

# Reps.

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time to let someone new in the door," Clark said.

Thornton served as county freeholder from 1976 to 1987 and from 1996 until the present. As freeholder, Thornton is the director of Health and Human Services, overseeing the Department of Aging, the Health Department and the Crest Haven Nursing & Rehabilitation Center.

Thornton said he was "dismayed" with the party's decision not to support him.

"It's my understanding that it's because I voted my conscience on several occasions and voted no. If I felt the freeholders were moving in the wrong direction as far as a policy, I expressed myself and indicated it was a wrong direction. It seems that people aren't happy with that. I've always believed in our democracy and that every-

body has the right to express themselves and I'm elected to do just that. I'm not elected to just sit there and nod my head yes like some automated robot," Thornton said.

Thornton opposed the county's purchase of the Beesley's Point Bridge in 2009 for \$1 million from its private owners, the Beesley's Point Bridge Company.

The bridge, which connects Upper Township and Somers Point, closed in 2004 due to structural concerns.

According to a New Jersey Department of Transportation study, the bridge could be repaired for \$20 million, which would extend its life for 25 years.

"I don't think the county should be burdened with an 80-year-old bridge that was on a state highway that was owned by private owners that were very wealthy. We just bailed out some wealthy peo-

ple," Thornton said.

However, the county hired an independent engineering firm to perform an analysis on the bridge, which determined the total cost for the construction would be estimated at \$32 million, \$12 million more than the state anticipated.

The former owners told the county that 1.7 million cars used the bridge each year, which would generate toll revenue for the bridge's reconstruction. Yet published reports stated that only 300 vehicles used the bridge each day.

"It's a \$32 million burden on the county and the county is stuck with that bridge," Thornton said. "We own an 80-year-old deteriorated unsafe bridge."

Though Thornton said he agreed with his Republican colleagues "95 percent of the time," he questioned why his

party wasn't supporting him.

"Times now have been very difficult because of the economy and the government has to be reduced. I've been in favor of that except when I have health and human services. When you start making reductions, I have to make sure there are suitable alternatives that protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents that we have been caring for," Thornton said.

He said county employees involved in the candidate selection process feel "intimidated."

"If you're a municipal employee or you do government business and you're elected committeeperson, you've got to vote the party line or the indications you should vote," Thornton said.

McCann said he's embarked on a race for the county seat after well-wishers throughout

the county urged him.

"I started to think if I go for freeholder now, my name recognition is very high and it might be a good move. It was really driven by the public who gave me the idea, and from there I just put my name in," McCann said.

According to McCann, it's still a three-way race until the March 15 county Republican organization meeting.

"The two highest vote-getters are going to be the winners. I could be either running with Ralph, or I could be running with Gerry, or it could be Ralph and Gerry," McCann said.

McCann said Ocean City needs its own freeholder.

"Ocean City pays approximately 24 percent of the county tax and we should definitely have representation on the county board. I strongly feel that Ocean City should have a representative on the

Cape May County Board of Freeholders," McCann said.

According to McCann, his endorsement by New Direction for New Jersey was one of many individual endorsements he's received. He said Freeholders Daniel Beyel, Ralph Sheets and Leonard Desiderio, Upper Township Mayor Richard Palombo and Upper Township Deputy Mayor Curtis Corson endorsed him for freeholder.

"I think that the freeholders do a great job, but I also think that having a new perspective or a fresh perspective on there would be a healthy thing. I'm a businessman and I look at things from a business point of view and I think that would be also a big plus for the freeholders," McCann said.

# Water

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committee formed to study water/sewer rates and make recommendations to city council.

"If you are asking if there was anyone looking out for the large users, that was a constant source of scrutiny," Mahaney said.

"I appreciate the care, but the end result is going to be a large increase on large users," Schatz said.

Mahaney said sewer rates were set by the Cape May County Municipal Utilities

Authority, which bills 85 percent on a fixed charge and 15 percent on actual usage. He said there is generally a 3 to 5 percent increase in sewer rates every year.

MacLeod said 2009 billings for water resulted in \$1.885 million in water revenue. With the changes in the billing system, the city anticipates \$1.889 million in revenue.

"That's based on the same level of water being consumed," he said.

Schatz said he felt the new system would shift the bur-

den for needed water revenues to the large users.

MacLeod said about \$282,000 was needed to balance the 2010 Water-Sewer Utility budget. Under the new rate structure, he said, high end users would peak out at \$8.50 per 1,000 gallons.

The minimum water rate set under the new rate system is \$36.35 per billing period (\$145.40 per year). Customers will be billed four times per year. The excess water use rate is \$8.25 per 1,000 gallons. Sewer rates are calculated based on water

use. A minimum sewer rate is \$65 per billing period (\$260 per year minimum). The base sewer rate is the same for all customers. The excess sewer rate is \$16.50 per 1,000 gallons.

Water bills will go out each year on or about Jan. 1, April 1, July 15 and Nov. 1. The water and sewer rate changes are effective Jan. 1.

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WEST CAPE MAY - The West Cape May Shade Tree Commission presents a free seminar conducted by Arborist Mickey Riggan on Saturday March 13 at the borough hall. Admission is free and not exclusive to West Cape May residents.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the session runs from 9 am till 1pm. The seminar will teach techniques on how to prune and what to look for when pruning young trees. The goal of this seminar is to acquaint the participants with the importance of young tree pruning for the development of a healthy tree canopy. For more information visit [www.westcapemay.org](http://www.westcapemay.org) or contact West Cape May Borough Hall at 609 884-1005.

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