

Night

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burden and promised every municipal meeting to be open to the public and for public comment.

Mahaney said he entered the race because he talked to many people who were angry and upset over the running of the city. He said people were upset because they felt the public did not have enough input on public projects. Mahaney served on Cape May City Council from 1995 to 2003, and he said he said he brings experience and integrity to the table. He reminded the audience the public was included for the entire Cape May desalination plant project.

Powick was the first to give an opening statement for the council race.

"People are tired of being ignored by government," she said.

She said she has been working to try and change government in Cape May, and she decided there needed to be a change of people, so she entered the council race.

Powick said she has heard it said that if people cannot afford to live in Cape May they could move. She listed what she considered examples of other negative trends in Cape May, including the Christian Admiral being demolished to make way for

"McMansions," the Historic Preservation Commission approving a demolition permit for the Beach Theatre, and the city ignoring the public referendum on the mall project. She claimed the city is now going to spend \$20 million on the Convention Hall project.

She echoed a remark made by Inderwies in his opening statement, saying, "I have no special interest other than you the voters."

Terri Swain talked about her background, being born and raised in Cape May and a member of the family running the oldest continuous business in Cape May. Swain

talked about going away to college, becoming a certified public accountant, and working in a career that included working for the Colgate Palmolive Company. In 1994, she said, she returned to Cape May and took over the family business - Swain's Hardware.

"I love having the ability to give back, and for the last 14 years I have served this community," she said.

Swain said she knows the people of Cape May, because she sees them day in and day out in her store.

"I know the people and what they want," she said.

Wichterman said he came to Cape May to live in 1998, but

became involved in the community immediately. A former councilman from Ringwood, Wichterman served two years on Cape May City Council before losing a close election to Craig. Wichterman said he supports the current Convention Hall replacement project, and believes if Cape May doesn't move ahead it would be left behind.

Wichterman summed up his candidacy saying, "I don't talk platitudes - I talk plat-forms."

Bellangy is the other Cape May native seeking a council seat. He worked in the information technology field for 42

years before taking early retirement from IBM.

"I have a long history of community service," he said.

Bellangy is on the board of the Center for Community Arts and Animal Outreach. He said he served on the Planning Board during two Master Plan cycles, and has not interest or ownership in any business in Cape May.

"It's time for a real change," Bellangy said. "There are all yeas votes on city council - no one asks why or how much."

On May 13, voters will select a new mayor and one member of council.

Part 1: Candidates field questions about many issues

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY - The seven candidates seeking elected office in the Cape May municipal election, May 13, fielded questions during the twohour forum sponsored by the Taxpayers Association of Cape May, last week.

The Candidates Night, moderated by the Cape May County Chapter of the League of Women Voters, offered several hundred Cape May voters the chance to see and hear the candidates for office.

Reading from a list of major issues facing Cape May, such as the recent closing of Convention Hall, moderator Corinne Robinson asked the mayoral candidates what other issues were facing Cape May.

Mayoral Candidate William "Jerry" Gaffney said the city had to be careful with its zoning and planning or the city could end up looking a lot differently than it does now.

"We have to be careful with our National Historic Landmark status," he said.

Gaffney said if Cape May doesn't follow its Master Plan it would become "just another seaside resort open three months per year."

Mahaney echoed remarks on the Master Plan, saying he worked on two reviews of the Master Plan - a 16-element land use document.

He said the city must also address traffic, COAH and community services. He said the city needs to take the Rhodeside and Harwell report and make it part of the Master Plan.

Inderwies also picked up on the Master Plan theme, and as a member of the Planning Board, could report the Planning Board is in the process of reviewing the Master Plan. Inderwies said he is likewise concerned about issues of traffic, the environment and Cape May's National Historic Landmark Status.

"That puts us in a position for grants," he said.

Inderwies also said he took care of Convention Hall for 19 years as the director of Public Works, and he is well aware of what shape it is in.

The council candidates were asked to evaluate the process of information sharing in Cape May. Bellangy said too few people have access to information. He said part of the problem is the same people are always being appointed to committees.

"I would propose no one who currently sits on a board or chairs a committee be appointed to another committee," he said.

Powick said the public policy on information sharing is "poor." She said as a result, the city is getting a convention hall rather than a community center.

"The committee made the decision on a 1,500-seat convention center," she said.

Powick said she would be in favor of holding open, town hall meetings, and to reach a consensus on major issues.

Swain said more people needed to be included in government, and the performance of people on boards and committees needs to be evaluated. She said people serving on these committees must have no conflict of interest.

Wichterman said he would like to see all council meetings televised so the entire community could view the proceedings. He said he would like to reinstitute the talent bank to involve more people in the community. At the same time, Wichterman challenged someone to name the special interest groups he was always hearing about.

"I wish someone would name these special interest groups, because I'm darned if I know who they are," he said.

The mayoral candidates were then asked how they would balance the interests of full residents and part times residents, who account for 65

to 70-percent of the property owners in Cape May.

Inderwies said the city does everything in its power to treat them equally, saying the streets are cleaned for full time and part time residents alike.

Gaffney said there are now less than 4,000 registered voters in Cape May, and he would like to see more landlords move to Cape May and vote. Mahaney said full and part time residents have had the same quality of services for 30 years, but the city has tried to allow more participation by non-residents. He said the police and fire departments also provide property checks for non-residents, and recreation facilities are open to full and part time residents.

Council candidates were asked about the consolidation of services in order to have more efficient government. Wichterman said there are 566 municipalities in New Jersey and 616 school districts.

"The entire state of Maryland has 15 districts," he said.

Wichterman said consolidation would have to take place, noting that Cape May, West Cape May and Cape May Point combined do not have 5,000 residents, and are losing state aid.

Wichterman had one caveat to consolidation, however.

"We don't want to be part of Lower Township, that's for sure," he said.

Swain said Cape May was

already a leader in consolidating services and said the process should continue. She said that no one ran for the West Cape May school board in the April 15 election was "telling." She said she is in favor of consolidating the West Cape May Elementary and Cape May City schools to "have one great school."

Powick said she is in favor of communities maintaining autonomy, but agreed with sharing services. She said the county is looking at the financial ramifications of consolidation, and considered giving up local control of schools a "serious concern."

Bellangy said consolidation was coming.

"Like it or not," he said.

He said consolidation of schools would have to come, but added one the first things that ought to be done is to merge the courts of Cape May and West Cape May.

The mayoral candidates were asked how they would address growing density in

Cape May. Mahaney said the city council, of which the mayor is a member, has been attempting to address density through legislation, but added there must be vigilance on the part of the zoning and planning boards.

Inderwies said it's sometimes not easy to address zoning and planning issues such as density, but attempts to address density have already been made. Gaffney said the zoning and planning boards are constantly being asked to approve variances, and the city must be cautious.

"We must not give approval quicker than it need be given," he said.

Asked if department heads should be required to live in Cape May, Swain said with the cost of housing in Cape May she would be cautious to support such a position. Bellangy said state law does not require employees live in a town where they work. Wichterman said with the price of real estate in Cape

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