

# HIGHLIGHTS AND HURDLES IN HAMLETS

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## Words of Wisdom from my Mom!

You won't go wrong if you live your life as if everything you do will be printed on the front of the Lock Haven Express!

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# Work history

- January 2017 - present
  - Town Manager, Fenwick Island, DE
    - population 429
- September 2011 – January 2017
  - City Manager, Harrington, DE
    - Population 3,646
- June 1988 – August 2011
  - Senior City Administrator, Dover, DE
  - Administrative Services Director
    - Population 37,938

# NLC indicates that...

- The vast majority (over 90%) of municipal governments in the U.S. have populations under 25,000.
  - <https://www.nlc.org/number-of-municipal-governments-population-distribution>

# Human Resources – Highlights and Hurdles

- Highlights

- Dedicated, loyal staff
- Usually non-union
- Flexible, multi-talented, ingenious
- Smaller staff – know them on a personal/ one-on-one level, centralized locations means staying connected
- Hands – on meaningful interactions with staff and supervisors

- Hurdles

- Nepotism
- Not open to change – we have always done it this way
- Underpaid, lower benefits– under qualified or not qualified – flexibility can be a benefit
- Succession planning can be difficult – have a game plan
- Job descriptions or pay classifications may not exist
- Few in-house experts – engineering, planning, HR, building inspections, accounting, etc.



# Public Relations – Highlights and Hurdles

- Highlights

- Everyone knows your name, but you know theirs!
- Accessibility to public at all times 24/7 access
- Nimble - respond quickly to needs and issues
- Visibility/ Staying engaged -meeting with business owners and private citizens

- Hurdles

- Can become personal
- Anonymity is difficult – it's the fish bowl thing again
- Difficult to get away from it all - 24/7 access at all times – on the spot meetings

# Infrastructure – Highlights and Hurdles

- Highlights
  - Less infrastructure
  - Simpler to operate
  - Learn how it works in detail
- Hurdles
  - Poor condition
  - The problems are not documented – in someone's head
  - Skill set may not be there – costly
  - Mandates
  - Emergency preparedness – minimal staff

# Technology – Highlights and Hurdles

- Highlights
  - It is more affordable
  - It has gotten easier to use even for a non-technical person
  - It makes small communities more efficient
- Hurdles
  - Sometimes small communities are not up to date
  - Cyber security
  - Can be costly
  - It is intimidating especially if technology has not been used before
  - Requires new skill sets
  - Staff Resistance



# Budget/Finance – Highlights and Hurdles

- Highlights

- More manageable – maybe
  - Less debt
  - Fewer funding sources
  - Quicker turn around time for revisions
  - Simpler Budget Process

- Hurdles

- Skill set – get a good finance resource, accountant, auditor, etc.)
- Processes and procedures may not exist – embezzlement, qualified audit
- Debt laden
- Councils may not be willing to raise revenues
- Internal controls can be difficult to establish

# Council Manager Relationships

- Highlights
  - Easier to get to know key players
  - Ease of organizing Council meetings
  - It's Mayberry – everyone knows everyone
  - Quickly understand who the key players are; public and elected officials
- Hurdles
  - Closed to new ideas or too many ideas with no established priority
  - It is not the way we have always done it
  - Elected officials may not listen to you, but to their close friends, family and locals
  - Elected bodies may be reactive instead of proactive
  - Elected officials expect immediate access to the manager (it only takes a walk across the street!)
  - Everyone knows everyone; friends, residents, business owners – you never know who you are talking to

# Community Relationships

- Highlights
  - Committees work well
  - Citizens are engaged – they care
    - Feral Cat Program, Parks and Rec Program,
- Hurdles
  - Cliques can form
  - It can become personal
  - You don't fit in
  - Your reputation can be tarnished before they really know you

# Management

- Highlights
  - You can make a difference and effect change
  - You wear many hats – feral cats
  - Build relationships at all levels – you need Federal, State, County, other local governments, and consultants
  - Ethics matter
  - Visibility – constituents are aware that we are out and about engaging the public, picking up debris, or assisting those in need.
- Hurdles
  - May have had poor management or no management
  - Operating in a fish bowl – ethics really matter!
  - Relationship building takes a lot of time – do it anyway

# Harrington Parks and Recreation



- National Guard donated an armory and land
- USDA Matching Grant
- DE Bond Bill
- Community Volunteers

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# Harrington Freedom Park



- Drug Seizure Money
- State Grant
- Volunteers
- Empty City Lot

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# Harrington Community Center



- Donated building
- City funding
- Rental Income pays for systematic improvements

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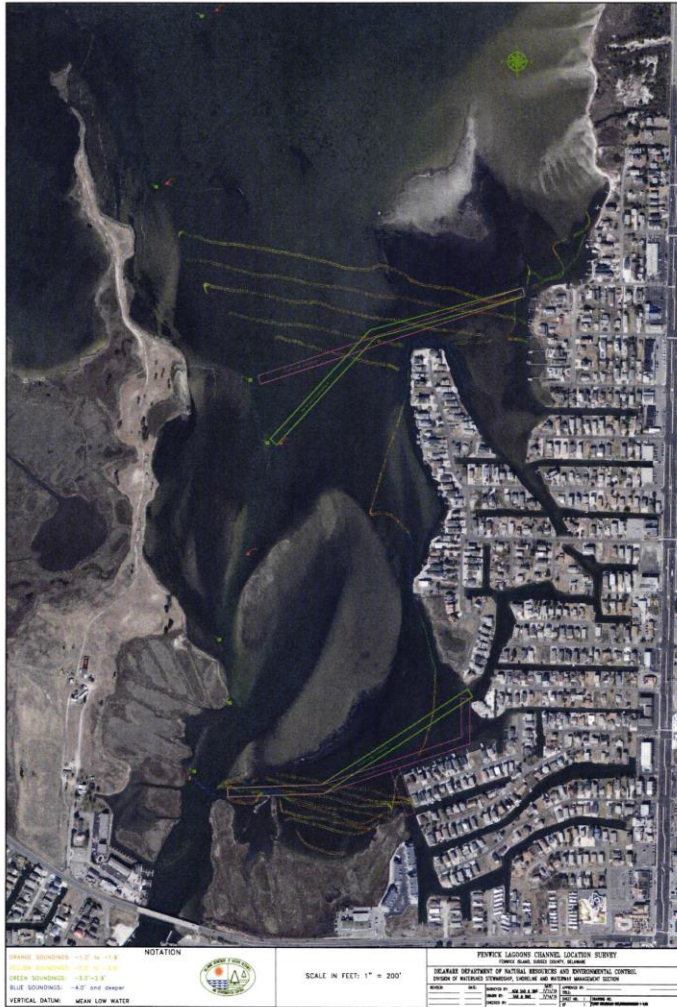
# SR1 Sidewalks – Fenwick Island



- Pedestrian Safety Committee formed
- State and Town partnered to perform feasibility study
- Support was also sought from Sussex County
- Town received \$250,000 in DE State Bond Bill to start 5 blocks
- Sidewalks are part of the DelDOT FY 21 to FY 26 Proposed Capital Transportation Program – **PROGRESS!!!**

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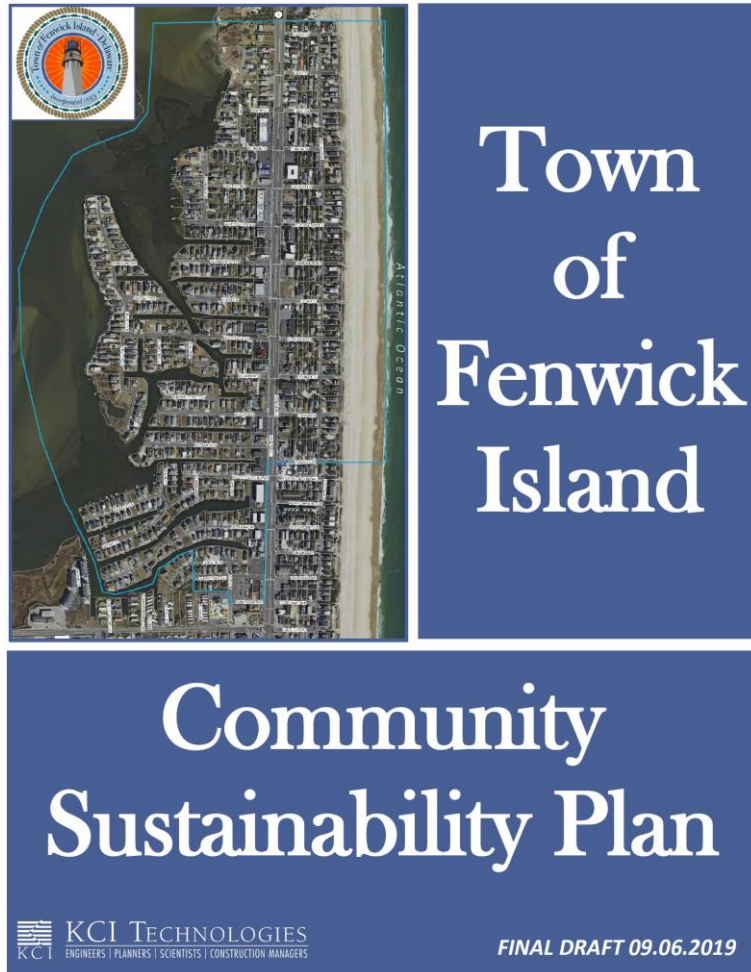




- Dredging Committee formed
- Worked with Delaware Department of Natural Resources
- Partnering with private developer to take dredged material
- Council set money aside to begin work
- Additional funding is being sought

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# Fenwick Island Community Sustainability Plan



- 1<sup>st</sup> Community Sustainability Plan
- Matching State Grant
- Provides a framework for projects and funding

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# THANK YOU

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Questions?

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