

July 15, 2011

To my fellow Rehoboth Beach citizens –

It is with a heavy heart that I am announcing my withdrawal as a candidate in this year's City election.

I am confident that I would have won my third term in the election based on my record and the support of many citizens. I am withdrawing neither for fear of the campaign debate nor losing the election. I am withdrawing for the reasons that follow.

I am proud of my record of accomplishment, but the past year has been extremely frustrating in trying to accomplish many of the goals that the citizens elected me to pursue. Among other things, I am particularly proud of the leadership role I played in enactment of the FAR revisions to reduce the ballooning size of new houses and the expansion of townhouses, the tree ordinance to preserve our beautiful urban forest that was being threatened by over-development, the site plan ordinance that prevents developers from continuing with their basically unregulated construction of large projects on unsubdivided land, and similar preservation measures.

I have been a vigorous supporter of a vibrant business community. But perhaps most importantly, I have tried to bring a greater sense of openness, transparency in decision-making, inclusiveness, candid debate, and visionary thinking to the ways our city is governed and managed. I led the successful fight against efforts to bar non-full time residents from serving on City boards and commissions. I fought against the down-sizing of the Planning Commission several years ago and, even after it occurred, I never gave up until we once again re-established the Planning Commission at its full strength of nine members. In my first and second terms I argued strenuously against precedent-setting special treatment in zoning matters. Recently I have been a persistent advocate, with a minority of City Commissioners and against the opposition of a majority of other Commissioners, for greater citizen accessibility and openness to our decision making, such as video internet streaming of our meetings. I have been an ardent minority advocate for instituting common sense measures to enhance public safety, such as bicycle lanes and pedestrian safety measures. In the past year I have argued vigorously, to no avail, for engaging the business and residential communities in our work to address the controversy surrounding restaurant patios and noise. In short, I care and speak passionately about the substance and processes of our government decisions and have a record that demonstrates that.

At least during my first term in office, a majority of the other City Commissioners shared my goals. Now I see a majority of my fellow Commissioners going in directions that I can neither support nor change. While my priorities for the City have been consistent over the past six years, the priorities of a majority of Commissioners are no longer aligned with my priorities, nor, I believe, with the priorities of the citizens that elected me.

Recently it has become difficult to get a majority of the City Commissioners to continue our past progress. In fact, on occasions there have been proposals among some City Commissioners to roll back some of our accomplishments. In the past year or two, I have worked tirelessly to build consensus, or at least a strong majority, around some of these issues. But on many occasions there has been a refusal to even bring up some of these matters for an up-or-down vote, and on other occasions a majority of the Commissioners has deferred to decisions that have been made without the degree of openness, examination and transparency that I've sought. In short, I am spending more and more time devoted to City Commission matters, and yet little is being accomplished. Indeed, the personal attacks against me at our meetings – sometimes by other City Commissioners – have replaced what should instead have been good faith debates about government philosophy and our City's policies.

While I have never turned away from challenges, it is now evident to me that my goals for Rehoboth Beach can no longer be realized with the City Commission as it is now constituted. Those who serve as Mayor and as Commissioners must embrace greater openness, transparency in decision-making, inclusiveness, candid debate, and visionary thinking. I hope that all of you will keep these points in mind when you vote in the upcoming election.

Many of you have become my friends and supporters over the course of the past six years. Your friendship and support has meant much to me. I have been honored by that and hope that our friendships will continue.

It has been a privilege to serve as your City Commissioner for the past six years and I wish all the best for the City as it moves forward after the election, including for certain with at least one new office holder -a new steward for the seat I now occupy and a much needed fresh perspective in the debates about the future of our City.

Dennis J. Barbour

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