

# Bethany Beach Times



Newsletter Fall 2025



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## From the Mayor's Office

"We were challenged by Mother Nature with a nor'easter in October, just after enjoying another outstanding, safe and fun summer," said **Mayor Ron Calef**, who was re-elected to a second term by fellow Town Council members in September. "Our police officers put in some long hours to help and protect residents before, during and



after the storm, going door-to-door to ensure their safety and to ask if they needed help. We thank them and all of our first responders, and Town employees, including our summer seasonal employees, for their dedication in making Bethany Beach one of the best places to be - a clean, beautiful and safe destination for a visit or place to call home, part-time or full-time." As Councilman Mickey Hinman said, "We are all so lucky to live in Bethany Beach."





## Weathering the Storm – *Dune Damage*

It could have been worse, but the October **nor'easter** left its mark.

**High winds and tides over three days caused widespread flooding on some streets and extensive erosion to the beach and dune, with steep, impassable drop-offs resulting at pedestrian beach crossovers.**

Between Wellington and Third St., the beach is inaccessible. Public Works Director Brett

Warner said, “We dodged a half-bullet.”

Mayor Ron Calef, who chairs the Town’s Stormwater and Flooding Committee, noted that this storm, along with the high winds in August and Hurricane Erin collectively **demonstrate how exposed our beaches are, how quickly they can erode and how vital our engineered dune and beach system is to our safety.**

The Town relies on equipment and manpower from the [State Department of Natural Resources \(DNREC\)](#) to repair the damage.

**Mayor Calef is hopeful that the planned Loop Canal Dam will help prevent most street flooding. “It’s a need, not a want,” said the Mayor.**

Town leadership is in discussion on the topic with state and federal government.





## State Climatologist: Increasing Frequency of Coastal Flooding

Delaware Chief Climatologist Kevin Brinson told the [Town Stormwater and Flooding Committee](#) during a presentation in September that **“since the year 2000, more frequent and stronger coastal storms have been affecting Delaware.”**

He calculates 33 coastal storms a year, an uptick from years prior, with more variability and a higher frequency of extremes projected.

**Overall, sea level is slowly rising. To add to that, Delaware is slowly sinking. “Our sea level is rising at the rate of 1.5 inches per decade,”** said Brinson. When Brinson’s team counts climate change trends, rainfall is not counted, which contributes dramatically to flooding issues in Bethany. Thus, the challenge for the community and Town leaders.



## To Address Future Flooding

### Loop Canal Dam Project

At the [October Town Council meeting](#), Town Manager Cliff Graviot reported that progress on the project was stalled due to the federal government shutdown effect on the necessary [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#) review.

Significant preliminary work, including engineering studies, design work and resolution of a number of issues, have been completed. However, the previous administration at the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) withheld approval and further progress was not possible.

The good news is that with the change in administrations, current

DNREC leadership has endorsed the project and it is moving along.

**Once the federal government shutdown ends, the Town can renew consultation with the Corps and begin the permitting process. That process may take as long as 12 to 18 months.**

Town officials, past and present, have been committed to completion of this vital project. The reason is clear. The maximum height of the tidal water flooding in the recent nor'easter was about 2.8 feet.

**Tidal flooding in Town would not have occurred with the dam.**



# Addressing Flooding Issues

## The Loop Canal: Stabilizing the Eroding Bank with a Retaining Wall

A project started in late October to build a [Loop Canal Retaining Wall](#) to address erosion along the Canal and Lake Bethany, helping to preserve this area while mitigating some ongoing flooding issues. In September, Town Council approved the \$1.37M bid from Murtech Marine, Salisbury.

- Supports the natural habitat
- Follows closely the shape of the current eroding bank
- Keeps the canal navigable for boats
- Uses native landscaping including grasses, pines, bayberry shrubs to hold soil

**“It is a vital project,” says Assistant Town Manager Teresa Tieman. “It provides a valuable marsh habitat for wildlife, improves shoreline resilience and protects against erosion.”**



**In November, the contractor will bring barges into the Loop Canal to begin work on the project.**

Meanwhile, the large swale dividing Bethany West and Sea Colony has been cleaned out and the Bethany West drainage system

flushed.

The Town is also seeking grant funds for a study of the area to determine further action that may help area drainage.

## Did You Know?

*With naturally sandy soil and a high water table, a **significant 86% of our town sits within the flood plain.***

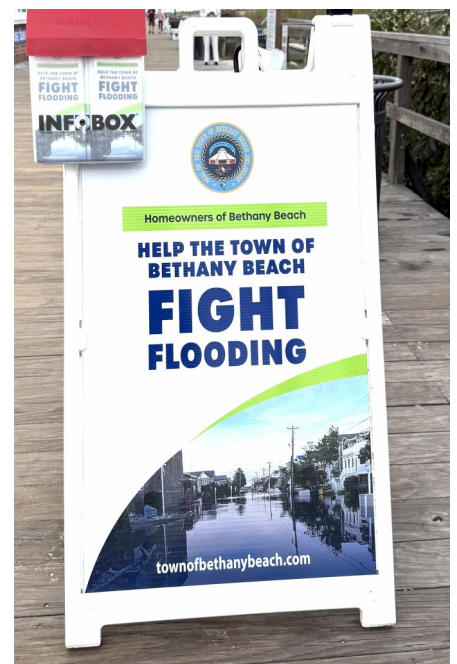
*This means that the water level goes up quickly when it rains. By implementing an effective drainage system, homeowners can ensure that water drains quickly.*

## Homeowners can:

*Installed booted gutter systems*

- Clean drainage swales
- Install pervious driveways
- Maintain maximum trees, natural areas and pervious ground
- Use porous landscape fabric
- Promote natural street drainage
- Install French drains and/or sumps with pumps

For a complete list of [best practices](#), visit [townofbethanybeach.com](http://townofbethanybeach.com)





# Bethany Beach Police Department News

## Turning the Page

*With the sentencing of the former BBPD chief and captain essentially for theft of federal grant funding for community police overtime, claiming overtime that they never worked, the Town has turned the page on this sad chapter.*

The BBPD is fully accredited by the [Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies \(CALEA\)](#), under its strict standards, as a premier police agency.

This accomplishment is due to the leadership of Chief Patrick Foley, Deputy Chief Justin Norman and the performance of all the dedicated officers in the Department who serve and protect us every day. Chief Foley incorporated "professionalism and accountability" into the Department's new Mission Statement.

### Bethany Beach Police Department updated Mission Statement reads:

**"To enhance the quality of life for all Bethany Beach citizens and visitors by providing professional, competent, and compassionate law enforcement services. To fulfill our mission, we will strive to always attain the highest degree of ethical behavior and professional conduct."**



The Police Accountability Committee welcomes suggestions [PAC@townofbethanybeach.com](mailto:PAC@townofbethanybeach.com)



## Seasonal Officers Make Safe Summers

When the summer population grows, so does the police department. With the hiring of seasonal officers, the police force doubles in size to more than 25 officers during the summer. And, Police Chief Patrick Foley wouldn't have it any other way.

**"They are the eyes and ears of the police department. I don't think we could function as effectively without them," says Chief Foley.**

Seasonal officers are high-visibility helpers, deterrents and enforcers that assist the Town in safely thriving.

### The biggest challenge for seasonal officers: the juvenile curfew.

On an average summer night, as many as 300 young people congregate and socialize on the beach. The Town moved up its juvenile curfew to 11:00 p.m. in 2021 to help curb disorderly conduct issues the Police Department and commercial district were facing. Officers start reminding young people on the beach during the 10:00 p.m. hour to think about heading home.

"It's definitely the biggest challenge," said seasonal Officer, Fani Cruz-

Bonilla, but "we want to keep everyone safe, so they can enjoy their summer."

**"The curfew is working," says the Chief. "Bethany is known as a safe community, and we want to keep it that way."**

## Bicycle Safety & Scooters

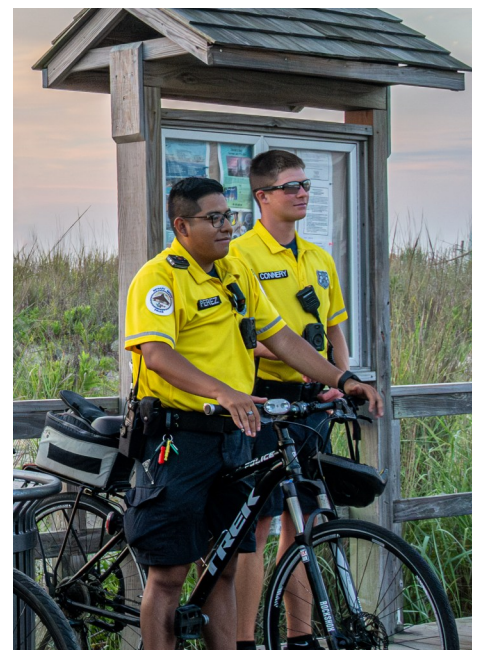
Bicycle safety, especially for those who work summer jobs in Bethany, many from other countries, was an education emphasis for officers.

**"Education over enforcement is a far more effective way to approach issues," says Chief Foley.**

The Police Department installed more than 300 light sets on bikes as part of its ongoing bicycle safety support efforts.

**On August 21, 2025, low-speed motorized scooters became legal in Delaware. Scooters must travel at a speed no greater than 15 mph.**

The Department offers programs to promote bicycle and scooter safety, as well as theft, victimization, frauds, scams prevention, pedestrian safety and home security.





## Police Department Charity Drive



### No Shave November

If you see an unshaven police officer this November, you may take second glance, but don't worry. The normally clean-shaven team of Bethany Beach Police are participating in "**No Shave November**" a nationwide police charity fundraiser where officers forgo facial grooming and the cost of shaving cream and razors to raise money for charity.

Bethany officers are personally contributing to the cause and hoping to raise funds from the public to add to their local charity: [Justin's Beach House](#), a Respite Home for Cancer Patients and Families, on Garfield Parkway.

**If you would like to contribute to the cause:**  
[Donate Here](#)

Delaware Police departments participating in the drive include Selbyville, Millsboro, Lewes, Dover, Newark, and New Castle County Police.



**Police Chief Patrick Foley**



**Unshaven Police Chief Patrick Foley**

### Police Community Event: Thursday, December 18

**Chief Foley holds an informational seminar at the South Coastal Library on Delaware DUI laws/awareness/prevention.**



## Welcome New Police Intern Sussex Tech Senior Floyd Moore

For the second year, the Police Department welcomes a high school intern on a criminal justice pathway for college.

**Sussex Tech Senior, Floyd Moore**, started mid-September and comes in every other day, riding along with officers and helping with administrative functions. With aspirations in criminal justice and law, Moore welcomes the unique opportunity of internship.

"This is my way to learn and deepen my understanding of how police officers work," says Moore. "I admire the way they do their jobs in the community, using discretion and treating people with respect."

Moore's high school criminal justice teacher, retired Milford Police Officer Steven Rust who passed away in May 2025, mentored and inspired Moore throughout high school to pursue the criminal justice



vocation, sharing with Moore his value of community engagement and the chance to help people.

Moore already volunteers for the Seaford Fire Department and comes from a family of First Responders, including his mother who is a paramedic; his father was a volunteer firefighter, and his sister is an emergency medical technician. His family, especially his older sister, as well as his old Scout Masters were also his biggest mentors.

Through school, Moore already has certifications, including 9-1-1 police dispatching accreditation, 40-hours of paralegal, and is now working on security guard certification.

Moore will intern with the department throughout the remainder of the school year and has his eye on perhaps becoming a future seasonal officer in Bethany Beach.

**The Town welcomes  
Police Intern, Floyd Moore.**





## Police Helping Our Churches Stay Safe

**As part of an effort to keep the community safe and deter potential criminals as threats nationwide have escalated to churches,** Bethany Beach Police met in October with staff and leaders of St. Ann Catholic Church.

Chief Patrick Foley and Deputy Chief Justin Norman provided law enforcement expertise and best practices for protecting people, buildings, parking lots and gathering spaces.

**“We are willing to educate and train church leaders and anyone in the congregation as part of heightening situational awareness, creating optimal deterrents and implementing best practices,” said Chief Foley.**



**“We all want to minimize potential threats.”**

Leaders walked the church property and talked to parish

leaders about steps that could be taken to make property and people safer.

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## Road Safety Improvements Garfield Parkway & Halfmoon Blvd

Work crews are extending a median to make drivers and pedestrians safer at the entrance to Bethany West on Halfmoon Boulevard. The changes will also help manage traffic flow. Town Council approved the contract for improvements at its September meeting.

Council member and Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Committee Co-Chair Theresa Keil says the project benefits pedestrians and drivers entering Halfmoon Boulevard at the entrance to Bethany West, including those who enter to eat at Bethany Diner or visit the Bicycle Connection.





# What Makes Bethany Special



## Bethany Tops Another List of Best Coastal Towns

Bethany Beach was just selected in October as the **#1 Most Captivating Small Town** on the Atlantic Coast, beating ten others, according to **World Atlas**, a website launched in

1994 that features top destinations of parks, cities, places, history sites, scenic byways and more geographical finds. **"Bethany Beach knows exactly what kind of town it is**



**and doesn't overcomplicate things,"** says World Atlas. Coming in at #2 was Rockport, Massachusetts.

## Local Reporter Shares Her Story

Susan Canfora, a seasoned veteran newspaper reporter at the Coastal Point, shared her insights and experiences in the journalism profession to an audience at Town Hall in October, **at an event sponsored by the Town Cultural and Historical Affairs Committee.**

"Every day is different. That's what I love about the business," said Canfora. "How news is delivered will continue to change over time."

Canfora has been a journalist for 45-years, after thinking she might be a veterinarian. But a comic strip she wrote in high school changed the trajectory of her future and she went on to study English at Slippery Rock University.

Feeling rewarded by her work on news stories, Canfora has captured recognition not only for news pieces, but also for columns she wrote. The most meaningful, she said, was a MD-DC-DE Press Association award in 2020 for a column she wrote about her beloved mother's death.

In a poignant Coastal Point Mother's Day message, Canfora said, "When I was cleaning out the house, I found boxes of newspaper articles I wrote, 28 years' worth, that my mother had cut out and saved. I guess she approved of journalism after all."

**The Town of Bethany Beach thanks Susan Canfora for her integrity in journalism.**





## Bethany Beach Patrol - part of the #1 in the Nation Lifeguard Team

The **Bethany Beach Patrol** remains top notch. Twelve guards from the 72-member Bethany Beach unit competed on a team with other Delaware Beach Patrols in the **Sussex County Lifesaving Association**, winning for the second year in a row the **Lifeguard National Championships**.

Led by Captain Joe Donnelly, the Bethany Beach Patrol kept beachgoers safe all summer.

**"We had a ten-day stretch in August that really kept us on our toes,"** said Donnelly. **Turbulent conditions and rip currents pushed up the number of water rescues to 565, about 100 more than last summer.**

Windy conditions, rough current and other factors also pushed a larger than normal quantity of jellyfish closer to shore, resulting in a higher number of jellyfish stings. **"Our lifeguards are highly motivated, smart, and they work hard to keep everyone safe,"** said Donnelly.





## Employee Spotlight

### Longest Serving Town Employee

### Brett Warner, Director of Public Works



Warner thinks about the storms. "Snowstorms, 'Nor'easters, possible hurricanes, those weather and storm-related challenges. Sometimes, in snow, we worked 36-hours straight."

His longest-running challenge? Water drainage. "We're so flat. There is nowhere for the water to go," says Warner. "When we get a heavy rain, I already know what's flooding."

Warner's family moved from Maryland to Ocean View when he was six years old. He graduated from Indian River High School, lived in Ocean View and now, Frankford. One of his sons, Taylor, works in the Water Department.

Warner has a strong constitution that has also helped him weather many personal storms. He lost his wife, Kim, to cancer in 2003, when his children were only ten and six years old. He raised them himself in the years that followed.

How did he do it all – all so well...?

"My father taught me the value of work," says Warner.

**The Town applauds and thanks Brett Warner for his 43-years of solid service.**

As of October 6, Brett Warner has worked 43 years for the Town of Bethany, making him the longest serving Town employee. Warner worked his way up the ranks.

"It's the only job I ever had," he said. Warner initially worked several summers clearing beach trash cans, then drove trash trucks and emptied dumpsters. All part of Public Works and all part of keeping Bethany clean.

Warner initially wanted to be an oceanographer, attending the University of Delaware and then Delaware Technical and Community College. But he kept working summers for the Town. When a full-time Maintenance position opened at the end of one summer, he applied. He got the job and kept expanding his responsibilities: grass-cutting, snow removal, commercial and residential dumpsters, hooking in new water lines, handling water leaks. He got his water plant operator license. He liked it.

"It was a hands-on accomplishment. You start a water line; you fix a leak," said Warner. "I worked 7-days-a-week, usually the only one on call."

Then, in 1999, the Public Works Director job became available. He was urged to apply but didn't think he had a chance. But he was offered the job and sent off to New York City for training.

When asked to recollect memorable moments from all the years,





## Business Spotlight Bethany Surf Shop Meet New Owner, Kim Neff

Kim Neff never imagined she'd become the owner of the Bethany Surf Shop, a place where she spent so many summers working as a young teen. But she is living that dream right now. 2025 was Neff's first summer as full-time owner.

While attending Indian River High School and George Washington University studying architecture, Neff worked summers and many off seasons at the shop, starting at the age of 15. In 2019, she was shocked when long-time owners Jim and Sheila McGrath asked her if she might want to buy the business.

When the long-time employee finally exhaled and said yes, the trio then

embarked on a five-year training and action plan.

"I am so grateful," says Neff. "It was raw, personal, and intense during those training years, with some long hours, but it was worthwhile. We worked well together. And I learned a lot. I felt prepared and adjusted by the time I took over the business," says Neff.

Any surprises? "Maybe how natural it felt," says Neff. "It felt good."

Top sellers at the shop?

Since 1980, they remain the same: Bethany Beach T-shirts, hoodies, and sweatshirts.





## New Little Lending Libraries - Book Boxes

Take a stroll in Bethany Beach Central Park and you'll see new **Little Free Library** book lending boxes.

A box on the south side of the park replicates the iconic blue and yellow Town Trolley. And a third new book box that sits just across Garfield Parkway at the Dinker-Irvin Museum, replicates the Museum.

Both the Trolley and the Museum library boxes are custom replicas, made by craftsman James Wall of Mississippi whose family used to vacation in Bethany Beach.

"Anyone can take a book or donate a book," says Carole Calef, Chair of the Bethany Beach Cultural and Historical Affairs Committee.

**The Committee wants to provide books for all ages, especially children's books.**

"Children's books are in high demand," said Calef. "Most families don't come to the beach with books, particularly children's books, so we see them scooped up right away."

The **Committee** maintains both boxes.



On the north side of Central Park is a library box built earlier this year by craftsman Bill Bergfeld, an avid reader who lives nearby. He and his wife, Anne McKinney, thought it would be great to have a little lending library in the park. Bergfeld talked to the town and built the book box.

**"The community keeps replenishing it," says Bergfeld.**

The three new book boxes join the original *Free Library* bench boxes that have resided since 2019 at the Bethany Beach Nature Center on Garfield Parkway.

**All boxes are part of the national**

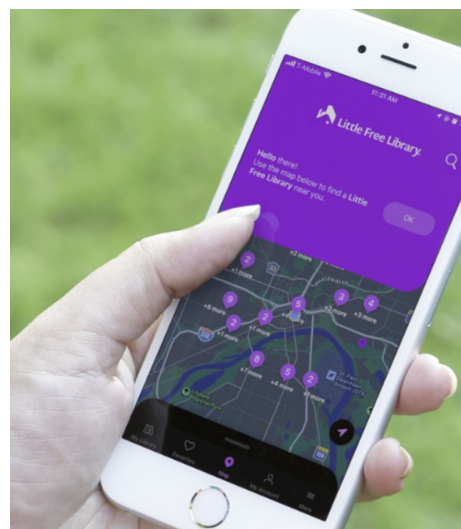


**Little Free Library system**, a non-profit free book access network led by volunteers who place and care for little free library boxes in neighborhoods.

**Little Free Library stands around the world can be found on the [littlefreelibrary.org](http://littlefreelibrary.org) website or on the official [Little Free Library App](#).**

If you would like to donate books, you may drop them off at Town Hall or the Dinker-Irvin Museum or email [chac@townofbethanybeach.com](mailto:chac@townofbethanybeach.com)

If you have ideas for other locations for accessible and visible lending library book boxes in Bethany Beach, email suggestions to [admin@townofbethanybeach.com](mailto:admin@townofbethanybeach.com)

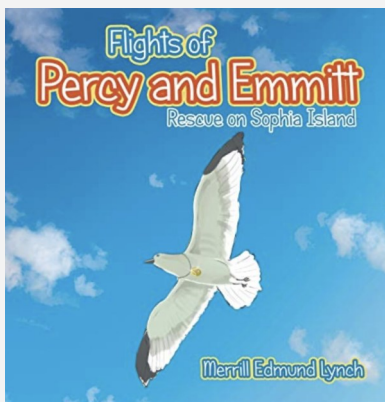
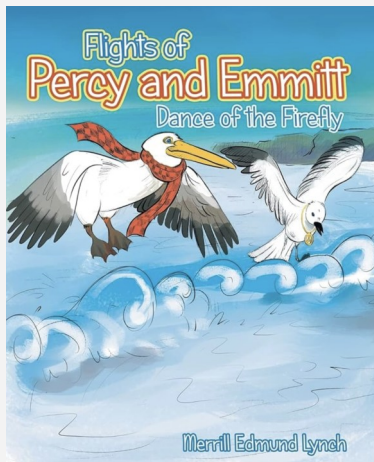




## Local Author to Donate Books for Young People

Merrill Edmund Lynch, who lives in Bethany Beach, wrote two books titled **Flights of Percy and Emmitt—Dance of the Firefly** and **Rescue on Sophia Island**—which he will place in **Little Free Library** Book Lending Boxes in Central Park.

The books tell the story of a family of birds on a rescue mission to save their home. The books emphasize teamwork, communication and empathy for animals and the importance of preserving natural habitats for all living creatures. Lynch is a lifelong advocate for nature.



## Do you love history and helping? Then, consider this....

The **Bethany Beach Cultural and Historical Affairs Committee** is welcoming new members.

Do you love local history and want to help preserve the stories that make Bethany Beach special? Whether your interests lie in organizing events or helping with projects and community outreach, your time and talents can make a difference. Come join us and be part of preserving our shared past.

Contact us at

[chac@townofbethanybeach.com](mailto:chac@townofbethanybeach.com)

or come to one of our meetings.

We meet the second Tuesday of the month at 10am in Town Hall.



The November meeting will be on Wednesday, November 12<sup>th</sup> at 10am because Tuesday is Veterans Day and Town Hall will be closed.

## Seaside Craft Show

Our annual Seaside Craft Show in June is a long-standing community favorite, and planning is already underway for another great year. We're looking for volunteers to join the Seaside Craft Show Committee to help keep this beloved tradition running smoothly.

If you enjoy planning events, working with creative people and contributing to a well-loved community event we'd love to have you join us. To volunteer or learn more, email [bbcraftshow@townofbethanybeach.com](mailto:bbcraftshow@townofbethanybeach.com). Together we can make this year's Seaside Craft Show a success!

## Save the Date

Bethany Beach  
Seaside Craft Show  
June 6, 2026





# TOWN OF BETHANY BEACH WINTER EVENTS 2025

4TH  
ANNUAL

## COASTAL CHRISTMAS SHOWDOWN

NOVEMBER 1ST-DECEMBER 6TH

Register your Bethany Beach home or business for this fun annual decorating contest. Winners to be announced at the tree lighting.



## HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6TH

Pony rides on the Beach  
Party with Santa  
Trolley, Train, & Tractor Rides  
Tree Lighting with SDSA Show Choir

## CHRISTMAS AT THE COTTAGES

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13TH

- Special events at the Nature Center & Dinker-Irvin Cottage

11 AM—1 PM



## TROLLEY TOURS

to see the holiday displays

NOVEMBER 29  
DECEMBER 6, 13, 20  
BY RESERVATION

TOWN OF BETHANY BEACH  
214 Garfield Pkwy, Bethany Beach  
[townofbethanybeach.com](http://townofbethanybeach.com)







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### Mayor and Town Council

- Ron Calef, Mayor
- Jerry Morris, Vice-Mayor
- Theresa Keil, Secretary/Treasurer
- Mickey Hinman
- Rich McHugh
- Bob Rush
- Marc Tanowitz

To contact Council members, please email the Town Administration at [admin@townofbethanybeach.com](mailto:admin@townofbethanybeach.com)

To submit story ideas for the News-letter, please email Cathy Rossi, Editor at [crossi@townofbethanybeach.com](mailto:crossi@townofbethanybeach.com)

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