



## Fire

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Lewis Megonigal, the fire scene commander said there were a series of explosions inside the garage.

"There were dozens of small explosions from the flammable materials inside," Megonigal said. "Luckily, we were able to contain the fire to the building so it didn't spread to neighboring houses or cars outside."

Shunpike Road resident Mary Moore said she never heard the explosions from inside her home, which is about five houses away from the junkyard, but could hear

popping from her lawn.

"I was in the kitchen cooking and my father called and said go outside and look," she said.

Moore said the smoke was readily apparent.

"There has been a lot of popping," she said. "And we are lucky. There were embers falling here and this is the fifth house down."

Moore said there were no fire hydrants in the vicinity, and water to fight the fire had to be trucked.

At one point the fire fighters on a ladder truck had to deal with a loss of pressure. One was heard calling to fellow firefighters on the

ground saying they had "negative pressure" and a "vacuum" in the line. Pressure was restored and the fire was put under control.

Megonigal said no one was injured in the fire, but there was very little left of the building when the flames were extinguished around 2 p.m.

Megonigal said the call came shortly after 1 p.m., and flames were already reaching through the roof of the building by the time his crew arrived on scene roughly 10 minutes later.

Megonigal said there were approximately eight fire

crews that arrived on scene from Town Bank, Villas, Erma, Cape May, West Cape May, Cape May Point, Green Creek, and even as far away as Goshen and Stone Harbor.

Christopher South

Cape May Star and Wave

Above left, firefighters from Town Bank operate a hose from a ladder truck. Above, flames can be seen inside the work bay as firefighters use a hose at ground level. Right, black smoke mixed with white steam could be seen for miles

## Suit

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Development Board refers to proposed construction in July 2005.

Richardson said the state's position is the events violate the deed of easement and the borough has taken no steps to enforce the state's directions on the matter. The winery's contract is with Cape May County, and the county would be the enforcing agency. Richardson said allegations brought that allege the bor-

ough took action against the winery are 'totally spurious.'

"What action has (the mayor) taken? It ain't there. They are just wasting taxpayer money for owner purposes," Richardson said.

Richardson said the mayor is not prohibited from voicing an opinion as a neighbor of the winery. He said there was no conflict of interest demonstrated in the mayor's actions.

Wilde alleged the mayor, who lives across the street from the winery, and other

neighbors have objected to every attempt to develop the winery, starting with erecting some greenhouses on the property. At public meetings neighbors have raised the issue of increased noise and traffic if the winery were to host events. Wilde alleged the mayor tried to have a stop work order issued numerous times.

"Before we ever opened our

doors we were labeled as a problem," Wilde said.

Celli said the winery is operating according to state regulations for a preserved farm under the contract they signed. He said the winery has taken careful measure to ensure any event is directly related to the sales of the agricultural product they produce, which in this case is wine. He said the state

requires 51 percent of the winery's profits must come from its agricultural produce, so they require any event must include the purchase of \$2,000 of wine for the event to be held.

Celli said Willow Creek Winery is committed to the preservation of the land for agricultural use. He said the vines they planted can live 20, 40, perhaps 80 years, which he said shows their commitment to preserving the land as a farm. He said the \$890,000

Wilde received through the Farmland Preservation Program was not squandered, but was reinvested into the farm.

Wilde said the development of the winery has led to the creation of 20 new jobs and she would like to maintain them year round. Wilde also said a winery is the only type of farm that raise the value of surrounding properties.

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## Cape May rated well on best practices

By CAIN CHAMBERLIN  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY - Cape May did well enough on the state's Best Practices survey to qualify for the full allotment of state aid tied to the survey.

The city's new Chief Financial Officer, Neil Young, released the results of Cape May's Best Practices questionnaire during the Oct. 15 city council meeting.

He said the city received a score of 46 out of 50, allowing Cape May to obtain the full 5 percent allotment of Energy Tax Receipts (ETR) aid and Consolidated Municipal Property Tax Relief Aid (CMPTRA).

The Christie Administration and the Department of Community Affairs, according to Mayor Ed Mahaney, established the Best Practices

program four years ago. He said all 565 New Jersey municipalities are required to complete the questionnaire and submit it to the state.

The mayor said there have been as many as 80 questions, but this year there were 50. The program is intended to ensure more efficient, transparent and responsible use of taxpayer dollars by local governments

"The questions are a surprise this year. There's a few that remain the same year to year," Mahaney said. "Then, there's actually a series of questions each year that are brand new and that is supposed to keep the towns moving along. It's to make sure that your local officials and your appointed officials and your government department

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