

Lower's new deputy mayor looking to give back

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township's new deputy mayor, Frank Sippel, dedicated 36 years of his life in service to the nation, retiring in 2015 as a command sergeant major in the New Jersey Army National Guard. Now he wants to serve the community in which he has lived

and raised his family. Sippel was deployed in operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and spent 15 years based at the National Guard Armory in Cape May Court House, as well as being headquartered in Woodbury and Atlantic City. As state command sergeant major for the New Jersey National Guard, Sippel said had responsibility

for 8,000 enlisted soldiers and airmen. He said during Desert Storm, he and a soldier named Stan Longo, of Lower Township, were credited with saving the lives of 13 soldiers. They were awarded a Soldier's Medal for Heroism, Sippel said. He also received eight other medals.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Sippel moved to

Lower Township in 1977 and joined the National Guard in 1979 at the age of 19. He received a college degree in the military.

"Two of my sons, my youngest and middle son, are both following in my footsteps and are both staff sergeants in the National Guard," Sippel said.

While the military requires avoidance of politics, Sippel said it was in the back of his mind to give back to his community. He said as he neared retirement, he took college courses including government.

Sippel said he began attending Lower Township Council meetings one year ago. He said it was his wish to make the township a better place to live.

"As you rise through the ranks of the Army, you can make a lot of good things happen," Sippel said. "One of the satisfying parts of serving in the military is looking back at all the soldiers you've helped and all the different families you've helped over the years."

After retiring, Sippel said he missed helping soldiers and their families, which helped him to decide to get involved with public service.

He said one of his current priorities is finding scholarship money to allow children of low-income families to be able to participate in township recreation programs.

"I want to help the kids of the township so they are not hanging on the corners, to make sure they are going down the right path of life," Sippel said.

Coaching in Lower Township in a variety of sports has been a part of Sippel's life for more than 15 years. He currently referees high school and youth basketball and soccer. Sippel said he coached his three sons from kindergarten through high school.

A trust fund supported by

local businesses to provide scholarship money for low-income youth to participate in recreation programs is in his sights, he said.

Sippel said his desire to serve on council is to give back to the community.

"I've been lucky. I had a great career, I was around good people who treated me well, and it's time for me to give back to the community," he said.

When campaigning door to door prior to the November election, Sippel said he heard residents' concerns about drug addiction in the area.

He said he also intends to help veterans navigate the Veterans Affairs health care system.



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Frank Sippel receives the oath of office from Freeholder Director Gerald Thornton as his son, Frank Jr., left, joins him for the ceremony.

Lower Township

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and children. His wife, Anna, held the Bible.

"We look forward to serving all of you equally," he said.

County Freeholder Director Gerald Thornton administered the oath of office to new Deputy Mayor Frank Sippel, who retired as a command sergeant major from the New Jersey Army National Guard after 32 years of service.

Sippel was surrounded by his family as he received his oath, his father held the Bible. He thanked his co-workers from the county Office of Emergency Management for attending the event.

"It hits home when you serve with people overseas and they come to support you even when you're retired. It means a lot," said Sippel, acknowledging veterans in the audience.

Prior to roll call, Simonsen eyed the official gavel in the possession of Township Manager James Ridgway.

"I'd like that gavel if you don't mind," Simonsen said with a smile. "I've been



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

County Freeholder Jeffrey Pierson administers the oath of office to Erik Simonsen as mayor of Lower Township. Simonsen's wife, Anna, is holding the Bible as his parents and children join him for the ceremony.

looking at that thing for six years."

During council comments, Sippel said he had been asked why he wanted to hold public office.

"When you serve in the military for a lot of years, you learn how to take care of soldiers and take care of their families," he said.

"When I retired, I no longer had that, so this is giving me an opportunity to take care of the residents of Lower Township. That's why I'm here."

Simonsen said council was there "to serve the good Lord, our families, our community and our country."

Township Manager Jim Ridgway reported reconstruction of the Public Safety Building at the county airport was entering Phase III.

"We hope to have the courts, fire safety and rescue back into the new building sometime next summer. Things are going well," he said.

Frisoli bids farewell to LTMUA

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and I didn't know them, but they were told by friends in the school district, where I worked, that if they ever needed help I would be the one to call. They were told that if anyone in the MUA needed help, I would help because that is what I do there (at the school district)," Frisoli said.

He said he started asking for records and the solicitor threatened to put him in jail. He said he had one board member with him for support, Pete Bitting.

"We started at meetings in closed sessions. Labor Day Weekend (2013) the employees were told the MUA would be dissolved. They were told their jobs would be saved, that they would be incorporated into the Lower Township Public Works department. (The Sept. 11, 2013, issue of the Star & Wave reported that the employees were told it was because of privatization.) We stopped it all," he said. "We have never, ever done anything but support our employees."

He thanked crew members and Superintendent Craig Loper for their work through those tough times and mayor elect, then councilman, Eric Simonsen for his support. He introduced Freeholder Jeffrey Pierson, whom he said backed up the MUA through the time of strife.

After being discouraged by the lack of applicants for a new executive director because of the dissension between the board and Lower Township Council, Frisoli said he feels fortunate that Executive Director Mike Chapman took the job. He has made the MUA a better place for all the employees because Chapman supports the employees and the ratepayers, Frisoli said.

Simonsen thanked Frisoli for his hard work and com-

mented that the MUA would not be here now if it weren't for Frisoli. He thanked the board, staff and crew for their efforts to keep rates low and complete jobs on time. The rates have not changed in the last five years and will remain the same in the new year. In the comments from the public session, Don Embs spoke for the staff, thanking Frisoli for all he has done in the last five years.

Resolutions approved at the meeting included appointment of Califero and Kaufmann as employment

attorney adviser and appointment of Mike Chapman as public agency compliance officer. A resolution was approved to authorize the board to advertise to solicit proposals for professional services for 2017.

Marc DeBlasio, of Remington Vernick & Walberg Engineers, reported that the East Villas Water Main Project Phase II application and technical data are complete. He said the engineers hope to get a successful answer from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the first quarter of the

year. Two tasks that will be addressed now are the water system sewage evaluation and the waste water treatment plant evaluation. These should be done in the next few months, he said.

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