

Ex-Sea Girt official tells court 'common sense' determined beach fees

By LAUREN ROBINSON

A former Sea Girt councilman who was also beach commissioner testified in Freehold yesterday that borough beach fees were determined by a "common sense" principle that included passing the costs of indirect beach services to beachgoers.

Eugene P. Rafter, who served as a councilman from 1971 to 1984, and as beach commissioner from 1977 to 1984, said he recommended "reasonable" beach fees to the council after consulting with department heads to determine beach-related expenses.

"There were a number of charges most of the public wouldn't consider as beach costs which I did, and which the council did consider," he said.

Rafter said those costs included year-round, beach-related services,

such as hiring extra police to control traffic in the boardwalk area; the upkeep and renovations of bath houses and pavilion facilities; interest on the 1980 bond issue to reconstruct the boardwalk, and cleaning up trash and sand that was blown from the beach to streets.

Richard Shapiro, one of two attorneys representing the state Public Advocate in the landmark suit against Sea Girt, charged the town with making a profit from the beach and discriminating against nonresidents by charging unreasonable daily beach-badger fees.

Rafter, who testified before Judge Alvin Y. Milberg during the third day of trial, asserted that Sea Girt ran up, on average, a \$36,000 annual loss from 1980 to 1984, due to beach-related expenses not matched by the beach fees.

He denied the borough profited

Former commissioner defends added levy for indirect services

from the beach and said he recommended the formula, which the council approved, of raising beach fees every three years as opposed to every year, in an effort to reduce the hardship to the public.

John Thurber, staff attorney for the Public Advocate, asked the witness if he was aware of state statutes governing beach fees when he made his recommendations to the council.

"We were well aware that we weren't supposed to make money. We were aware that the beach was open to

the public," Rafter replied. "As far as I was concerned, I was aware of the charges that could be used for the operation of the beach which would be perfectly acceptable in establishing beach fees."

Other indirect beach costs that were passed on to beachgoers, as outlined by Rafter, were: Road repairs; leveling the beach after storms; boardwalk lighting and insurance.

Rafter said beach fees were based on actual costs, as well as "educated calculations" of what costs would arise

in the next fiscal year.

The witness also detailed the borough's practice of selling seasonal and daily badges. He said Sea Girt residents who wanted to buy seasonal badges had the advantage of buying up to six badges per family months before the public sale, which he referred to as "the crunch."

Rafter said during the public sale, people had to wait in lines as long as two blocks to buy a maximum of two badges. He said in 1982 and 1983, many customers were turned away when the limit of 5,000 seasonal badges was reached.

According to Rafter, the town set beach badge limits for safety reasons in the mid-1970s, when Sea Girt had to open its beaches to nonresidents because of a court ruling demanding the action.

He said a beach capacity of 7,500 people was arrived at by the Army Corps of Engineers, and the borough set limits of 5,000 seasonal badges, 500 daily badges and 300 bath house badges to adhere to the capacity limit. Rafter added the remaining room took into account children under 12, who do not need badges.

In 1984, 6,500 seasonal badges were sold. The 5,000-badge limit was waived in response to complaints from beachgoers who couldn't buy badges in 1982 and 1983, he said.

"I felt it a matter of good judgment to accommodate as many people as possible within the realms of safety and taking into consideration there were various complaints registered throughout the state of New Jersey in regards to beachfront limits," Rafter said.

Officials in tour of public housing call residents key to fighting drugs

By KINGA BORONDY

Law enforcement officials and residents of public housing found pride and self-worth can be used as weapons in the war on drugs yesterday during a tour of several housing complexes in Newark.

The key to solving the drug problem in public housing are the residents themselves, said Alvin Wright, executive director of the Newark Tenants Council.

The tenants must be "ready, willing and able" to get involved in the fight, Wright told a group of officials after they toured four complexes.

The tour, which drew housing and city officials along with federal, state and local law enforcement officials, was joined by Essex County Prosecutor Herbert Tate Jr. and Sheriff Thomas D'Alessio and started with a walk-through of Hyatt Court, a low-rise family complex in the Ironbound district.

Participants then rode through streets surrounding Seth Boyden Court and Kretschmer Homes—low-rise and high-rise structures housing both families and senior citizens in the South Ward—and walked through a building at the Stella Wright Homes in the Central Ward.

Residents must take responsibility for their own security, said Joseph Foushee, security director for the Newark Housing Authority.

"The tenants cover up for each other, refuse to take responsibility for their lives and then blame us for the drug problem," Foushee said.

Pointing to the Seth Boyden senior complex, he said security there is hampered by young adults living clandestinely with older relatives.

Later, on observing a maze of blacktop that leads through the Hyatt Court complex, Foushee said, "There's no question that the architecture and layout of the buildings are not conducive to good security. It seems as if the projects act as a magnet, promising anonymity."

Public housing residents echoed some of the concerns of law enforcement officials. Doris Daniels, a resident of Hyatt Court and a teacher at a neighborhood pre-school, described some of the problems caused by drug abuse.

"There are shootings, stabbings and fights," Daniels

said. "The kids can't go to the store, they can't go down to play, they're walking into it everywhere they go."

Another resident, Bonnie Thomas, said while the apartments are attractive to live in, there is no control over the outside environment. "They (drug dealers) are out in the streets, making all kinds of noise at all hours of the night," she said.

A young resident walking through the complex said more jobs and recreational programs would improve the quality of life in public housing. Housing officials agreed, adding that lack of organized recreation outlets contribute to the drug problem.

"If we tell them to get out of the hallways, and then the lobbies, and later the street corners, where are they going to go?" Foushee asked. "Lack of recreation is a big part of the problem."

Community leaders, the housing authority and area churches should join forces to create activities for the children of public housing, tour participants agreed.

"They need poster contests, essay contests with prizes, field trips, plays and other activities," said Benjamin Quattlebaum Sr., a minister at the First Tabernacle Beth El on Meeker Avenue whose son, Benjamin, is chief of staff at the housing authority.

"We must give them an alternative to hanging out on the corner," he said.

Orange Police Director Charles Cobbett said pride must be instilled in residents to improve the complexes and win the war on drugs. "The big things aren't working so we should start doing the little things," he asserted.

If youngsters help pick up papers, cans and garbage around their neighborhoods they may think twice about throwing trash on the street themselves, Cobbett said. If the children help clean, they may resent outsiders dumping on their neighborhoods and tell them to clean up after themselves.

Cobbett also urged people to change the labels placed on public housing developments.

"Don't call them projects, call them housing complexes," Cobbett said, adding that names can mean a lot.

Cobbett said his city seems to be winning the war on drugs at housing developments in stages.



A group of local and federal officials completes a tour of Newark public housing at the John W. Hyatt Court on Roanoke Avenue

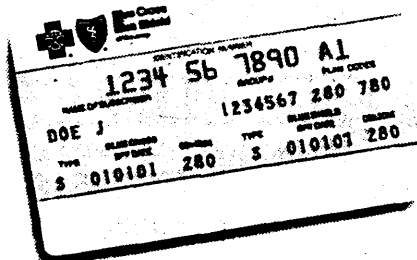
The first of three stages he outlined included drug sweeps of the buildings and numerous arrests. Cobbett said the second stage, now in effect, calls for police assigned to the complex to meet with residents and tell them that "The ball is in their backyard now; it's up to them."

The third stage, which will be implemented when the

city obtains more manpower, calls for the assignment of police officers to each complex on a regular basis. Cobbett said in that way the residents may come to trust the officers more.

Cobbett said he hopes to eradicate the idea of police as robots and enemies. "We're not big bad animals," he said.

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