



Barriers turn Beach Avenue into 'construction zone'

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House of the week

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166th YEAR NO. 32 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2020 \$1.00

Dems kick off campaign for CMC freeholder

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

Democrats Brendan Sciarra and Elizabeth "Liz" Casey kicked off their campaigns for the Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders last week, challenging a pair of Republican incumbents.

Sciarra is a Wildwood businessman and third-generation county resident. Casey is an attorney who lives in Upper Township and has a practice in Ocean City. They are trying to unseat incumbents Will Morey and Jeffrey Pierson in the November general election.

Their campaign website says they will bring "common sense solutions" to "fix the past" and "lead the future." Their priorities are diversifying the economy and working to end the opioid crisis that has swept across the country and has hurt Cape May County families.

Sciarra and Casey say they want to change the one-party

rule on the all-Republican freeholder board to end favoritism, nepotism and conflicts of interest in county government, and institute fair hiring practices while eliminating political job rewards. They want to support the large veteran and senior community in the county, make bridge and road repairs a priority, battle homelessness and take care of the county's environment and ecosystem.

Sciarra, an entrepreneur and restaurateur, and his wife, Robin, live in Wildwood Crest with their three young children, Michael, Kai and Brendan.

Casey and her husband, Dr. Jerry Horowitz, have two college-age children, Samantha and Peter. Casey is graduate of Drew University and The Dickinson School of Law with a practice that focuses on business law, real estate and estate planning and administration.

Interviews with Sciarra and Casey follow.

Sciarra: It's time for a change in county gov't

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

Brendan Sciarra believes there is a need for change in Cape May County government.

"I've been here my whole life," the Wildwood Crest resident said. "My parents grew up here, my grandparents grew up here. I have a pretty good sense of the issues in Cape May County. I feel like there is a need for change."

"There is a need for a bipartisan board that can work together."

Sciarra, a Democrat and Wildwood restaurateur, is running to change the complexion of the Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders, which has been controlled by Republicans for generations. Only one Democrat has been elected to the board in the past 25 years.

"Diversity," Sciarra said, "can bring better representation to taxpayers and constituents. And I like to get stuff done in government. If you can fix things and make it a better place, that is a driving thing for me personally."

He believes there is an opportunity this election cycle because "I think I can offer some common-sense solutions. I can work across the aisle. People see a need for change and see bipartisan diversity, and someone with a set of different thoughts needs to be in office."

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Casey says transparency necessary at county level

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

Elizabeth "Liz" Casey, a lifelong Democrat, decided to battle for a freeholder position in Cape May County because she believes in transparency in government.

It's a battle because as of mid-June, there were 29,347 registered Republican voters in the county compared to 17,126 Democrats. There are also 25,726 voters not enrolled in either party, but many of them lean toward the GOP. There has been only a lone Democratic freeholder on the board in the past 25 years.

"Even though we are in the minority in terms of party-affiliated voters in Cape May County, there is a huge chunk of independents. That's a group I think we can try and persuade and show we should have diversity on the freeholder board," Casey said. "Plus, I'm never one to shy away from a challenge."

She believes the hardest thing she will have to overcome to get elected — she ran unsuccessfully for freeholder before — is to get voters beyond a label.

"I think there is a tribalism. And we see that nationally," she said. "And I think it's getting people to look at me as an individual as opposed to a member of an opposing team."

She said voters should see her "as an individual who has lived in Cape May

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JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

Harriet Tubman museum to celebrate city's vital role in abolition movement

By CRAIG D. SCHENCK
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A historic building has been turned into a tribute to an important period in the history of Cape May's African-American community and abolitionist past, and soon will be open to the public.

A philanthropic local family and the Macedonia Baptist Church, along with financial and physical assistance from the community, have turned the church's dilapidated former parsonage into the Harriet Tubman Museum to celebrate the abolitionist's efforts to free slaves from the South through the Underground Railroad.

According to the museum website, Tubman lived in Cape May in the early 1850s, working to help fund her missions to guide slaves to freedom.

After her initial journeys conducting freedom-seekers to Canada, Tubman's friend and another abolitionist leader Franklin Sanborn wrote, "She returned to the states, and as usual earned money by working in hotels and families as a cook. From Cape May, in the fall of 1852, she went back once more to Maryland, and brought away nine more fugitives."

The New Jersey Historical Commission says she spent two other summers in the city. Cape May played a pivotal role in the fight to end slavery. Several historic figures critical to the abolitionist movement spent their summers there. The museum building is located on a block that anti-slavery



Tim Hawk/Special to the CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Members of the board of trustees for the Harriet Tubman Museum and Church Committee of Macedonia Baptist Church pose with the museum's first installation, the bronze statue 'Harriet Tubman — The Journey to Freedom,' by Wesley Wolford.

activists called home. Lafayette Street and Franklin Street became a center of abolitionist activity centered around three important buildings developed in 1846.

— The Stephen Smith House stands at 645 Lafayette St., across from the site of the museum, where Smith built his summer home in 1846. Smith was a founder of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

— The Banneker House was next to the Stephen Smith House. It became a first-class hotel and one of the only summer resorts for free black people in the country, and was developed by James Harding, a friend of Smith.

— The Macedonia Baptist Church is located directly across the street

from the Stephen Smith House and Joseph Leach frequently preached there. Leach was a political leader and editor of the Ocean Wave newspaper, in which he often wrote accounts of enslaved people that fled to Cape May.

The museum's creation is part of a historical restoration of the area with a focus on the city's abolitionist past. In addition, members of the Allen A.M.E. Church have agreed to rehabilitate their building following a fire in 2018.

On Dec. 16, 2018, the Baptist church signed a lease agreement with the Mullock family to restore the building, parts of which may date back to 1799.

Lynda Anderson-Towns, a deacon at Macedonia Baptist Church, member

of the museum's board of trustees and liaison to the church, where she was chairwoman of its board of trustees when all of the details were established, said the museum is housed in the church's former parsonage.

The museum also will honor the Rev. Robert O. Davis, who was pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church for 47 years before his death at the age of 90. Davis had a collection of items from the slave era he took to area schools that will be placed in the new museum, where he lived while serving the congregation.

Cynthia L. Mullock, executive director of the Harriet Tubman Museum, said Davis was a founder of the

Tubman, Page A8

Erma man, 21, drowns in ocean off Cape May

CAPE MAY — The body of an Erma man was discovered in the surf off Philadelphia Avenue in the early hours of Aug. 3.

According to the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office, the Cape May Police Department received a call at 8:44 p.m. Aug. 2 reporting an unresponsive

person in the water in the area of Jefferson Street.

Patrol units responded and conducted a search of the area but were unsuccessful in locating the victim.

Detectives from the Cape May Police Department and the county Prosecutor's Office responded to the scene to assist with the

investigation.

At about 1:30 a.m. Aug. 3, authorities found the body of an unresponsive male lying at the water's edge between Madison and Philadelphia avenues. Further investigation revealed a deceased male, identified as Kevin L. Lare, 21. The investigation is ongoing and

there are no indications of foul play.

According to Cape May Police Chief Tony Marino, the Cape May Beach Patrol conducted 48 ocean rescues of swimmers from Aug. 1-2. The public is reminded not to swim during dangerous conditions, at night or when lifeguards are not present.

Schools form plans for students' return

Cape May, Lower Township to open half in person, half remote

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Cape May City Elementary School plans to reopen Sep. 8 with half the students in the building and the other half learning at home on a given day.

During a virtual Board of Education meeting July 30, Principal Zack Palombo said the reopening plan was the culmination of a month's

work. The complete plan is posted on the school district's website at cmcboe.org.

He said plans could change from state guidance, health trends and input from teachers, administrators, staff, students, parents and community stakeholders. Palombo said students at any time may be subject to

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By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

COLD SPRING — Lower Township Elementary Schools will reopen with 50 percent of students in school daily and 50 percent using distance learning at home.

During a virtual Board of Education meeting July 28, Superintendent Jeff Samaniego said for the past several weeks the Low-

er Township Elementary Schools administration, along with its Pandemic Building Teams and District Pandemic Response Team, have been working on reopening plans for the schools district.

He said information provided by parents in a survey was extremely helpful in their decision-making process.

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