

City not going off the deep end with swimming pools

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – City officials did not go off the deep end after receiving complaints from the public about swimming pools, but instead created a committee to review current zoning related to pools.

Mayor Edward J. Mahaney Jr., a statutory member of the Planning Board, said he served on the Planning Board from 1991 to 2003 and did not remember swimming pools being a hot button issue.

"The only (pools) I remember at that time were motels," he said.

When Mahaney was elected mayor he returned to the Planning Board and found swimming pools had become a controversial matter.

Currently, the zoning ordinance says swimming pools are not included in lot coverage, only the decking around it.

A committee was formed to examine the swimming pool issue and Bill Murray and Artie Pittman from the

Zoning Board, Harley Shuler and Bill Bezaire from the Planning Board, Craig Hurlless, engineer for both boards, attorney George Niedig and an attorney from Monzo and Catonese.

Mahaney said the Zoning Board asked for a meeting with city council because they felt they were not getting enough response from committee.

"They wanted an option to come back to us that really looked at all the criteria, all the issues regarding swimming pools," Mahaney said. "Also an option that is legally permissible and defensible."

Mahaney said he thought this was a way to have both boards operate together, which is needed because when the Zoning Board has an issue that is controversial, they must bring it to attention to the Planning Board, which makes a recommendation to city council. The joint committee is scheduled to attend the Oct. 6 city council work session, where the topic of swimming pools will be

addressed.

Asked about the purpose of restricting lot coverage, Mahaney said it included several factors: recharging the ground water system, containing storm water run-off, and maintaining green space.

"In the oldest part of town the lot coverage is 90 percent plus and we are constantly addressing storm water run-off," Mahaney said. "Years ago a lot of down spouts went in the ground and went into the sanitary sewer."

Mahaney said the county was charging the city for that storm water as if it were sewage. However, Mahaney believes that situation has been eliminated.

Mahaney said restricting lot coverage has a quality of life element, which includes neighbors having a sense of privacy, the appearance of the neighborhood, and wanting to have some green space.

Taller homes tower over and shade smaller homes, and homeowners might feel like all their activities are being observed. Mahaney

said large homes that take up most of the lot are also unattractive.

"And you want it to look like a city with a healthy, environmental sense," he said. "That is critical in Cape May. We need to have as much greenery as possible, especially for our migratory avian population, which also needs a food source."

Mahaney said the joint committee would not be dealing with pool-related noise, which has been raised at several of the last city council meetings.

"Noise is not a zoning issue. Noise is an issue under the purview of city council and something city council will address," Mahaney said.

Mahaney said he believed the majority of the complaints about pool noise came from neighborhoods with smaller lots, where the noise tended to carry over into neighboring yards, and where there were previously no pools. He said most of the complaints were coming from the area east of Madison Avenue and about a

block off Beach Avenue. He said that area has been traditionally quiet.

"As soon as somebody gets a pool, the noise transcends into the neighborhood and it seems very loud because it's a major change," Mahaney said.

The mayor said city council would have to review the noise ordinance with particular emphasis on recreational features such as pools.

Mahaney also said the city did not receive as many noise complaints this summer as in previous years. He said most people in town are trying to control the amount of noise they make and the police department has done a good job of warning offenders.

"From what I've gathered, most property owners or tenants when informed of the complaint do tone the noise down," he said.

Mahaney said the primary enforcement comes from peer pressure, which he said is more beneficial and an improved way of solving a problem. He said the council

members have a particular sensitivity about this issue, as they do with respect to all property owners' rights.

"With every measure passed we have to make sure protects property owners' rights are protected but also do not abridge a neighboring property owner's rights," he said.

At the Sept. 15 city council meeting, resident Charlotte Todd questioned whether a neighborhood was improved by the installation of a swimming pool. She said the existing noise ordinance seemed to primarily define noise in relation to construction. Todd recommended a wide vegetative buffer be required for all swimming pools, such as planting in the entire 10-foot setback area between properties.

"So people can read a book without noise all day and all night," she said.

Wooden Bikes a novel idea

Continued from Page A1

two friends of mine. I had just finished making a hall table and two footboards. I said I

needed projects. Now, my friends and I are big at quoting lines from movies. My friend, Erica Axelson, after hearing what I had said, quoted the line from the movie Wedding Crashers when Vince Vaughn is making balloon animals. In the movie, this punk kid says, 'Build me a bicycle clown.' I thought of all the scrap mahogany and spare material I had from my projects and thought, well, maybe I want to build a bike out of wood."

Samuelson continued, "My mind started racing. It was late midnight and I went home and started drawing up sketches. When I was finished drawing, I went to sleep, saying to myself, 'I hope I wake up in the morning thinking this was a stupid idea.' The next morning I started cutting the wood."

In the beginning, it was rather a slow start for Samuelson.

"The original bike was made from approximately 120 pieces of wood. I had made all these thin pieces because some of them had to bend. So I could only put together 10 to 15 pieces at a time. It was really slow because I could only put together some pieces and wait a minimum of 24 hours. I'd work on it about an hour or two. Then three weeks would go by, and I'd work on

it for another hour or two."

"After two months of randomly working, it started looking like a bike to me," Samuelson said. "My dad would stop in the shop occasionally when I was working on it and he would ask, 'You seriously building a wooden bicycle?' He said this to me for 11 out of 12 weeks. To others, it was just a big square block of epoxy and fillers, but I could see the bike in there. It got to a point to where I could cruise with the work. I could shape it, drill holes and put parts onto it. The last two weeks, I was just so engulfed in the project."

Said Samuelson, "Then I finally finished it and everyone was freaking out about it, saying it is so cool! Everybody was saying something about it."

Even Samuelson's dad Richard was impressed.

"In the end, when there was this bike on the workbench, he was bringing his friends down to see it."

With the compliments came the obvious question; what was next?

"Work started getting busy

and I kind of chilled out with the project. But everybody had their two cents on what I needed to do with this and it wasn't stop," Samuelson said with a chuckle. "So, a few months after I finished the bike, I got a crew together with my friends Chad Shagren, Justin Nash, and Paul Knepley, who was an architect major at Syracuse University. All of us are guards and each one of us feels we have something significant to contribute."

As the crew was being put together, Samuelson was going over what it took to actually build his wooden bike.

"I estimated it took about 125 hours to build this one bike. Probably more to honest," Samuelson said. "If I wanted to make 10 of these, it would be 1,250 hours. I estimated I would have to charge some ridiculous amount for this bike."

Samuelson continued, "I thought 'how could I do this more efficiently?' I figured out I could cut down the man hours to 20 and build 10 bikes at once. I said, we can try to sell these ten. If it doesn't workout, we each have a wooden bike. If it does work out, we are the coolest guys ever," he said with a laugh.

The new design?

"We (Paul Knepley) stumbled on to this design because, engineering wise, it solved a few problems. Time wise, it knocked down the

pieces needed from 120 to 45. Also, we're testing it in Cape May. The new design is a beach cruiser. It just made sense."

On the side of the bike is engraved the word Woody, a small tribute to the old beach wagon.

"If it gets to the point this project is going somewhere, we can get one of those old woody cars and have it as part of the marketing," Samuelson said, always thinking about the future. This includes the next wooden bike, which would be able to switch gears.

"I rode the road bike in a race. It did great, but it's a single speed and I was competing against multi-speeds. So I am already working on it," he said.

When asked if it was worth it, Samuelson's response was almost instantaneous.

"Without a doubt. There were tough moments in the shop where we were all yelling at each other, but it was all worth it. Even if we don't sell any of them, it was really cool."

For more information or to purchase a bike got to the website, www.woodybicycles.com. Also, the Cape May Film Society's summer camp put together a video of the beach cruiser riding around throughout Cape May. If interested, search for "Woody's Bikes" at YouTube.com.

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