



House of the week

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Coombs takes empty seat on Lower Council

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166th YEAR NO. 98 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2020 \$1.00

Safety building bond comes up short

Sheehan, Mullock vote against \$14.2 million appropriation

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — In a 3-2 vote, City Council introduced a 30-year, \$14.2 million bond ordinance to finance construction of a public safety building to house both the fire and police departments. The introduction was voided later in the meeting when council voted 3-2 to approve an emergency appropriation that would have made a 5 percent down payment, or \$750,000, on the bond. A super majority of

council, four votes, was required to pass the emergency appropriation.

The bond required a down payment certificate to be submitted. In both cases, Mayor Chuck Lear, Deputy Mayor Patricia Hendricks and Councilman Shaine Meier voted in the positive, while Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan and Councilman Zack Mullock cast negative votes.

Answering a question from a member of the public, Sheehan and Mullock said they would also have voted against the bond

ordinance at its public hearing in March.

The bond ordinance stated it would only take effect within 20 days after passage if a sufficient number of legal voters in Cape May, 15 percent of the number of voters who voted in the last general Assembly election, signed and submitted to the clerk a petition calling for a binding referendum on constructing the building. A special election for the referendum would be held in June, according to city solicitor Frank Corrado.

He said the petition for a binding referendum on constructing a public safety building would require the signatures of 132 voters. Corrado said any voter could sign the petition whether they were for or against construction of the new building.

Meier said City Manager Jerry Inderwies had talked with Cape May City Elementary School about using the school's auditorium to hold a town hall meeting on the project before council's final vote March 17.

Sheehan said she would not

support a joint building for the fire and police departments.

"They both deserve their own building where they can expand in the future and not have a building that is cut down just to be within a budget," she said.

The joint building would not provide adequate parking for the police and fire departments, Sheehan said. She said she believes the joint building would be detrimental to the streetscape of Washington Street.

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School may deed land to Cape May for a nature trail

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Board of Education of Cape May City Elementary School is considering deeding a tract of land behind the school to the city so it may be made into a nature trail as part of Lafayette Street Park.

City Manager Jerry Inderwies, engineer Tom Thornton, city solicitor Frank Corrado, grants consultant Jim Rutala and Lafayette Street Park Advisory Committee Chairman Mike Jones visited a Feb. 20 school board meeting. Inderwies said county Open Space funding is available for the project.

In order to receive that funding, the lots must be deeded over to the city since the county Open Space program grants funding only to municipalities but not schools, he said.

Inderwies said the area for the proposed nature trail covers two to three lots that would need to be combined into one parcel of land. He said the Open Space Program could fund as much as \$1.3 million for the project. "They love the concept and they love the idea,"

Inderwies said.

He said the land acquisition by the city needs to move along since the Open Space board is meeting in April. Inderwies said he was aware the school board had questioned why Phase II and Phase III of the Lafayette Street Park project have been delayed.

Phase II of the park project has a \$500,000 loan from the state Green Acres program with \$1 million from the city's Open Space fund, Inderwies said. He said the city earmarks \$222,000 each year for Open Space funding.

Inderwies said Phase III has \$1.1 million from the county Open Space Program.

"If the grants don't cover the cost, the city has to come up with the additional costs," he said. "It hasn't gone out to bid. The timeframe for that is hopefully this spring, so then we'll have the total cost."

School board Vice President Sharon Lee Kustra said the Board of Education signed a lease of school property for Phase I of the project in 2014. Inderwies

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Roseann Avenue work to be finished in April

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — All storm sewers have been installed on Roseann Avenue, concrete work is under way with final road paving expected to begin in April, according to engineer Shawn Carr of Mott MacDonald.

During a Lower Township Council meeting Feb. 19, Township Manager Jim Ridgway said fencing has been installed around the pump house at the end of

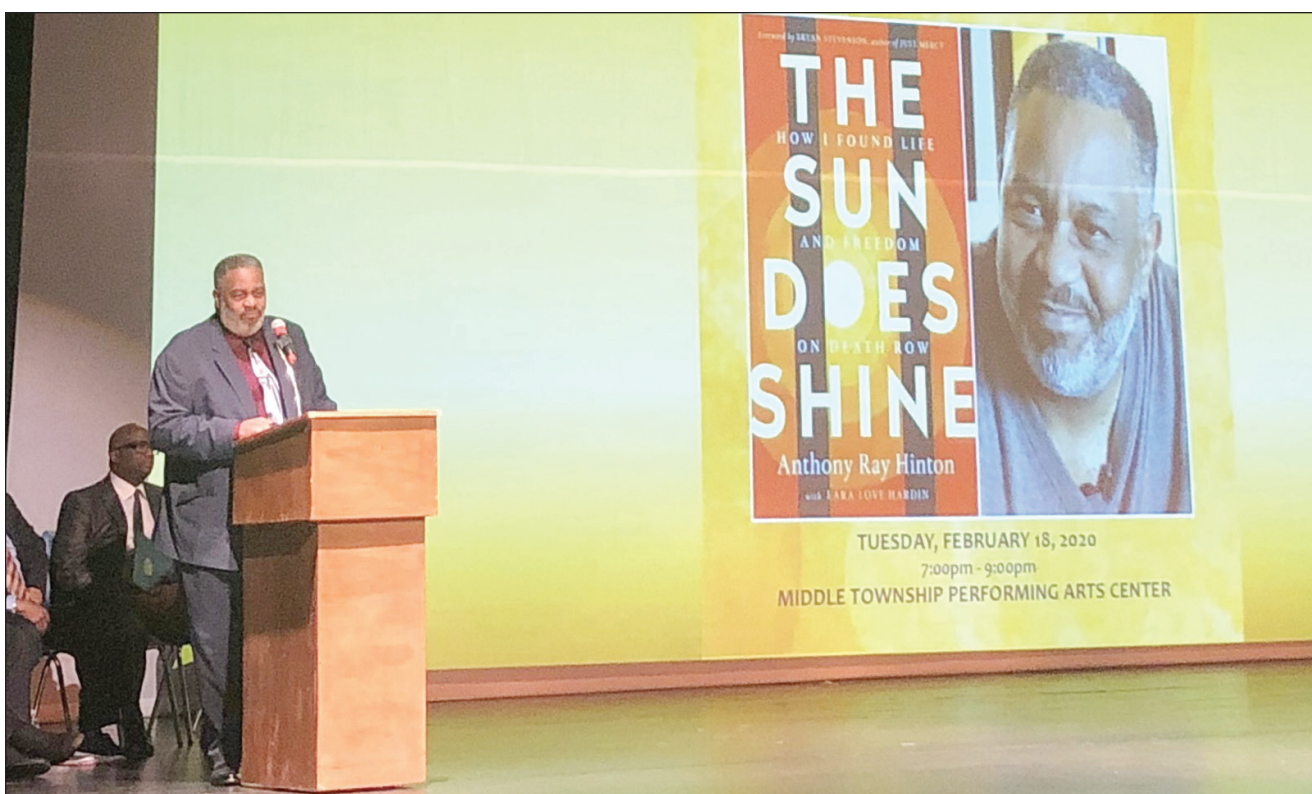
Roseann Avenue. He said one portion of fence remained to be adjusted.

Ridgway said a neighbor on the north side of the pump house was very pleased with the fence.

"That was one of the homes that had substantial flooding during all of the backups," he said.

Deputy Mayor David Perry said he hopes "contractors will be out of there" in the next couple of weeks.

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Rachel Shubin/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Author Anthony Ray Hinton speaks at the Middle Township Performing Arts Center about his wrongful conviction and the 30 years he spent on death row.

Wrongfully convicted, man spent 30 years on death row

Hinton speaks at Middle PAC amid book tour

By RACHEL SHUBIN
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — In a packed auditorium full of community stakeholders, elected officials, parents and youth, author Anthony Ray Hinton told his story of living on death row for 30 years for a crime he did not commit, a story also told in the best-seller "The Sun Does Shine."

"How does one survive 30 years of solitary confinement?" Hinton asked. "With every story, there's a beginning and my end has not come yet."

The Black History Month event was hosted by the Coalition for a Safe Community, the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office and other nonprofit groups.

"I read the book and it

really moved me to arrange this event," Cape May County Prosecutor Jeffrey Sutherland said. "It is important for our future law enforcement officers and [us] as a community to acknowledge racism in our country and community."

Sutherland said if errors are made, they should be set right by admitting and acknowledging mistakes.

State Attorney General Gurbir Grewal welcomed Hinton to Cape May County.

"Thank you for sharing your truth with us this evening," Grewal said. "You have a terrific prosecutor in Cape May County, [who] is committed to justice and really cares about it."

Sen. Cory Booker was unable to attend the event but sent a letter on his behalf.

"I am grateful to the Cape May County Prosecutor's

Office for celebrating the event tonight with Black History Month," Booker's letter stated.

In 1985, two Birmingham-area fast-food restaurants were robbed and the managers, John Davidson and Thomas Wayne Vason, fatally shot. There were no eyewitnesses nor fingerprint evidence; police had no suspects and pressure to solve the murders grew as similar crimes continued, according to information on the Equal Justice Initiative website.

On July 25, 1985, a restaurant in Bessemer was robbed and the manager was shot but not seriously wounded. Hinton was arrested after the manager identified him from a photo lineup, even though he was working in a locked warehouse 15 miles away at the

time of the crime. Hinton was 29 when he was arrested on what he describes as the hottest July day in Alabama.

"I was cutting the grass when two gentlemen I'd never seen before identified themselves as two detectives from the Birmingham Police Department, with a warrant for my arrest," Hinton said.

He asked what the charges were and the officers told him they would explain it later. They proceeded to put him in the back of the squad car and take him to the Birmingham Jail.

"They asked me if I owned a firearm and I said, 'No, my mother has a Smith and Wesson .38 for killing snakes,'" Hinton said. "We went back to my mother's

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