

# Lower bureau participating in Fire Prevention Week

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — This is fire prevention week and Lower Township's Fire Prevention Bureau is busy with an outreach to the public.

Donna Blackley has served as Lower Township's fire official for nine years and has been with the Fire Prevention Bureau for 24 years. The bureau is run by a board of

commissioners from the township's three fire districts: Villas, Erma, and Town Bank.

"Our office enforces the New Jersey Uniform Fire Code by conducting yearly inspections on businesses and rental properties within Lower Township," she said. "We also conduct the required sale of property inspections that have to be submitted to property buyers at the settlement table

when owner transfer occurs."

The bureau has two full time fire inspectors who are both certified New Jersey Division of Fire Safety inspectors and hold a fire official's license. All three staff members are also state certified fire investigators, Blackley said.

"Our three fire investigators are on call 24-7 to respond to origin of cause investigations," she said.

The bureau provides fire prevention education from survivors of the Seton Hall fire in South Orange in 2000 that killed three students and injured 58 others. The program educates students about fire safety when moving into an apartment or dormitory.

"It's also going to be recruitment event for our volunteer (fire) companies here in Lower Township," Blackley said.

She encouraged anyone who needs a smoke or

carbon monoxide alarm to contact the bureau at (609) 889-0404.

The bureau is funded entirely by user fees and uses no taxpayer dollars. As part of Fire Prevention Week, volunteers from the three fire districts are bringing fire trucks to schools and holding assemblies for students up to seventh grade.

A presentation will be held at Lower Cape May Regional High School from survivors of the Seton Hall fire in South Orange in 2000 that killed three students and injured 58 others. The program educates students about fire safety when moving into an apartment or dormitory.

"It's also going to be recruitment event for our volunteer (fire) companies here in Lower Township," Blackley said.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE  
Lower Township Fire Official Donna Blackley notes this week is Fire Prevention Week.

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## Ballot set for Nov. 7 elections

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She has served in various leadership roles with the Bridgeton School Em-

ployee Association, Cumberland County Council of Education Association, New Jersey Education Association and the National Education Association. She is currently an early childhood director.

Bonner retired as a police officer after 15 years of service and now serves as district manager for KD National Force Security, managing security for Cumberland Regional High School, Hopewell Crest School in Hopewell and Cumberland Christian School in Vineland.

Sheriff Robert A Nolan, a Republican, is running unchallenged to keep his position.

Former County Commissioner E. Marie Hayes, a Republican, is running against Democrat Beverly McCall for surrogate.

Hayes was nominated by Gov. Phil Murphy and confirmed by the state Senate to fill the vacancy this summer created when Dean Marcolongo became a Superior Court

judge.

Hayes served as vice director of the county Board of Commissioners.

McCall has been an attorney since 1986.

She was appointed by the governor and currently is serving a second three-year position as a commissioner on the Ocean City Housing Authority.

McCall is the chair, as well as the Cape May County Trustee for the Ocean Wind Pro-NJ Grantor Trust, which administers funds to minority-owned and women-owned small businesses, as well as municipalities.

In the county Commission race, two seats are available for a three-year term. Republican County Commissioner Will Morey is seeking re-election, while newcomer Melanie Collette seeks her first term.

Commissioner Jeffrey Pierson decided not to seek re-election.

Republican Bob Barr of Ocean City is seeking

to keep the County Commission seat he was appointed to when Hayes resigned to become surrogate.

Barr was an Ocean City councilman since 2016, a position he resigned in order to join the County Commission.

Morey is president and chief executive officer of Morey's Piers, a family-owned business in Wildwood started in 1969.

Collette is director of community engagement for the First Legislative District and a former business education teacher.

Only one Democrat, Patricia O'Connor, is running for one of the two available County Commission seats. As a mortgage banking executive, she has held senior level positions with CoreStates Bank, GMAC Mortgage, First Niagara Bank and Freedom Mortgage.

O'Connor started her career at Fannie Mae, where she specialized in low- and moderate-income lending, working with state housing financing agencies.

Cape May County skews heavily Republican in voter registration and there has not been a Democrat elected to the County Commission — formerly the Board of Chosen Freeholders — since Jeff Van Drew, who is now the Republican U.S. Representative of the Second Congressional District after multiple terms in the New Jersey State Assembly and Senate as a Democrat.

As of May, there were 32,519 registered Republicans in Cape May County, 18,463 Democrats and another 24,287 unaffiliated voters.

## Tourism

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Convention Hall has done a very good job of turning around, along with support from council, to make sure that the tourism utility is solvent, which it is," Mullock said.

City solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said the city had paid more than \$100,000 to artists upfront. He said the shift in 2021 was to switch to renting the hall to promoters.

Rauch said the city ran the concerts in Convention Hall in 2014 to 2016 and in 2017 it was reported the tourism utility had a \$300,000 deficit.

"The first thing we had to do was stop the bleeding, get your costs down and in doing that I don't think that the quality of the acts has gone down, I think they have actually gone up," Mullock said.

In 2012, when concerts began in Convention Hall, a number of businesses paid to have their name in a concert program book, Rauch said.

Mullock said council did not want to see just a flat tourism utility but instead see it flourish. He said the concert industry has changed and some of the smaller promoters have been taken over by much larger agencies.

"The main thing I think should be said is we are not losing any tax dollars on the tourism utility, it is solvent," Mullock said.

Councilman Shaine Meier said the purpose of the tourism utility is to draw visitors to Cape May.

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