

Hall

Continued from page A1

structure. She said only 16-percent of the respondents wanted a large fine arts center.

She said city council was preparing to approve a \$10.5 bond for a project with no plans in place.

Inderwies said adopting the ordinance did not mean the money was going to be spent. He said Cape May was not going to build a Convention Hall such as there is in Wildwood, but a convention hall/community center as exists now. He said he did not envision a 1,500-seat auditorium, but a place to host roller-skating, art shows, and similar functions.

"And before we spend anything we have to demolish it,

get plans...we won't spend anything until we know what we are going to do," he said.

Continuing with public comment, mayor-elect Ed Mahaney, who along with Swain had been invited to sit at the council table, said he totally agreed with Powick. He said there was a division in Cape May that needed healing. Mahaney also said there was no legal reason to pass the bond ordinance Tuesday.

He said the perception of the public to some plan was not of their choosing would be rapidly advanced once the ordinance was in place.

"That is the perception in Cape May, where perception is often more important than

fact," he said.

Mahaney said given the number, cost and scope of the permits required, there was time to hold town meetings to discuss the design, location of the structure and funding. He said the public wants more input, participation, and for the city to look for funding other than property taxes.

"We should keep to a strict schedule, but get the public's input. If not, we may end up with another referendum," he said.

A referendum in August 2006, rejected an initial bond ordinance for the Washington Street Mall project.

Louis "Skip" Loughlin, chairman of the Convention Hall Committee told city

council it was time to move forward. He said the committee was a cross section of people and the public had input. He said the committee members talked to many people getting their input, and he said those asked to speak at a committee meeting to tell what their needs were for a new Convention Hall also represented a cross section of people.

Loughlin also said there would be more public meetings and he was tired of innuendo about special interest groups driving the project.

"I'm getting frustrated hearing about special interest groups - let's get behind this project and move forward," he said. "I'm tired of hearing to all the drivel by people who want to stop the project."

Resident Virginia Hesel said there was a perception that the bond ordinance needed to be in place before Inderwies left office. Hesel said there was a special interest group driving the project,

but would not name them. She said the project was dividing the city and had broken the trust of the residents.

"It (Convention Hall) doesn't have to be grand or cater to special interests who use greed to get what they want," she said.

"Are you insinuating I'm a member of a special interest group?" Inderwies said. "And that I want this to be done before I leave?"

Hesel said that was the perception.

Inderwies said he believed if the ordinance was not passed by the second meeting of June the waiver would no longer be in effect. City solicitor Anthony Monzo said the ordinance would die when the new council was sworn in, but the waiver would not go away.

Councilman David Craig said he was confused by the suggestion there was a lack of opportunity for public input. He said apathy on the part of the public did not mean they

were not given the opportunity to comment. Craig also echoed earlier statements from council members saying the bond ordinance did not spend money. Future ordinances would have to be passed, with public hearings, in order to spend money on the project.

Deputy Mayor Niels Favre said he did not know how the Convention Hall project became a matter of personalities rather than what was good for Cape May. He said the people on the Convention Hall Committee had nothing to gain from their membership or the project.

Favre also said he agreed with Mahaney, but said everything Mahaney wanted could be done and council could still pass the ordinance on Tuesday.

Steenrod said passing the ordinance did not mean the city would not seek grants for the Convention Hall project.

Now open 7 days a week with the May 22nd premiere of

INDIANA JONES

and the
KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL PG-13

INDY SCHEDULE

Thursday - Monday: 4, 6:45, 9:30 p.m.

Matinee Sat/Sun/Mon: 1:30 p.m.

Tues/Weds: 6:45 & 9:30 p.m.

"Evening On The Harbor"

Fundraising Cocktail Party
Corinthian Yacht Club Friday 5/23 5p.m.
\$75. Per person - Everyone welcome
Tix still available - Call 609-778-1203



Now FREE WiFi in Lobby Cafe!

Beach Theatre

609-884-4403

www.beachboxoffice.com

Cape May's home for movies since 1950.

SHOP AROUND
Get the Best Deal in Town
at

Big Wally's

DISCOUNT FURNITURE
NORTH CAROLINA DIRECT

- Large Selection of Seashore Prints
- Wicker & Rattan Furniture
- Cottage Style Bedroom & Dining Room

All colors available

SLEEPERS • BEDDING • DINETTES

514 New Road (Rt. 9)
Somers Point, NJ 08224

(609) 926-1155

Wages

Continued from page A1

doing a very important job for a lower rate of pay.

The guards say they also do not get breaks or a lunch hour.

"The city treats lifeguards differently. Lifeguards get no longevity, no breaks, no lunch, no overtime, no pension, no credits on hours worked," Smith said.

Corea said no beach patrol members get a lunch break, but there is a rotating person to give breaks. He said the guards eat lunch on their stands and are paid for it. According to Corea, the captains of the beach patrol said if a lunch hour were implemented they would have to hire five or six people to cover the guards who were off the stands.

According to the guards, what the city has offered is less than the rate of inflation. They said the increase amounted to \$11 a day after 10 years.

Smith said the city offered the lifeguards a 21-percent raise over four years, but

came back and reduced the offer to 18-percent. He said their final offer was 15.6-percent over four years. "That is absolutely not true," Corea said.

He said the union may have submitted something to the lifeguards not offered by the city, and the guards may have ratified something the city never proposed. However he said he didn't believe anything had been submitted to the rank and file.

According to Corea, there was correspondence between the lifeguards and the city, and he thought they would submit the proposal to their members over Christmas, but he guessed that didn't happen.

"Our assumption is they would submit it in May or June when their people come back," Corea said.

The guards worry people won't come back under existing conditions. They currently have about a 65 to 70-percent retention rate, but believe it is getting worse.

Four years ago the Cape May Beach Patrol had to replace seven guards, the next year 10, the next year 14, and this year another seven.

"With the salary offered we can't return veteran guards," Smith said.

The guards feel returning guards is important to have a trained, professional beach patrol.

Bob Cwik, who is a high school administrator, said a lot of the guards are professionals in other fields, and a couple of them have Ph.D.s He said 40-percent of their guards are college students, and another 40-percent work in other fields.

According to Terry Randolph, the Cape May Beach Patrol has the top level of certification.

"We are in the top tier as far as training goes. It's a reflection of the people, and how much they enjoy beach safety," he said.

Guard Jeff Wright said the Cape May Beach is one of the hardest to guard because of its proximity to the Delaware Bay.

"Due to where (Cape May) sits, there are strong currents - mainly due to the Delaware Bay. Our beaches are the hardest to guard and we have an almost stellar record with water and beach emergencies," he said.

He said the level of expertise is very important in Cape May, and so it is better to return guards with training and experience.

"All we want to do is provide the best service. And we just want the city to recognize that level of dedication and make it easier for guards to come back," Wright said.

The guards said unless younger guards have housing they often can't come back because they can't afford rents. Some find they can earn more bussing tables, and they don't feel lifeguards should have to make that kind of a decision, especially since the guards are paid out of beach tag fees, and a raise would not cost the taxpayers a penny.

Corea said it was irrelevant where the money to pay the guards came from.

"The Beach Utility must be self liquidating. Anything not covered would be paid by taxpayers. It's not who pays what, but what a fair wage is. We never want to go to the taxpayer if we can help it, but every year expenses go up," he said.

The guards don't buy that argument.

In 2007, the city took in \$1,755,198.05, and paid out \$1,575,879.59, leaving the Beach Utility with a surplus of \$179,595.79.

The city budgeted \$645,000 for lifeguard wages in 2007 and paid out \$545,006.16. The remaining \$99,993.84 was reserved. Corea said the reserve was because money was allocated for beach protection through September, but the beaches were not guarded the entire time.

Smith said the city has spent enough fighting a pension plan and salary raises for lifeguards since 1992, and feels at some point the city must find it cost effective to simply give a raise. The guards said they don't understand why there has been so much hostility between the guards and the city, something they feel has been the case for the past 15 to 16 years. They said they are not getting anywhere in negotiations, and wanted to draw some attention to their situation.



IT'S HERE!
Cape May
MAGAZINE
Spring 2008

NEW year
NEW look
NEW columns
DON'T MISS
AN ISSUE!

Pick up a copy at these local stores:

Whale's Tale, Atlantic Books,
Kaleidoscope, Dellas, Fudge Kitchen,
and Swain's.

Can't get to town?
Subscribe online capemaymag.com
or call 1-888-898-2997 Visa/MC accepted

Platt's Home Furnishings

The BEST beach house furnishings...

- in store design service
- specializing in custom condo & rental packages
- from furniture to beach house Bedspreads



For the best price!

Platt's
HOME FURNISHINGS

www.plattshomefurnishings.com

MacArthur Blvd., Somers Point • 609-927-8200