

North Cape May man complains of rusty, stinky water

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — North Cape May resident Ralph Genovese approached Lower Township Council with complaints about the quality of water he is receiving at his home from the Lower Township Utilities Authority (MUA). He said the water has stained his laundry orange and brown. He said at times the water reeks of chlorine.

"I don't know what's in there; it's killing a house plant I've had 50 years, a dieffenbachia. It's turning it brown," Genovese said. He said the water feels greasy. "It's getting out of hand," Genovese said. "It goes from ruining your blankets that are white. Take them out and they are orange as can be. You can't get it out, you have to throw it out and buy new." The township should look

into the matter, he said, and residents should not have to fear what is coming out of their faucets. Mayor Frank Sippel said no other members of the public have complained about water quality at council meetings. Township Manager Mike Laffey said he has had complaint calls when lines are being flushed in Villas. He suggested Genovese attend a meeting of the Lower Township MUA Board

of Commissioners, which is held the first Wednesday of each month. Laffey said he would contact MUA's Executive Director Stephen Blankenship. Blankenship told the Star and Wave Genovese stopped by the MUA meeting later that night. "That part of our water system is like the oldest part. That was built by a developer prior to the MUA being formed, from what I understand, and that was operated as a private water company," Blankenship said. "Then when the MUA was formed, sometime after that, the MUA took over that system." He said the MUA has

some issues with deposits such as iron collecting in water mains. The system is flushed twice per year, which produces the most complaints because it stirs up the system. He said the first phase of a 10-year, \$32 million water main and service replacement project is expected to start at the beginning of next year. "We have the design almost done, and so we'll be going out to bid probably by the end of the year and hope to start construction on the first phase," Blankenship said. In addition, the MUA is considering a \$6 million filtration system that would help with quality issues as

it relates to iron, he said. Blankenship said when the MUA receives complaints, it typically flushes the system to clear it. When a fire hydrant is used to fight a fire, it can change patterns in the water system and stir up sediment. A system flushing is scheduled for the beginning of October, he said. MUA tests for pH and chlorine residuals daily, Blankenship said. He said recent testing in the homeowner's area showed the chlorine residual down to .2 or .3, which is on the low side since .4 is permitted. Blankenship said the MUA would sample water from Genovese's house.

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Recycling cans line streets

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On Tuesdays, the route goes from Ocean Street to Madison Avenue, Beach Avenue to Lafayette Street and Broad Street. Wednesday recycling pick ups operate from Cape May Avenue to Lafayette Street, Madison Avenue to the Yacht Avenue, he said. On Thursdays, the route runs from Beach Avenue to Cape May Avenue, Madison Avenue to Pittsburgh Avenue. "Fridays are everything up top," Prusinski said. He said he considers any property holding a mercantile license to be commercial.

Mayor Zack Mullock said they probably did not want to class homes available for rent as commercial. Prusinski said Cape May has many Airbnb rentals which he considers single-family homes. Looking over the spreadsheet, Mullock said he saw one business used 36 32-gallon cans on a recycling day. Councilman Shaine Meier said the city was receiving complaints about that location, which was not disclosed. "When you're getting to 36 cans, whatever they may be, that is when that business should have recycling pick up," Mullock said.

Prusinski said if the city placed a commercial limit of 384 gallons of recycling, the business in question would exceed the limit by 612 gallons. "That one stop alone is putting out almost 1,000 gallons of recycling. That's not counting cardboard, that's just cans," he said. Dietrich said the city had to draw a line of when it was the responsibility of the municipality to pick up recycling and when it becomes a commercial business obligation "because they collect so much, that it's really not incumbent on the city to pick it up." The city's two recycling trucks can hold as much as 10 tons. Two Mondays ago, a truck had to be taken to the transfer station in Burlington at midday to dump 8.14 tons before the route was completed, according to Prusinski. The day of the meeting, Public Works picked up 15 tons of recycling, he said. The city is not charged to dump recycling at the county Municipal Utilities Authority's facilities. Prusinski said the cost to the city was in labor and fuel, and potential injuries, McDade added.

McDade said properties where major renovations were taking place put out large quantities of boxes for weeks on end. She suggested the city create a process for those undertaking major construction projects to notify the city of an expected large quantity of recycling. Prusinski suggested opening the recycling facility on Canning House Lane on Wednesdays year-round. Mullock said council was asking the city solicitor to write an ordinance amendment for the suggested recycling changes. Councilman Shaine Meier and McDade volunteered to work with Public Works and City Solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz to formulate an amendment to the city's solid waste code. During public comment, resident Jules Rauch said the Taxpayers Association of Cape May has discussed recycling. He offered a history lesson noting until January 2017, commercial businesses were required to contract with a hauler for pickup. "Beginning on Jan. 1, 2017, with no discussion from City Council with no budgets, with no authorization, no resolution, the collection of commercial businesses was done free," he said. "I think it is imperative that you take a look at this from a real

perspective point. The city has changed; we're now 10 to 12 months a year. In the last five to six years we have seen a change they tell me from 400 to 800 houses that are now being rented. We know that many of them are big houses." Rauch recommended businesses pay for contracted recycling from a hauler. He said the issue was not trash cans but dealing with everything businesses place on the sidewalk for recycling. "I don't think it's fair to expect our Public Works frankly to be dealing with that issue," he said. He said a "monstrous container" filled with bottles was too heavy to lift. Rauch said he was curious as to how many Public Works employees were injured collecting recycling. The Joint Insurance Fund has recommended to all of its members they do not participate in trash or recycling collection, he said. Mullock said it was ridiculous to see 30 cans of recycling lined up on the sidewalk, something that businesses should be paying to have collected. Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee Chairman Dennis Crowley said collecting recycling was "sold to the city as a way to pay for itself." "It was supposed to generate revenue enough to cover all of its costs and even make some profit for the city, and that simply is not happening," he said. "The revenue has never been there for recycling. There is no market for recycling and the city is now incurring a significant annual cost to provide a service that frankly doesn't make any sense." He noted residents arrange for their own trash collection. Crowley suggested the city consider eliminating the entire concept of recycling pickup since it brings in no revenue and costs the city money.

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