

Lower evaluating, rating roads for repair needs

By **RACHEL SHUBIN**
Special to the Star and Wave

VILLAS — A bump in the road may slow down a car, but Lower Township has its foot on the gas to locate roads in need of repaving.

Engineer Mark Sray gave a presentation Monday on road surface evaluation for the township. Each road-block was given a numerical score based on its condition. The number is a scale of one to six, with one being the worst. Intersections were given scores in addition to roads.

The evaluation was conducted Feb. 6-21 by driving each road at a low speed and making assessments.

"There was qualitative judgment on cracks, patching, trenches, alligator cracking, potholes, exposure of aggregate and overall ride quality," Sray said.

Department of Public Works Superintendent Gary Douglass said it would take several months for the next step.

"We will receive a database from Mott MacDonald Engineering and go over the drainage and infrastructure issues that might change the scoring," Douglass said. "Paving of certain roads may be more of a priority if there are drainage issues. It is a good tool to start with

and these roads can be re-evaluated at any time."

Councilman David Perry reiterated to residents that the infrastructure of Lower Township is of importance to the council.

"Councilman Conrad and myself have made it a priority to make sure that our infrastructure gets reviewed and monitored," Perry said. "Instead of waiting until potholes get too big or whatever it may be, we try to get a hold of it and start a program with continued maintenance. This is a great start."

Township Manager Jim Ridgway stated council could look at individual wards and that there is enough money in the capital budget to move forward with repairs.

"It is a positive that we can move forward with immediate finances," Ridgway said.

Douglass urged council to consider putting a moratorium on street openings once they are repaved.

"What happens is you repave the streets and the utility companies come in to work on their services and we are back to patched-up streets," Douglass said. "Most places do a five-year moratorium."

Perry said he agreed with Douglass and urged council to do whatever it could do to

get a moratorium set.

"The roads are a priority for all of us up here," Mayor Erik Simonsen said.

Councilman Tom Conrad reminded residents that construction on Bayshore Road is ongoing.

"What you see now will last until April 23, when the road will be open with lane shifts as they start curbing work," Conrad said. "After April 23, they will start excavating and the road will be closed with detours. After April 30, they will start Bayshore from Wilde Avenue to Alabama Avenue. They will close one lane at a time and will be working with the fire department."

Douglass reported that the Beach Drive project was progressing and the construction crew had completed its interim deadline. Asphalt base is expected to be put down at the end of this week.

Perry said the Beach Drive project is a pedestrian safety project and reminded residents that it is an active and unfinished construction area.

"Please use caution if you go up there," Perry said. "Last weekend we noticed cyclists on the sidewalk, whether it was weekend people or year-round. Please obey New Jersey bicycle laws as they are not permit-

ted on the sidewalk, only the street. It is a matter of safety and concern, so please pass the word on."

Simonsen reminded residents that there will be a town hall meeting to knock out opioid abuse from 9 to 11 a.m. Thursday, April 19, at the Dennis Township Senior Center.

Fishing Creek School will celebrate Earth Day from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 21. Residents are encouraged to attend the event to see the community plant exchange, Native American offerings and a painting exhibit by the Lower Cape May Regional High School art classes.

There will be an Arbor Day service at 10 a.m. Friday, April 27, behind Lower Township Town Hall.

Councilman Roland Roy reported that he attended a meeting regarding the Ocean Drive bridges. A study is under way, with further discussions planned. A meeting is scheduled from 2 to 4 p.m. May 3 at the Wildwood Crest Pier Recreational Center. Another session will be held in Cape May, time and location to be determined. More information can be found online at capemaytwomilebridge.com.

The aquatic center feasibility study is scheduled

to be presented during the council meeting May 7.

Lower Township declared April alcohol awareness month. Alcohol is the most commonly used addictive substance in the United States. Teens who drink before age 14 are more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who start at age 21. Lower Township is calling upon all citizens, parents and institutions to support efforts to reduce underage drinking, provide awareness

and coping methods.

"I attended a meeting with Cape Assist and our youth group at Richard Teitelman School," Simonsen said. "The students are part of these meetings and have input."

Township Council also declared April Autism awareness month.

"We are thankful that the council is declaring awareness," a resident said. "But it does not go away after April."

WCM school names Teacher of the Year

WEST CAPE MAY — On April 11, West Cape May Elementary School named support staff member Debbie Lewis its Teacher of the Year.

Each year, the state Department of Education recognizes one teacher or one support staff member from each school in the state for the distinction. This is the second time that a support staff member has been chosen for the honor at West Cape May Elementary.

Lewis started the after-school program at West Cape May in January 2014. After a slow start, the program grew over the years to where an average of 10 students routinely utilize the program each day. Lewis is a creative and support-

ive instructional aide and aftercare coordinator. She always has a smile on her face, even on the toughest days, and is always the best cheerleader, according to a news release.

Lewis also initiated a program to reduce food waste in the cafeteria. She takes the unused food items from the lunch periods and delivers them to Family Promise on her own time. In addition, she started the Nickels for Niceness program, which shares random acts of kindness.

Lewis also knows sign language and teaches the students at the end of the lunch period that she supervises. The children are learning a new beneficial language and they love it so much they don't even

notice that they are learning a new language. Her enthusiasm while sharing some

vocabulary and sentences has the children eager to learn more.

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