

Cape May Star and Wave



160TH YEAR NO. 38 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2014 75¢



HOUSE OF THE WEEK
Page B1



NEW BISON BORN AT CAPE MAY COUNTY ZOO
Page B4



Move to dissolve Lower Township MUA fails

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — In a 3-2 vote along party lines, a move to dissolve the Lower Township Municipal Utilities Authority went down the drain Monday night.

Lower Township Council's three independents — Mayor Michael Beck, Deputy Mayor Norris Clark and Councilman James Neville — voted for the township to assume the

Independents fail to get one of two Republican votes

MUA's debt of \$17 million, while the two Republican councilmen — Tom Conrad and Erik Simonsen — voted against the ordinance. Two companion ordinances were tabled after the first ordinance was defeated, one to create a township water/sewer utility and another to dissolve the MUA.

A vote of four council members was needed to approve assuming the debt

of the MUA.

The meeting opened with a team of attorneys and an independent auditor documenting how dissolving the MUA and creating a township water/sewer utility would save ratepayers \$1 million per year.

Township Manager Mike Voll said the state Local Finance Board agreed with the plan to shut down the MUA

and stated the township could realize significant financial savings. He said the savings would be accomplished without the MUA's current 14 employees losing their jobs or benefits.

"The people that are there today are all going to be hired," he said. "Nobody is losing their job."

Voll said the quality of water/sewer service would not be affected. He said

the savings to ratepayers would come from not duplicating the services of professionals already employed or contracted by the township.

Beck said he expected the 3-2 vote and could have predicted the outcome of the vote before the meeting began.

"I don't think there was anything we could do short of standing on our heads in Macy's window that would have switched either one of your

See Lower MUA, Page A3

County tourism officials report a strong season

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Reports from most sectors of the tourist economy in Cape May County indicate it was a very good summer season.

"I've been getting some incredibly good reports," said Diane Wieland, director of the county Department of Tourism.

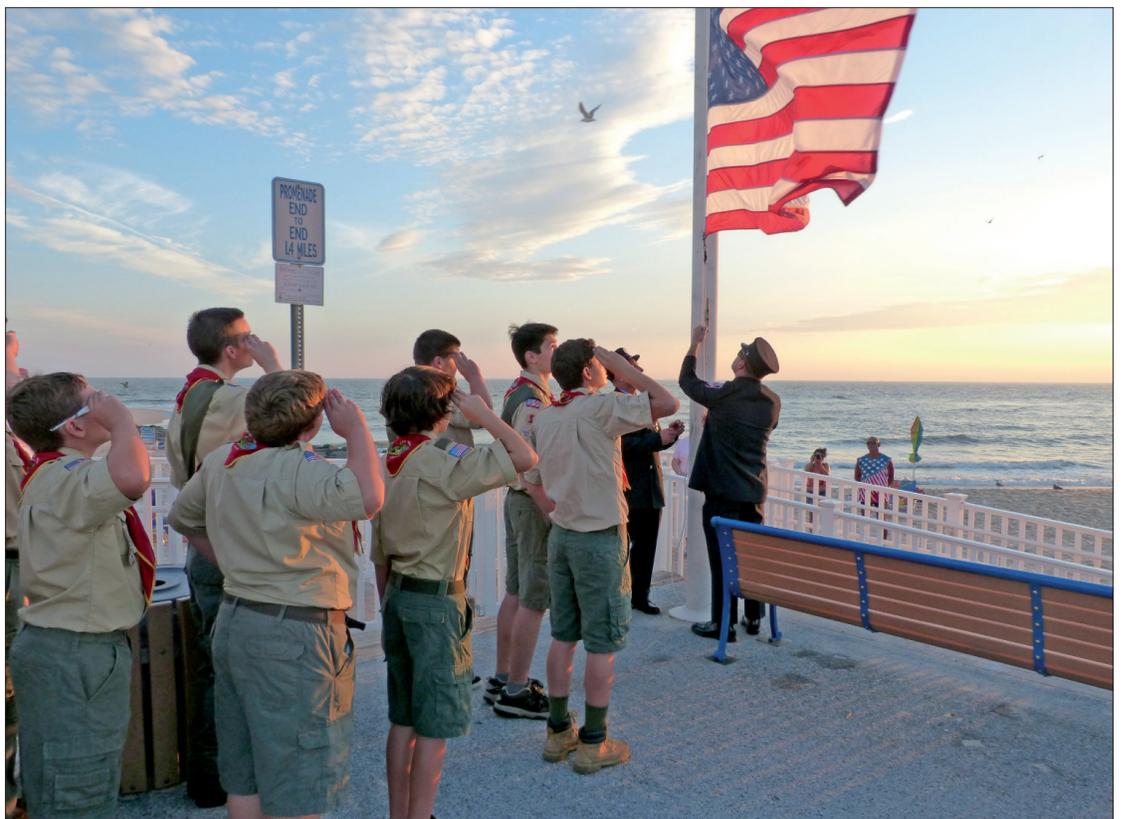
She said anecdotal reports from businesses indicate 2014 was a very good year and in many cases better than 2013, with the county showing an overall 2.9 percent increase in tourism expenditures.

From a report Wieland prepared for county freeholders and the state Division of Travel and Tourism: lodging was up, with a very strong rental season up 2 percent to 3 percent over last year; June occupancy tax from hotels/motels, bed and breakfast inns was up from 2013 by \$107,825; countywide June occupancy tax appears from a state treasury report as the highest collection rate in the state at \$1,247,238.

Rentals are solidly up 2 percent to 3 percent over a record 2013 year. Campgrounds were up after a slow start in June. Wieland said she believed reservations were down due to a cold, rainy June in 2013, which created a bit of hesitation for those planning early June camping vacations.

The report stated that restaurants are reporting a very good season, with upscale restaurants still struggling

See Tourism, page A3



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Boy Scout Troop 73 salutes as Cape May firefighter Lt. George Rea lowers the flag at the conclusion of Cape May's Patriot Day ceremony on the 13th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Cape May Harbor dredging to begin in early October

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Dredging of Cape May Harbor will begin during the first week of October, according to Mayor Edward Mahaney.

He said a dredging project for Cape May Harbor is the first to be done under a new formula. Following Hurricane Sandy, the state was directed to look at boating channels and determine which ones were in need of dredging because maintenance was not being undertaken on a regular basis, the mayor said.

Hurricane Sandy deposited debris, sand and silt in channels, making some difficult or impossible to navigate, Mahaney said. As a result of a study, new procedures were established by the state, he said.

"In the future, all dredging in the inland will be done under the direction of the New Jersey Department of Transportation (DOT) with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) issuing the permits," Mahaney said. "Previously, all the work was under the direction of DEP."

He said the DOT would handle all roadwork, bridge

See Dredging, Page A5

Cape May firefighters recall assisting at ground zero after Sept. 11 attacks

By JACK FICHTER
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CAPE MAY — Two firefighters who answered the call to assist at ground zero at the World Trade Center Sept. 11, 2001, offered their remembrances of the tragedy at a ceremony here on the 13th anniversary of the event.

Cape May Fire Chief Alex Coulter and Lt. Michael Eck addressed a sizable crowd Sept. 11 at the city's Sunset Pavilion.

Coulter said his day began Sept. 11, 2001, with surfing at Broadway beach. He said an hour into his surfing, a friend paddled into the ocean to inform him of the events in New York.

"My first reaction, being a first responder, is what could I do, where should I go?" Coulter said.

He said he realized he had a friend in New York City who frequented the World Trade Center and tried to contact him. A few hours later, Coulter and Eck and other members of the Cape May Fire Department, along with U.S. Coast Guard firefighters and members of the Wildwood Crest Rescue Squad and Wildwood Fire Department, formed a convoy to New York City.

Coulter said the Garden State Parkway in North Jersey was eerily empty.

"To say I was nervous would be an understatement," he said. "Being a young man in my early 20s, I was not prepared for what I was about to see."

See Patriot Day, Page A2



The U.S. Coast Guard Color Guard participates in the Patriot Day ceremony at Cape May's Sunset Pavilion.

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