggered – no more than one bus load to a ferry. This allows him to schedule his officers more efficiently when the need is great-est. On Mardi Gras weekend, May 10th and 11th, officers wrote 79 tickets for fines of \$65 to \$265. 64 of the tickets were paid immediately and the remaining 15 had warrant locks placed on their driver's licenses. They cannot be renewed until the fine is paid.

The open container laws allow for some discretion so officers may ticket or ask the offender to empty the container and receive a warning. Chief Frank's force wrote 400 tickets. The next year Chief Riddle's force wrote 800. The year after that they wrote only 400. The Chief thinks people do learn! This year he intends to teach them about golf cart safety. Three new police carts will patrol Langram Road in particular looking for unsafe drivers and/or driving and seat belt violations.

The Ottawa County sheriff has now agreed to police the township while the Village polices itself. This allows the Sheriff to send 30 deputies on heavy weekends. Other state agencies are contributing an additional 40 agents, some in plain clothes. The combined force of village (30), township (30) and state(40) will be a force to be reckoned with.

In an unusual turn of events, last summer, agents from the state found con men cheating tourists with illegal and fixed gambling devices. Equal justice for all.

Jim Duffy wanted to know if a portable jail was required. The Chief did not think so, although he had filled the jail once this season. He noted that new financial arrangements for the ODNR boat made it more available for police use. He has used it a number of times to take people off the island.

The long-range perspective was provided by Jeff Koehler, who introduced himself as a person whose family's roots on the island go back to the '30's and the longest-serving Village Councilperson. He wanted to answer questions, which he did - not from the point of view of the Gazette, but of that of a longtime Council member and observer.

The first question raised the One-Island/One Government issue. He thought that, at the moment, this was a long shot because neither the Council or the Township are making it a top priority. There are still many issues that need to be solved, and without answers there is no progress. Duffy said that the appointed 10-member

commission (five people from each jurisdiction) would answer such questions before the issue was placed on the ballot. It appeared to Jeff that the establishment of the commission had little support from the Township Trustees, and that the Council which voted for it, hasn't really taken it off the back burner either.

The next question asked about the position of City Manager. Jeff praised the efforts of Council's administration, but noted that they were being asked to answer engineering questions exceeding their training. To change to a city-manager form of government, either the Village Council would need to vote in favor, or a citizen's petition signed by 10% of the registered voters would put the issue on the ballot. In either case, Village voters would decide.

The big issue was water/sewer. Jeff expressed interest in the connection-to-mainland solution and referred to Joe Cerny's recent study of long-term costs. The last Poggemeier report recommends this solution in the back of a long report. Water costs are going to go up. At one time, the Water works required an operator with a level II certificate; then EPA changed it to level III. Such mandates increase the fixed costs dramatically for a plant like ours that is a tenth of the size of its mainland cousins. In spite of the rain water costs are going up. And up.

The sewer situation is much better since (1) the present system has excess capacity and (2) the Council has approved a low pressure system policy which might address the needs of Toledo Avenue, Shore Villas and Victory Avenue without lift stations. Shore Villans might be interested in the letter Jeff has from the EPA mandating sewerage by 1995.

President Duffy wanted the PIBPOA to concentrate on one of these many issues. After much discussion the membership voted to focus on the water issues.

The meeting was adjourned; the discussion will be continued.

Safe Island Task Force Reports to Property Owners



On Saturday, August 17th, the Safe Island Task Force addressed nearly 50 members of the Put-in-Bay Property Owners' Association regarding efforts of the SITF in dealing with the former Christmas in July weekend. While Brad Ohlemacher did not know which of those efforts was most important he did highlight the many and different steps taken by the SITF.

They include:

- The formation of the task force.

- The addition of off-islanders Mike Bell, former Mayor of Toledo, and Aaron Walker to the team. Neither missed a single meeting!

Mike Bell and Peter Huston reached out to bus tour operators to assure that they, and their customers, knew what was and what was not legal on the island. They reminded operators of the consequences of promoting illegal activities.

Improved communications included a text alert system connecting officials and business people, small signs and stickers aimed at pedestrians in line to rent carts and media training for employees to keep them on message.

With better communication the new traffic patterns could be activated (or deactivated) quickly and easily.

Proactive monitoring of social media allowed officials to know that the golf carts were not all sold out. The Miller Boat Line requirement that tour busses preregister to assist traffic flow permitted security officers to appear in force when necessary.

Brad thought his work was now over but he thinks we all need to keep the SITF going and to promote the "One Island, One Voice" message to advertisers. The SITF has produced a 60 page report to assist with future evaluations.

Jim Duffy then introduced SITF member Todd Blumensaadt who explained the roles of the Jet Express. The larger Jet handles 395 riders, the smaller 147. He and Billy Market met with the Public Utilities Commission to assure that cooperation between competitors was not a violation of anti-monopoly regulations. The Miller and the Jet are public utilities and Route 357 is a state highway. Todd noted that some merchants initially afraid of driving away business are now on board with the SITF.

Jim Duffy then introduced Police Chief Steve Riddle who stated that there were 13 arrests and one open container violation on the last weekend of July. In 2018 there were 104 tickets written. He attributed the decline to the factors Brad and Todd mentioned. He also said that the Police Department has appointed an Information Officer who, with a colleague, will visit the Sandusky Register in an effort to clear lines of communication.

In the following Question and Answer session Chief Riddle noted that an extremely busy July weekend may cost the department \$25,000. Questioners asked if the promoter of major events e.g. Kid Rock concert should have to pay for security. The Chief replied that they do within the boundaries of the concert venue and that 200 security officers would work the concert on the inside. He believed that the 360 officers scheduled to work the Kid Rock concert were sufficient although the number of sold tickets approximates 15,000.

Kathi Spayde introduced the new and improved PIBPOA website where the public records of the Village, the Township, The Police Department, The Mayor's Court etc. are just a mouse click away. It is a very comprehensive site – a one stop shopping spot for information about the island.

The next meeting of the PIBPOA, one week later than normal on Saturday, September 28th, will focus on the future. Members will elect new board members of the PIBPOA, candidates for public office will be invited to answer questions and members will be asked about their priorities for 2020.

OEPA WATER MEETING

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On Thursday, September 5th, there was an open meeting with Amy Klei, head of the Ohio EPA's drinking and ground waters department, Chief, Division of Drinking and Ground Waters - OEPA, and other representatives from the Ohio EPA to discuss options for providing water for the is-land in the coming years.

The representatives were there to provide information about EPA policies and regulations in the coming years, provide information about possible funding options and discuss engineering concerns about maintaining a water plant on the island or building an underwater line and connecting to the regional water system on the mainland.

The EPA officials began with praising the current status of the Village's water plant and said that the water being produced there is some of the best in the state. They said the agency's relationship with Jaime Hernandez, the plant's operator, is very good.

However, when it came to the future of the plant, Klei could not tell those gathered what to expect when it comes to future mandates for treatment, operations, operator certification and on-site supervision, all of which add to the cost of producing water just like the expensive ozone treatment system that was recently required to be installed at PIB's plant.

When it came to financing options in the future, there was no definite information about what grants and funding opportunities might be available, but the money man on Klei's team OEPA Water Meeting did explain how current funding works in relation to what the agency looks for when assessing new projects.

When it came right down to deciding on whether or not an on island system or a waterline to the mainland was the best, the engineers from the OEPA and Ottawa County had concerns about providing water from the mainland, but did not rule it out. The EPA promotes connecting to regional water systems, but does not decide which option is best for a community. It is basically up to the Village of Put-in-Bay to decide which option it wants to pursue and submit a proposal to the OEPA. The OEPA would then have to approve any proposal.

Needless to say, there are pros and cons for running an island water plant or installing a line to the mainland. An aging water plant makes it important that officials at least look at both options, especially when it comes to operating a small plant with many of the same fixed costs and regulatory obligations that a large plant incurs. Proponents of installing a waterline to the mainland show initial, cost-saving projections in the tens millions of dollars over the life of a line.

It was suggested that an outline of the issues, requirements and questions be put together for both options so that Village officials could review everything that would be involved in making their choice.

When the meeting was over, everyone was certainly more informed about the issues from an OEPA stand-point, but there was no clear cut decision which option would be best for the island. Klei indicated the agency would be interested in any new studies or other case stud-ies that are relevant for the future of providing water for the island.

If you were in the audience and a proponent of one op-tion or the other, you probably walked away with your position unchanged, Hopefully, all par-ties walked out with open minds about conducting further study of the issue.