



## The Town of Fenwick Island

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# MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR JULY 2026

*Maybe I don't want to know the way home...*

*I've got places to go.*

*Wanna chase a miracle?*

*It's possible.*

*You just got to open the door...*

Lyrics from "Following the Sun" performed by NEEKA and SUPER-Hi

### PEDESTRIAN SAFETY UPDATE:

We have heard you about how difficult it is to cross Coastal Highway and how crazy the drivers are as they are coming through our Town. We are on it.

The Fenwick Island Police Department is and will continue to actively engage in actions to enforce our pedestrian safety laws including ticketing those who try to speed through our Town, vehicles making illegal U-turns as well as drivers who do not respect our pedestrians' right of way in the crosswalks.

Prior to the summer season, we had approached DelDOT to try and synchronize the lights through Town to create traffic calming measures which could assist us in those endeavors; however, DelDOT denied our request.

The sidewalk project that is slated to occur in the 2028 time period should, if it stands as currently engineered, have flashing lights at all crosswalks not controlled by traffic lights. Meanwhile, in addition to active enforcement, we are going to try a new idea, utilized with some reported success in Florida (thank you Stu Rubenstein for bringing back some pictures for us to use).

At intersections where there is not a traffic light, we will be installing a bin containing red traffic flags. Use a red flag as you are attempting to cross the highway to gain further attention from drivers before stepping into the crosswalk. WAVE THE FLAG WILDLY until you get their attention and they stop. Once on the other side of the highway, deposit the flag back into the bin on the opposite side.

Our hope is that the Crosswalk Flags we are rolling out will further assist in helping our pedestrians be more visible to drivers while utilizing the crosswalks.

Please continue to watch out for drivers who ignore the rules. As I used to tell my kids when they were learning to drive, it is better to be safe than right. You and your family's safety are paramount.



**ACLU HAS APPEALED THE RULING DISMISSING THEIR CASE AND THE DELAWARE LEGISLATURE HAS PASSED THE FIRST PART OF A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO BAR TRUSTS , LIMITED PARTNERSHIPS AND LLCs FROM VOTING IN FENWICK ISLAND ELECTIONS:**

The ACLU sued the Town of Fenwick Island in December and was challenging our election process for Town Council elections. As set forth in our Charter, artificial entities (LLCs, LPs and trusts) are granted to the right to cast a vote in our town elections under our one person/one entity/one vote principle. Asserting that they were targeting “corporations” but also entangling family trusts set up for estate purposes, the ACLU alleged that allowing artificial entities to vote could dilute our voting outcomes and was “unconstitutional.”

Our Charter was amended in 2008 to allow artificial entities to vote in our Town elections due to the number of property owners that were setting up trusts for estate purposes and under the belief that every property owner who is subject to our Town taxes and ordinances should have a say in electing our Town Council. Artificial entities cannot hold office on our Council, cannot vote in federal or State elections and are only given one vote regardless of how many different properties they own.

Our Charter amendment granting voting rights to artificial entities was unanimously enacted by the Delaware State legislature in 2008 and no one voting in Fenwick Island ever challenged the process. While there are other Towns with similar election provisions and the State of Delaware enacted the Charter provision years ago, the ACLU decided to pursue an action against us.

We defended the lawsuit filed by the ACLU and our Motion to Dismiss the Complaint was granted. The ACLU has now appealed to the Supreme Court of Delaware.

On the last day of the legislative session, along party lines, the Delaware legislature passed Part I of a constitutional amendment to prohibit all artificial entities from voting in any election in Delaware, including ours. To be successful, the legislature would have to approve the amendment in two successive legislative sessions. Therefore, if passed during the next legislative session, all artificial entities in Fenwick will lose the right to vote in our Town elections.

We will continue to try and protect all property owners’ right to vote and will keep you advised. I testified in Dover this session but was only provided two minutes to make our case. We will write to all legislators prior to the next session and provide a detailed summary of our election process. We

are also working with other Towns, similarly situated, to ask for their assistance as well. As it stands now, Dover is working under the mistaken belief that “corporations have taken over Fenwick.”

### **TREASURERS REPORT:**

As of May 31, the Town’s overall cash balance was \$3.86 million, which was a decrease of \$114,000 from April 31. This decrease was anticipated since we started to have a full lifeguard patrol. Through May 31, overall revenues and expenses are in-line with expectations with the exception of higher than anticipated legal expenses due to the recent ACLU litigation. RTT revenues for May were \$35,000 and now the YTD RTT revenues total \$359,000 which exceeds the annual budget by \$9,000. We are anticipating a few more house sales in June and July, which means RTT will likely exceed \$400,000 for the full year. The Town remains on target with its forecasted cashflow.

### **BUDGET FOR 2027 PASSED BY TOWN COUNCIL:**

The 2027 Fenwick Island Town Budget was approved unanimously by Town Council at the June meeting. To review the budget: [FY-2026-2027-BUDGET-2.pdf](#).

As part of the 2027 Budget, the Budget and Finance Committee recommended and the Town Council adopted a tax increase of 4 cents from .174015 to .214015 per hundred dollars of assessed value, the first tax increase since 2002. In addition, the Budget and Finance Committee recommended and the Town Council adopted increasing the long-term rental rate from 4% to 7.5%, which would be consistent with the short-term rental rate. Tax bills should be sent by the end of July.

The historical background that was considered when passing the tax increase included:

- Payroll and benefits represent 74% of total town operating expenses and these expenses have been rising each year.
- When comparing the FY2027Budget with FY2022 actual results, overall expenses have increased by \$860,000. Over that same time period, salaries and benefits for the Police Department increased by \$274,000 along with a \$139,000 increase in the Lifeguard Department.
- During the Fenwick Island FY2022 Budget discussions, the then Town Manager strongly recommended a tax increase in either FY2022 or FY2023 due to rising salary costs that were exceeding taxes collected.
- Town Council intentionally delayed raising property tax increases and due to the favorable real estate market chose to rely on RTT revenues (fees collected from property sales) and new home construction/renovations permit fees **for as long as possible** to provide adequate cash reserves to offset the continued cost increases (salaries, health insurance, and general insurance) and adequate reserves.
- The Town has not raised property taxes since August 2002 (24 years ago) even though other towns around us have had several tax increases.
- We have now reached the point where the rising costs of salaries, benefits and insurance have outpaced the RTT revenues that had been able to make up the difference between expenses incurred versus taxes collected.

Town Council also will be seeking a Charter change to adopt Sussex County’s appraisal of properties. By doing so, the Town will save approximately \$20,000 a year in appraisal fees.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE /FLOODING UPDATE:**

Bayside flooding is one of our biggest priorities for the Town. We hired Straughan Environmental to create a Comprehensive Engineered Master Resiliency Plan for the Town and to define engineered

methods of mitigation, recommend proposed demonstration projects, develop concept designs for the demonstration projects, prepare final design plans with cost estimates, and prepare bid documents for the high priority demonstration projects. We hope to have the Comprehensive Engineered Master Resiliency Plan completed by Straughan Environmental by the end of 2026 and it will provide the next set of tools and insight for taking the additional steps for mitigating bayside flooding and planning for resiliency.

Straughan Engineering has already recommended that we ensure that all our bayside homes/street ends meet a target elevation (bulkhead/berm) of 3.98 NAV88 by 2050 to protect the Town from bayside flooding. Charter and Ordinance Committee will begin the process of considering ordinance changes to meet those standards.

The Infrastructure Committee held a public engagement symposium in May to share Straughan's findings and recommendations to date. **You can access the symposium at:** [Bayside Resiliency Planning & Flood Mitigation Strategies Forum - Zoom](#)

We have another symposium planned for August 21st at 1:00 p.m. Please join the Town of Fenwick Island's Infrastructure Committee and Straughan Environmental for the **Bayside Resiliency Planning & Flood Mitigation Strategies Forum**. The community discussion will focus on engineering updates from the May 29 forum, continued mitigation planning efforts, and additional community discussion and questions aimed at helping protect Fenwick Island's future. Residents will also have the opportunity to participate in a Q&A with the Infrastructure Committee and Straughan Environmental. Busy, booked, or not able to make it to Fenwick? Zoom in!

**Bayside Resiliency Planning & Flood Mitigation Strategies Forum**

**August 21, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.**

**Call-in #: (301) 715-8592**

**Meeting ID: 849 7636 8245**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84976368245>**

We have also filed for a federal BRIC grant in the amount of \$2.1 million dollars, with a 25% contribution from the Town, to begin mitigation measures along two of the most vulnerable roadways—West South Carolina Street and Dagsboro Street. The areas were chosen because they are among the most impactful locations for flooding and drainage issues and because they are appropriate candidates for the type of comprehensive resiliency work being evaluated by the Town's contractor, Straughan Environmental, Inc. We should receive word by 2027 if our grant application is accepted. Public Works continue to maintain the valves that have been installed in the drainage pipes and to clear debris from pipes. If you believe that the valves are not working or that the pipes are not open, please contact Town Hall to report. You can access updates on maintenance/inspection and repairs to the pipes on our website, under the Departments-Public Works—Discharge Replacement Plan at <https://fenwickisland.delaware.gov/files/2025/09/DISCHARGE-REPLACEMENT-PLAN-2025.pdf>. Please keep in mind, in the event of high tides, the valves and pipes cannot assist until the tide recedes. Our Town on the bayside is flat and almost at sea level so there is not enough "fall" for the pipes to be effective while the tide is high.

We have also repurposed some "NO WAKE SIGNS" that we place throughout Town in problem areas to remind drivers to travel slowly through the road when there is flooding so as to not create a wake that can enter homes.

**DARKSKY COMMITTEE UPDATE:**

The DarkSky Committee created a list of DarkSky friendly lighting choices that can be distributed to residents and businesses when considering lighting for new builds. For further information, please visit: [Microsoft Word - Lighting Handout - Final 6.16.26.docx](#)

The DarkSky Committee is partnering with the Fenwick Island Yacht Club to host a **“Night on the Bay” on July 25th** beginning at 7:30 p.m. Anchor near the Seal Island pilings and enjoy community while the sun sets. By 9:00 p.m. enjoy a moonlight paddle and sail and experience the beauty of Fenwick’s dark skies. All vessels are welcome.

Now that summer is here and we are all returning to Fenwick, the DarkSky Committee wants to remind everyone to consider the impact lighting has on others, particularly our friends in nature, and to consider the savings that can be achieved when making DarkSky endorsed lighting choices.

### **BEACH COMMITTEE UPDATE:**

The Beach Committee has an exciting lineup this summer. Please mark the dates!

- **Annual Town Bonfire on Saturday, July 18, 2026, to Support FIBP.**
- **Fenwick Flicks-- August 14th at Bayard Street at 8 p.m. ( “Minions”).**
- **NEW ADDITION--Fenwick Flicks Classic Movie Night-- August 21st at Bayard Street at 8 p.m. (“Casablanca”).**



### **FENWICK ISLAND BEACH PATROL UPDATE:**

The FIBP is fully staffed and now on duty every day for the 2026 season.

The Fenwick Island Beach Patrol provides access to the beach with a vehicle used to transport people with disabilities, injuries, the elderly and other special circumstances on to and off the beach. This service is provided between 10:30 AM – 3:00 PM from June – Labor Day. To utilize this service, you may call the beach patrol phone at **302-462-6942**. Since we only have one vehicle for transport, we ask for your patience as there may be wait times between trips.

If you prefer, the Beach Patrol also has 3 beach wheelchairs available. To utilize the use of a wheelchair, please contact 302-462-6942 (June – September) or 302-539-3011 (October – May).

All dunes in town are equipped with ADA compliant Mobi-Mats that are designed to provide accessibility to our beaches for pedestrians, wheelchair users, strollers, and individuals with limited abilities.

Please pay attention and adhere to all instructions from the FIBP. Let's enjoy a safe summer.

We have also negotiated a renewal of our contract to provide lifeguard services in the unincorporated section of Fenwick Island for an additional three years.

#### **4TH OF JULY PARADE ON BUNTING AVENUE**

Despite the heat and the cancellations of other Town's parades, Fenwick Island came out strong to celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the founding of our country. The inaugural 4th of July parade marched from Faucett Okie Family Preserve at Bayard Street and ended at the Pollinator Park.

No bands, just us – dressed in our best 4th of July costumes and promenading down Bunting Avenue. Well done Fenwick!

A big shout out to The Station who invited participants to join them at their Patio for a post parade celebration and enjoy hot coffee, lemonade, and 4th of July treats.

Next year we will add bikes...and yes, we plan on making a 4th of July Parade an annual event!







### **TOWN COUNCIL NEW MEMBERS SWEARING IN CEREMONY AND REORGANIZATION MEETING UPDATE:**

Jim Simpson and Behrooz Garavi will be sworn in as new Council members at the August Town Council reorganization meeting, scheduled for August 14th at 9:00 a.m. Also, the town Officers of Mayor, Treasurer and Secretary will be elected by Council at the same meeting.

The open Council position will be filled after the August reorganization meeting by the newly formed Council. If you are interested in serving on Town Council, please send a note to Town Hall or me.

### **OTHER TOWN COUNCIL NEWS:**

**MARINE SCIENCE CAMP IS SERVING FENWICK ISLAND FOR THE SUMMER OF 2026**--Town Council approved the use of Town facilities to host Marine Science Camp.

Visit [www.marinesciencecamp.com](http://www.marinesciencecamp.com) to learn more.

**CASSELLA WASTE SERVICES** was awarded a three-year contract after being the only bidder for our trash services. Currently, the rate is \$17.57 per home and the new contract renewal calls for a year one fee increase of \$17.92 per home, year two \$18.45 per home and year three \$19.00 per home.

**TOWN WORKING TO INTRODUCE NEW ALERT/MESSAGING SYSTEM WITH BYRX** after terminating service with Code Red. The change in system will save the Town approximately \$4500 a year, is much more user friendly and will allow us to push out updates more easily and efficiently. You will get information about signing up in the tax package sent to you in July. Please complete the necessary forms so we can keep getting the

Town updates out to you. Thank you to Council Member Lucy Wilder who spearheaded this project.

**BE ALERT FOR FALL HURRICANES/STORMS/TOWN UPDATES:**

We post updates about events, cancellations, or news on the Town's Facebook account at <https://www.facebook.com/TownofFenwickIsland>.

**COMING ATTRACTIONS:**

- Annual Town Bonfire – July 18th at Bayard Street beginning at 7 p.m.
- Town Council Meeting on July 24th at 1:00 p.m. at Town Hall or via Zoom.
- DarkSky and Fenwick Island Yacht Club "A Night on the Bay" on July 25th a sunset raft-up beginning at 7:30 p.m. near the pilings at Seal Island in the Little Assawoman Bay – all vessels welcome.
- Fenwick Island Reorganization Meeting, August 14th at 9:00 a.m.
- Fenwick Flicks on August 14th at 8 p.m. at Bayard Street
- Fenwick "Classic Movie Night" Flicks on August 21st at Bayard Street at 8 p.m.
- Bayside Resiliency Planning & Flood Mitigation Strategies Forum on August 21, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.
- Town Council Meeting on August 28th at 1:00 p.m. at Town Hall or via Zoom.
- Various Committee meetings can be found by going to the Town's website at <https://fenwickisland.delaware.gov/>.

Please feel free to reach out to any Town Council member if you have any questions or concerns about things happening around Town and remember to check our website and Facebook pages for current information/events.

Regards,  
Natalie Magdeburger  
Mayor/President of Fenwick Island Town Council

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*To stay informed about events, meetings and things going on around Town, please be sure to check out the Town's website at <https://fenwickisland.delaware.gov/> and look under the MEETINGS, EVENTS, AND CALENDAR tab in the center of the homepage to review all the events, meetings and links for Zoom attendance. There is lots of information on the website and you can even access many of the forms that the Town uses.*

You can also sign up for an **"Events Subscription"** by going to the **Contact** tab at the top of the Town's website homepage which will result in the receipt of an email to you on each day that notices of meetings and events are published on the Town's website, including a link to the activity.

You can also use the **Contact** tab on the website to contact Town Hall if you have a question, need assistance or have a suggestion.

The Town's Facebook page also hosts updates/announcements and is on Facebook at **Town of Fenwick Island-Government**.

There are LOTS of activities and meetings going on and we hope by using the Town's website and Facebook, you will not miss the things that are important to you and your family. Of course, if you do not use the internet, you can always call or stop by for assistance or information.

**If you are getting our email updates, please make sure to "whitelist" our address as some internet providers like to mark the updates as spam and are sending our materials to your spam folder.**