

West Cape seeks LOSAP for volunteer firefighters

By RACHEL SHUBIN
Special to the Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Borough Commissioners are considering implementing a Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP) for the West Cape May Volunteer Fire Company.

"We brought it up once before and it's something I've discussed with the Volunteer Fire Company program, to award volunteer firefighters for their service to our community," Mayor Carol Sabo said at meeting Jan. 7.

The process requires several steps, including an ordinance and a referendum before voters. Implementation of LOSAP would be planned for 2021.

"It's a minimal financial commitment for someone who participates and gives their all for every call," Sabo said. "We have a very professional company and I just feel like it's the least we can do at this point."

Solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said the statutes provide for a framework of flexibility for the local government to craft the program.

Volunteer firefighters would be eligible to participate upon commencement of performance, he said.

"There is an annual contribution and a minimum," Gillin-Schwartz said. "If you establish the program for \$100 to \$1,050 max under the statute, you can go up to the top or you can do 5 percent increases."

Sabo said there are no budgetary constraints this year but providing the benefit would need to be budgeted for in the 2021 budget.

"A lot of municipalities have a point system, which is something for consideration," Gillin-

Schwartz said. "Based on the amount of points for the year, they earn points for calls, events and trainings."

Gillin-Schwartz said awards can be retroactively awarded, with limits of up to 10 years.

"You can come up with what is an appropriate measure to come up with that benefit," Gillin-Schwartz said.

Deputy Mayor Peter Burke said the program could bring in more members to the department.

Cape May Police Chief Anthony Marino updated the commission on a new police officer who will be graduating the police academy and already went through the hiring process.

"We are still working on current hiring to prevent the situation we're in now, being short-handed," Marino said. "We're trying to hire prior to retiring."

Marino said recent complaints through a local Facebook page about speeding on Stimpson Lane were addressed by the department.

"We had direct patrols running radar and enforcing as much as we can," Marino said. "We encourage the commission to let us know any time you get a complaint."

The Cape May Police Department received a grant it applied for last year through the Wawa Heroes Program.

"We received a grant for \$8,500, which we are using to purchase new load-bearing vest carriers," Marino said. "Many studies show that the 22 to 25 pounds of gear our officers wear on a daily basis is bad for their physical health."

Marino said the gear is worn on a belt around officers' waists, which is dif-

ficult on the hips and back.

"There is research done that vest carrying the load on shoulders prevents many injuries which would cause the department to lose an officer to a back injury," Marino said. "We've had officers retire due to back injuries."

The vests are due in to the police department in the next four to five months, as they were custom ordered, he said.

"The vest is a different color than our uniform, some people construe it as a military look but it is to protect our officers," Marino said. "It is a health preventative measure more than anything else."

Sabo said the borough had a tremendous year of progress.

"We completed the municipal parking lot, various street improvements and worked on safety for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, thanks to our engineer," Sabo said. "I do continue to press the county to address the roundabout issue and county thoroughfares that need attention."

Sabo said she encourages residents to reach out to the county about any county projects.

"Thank you to our police department for the good work and representation, the Environmental Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, borough employees and Volunteer Fire Department," Sabo said. "I continue to be impressed for the level of service we get and I will do everything we can to support them and make them feel as valued as possible."

Burke reminded residents the leaf pick up schedule was changed to Mondays.

Legislative election campaign spending least in past decade

By ERIC AVEDESIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

Spending on the 2019 state legislative election was the lowest in a decade despite a price tag of nearly \$25 million to fill a state Senate seat and 80 state Assembly seats, according to reports from the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Candidates spent \$19 million on the general election while independent special interest groups sank another \$5.9 million into the elections, which took place Nov. 5.

Republicans made gains despite the fact that Democratic candidates spent three times more statewide on the general election — \$12.2 million versus \$4.8 million.

In the First Legislative District, which encompasses Cape May County, candidates spent \$1.8 million, while independent groups spent \$1.07 million, for a total of \$2.9 million.

Republican Assembly candidates Erik Simonsen and Antwan McClellan, under the committee Friends of Simonsen and McClellan, reported receiving \$105,959, according to their 20-day post-election report filed Nov. 27.

Of that, \$65,385 was raised from monetary contributions in excess of \$300, while \$40,273 was raised from in-kind contributions of more than \$300.

Contributors included Keith Laudman of Fisherman's Wharf in Cape May with \$2,600; Robert Belasco of Wildwood Crest with \$1,000; the Cape May County RRO of Wildwood gave \$5,000; Leon Costello of Ford Scott & Associates LLC of Ocean City gave \$2,000; Eustace Mita of Chester, Pa., gave \$2,000; Ernest Utsch of Cape May gave \$500; Wil-

Cape May gave \$1,000; and Citizens for ICE/Neighbor Research & Media of Rodanthe, N.C., donated \$25,246.

Simonsen and McClellan's campaign spent \$57,244, according to the report. Expenditures included \$8,000 to Just Right TV for media production, \$95 to Lowe's for billboards and lawn signs; \$433 to Rio Station Restaurant in Rio Grande for a fundraising dinner; and \$33 to iHop in Vineland for food for travel related to a radio program.

Friends of Simonsen and McClellan's 11-day pre-election report, filed Oct. 28, listed total contributions of \$22,855, of which \$19,685 were contributions in excess of \$300, and \$3,170 on in-kind contributions in excess of \$300. Simonsen and McClellan's campaign raised a cumulative of \$63,713 11 days before the election, according to the report.

Donors listed in the 11-day pre-election report included Rebecca Albertson of Ocean City, who donated \$500; \$1,000 from attorney Paul Baldini of Wildwood; \$500 from Brian Bradley of Marmora; \$9,735 from a fundraiser; \$1,000 from David Richter for Congress; \$1,000 from Cape May County Freeholder and Sea Isle City Mayor Leonard Desiderio; \$1,000 from Ocean City Mayor Jay Gillian; \$5,200 from the GOPAC Election Fund of Arlington, Va.; \$500 from Scott Halliday of Ocean City; \$500 from Gary and Denise Jessel of Ocean City; \$1,000 from Dallas Krapf of Exton, Pa.; \$500 from John L. Linnington III of Rio Grande; \$500 from Ocean City Councilman Peter Madden; \$1,000 from Remington & Vernick Engineers of Haddonfield; \$1,000 from Thornton and Hayes of Freeholder in Ocean City.

In-kind contributions

listed were \$3,170 from the Republican State Committee in Trenton.

Democrat incumbents Bruce Land and Matt Milam filed separate campaign contribution reports.

Land's 11-day pre-election report listed \$14,666 raised with \$600 from contributions of \$300 or less and \$14,066 in contributions in excess of \$300.

Donors listed on the report who contributed donations in excess of \$300 include \$1,000 from Robert Balicki of Millville; \$8,200 from the Election Fund of Craig Coughlin of Fords; \$3,000 from the JEB PAC State Fund of Cranford; \$1,000 from Daniel Levecchia from Cape May Foods LLC of Millville; and \$866 from NAIOP Developers Political Action Committee of New Brunswick.

Land's campaign spent \$13,293, according to the 11-day pre-election report; expenditures listed are \$36 in bank charges.

According to Land's 20-day post-election report filed Dec. 2, the candidate raised a total of \$13,800 for his re-election campaign but no contributions were reported from 11 days before the election.

Milam's 11-day pre-election report, filed Oct. 25, lists \$13,566 raised in the campaign, with \$500 from contributions of \$300 or less, and \$13,066 in contributions in excess of \$300.

No donor information was provided in the report.

Milam's 20-day post-election report filed Nov. 25, listed \$12,700 in total receipts, with \$500 in contributions of \$300 or less and \$12,200 in contributions in excess of \$300.

Milam's campaign spent \$12,725, according to the report, with \$45 in bank charges the only expenditures listed.

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