



**NEW JERSEY LEGISLATURE
2ND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
ATLANTIC COUNTY**

**VINCE POLISTINA
SENATOR**

October 4, 2022

Hon. Marty Small, Sr.
Mayor, City of Atlantic City
1301 Bacharach Boulevard
Atlantic City, NJ 08401

Dear Mayor Small,

Unfortunately, you continue to try to make this situation personal rather than focusing on what is best for the City, its residents, businesses, and the most important industry to our region. I'm not sure why you believe your public displays help you or the City but your personal feud against so many is a waste of time and energy.

First, a little civics lesson.

As State Senator, my job is not only to promote the City every chance I get, but to represent the approximately 230,000 residents of the 2nd legislative district collectively. That involves working on legislation with my colleagues, helping to run the 2nd district legislative office in providing the best constituent services in the history of Atlantic County, communicating with elected officials at all levels to help our communities, and interacting with the public to hear their issues and concerns.

Second, the district includes the City of Atlantic City, all of its 37,000 residents, all of the businesses and the extremely important casino industry. Your continued efforts to imply that I should stay out of Atlantic City matters because I happen to live in Egg Harbor Township is offensive to every single person who lives in this region. The residents of Atlantic City and of the district deserve to have their elected officials work together – a point so many in the region and at the state level understand.

And although there is no justification needed for the 2nd district State Senator's interest and involvement in the City, I am proud of my family's heritage in the City and will gladly share it. My family settled in the City of Atlantic City in 1904. I spent a lot of my youth in the Ducktown neighborhood while my grandfather operated Regina Pharmacy on Georgia Avenue. My roots and my care for the City of Atlantic City run deep. The success of Atlantic City and the casino industry are so important to this region's future that you will never convince me to stay out of Atlantic City. I will also note that one of the commitments we made and fulfilled was to have a constituent services office in the City of Atlantic City, just one more reason why the dysfunction in Atlantic City concerns us.

Now on to the issues that concern so many in the region – almost everyone but you. Since you refuse to communicate directly with me, I watch, listen, and learn about the happenings in Atlantic City. I then comment privately and publicly with all people of good will who have an interest in working together to address the many challenges we face, challenges which will affect all of the people I represent if we don't start to address them in a meaningful way. You may choose to ignore the pleas for help from those who are concerned about the safety and quality of life in Atlantic City but as elected officials we must recognize what people are saying and do what we can to help.

Here are a few of the issues that have generated significant concerns for the people of Atlantic City, the people of our South Jersey region, and all of the visitors to the City of Atlantic City.

- The continued outages of streetlights in the City of Atlantic City. This is not a new problem and has been talked about for the last 10 or 12 years, (while you have held various positions in the City of Atlantic City), but the issue was given little attention. Lights are out, the City is way too dark, and no one is taking the lead on getting the situation addressed. Recently, the Atlantic County prosecutor took time to go out with 40 people on his staff, representatives of the Atlantic City Police Department, representatives from AtlantiCare, and representatives of the City's Public Works department to look at the lighting on Atlantic Avenue in Atlantic City. A list of outages was provided after the initial walk on July 27th. He went back to the City on September 7th and not a single one was addressed. Local government needs to step up as it relates to getting the City properly lit.
- 2 more homicides in the City within the last two weeks. You kept saying that murders were down in the City, but now there have been numerous homicides in just the last few months. While no one wants to talk about this issue, you have to. Residents and visitors continue to question why the mayor will not address such an extremely concerning topic.
- Shootings are occurring at an unacceptable level. Some of the offenders have become so brazen they are committed in broad daylight with shooters aiming for the legs so they won't be charged with attempted murder. The situation with gun violence in the City is extremely concerning to many and the City needs a plan to address it.
- If broad daylight shootings aren't concerning enough, what happens when one of those shooters is released on a summons? In a recent incident, a 27-year-old Philadelphia woman apparently shot at her boyfriend with hollow point bullets (cop killers) from a semiautomatic handgun. The ACPD quickly located her and also found drugs and drug paraphernalia in her car. This woman terrorized our city, nearly killed a man, and placed our officers in jeopardy while having to investigate and arrest. However, your Municipal Court Judge released the suspect on a summons, free to return back to Philadelphia with no punishment. I don't care what city in America we are speaking about, but someone who commits these types of offenses, once in custody, should NEVER BE RELEASED, let alone a city plagued by the violence like Atlantic City. This is a perversion of justice, and as a City, we cannot be soft on crime.
- The condition of the municipal roads in the City is self explanatory. Again, for someone who has served as much time in high levels within the City Government like you have, I am sure that just like the lack of lighting and the knowledge of horrendous roads within the city comes as no shock.

- The “road diet” is a significant concern for many. Being forced to turn Atlantic Avenue into one lane in each direction by the federal government because Atlantic Avenue is in such dire need of paving is a problem for a City that relies on conventions and other large events. The congestion during events and the need to allow for access to emergency vehicles should lead to the conclusion that Atlantic Avenue should remain 2 lanes in each direction. If there was a traffic study done which provides the traffic counts and trip generation during an event at Boardwalk Hall or on the beach and concludes that one lane would be sufficient I would love to see it.

- Drugs are being sold rampant on the boardwalk to the point where the Prosecutor had to put a task force together to deal with it. Numerous arrests were made and significant quantities of drugs were seized with so much more to do.

- The theft ring operating in the City that was ripping off retailers at the Walk repeatedly. The situation got so bad that your 3rd Ward Councilman Kaleem Shabazz created a special City-run task force/roundtable to address the issues. My office has been involved since its inception and we have worked directly with Councilman Shabazz, Chief Sarkos and Prosecutor Reynolds to craft specific legislation to assist with the issues in Atlantic City. Prosecutor Reynolds also has attended every meeting and took action that led to identification, arrest, and prosecution of many involved in the shoplifting and quality of life crimes but to my knowledge you have yet to participate.

- Homelessness, panhandling, mental health and addiction seem to be at the worst levels they have ever been in the City. I have been working with the Prosecutor and the Sheriff to collaborate on addressing the significant challenges people in the City are facing. We are fortunate that many are stepping up to assist the cause because we need to get it under control. I’m sure your deep understanding of the City and its residents would be invaluable information to this endeavor.

- We continue to work on legislation to deal with issues in the City or brought forward by constituents. One of the pieces of legislation you seem very fond of but haven’t fully grasped is S-2454. It is not a takeover of the City’s school district by the DCA. It simply allows for financial oversight of the school district in the same manner that the DCA has financial oversight of the City so that one entity is looking at all of the governmental entities. It is important to note that Governor Murphy and Lt. Governor Oliver have extended the fiscal oversight of the City because they recognize that the City is incapable of managing their own finances. As the school district is the largest burden on property taxes, having one entity overseeing both is just common sense and good government.

- An elaborate groundbreaking for the Shop Rite was held in November of 2021. There has still not been a single thing done on the site since. When questioned, you deflected and blamed supply chain issues as a result of COVID. The reality is that there was never a deal signed with Shop Rite because they wanted \$500,000 in losses guaranteed each year. Now with costs escalating due to inflation, it doesn’t look like the project will happen at all. Everyone wants to know why you would hold a groundbreaking for a project that never had a final agreement in place.

Finally, and maybe most importantly as we move forward trying to make Atlantic City clean and safe it is important to take a look at what has happened in Atlantic City over the last five (5) years. As you know, in 2016 Atlantic City was faced with 2 choices – bankruptcy or a state bail out. This was necessary due to fiscal mismanagement at the City level – a City that you have served as a Councilman, Director of Revenue and Finance, City Council president and now Mayor for the last 20 or so years. Most of the problems occurred while you were Director of Revenue and Finance or Council President – prominent leadership roles while the City over assessed the casinos in order to fuel the City’s spending spree.

The option for the state to bail the City out was chosen. The way the state found additional revenue for the City’s pay back of tax appeals and debt service was to take the money from the CRDA. The City has now essentially bankrupted the CRDA to the point where the CRDA has no money to do the important redevelopment and revitalization work that is the CRDA’s mission. I enclose a chart detailing those transfers to the tune of over 222 million dollars since 2016 which was obtained from the CRDA.

Then earlier this year you appeared in Trenton to try to push through another 5 – 10 million dollar diversion of money from the CRDA to the City. Don’t you understand the impact of bankrupting the main redevelopment agency for the City at a time when so much redevelopment and revitalization needs to occur?

In closing, you may want to ignore the situation, but I think we have reached the end of your ability to do that. Unfortunately, I hear on a daily basis from my constituents in the City of Atlantic City, and throughout Atlantic County, that the city looks worse now than it ever has and is the most unsafe it has ever been.

Brick and mortar revenue for the casinos is down and additional competition from New York is on the horizon. The City is already the poorest in the State. Traditional approaches excluding elected officials and concerned members of the public is not a winning strategy. Being an avid Eagles fan I’m sure you understand the importance of building a team.

While I don’t expect to hear from you, I urge you to reach out to Prosecutor Reynolds and Sheriff Scheffler to get their perspectives on the situation in the City. Both are extremely competent professionals committed to improving the City and helping people despite the fact that neither one resides within the City of Atlantic City.

Marty – the public posturing, press conferences, conversations through third parties or radio shows should end. Let's have a direct conversation to talk about problems and most importantly, the solutions to benefit the people of our South Jersey region.

Sincerely,



Senator Vince Polistina
2nd Legislative District

cc: Assemblyman Don Guardian
Assemblywoman Claire Swift
County Executive Dennis Levinson
County Commissioners
Atlantic City Council
All Atlantic County Mayors
Jaquelyn Suarez, NJDCA
Honorable Chris Brown
Atlantic County Prosecutor William Reynolds
Atlantic County Sheriff Eric Scheffler

Recap of IATs diverted from CRDA pursuant to PILOT legislation
 CRDA
 12/31/2021

For Internal Deliberative Purposes Only

Year	Quarter	Quarterly Total IATs	Annual IATs	Quarterly CRDA Commitments	Annual CRDA Commitments (1)	Quarterly Diverted	Annual Diverted
2016	Q2	\$ 8,734,197		6,557,081		2,177,116	
	Q3	9,970,049		3,541,952		6,428,097	
	Q4	8,248,382	26,952,628	2,885,361	12,984,394	5,363,021	13,968,234
		8,640,902		2,286,224		6,354,678	
2017	Q1	8,640,902		2,393,180		6,619,755	
	Q2	9,012,935		2,682,230		7,451,540	
	Q3	10,133,770		1,819,931	9,181,565	6,708,186	27,134,159
	Q4	8,528,117	36,315,724	1,649,364		6,658,252	
2018	Q1	8,307,616		1,866,774		7,297,939	
	Q2	9,164,713		1,934,270		9,924,601	
	Q3	11,858,871		1,665,989	7,116,397	8,139,937	32,020,729
	Q4	9,805,926	39,137,126	382,910		9,696,144	
2019	Q1	10,079,054		409,457		10,747,072	
	Q2	11,156,529		450,398		12,444,463	
	Q3	12,894,861		429,819	1,672,584	11,100,482	43,988,161
	Q4	11,530,301	45,660,745	384,631		10,112,661	
2020	Q1	10,497,292		243,663		6,035,411	
	Q2	6,279,074		510,473		12,785,486	
	Q3	13,295,959		460,429	1,599,196	12,665,877	41,599,435
	Q4	13,126,306	43,198,631	473,187		13,463,948	
2021	Q1	13,937,135		546,955		15,253,750	
	Q2	15,800,705		653,407		18,091,944	
	Q3	18,745,351		629,561	2,303,110	17,039,966	63,849,608
	Q4	17,669,527	66,152,718				
TOTAL		\$ 257,417,572	\$ 257,417,572	\$ 34,857,246	\$ 34,857,246	\$ 222,560,326	\$ 222,560,326