

Legislators navigate odd first year in Trenton

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House of the week

B1



166th YEAR NO. 53 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2020 \$1.00

LOWER TOWNSHIP YEAR IN REVIEW: 2020



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Frank Sippel receives the oath of office as Lower Township mayor from Sheriff Robert Nolan during a meeting of Lower Township Council on Jan. 14. He replaces Erik Simonsen, who had been elected to the state Assembly the previous November.

New mayor takes reigns, faces COVID challenges

JANUARY

Dredge materials from the berths of the Cape May-Lewes Ferry were being transported to and spread onto a field across from the Cape May County Airport. About 225,000 cubic yards of dredge spoils had to be removed from a storage area at the ferry terminal in North Cape May. The material was being placed on an empty field at the airport purchased by the Delaware River and Bay Authority in a runway incursion area. Grass was to be planted on the materials. Height of the spoils was expected to reach 10 feet at the back of the property.

Former Lower Township Mayor Erik Simonsen was sworn in on Jan. 14 as a state assemblyman, representing the First Legislative District. He was appointed to the Assembly Education Committee, the State and Local Government Committee and the Community Development Committee.

Frank Sippel received his oath of office as Lower Township mayor on Jan. 22. Sippel was selected by the Lower Township Republican Organization to fill the unexpired term of Erik Simonsen, who resigned as mayor following his election in November to a 1st District Assembly seat. Sippel was required to resign from his seat as deputy mayor to accept the position as mayor.

FEBRUARY

Lower Township introduced its 2020 budget Feb. 3 with no tax in-



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Lower Township Mayor Frank Sippel, right, swears in Kevin Coombs to represent Ward II on Township Council during a meeting Feb. 19.

crease. Township Manager Jim Ridgway said the zero increase was being accomplished with major projects underway and with the township "eradicating massive amounts of debt." The tax levy totaled \$21.3 million, up \$82,823 from 2019. Lower Township's budget totaled \$30.4 million, up \$1.8 million from 2019. The township completed 2019 with a surplus of \$8.4 million with \$2.2 million applied to the 2020 budget.

Councilman David Perry was sworn in Feb. 3 as deputy mayor. In order to accept the position, Perry was required to resign his seat as a Ward Two councilman. He was nominated by the Lower Township Regular Republican Organization and approved in a unanimous vote with Perry abstaining. At the previous Township Council meeting, Frank Sippel, former deputy mayor, was

appointed mayor to fill the unexpired term of Erik Simonsen, who resigned as mayor following his election to the state Assembly. Perry replaced Sippel as deputy mayor.

On Feb. 3, Township Council declared Lower Township a "Second Amendment lawful gun owner sanctuary" in a unanimous resolution. The resolution notes the U.S. Constitution states, "a well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed, an individual right affirmed by the Supreme Court." Council's resolution stated that legislation introduced by the state Legislature and introduced in the current session of Congress could infringe on the rights of law-abiding residents to

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HPC proposes measure to allow home elevation

Structures could keep their historic status

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Chairman Warren Coupland presented a draft ordinance to City Council on Dec. 15 addressing elevating historic houses to remove potential flood loss.

He said normally elevating a contributing or key building to the historic district could challenge its credibility. Coupland said the HPC wanted to create a program that would allow flood mitigation and at the same time maintain the classification of homes contributing or key to the historic district.

While the HPC was working on the issue, the

Secretary of the Interior and state Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) introduced a program to allow flood elevation of historic properties, he said.

"We've also looked at some other communities like Charleston (S.C.) and Beach Haven, so what we have done is taken all that information and our own experience and we've put together a draft ordinance we believe allows historic houses to be elevated for flood only and they will retain their classification as key or contributing, both inside the historic district and key and contributing outside the historic district," Coupland said.

He said a home could be elevated by 2 feet above

base flood elevation. Coupland said the city's planning and zoning boards examined the proposed ordinance.

Deputy Mayor Patricia Hendricks said the city's Environmental Commission also offered comments on the proposed ordinance. Coupland said the city's flood manager also participated in the formation of the ordinance.

A backlog of surveys of historic homes in Cape May exists needing the approval of council. He said the backlog should not be blamed on the HPC.

Cape May as national historic landmark city is required to have a current survey of historic proper-

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Lear, Hendricks say goodbye, recall their accomplishments

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Mayor Chuck Lear and Deputy Mayor Patricia Hendricks attended their final council meeting Dec. 15.

City Manager Jerry Inderwies thanked Lear for his 41 years of service to the city of Cape May, including 37 years in the police department — retiring as a lieutenant — and four years on council.

"Someone giving 41 years of their life to the city, mostly in a full-time capacity, is impressive and can't go unnoticed," Inderwies said. "Thank you, Mr. Lear, as a taxpayer and lifelong resident, for giving us your time, effort and most of your adult life to the city of Cape May."

He said Hendricks "dove into her work and did her homework."



LEAR



HENDRICKS

"You tackled issues, you were always in communication, always asking questions," Inderwies said.

Councilman Shaine Meier thanked Lear and Hendricks for their hard work.

He said the largest accomplishment of the outgoing council was saving the historic Franklin Street School, which will be renovated and used as the city's new library.

"To get a project with so much local, county, state and federal support and funding is a grand slam

and something amazing to see for many years to come," Meier said.

Hendricks said she started her civic participation in Cape May by joining city organizations and attending council meetings.

"I remain very honored at the opportunity that was given me in 2016 by Cape May voters," she said. "Sometimes the events of the ensuing four years were difficult, tedious, sometimes they were exhilarating and fulfilling," Hendricks said.

She said the city is a "treasured hometown" even for those who are not Cape May natives.

"The city allows us to belong," Hendricks said. "That is why I will continue to be committed to protecting and enhancing the city's quality of life in

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Dennis Flanagan/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Winter wildlife

A deer crosses a path in the Lower Cape May Meadows.



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