

Town of Ocean View
Delaware

April 13, 2026

Follow-up to Candidate's Night and Local Newspaper Interviews

As a governmental organization we appreciate the willingness of all candidates to participate in our election process. Our very form of Government relies on this participation to be successful. However, and as always with the best interest of the Town in mind certain clarifications have been deemed necessary.

The following is presented with the intention of providing information related to various topics, of which the Town has already addressed or is addressing and provide clarity regarding certain comments. It's important to note that the comments and interests expressed of any candidate are not necessarily the position of the Town. They may also have been made without awareness of past efforts, regulations, or a full understanding of the issue(s) involved. Our formal process of monthly meetings of Council reflect the initiatives, facts, reports and decisions made, that can therefore be relied upon.

Property Taxes

The Town of Ocean View maintains a very competitive tax rate. We have addressed revenue needs professionally and have fully justified increases and taken steps to limit the need for tax increases. Open and transparent discussion has occurred annually in regard to our budget process and any need for increases. In the last 10 years the Town has increased its tax rate 3 times, maintained the tax rate 6 times and reduced the tax rate once for an overall tax rate increase of only 9.3 cents (in 10 years).

Any statements related to continually raising taxes does not align with the facts. Likewise, suggestions regarding where the money is coming from or tightening belts are not reflective of the operations of the Town. Nothing is included in our budget or recommended to Council without identifying the funding source.

With that said, Ocean View does not have access to certain revenue streams. This fact is reflective of the type of Town we are and our location. Town staff have worked to identify additional revenue streams, exploring parking revenue primarily. Not having a traditional downtown limits access to parking revenue as this form of revenue is dependent on turnover to be beneficial.

Ocean View Post Office

The Town Manager has been actively engaged with both our local representatives and Congressional representatives since last September when the post office closed. Any notion that this engagement has not taken place is misinformed. However, the Town of Ocean View is not in a position to fund or mandate a specific outcome. It can only continue to provide information, request updates and push for an improved facility through engagement with our state and congressional representatives.

Flooding Concerns

Much discussion of flooding took place with little comment on location of the flooding being referred to. We can happily advise that regular localized flooding on roadways in the Town limits is something we have been addressing aggressively for over 7 years with nearly all areas currently identified completed or in the planning stages to be addressed.

In regard to major storm or catastrophic weather event flooding, we participate in emergency preparedness programs and make information available to our community regarding flood insurance programs, notification options, etc.

Communication with the Community

Some comments related to improving communication suggest emailing people in our community. Certainly we communicate by email regularly with many. It must be noted that for a small Town we have committed to providing numerous options for staying informed including our Website, Newsletter, maintaining OVTV our government access channel (818 or 78), offering Council and Planning meetings live via YouTube and airing after the fact on OVTV. Workshops and meetings are advertised and held for special projects and topics. Bulk mailings have been utilized for special topics and as required by law. The required posting are made in the local paper and on at least two information boards at our public facilities. Anyone that wants to be informed or engaged has ample opportunity.

In relationship to communication and outreach, it's important to point out that Ocean View won the Small Town Award for our 2020 Comprehensive Plan Update from the National Planning Association. The award was specific to the extent of engagement we offered during the long process, having gone above and beyond.

Annexation

The annexation discussion is a very complex topic. There are strict rules in place for approaching annexation of property. The Town doesn't have the power to require annexation. We have met in recent years with numerous developments that are adjacent to Town properties, at their request and interest. Most have infrastructure that they've not adequately saved to maintain. To be sure, any annexation is a two way street. Any true consideration of annexation (especially of existing developments) would undergo a full cost benefit analysis and require specific requirements of the developments to seek approval from its property owners. The process would be completely open and transparent. There are times that existing development annexation can be successful however more often than not, achieving a win-win outcome with existing developments is very difficult.

More mouths to feed type comments are dismissive of the extensive evaluation the Town staff would perform, and the initial engagements we've already conducted. These discussions and efforts must ensure and demonstrate that the best interest of the Town and its current property owners are served, in regard to any future recommendations for annexation.

Grants

Comments have been made regarding grants that seemed to suggest we seek them for operational support, including statements such as "what will we do when grants aren't available". As a result, it should be noted that most grants are sought for one-time expenses to develop a project or specific improvements. Some (typically police department grants), or municipal street aid are presented annually and may have a positive operational support impact (for the General Fund), but they're grants that have been in place for a long time and enjoy state level legislative support.

Suggestions were made that we should seek Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) grants and other such opportunities. While all may not be aware of what we present at meetings, in reports, in financial statements and workshops, the Town of Ocean View has been *extremely successful* in obtaining TAP and other grants, at the level of millions of dollars in recent years.

We regularly apply for and have been the grateful recipients of grants from the following sources:

DNREC Outdoor Recreation Parks and Trails Program (ORPT), Office of Highway Safety, State Aid to Local Law Enforcement (SALLE), Emergency Illegal Drug Enforcement (EIDE), Criminal Justice Council (CJC), Fund to Combat Violent Crime (FCVC), Special Law Enforcement Assistance Funds (SLEAF), Indian River School District (SRO support), State of Delaware Municipal Street Aid (MSA) Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant, Transportation Alternative Program (TAP grants – DelDOT), Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities grants (BRIC), Sussex County Revenue Sharing grants, Sussex County Transfer Tax Revenue Sharing, State Community Reinvestment Fund (CRF – Bond Bill), and Delaware Emergency Management Association (DEMA) Homeland Security grants.

Gross Rental Receipt Tax (GRRT)

The Town of Ocean View has a very successful program and process for identifying and obtaining the required GRRT from those who rent property in Town. This is a significant revenue source for the Town. In addition to researching online and print rental listing against our permit list we often receive calls from neighboring properties to alert us to a home being rented. Staff often identify possible unlicensed rentals by observance during routine patrols of the Town. Any suggestion that we're not addressing unpermitted rentals is inaccurate.

DART Engagement – Transit

There was some discussion regarding transit and such and the possibility to raise revenue with parking. To this we can share that within the last 6 years we have tried to address transit and consider the opportunity to add parking revenue. These efforts have been documented and/or discussed in meetings and reports.

First and foremost, transit is difficult and almost always subsidized. Our effort to attempt a Pilot shuttle program was halted when its evaluation resulted in the cost to offer a shuttle to and from Bethany Beach would require a fee of \$4 a ride (each way) and that was the cost with free shuttle buses from DART! The fact is that transit is a State responsibility and we have communicated our concerns to DART.

Ocean View participated in the *DART Reimagined* effort several years ago – stressing the lack of transit in our area of Sussex County and the need for a consistent and convenient offering that could have a true impact on vehicular congestion. Unfortunately the *DART Reimagined* effort resulted in zero recommendations being made to add transit for our area!

With this noted, Ocean View is not in the position to fund a successful transit program on its own. The infrastructure requirements for transit along Rte. 26 (Atlantic Avenue) alone are extensive and it's a State roadway. A great opportunity was missed by the State 12 to 15 years ago when Rte. 26 (Atlantic Avenue) 26 was widened and the center turn lanes were added. In our opinion, that effort should have included transit pull off areas, for the future option of safe transit opportunities. However, as a result, the DART buses won't stop along Rte. 26 , so a reroute of the DART Beach Bus isn't feasible. We've already engaged DelDOT and met along our portion of Rte. 26 in three locations to discuss this option, even explored with DelDOT assuming excess right of ways along the roadway to accommodate transit pull offs. Again, safe, efficient transit is not easy to achieve.

This topic also aligns with the suggestion made to offer day long paid parking at our park. We explored an opportunity with a local property owner in association with the shuttle pilot evaluation. There was no interest in working with the Town to participate and its not clear the plan would work (that people would use a shuttle). The cost, however, of offering a shuttle was determined to be cost prohibitive as noted above. What we know is that transit must offer extensive hours to accommodate many needs and interests and it can't have long wait times between shuttles, or it won' be used. Paying for parking also requires management and enforcement (staffing and equipment). Basically, it's just not that simple.

Permit Revenue Increases

We evaluate the level of fees and permits annually during our budget process. Fees and charges are required to reflect the Towns costs to address the specific item. Evaluations of the amount of time spent, comparisons to other jurisdictions, etc. are considered when recommending changes. They're not typically raised without justification or to simply increase revenues. In 2024 (FY25 - January as Gross Rental Receipt Tax [GRRT] is based on the calendar year) we increased the Towns GRRT from 5% to 6% in association with the level of engagement and effort put forth running the program and in association with a review of the percentage charged by neighboring communities.