

# Year in Review: Injuries, upgrades and a shake-up

Continued from Page A1

upgraded fencing, benches and other amenities to Rotary Park.

Point signs water deal with Cape May: The Borough of Cape May Point signed a five-year deal with Cape May, locking in a set price for water. Consumption of water in the borough was down in 2015.

Resident asks why beach slope not being fixed: Dennis DeSatnick asked City Council at a Feb. 16 meeting why the city was doing nothing to fix the beach slope. He reminded City Manager Bruce MacLeod of a statement he made in September that the beach slope would be addressed aggressively.

Cape May introduces budget with zero tax increase: While initially a tax increase of .7 cents was proposed, City Council held the line on any tax increase. Mayor Edward Mahaney said the city had a record amount of surplus funds and financial stability for the next five years.

## March

Taxpayers Association complains not enough action taken on beach slope: The association called for signs with short simple messages on beach safety, informed beach taggers and adding stronger emphasis on the shore break to the beach safety brochure. It also called for reporting beach incidents on the Beach Patrol website.

Meier wants post office to build ramp: Councilman Shaine Meier contacted officials in Washington, D.C., to request a ramp be constructed at the Cape May Post Office. He complained the building offers no access for the disabled or seniors. Mayor Edward Mahaney warned if the U.S. Postal Service were pressed, it could close the post office.

West Cape May offers



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Councilman Shaine Meier contacted officials in Washington, D.C., to request a ramp be placed at the Cape May Post Office to improve access but met with opposition from the city.

liquor license: The borough offered a restaurant liquor license for sale with a minimum bid of \$525,000. The borough sold a liquor license to Sunset Liquors for \$615,000 in 2011, resulting in a savings of \$45,000 for taxpayers per year beginning in 2013.

Leaky windows: Windows in City Hall, built as Cape May High School in 1917, have been leaking. City engineer Tom Thornton said the leaks were a "10" on a scale of 1 to 10. He said his goal was to receive quotes for an investigation of what was causing the leaks.

Grant for Lake Lily: Cape May Point received a \$400,000 state Open Space grant to allow improvements including a new bulkhead and establishment of handicapped accessibility to Lake Lily.

No tax increase: Cape May City Council approved the 2016 municipal budget with no tax increase. Auditor Leon Costello said just about every line item in the budget for 2015 exceeded expectations for revenue, from parking meters to room tax.

Public notified of beach dangers: In response to a statement from the Taxpayers Association of Cape May, City Manager Bruce MacLeod said the city dis-

tributed 40,000 to 50,000 beach safety brochures. He said beach entrances had signs that covered information in the brochure. MacLeod said a safety informational would be developed for local access television.

City engineer to handle school pool rebuild: City Council approved a professional services contract with engineer Tom Thornton to provide engineering services for the reconstruction of Cape May City El-



Cape May started a public awareness campaign about the dangers of the shore break.

elementary School's indoor swimming pool and locker room. The city will loan the school funds to replace the pool at zero interest for 10 years. The price tag was projected to be near \$2 million.

Fire causes heat damage to homes: A reed fire in Harbor Cove caused heat damage to five structures on three properties March 23. Vinyl siding melted or curled on several buildings from intense heat. The fire was under control in 20 minutes.

Tax increase for West Cape May: Borough Commission approved a 1.9-cent tax increase for property owners. The tax rate increased from 33.1 cents per \$100 of assessed value to 34.9 cents, or a 5 percent increase.

## April

Underground barrier at former gas plant nearing completion: A large machine called a one-pass trencher has been injecting a concrete mixture underground to create a containment barrier 3 feet wide, about 55 feet deep and about 1,125 feet in rectangular length at the site of a former manufactured gas plant near St. John and Lafayette streets. The gas plant left behind benzene, naphthalene and other chemicals underground.

Falling county population: Census figures indicate Cape May County's population has been falling for the past five years. The county population in 2010 was 97,263, dropping to 94,727 in 2015. The county experienced 2,000 more deaths than births during the five-year period, according to Richard Pernicario, vice president of planning and research at Atlantic Cape Community College.

Add on to school? West Cape May Elementary School Chief Administrator Alfred Savio proposed expansion of the school with modular trailers or an addition due to increased enrollment. The school receives local children as well as Choice School students from other districts. A total of 89 students were enrolled for the 2015-16 school year.

City revamps beach safety brochure: City Manager Bruce MacLeod announced at an April 19 council meeting that the city's beach safety brochure had been updated with more emphasis placed on neck, head and back injuries. Larger beach safety signs will warn of diving into oncoming waves, not standing with one's back to the ocean and avoid bodysurfing or bodyboarding "over the falls, ride the shoulder."

Outdoor seating ordinances on hold: City Council tabled two ordinances April 19 that would have created new regulations for seasonal outdoor seating and Washington Street Mall and Promenade patio permits. One ordinance proposed raising annual fees for applicants that sell alcohol from \$2.50 per square foot to \$5 per square foot.

## May

Lightning sparks townhouse fire: Lightning struck a home in the 900 block of St. James Place on May 3, collapsing a roof and heavily damaging two units. Adjacent units suffered only smoke damage.

County tourism hits \$6 billion: Tourism expenditures in Cape May County last year rose 4.3 percent to \$6 billion, the highest number since the state began to measure tourism activity. County Director of Tourism Diane Wieland said the county's tourism industry has grown from \$2 billion in 1994 to \$6 billion in 2015. Tourism grew \$246 million from 2014 to 2015, she said.

First Beach Safety Committee meeting held: On May 2, the committee discussed new beach safety brochures and signage, continuing education of the public, the need to continue communication with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and state Department of Environmental Protection, including clarifying the city's ability to move sand on the beaches.



CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

A contractor for Jersey Central Power and Light mobilized equipment at the site of the former manufactured gas plant and built an underground barrier in April.

Sheehan disciplinary hearing: Final arguments were presented May 11 in the third and final session of a disciplinary hearing for Capt. Robert Sheehan, the city's police chief who was demoted 14 months earlier. At issue was Sheehan qualified on the gun range in 2009 at the county Police Academy twice in that year but the qualifications were not separated by a three-month gap, thus disqualifying him from carrying a firearm by state Attorney General guidelines. Hearing Officer Richard Williams, a retired Superior Court-Appellate Division judge, said the proceedings were not judicial but an administrative hearing on a disciplinary matter. He said he would offer a written decision within 20 days of the final hearing.

Hoping beach replenishment alleviates dangers: During a May 17 meeting, Mayor Edward Mahaney said the city wanted to see the Army Corps of Engineers templates for the fall beach renourishment and wanted the agency to make some adjustments to address the beach slope, which has been blamed for injuries to bathers and surfers.

## June

West Cape May to pay Willow Creek \$500,000: The Borough of West Cape May will pay Barbara Wilde, owner of Willow Creek Winery, \$550,000 as a settlement of a federal civil rights case plus an additional \$10,000 to settle an open public records act case. The borough also agreed to dismiss a complaint it filed against the winery with the county Agricultural Development Board. The borough was ordered to pay half of the settlement in 30 days, with the remainder due by the end of July.

City to suspend Sheehan for four days: Hearing Officer Richard Williams released his decision from a disciplinary hearing for former police chief Capt. Robert Sheehan. In his recommended decision, Williams stated a period of suspension is required "because of Capt. Sheehan's responsibilities as a department leader to obey the laws and regulations he is sworn to uphold and enforce. However, any suspension should also be mitigated by the fact that the offenses occurred more than six years earlier, were relatively de minimus and resulted in no harm to anyone. Williams noted the suspension should also be mitigated by the fact Sheehan had no past disciplinary actions from the department. Williams recommended a suspension of four days.

Outdoor Seating Committee holds first meeting: The issue of seasonal outdoor seating regulation was raised in April when City So-

licitor Tony Monzo presented City Council with a draft of an ordinance to regulate outdoor seating primarily at hotels that present live music and allow seating on the lawn. The proposed ordinance required merchants to provide a footprint of their property and designate on a plan where additional seats would be placed. The applicant would designate where those outdoor seats would be located and submit it with a mercantile license application to the city clerk that would include a review by the city manager.

City to spend \$2 million to replace school pool: The city agreed to completely replace Cape May City Elementary School's swimming pool rather than just replace the concrete shell of the old pool as projected in earlier plans. A consultant found the project would be less time consuming, less expensive and more durable if the entire pool were replaced, according to Mayor Edward Mahaney.

Committee says experts needed to solve surf zone injury problem: Beach Safety Committee member Dennis DeSatnick questioned if the committee was not just "going in circles" trying to find a solution to injuries to bathers in the surf zone of the city's beaches. At a June 13 meeting, DeSatnick complained a report of Cape May's surf-related injuries was not presented to the Army Corps at a Nov. 2015 meeting. He said he continued to request a representative from DEP or the Army Corps attend a committee meeting. DeSatnick said no one on the committee was an expert on beach slopes or injuries.

Council passes resolution opposing changes to post office: In a move described by Councilman Shaine Meier as "slapping him in the face publicly," City Council passed a resolution opposing changes to the city's post office and not endorsing any individuals who are seeking alterations to the building. In this case, Meier had been attempting to get a ramp built at the post office to allow access for those in wheelchairs or those who have trouble navigating the steps.

Gibbons takes over command of Coast Guard Training Center: Capt. Owen Gibbons, who served as executive officer at TRACEN two years ago, relieved Capt. Todd Prestidge as command officer June 17. Prestidge transferred to a new position in Washington, D.C.

Lear announces candidacy for mayor: Retired police Lt. Chuck Lear announced his bid June 20 to seek election as mayor in November's general election. Lear, a life-long Cape May resident, served 37 years with the city's police department and retired this past December.

Voted county superintendent of the year: Victoria Zelenak of Cape May City Elementary School was voted Cape May County Superintendent of the Year. "I'm surrounded by wonderful people, the staff and of course, the children," she said. "It's joyful to be in the school and not separate in an administrative role."

West Cape May approves bond for Willow Creek settlement: An ordinance providing an emergency appropriation of a \$300,000 bond to pay for the borough's portion of a \$550,000 settlement reached with Willow Creek Winery and its owner Barbara Wilde drew

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CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE (ISSN 519-020)  
Volume 163 Number 1

Published weekly by Sample Media, Inc.,  
801 Asbury Ave., #310, Ocean City, N.J. 08226

Published Weekly (52 times a year)

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: By mail for \$39 a year; \$70 for two years; \$20 for six months. Periodical Postage at Cape May Court House, N.J. and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to the Cape May Star and Wave, P.O. Box 2427, Cape May, N.J. 08204.

161 Years Old • 1854-2015

**TIDES : January 4-11 2017**

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
4	11:55		5:33	6:14
5	12:37	12:53	6:37	7:09
6	1:41	1:59	7:46	8:07
7	2:47	3:08	8:56	9:07
8	3:51	4:14	10:03	10:07
9	4:51	5:17	11:05	11:05
10	5:48	6:15		12:02
11	6:41	7:09	12:00	12:56

**MOON PHASES**  
First quarter, Jan. 5 • full moon, Jan. 12

See Year in Review, A3

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