

Pessagno seeking Cape May City Council seat

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Beatrice Gauvry Pessagno obtained a petition to run for one of three Cape May City Council seats up for election Nov. 4. The lifelong Cape May resident confirmed her candidacy in a news release.

"My family has had the unique privilege of being part of this community for more than eight decades, and has a proud history of contribut-

ing to its growth and progress whether as small-business owners, as citizen volunteers, or in an elected capacity. In keeping with that tradition of commitment and service to Cape May, I am seeking a seat on the Cape May City Council. I do so as someone who has enjoyed the opportunities that Cape May offers, a secure and vital community in which to raise a family and build a business and who is committed to ensuring those

same opportunities for the next generation of families and entrepreneurs."

The daughter of former Cape May Mayor Frank Gauvry and Eleanor Conway Gauvry, she was born and raised in Cape May and attended Our Lady Star of the Sea Elementary School and Wildwood Catholic High School. After graduating from Trinity College in 1971 with a degree in literature, she began a career in education, work-

ing as an elementary school teacher in Moorestown.

Pessagno returned to Cape May County in 1974, and has lived in Cape May since 1980. While raising her three children — Francis, Caroline and Stephanie — she remained active in education, teaching part time at both the elementary and secondary levels.

With her children grown, Pessagno returned to teaching full time at Wildwood Catholic, specializing in honors Eng-

lish, British literature and French. At the same time, she also took on a more proactive role as a community activist, advocating for education, the arts and the environment. Her efforts and accomplishments in this area include serving on the board of directors of the Washington Street Mall Management Co.; co-chairing fundraising for the Cape May Forum; and holding a seat on the Environmental Commission of City Council. In 2010,

she helped spearhead the grass-roots effort to prevent the closing of Wildwood Catholic High School, and currently sits on the executive board that was formed to ensure the school's long-term viability.

"Whether as a mother, a teacher or an advocate, I'm focused on the same goal: turning the potential of today into the opportunity of tomorrow," Pessagno said. "That will be my focus as a council member as well."

Vehicle crashes into building in W. Cape May Winery

Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — The Cape May Police Department is investigating a one-car accident that occurred Aug. 9 at 600 Park Blvd. in West Cape May.

The Police Communications Center received several calls at 10:13 a.m. reporting a car had been driven into the front of the Professional Property Services office. Located between the Animal Outreach of Cape May County office and Artizan Salon and Spa, the Professional Property Services office was scheduled to open next week and was unoccupied at the time.

Cape May Fire Department Rescue Squad and West Cape May Fire Department responded to the scene, entered the office building and assisted the driver, identified as Sylvia Byrd-Leitner, 59, of Tabernacle, from the vehicle, a small sport utility vehicle.

Officer Kelley Walter's investigation is still ongoing, but police do not believe that alcohol was a factor. No injuries were reported to either the driver or pedestrians.



Robert Newkirk/Special to the CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

No one was injured when this sport utility vehicle crashed into the Professional Property Services office on Park Boulevard in West Cape May.

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the legitimate interests of a municipality. The new amendments do just that."

Kaithern stated that West Cape May asked the winery to comply with the law and cease holding the events but that the winery declined.

"We were left with no alternative but to file this action," Kaithern stated.

The borough is asking for a declaration that the new statute prohibits special-occasion events absent compliance with its conditions and an injunction prohibiting the winery from holding such events until it satisfies the conditions. The complaint, Borough of West Cape May v. Willow Creek Winery Inc., was filed in the Cape May County Superior Court.

Willow Creek Winery answered in news release from its attorney, Colin G. Bell: "The lawsuit filed today by the Borough of West Cape May continues the pattern of harassment and discrimination against Willow Creek Winery by West Cape May and its mayor, Pam Kaithern."

"The lawsuit has no basis in law or in fact, and Willow Creek Winery intends to vigorously refute its allegations," said Bell, of the law firm Hankin Sandman Palladino & Weintrob.

According to the news release, West Cape May and Kaithern are both defendants in a federal civil rights suit pending in Federal District Court for the District of New Jersey alleging that they have violated the constitutional

rights of Willow Creek and its owner, Barbara Wilde.

During the course of the lawsuit, sworn deposition testimony was obtained from two uninterested witnesses who both explained that Kaithern stated during a tourism meeting in Cape May County that she needed to stop Willow Creek from conducting weddings because it would hurt the mayor's economic self-interest.

"Unlike almost every other town that I am aware of, Mayor Kaithern actually pockets the money she receives for performing wedding ceremonies in her capacity as mayor instead of returning it to the taxpayers," Bell said.

"Over the years, Kaithern has made thousands in profit using her elected position, but now stands to lose substantially since she is unlikely to be selected to perform ceremonies at Willow Creek. Now that special occasion events, such as weddings, are expressly permitted by law, West Cape, apparently at the direction of its mayor, is making another frivolous and desperate attempt to shut the business down," stated the news release.

"Wilde, a single mother who suffers from multiple sclerosis, provides desperately needed well-paying, year-round jobs through Willow Creek to numerous individuals in Cape May County. The governor and the New Jersey Legislature have time and time again recognized the economic importance of farms such as Willow Creek in the Garden State," the release stated.

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