

**Friends of
Hereford Inlet Lighthouse**

111 N. Central Avenue
North Wildwood NJ 8760

Mayor Patrick Rosenello
N.W. Council Members
Kevin Yecco City Administrator

Oct. 20, 2017

Our Board of Trustees includes individuals who have been with the Lighthouse since it was first acquired in 1982. Tom Flud and the late Phyllis Catanoso are recognized as the persons responsible for saving and then acquiring the old Lighthouse by lease. They are also the ones who negotiated the original lease and spearheaded the initial restoration efforts.

The Board also includes members who helped oversee the authentic historic restoration from 1998 to 2011, Chairman Steve Murray, Trustee Betty Mugnier and Chairman Emeritus, Paul DiFilippo. These members are also responsible for developing the Lighthouse into a first class maritime museum with a successful gift shop. In addition, Chairman Steve Murray designed the gardens that surround the building in 1986, the largest public garden in Cape May County, that also serves as our most effective marketing tool.

Board members that sat simultaneously on both the Lighthouse Commission and the Friends Organization, were successful in acquiring \$1.5 million in State restoration grants. The project was honored with the esteemed "New Jersey Historic Preservation Award" in 2005 and a National Preservation Award from the Victorian Society In America in 2011.

The gardens have also won numerous awards including the prestigious "Suburban Greening Award" from the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in 2002.

Our Friends Board of Trustees is composed of a talented and successful group of individuals with varied backgrounds. This includes those with experience in education, municipal government, finance, business, grant writing, engineering, the arts, journalism, horticulture, American History and one member who was an actual Lighthouse keeper. Two new members were just installed this year.

Through the combined efforts of founding members as well as recent members, the Lighthouse is now recognized by visitors as well as the Lighthouse community, as one of the finest, best run lighthouse museums in the State.

It has been toured by visitors from over forty five foreign countries and all fifty states. According to Trip Advisor in 2016, the Lighthouse and gardens were second only to the beach in "Best things to do in North Wildwood".

With all of these accomplishments, touched on just briefly here, why does the current administration, through a newly proposed management agreement, want to restrict our duties as stewards of this historic site? Only vague reasons for the new changes were given. It is insulting to everyone that's given up so much of their lives and shows no appreciation or acknowledgement of the great accomplishments of this Board.

The essence of this new agreement would restrict and limit the Friends duties and authority to only running tours and the operation of the gift shop. The City would take over, for the first time, all other aspects of the historic site that formally were the responsibility of the Friends members, and before that, the Lighthouse Commission. Some have been doing these things for twenty to thirty years and know the building intimately. New people, brought in from the City, with no prior knowledge of the buildings architectural or restoration history, would now be in charge maintaining it. The same situation would occur with the Victorian Gardens surrounding it. The primary function of the Friends is to raise money to operate, maintain and restore the historic site. With the proposed changes what would even be our purpose of existing?

In the last meeting between our Board and the Mayor, he inferred that the reason for the changes in the agreement was to protect the City from a liability standpoint because the City is the actual tenant. The simple fact however, is that in thirty five years the State has not cited a single violation of anything written in the lease. In addition, in all that time, there hasn't been a single accident claim against the Commission, City or the State. This is an incredible record considering the hundreds of thousands of visitors that have toured the Lighthouse and walked through its gardens. The yearly extensive audit that the City requires the Friends to go through every year has also proven to be without significant problems.

It is important to point out here that although there are nine trustees, there are over six hundred dues paying members that make up the Organization. These members are not only local residents, but also people from all across the Country. Members include those who grew up in the Lighthouse as children, descendants of Hereford's early keepers, former Coast Guardsmen who were stationed in the Coast Guard Building next door, individuals who helped with the original cleanup back in 1982, persons who have donated or loaned important historical artifacts to the Friends for display, many who have sponsored engraved pavers, arbors, birdhouses, park benches and benefactors who have donated thousands of dollars to support our non - profit organization's work. These members will no doubt, also consider the new restrictions on their organization and the Lighthouse they have helped to nurture along, as a great injustice and insult, with no legitimate reason to do so. There are also the loyal local volunteers and staff who will be puzzled and angry.

The Trustees have forged strong partnerships and productive relationships with the State's other Lighthouses and maritime museums over the course of many years. If the Friends agreed to the new management agreement, we would end up being the only museum interacting with the others that would have no decision making authority on the museum we represent.

There has only been one question our board has ever had to ask when making any decisions regarding the Lighthouse. "Will it be good for the Lighthouse"? Not, "will it be good for the City"? or "Will it be good for the Friends"? We feel this is still the only question that should ever be considered. We don't feel the City has asked this question itself.

"What is best for the Lighthouse"? is the question Mayor Bill Henfey had in mind when he pursued the plan that the Lighthouse Commission be dissolved and that the Friends would have a management agreement allowing them to take over complete stewardship of the Lighthouse. The main purpose of this was to help get around the highly unusual situation that the City leases the Lighthouse, and as a result, once and for all, gets politics and the whims of elected

officials out of Lighthouse matters. This was his interim plan with the next phase being the request to the State to turn the lease over to the non - profit. This would be exactly how the Cape May Lighthouse is leased and run by MAC.

Just the opposite has occurred tenfold.

With all that being said and having looked over the newly proposed management agreement, we have to say that this document is almost completely unacceptable. The trustees as a whole believe that the only agreement we can sign is one similar to the original.

The other solution is to work with us and the NJDEP in discussions of transferring the lease to the Friends.

Sincerely,

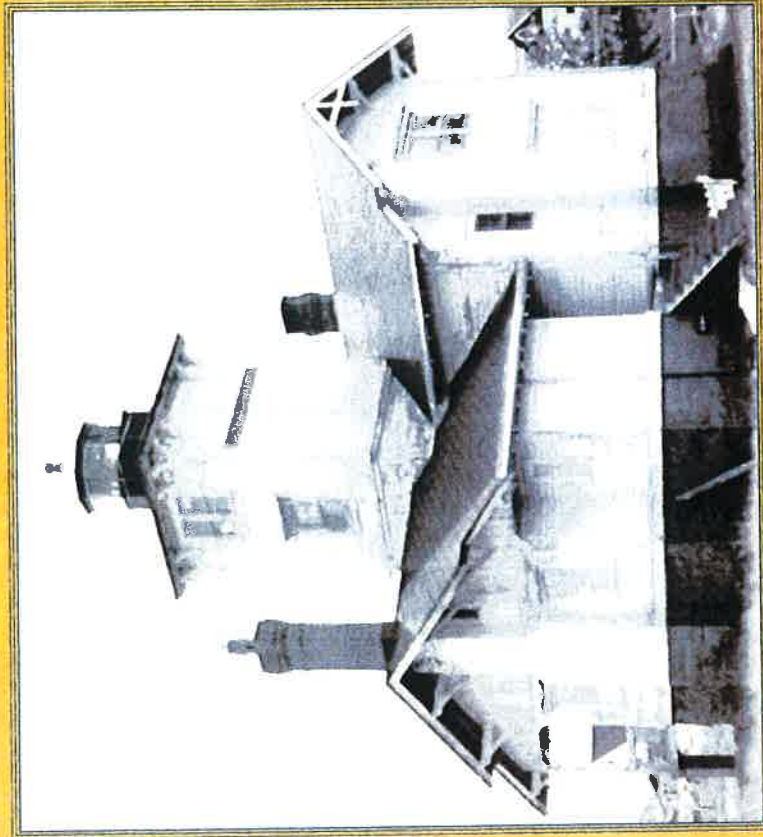
The Trustees of the Friends of Hereford Inlet Lighthouse

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**HEREFORD INLET LIGHT STATION
ANGLESEA NORTH WILDWOOD, NJ**



**Closed 1962, and Derelict
Northwest View, 1981**

Photo: George E. Thomas, Airtels Group



**Preserved and Restored
Northwest View, 2006**

Photo: Fred Vannoy, United Architects



