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Transparency put to the test

Parking, surf zone, ramp at post office topics at town hall

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

CAPE MAY — The city's new administration held its first town hall meeting March 29 in Convention Hall, covering topics from surf zone injuries to a ramp for the city's post office.

Mayor Chuck Lear said the town meeting was an integral part of "open, honest exchanges" the administration planned to encourage. He said the city's search committee for a city manager received more than 40 resumes. Lear said the city was close to making a decision on the hiring of a new city manager.

On the topic of constructing a parking garage to ease the city's lack of parking, Lear said no assumption should be made that council would earmark funds in the city's parking trust for demolishing buildings and constructing a parking garage.

"Nor is there any indication that was ever the intention of the prior City Council," he said. "I assure you I would recommend City Council take matters to a public referendum before making such major and far-reaching decisions without understanding the interests of our taxpayers."

Lear said the city and Center for Community Arts (CCA) were collaborating to secure support to complete the renovation and restoration of the Franklin Street School and gym to transform it into a community, arts, history and cultural center. He said the city hosted a meeting with its grants management consultant and CCA with the expectation of revising and updating the concept plan for the former school, the first step in applying for funding.

Deputy Mayor Shaine Meier said phase two of the Lafayette Street Park project would include restoration of basketball courts and the baseball field, funded by a \$1.5 million bond ordinance with projected funding of \$1 million from the city's open space fund and a \$500,000 Green Acres loan. He said phase three of the project extends from the baseball field to St. John Street and is funded through a \$1.1 million county open space grant. He said plans and funding sources for phase four were less defined

although it was envisioned to include walking paths through the Cape Island Creek meadows.

"City Council will continue to explore options for any needed tweaks that may be made within grant parameters," Meier said. "Council will also be developing more definitive phase four plans with, of course, input of the community."

He said a new swimming pool for Cape May City Elementary School should be completed by Aug. 10. The locker room will be upgraded, heat, air conditioning and filtration systems replaced and new skylights installed in the pool area. The project cost is \$1.6 million financed by a bond ordinance to be paid back over 10 years by the school.

Lear said one of the most important decisions council has made this year was to officially establish the Beach Safety Committee. Councilwoman Patricia Hendricks, a member of the committee, said the cornerstone of the beach safety program is public education.

"If swimmers and surfers are taking unacceptable risks, they should be helped to understand the importance of their own actions in keeping safe," Hendricks said.

She said a recent study in Delaware showed tourists had six times greater chance of surf zone injuries. Hendricks said in addition to distributing beach safety brochures, continuous loop videos would be run on the screen in Convention Hall as well as seeking airtime on local cable channels.

"We're going to move forward to try very hard to get some of our videos running in a loop within the hotel community here," she said.

Hendricks said a surf zone safety video would also be run at Movies on the Beach this summer.

Beach Safety Committee Chairman Dennis DeSatnick said he was concerned with proposed cuts from the Trump administration to the Army Corps of Engineers budget. He said the city was searching for a solution to the shore break in the surf zone.

DeSatnick said he had been in touch with the Army Corps and state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). He said he was

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Delaware River and Bay Authority Commissioner Shirley Wilson and Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders Director Gerald Thornton unveil a historical marker noting the establishment of a European settlement in 1631 that led to what is today Cape May County in 1692.

Marking history on cape

Plaque notes site of first European settlement in county

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

NORTH CAPE MAY — Officials from Lower Township, Cape May, the county, state and Delaware River and Bay Authority, along with the leadership of the Society of Colonial Wars in the State of New Jersey, gathered Friday, March 31, inside the Cape May-Lewes Ferry terminal to dedicate a marker commemorating the European Settlement of Cape May County. The settlement began in 1631 and led to the formal establishment of the county in 1692.

The European Settlement of Cape

May County was a significant event in the region's Colonial history. The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of New Jersey, which sponsored the production of the historic marker, wanted to ensure residents and visitors alike can appreciate the county's history. The dedication and unveiling of the historic marker is the first of many events that will celebrate Cape May County's 325th Anniversary.

DRBA Chief Operations Director Vince Meconi said the ferry terminal is very close to the original European settlement in Cape May County.

Lower Township Mayor Erik Simonsen acknowledged Town Bank

has been in existence for over 300 years.

"I always remember as an educator, if you don't research history, if you don't teach history, it will not exist," he said.

Gov. Robert Vivian of the Society of Colonial Wars in the State of New Jersey said the organization started in 1894 to help remember our early colonial history.

"We remember our ancestors who served in wars in America before the American Revolution," he said.

The organization supports preser-

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Tribute to a fallen flyer

Joseph Salvator, executive director of the Naval Air Station Wildwood Aviation Museum, commemorates the 42 aviators who lost their lives during World War II training missions at the base March 30 during a ceremony on the base marking 72 years since Ensign Andrew Hamilton's death. See story, more photos on A5

Lower OKs engineering funds for Beach Drive safety project

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

VILLAS — Despite objections from the public, Lower Township Council approved a \$175,420 professional services contract Monday with Mott MacDonald engineers for "Beach Drive pedestrian safety improvements."

The engineering work is in preparation for a project that includes beach modifications, curb, sidewalk and drainage improvements on the west side of Beach Drive from Lincoln to Fernwood, and outfall pipe replacement at Washington Boulevard from

Beach Drive to the outfall replaced in January 2013. Curb and handicap ramp improvements would be made on the east side of Beach Drive from Whittier to Emerson.

Township Hall had a standing-room-only crowd, with many homeowners speaking against the proposed project.

Township Council previously authorized Mott MacDonald to complete a field survey, design and preparation of permit plans necessary to acquire a Coastal Area Facilities Review Act (CAFRA) permit from the

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