

Cape May Star and Wave



160TH YEAR NO. 4 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY WEDNESDAY, January 22, 2014 50¢



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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Annual exhibit focuses on area's black history, culture

By CAIN CHAMBERLIN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – Most people aren't aware of the depths of the African-American history in Cape May County, like the more than 60 black-owned businesses that once flourished in what is now historic Cape May, said presenters at the annual Black History exhibit at the Physick Estate.

An exhibit called, "The Way We Were...Cape May County's Once Thriving Black Business Communities," is highlighting that history and heritage at the Carriage House Gallery on the grounds of the Emlen Physick Estate on Washington Street. According to the Center for Community Arts (CCA) Historic Committee Director Sandra Jensen, this intriguing exhibit focuses on the historical black-owned businesses in Cape May County as well as famous African Americans that visited these communities, including Cape May, West Cape May, Wildwood, Ocean City, Middle Township and Whitesboro. She said the CCA Historic Committee, comprised of 10 to 15 members, has been working for the past year, collecting photos, artifacts, documentation and anything else for the exhibit that could help

people better understand the significance of this history. "Each section is explained with some photos. We even have some present business owners in some of the areas – you'll see some of these businesses still exist now," she said.

The exhibit, CCA in association with the Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts & Humanities (MAC), is one of 17 the CCA has done in "The Way We Were..." series. Each exhibit takes on a new chapter or topic in the African-American history of Cape May County, such as churches and worship, musicians, military service, schools and education, and family heritage.

This particular exhibit focuses on the business community and its prosperity in the Cape May region in the first half of the 20th century. From the early 1900s to the 1960s, businesses like hotels, pubs, pool halls, bakeries, barber shops, hair salons and an opera house were all businesses that flourished throughout the county, many of which were owned and operated by African-Americans.

According to a MAC press release, the 1960s urban renewal programs, one of the



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Above, Emily Dempsey explains part of the 'Way We Were' exhibit now on display at the Carriage House on the Emlen Physick Estate, Cape May. The annual exhibit, sponsored by the Center for Community Arts and the Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts and Humanities, presents information about black culture and history in the Cape May area.

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Officials answer question: What does a town council do?

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

LOWER TOWNSHIP – Based on the various anonymous postings appearing in a local newspaper, some people in Lower Township have looked at what happens at council meetings and have decided nothing is getting done.

Typically, when the governing body meets, in the council-manager forms of government, a lot of what is being done is fulfilling a legal requirement, which is to conduct business in a public

meeting. However, much of what the governing body does there is a formality to satisfy the requirements of the law.

"What is done at the meetings IS a formality," Municipal Clerk Julie Picard said. "But people don't understand how it gets to council."

Picard said council members spend anywhere from 20 to 50 hours per week working on township business before they meet for their twice per month public meetings, where formal measures are taken.

"You follow a half dozen blind alleys before you get

to the door that lets you out," Beck said.

Beck said he is in his office at Township Hall five to seven days per week. He said anyone who wants to be mayor should expect nothing less.

"Anyone who does the mayor's job and has another job, they are gypping the township. I knew this when I ran," he said.

For the most part, people don't see the mayor, council, or manager doing the bulk of their jobs, but only see them vote in public meetings.

"The very basic reason why the council has a public meet-

ing is to move government along. They have to publicly vote on and ratify all the current goings on – they adopt the minutes, they authorize contracts, they pay the bills – all those things on the consent agenda."

The agenda for each township council meeting has several parts. One is the consent agenda, which contains numerous resolutions that are considered to be routine in nature; such as, paying the bills on the bill list, which includes the electric bill, phone bill, janitorial supplies, office supplies, etc.

"Any bill you have in your house, we have," Picard said.

Picard said the township cannot pay any bill unless it is authorized by Lower Township Council.

Township Manager Mike Voll said before a bill list gets to council, departments make a request for a purchase, and those requests are sent to the treasurer's office and the treasurer certifies there are funds for the purchase, department. The manager then approves the list, which comes before the council in the public meeting, normally as part of the consent agenda.

"By the time this comes to council there are normally two full weeks of work to bring to them one piece of paper," Voll said.

"And every piece of paper that comes before council is on our website," Picard said.

The council votes on consent agenda resolutions as a group, with each member voicing a single vote. Another section is referred to as the regular agenda. Any of the resolutions on that part of the agenda are voted on individually, for various reasons. Any

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Cape May manager presents 2014 budgets for general fund, utilities

By CAIN CHAMBERLIN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – After City Manager Bruce MacLeod presented his proposed 2014 Cape May budget, Municipal Auditor Leon Costello recommended city council introduce it with its 2-cent tax rate increase, as is, by Feb. 18.

"This budget is very sound, well thought out...you're looking to the future, which is great," Costello said at the conclusion of MacLeod's presentation. "I highly endorse (the proposed budget) and recommend it be introduced as is."



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Above, left to right, Cape May City Manager Bruce MacLeod, finance department staff member Dan Shustack, Cape May CFO Neil Young and Municipal Auditor Leon Costello.

MacLeod presented a 2014, which increases the \$16,599,793 budget for tax rate by 2 cents per \$100

of assessed valuation. He said the tax rate would go from 30.9 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation to 32.9 cents. He said a property with an assessed value of \$500,000 would pay an additional \$100 for the year in local purpose taxes based on the 2-cent increase, or \$8.33 per month.

MacLeod said the city has maintained a financially sound position and has used a conservative approach on revenues and limits on discretionary spending without the use of one-time gimmicks.

The proposed \$16.6 million budget represents 63

percent of city spending, as Cape May has separate budgets for the Beach Utility, the Water and Sewer Utility, and the Tourism Utility. All four budgets combined, as presented, would bring city spending to over \$26.6 million in 2014.

MacLeod presented a \$2,229,505 Beach Utility budget, which includes revenue derived from beach tag fee increases recently invoked by city council. Pre-season seasonal tags were raised by \$5 and the three-day tags increased by \$2 for 2014, while the eight-day, or weekly tag, will increase by \$3 in 2015. Beach tags rep-

resent most of the revenue for the Beach Utility, which totaled \$2,113,008 in 2013, an approximate \$163,000 increase over 2012. The largest expenditure is in the salary and wages item of the utility, which is \$1.4 million. MacLeod said this is primarily for lifeguards and beach taggers.

MacLeod said the \$6.7 million budget for water and sewer is up \$88,000 (1.34 percent), however, it does not include any rate increases. Roughly 40 percent the water and sewer budget goes to the Cape May County

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