

Bond

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for the project. Jay Schatz challenged what he believed was Causey's assertion that the chamber as a whole supported the project. Causey said he was speaking for the executive board. Causey again spoke in favor of the current project.

"If we keep stalling we are going to spend \$14 million to \$15 million for a smaller building," he said.

Rochelle Hirsch said she didn't understand why the city had to tear down the Solarium to build a new Convention Hall. She said the Beach Theatre could be used for music, meetings and cultural activities.

"The city does not need this Convention Hall. Don't knock down the Solarium and build a \$14 million facility," she said. "Just because making a good decision will delay the outcome, that is no reason to make a poor decision."

Jim Wyatt said the city was trying to put up a Taj Mahal, but his biggest concern was tampering with the seawall. He urged city council to go back to building on the original footprint, saying they had the plans in their files.

Barbara Skinner also

touched on the issue of the seawall.

"What I'm concerned with is the safety, the security and the cost," she said. "We have to balance the need with the residents. Most homeowners are seasonal, summer residents."

She said she looked at drawings provided by Fralinger Engineering, showing some of the large boulders that make up the seawall being removed and replaced with cement with small pebbles. Mahaney said the construction specs do not call for the removal of boulders. He said they would be removed and put back.

"Nowhere does it say what you advocate," he said. "We spent a lot of time evaluating what the seawall is and we wouldn't want the public to think they were in danger."

Mahaney said the new building would come to the edge of the seawall.

John Vandevaarst of Ohio Avenue advised against down-sizing the project because of a past experience. He said he worked at the Beltsville (Md.) Agricultural Research Center and once recommended down-sizing a project.

"In the end we ended up

spending more money, had construction delays, and issues with the state of Maryland," he said. "I fully support what you are doing."

Harley Shuler said he would support the project if he knew the facility would generate enough revenue to be self-supporting and not a burden on the taxpayers.

Gail Pierson of the Gail Pierson Gallery said she supported the project moving forward because the city needs to have a working beachfront.

Jeanne Powick calculated the total cost of the project as exceeding \$20 million, including more than \$12.5 million for construction costs, \$1.75 million in soft costs, contingency costs, and \$3.3 million in bond interest.

Municipal Auditor Leon Costello addressed the bond interest, saying the interest was not going away if the city stuck to the \$10.5 million.

"The interest is still in there. It's just that you are accepting the smaller (amount) and not the larger," he said.

Mahaney said the city's figures differed greatly from what Powick presented.

Mary Stewart, chief outreach officer at MAC, said the

existing Convention Hall has always been substandard, saying a featured performer had to use an electrical closet as a changing room because the band took up the dressing room. She said there was only one water source, which was a utility closet, and the city had to store tables and chairs around the interior perimeter of the building. She said to bring in world class performers the city needed to have an adequate stage, dressing rooms, and room for an audience.

She said taking people to Lower Cape May Regional High School for performances just means people are not eating and sleeping in Cape May.

Alison Bjork said people have described the new project as massive, but it would not be taller than her home on Hughes Avenue. She also said a lot of the people who wanted to make the Convention Hall project smaller also wanted to save the Beach Theatre.

"If you build a beautiful Convention Hall maybe some investor would want to buy the Beach Theatre," she said.

Dennis Crowley said the Convention Hall project has been down a long road, and

he likes the current design, but he felt there was a lack of factual information.

"We run into trouble when we depend on anecdotes, stories and personal opinion to spend money," he said.

Crowley referred to a line used by a project support, gleaned from the movie Field of Dreams - "If you build it they will come" - suggesting the current design of Convention Hall would draw tourists, acts, events, and so on. Crowley said in the movie "the people who came were dead and they didn't spend a dime."

He said if the decisions were made by anecdote he would tell one, telling the story of a young man who went to the bank wanting to borrow \$10 million to build a business, but didn't know what he would sell, how much it would cost to run the business, and how much the business would make. When asked to come back with the answers to those questions, the man returned not with the answers but with a request for \$13 million.

"If you were the banker, would you give him the \$13 million," Crowley asked council. "If you can't, don't do this."

Judy Lord said the citizens of Cape May voted for \$10.5 million for Convention Hall and recently voted in three new council members.

"If you can't elect people who do what they said they would do, why vote?" she said.

Charlotte Todd of the Environmental Commission said the city had to consider the town's "carrying capacity" how many people the town can accommodate along with their cars. She was also concerned about the amount of energy that would be required by Convention Hall.

"We have to get off that big energy diet," she said.

Arnie Pitman suggested council have the new footprint of the building laid out on the ground. He said until then they could not see how much area it would take up, particularly on Beach Avenue.

"You're never going to get it back," he said.

Pitman said he was not against a bigger building, but was against moving it into the roadway.

The public hearing on the additional spending is set for July 20.

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tsunamis, which hit coastal areas thousands of miles from their origin.

"It works the same with lower pressure systems, tropical storms, and hurricanes, as well," Back said.

The Ocean City Beach Patrol, at the north end of Cape May County, reported nearly 300 rescues over the weekend, with most on Friday

and Sunday.

Valerie Meola, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Mount Holly, said one way to explain it is weather systems are constantly moving.

"In this case a low pressure storm over North Carolina is spinning counter-clockwise, so the winds are coming around from the east," she said.

She said what is happening

in one part of the ocean far away can affect the New Jersey coast.

"The ocean is one big entity, and it doesn't take much to start mixing it up and get it moving," Meola said. "And even a tropical system well south of our area, east of Florida or the Bahamas can still affect our ocean."

Meola said once a storm swell is moving it continues to move until it hits something.

"In this case it's our shores," she said.

Meola said despite the recent storm-related activity, New Jersey beaches are more

often affected by winter storms.

"In the winter people hear a lot about nor'easters. You can see the storm form near the Carolinas then move up the coast and it intensifies. The storm moves counterclockwise and it brings a lot of waves on shores, with a persistent northeast wind and you see a lot of beach erosion," she said. "In the summer that's not the typical pattern we see, but we do see flow coming on shore from distant storms."

Back said the effects of the storms are apparent to lifeguards. The water is discolored, turning brownish because the waves are churning up the sand. He said the lifeguards are there to advise the public on the surf conditions and, if necessary, to help them out of a bad situation. However, the lifeguards generally go off duty at 5:30 p.m., and they normally call all bathers out of the water at around 5:25. On Sunday they went off at 6:30 and at 6:20 p.m. the guards announced they were going off duty and called everyone out of the water, advising them not to go back in. Later, they got a call for a water rescue.

Back said if a person is caught in a rip current he or she should swim parallel to the beach. They will eventually be able to break free of

the rip current and then swim to shore.

"The big thing is not to panic and don't try to swim against it," he said.

He said if anyone spots a swimmer having trouble in the water to call 911. Each night during the summer there are three Beach Patrol members on duty at lifeguard headquarters from 5:30 until dusk - a lieutenant and two lifeguards. This continues until mid-September.

Back said it might be helpful to the victim to throw them some flotation device, but they would more than likely be moving out too fast. However, he discourages anyone other than a lifeguard from entering the water to attempt a rescue.

"Don't go in and become the second victim," Back said.

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# Promenade art show winners

CAPE MAY - Nearly 70 artists displayed their works of art at the three-day 46th Annual Cape May Promenade Art Show last weekend. Professionals and amateurs participated in the judging and awards ceremony held Saturday, July 10. Oil painter Eugene Maziarz received the Mary A. Joyce Best of Show award, and the right to exhibit in the Gallery D'May. In all, 23 awards were presented.

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