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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Meier submits petitions

Councilman Shaine Meier submits petitions Sept. 6 to run for re-election to Deputy City Clerk Emily Dillon. Meier first was elected to council in 2014 and re-elected in 2018. He was appointed deputy mayor in 2017 and served two terms in that post. Meier served on the Lafayette Street Park Advisory Committee and worked to bring sidewalks to Elmira Street. He is a lifelong resident of Cape May.

Solution sought for flooding on Fourth in West Cape May

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Pacific Avenue resident Courtney Grugeon asked commissioners if a flooding issue on Fourth Avenue could be addressed.

At an Aug. 24 Borough Commission meeting, she said she moved into the neighborhood 18 months ago and was surprised the flooding has been found to be acceptable for the past 15 to 20 years.

"I've spoken to multiple neighbors, they've noted that throughout the years that we have formally complained," Grugeon said.

She asked what the borough could do to remedy the flooding issue.

"My understanding from calling the borough is there is some engineering that needs to potentially take place on that street," Grugeon said. "I understand that this may need to be something that's budgeted

or considered over the years but as a new resident, I don't think it's acceptable for the level of flooding that's happening on my property."

Deputy Mayor Peter Burke said the flooding has been present for many decades. He said water seems to be draining from the street more rapidly than in the past.

Grugeon said the flooding problem could possibly be eased by enlarging stormwater pipes.

Mayor Carol Sabo said a stormwater pipe was replaced on Sees Alley three weeks ago. Grugeon asked if mayor anticipated the new pipe on Sees Alley would fix flooding on Fourth Avenue.

"We live in an area that is 6 or 7 feet above flood level, you're probably lower, actually," Sabo said. "No, it's not going to fix the problem, we have climate change and sea level rise, we have heavy torrential rain that comes in shorter periods of time."

She said the first order of business of the Public Works Department after a heavy rain is to clean out storm sewers. Sabo said the water generally disappears within an hour or two.

Grugeon said she cleaned out storm sewers in front of her home. She said her neighbor has cleaned the storm sewer in their block at 4 a.m. when necessary.

Burke said the storm sewer in the middle of the block between Atlantic and Pacific avenues drains into wetlands across the street from Grugeon's house and does not drain into the ocean. He said Second Avenue at Pacific Avenue has had a drainage problem that has shown some improvement due to work completed by the borough.

"I know people who used to ride boats on Fourth Avenue between Broadway and Atlantic, decades and decades and decades ago when there has been a particular storm that has put in so much water in such a short amount of time, you could actually go in a boat or canoe," Burke said.

Grugeon said she had not seen this type of flooding

in a shore town and her neighbors spoke to an engineer who stated the pipes installed on Fourth Street 20 years ago were not large enough to remove the necessary volume of water. She said she installed drainage in the crawl space of her house, two sump pumps and a French drain to mitigate any water issues on her property.

The water table seems to be higher and the flooding on Fourth Avenue seems to exceed flooding on other streets in the borough, Grugeon said.

"I know that there is always going to be some level of water, but the water is literally up to my knees, if floods half of my property," she said. "I just put a brand-new gravel patio on my property, it's flooding the furniture."

A severe storm could flood multiple crawl spaces of homes on Fourth Avenue, Grugeon said. Water has been coming up to porches of houses on the street, she said.

Commissioner Dan Kurkowski said commissioners would have the borough engineer determine if there is a solution to the flooding on Fourth Avenue.

Burke said the borough has many more houses than 20 years ago, displacing areas where water sat in the past. He said the state Department of Environmental Protection has allowed houses to be constructed on lots where building was not permitted in the past.

Grugeon said the borough remediated some flooding issues on Second Avenue.

Borough engineer Anthony Chadwell, of Remington Vernick, said he served several coastal towns that experienced flooding including Wildwood, West Wildwood, and North Cape May.

Kurkowski asked Chadwell to determine the circumference of the stormwater pipe near Fourth and Pacific avenues and compare it to other pipes in the borough.

Burke said Fourth Avenue is a county-owned road.

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