

Wawa

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Hanson said the site has been cleaned of trash and overgrowth since he purchased the lot in August. "We are not going to have rock bands at all hours of the night," Hanson said the bar would host some live music but it most likely would end around 11 p.m.

Hanson and Bryan bought the site for \$750,000, paid \$365,000 for the liquor license and \$1.2 million to renovate the building. "We've already invested

about two million into the property," Hanson said. Paget conceded the property looks better now and requested a buffering zone between her property and the site of the bar.

"You've spent two million, what's another few hundred to buy a higher fence?" Paget said.

Mayor Walt Craig said the 6-foot fence behind the site is the tallest zoning regulations will allow and the liquor license will be subject to

township approval for annual renewal.

"This is an improvement to the area and they have made a concerted effort to clean it up," Deputy Mayor Robert Nolan said.

"I don't see the same problems at this establishment that persist at the other one," Craig said.

Council approved the liquor license transfer in a 4-0 vote; Council member Wayne Mazurek was absent.

Library

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Even a bride and groom who were just married at the Methodist Church joined in the line to strengthen the brigade.

The brigade moved over half of the stored volumes until noon when rain threatened the books and then city workers began to take them

by the truckload.

The library was run by the city until 1995 when the libraries became a county system.

"We only own half of the grassy area in the back; I can't figure out how we could have a bigger facility on this property," Smith said. The

grassy strip behind the library is shared with a neighboring house.

The city-owned property could expand upwards with a two-story building but the architects' assessment is currently only at the recommendation stage.



Christopher South/Cape May Star and Wave

Lower Cape May Regional Homecoming Court 2007

Lower Cape May Regional High School celebrated its Homecoming Weekend last weekend. (See related story, Page B1). Pictured, left to right, are Bill Porch, Victoria Wermuth, Patrick Miller, Eliza Lotozo, Joe Sippel, Kim Douglass, Mike Chan, Stephanie Dugan, King Rory Rosenberg, Queen Sarah Jackson, Ray Hawthorne and Candance Podgorski.

Forum

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address that problem and then a policy should be developed to address the illegal immigrants who are already in the country.

Thornton said the question rests with the federal government, which he said has done an "abysmal job" of dealing with. He said illegal immigrants are a burden on county services, but was not in favor of withholding those services from children. He said the government needs to fine employers who hire illegals.

Bacher said the illegal immigrant issue was a law enforcement problem – one he said would be better addressed if the freeholders would give the prosecutor the staff he requested.

Bakley said illegal immigrant families put a drain on schools and said local law enforcement should have a freer hand to arrest illegals.

Addressing a question on dual office holding, Thornton said that issue was being addressed by the state, but the practice has been legal until recently.

"I believe the issue will take care of itself," he said.

Bakley echoed Thornton's remarks saying he believed the state had banned the practice but was allowing current dual office holders to keep their positions. Jackson referred to dual office holding as "the hypocrisy of government, and said no one should hold two elected offices."

"People need to stop electing them to office," he said.

At this point, the moderator attempted to bring the questions down to the county level. One audience member then asked about the proposed takeover of the Beesley's Point Bridge by the county Bridge Commission. The privately owned bridge, which connects Cape May and Atlantic Counties, is part of a state highway with a federal designation.

Bacher said he supported the plan to take the bridge by eminent domain and force the owners to pay back \$1 million loaned to them by the state to make repairs. Bakley said the bridge should be opened for the sake of public safety. Jackson said he suggested the county take over the bridge

two years ago when he ran for freeholder, and said the bridge should be forced to open "by whatever means," including eminent domain.

Thornton said he believed there should be a new bridge constructed rather than sinking \$8 million into repairs.

Asked what was the most significant challenge facing Cape May County, Bakley said it was repairing roads and bridges, while acknowledging the high cost of these repairs.

"It's a big step but it has to be done," he said.

"That's a concern," Jackson said, "but the biggest thing is concrete planning."

Jackson said there needs to be a long-term plan for replacing aging infrastructure.

Thornton agreed with Jackson, but said there has been planning for years in Cape May County, mentioning the 208 waste water management plan, complying with the state Smart Growth Plan, as well as the county's efforts to address the future needs of seniors in the county.

Bacher said he felt there needed to be better management in the county "across the board." He said a lack of planning for the future has caused a number of barrier island communities to consider removing their libraries from the county system, as Avalon has already done. Bakley called the idea of island communities pulling out of the county library system a rumor and a misconception.

Jackson said current plans for library renovations ignored recent retro-fittings, and called it "money going down the tubes."

Thornton suggested the Avalon situation was unique; that the municipality wanted a library that complemented the school system.

A question on "pork barrel spending" in the county caused Jackson to comment on the county giving \$2 million to municipalities for capital improvement projects.

"You would think they would want to give it back to the taxpayers," he said.

Thornton said the \$2 million would only work out to \$10 or \$12 per taxpayer and would cost the county money to process the rebates. Bacher said the county should cut the tax rate more and collect \$10 or \$12 less from each taxpayer. He said the county budget

has grown from \$96 million in 2000 to \$131 million in 2007. Bakley said the county only hired 20 new employees in the last five years, and said the county budget was "bare bones."

Thornton added that the 20 new employees in health services were actually self-sustaining because of the revenue their services bring in.

"And Cape May County has the lowest tax rate in New Jersey. How can we do any better?" he said.

Jackson said that while the county tax rate has gone down, individual taxpayers are still paying more taxes each year and thus see no savings.

Asked what the candidates would do as freeholders to help young people in Cape May County, Bacher said proposed changes to reduce carbon emissions would create jobs in the areas of solar and wind power. He said he also wanted to attract light industry and high tech jobs, which would benefit younger residents of the county. Bakley said the Technical High School is already addressing the future needs of young people, offering training in cosmetology, culinary arts, small engine repair, law enforcement and others. Jackson said he didn't believe enough was being done to get

young people into such programs.

Bacher said improved public transportation was a key to getting young people started on a career path. He said there was a need for improved public transportation to the county branch of Atlantic Cape Community College.

In closing, Bacher told the audience there was a clear choice between the challengers, he and Jackson, and the incumbents. He said there needed to be a dissenting voice on the board who would question spending he believes now passes with a unanimous voice.

Thornton said he has always tried to represent "honestly and sincerely," and talked about a county record that he said shows good management.

Jackson said he believed there needed to be more balance on the board and the people should know exactly what goes on in county government. He said the voters could have better government if they want it.

Bakley finished his remarks saying an individual really needs to be retired to serve on the freeholder board, considering all the time the position requires.

Voters will choose two of the candidates for the available seats on Nov. 6.

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