

Tensions rise during West Cape reorganization meeting

By **JULIA DiGERONIMO**
For the Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Tensions arose as the Board of Commissioners reorganized Jan. 8. The seats on the board remain the same going into 2025, so the board followed a regular meeting structure. Mayor Carol Sabo, Deputy Mayor George Dick and Commission-

er Giacomo Antonicello reviewed 43 resolutions. The discontent began when Antonicello requested that each resolution be read out by its full title. That was met with discourse because solicitor Frank Corrado said he believed it was unnecessary. That was the first of many disputes between the board members, who disagreed with each other multiple times during the

meeting. Dick thanked the town for handling the snowstorm that passed through southern New Jersey last week. “I appreciate the work they did. They were out there all day yesterday and today. Thanks a lot for the hard work,” Dick said. New Jersey was under a state of emergency following a snowstorm Jan. 6. The National Weather Ser-

vice reported Cape May County received about 5 inches of snow. “There’s so much impact on what this weather does to the people and on the community,” Antonicello said. “You guys are doing a great job keeping our roads clean and safe.” The meeting ended with a public discussion. More than one resident expressed dissatisfaction with how the commissioners

conducted themselves during the meeting. One complaint was about the lack of cohesion among the board and how that can lead to miscommunication and unproductive meetings. The final resident inquired about the reinstating of the mayor and why the public does not get a formal say on who is elected for the position.

District 1 legislators

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issue,” McClellan said. “I think protecting the climate is something that we all need to do together in a nonpartisan way and fight for our lives.” While the legislators actively work to pass environmental policy, they want the room to make decisions on a local level. “One of the biggest issues is the NJ PACT,” Simonsen said. “We met with the commissioner of DEP last week. Antwan and I, along with Sen. Testa, represent the bayshore communities as well as the oceanside communities of Cape May County.”

Environmental policy is on McClellan and Simonsen’s agenda entering the new year, but they question parts of the Department of Environmental Protection’s New Jersey Protecting Against Climate Threats (NJPACT) and Resilient Environmental and Landscapes (REAL) proposals that would require elevated first floors and expanded flood inundation zones for new construction and properties that undergo significant renovation.

Key components to the proposed regulations include adjusting coastal flood hazard areas to account for rising sea levels and storm surge, which would extend jurisdictional area further inland and require higher first-floor elevations or flood-proofing for buildings as well as elevated roadways.

“This NJPACT is pretty extreme,” Simonsen said. “It’s just going to be very costly for our communities anywhere near the water.”

Testa and the assemblymen believe that the best way to combat the climate is direct action made at a local level.

“We know that climate change is real,” McClellan said. “We’re not going to pretend that it’s not, so allow us to make the incremental adjustments that need to be made to secure not only our way of life but to secure our environment and make sure that it’s good.”

Gubernatorial, Assembly election

An election is held every odd year in the Assembly and they will be running for a fourth term

in November, adding a campaign and being re-elected to their list of priorities.

“We’re only two-year terms,” Simonsen said. “The first year you’re in office, you’re trying to figure everything out, and the second half of the term you’re back running again. This is the third term we’ll be completing and we look forward to a fourth.”

After five years together, they’re proud of the relationship they’ve formed with others in the chamber and said regardless of their party, find them an integral part of working for the people.

“The things we’ve done for the people will carry over,” Simonsen said. “The longevity helps us and now we can get more done because we have established relationships.”

This year also includes the gubernatorial election. Gov. Phil Murphy is ineligible to run again after his two consecutive terms. There already are more than a dozen potential candidates on the Democratic and Republican sides.

“This will be our first term going in with a new governor,” McClellan said. “The hope is that the governor we select will be south Jersey-focused because we know how important South Jersey is, not only to us but to the entire state.”

A new governor on the horizon leaves the legislators hoping for someone who will make the region a priority.

They say southern New Jersey has been neglected and not provided what was needed to fund the striving tourist region.

“Invest in the fact that our tourism is the best tourism, not only in the state but probably in the country,” McClellan said. “Realistically, the things that Cape May is doing, with the amount of investment they don’t receive from the state, is uncharted.”

Testa is a member of the Senate Budget Appropriations Committee and sees where the money is divested.

“The governor and their budget is going to have to be intellectually honest,” he said. “You look at Cape May County, and it’s the number two county for tourism tax dollars, and so many of those tax dol-

lars go to Trenton and go into the general fund. I see all this money going to other jurisdictions.”

They said they are looking for a governor who gives local legislators the opportunity and room to make the decisions they know will be best for their district.

“Allow us to be us, and if we need your help, then work with us as opposed to trying to demand and tell us what we should be doing,” McClellan said. “We can lead that charge with Sen. Testa with south

Jersey in the forefront.” Testa shared the same sentiments about prioritizing the region.

As co-chairman of the Manufacturing Caucus, Testa is invested in New Jersey’s merchandising market.

He believes it’s an opportunity to open up the job market and make it possible for New Jersey residents to have more livable wages.

“I’ve been trying to highlight manufacturers in New Jersey and what the economic multiplier

is,” he said. “The employment opportunities are there for so many people, and they don’t know manufacturing has so much growth potential.”

The legislators are eager to put their best foot forward with the possibility of a fourth term on the horizon.

“The people know us at this point,” Testa said. “The way we’ve gotten re-elected is we continue to work hard for our legislative district and represent everyone. We continue to put in the work and make south Jersey a priority.”

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Crest woman, 76, charged in fatal hit-and-run crash

WILDWOOD — Cape May County Prosecutor Jeffrey H. Sutherland and Wildwood Police Chief Joseph Murphy announced the arrest of Marylin Glenn, 76, of Wildwood Crest, in connection with a fatal hit-and-run accident Dec. 31. On Jan. 2, Glenn was charged with second-degree leaving the scene of a motor vehicle accident resulting in death and second-degree violation of a public law intended to protect public safety.

The charges stem from an investigation conducted by the Wildwood Police Department and the Cape May County Prosecutor’s Office into the fatal striking of a pedestrian, identified in the area of West Hand Avenue and Hudson Avenue in Wildwood. According to authorities, the investigation revealed that Glenn fled the scene of the accident but contacted law enforcement shortly afterward.

“Leaving the scene of an accident is not only unlawful but also undermines the principles of public safety and responsibility,” Sutherland said.

Glenn was initially lodged at the Cape May County Jail following her arrest but has been released on pre-trial monitoring pending further court proceedings.

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167 YEARS OLD • 1854-2022

CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE (ISSN 519-020)
Volume 171 Number 3

Published weekly by Sample Media, Inc.,
963 Lenape Drive, Lower Township, NJ 08204

Published Weekly (52 times a year)

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: By mail for \$47 a year; \$79 for two years; \$25 for six months. Periodical postage at Cape May Court House, N.J. and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to the Cape May Star and Wave, P.O. Box 2427, Cape May, N.J. 08204.