Great Day Gazette

The crown jewel of the Jersey Shore

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FROM THE MAYOR

May 5, 2023

Dear Atlantic City Residents and Guests,

We are less than a month away from Memorial Day Weekend, a time when you'll see many Shore towns start to switch it up into high gear. But that won't be happening in Atlantic City. Want to know why? Because we're in high gear 12 months of the year! Just look at these last few weeks alone. I made history by signing a business license making Atlantic City the first Shore town to sell recreational cannabis, I delivered huge news regarding the future of Skate Zone, and I announced yet another tax decrease. You can read about all of these in our newsletter.

I recently appeared on "Off The Press" with Scott Cronick to have a debate of sorts with Senator Vince Polistina. It's no secret Senator Polistina and I have not always seen eye to eye. His past criticisms of the Small administration, at times, forced me into having to publicly defend myself. But at the end of our joint appearance, we called a truce. I will do anything for the betterment of Atlantic City, and being on the same page as Senator Polistina is something that will accomplish that. Are we always going to agree on everything? Absolutely not. But we have a mutual understanding that disagreements will be settled privately, amongst ourselves, rather than in the public eye. Senator Polistina even came to City Hall, along with Assemblyman Don Guardian and Assemblywoman Claire Swift to watch a presentation on all that we offer youth and seniors in Atlantic City.

Have you driven around Atlantic City lately? If so, you probably noticed some freshly paved streets. That's because our Spring road paving schedule is in full force. As I like to say, "we paving and behaving!" While you're checking out the new look roads, swing by the Showboat and see for yourself the progress of the new Island Waterpark, opening this summer.

Lastly, I'd like to thank the NAACP Atlantic City Branch for honoring me at their 49th annual Freedom Fund Gala by presenting me with the Government Award. I've been a leader long before I was a mayor, and it's humbling to be recognized. The only thing that made this night even more special was being honored alongside my wife, Dr. La'Quetta Small, who received the Education Award.

Thanks for reading our newsletter, and remember, It's a Great Day Here in the City of Atlantic City!

- Mayor Marty Small, Sr.

Recreational Cannabis Sales Begin in Atlantic City

On April 19, 2023, Mayor Small made history by signing a business license allowing MPX New Jersey, LLC to become not only the first recreational cannabis dispensary in Atlantic City, but the first one in any Jersey Shore town.

"Cannabis has been a topic in Atlantic City since I was a Council President, and at the time, because I'm not a user, I was close minded on the issue," said Mayor Small. "But this is about the greater good in the City of Atlantic City, and that's relief for our taxpayers. This is yet another ratable for our taxpayers. It's a new business, it's new construction. It's showing that people are invested in the great City of Atlantic City. We're being proactive about this. We have to take a chance."

In anticipation of this moment, Mayor Small formed a Cannabis Review Board consisting of his Director of Constituent Services Kashawn "Kash" McKinley, City Councilwoman Stephanie Marshall, Assistant City Solicitor Karl Timbers, the city's Director of Licensing and Inspection Dale Finch, the city's Director of Planning and Development Jacques Howard and Atlantic City resident Zach Katzen.

"What got us here is not what's going to keep us here," said McKinley. "We have a lot of hard work to do, but this is another step in the right direction to making Atlantic City the East coast's cannabis hub, which is our goal. It starts with leadership, which starts with the mayor. His vision is all about setting a standard,

and cannabis is no different. This is yet another platform Atlantic City can be proud of."

MPX NJ, located at 153 S. New York Avenue, opened the next day, on 4/20, for adult use recreational cannabis sales by offering discounts and special promotions. Lines to get in stretched up the block all day as the Atlantic City 420 Festival was happening across the street. McKinley, on his day off, was the first customer to purchase recreational cannabis at MPX NJ.

More Tax Relief

Mayor Small announced the taxpayers of Atlantic City will see a tax decrease of 5.23 cents this year, marking the fourth straight year of relief for Atlantic City taxpayers since he took office.

"This is the strongest the city's finances have been in a very long time, and we're just getting started," said Mayor Small, before announcing a 2023 Fiscal Year budget in Atlantic City of $225,881,360.74.

"Everything out there is more expensive than it was last year, yet we're still able to give the taxpayers of Atlantic City a decrease," said city Chief Financial Officer Toro Aboderin. "None of this can happen without a mayor that really has his hands on the pulse of what's happening in the city. The budget is done, and the work begins now. We have to manage it and make sure we stay within the budget put forth and accomplish all the things we want to accomplish."

Still Ice Skating

Mayor Small has announced the Atlantic City Skate Zone will continue to operate as an ice skating facility for the foreseeable future. The city inherited the building in April 2022 after a sublease between the CRDA and Comcast was terminated. At the time, the building was in need of serious repairs, and the city announced the facility would remain an ice skating rink through April 2023. After exploring other options throughout this past year, Mayor Small decided to keep Skate Zone an ice skating rink as long as the city has possession of the property. Back in March, Mayor Small signed a Memorandum of Understanding with DEEM Enterprises for a $2.7 billion redevelopment project at Bader Field, where Skate Zone is located.

"I don't know if it will be one year, two years, or five years, but I'm making a commitment as Mayor. My administration and I, within reason, will make sure these lights stay on and that we, to the best of our ability, fix all of the ill wills this building has had," said Mayor Small.

In 2022, Skate Zone brought in $309,901 in revenue to the city with $463,101 in expenses, for a loss of $153,200. As of the April 26, 2023 news conference, in 2023, Skate Zone brought in $208,991 in revenue to the city with $96,205 in expenses for a profit of $112,786. Salaries are included in the expenses.

Forbes has included Atlantic City on its list of "The Best Places To Travel In The U.S. In 2023" predicting a "banner 2023" in the city! According to Forbes, "America's Playground has seen significant reinvestment into the destination over the last several years, including multi-million dollar hotel renovations, game-changing restaurants and all-new attractions."

Atlantic City is also featured in the April edition of Business in Focus Magazine. As the article states: "While many still think of Atlantic City as strictly a gaming town, it is changing under Mayor Marty Small, Sr., who is leading the transformation of this legendary spot into more of a family destination."

The city worked with the Atlantic City Shade Tree Commission to celebrate the 151st anniversary of Arbor Day. Mayor Small delivered a proclamation, and was joined by students at Richmond and Sovereign Avenue Schools, who recited the history of Arbor Day. Afterward, trees were planted at O'Donnell Park with support from the Atlantic City Development Corporation.

Atlantic City residents got to learn about the various programs for businesses throughout the city during a special Town Hall in partnership with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. Entrepreneurs and business owners got to network and share their experiences with one another.

Albany Ave outside Stockton is now known as "Dr. Harvey Kesselman Way," named after the University's longtime President. As Mayor Small stated, "we couldn't think of a better way to honor you and you legacy for being part of the rebirth of Atlantic City."

The 7th floor of City Hall has undergone a complete renovation, including new flooring with the city emblem right in the center, and a new mural on the walls, painted by Atlantic City resident Kelley Prevard. The artwork honors Atlantic City's past, present and future. It features a tribute to the late Jim Usry, the city's first African American Mayor, as well the late Jim Whelan, former three term Mayor in Atlantic City, whose wife, Kathy, was present for the unveiling. The mural recognizes old Atlantic City by highlighting Steel Pier, Ms. America and the Diving Horse, and features the Absecon Lighthouse. There are hands of all colors holding the City emblem to showcase the city's diversity, and Mayor Small's slogan "It's a Great Day Here in the City of Atlantic City" and "Can We Say Great Day?" is also painted on the walls.

Mayor Small joined representatives from Orsted, Rowan College of South Jersey and other local organizations to announce the launch of a first-of-its-kind wind farm job readiness program.

The workforce development program, called Wind Power Ready, recruits and trains individuals in Atlantic City and nearby areas to become wind farm technicians on Orsted projects.

"The development of offshore wind here in the great city of Atlantic City presents opportunities on many fronts," said Mayor Small. "Education and job opportunities are two major components that I have stressed since becoming the Mayor. I believe that this particular work program can supply participants with lifelong tools and success. I encourage interested residents to attend an information session to see if this program is a good fit for them."

Up to 24 applicants will be accepted. Registration is open through early June.

The Atlantic City Police Department is distributing free steering wheel locks to Hyundai and Kia owners in an effort to deter thefts of these vehicle brands. To obtain one, bring your affected vehicle or a copy of your registration and driver's license to the Public Safety Building (2715 Atlantic Ave) M-F from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Hyundai will reimburse owners who have already purchased them.

The Atlantic City Fire Department took part in Sovereign Avenue School's STEM Day at Stockton by giving the students a drone demonstration in the parking lot. The students learned all about how the ACFD uses drones in their day-to-day operations and enjoyed seeing themselves from high above in the drone recording.

The Atlantic City Department of Public Works proudly took part in Stockton's Community Day street and beach cleanup, followed by Party in the Park. Keep an eye out soon for an announcement on the return Public Work's clean community initiative, which will return for a second year this summer.

Abdullah Anderson, who was born and raised in Atlantic County and currently plays for the Washington Commanders in the National Football League, hosted a free football camp at Atlantic City High School, in conjunction with the Atlantic City Recreation department.

“It feels amazing,” said Anderson. “My dad, my grandfather, everyone in my family has ties to Atlantic City. That’s why we wanted to have this camp here. It feels good to give back to the community.”

The camp started with hundreds of kids grades K-8 learning basic offensive and defensive football skills and drills from Anderson and volunteer coaches. This was open to youth from all across the region. Then, high school football players from area schools were invited to the camp for a true NFL combine experience.

AC Rec is also bringing NFL Flag Football back to Atlantic City on May 22. Sign up now using the link on the City of Atlantic City website.

I scream, you scream, Atlantic City seniors screamed for ice cream as our Senior Services Division brought a group to Lancaster County, PA for the Turkey Hill Experience, where seniors got to make, then eat their own ice cream!

This trip was on top of regularly scheduled senior activity in Atlantic city lately, including bowling, photography class and walking club. And all seniors are invited to the Senior Health Symposium on May 10th and 11th at All Wars Memorial Building.

Atlantic City youth had a Spring break to remember, capped off with the first ever Field Day at Dew Park, where hundreds of local kids enjoyed a day of sports and activity, like rocket launching, face painting, arts and bounce houses and obstacle courses. This was put together by the Atlantic City Youth Services Division, AC Rec, Multicultural Services and Antiviolence. Also during Spring Break, ACYS brought Atlantic City Youth to Topgolf in Mount Laurel, Urban Air Trampoline and Adventure Park in Sicklerville and to iPlay America in Freehold, while AC Rec brought a group to a Philadelphia Flyers game.

The City of Atlantic City Health and Human Services Department organized a “Pinwheels for Prevention” event in the City Hall courtyard. City Hall employees and their families planted the blue pinwheels in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month. Coinciding with this event, the Multicultural Services division held a Denim Day event in the City Hall lobby as the city showed its support in ending sexual violence. During the event, tables were set up with multiple resources available. City Hall employees also dressed in denim to further show their support for the cause.

Mayor Small and the Easter Bunny delivered around 200 Easter baskets to students in grades K-2 at Pennsylvania Avenue School right before the holiday. The baskets were provided by North Jersey-based company My Sneaker Palace (mysneakerpalace.com)

The Mayor's Office of Special Events and Midtown CDC also hosted a successful Easter Egg Hunt at Brown's Park!

Can We Say Great Day?!

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