

Cape May ends year of change, animosity

Continued from Page A1

grades to Rotary Park started to take shape. City Council also began a feasibility study of its beach slope, which has been blamed for multiple spinal injuries over a long period.

January

New council members: On Jan. 1, three new City Council members received their oaths of office: Bea Pessagno, Jerry Inderwies Jr. and Shaune Meier.

New mayor: Robert Moffatt was sworn as mayor of Cape May Point on Jan. 8, replacing Anita vanHeeswyk. Moffatt served four years prior as a borough commissioner.

Drones: On Jan. 28, New Jersey Institute of Technology tested drone flights from a seldom-used airstrip at Coast Guard Training Center Cape May. An Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) traveled one nautical mile over the Atlantic Ocean in a circular flight path. The drone spent an hour flying at an altitude between 2,500 and 3,000 feet, making loops to map the area between the base and Cape May Inlet.

Nor'easter shifts: While forecasts for Jan. 26 called for 6 to 12 inches of snow in Cape May County, most areas received an inch or less. The forecast snowfall totals never materialized when the bulk of the storm shifted to the east, remained offshore and the nor'easter gained strength later than originally forecast.

February

Trees preserved: An updated plan for refurbishment of Rotary Park calls for preserving old trees. Mayor's Advisory Committee Chairman Curtis Bashaw said the largest change since the original Temple University students' plan involved rethinking whether all the trees in the park needed to be removed. He said the current plan preserves seven or eight of the existing trees.

Fire department funds: Councilman Jerry Inderwies Jr. requested \$70,000 be restored to the fire department's budget Feb. 25 for more paid fire personnel and more surplus be used to reduce a 1-cent property tax increase. He cast the lone vote against the city budget.

Higher seawall: City Council approved a \$475,000 bond ordinance Feb. 17 to fund a feasibility study of raising the height of the seawall along Beach Avenue from Madison Avenue to Wilmington Avenue and extending it around the corner to New Jersey Avenue. The ordinance appropriated \$500,000 and bonded an additional \$475,000.

Dot Burton dies: On Feb. 28, Dot Burton, famous for cooking fried chicken at the Chalfonte Hotel, passed away at the age of 88. She began working at the hotel at the age of 9. Her fried chicken was rated best in the nation by USA Today.

March

Chief demoted, councilman quits: On his one-year anniversary as police chief March 3, City Council voted 3-2 to remove Robert Sheehan from his position.

Outraged by the decision, Councilman Jerry Inderwies Jr. resigned from council and left City Hall. The audience was filled with officers from other police departments



INDERWIES

including police chiefs from Middle and Lower townships, Stone Harbor and former Cape May Police Chief Diane Sorantino offering their support for Sheehan. City Solicitor Tony Monzo said the city received a letter March 2 from the county Prosecutor's Office instructing council not to have any discussion of a matter that was still a pending criminal investigation, with no discussion taking place in open session.

Prosecutor places monitor: Due to the release of what he termed confidential information from an internal affairs investigation and other actions by the city of Cape May, County Prosecutor Robert Taylor installed a retired State Police major as a monitor in the Police Department. Detective Mark Weeks from the county Prosecutor's Office would serve as a monitor and buffer between the Cape May Police Department and the city administration.

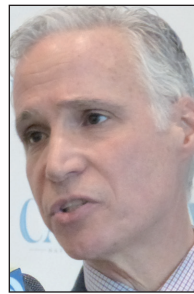
Seeking new well: The city submitted an application to the state Department of Environmental Protection Environmental Infrastructure Trust for a grant and loan to install a new well into the 800-foot Atlantic City Sands aquifer to support the city's desalination plant.

No tax hike: The boroughs of Cape May Point and West Cape May introduced their 2015 budgets with no tax increase.

Chamber endorses Sheehan: The Chamber of Commerce of Greater Cape May released a statement March 11 opposing the demotion of former Police Chief Robert Sheehan to captain.

Monzo requests retraction: City Solicitor Tony Monzo asked for a retraction of a statement from County Prosecutor Robert Taylor accusing him of "cherry picking" a statement from a letter to his office concerning an investigation of acting Police Chief Robert Sheehan, making it sound as if the chief was the target of a criminal investigation. Monzo, Mayor Edward Mahaney and City Manager Bruce

MacLeod addressed the media at a news conference March 19 that was billed as providing additional information on a recent Police Department investigation. Mahaney stated the Prosecutor's Office had indicated its investigation into the city's Police Department was administrative in nature.



MONZO

April

Sheehan files whistle-blower suit: Former Police Chief Robert Sheehan sued the city of Cape May for reinstatement and lost wages, claiming he was being punished for bringing an administrative matter to the county Prosecutor's Office. According to the complaint, Sheehan was correct in placing the issue of Lt. Chuck Lear's alleged misuse of comp time under investigation of the county Prosecutor's Office. The complaint stated City Manager Bruce MacLeod and City Solicitor Tony Monzo wanted to take disciplinary action against Lear without Sheehan's involvement.

Wichterman fills vacant seat: City Council appointed former Deputy Mayor Jack Wichterman to fill a vacant seat created by the resignation of Jerry Inderwies Jr. in March. Wichterman served on council from 2002 to 2004 and from 2010 to 2014.

Top 10 beach: Family Vacations Critic named Cape May among the Top 10 family beaches in the nation.

School pool bids too high: Bids to replace Cape May City Elementary School's 50-year-old swimming pool came in much higher than anticipated. The pool had been closed since August 2013 due to leaks.

Committee files petition to recall Mahaney: A committee filed a Notice of Intent to Recall Edward Mahaney as mayor April 27. The recall committee consisted of Charles Hendricks, Thomas Keene and Mary Jo Pinelli. The committee cited Mahaney's "flagrant violation of the Faulkner Act." In addition, the committee cited Mahaney, Deputy Mayor Terri Swain and Councilwoman Bea Pessagno for casting "unlawful votes to rescind Robert Sheehan's position as chief of police." The committee also claimed the mayor wasted tax dollars by approving questionable one-source contracts to Temple University "overseeing the disastrous construction and operation of Convention Hall."

No beer garden in West Cape May: Borough Commission agreed unanimously to deny the request by the business association to have a beer garden in Wilbraham Park for a future event.

May

A Coast Guard Community: The U.S. Coast Guard's top official, Commandant Adm. Paul Zukunft, presented a proclamation May 8 declaring Cape May and Cape May County as a Coast Guard Community. The event led off three days of activities highlighting the relationship between the Coast Guard and community.

Wineries may hold special events: The county Agricultural Development Board ruled May 18 in favor of allowing wineries on preserved farmland to hold special events such as weddings and birthday parties. Wineries will be limited to serving alcoholic beverages produced at their locations.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Appearing before county Superior Court Judge Christopher Gibson on May 22, Cape May presented arguments why a monitor appointed by Prosecutor Robert Taylor should be removed.

Cape May asks judge to eliminate monitor: Appearing before county Superior Court Judge Christopher Gibson on May 22, Cape May presented its arguments why a monitor appointed by county Prosecutor Robert Taylor should be removed from the city's Police Department. The city argued the Prosecutor's Office was interfering with its ability to communicate with police administration.

Taylor files counterclaim: County Prosecutor Robert Taylor filed a counterclaim against the city's civil suit in Superior Court May 27. Cape May officials and Taylor faced off in Superior Court Judge Christopher Gibson's courtroom May 22. Cape May argued why a monitor should be removed from the police department. In his counterclaim, Taylor stated Cape May City Manager Bruce MacLeod "cannot be trusted to observe and follow the law and should be disqualified or removed from the city as the appropriate authority" over the police department.

June

Committee recommends more firefighters: A committee reviewing the staffing of the city's Fire Department recommended the hiring of three full-time firefighters in January 2016. Adding three staffers would increase the number of firefighters on duty per shift from four to five. Increasing the number of career staff to 17 year round allows for seven firefighters per shift from mid-May to mid-September and the ability to put as many as three ambulances on the road with staff at the firehouse, according to the committee's recommendations.

Point residents complain of construction woes: Several residents attending a June 11 Borough Commission meeting complained about construction trucks blocking a beach entrance and piles of dirt and gravel in the street. Commissioner Bob Mullock stated the



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

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amount of construction taking place in the borough was far beyond anything he had witnessed in 30 years.

Lear to face discipline for comp time use: Following a lengthy closed session June 16, City Council passed a resolution in a unanimous vote to discipline Lt. Chuck Lear for alleged comp time abuse which was the center of the demotion of Chief Robert Sheehan and the county prosecutor placing a monitor on the police department. The resolution noted a Civil Service Disciplinary Action would be served on Lear and any disciplinary hearing would proceed in accordance with city statutes and be presided over by an independent hearing officer.

Motion to reinstate Sheehan fails: A motion made by Councilman Jack Wichterman to reinstate Robert Sheehan as police chief failed in a 2-2 vote June 16. Wichterman and Councilman Shaune Meier voted to reinstate Sheehan while Mayor Edward Mahaney and Councilwoman Bea Pessagno cast "no" votes. Deputy Mayor Terri Swain was absent.

Plans for Lafayette Street Park: A special City Council meeting was held June 22 to gather input for phase one of Lafayette Street Park. In total, the park would cover 40 acres from the elementary school to St. Johns Street. Mayor Edward Mahaney stated the city acquired a \$1.5 million Green Acres/Blue Acres grant to purchase the former Vance's Bar property. Part of the property will undergo remediation for contaminants by Jersey Central Power and Light. The mayor said the park would be constructed in phases without using taxpayer money.

Council backs down on Carney's closing early: Council backed down from approving a resolution that would have required Carney's Restaurant and Bar at 411 Beach Ave to stop serving alcohol at midnight and close its doors at 12:30 a.m. in order to renew its liquor license with the city. The resolution based the proposed restrictions on calls for service from the Police Department to the "premises on numerous occasions over the past several years."

July

Cape May loses bid to have monitor removed: Superior Court Judge Christopher Gibson in a comprehensive opinion issued July 13 denied Cape May's five applications for injunctive relief and a declaratory judgment against county Prosecutor Robert Taylor. Gibson denied the city's demand a monitor from the Prosecutor's Office be removed from the city's Police Department. He also denied the city's application to declare the prosecutor exceeded his lawful authority.

Foot legal bills: City Council approved resolutions July 22 providing funding for the legal defense of City Manager Bruce MacLeod and City Clerk Louise Cumiskey.

Lifeguard Oat honored: Bill Oat, who served on the Cape May and Cape May Point Beach Patrol for 50 years, was honored at a special event July 26 at the Chalfonte Hotel. He said it was impossible for him to offer a number of the rescues in which he had taken part.

August

Former Point mayor dies: Former Cape May Point Mayor Carl Schupp passed away Aug. 1 in Knoxville, Tenn. He served three terms as a commissioner and mayor before retiring in 2010.

Legal bills within budget: The city's legal bills from Jan. 1, 2014, to July 31, 2015, totaled \$499,000, according to City Manager Bruce MacLeod. He said the city's 2015 current fund was budgeted for legal costs of \$575,000 with a balance of \$463,000 remaining in the account.

Cape May approves water-loss settlement: City Council approved a \$350,000 settlement agreement with West Cape May for 121 million gallons of water Cape May sold to the borough from its desalination plant from 2003 to 2009 but did not deliver

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Date	TIDES : January 2016			
	High		Low	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
6	5:05	5:18	11:11	11:03
7	5:49	6:04	11:56	11:46
8	6:31	6:48		12:39
9	7:12	7:31	12:29	1:22
10	7:53	8:14	1:13	2:04
11	8:35	8:59	1:58	2:47
12	9:19	9:45	2:45	3:32
13	10:05	10:35	3:35	4:18

MOON PHASES
New moon, Jan. 10 • First quarter, Jan. 16

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