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Lear to retire as part of settlement

Cape May agrees not to pursue disciplinary action in use of comp time

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — During an emergency meeting Oct. 13, City Council approved a settlement agreement with police Lt. Chuck Lear, allowing him to retire in July and not face any disciplinary action for alleged unauthorized use of comp time.

In June, City Council passed a resolution directing City Manager

Bruce MacLeod to issue disciplinary charges against Lear, noting he was the subject of complaints and an internal administrative investigation concerning allegations of accrual and use of compensatory time contrary to city personnel policy, the terms of his contract, a state statute and Cape May Police Department rules and regulations.

A disciplinary hearing began Oct. 13 overseen by retired Superior Court-Appellate Division

Judge Richard Williams using the city's municipal courtroom. Before any proceedings were started, attorneys for both parties met behind closed doors for three hours.

During the noon hour, Williams announced an agreement had been reached, noting if the hearing had commenced, it would have lasted all week, possibly stretching into the following week. Seats were reserved in the courtroom for 18 witnesses.

Williams said both parties had serious issues at stake.

Following a unanimous vote of council, City Solicitor Tony Monzo said the agreement process began with a settlement offer from Lear's attorney John Eastlack the previous day. Monzo said it contained terms and conditions that were not acceptable to the city but it opened up discussion between the parties.

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Lower OKs funding for Roseanne Ave. project

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — In a unanimous vote Monday, Lower Township Council approved a \$4.7 million bond ordinance to provide for drainage and stormwater improvements and road reconstruction to Roseanne Avenue and the Bayshore Estates area.

The township will continue to seek proposals for engineering services for the project until the next council meeting in two weeks.

At an Oct. 5 Township Council meeting, Deputy Mayor Norris Clark asked Township Manager Jim Ridgway if he made any attempt to put engineering services for the Roseanne Avenue project out for quotes. He said he had not.

At Monday's meeting, Ridgway reported Lower Township's Qualified Purchasing Agent Margaret Vitelli reached out to four engineering firms on a list of engineers preapproved by the township. Vitelli said all four declined to submit a proposal.

"There's no engineers that want to bid on this at all?" asked Mayor Michael Beck.

Clark asked when Vitelli sent out the request for proposals. Vitelli said she sent out the request Oct. 7 with a deadline of proposals set for Oct. 16.

She said she included in the proposal request an investigation report on the project from the engineering firm of Hatch Mott MacDonald. Vitelli said the four engineering firms contacted for a proposal were T and M Associates, Fralinger Engineering, MV Engineering and Vince Orlando of EDA Associates.

Vitelli said the firms responded with emails indicating they were not interested in the project. Orlando replied Oct. 19, stating he was unable to get needed price quotes and asked for a time extension of a few weeks.

Clark asked if a week was the standard amount of time to request a quote for a large project. Vitelli said the township has not requested engineering proposals for a large project in the past but instead used the contracted engineer.

Beck asked why the timeline was so short for the proposals. Vitelli said council needed proposals for their Oct. 19 meeting. Beck asked why more time was not allowed for engineering firms to create proposals.

Clark said he supported the Roseanne

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Resident questions report on parking

By BETTY WUND
Special to the Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — It was time for the public to question their government's decisions. At the Oct. 14 Borough Commission meeting, residents made known their feelings about the discussions the commissioners have had in recent weeks about a Business Task Force report and parking.

Although it is just a report of concepts, the report on parking did not sit well with resident and innkeeper Jim Labrusciano, who ran for a commission seat in 2009. He referred to an article in the Cape May Star and Wave's Sept. 30 issue saying that he saw the comments about the last meeting meant that the commission had made decisions on parking.

Deputy Mayor Peter Burke said the comments he made at the work session were suggestions he received from business people and that no decisions had been made. Mayor Pam Kaithern restated that the work session was to review the task force report on parking as it relates to its concept of what the borough

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Tonka tough!

A downpour dampened participants in Cape May's Halloween parade Saturday, Oct. 17, but didn't dampen their spirits. Above, the Roffett brothers from Cape May drive their F-150 truck along the parade route undaunted by the raindrops.

City Council hopefuls state positions during Candidates Night

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council candidates Roger Furlin and Patricia Gray Hendricks shared their opinions, platforms and hopes for Cape May during Candidates Night on Oct. 15, agreeing on a number of issues but differing on reinstating former police chief Robert Sheehan, combining area elementary schools and the transparency of the operating budget of Convention Hall.

The forum was sponsored by the Taxpayers Association of Cape May and moderated by Diane Young of the League of Women Voters. The candidates drew questions from a basket placed on the moderator's podium. The final 20 minutes of the forum al-

lowed audience members to question the candidates.

Parking garage

Regarding the need for more parking lots or the construction of a parking garage in Cape May, Hendricks said the city's master plan suggested considering a parking garage if the tourist season were longer. She suggested looking at paper streets in Cape May that could be used for parking.

"If you invite 40,000 people to come see you, you better have accommodations and you better have parking," Hendricks said.

She said council, rather than a committee, should focus on the problem.

Furlin said the city has only so much land available, which prevented build-

ing additional parking lots. He said years ago the suggestion was made to construct a parking garage at the current location of Collier's Liquors. Furlin said the question was whether the city wanted to spend the capital costs to construct a parking garage.

"Let the citizens decide whether they want to put that kind of investment in the city right now," he said, adding that he did not see any other parking alternatives.

Convention Hall

On what the new council member would do to address Convention Hall not having a transparent operating budget or business plan, Furlin said an operating budget for Convention Hall was presented at a council meeting last

June. He said the hall's budget was part of the city's Tourism Utility budget.

"It's very, very difficult to separate the two because there are a lot of resources being used between the Tourism Utility and the Convention Hall itself," Furlin said, adding that he did not believe Convention Hall would ever show a profit by itself.

When the hall was being built, there were a number of arguments that it should be a community center and not just a convention center, he said.

"Supporting it completely as a convention center I don't think is a viable option," he said.

He said the city lacks rooms for conventions and has insufficient parking. Furlin said he does not think the budget of Convention Hall should be

separated from the Tourism Utility but accounting could make the costs viewable to the public.

Hendricks said the Tourism Utility was introduced as the center of Cape May's economic development plan that would provide fiscal and operational accountability.

"Today, the financial accountability of the convention center is being treated like a shell game that should be reserved for the boardwalk," she said.

Without a profit and loss statement, the city cannot know what is working and what to improve, Hendricks said.

"It's unacceptable for the city to try and hide information that reflects poorly on its own decisions and storylines.

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in honor of whose lives have been touched by cancer

Raise awareness of the importance of character in people and to raise money for the Gene Sole Scholarship Fund.

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CAPE MAY CONVENTION HALL

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