

City Council squabbles over annual appointments

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — In a 3-2 vote, City Council reappointed Patricia Hendricks as deputy mayor during the city's annual reorganization meeting Jan. 7.

Councilman Shaine Meier nominated Hendricks, while Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan nominated Councilman Zack Mullock for deputy mayor.

Mayor Chuck Lear, Hendricks and Meier voted for Hendricks, while Sheehan and Mullock voted for Mullock, who noted council said it was taking turns with the deputy mayor position.

Frank Corrado was reappointed as city solicitor in a 3-2 vote with Lear, Hendricks and Meier casting positive votes and Sheehan and Mullock casting negative votes.

A vote for Hendricks to serve as a Class III member of the city's Planning Board followed the same 3-2 vote count as did a vote to reappoint Mott MacDonald as municipal engineer. Mullock said the city committed \$2.6 million to the firm during the past three years.

"I think it's time to look at the other engineering services within the county or within the area," he said. "I think we need to bid out our projects and shouldn't just give out these projects without any bidding."

Hendricks said Mott MacDonald was appointed municipal engineer in 2015. Mullock said he would have

avored discussion of the engineering firm choice prior to the meeting.

"If there was a question on any of these resolutions, certainly any council member could have sat down with you and discussed any issues that you had," Lear said. "Sorry that you didn't take that opportunity."

Neil Young was appointed an interim city manager in a unanimous vote while the city continues to seek a full-time manager. Young resigned the position effective the last day of 2019. He will receive \$1,000 per week, according to Corrado.

A resolution for reappointment of Polistina and Associates as engineer for inspection of projects approved by the city's planning and zoning boards was passed in a 4-1 vote, with Mullock casting the lone "no" vote.

A resolution for appointing members to various boards and commissions of the city for 2020 passed in a 3-2 vote, with Mullock and Sheehan casting dissenting votes.

Mullock said council was not looking for any consensus on any committee or the Planning Board, Zoning Board or Shade Tree Commission.

"All of those selections have been made without consensus or consultation of council member Sheehan or myself," he said.

Mullock said six seats on the Planning Board are opening, of which he and Sheehan would not be able to select any of the members. He said it could have been an op-

portunity for council to find consensus, work together and try to compromise.

"When I vote 'no' it's not for any of the people that were selected. Frankly, I'm fine with them, but working together, trying to find some compromise is what we have to do and that's not happening," Mullock said.

He said two members of the Planning Board are real estate agents. Hendricks, who is a Realtor, said there are only two licensed agents on the Planning Board. Mullock said he disagreed but would not provide names.

Lear asked City Clerk Patricia Habora how many letters of interest were received for the openings on the Planning Board. She said two letters were received.

Mullock said he had announced the name of his choice for the Planning Board. Sheehan asked how other members of the Planning Board were reappointed without submitting letters of interest. Lear said council could set a policy requiring those with expiring terms on boards to submit a letter of interest but no such policy is in effect.

Hendricks said she contacted the two persons who had written letters of interest and "had an intelligent conversation with which to make a decision." Sheehan said her "no" vote did not reflect on the persons named in the resolution.

Council passed a resolution regarding the process for council appointments to advisory committees and



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE
Cape May Deputy Mayor Patricia Hendricks receives her oath of office from City Clerk Patricia Habora during the city's annual reorganization meeting Jan. 7.

boards and commissions. Lear said he discussed with Corrado a provision in the resolution regarding council discussing appointments to advisory committees in closed session. Corrado said after researching the topic, he was confident it would withstand a legal challenge.

Hendricks said she wanted to see that provision removed pertaining to advisory committees. She said her preferred method is to contact anyone who submitted a letter of interest. Sheehan said she wanted to retain the provision.

In a 3-2 vote, council amended the resolution to allow council, if necessary, to meet in closed session to discuss the appointments to boards and commission but not advisory committees.

ganization.

The resolution passed in a unanimous vote. It calls for posting openings on boards, commissions and advisory committees on the city's website and having interested persons to submit a letter to the city clerk.

Council will be notified by the clerk of those interested and each council member shall review the names and qualifications of interested persons.

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Point plans stormwater work to start in February

By RACHEL SHUBIN
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — Commissioner Bob Mullock said the borough continues to work on the stormwater management program on the west side of town.

"There are a large number of French drains which don't work in the atmosphere with the rain we [have been] getting," Mullock said at a Jan. 9 meeting.

He said there are several towns suffering from flooding that occurs in nonstorm situations.

"The drain construction will go down to Yale Avenue and nearby adjoining streets, going past the firehouse," Mullock said.

The construction will begin on about Feb. 1 and last 90 days. The winter start date is to preclude going into late May, June or July, Mullock said.

"Working during those months, we realize the asphalt plants are down and do not produce asphalt in the winter time," Mullock said. "Much of the construction [will] be completed and then we will connect all the drains."

Some of the French drains are 2.5 feet deep, which is not very deep during a rainstorm, Mullock said.

"There will be a rough surface and 4-foot-wide strip taking care of the street sewer," Mullock said. "The lines will be covered with material but will not be paved before the plants open on April 1."

Mullock said eventually the water will be directed in its natural flow toward Lake Lily.

"We also have the current project over on Cen-

tral [Avenue] around the circle, which is essentially completed," Mullock said. "Again, the asphalt plants are closed so we don't have a finished surface yet; there is a rough surface down ready to drive on."

Areas of the street that align with driveways will be finished when the asphalt is down, he said.

In other news, Mullock followed up on his previous report of the borough's water not being of sufficient quality.

"I discussed it with the city of Cape May, as they supply us with the water," Mullock said. "Our crew tested the water, which they do weekly, and found that there were insufficient chemicals in the water."

The water reading was 0 and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) requires a reading of 0.2.

"It was reported to the DEP and discussed and analyzed by the water people in Cape May," Mullock said. "Our own staff tested it in a number of different places in the borough. They flushed out the water and it met the standard today."

Mullock said he will continue to address the water quality in further discussions with Cape May.

"We are being charged a significant amount of water and it should be meeting standards," he said. "We will find out whether this is a systematic problem or someone made the same mistake as last time."

Mayor Bob Moffatt said the borough will continue to try to reach a resolution on houses in disrepair around the borough.

"It's a very unfortunate problem because there are multiple people involved,"

Moffatt said. "There are ill family members and it is all tied up. We're going to reach out to the people we have addresses for and see where we can go with that legally."

Resident Connie Campanella asked the commissioners if there was a process to be set in motion for adopting legal authority over abandoned or vacant houses.

Solicitor Brock Russell said it would require an ordinance.

"Some of these properties are beyond the pale and really devalue their neighbors," Campanella said.

Moffatt said the three houses that come to mind are all unique cases.

"The goal is more compassionate than legal," Moffatt said.

Resident Catherine Busch asked Deputy Mayor Anita VanHeeswyk about the projected timeframe for the borough's new website.

"We were shooting for Jan. 1 but I don't think we are too far away," VanHeeswyk said. "It's going to be worth the wait."

Clerk Elaine Wallace said there were a few departments that still need descriptions for the website.



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