

# Voll warns Sheehan of overstepping on fire contract

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council voted against going into closed session to discuss negotiations for a new firefighters contract as suggested by Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan, something City Manager Mike Voll made clear was his job.

During a meeting May 4, Councilman Chris Bezaire said he did not think it was City Council's job to be involved in ongoing labor negotiations.

"To my knowledge, City Manager Voll has not asked us to intervene yet, he hasn't hit a roadblock where he needs direction from council, and I think that would be the only time it would be appropriate for council to go into closed session to discuss an ongoing labor negotiation," he said.

Sheehan said she felt the role of council, when it comes to labor contracts, was to direct the city manager.

"I think it is the duty of the council to give him some direction on how we want to go with contracts," she said. "As a council, we have not met with the city manager concerning these contracts or with any of the blue-collar or white-collar contracts, and I think that's our duty to talk with him and say the direction we want to go and what we feel the raise should be and for him to work toward that raise."

Council has given the city manager direction with other contracts, Sheehan said.

She said council should inform Voll what salary raise he should be trying to reach and what council wants out of the firefighter contracts.

"I don't appreciate people going around me when I'm trying to manage this city," Voll said. "My job is to negotiate contracts like I just did with the police chief and lieutenant and I bring it to council. Then in closed session you say to me, 'No, you're giving too much. Go back to the table, we don't like this.' That's how it works."

"For us to bring up the firefighters tonight, those guys are thinking you are negotiating their contract," he continued. "That's not how it

works. Your job is to ratify it, approve it or disapprove it, that's how it works."

Sheehan said she disagreed with Voll. He said he appreciated her opinion but disagreed with it.

City solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said if there are policy goals or important items any council member would like to see addressed in contact negotiations, they can be communicated to the city manager outside of council meetings.

"I think that's really the process that should be utilized because, again, the executive function, the administrative function in the Faulkner Act is taken off your shoulders, so you can focus on the big issues," he said.

Cape May's council-manager form of government is governed by the Faulkner Act.

He told Sheehan if she had major priorities she wanted to see in a contract, she should reach out to Voll.

"I don't think we need a

closed session necessarily to discuss that. If you have concerns, if any member of council has concerns, I would encourage you to bring them to the manager. That's what he is there for," Gillin-Schwartz said.

Council should not go into closed session unless absolutely necessary since it is an exception to the Open Public Meetings Act, he said.

Sheehan said it was a problem if each council member went to Voll to express their desires instead of meeting as a group.

Bezaire said if all five council members approach Voll with a different opinion, then Voll should come to council asking for a closed session due to a difference of opinion.

Voll said for the contracts for the police chief and lieutenant, the city clerk sent the contracts to council five days before the council meeting. He said that gave council time to question him.

"We went into closed session anyway just to agree

with what I did," Voll said. "So, if you want to waste my time and money for labor counsel, then continue with your process the way you want it, Stacy."

Sheehan said she has served on council for two years and her suggestion was the way it was handled in the past.

"Maybe you never did it right," Voll said.

He said he did not appreciate any member of council bypassing the city manager's office and wanting to deal directly with city employees.

"It's not right. It's a violation and I'm just going to warn you," Voll said.

Sheehan asked if Voll was inferring she talked with city employees. He said that was the case.

Mayor Zack Mullock pounded his gavel and sug-

gested some of the discussion be saved for closed session. Sheehan said Voll's question to her was not related to the firefighters contract.

Councilman Shaine Meier said it was inappropriate for council to go into closed session to discuss a labor contract before the city manager and labor counsel had finished their work and presented the contract to council.

A 3-2 vote of council shot down having the closed session. Councilwoman Lorraine Baldwin, Meier and Bezaire cast "no" votes.

Mullock said the manager must be allowed to do his work on which council would base its decision.

Voll said he did not want the city's firefighters to get the wrong impression. He said he received their re-

quests for items in the contract and he was reviewing them with the city's labor counsel.

Sheehan said she had not seen the firefighters' requests.

"Or I guess I will never see your requests," she said. During public comment, Jim Matthews, president of the city's volunteer fire department, said Frank Mittleberger is vice president, Alex Coulter is chief of the fire department and Mike Eck is deputy chief.

"We are the people that deal with any fire department business," Matthews said. "No other member is authorized to deal with anything to do with the fire department and I don't think everybody sitting at this front table understands that but that's the way it is."

### TIDES: May 19-26, 2021

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
19	1:37	2:34	8:14	8:09
20	2:38	3:36	9:09	9:18
21	3:42	4:35	10:02	10:24
22	4:44	5:29	10:54	11:26
23	5:43	6:22	11:45	
24	6:39	7:12	12:25	12:35
25	7:34	8:03	1:21	1:25
26	8:27	8:54	2:16	2:15

### MOON PHASES

First quarter, May 19 • full moon, May 26

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