

OC's Cigarette Initiative Looking To Grow

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OCEAN CITY – A positive review of the town's Cigarette Butt Beach Container initiative was presented this week.

As Ocean City Surfrider Foundation member Terry Steimer prepared for his report on the Cigarette Butt Beach Container initiative, he wheeled in a grocery cart of bags full of cigarette butts and placed it directly in front of the Mayor and City Council.

Steimer's report followed a discussion held last winter concerning smokers on the Boardwalk and the beach. The conclusion of that discussion was to start an initiative to educate smokers on designated smoking areas by placing cigarette butt containers in areas labeled smoking areas.

According to Steimer, a meeting was held with representatives from the Public Works Maintenance Department, city administrators, and the Ocean City Surfrider Foundation. They had come to an agreement where cigarette receptacles would be placed at each street indicating a smoking area. Also, receptacles were installed between each beach street access about 50 feet off of the dunes and were also labeled smoking area.

"The idea was to provide a place not contiguous to bathers, convenient to smokers and in the end make it as convenient as possible," Steimer said.

The city purchased 200 cigarette receptacles and on July 18 of last



Ocean City Surfrider Foundation's Terry Steimer wheeled in a collection of cigarette butts to the Mayor and Council meeting this week. Photo by Joanne Shriner

year 146 receptacles were placed from the Inlet to 142nd Street.

"Surfriders at that point in time thought that those receptacles were not going to be adequate because they were going to be blown all over the beach and picked up and misused for one reason or another, and we would never see them again," Steimer said.

The Surfrider Foundation painted 10, 55 gallon drums red and placed them in "hot areas", where they thought more of an accumulation of cigarette butts would take place, such as in front of the Clarion and the Castle in the Sand because they sell alcohol on the beach.

"As it turns out, they were insignif-

icant," Steimer said. "We drilled holes in the tops of the cans that we thought were just big enough for cigarette butts, but it turns out that any time you have a flat can on the beach people think it is a trash receptacle, and I am telling you they found a way to stick trash in that can."

At the end of the summer season, every cigarette receptacle was collected and an estimate was made that there were approximately 69,000 cigarette butts recovered.

"That was the first year mind you that we have done this, and what we figured is there are over 60,000 conscience citizens who left their spot on the beach to go smoke, being good friendly people," Steimer said.

Steimer acknowledged that a portion of the receptacles went missing due to weather or theft, but pointed out some were just moved to other locations. He asked the council to renew the initiative for the upcoming summer season.

"Terry, I think they are great suggestions, a great presentation, and the council is coming into the budget time and I am sure we will take care of you," Council President Jim Hall said.

Mayor Rick Meehan pointed out that the cigarette receptacles placed on the Boardwalk were used more often than the containers installed on the beach.

"I think that we want to keep that in mind as we get into the budget," he said. "We prefer it if people didn't smoke, but if they are going to smoke we should have a few more of these on the Boardwalk for them to utilize."