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## Ship Bottom firefighters want lockboxes at businesses

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The Ship Bottom Volunteer Fire Company wants the Borough Council to consider an ordinance that would require new and renovated commercial buildings to be equipped with an exterior electronic lockbox containing a key to the building.

Rick Traut, the fire chief, told the council at its Tuesday night caucus meeting that such a device could save businesses thousands of dollars by negating the need for firefighters to break through doors and windows to enter a building in the event of a fire or other emergency. The fire company would have a master key to all the boxes.

In addition to saving property owners money, Traut said the devices would help firefighters gain quicker entry to a building.

“We spend a lot of time waiting for the property owner to bring the keys,” he said.

Other towns already require the devices for new and renovated commercial buildings. For instance, Stafford Township, right across the bay, has such an ordinance, according to Ship Bottom Councilman Tom Tallon.

Traut said it would also make sense for other emergency organizations, like police and first aid, to have master keys to the boxes. He also said the systems can electronically record data such as times of entry to ensure security.

“I know in Stafford Township, the police, fire, first aid all have access to the keys. And I know from talking to some of the guys over there that it's one of the best things that they've done,” Traut said.

The Borough Council also heard from several representatives from the nonprofit Surfrider Foundation at its regular meeting. That organization has been trying to build support for getting the Army Corps of Engineers to change some aspects of its Long Beach Island beach replenishment plan that the foundation believes will harm surfing conditions and make the beaches potentially more dangerous.

For instance, by filling the beach with sand out to the 100 yards called for in the corps' plans, foundation members said the beach would extend so far out that the drop off from the shore would be very steep and sudden.

Foundation member Ken Liss said he's seen that happen before. A Long Branch resident, Liss said ever since the beach replenishment program there was completed in the 1990s he's gone to beaches in other areas of the state.

“Every summer for the past several years, we go south to find beaches that are safe for my kids,” Liss said. He and other foundation members said they're not against beach replenishment, but want to make sure the plans address such concerns.

Council President Edward English said he'd bring those points to the attention of the Army Corps and the Department of Environmental Protection.

“I've never heard this end of it. The next time I sit down with them, I will raise these issues,” he said.

The borough has other issues to contend with regarding beach replenishment. Thus far, only five beachfront homeowners have signed the easements required for the project, though 52 easement agreements have been sent out, officials said.

Print Page

Close Window