



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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LONGER DAYS? TIME TO GROW HOUSEPLANTS

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Lear now mayor; Hendricks joins council



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Clarence 'Chuck' Lear is sworn in as mayor of Cape May while his wife, Karen, holds the Bible on Sunday, Jan. 1, at City Hall.

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Before a standing-room-only crowd Jan. 1 in City Hall Auditorium, Chuck Lear received his oath of office as the new mayor of Cape May and Patricia Gray Hendricks received her oath as the city's newest council member.

Councilman Shaine Meier received his oath as the city's new deputy mayor. All three received standing ovations following the administration of their oaths by County Clerk Rita Fulginiti.

In its first action of 2017, council appointed Patricia Harbora deputy clerk and Frank Corrado as city solicitor. Lear said Corrado was formerly Cape May's municipal prosecutor. Neil Young, the city's chief financial officer, was appointed interim city manager. Council

approved creating a search committee for a new city manager comprised of former mayor Jerry Gaffney as chairman, John van de Vaarst as vice chairman and members Larry Hirsch, Robert Boyd and Charles Hendricks.

The Cape May Star and Wave was designated as the city's official newspaper. John Amenhauser was appointed as the city's new prosecutor. Corrado explained current prosecutor Marian Ragusa was expected to be appointed as a municipal judge in Middle Township in the next few days.

In his State of the City address, Lear noted he has lived his entire life and raised his family in Cape May.

"As mayor, I am eager to move forward with you knowing our city is ready

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Patricia Hendricks is sworn in as the newest member of City Council in Cape May while her husband, Charles, holds the Bible on Sunday, Jan. 1, at City Hall.

CAPE MAY YEAR IN REVIEW

Beach injuries, park upgrades and a shake-up on City Council

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — In 2016, Cape May replaced a mayor and saw the retirement of its city manager and city clerk. A refurbished Rotary Park opened as well as Phase I of Lafayette Street Park. Injuries in the city's beach surf zone continued to be an issue with no solution found. Revenue from parking meters and beach tags decreased slightly in part due to a rainy May.

January

Lt. Chuck Lear retires: On New Year's Day, police Lt. Chuck Lear accepted a settlement agreement to end all litigation between the city and himself. Lear had been accused of abusing comp time privileges. City Council had approved a settlement agreement Oct. 13, 2015, allowing him to retire July 1, 2016, in exchange for dismissal of comp time charges, with the city agreeing not to proceed with disciplinary charges relating to an investigation of the timing of 2009 firearms qualifications. Lear retired Jan. 1, 2016.

Beach slope study: The city sent a report on the sharp drop-off on its beaches prepared by the engineering firm of Hatch Mott MacDonald to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. City engineer Tom Thornton said the main injuries to bathers occurred in shallow water when waves hit them from behind. The firm recommended moving sand with bulldozers from the downdrift side of the jetties in the surf zone, creating a 1:25 beach slope with excess sand moved to the dunes.

City joins school in pool replacement: City Council voted Jan. 5 to reinforce a shared services agreement to ensure Cape May City Elementary School's leaky swimming pool was reconstructed and opened in 2016. In 2014, the city agreed to finance the \$1 million



Robert Newkirk/Special to the Star and Wave

Winter Storm Jonas, a strong nor'easter, pounded the coast with high surf, strong winds, snow and rain Jan. 22-23. Cape May Harbor posted a record-high tide of 9.38 feet, and northeast winds prevented back bays from draining. Above, Yacht Avenue was perhaps appropriately named.

cost of replacement by issuing bonds and notes.

Farewell to the Rev. Davis: On Jan. 9, hundreds of friends and family members said their final goodbye to the Rev. Robert O. Davis, who was pastor at Macedonia Baptist Church from 1961 to 2009. His funeral was held in Convention Hall to accommodate the crowd.

Dig the new well: City Council approved the construction of a new well Jan. 19 for drinking water into the 800-foot Atlantic City Sands aquifer. The project was to be financed by a \$2 million loan from the New Jersey Infrastructure Trust. The brackish well will feed the city's desalination plant.

School bond referendums pass: Voters in Cape May, West Cape May and Lower Township approved bond referendums to make improvements to the regional high school, middle school and three schools in the Lower Township Elementary District. Lower Cape May Regional High School was approved for \$6.3 million in renovations including roof repairs, windows, paving and construction a new field house.

February

Police eat pizza with students: Cape May police officers under the direction of Capt. Robert Sheehan began visiting Cape May City Elementary School once

a month for a pizza party and presentation of Student of the Month. Officers hoped sharing slices with students would forge a bond.

Weak loonie a threat to tourism: With the Canadian dollar worth only about 70 cents to the U.S. dollar, county tourism officials feared our neighbors from the north would stay home over the summer. County businesses were encouraged to offer 10 percent to 15 percent discounts to Canadian visitors to compensate for the exchange rate.

Prestidge to leave TRACEN for Washington: Coast Guard Training Center Cape May commanding officer Capt. Todd Prestidge announced his transfer to Personnel Services Command in Washington, D.C., to work with Adm. William Kelly. Capt. Owen Gibbons was named as his replacement. Gibbons had previously served in Cape May as executive officer.

Ice Ball raises \$20,000 for Rotary Park: More than 300 guests attended the 2nd annual Ice Ball on Feb. 5 at Congress Hall to aid the Fund for Cape May, which planned to provide

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Two Village Green residents flee from New Year's Eve fire

CAPE MAY — Two people escaped from their burning home New Year's Eve, less than an hour before the end of 2016.

The Cape May Fire Department was notified of a structure fire at 11:08 p.m. Dec. 31 in the 1300 block of Virginia Avenue. A request was made for a general alarm, which brought Cape May, U.S. Coast Guard and West Cape May fire companies to the scene.

Upon arrival, the duty crew requested to upgrade the alarm to a heavy fire at a multifamily residence. A special request was made for Town Bank Fire Company for an engine company to the scene and Erma Volunteer Fire Company to cover the district.

Two occupants were able to escape the burning unit. A coordinated attack and primary search was conducted in the fire unit. Secondary units

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Witness thanks firefighters for heroic efforts.
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performed a primary search of attached units and ventilation. The fire was placed under control within 15 minutes.

Atlantic City Electric and South Jersey Gas reported to the location to secure utilities. The two victims were treated and transported to Cape Regional Medical Center for evaluation.

The fire is under investigation by the Cape May Police Department, Cape May County Fire Marshal and state Division of Fire Safety.

Cape May Police also assisted with both victims and securing the scene.



Robert Newkirk/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Cape May Fire Department personnel were notified of a house fire shortly after 11 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 31, in the 1300 block of Virginia Avenue in Cape May.

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