



Christopher South/Cape May Star and Wave

Above left, Mayor Mike Beck was one of the many community members who responded to the home explosion on Atlantic Avenue, Villas. Beck lives 150 to 200 feet from the site. Above center, federal, state and local officials keep members of the press and public away while they investigate the cause of the explosion. Above right, a shot of the front of the house from the next street over.

House

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investigate the scene Friday, where the house in the 200 block of E. Atlantic Avenue was completely flattened, and debris could be seen hanging in the branches of nearby trees.

The alarm came in around 3:40 p.m., Nov. 7, from neighbors who said the house had exploded. Reports said by the time firefighters arrived the house was in flames, but on Friday, unburned portions of

the house remained.

The Villas, Erma and Town Bank Fire Companies all responded to the alarm.

According to Mayor Mike Beck, who said he lives between 150 and 200 feet from the McCarty home, he was cooking when he heard a loud explosion.

"I told my grandson either we were under attack or something bad had happened," Beck said. "It was an incredible explosion."

He looked out and saw

smoke. Beck, a former Philadelphia police officer, headed outside in his house slippers and climbed a fence at Bates Avenue to get to the McCarty home.

There he saw people, neighbors, already trying to give assistance.

"There was a significant response from the people of this area, including an off-duty police officer," Beck said.

Beck said he was overwhelmed by the concern

people showed for the safety of the neighbors in the area. He said people went around knocking on doors to see if others needed assistance. In the meantime, some people helped Evelyn McCarty out from under the debris.

Once she was freed, McCarty told her rescuers that her husband was in the back of the house when it exploded. Neighbors were able to locate and free Joe McCarty. Beck described the McCartys as seniors who he

has known for some time.

"I've been in their house half a dozen times. I just saw Joe on Saturday at the DAV's flag retirement ceremony," Beck said.

He said he appreciated the way people responded.

"The township owes a debt of gratitude to these people, and the emergency responders. I witnessed some heroic actions," he said.

Beck also commended the township's emergency responders, saying their

response was immediate.

"The cavalry was here in a minute," he said.

Beck said the McCartys appeared to be in shock after being helped from under the debris. He said there was some wispy white smoke when he arrived at the scene, which later turned dark before being extinguished by the fire department.

Little

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said even though fellow Democrat Albano was not reelected, he will work with Fiocchi as he would anyone else to best serve his con-

stituents.

"In every election, people from all parties come together and vote for who they think will represent the district best. It's important to have someone who will fight for

you and advocate for you in a bipartisan way," he said. "We have to work together to get the job done."

Van Drew said some of the issues he, Andrzejczak and Fiocchi will have to focus on are transportation, such as the current Garden State Parkway traffic light removal project along exits 9, 10 and 11, as well as lowering taxes, working with the new health care reform and making sure our veterans are taken care of.

In the Borough of West Cape May election, Mayor Pam Kaithern, Deputy Mayor Peter Burke and Commissioner Carol Sabo were all reelected to their positions on the Board of Commissioners.

Kaithern said the commissioners plan to see through several projects and issues during their new terms such as USDA water and sewer system expansion project, which is approaching the final stages. West Cape May has also applied for grant money to continue the next phase of the bike lane project, hoping to add a bike lane along Leaming Avenue into Cape May city.

She said the commissioners hope to see the proposed

traffic circle project for the intersection of West Perry Street, Myrtle Avenue and Park Boulevard commenced and completed. The project is currently in the assessment stage as the county is trying to obtain state and federal funding for the construction.

She said she would also like to see the water discrepancy issue with Cape May city mediated, an issue that has been ongoing since 2010 when it was brought to municipality's public attention.

Kaithern said the commissioners hope to improve the business district in the borough by speaking with local business owners and working with the Community Business Task Force.

"We want to expand on thoughts we've had with the business district - an expansion of that in a community friendly way," she said.

Burke said looking back on the election from a state and county standpoint, he wasn't surprised with Gov. Chris Christie's landslide victory, but hopes the reelected governor will improve some of his education policies among other things. Burke said he was also not surprised by Van Drew's victory, as he

and many other people he knows weren't familiar with Adelizzi-Schmidt.

"I am surprised by Albano losing his seat," Burke said. "But, overall it seems everything else pretty much stayed the same. It looks to me like it's status quo."

He is returning to council after serving in 2010-2011.

Although there was a change in Lower Township's Ward 3, newly elected Councilman Erik Simonsen is not so new to Lower Township Council. Simonsen served on council from 2010-2011 and also served as chairman of the Mayor's Advisory Board prior to that. Simonsen received 61.7 percent of the votes in Ward 3, having over 900 votes above Glenn Douglass and Thomas Will.

"I feel good about it. I worked hard. I sort of expected the results given the amount of work I put into it," he said. "Knocking on doors, asking people what they wanted to see in Lower, listening to their concerns - just talking to residents and hearing what they had to say."

Simonsen said he has been attending regular council meetings, speaking with councilmembers and the township manager to familiarize himself with the current local issues, but plans to obtain more detailed information and opinions on the new FEMA Flood Maps, township infrastructure issues and developments within the LTMUA involving charges against former director Matt Ecker.

"I need to get up to speed and keep up on this issues at hand," he said.

Simonsen said it's things like the federal government shutdown and the recent LTMUA incident that "put a bad taste in people's mouths" when it comes to politics, explaining the low voter turnout through the years.

"People get turned off by it and don't vote," he said. "Obviously, I feel the opposite - it makes me want to get involved and do something about it."

Of the 69,042 registered voters in Cape May County this year, 33,847 cast ballots, which is just over half. Van Drew said when he was up for election in 2011, only 38 percent of the voters submitted

ballots in Cape May County.

"A 50 percent turnout is a good turnout and that's sad," he said. "I wish we had at least an 80 percent turnout - then we'd really see the numbers and what the people wanted."

Van Drew said it's important for people to exercise their civic duty of voting. He said the elections are not just about voting for candidates, but also voting on issues like the minimum wage increase, taxes and other policies.

"People think they can't change anything, but you really can make a difference on a lot of issues that impact your community," he said. "Whether you're for or against the issue, you should vote."

Van Drew said as an elected official, he too gets fed up with the recent antics and hindrances in politics just like everyone else, but still feels those who have the right to vote should exercise that right.

"It is a flawed system, no doubt about it, but right now it's the only system we have and people need to do their part," he said. "I get disgusted when I go up to the capital sometimes too, but we have to fight through it and do the best we can to make things better."

According to Borough Clerk Diane Rutherford, 501 of the 825 registered voters showed up at the polls in West Cape May on Nov. 5, which is 60.73 percent. She said this did not include the mail-in ballots.

The number of registered voters in West Cape May surpassed the last two elections for the Board of Commissioners in 2009 and 2005. Burke said this election nearly matched the 2005 Borough election when 68 percent of the registered voters cast ballots. Burke said he was thrilled with the turnout of the election in West Cape May but in general, believed more people should vote.

Sabo said the governor's election likely helped boost the voter turnout in the county and borough, but expected more.

"Sadly, I think it's a privilege people neglect," she said. "I don't know why this generation rarely votes, but it's something my parents instilled in me. It's such a great opportunity to have a voice and have that ability to vote."

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