

Cape May Star and Wave



160TH YEAR NO. 42 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2014 75¢



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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FAMILY CREATES HABITAT FOR BUTTERFLIES

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Police station, MUA major issues in Lower Twp. election

Regular Republican organization accuses Neville of wrongdoing. Page A2

By **MARY LINEHAN**
Special to the Star and Wave
and **JACK FICHTER**
Cape May Star and Wave

LOWER TOWNSHIP — Seven men are vying for three seats on Township Council in the Nov. 4 general election.

Their respective positions are most clearly defined by two issues: the township's proposed takeover of the Lower

Township Municipal Utilities Authority (MUA), which was calculated to be worth nearly \$1 million annually in savings for ratepayers; and whether a new public safety building should be built to replace the aging World War II-era building that presently houses the township's police and municipal court.

The Republican slate of candidates comprises incumbents

Erik Simonsen (Ward 3) and Thomas Conrad (Ward 1), and local fire district official Dave Perry (Ward 2). The three will face off against an "Independents for Lower" ticket that includes veterans activist Johnnie Walker in Ward 1, incumbent Jim Neville in Ward 2 and former Councilman Glenn Douglass in Ward 3. Joseph R. Will, listed on the ballot as the "Time for Change" candidate,

will also challenge in Ward 1. The Star and Wave has been unable to contact Will.

In terms of recent history, Simonsen is serving the remainder of Douglass' term in Ward 3, at the behest of the Lower Township Regular Republican Organization. Douglass, because of a glitch in state law, was required to resign the council seat in 2013 in order to retire from his state

job with the Department of Corrections and begin collecting his pension.

Simonsen had resigned from his Ward 2 council seat in December 2011 after buying a home in Ward 3; former Mayor Walt Craig was named to finish the term by the Lower Republicans. Craig lost the seat in November 2012 to Neville.

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Beacons of the past



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Ben Franklin impersonator Ward Larkin visited the original lens of the Cape May Lighthouse displayed at the Museum of Cape May County during the Mitten Festival on Oct. 11. The event celebrated the entrepreneurial spirit of Cape May County women who knitted and sold mittens as a cottage industry in the pre-Revolutionary War years. Mittens were tied with white cedar lumber as the county's third-most-profitable export.

Cape May leaders see court battle as necessary step in school-funds fight

By **JACK FICHTER**
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council met with special attorney Vito Gagliardi in closed session Oct. 7 to discuss its next steps in changing the funding formula with the Lower Cape May Regional School District following a Dec. 9 special election.

Deputy Mayor Jack Wichterman said the city was aware it would not win the special election with a ballot question asking whether Cape May should withdraw from the school district. He acknowledged Lower Township has more than 12,000 voters and Cape May has just 1,800.

"It's just a step we have to take before we end up in the court system," he said.

The matter of who should pay for the Dec. 9 special election went to court.

"Once again our special attorney, whom we have hired on the school funding formula problem, has prevailed in the court system," Wichterman said. "The cost of the special election will be borne, as he so ably pointed out to everybody all along, by the regional school."

Wichterman said Cape May offered to pay 35 percent of the

cost of the special election, the same percentage the city pays Lower Cape May Regional in school taxes, if Lower Township would pay 58 percent of the cost, the same portion it pays to fund the school district. He said West Cape May was asked to pay 7 percent of the cost.

"They both declined, they didn't want to pay a nickel," Wichterman said.

He said Gagliardi had pointed out that historically school districts pay for special school elections. Judge Julio Mendez concurred with Gagliardi.

Wichterman said it was a shame the matter went to court with additional money expended by the three sending district "because they don't listen to us."

"We hired him because this gentleman knows what he is doing," he said. "He's had done this before."

Wichterman asked residents to vote in the Dec. 9 special election. He said legally, council could not ask voters to vote "one way or another."

During public comment, former Mayor Jerry Gaffney asked what the next step would be for the city if voters reject Cape May leaving the regional

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Restored Fishing Creek School reopens

By **BETTY WUND**
Special to the Star and Wave

VILLAS — The historic Fishing Creek School on Bayshore Road was re-dedicated at a grand opening Oct. 12.

Built in 1888 by Civil War veterans, the one-room schoolhouse has been preserved and restored with elements of its original use until 1925.

The imprint of the Leckey family, which owned the building for 65 years, has also been preserved. Lower Township Deputy Mayor Norris Clark, master of ceremonies at the opening, recapped some of the history of the school. He also

focused on the change of use of the building in 1927.

"The reason communities came together was to take care of the next generation. They wanted to give them an education and values," Clark said. "It was really the invention of the school bus which changed education in America. The schools consolidated and everyone got on school buses and went to a bigger school. School districts were formed and one-room schoolhouses went out of favor and they were put up for auction."

Marion and Tom Leckey were in attendance with their nieces Laura Babbish and Sue

Kellen. They recalled the family history of how Grandma Leckey paid \$500 for the building in 1927. Two of the Leckey brothers turned it over to the state in 2002 so it would be preserved. The state declared it a National Historic Landmark and Lower Township signed a 20-year lease to take responsibility for the building.

Many of the decorations for Sunday's event were put up by Babbish, a member of the Friends of the Fishing Creek School, and Kellen. She remembers spending summers in the house, walking to the

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Betty Wund/Special to the CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The historic Fishing Creek School in Villas, which was built in 1888 and used as a one-room schoolhouse until 1925, has been restored and now will be used for early childhood development education by the Lower Township Elementary School District.

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