

City

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housing units on a portion of the property.

"It is our hope that none of this land be developed," Mahaney said.

He said the city continues to participate in negotiations with East Cape May Associates, the NJDEP, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the American Littoral Society to reach a mutual agreement on the finalization of the permitting process.

"These negotiations represent the final step of implementing the settlement agreement signed by all parties at the Cape May City Council reorganization meeting on July 1, 2009," Mahaney said in his speech. "Under this settlement agreement, the City of Cape May will become an owner and managing partner of the 78-acre wildlife sanctuary at a cost of \$4.4 million that will be covered totally by grants. This purchase will have no financial cost to the Cape May taxpayers."

Mahaney also spoke about the city's water supply and conservation. As the only desalination plant in the state, the city's facility provides 2 million gallons of the maximum 3.4 million gallon daily capacity, and currently produces 66 percent of the potable water used on a year round basis, according to Mahaney.

He said in 2014, city council will be planning the location, design, permitting and funding for an additional water supply well that will be drilled into the Atlantic City 800-foot Sand Aquifer. He said this will replace the city's current Well #5 and provide a potable water supply to regional residents for the next 25 years. He said Well #5 in the 600-foot Cohansey Aquifer has become increasingly intruded with salt water. The new well is estimated to cost between \$750,000 and \$1 million. Both the Madison Avenue Water Tank and Canning House Lane Standpipe, which hold a combined 1.7 million gallons of water, have been restored during 2013.

The mayor said over the last six years, the city has obtained \$2.9 million in New Jersey Small Cities grants to ensure compliance with American Disabilities Act (ADA). He said the main

focus has been access for the disabled to the promenade, beaches, Washington Street Mall, all intersections of Village Green and the Franklin Street Civic Center. He said as of Monday, Jan. 6,

Mahaney said the city has also submitted a streetscape application for grant funding to renovate and upgrade the former Oasis Grill and Ricker's Gift Shop, adjacent to Convention Hall, into a multi-purpose comfort station including restrooms, secure locker facilities, shower stations and outdoor drinking fountains. He said the facility will also be ADA compliant and will also serve as an administrative office for the Beach Tag Program.

the city initiated the installation of ADA-compliant ramps at eight additional intersections in Village Green and also the reconstruction of the 400 block of Carpenter's Lane, complete with compliant ramps and parking structures. He said during 2014, the city will apply for additional New Jersey Small Cities grants to focus on restructuring the 400 block of Lyle Lane, the final block of the Washington Street Mall service streets that needs to be ADA compliant. In 2015, the city hopes to com-

The mayor said the city has continued to cooperate with West Cape May regarding a water loss issue in the borough. Unresolved discrepancies have been found in the volume of metered potable water purchased by the borough from the city and the volume of water sold by the borough to its customers. The city subsequently replaced the master water meters at Wilbraham Park and Canning House Lane with new meters that record at low flow below 40 gallons per minute at a cost of \$250,000. West Cape May and Cape May City both hired firms to perform studies on the water loss issue. The borough's study, done by Edens Revenue Recovery Associates, concluded the problem was in Cape May's system. However, Cape May hired Dixon Associates to perform a study, which concluded West Cape May had been under billed for water flow over the last several years based on the measured number of instances of flow in both meters. Dixon said the meters were not measuring flow accurately prior to their replacement.

"The City of Cape May remains ready, willing, and able to assist the Borough of West Cape May to ascertain the source and cause of the unaccounted for water usage which is occurring in the West Cape May system," Mahaney said.

mence reconstruction of the 300 block of Lyle Lane and Mansion Street with additional ADA-compliant ramps at intersections on Philadelphia Avenue and continued installation of ocean overlook structures on the beaches.

The mayor said during 2014, the city will complete infrastructure improvements consisting of:

- Reconstruction of Cape May Avenue on the North side from Reading to Trenton Avenues
- Reconstruction of Delaware Avenue from Trenton to

Pittsburgh Avenues

- Abandoning the existing four-inch water main and reconnect services to the existing six-inch water main on Beach Avenue between Howard Street and Jefferson Street
- Replacing existing sanitary sewer on Beach Avenue from Jefferson to Madison Avenue
- Replacing the Gurney Street storm sewer

from the seawall to Columbia Avenue

- Replacing the Harbor Lane bulkhead

Mahaney said the \$10.5 million Convention Hall has been the city's most visible public improvement in the past two years. He said the array and diversity of events held at the facility during 2012 and 2013 demonstrated the capabilities of the multi-purpose venue to meet the goals established in the business plan of the city's Tourism Utility. He said the Tourism Utility did achieve a self-liquidating status in 2012



Cain Chamberlin/Cape May Star and Wave

Above, Cape May Police Pltm. Victor DeMusz takes his oath of office on New Year's Day from Judge Ray Batten after returning to duty. Det. Anthony Marino holds the Bible for DeMusz, who had been on working as a dispatcher after an injury.

tion. He said the city's new website, www.discovercape-maynj.com, went live in the spring 2013 and has produced measurable results that show its effectiveness in obtaining a larger market portion of the regional, national and global tourism industry.

Mahaney commended Councilman Jack Wichterman for his efforts in trying to alleviate what he called the city's high portion of funding paid to the Lower Cape May Regional School District. Wichterman has been spearheading an effort to change the regional school funding formula that has Cape May paying approximately 35 percent of the school district's overall budget while sending just around 70 students.

Mahaney said the 2014 municipal budget continues the process of shifting the cost burden of tourism activities from the residential and commercial taxpayers to the actual participants in tourism-related activities. He said there are many challenges faced in keeping tax increases from occurring, including the state's 2-percent tax levy cap.

"Like everyone else, we still feel effects from the recession of 2007," he said. "There are times you have expenses you just can't control."

City Manager Bruce MacLeod will present his 2014 Budget Proposal on Wednesday, Jan. 15 at 1 p.m. Appointed to the Mayor's

Advisory Committee were Mark Lomanno, Susan Mullins, Curtis Bashaw, Scott Thomas, Hilary Pritchard and Eliza Lotozo. The mayor's

and Murray will be the Class III Planning Board member. A large crowd gathered in City Hall for the reorganization meeting to wit-

Mahaney said city council has also been heavily involved with FEMA following Hurricane Sandy regarding the new flood maps and flood insurance rates. He said of the 4,000 properties in Cape May, 2,757 currently have flood insurance. The city recently improved its FEMA Community Rating System (CRS) status from a Class 8 to a Class 6, which resulted in a 20 percent discount for residents in their flood insurance premiums. Mahaney said this will reflect \$614,000 in cost savings per year for participating property owners. He said Cape May is just 300 points shy of attaining a Class 5 status, which would result in a 25 percent discount.

State of the City speech in its entirety can be found on the city website.

Councilman Jack Wichterman was again selected by his peers on Cape May City Council to serve in the position as Deputy Mayor, at Cape May's reorganization meeting held on New Year's Day.

Wichterman was sworn in by Superior Court Judge Raymond Batten. Wichterman served as the deputy mayor prior to a term by Councilman William Murray.

Wichterman was appointed to the Business Improvement District (BID) board, taking the place of Councilwoman Terri Swain, who served on the board for several years. Swain will now be the city council member on the Environmental Commission

ness the oath's taken by Wichterman, Murray and Louise Cummisser, who was reappointed to her position as city clerk.

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Plan

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escape from the Lower Cape May Regional School District is purely to avoid paying its fair share of the operational and bonding obligations of the regional school district based on the equalized value of the taxable property in the

City of Cape May. This type of motivation for withdrawal from a regional school district was directly criticized by the Commissioner of Education in a case brought by the Borough of Oradell as a constituent of the River Dell Regional School District.

As recited above, the deci-

sion of the Appellate Division of the Superior Court of New Jersey rendered on Aug. 12, 2013, soundly establishes the legislature as the appropriate branch of government to establish tax policy for governmental operations including those of regional boards of education. That decision clearly undercuts the efforts of the City of Cape May to avoid paying its fair share of school taxes as a constituent of the Lower Cape May Regional School District."

Crowley said his report and the Wyns report did not agree with Cape May's feasibility study in any area other than that there would be no racial impact on the dissolution of the school district.

Mayor Mike Beck said the departure of Cape May from the regional district would "be an epic disaster for the school and our community." He said it would also be contrary to what the state legislature has dictated, that school funding be based on equalized property values, not the

Please see Plan, page A3

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