



LCMRHS wrestlers top Absegami in tight match

Page A4

House of the week

B1



167th YEAR NO. 15 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14, 2021 \$1.00

'Here where we stand, walked some of the most important and influential abolitionists in America.' — Mayor Zack Mullock



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

City officials and members of Cape May's cultural organizations gathered on the sidewalk in front of the historic Allen AME Church on April 12 to celebrate its purchase by the city.

City celebrates AME Church purchase

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — At noon Monday, city officials, staff and volunteers from the Center for Community Arts and Cape May MAC, East Lynne Theater Company Artistic Director Gayle Stahlhuth and community members gathered on the sidewalk

in front of the historic Allen AME Church to celebrate its purchase by the city.

The closing date was a week ago and the church already has gotten a new roof. Built in 1888, it was damaged by a fire in 2018 and faced a dwindling number of members.

Lynda Anderson-Towns, president of the Board of Trustees of the Har-

riet Tubman Museum of Cape May, said the celebration was a moment to preserve what Cape May is and what it was, to appreciate diversity and the role African Americans and the church play in the city. She said Cape May has a rich, diverse history.

Mayor Zack Mullock called the

See AME Church, Page A5

City committee: Raise room tax to maximum 3%

Taxation and revenue panel says Cape May losing millions

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

INSIDE
Rental license revenue falls far short of city's costs.
Page A3

CAPE MAY — The city's Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee (MTRAC) is recommending Cape May raise its room tax from 2 percent to 3 percent, citing the city has lost \$3.7 million in potential revenue by keeping the room tax at 2 percent.

During a City Council meeting April 13, MTRAC Chairman Dennis Crowley said the city adopted a room tax on hotels/motels and bed and breakfast inns in 2003. He said the state permits a municipality to have a room tax up to 3 percent. Since 2003, 170 municipalities in the state have instituted a 3 percent room tax. Only three towns have a 2 percent room tax, according to Crowley.

He said by not taking the additional 1 percent room tax, Cape May has lost \$3.7 million of potential revenue in the past six years while generating \$7.4 million in room tax.

"Had we applied the 1

percent at any time before that six-year period, we would have raised \$11.1 million," Crowley said. "We call this the lost municipal revenue stream because it is."

The committee recommended immediate action to get the 3 percent room tax in place for the summer season. He said legislation passed in 2018 authorized municipalities to assess a 3 percent tax on house rentals booked through internet services such as Airbnb.

"Those venues are not under our current ordinance," Crowley said.

He said the committee could find no justification for the city to refuse to pursue the house rental revenue. MTRAC is recom-

See Committee, Page A3

Municipalities take marijuana-management measures

Lower Township wants weed-free public places

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council introduced an ordinance to amend its smoking ordinance to prohibit the smoking and vaping of marijuana in public places.

The enabling ordinance states the smoking or vaping of marijuana in public places would impact the health and safety of residents with secondhand marijuana smoke.

During a council meeting April 8, Mayor Frank Sippel said the ordinance would be similar to legislation governing consumption of alcohol in public places.

Diamond Beach resident Jim Sanford asked if the ordinance would prohibit smoking marijuana on privately owned beaches. Sippel said the ordinance would prohibit smoking marijuana in public places.

Township solicitor David Stefankiewicz said the ordinance would cover all areas

that are generally open to the public.

"I think it would be broad enough to include that area," he said, referring to the Diamond Beach section.

Stefankiewicz said the ordinance has two definitions: public and indoor public, both very broad and expansive.

Sanford said the public has access to private beaches to access the sand from the high tide mark.

Sippel said the township

would further examine the issue.

Persons violating the marijuana smoking ordinance would receive a written warning for a first offense. For a second offense, the individual would be fined no less than \$250 nor more than \$500.

For a third or subsequent offense, an individual would be fined not less than \$500 nor more than \$1,000.

A public hearing on the ordinance is scheduled for council's meeting May 3.

Cape May Point prepares to prohibit pot purchases

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — The borough is preparing an ordinance to prohibit the retail sale of marijuana products.

At an April 8 Borough Commission meeting, borough solicitor John Amenhauser said Cape May Point has until Aug. 21 to enact an ordinance to

prohibit the sale of marijuana. Since the borough is entirely residential and lacks a commercial zone, he said it was obvious retail marijuana sales would not take place.

Amenhauser said the manner in which the state statute is written, if the borough does not act now, it is barred from

See Prohibit, Page A2

Lower Twp. holds off on adopting budget

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — Lower Township Council tabled a scheduled public hearing on its 2021 municipal budget April 8 because it is unknown how the township can use federal COVID stimulus money.

Auditor Leon Costello, of Ford-Scott and Associates, said the township had to wait to adopt its budget because the state has not established rules of how municipalities can apply the funding. He said budget hearings in the towns he served were ending without adoption of their 2021

budgets.

"I am actually working with the state on this. I'm part of the team that's doing this and we expected to have a result before today, but we haven't," Costello said.

Pressure is being placed on the Governor's Office to complete the rules for municipal use of stimulus money, he said. Costello said if the township adopted its budget before stimulus fund regulations were in place, it could not use the money.

He said he hoped the township could adopt its

See Lower, Page A3

New staff has 'talent, energy and excitement'

Director, spokeswoman, recreation director take helm at Convention Hall

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Three new city employees for Convention Hall — Kacie Lee Rattigan, director; Ayesha Dickerson, public information officer; and Brad Gilbert, recreation director — were introduced to City Council on April 3.

City Manager Michael Voll said many interviews were conducted to select the new staff members. He said the new hires have "talent, excitement and energy."

Rattigan said Dickerson would also serve in event sales.

"I love Cape May. It sort

of wrapped its arms around me and I look forward to just being a part of bringing a lot of fun things to Cape May," Dickerson said.

Gilbert said he is excited to be back home after living in Delaware for a decade.

Voll said the Recreation Department plans to have programs year-round for all residents. He said the Convention Hall staff would be seeking to book corporate events such as seminars and retreats in the offseason.

The city is planning to hold a fireworks celebration and an Independence Day parade, Voll said.

See New staff, Page A3



Provided

Kacie Lee Rattigan, left, is the new director of Cape May Convention Hall and Ayesha Dickerson is the new public information officer.

Sensory-friendly Pediatric Emergency Care

Shore Medical Center, assisted by the Atlantic County Special Services School District, has gone to great lengths to create a sensory-friendly pediatric emergency space ideal for those on the spectrum. Shore's specially trained staff is dedicated to making the emergency room experience less overwhelming for patients and their families from door to discharge.

Shore Medical Center is committed to making every step of treatment easier.

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