

LCMR football scores 7 TDs, blanks Schalick

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House of the week

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166th YEAR NO. 42 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2020 \$1.00

County freeholder candidates share plans

Address COVID recovery, economy, jobs, homelessness, education

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

Casey and Brendon Sciarra; and independent Ryan Troiano.

CAPE MAY — The League of Women Voters held a candidates forum Oct. 14 in the ballroom of Congress Hall, where the five candidates seeking two seats on the county Board of Chosen Freeholders addressed a variety of issues.

Participating were Republican incumbents Jeffrey Pierson, of Upper Township, and Will Morey; Democrats Elizabeth

Current challenges

Candidates were asked what they consider to be the most important challenges facing the county today and why they are uniquely qualified to address the challenges.

Sciarra said the county needs to invest in infrastructure and examine the budget. He said spending has increased by \$30

million since 2015.

Morey said the biggest challenge is getting residents and businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic, but responded to Sciarra's criticism by saying Cape May County has among the lowest tax rates in the state.

"We invested, since 2017, \$3.5 million into the bridge program that we just adopted a month or so ago," he said. "If we had removed that from the tax base, we would have actually had a fairly significant tax decrease."

Casey said the low tax rate is "really smoke and mirrors."

"We spend more than almost any county in the state of New Jersey. We spend double of what Atlantic County spends per resident. We spend almost double what Cumberland County spends per resident and we have bridges and roads that are falling down," she said.

Casey questioned whether building the new county jail was necessary, saying the county could have contracted within

another county like Cumberland County does. Casey said she would look at spending with a "lawyer's eye."

"When we look at taxes per resident, it just basically says all the second homeowners don't matter," Morey said in rebuttal. "The fact that they are building second homes and contributing to this economy doesn't really matter at all because the bottom line of it is we all pay taxes and

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Skeleton crew

This group of swashbucklers was ready to sail from the front yard of a home in the 600 block of Sunset Boulevard on a rainy Friday in Lower Township.

More extensive repairs needed

Foster House contractor finds ways to keep cost the same

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Foster House is apparently in worse shape than restoration experts believed when they determined the scope of work needed to restore the historic structure on Bayshore Road.

That's the bad news. The good news is additional repairs will not raise the construction costs.

Lower Township Council awarded a \$394,000 construction contract Aug. 3 to Del-Tech.

In a letter from historical architect Michael Calafati to Lower Township purchasing agent Margaret Vitelli, he said the degree of damage to the building's structural wood, heavy-timber frame and wood siding was greater than anticipated.

"Actual field review of conditions of the framing and siding became possible only recently with



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

After removing the asbestos siding, a historical engineer found that the Foster House, built in 1727 and remodeled in 1826, will need more extensive repairs than originally believed. The extra work will not cost the township more money, though.

the removal of the home's asbestos siding," he stated. "A certain degree of repair and replacement were expected and included in the

contact documents, namely a defined quantity of siding to be replaced and the number of heavy timbers to be replaced or repaired

(specifically rafters and rafter sills to be replaced or repaired.)"

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Mail-in election labor-intensive, costly to county

Tens of thousands of ballots must be prepared, delivered, sorted, counted upon return

By CRAIG D. SCHENCK
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — The Cape May County Clerk's Office and Board of Elections are working overtime to handle the unprecedented vote-by-mail election balloting forced by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Cape May County Clerk Rita Fulginiti said Oct. 15 that her office is busy dealing with a large number of people seeking information via email and telephone about the voting process, dropping ballots off or requesting replacement ballots.

Under an executive order from Gov. Phil Murphy, every county clerk's office is responsible for creating and mailing out ballots to every active registered voter this year.

Fulginiti said her office sent out 71,332 ballots for the general election, far exceeding the number in a regular year.

"In a normal year we would be sending out 6,000 vote-by-mail ballots. It would be a small percentage of votes cast and people would be voting at the polls. This is not normal, but this is what it is," Fulginiti said.

She said she doesn't think the process is achieving what it was meant to — keeping people away from one another to help stop the spread of the coronavirus.

"My lobby is just a sea of people and we're serving them, but in a lot of ways it would be much more efficient to let people mask up and go to a poll — and let's hope that that happens next year," Fulginiti said.

She also said many people are unhappy with the process and showing it.

"Voters that are upset about the process are verbally taking it out on my staff," she said. "We

are guiding them according to the rules and regs. We didn't make up the rules and regs, and I get it that people are upset and unhappy about the method of voting in the machine, and I get that, but we're here to serve and serve according to the law and it does no good to speak angrily to my staff who are here to do a job."

Voters, she said, are not familiar with the process, causing confusion and a lot of inquiries.

"It's just driving people to my office because they are not used to voting by mail. It's a different process. They spoil a ballot or they seal an envelope before they are ready, so they are coming in here in droves to get replacement envelopes, to get replacement ballots because they spoiled a piece of the process and they want to make sure their vote counts," Fulginiti said.

The clerk said the process is time-consuming and labor-intensive.

"When you think about mailing 71,000 pieces of mail — in the primary you've got more than 250 different ballots, and in this election you've got 23 different ballots to mail. You want to make sure that the voter gets the right ballot. There is a lot of labor in that — and then when they come back, of course they are checked in and the signatures are matched against the voter registration system and so the process does take a long time."

She said workers with the Board of Elections look at the signature on every ballot and check it against the statewide voter registration system.

"They are returned to the Board of Elections and it is

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To schedule an appointment with Dr. Bui contact Shore Physicians Group's Orthopaedic Surgery at 609-365-6280 or visit ShorePhysiciansGroup.com

