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166th YEAR NO. 7 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2020 \$1.00

Council bickers but no action on a safety building

Issue may have to go to public referendum

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Due to a stalemate on City Council, the question of construction of new public safety building may go to voter referendum as early as May or as late as November.

During a council meeting Feb. 4, city solicitor Frank Corrado said the city has two options for a bond to finance construction of a public safety building involving a voter referendum on the issue. He said a bond ordinance would total \$15 million.

One option would be to have an effective date provision in the enabling ordinance stating the bond ordinance would take effect only if approved by a binding referendum that would be held subsequent to the adoption of the ordinance, he said.

"Under the statute, that binding referendum could only be held in November at the general election," he said.

Under option two, the ordinance would state it would take effect within 20

days after passage only if a sufficient number of legal voters — 15 percent of the total who voted in the last general Assembly election — sign and submit to the clerk a petition calling for a binding referendum, Corrado said.

"Under that version of the ordinance, if such a petition were submitted within 20 days, the referendum could be held at a special election, which would occur somewhere between 60 and 90 days after the submission of the petition to the city clerk," he said.

Corrado said in both cases, the bond ordinance could be introduced by a simple majority vote but could be approved only by a minimum of a 4-1 vote of council. Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan said a special election would incur cost to the city.

Corrado said the referendum question would ask voters if they approve a bond ordinance for a new public safety building.

Deputy Mayor Patricia Hendricks said looking out

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The Fisherman's Memorial on Cape May Harbor needs a dedicated organization for maintenance, according to the Cape May Municipal Buildings and Properties Committee.

Cast Fisherman's Memorial a line, Cape May building committee says

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Fisherman's Memorial, a tribute to commercial fishermen lost at sea, needs a permanent solution to assure its upkeep, according to a city committee. The memorial includes a wall of names, benches and a statue of a woman and child looking out to sea for their lost loved one.

On Feb. 4, Bob Elwell, chairman of the city's Municipal Buildings and Properties Advisory Committee, said there were complaints about the condition of the memorial last year. A flag was not flying at the site due to the absence of a rope on the flagpole, he said.

Elwell said the city Public Works Department and the Fire Department put a new rope on the flagpole.

"That generated the concern of this committee of who was taking care of it, because at one time there was a board of trustees that had the job of taking care of that area," he said.

The original board of trustees was comprised of commercial fishermen

both working and retired, Elwell said. Committee member Larry Reed said he spoke with former City Manager Neil Young and new City Manager Jerry Inderwies about who was holding funds for maintenance of the memorial. He said the group Cape May County Fisherman's Memorial Inc. was established about 20 years ago.

Reed said the group is defunct. He said City Council passed a resolution in 2004 to take over responsibility for the memorial. He said the city receives about \$70 a year from a trust for the upkeep.

Nature Center of Cape May Director Gretchen Whitman said she became involved with the memorial around 2007 when the first Harborfest was held. During 2008's Harborfest, a blessing of the waters was held at the memorial.

Whitman said at the time of the first Harborfest, Bayshore Landscaping donated its services to clean up the area around the memorial. She said for the past 12 years, when the Nature Center has conducted cleanups of the harbor and beach sweeps twice a year, it gets U.S. Coast Guard recruits and

community members to weed and pick up trash at the memorial.

Landscapers donated their services and may have donated flowers and materials, Whitman said. During the past 12 years, the city cut down Bradford pear trees that were dying at the site and planted magnolias and crepe myrtles, she said.

Last year, the city rearranged some of the benches and did landscaping, Whitman said.

She said an Eagle Scout project in conjunction with the Nature Center created storage racks for kayaks. In the past, kayaks were illegally locked to trees around the memorial.

Whitman proposed resurrecting the blessing of the waters, noting the ceremony drew more than 100 persons to the memorial. She said a donation jar for upkeep of the memorial and information on how to make a donation could be available at the ceremony.

Elwell suggested setting up a new board of trustees for the memorial and involving the commercial fishing industry. Reed suggested City Council be approached about setting up a new board of trustees.

Lower declares itself Second Amendment sanctuary community

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Township Council declared Lower Township a "Second Amendment lawful gun owner sanctuary" in a unanimously approved resolution Feb. 3.

The resolution notes the U.S. Constitution states "a well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed, an individual right affirmed by the Supreme Court."

Council's resolution states that legislation introduced in the state Legislature and introduced in the current session of Congress could infringe on the rights of law-abiding residents to keep and bear arms as guaranteed by the Second Amendment, and Lower Township is concerned about the passage of any bill containing language that could be interpreted as infringing on the rights of citizens of the township

to keep and bear arms. It also expresses concerns of a beginning of a "slippery slope" of restrictions on the Second Amendment rights of township residents.

The resolution states the township "desires to express its intent to stand as a sanctuary municipality for Second Amendment rights and to oppose within the limits of the Constitution of the United States any efforts to unconstitutionally restrict such rights and to use such legal means at its disposal to protect the right of citizens to keep and bear arms including through legal action, the power of appropriation of public funds and the right to petition for redress of grievances."

Mayor Frank Sippel said he is a strong supporter of the Second Amendment.

"Even though this resolution is symbolic, I think it's important that the public understands what their elected officials stand for when it comes to the Second

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City won't help fund Sewell Tract fight

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — With a deadlocked vote, council rejected a request from Concerned Citizens for Sewell Tract Preservation to contribute to current litigation expenses.

On Feb. 4, Councilman Zack Mull-ock and Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan voted against the request, while Mayor Chuck Lear and Councilman Shaine Meier voted for the resolution. Deputy Mayor Patricia Hendricks abstained from the vote since she is married to Charles Hendricks, president of

Concerned Citizens for Sewell Tract Preservation.

Charles Hendricks said the organization made a change from its original request, adding \$20,000 for a total of \$85,000 because the timeframe has doubled and more depositions must be taken.

Sheehan said she was against all development of the Sewell Tract but said the city should not be providing funding to a private organization.

"The city should be doing it themselves," she said.

Sheehan said she believed residents were not aware of how the lawsuit was

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structured. She said it was the state Department of Environmental Protection v. East Cape May Associates and Concerned Citizens.

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