

New Jersey Herald

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Newton, N.J.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2010

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ON THE WEB



Local news, sports and more, only a click away.

Wednesday



Photo by Daniel Freel/New Jersey Herald

Sparta Township Councilwoman-elect Molly Whilesmith, center, chats with Cheri Schon, left, the wife of fellow Councilman-elect John Schon, and Deputy County Clerk Brian McNeilly, right, as she celebrates her win in Tuesday's runoff election at the Mohawk House in Sparta. Whilesmith's husband, John, is seen in the background.

Sparta elects new majority to council

By **SETH AUGENSTEIN**
saugenstein@njherald.com

SPARTA — The Township Council has a new majority, after Tuesday's runoff election.

Three newcomers who ran a coordinated campaign — John Schon, Molly Whilesmith and Gilbert Gibbs — won four-year terms on the five-seat council.

Schon (1,141 votes), Whilesmith (1,057) and Gibbs (1,024) narrowly beat chal-

lengers Robert Spetz (1,007) and Donald Ploetner II (981). Jesse Wolosky, a well-known activist, finished last at 693, according to unofficial results.

Schon, who was the top finisher in both the May election and Tuesday's runoff, said he was gratified by the results.

"I think that the voters spoke loud and clear," the councilman-elect said.

Whilesmith, who will be the first woman on the council

since 2006, thanked her family and her campaign manager. She said she was going to enjoy the win, just for a short while.

"I'm going to relax for a couple hours, and then I'll be getting back to work," she said.

Gibbs, too, said he was happy with the results.

All three congratulated and thanked one another and their supporters.

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Fast-moving house fire leaves shell in Hampton

By **LYNDSAY CAYETANA BOUCHAL**
lbouchal@njherald.com

HAMPTON — Plumes of black smoke could be seen miles away from a house fire on Tuesday. By late afternoon, all that remained of the two-story home on Morris Turnpike were charred support beams, a blackened stone chimney and a sturdy foundation.

"There was no way we were going in," Branchville firefighter Ashley Pelt said. "By the time we got here, the house was already fully involved."

The Branchville Fire Department first received word of a possible fire at 12:16 p.m. The Frankford Fire Department was first to the scene with assistance from state police and seven other Sussex County fire departments.

No one was in the house, located at the border of Frankford and Hampton, when the fire started. No injuries were reported. However, a household pet may have perished.

The fast-moving fire was under control by 2 p.m., but little of the house was salvaged. Fire officials could not determine when the fire would be completely extinguished.

Sussex County Fire Marshal Joe Inga said that since no water source



Photo by Lyndsay Cayetana Bouchal/New Jersey Herald

Firefighters respond to a blaze on Morris Turnpike in Hampton Tuesday afternoon. State police will investigate to determine the cause of the fire.

was nearby, extensive backup and tankers were needed to supply water to extinguish the fire. Inga also was concerned about the torrid weather conditions. To prevent heat exhaustion, firefighters worked to suppress the flames by rotating off duty every 20 minutes.

Branchville Fire Chief Keith

Whitehead said this was the largest fire he's fought this spring and the largest he's witnessed in two years.

Once the fire was controlled, Whitehead said, the only hazard left was the house's propane tank, which was kept cool during the blaze, then unhinged and removed.

Neighbor Margie Havens speculat-

ed that homeowner Elizabeth Jackson was at work in the southern part of the state while her two sons were in day care when the fire broke out.

State police will investigate the blaze to determine the cause.

"There's nothing left," Havens said. "My heart goes out to Liz."

Obama: 'Reckless' BP will pay for cleanup

By **JENNIFER LOVEN**
AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Vowing to "make BP pay," President Barack Obama accused the oil giant of "recklessness" in his first address to the nation from the Oval Office Tuesday night, eight weeks to the day after the catastrophic oil spill began destroying waterways, wildlife and a prized Gulf Coast way of life.

"We will fight this spill with everything we've got for as long it takes," declared Obama, whose own presiden-

cy has been stumbling because of the gushing oil. A new Associated Press-GfK poll even indicates as many Americans disapprove of his handling of the crisis — 52 percent — as felt that way about President George W. Bush's handling of the Katrina aftermath.

Obama offered no immediate remedies for a frustrated nation. Rather he announced he had asked former Mississippi Gov. Ray Mabus to develop a long-term Gulf Coast Restoration Plan — to be funded by BP PLC — in concert with local states,

communities, fishermen, conservationists and residents "as soon as possible."

He did not detail what this effort — he called it a "battle plan" — should include or how much it might cost, a price sure to be in the billions of dollars. Whatever the bottom line, he declared to his prime-time television audience, "We will make BP pay."

That's not certain, however. In declaring that BP won't control the compensation fund for Gulf recovery, Obama failed to mention that the government won't control it, either. The president

meets BP executives in a White House showdown today.

Fifty-seven days into the crisis, oil continues to gush from the broken wellhead, millions of gallons a day, and Obama has been powerless to stem the leak. The sad episode has raised doubts about his leadership and his administration's response to what Obama has called the nation's worst environmental disaster.

He spoke from the Oval Office while seated at the storied Resolute desk, a bank of family photos and an

American flag filling the backdrop. A president sometimes criticized as lacking emotion, Obama talked in a calm tone, no sign of the anger he showed earlier in the week concerning the spill.

In one specific action, Obama announced former Justice Department inspector general Michael Bromwich as his choice for the new head of the agency that regulates the oil industry. Obama said Bromwich's job at the helm of the federal

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