

# Cape May Point commission candidates face off in debate

By RACHEL SHUBIN

Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — The Cape May Point Taxpayers' Association (CMPTA) sponsored a forum featuring the four candidates running for Borough Commission.

The candidates are incumbents Anita VanHeeswyk and Bob Moffatt, and newcomers Mary Kelly and Catherine Busch. The event was moderated by Corinne Robinson of the League of Women Voters of Cape May County.

"In our form of government, three commissioners are elected at large every four years," CMPTA president Connie Campanella said. "The offices they hold carry legislative and executive responsibilities. Each is paid \$10,000 per year for their services. Potential questions for the forum were drafted by a three-person committee of the CMPTA board of directors."

VanHeeswyk first ran for election in 2008 and has served on the Planning Board, Environmental Commission, Friends of Lake Lily and as a trustee of St. Peter's by the Sea. She said her priority issues from 2008 included stopping tax increases, affordable housing protections, plan endorsement from the state, fight against the elimination of Cape May Point school district, clean up the proliferation of trash corrals and beach fortification for the protection of the town.

"We all agree the quality of life in Cape May Point is exceptional. The important work is never done and I would consider it a privilege to be allowed to continue the work that needs to be done for all of us," Van Heeswyk said.

Moffatt thanked the other candidates running for commissioner, even in difficult times. He said he believes in working together for a common goal and focusing on the positive aspects of the community.

"I am the present mayor of Cape May Point and I am here because many of my neighbors, your neighbors, asked me to continue to work for the borough on their behalf," Moffatt said. "Cape May Point is much more than a collection of houses at the shore. I believe all of us are here today because we want to preserve the unique character and sense of place that is Cape May Point."

Busch said she has served her local communities in various positions, as well as volunteer activities in Cape May Point, including volunteering with the Cape May Bird Observatory, CMPTA

and civic club, combined Zoning and Planning Board, chair of Environmental Commission, and the Green Team.

"I've attended nearly every borough meeting for the past six years and gained an understanding of how the government works," Busch said.

Kelly is the co-president of the Planning Board, a non-resident member of both the Civic Club and CMPTA.

"Cape May Point is truly a very special haven and I think I might be able to bring a fresh perspective to the government," Kelly said. "I hope that as a commissioner I could foster a more welcoming government experience with easy access to information and participation for all."

The first question asked the candidates to explain their strengths and weaknesses.

"I am organized, meet all deadlines with work that I do and my staff is respectful of my expectations," VanHeeswyk said.

Kelly said one of her greatest strengths is intellectual curiosity.

"Because I'm not in the government currently that would be a benefit should I be invited to join the commissioners," Kelly said. "One of the weaknesses I've experienced in managing people is setting very high expectations, which sometimes can be unrealistic. On the upside, I am willing to accept the fact [if] I've made a mistake."

Busch said listening to all sides objectively and dispassionately was one of her strengths.

"I hear all perspectives and help all people to achieve a consensus," Busch said. "A weakness for me might be like many who volunteer, at times in my life I have agreed to do many things but have delegated to ask others to take over responsibilities I would normally do myself."

Moffatt said one of his strengths is listening to others, caring and diagnosing the problem.

"As a weak point, I guess I just don't have enough time to devote as much as I would like to devote to these issues in Cape May Point [because] I have a full-time job," Moffatt said.

The second question asked for the top two or three priorities for each candidate.

"I would like to continue to protect and preserve the environment in our town," Busch said. "I would like to better involve citizens in our government and help keep the town small, low-key and welcoming as it is."

Moffatt said his priorities included maintaining the town's sense of community.

"Not just the physical attributes, but the sense of community that I've grown to love in this town," Moffatt said. "People take care of each other, make sure they are okay at home if they are by themselves."

Kelly agreed with Moffatt, stating that there is a wonderful sense of community in Cape May Point.

"Even if you've been here five, 10, or 20 years, you've seen an evolution and change," Kelly said. "We've managed to maintain the goodness of this town and I'm hoping that by working together, we can continue that in the future."

VanHeeswyk said infrastructure issues were a top concern for her. She said people are the core of the town and the best times are when the community members help each other.

"[The] infrastructure issues [include] the beaches, without [which] we would be completely lost."

Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of Cape May Point was the third question.

"I've been very impressed with the work that has been done with the borough to improve the environment at Lake Lily," Kelly said. "We have tried very hard to address quality of life issues in the borough [like] noise, traffic and trash. I think there is more that we can do [in a balanced way]."

VanHeeswyk said the borough's strengths are numerous.

"We're here for one another, care for people so they can live here longer," VanHeeswyk said. "Weaknesses on personal issues, we can be kinder and more respectful at times."

Moffatt said the strength of the town is the people who are drawn to Cape May Point.

"It's a special person that likes a little village like this," Moffatt said. "I think that we do make the difference when it comes to the beaches, the lake and livability of the town. The weaknesses, it's hard to adjust to changes, especially the demographics we are witnessing right now. We need to figure out how to handle that better than we have."

Busch echoed the other candidates on the strength of the people in Cape May Point.

"The infrastructure we have in place in terms of storm water management is strength, as is the foresight in revising the zoning codes many years ago," Busch said. "The key weakness for us is that we have a declining year-round population. We need to have enough people

here to run a government year-round. As property values increase here, it becomes harder for longtime residents to afford it."

The fourth question asked how the candidates would address and follow through with the increased number of tourists, traffic and trash in regards to maintaining the diverse ecosystem.

"I think we would start with trying to educate people about the importance of feeding the waterfowl in Lake Lily," Moffatt said. "We were the first beach in New Jersey to ban smoking on the beaches because of the butts. I think for those who rent or buy in Cape May Point if they are given a little bible of understanding about what this town is all about and [our] fragile ecosystem."

Busch said education and outreach are one of the things the borough can do to encourage recycling, decrease single-use plastics, dune protection and traffic calming.

It has been an extremely difficult year and not just for Cape May Point, VanHeeswyk said.

"It isn't just Cape May Point having problems," VanHeeswyk explained. "Many people don't think as carefully as they should on vacation and these are long-term issues."

Education and outreach is way to protect Cape May Point, Kelly said.

"I know there is an aversion to it, but I think that this might be an opportunity for education through signage," Kelly said. "It can be done gracefully with artistic embellishments and incorporated throughout the borough."

The fifth question was a multi-part question that encompassed increasing water rates, flood insurance rates and Cape May Point becoming an enclave for only those who can afford it.

"The consequences of that change [are] people are not coming here to retire, people who own homes are retiring and move away when they need assisted living," VanHeeswyk said. "The high prices are people using their homes just to vacation. The water rates are something as we talked about, we are looking at an ordinance about banning pools. The potable water here is so pricey it's desalinated water and there's a limited amount."

VanHeeswyk said the increasing prices are a result of the market and the government cannot limit who purchases in Cape May Point.

"I don't believe that Cape May Point is an enclave for only the wealthy. There are

cottages that people want to live in," Kelly said. "A cottage generally doesn't lend itself to what has happened with new development. It's a reflection of what is going on in the economy and I don't think there is a way for it to be stopped."

On the water issue, Kelly said focusing on doubling efforts to save trees for water retention is an important consideration.

"I take issue with the premise of the question. I don't think people are changing who moves here because of our water rates, flood insurance and recycling," Busch said. "Coastal communities are in demand throughout the country and prices are going up."

Moffatt agreed with VanHeeswyk and Busch, Cape May Point is not the only town seeing these increases.

The sixth question was what the candidate would recommend doing if the borough received a million-dollar grant with no strings attached.

Busch said she would pursue a pavilion in the pavilion circle as a place for undercover events.

Moffatt said he would use the money to bring people the information they need when building and expanding, or considering flood insurance.

Kelly said she would update the borough's access to construction files.

VanHeeswyk said she would digitize years' worth of construction files.

Question seven asked how the candidates would ensure all "Pointers," regardless of age or ability, can enjoy the beaches fully.

Kelly said Dune Day is a wonderful thing, as well as the plantings offered by the CMPTA.

VanHeeswyk said she received word that Cape May Point's municipal public access plan was approved, allowing the beaches to continue to be accessible.

Moffatt said the beach patrol goes out of their way to help people who have problems getting on and off the beach.

Busch said larger platforms have been requested for some beach entrances, which may be worth pursuing.

The eighth question asked the candidates if they were presented with a proposal for a new piece of public infrastructure, how they would determine if it was worth implementing.

Moffatt said it is a process the borough is currently going through this process with the public works building and emergency shelter to provide safety and withstand a Category 5 hurricane.

Busch said any large infrastructure project should be evaluated to see if it is a safety need for the borough, how it has been engineered, funded and undergo a transparent process on why it's essential.

VanHeeswyk said doing a cost/benefit analysis would be important as well as the lifespan of the building.

Kelly said taxes and budget are a consideration she would make. Depending on the proposal, she would identify experts to help evaluate the assessment.

Question nine encompassed whether candidates were satisfied or wanted to change the Cape May Point zoning codes.

VanHeeswyk said she wouldn't want to overstep the Planning Board and would hesitate to change anything in the zoning without having

someone to look at it overall and know the future effects.

Kelly agreed with VanHeeswyk, considering the potential impacts as well as tweaking the zoning documentation to consider new weather patterns and the master plan vegetation.

Busch said she is satisfied with the zoning code. She said she would consider promoting sustainable and green architecture as an incentive.

Question 10 addressed how the candidates would change Cape May Point's lack of involvement with social media and the inability to host online meetings.

Busch said it's essential for homeowners to have access to the latest information from the borough. She would explore an electronic newsletter and Zoom meetings after the pandemic concludes.

Moffatt said he is not a fan of social media and there is more that can be done to enhance communication between residents and the borough itself.

Kelly said she would like to see the borough send text alerts, streaming meetings for those who can't participate in meetings held during the day and searchable databases to review the commission minutes with ease.

VanHeeswyk has taken classes on social media for municipalities and the Cape May Point lifeguards utilize social media. But accessibility issues are a consideration, she added.

Question 11 asked the candidates what would be their approach to historic preservation in Cape May Point.

Kelly said the problem is everyone's perspective of what should be preserved is different. Without assessing the community's desire, it would be impossible to determine the correct approach.

"Millions of dollars were spent on both sides trying to save the Beach Theatre in Cape May," VanHeeswyk said. "The city didn't prevail, the group trying to save it didn't prevail. Cape May Point doesn't have millions of dollars to try to save something that the owner appeals it."

Moffatt said getting the opinions of the Cape May Point residents is important.

"Even if something is certified as historically significant, the property owner can do whatever they want with it. They can demolish it," Moffatt said.

Busch said she supports surveying the property owners to find out what community support there is for historic preservation. Providing a clear description of restrictions of property owners, the cost to the borough and a list of properties that would be impacted would need to be determined.

The final question was what the borough government could do to encourage more people to become residents and to support/foster volunteerism.

"We have many volunteers in Cape May Point," Moffatt said. "When we do send out letters we can make suggestions for each effort."

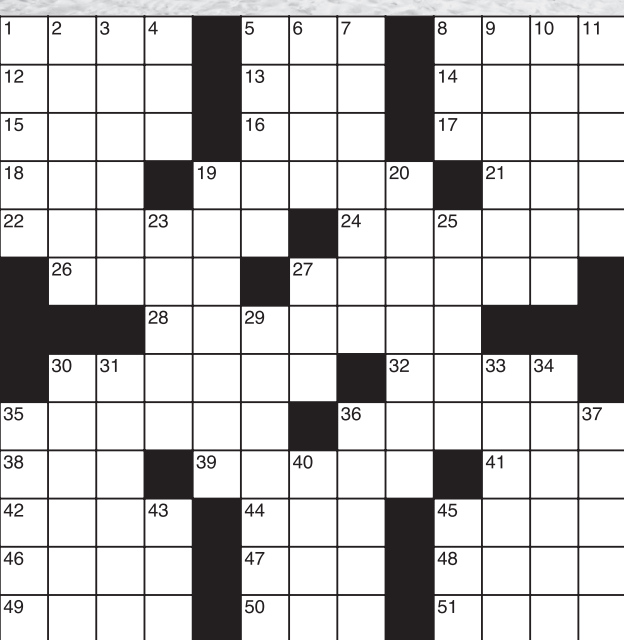
Busch said the borough could work in partnership with the volunteer groups to make Cape May Point a four-season community, such as promoting seasonal activities.

VanHeeswyk said the market is driven by the sunshine and has a different dynamic with people realizing they can work from home.

Kelly said it all starts with asking and talking with neighbors to inform them of activities.

## Beach Break

Relax, life takes time...



## Crossword

### ACROSS

- Neighborhood
- Use snow runners
- Original garden
- Storage containers
- Zilch
- The \_\_\_ Ranger
- Evans' opposites
- Entirely
- Electrical device
- Game cube
- \_\_\_ of passage
- Bundy son
- Glossy paint
- Ship's kitchen
- Developed
- Prized
- Like
- Sweetie
- Disorder
- Decrease
- Straight

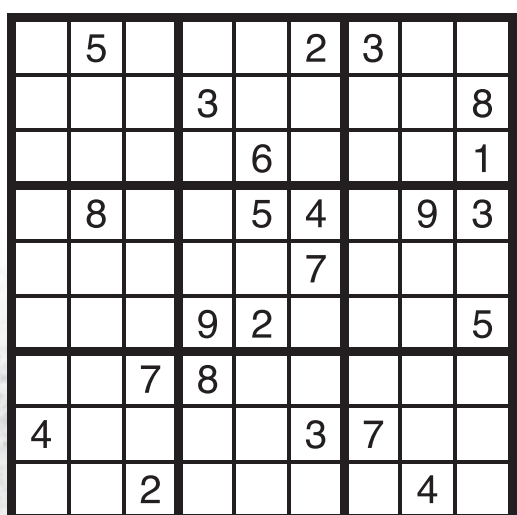
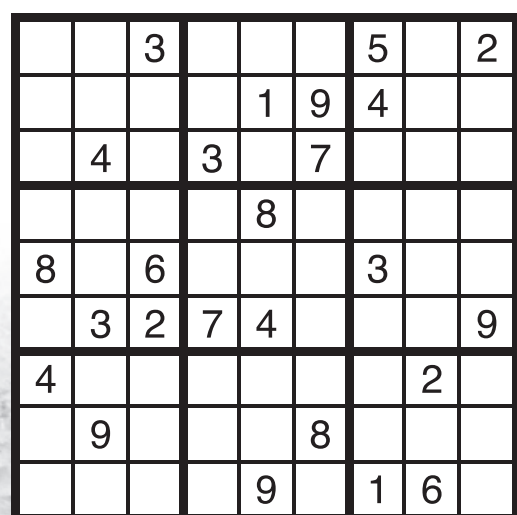
- Picnic spoiler
- Audition tapes
- Train unit
- Attempt
- Disintegrate
- Law
- So long, in Liverpool: 2 wds.
- Chimpanzee
- Metallic rocks
- Child's snow slider
- Was ahead
- Bunks

### DOWN

- Residence
- Going by bus
- Make beloved
- Donkey
- Slow shell-dweller
- Highlander's attire
- Forbidden

- Fairy
- Twin
- Resulted
- Down-and-out
- Telegraphed again
- Deli meats
- Buttes' kin
- Tempter
- Contend
- \_\_\_ spring (spa)
- Kind of floss
- Manor
- Safe
- Climbed
- Survives
- Loved too much
- Ringlet
- Sulk
- Evil
- Filch

## Sudoku



HOW TO PLAY: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 only once. Each 3x3 box is outlined with a darker line. You already have a few numbers to get you started. Remember: You must not repeat the numbers 1 through 9 in the same line, column, or 3x3 box.

HAVE YOU READ THE  
"MESSAGES"

WWW.MEDJUGORJE.ORG



"Thank you for responding to my call"

### Pray the Rosary

Our Blessed Mother and Pope John Paul II asked us to pray the Rosary daily for PEACE.

The Rosary is prayed every day:

Monday – Saturday after the 8:30 am Holy Mass  
at

St. Augustine's Church

Monday – Saturday before the 9 am Holy Mass

at

St. Frances Cabrini Church

The Rosary is prayed:

Every Friday before the 4:00pm Holy Mass at

Our Lady of Good Counsel Church  
ALL ARE WELCOME!