

# Lower seeks outside opinion on service contracts

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council voted unanimously to ask the New Jersey State League of Municipalities to recommend a consultant to look at the way the township awards professional service contracts.

At a Feb. 16 meeting, Deputy Mayor Norris Clark said there has been concern over the past year on how the township issues the contracts and how the township handles requests for proposals. He said council recently awarded one of the largest contracts in the history of the township.

In November, the engineering firm of Hatch Mott MacDonald was awarded a contract in a 3-2 vote of \$559,150 to design a project to provide for drainage and storm water improvements and road reconstruction to Roseanne Avenue and the Bayshore Estates area, an area plagued with flooding problems.

Clark said the awarding of the contract received a number of concerns and questions from the audience

and from some members of council. Republicans Tom Conrad, David Perry and Erik Simonsen voted for the contract while independents Clark and Mayor Michael Beck voted against the contract.

Clark said council put out a request for proposals for the contract and received no replies. A second request for proposals was offered. Beck complained council received quotes from three engineering firms only 30 minutes before the start of the council meeting.

Clark said the state comptroller in 2010 issued guidelines for municipalities issuing service contracts. The state guidelines state, "Historically the absence of rigid procedures frequently associated with the government's procurement of services has presented opportunity for abuse by unscrupulous public officials and government contractors."

State guidelines for contracting for services include the pool of contractors solicited should be as expansive as possible, statements of work should be presented in clear terms and proposals

should be judged on the basis of predetermined merit-based criteria made known to vendors before proposals are submitted. In addition, the state recommends criteria should be judged by a qualified evaluation committee, the evaluation process should be explainable to evaluators and vendors and capable of withstanding scrutiny under a protest and the scoring process and award recommendations should be well documented and retained.

"I've asked the mayor to consider the prospect of doing a review of our approach and come up with recommendations for the township to make sure that we have a rhyme and a reason for the way we go about awarding our public service contracts," Clark said.

Beck said proposals for the Roseanne Avenue project were due by 11 a.m. Nov. 2, 2015, but he received the Hatch Mott MacDonald proposal at 7 p.m. at the start of the council meeting and had 33 pages of information to read. He said an average of the two lowest engineering bids for the

Roseanne Avenue project were \$74,000 under Hatch Mott MacDonald's bid. Beck said if administration fees were averaged from the two other bids, it amounted to \$85,000 less.

"If this wasn't a township, if it was a private company and you pulled something like that, people would be fired," he said.

"We have a problem in our township with confidence in the procedure," continued Beck. "I personally believe that what we need to do is to get somebody from outside to come in and take a look at what we've done and every contract that we've handed out since I came on, for the past eight years."

He said the outside consultant would then craft specific guidelines for issuing professional service contracts. Beck said he called the League of Municipalities, which has people who can assist the township on procedure for professional service contracts.

"All we're doing is going meeting to meeting and fighting and it needs to stop," he said.

He made a motion for the

township solicitor to contact the League of Municipalities with council discussion to follow at its next meeting.

Simonsen said the Roseanne Avenue engineering contract received two proposals with two of the proposals deemed as incomplete and those were disqualified. Simonsen said other professional service contracts have been granted with no process. He said he agreed with Beck to an extent.

Councilman Tom Conrad

said if council had accepted one of the incomplete proposals, it could have been sued. He said the proposals left out obtaining necessary permits.

Conrad suggested a council work session March 21 to discuss professional service contract procurement.

"I'd like to see us move forward also to work together on not just this but a lot of other things that are going on in the township," Perry said.

## Authorities find body in burned trailer

LOWER TOWNSHIP — Lower Township police officers discovered an unidentified body Feb. 22 at the scene of a fire in the Shawcrest Mobile Home Park located off Route 47.

According to Prosecutor Robert Taylor, the first responding officers arrived at the scene at the intersection of Diane and Chan-

nel avenues and found a maintenance trailer fully engulfed in flames. Once the fire was extinguished, the remains of an unidentified male were found in the structure.

Detectives from the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office, Lower Township Police Department and investigators from the Cape

May County Fire Marshals Office responded to the scene and a joint investigation is currently under way.

The unidentified male was wearing a red and black plaid flannel shirt and gray sweatpants. Taylor urges anyone with information regarding this incident to contact the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office

at (609) 465-1135 or Lower Township Police Department at (609) 886-1619 or anonymously at (609) 886-2711, ext. 156, via the Cape May County Sheriff's Tip Line at cmssheriff.net and click on anonymous tip, or through the Cape May County Crime-Stoppers at (609) 465-2800 or (877) 465-2801.

## Two charged

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murder, desecrating human remains, conspiracy to desecrate a human body, aggravated sexual assault, hindering apprehension and hindering apprehension of another.

Porto set bail for Mosley at \$1 million cash. Mosley was being held at the Cape May County Jail in lieu of bail.

On Dec. 14, Powers,

## MUA cash

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Beck said.

During public comment, North Cape May resident John Skowronski asked Perry why he voted to request MUA funds. Skowronski said accepting the funding was unfair to MUA ratepayers that instead should receive a lower rate on their water and sewer bills.

Perry said the MUA last year wanted to give the township more money than it needed for its budget.

"It was half-received last year and we're requesting to receive the other half this year," he said.

Villas resident Ed Butler asked Township Manager Jim Ridgway if the \$205,000 was needed "to pull the township out of a hole."

"You must be if you're asking for somebody to donate something to you," Butler said.

Ridgway said that one year ago, the township was close to a 3-cent tax rate increase and was "looking for help in a lot of areas." He said at that point the township talked to the MUA for help and some shared services between the township and MUA.

Ridgway said there was concern from some members of council last year the township's budget the following year would "be like a roller coaster" if the township accepted the MUA money.

"We thought 'Let's spread this over two years and grow the relationship between both parties,' and that's precisely what started," he said.

Public Works has worked with the MUA on several projects, shared vehicles and police on a road proj-

ect, Ridgway said. He said there would be a tax increase if the MUA money were not accepted.

Ridgway said he has recommended a zero tax increase.

"I don't feel we're in a hole. We're currently in a very good financial position, but I asked for it based on the fact of the plan that went in place a year ago," he said. "It wasn't decided

each of armed robbery and conspiracy to commit armed robbery. Harris has not been charged in Angstadt's death.

The same day, authorities learned Mosley, then 32 and a resident of Silver Birch Motel at 1019 Route 47 in Rio Grande, allegedly had a sexual relationship with Angstadt. He was charged with sexual assault of a person at least 13 but less than 16 years of age, endan-

gering the welfare of a child and trespassing.

Taylor urges anyone who may have additional information regarding the investigation to contact the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office at (609) 465-1135 or Middle Township Police at (609) 465-8700, or text TIP MTPDTIPS followed by a message to 888777 or text a tip message using the Cape May County's Sheriff's Department's TIP 411 app.

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