



## Borough of Ship Bottom Council Meeting - SBTA Highlights Summary Form

Town Council Meeting Date: [12/19/2025]  
SBTA Board Member Submitting Notes: [Greg Fath]

Ship Bottom Town Council Meeting December 19, 2025 – call to order 2:35 pm

The main reason for this special meeting was to discuss Ordinance 2025-09C and to introduce Ordinance 2025-10C. The town solicitor explained that Ordinance 2025-09C could not be “tabled”. Per law, it either need to be left as-is to vote on December 30<sup>th</sup> or “killed”. The council voted 4-3 to kill this bill.

Voting to keep the bill as-is were Councilmen Dave Hartman, Joe Valyo & Tom Tallon. This was against what the SBTA had requested along with the vast majority of the 150+ people who were crammed into the court room. Councilman Valyo stated that there were a large number of people who wanted to keep the ordinance as-is. Note that in the proceeding 2.5 hours, not a single person spoke in favor of this ordinance.

Prior to public comments, a new ordinance was introduced > 2025-10C which would levy a 3% tax on all short term rentals. This new ordinance is attached. The mayor apologized for how the prior ordinance was introduced and said it wouldn't happen again. However, ten minutes later, it DID happen again with the introduction of ordinance 2025-10C, leaving us with only 11 days to review and comment before they vote on making it official!

The next two hours had many individuals voice concerns regarding the implementation of these ordinances, the reasons for them, and the total lack of transparency. Multiple people asked that the council include taxpayers and others to work collaboratively on a revised ordinance. As President, I reminded the council that on December 2, 2025, the SBTA respectfully asked that a stakeholder committee be established. No one responded to our request.

Multiple people asked about the associated financials and why did we need to collect additional funds. Some felt it was due to our debt service on the new municipal building. Others felt it was simply a “money grab”. I told council that my simple request for BASIC financials was denied, so **either no financial analysis exists, or the borough is deliberately withholding it**. I said, “Both possibilities are alarming. Both are unacceptable. And both raise serious questions about how this ordinance was developed and why transparency has been avoided at every turn!”

On a similar path, Karen Drucker asked Kathleen Flanigan how much revenue was expected from this new tax and what our deficit was. Kathleen said we don't have a deficit; however, expenses like health benefits went up 36% and garbage collection fees have risen substantially. When Karen questioned it again, Kathleen said she expected to raise \$994,000 from the 3% tax. She did not provide any specific calculations; simply that based on the information given to her, that was her projection.

Many people questioned who would be required to pay this new tax (and how it would be collected, then remitted). Duane Watlington provided an in-depth explanation as to why most rental units would be exempt. As an expert in this field who has testified many times, he explained that the financial windfall that the borough expects would NOT materialize.

A number of individuals questioned why we are rushing to pass this ordinance. One taxpayer went so far as to ask the council to close the current session and remove ordinance 2025-10C. The council refused to do so. It will be voted upon at the December 30<sup>th</sup> session.

Another topic brought up by multiple people revolved around public safety and complaints. One individual stated that of the 67 reported complaints, 26 belonged to 3 particular properties. When questioning the council for more specifics or percentages, they were unable to provide any answers.

In addition, concerns were raised regarding the potential utilization of AI powered implementation platforms. This included a company called Granicus and an associated email that had been circulating from a borough employee. Most issues were in connection with what data was being collected and what was this data being used for.

There were other issues raised; however, I believe the most contentious ones are included above. The new ordinance, 2025-10C, is slated to be voted upon on Tuesday, December 30, 2025 at 6:30 pm. As of right now, it is still scheduled to be held at borough hall. A request has been made by the SBTA to have it moved to a larger facility, so people aren't forced to stand in the hallway or sit on the floor as was the case on Friday.

Meeting adjourned at 5:13 pm.