

**Rough year ahead?  
Calling  
Harry Truman**

Page A4



**House  
of the  
Week**

B1



170th YEAR NO. 1 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3, 2024 \$1.00

## Cape Island Year in Review



John Cooke (file)/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

A crane lifts the cupola onto the top of Cape May's fire station, which was completed and opened in 2023. Below, the 16,100-square-foot facility was dedicated Nov. 29.

### JANUARY

— Five residents who circulated a petition seeking an amendment to a borough ordinance permitting recreational cannabis sales received a summons to court regarding a lawsuit filed by West Cape May. The petition's request for cannabis stores to be 1,000 linear feet away from residences, parks and churches would have eliminated cannabis sales anywhere in the borough. On Jan. 4, borough resident Ellen McDevitt told Borough Commission she was one of five residents who last fall circulated a petition that received 174 signatures to change the wording of an ordinance allowing for the sale of recreational cannabis.

— According to the city's Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee, Cape May's annual municipal budget has increased 87 percent since 2010. On Jan. 13, MTRAC Chairman Dennis Crowley said inflation has risen at a rate of 3 percent a year since 2011 for a total increase of 42.57 over the past 10 years. "In that same period of time, the Cape May city budget has increased 87 percent. The budget has gone from \$11.7 million in 2010 to \$22 million in 2022," he said. With respect to the impact of inflation on city services, it is far greater than the national impact, he said.

— George Dick was appointed to temporarily fill a vacancy on Borough Commission created when Dan Kurkowski submitted his resignation Dec. 20 following his appointment as a Superior Court judge,



Jack Fichter (file)/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Family Division, Cape May County, Vicinage 1.

Kurkowski was filling a vacancy left by Peter Burke, who resigned his seat on Borough Commission in September following more than 17 years of service.

— City Council dissolved the Municipal Parking Advisory Committee (MPAC) but kept committees overseeing beach safety, taxation/revenue and bicycle/pedestrian safety. Councilman Shaine Meier requested Jan. 17 that MPAC be restored, noting he valued the efforts of the volunteers on the committee. A motion to amend to include MPAC in the list failed to receive a second.

— The Cape May Police Department accepted delivery of an electric Ford Mustang. City Manager

Mike Voll said a second electric vehicle was on its way and the city planned to install charging stations at the Welcome Center and City Hall parking lots.

— City Council moved forward with plans for a land swap that would allow construction of a police station on part of Lafayette Street Park. During a special meeting Jan. 25, City Council awarded a contract for appraisals of a property on St. John Street and the Sewell Tract. Mayor Zack Mullock said the appraisals would be provided to the state Green Acres Program. The city contacted officials with the Department of Environmental Protection proposing to dispose of .14 acres of future parkland along St. John Street near the inter-

section of Lafayette Street. As compensation, the city would dedicate as parkland about 4.86 acres at the Sewell Tract.

— Borough Commission approved an ordinance to enhance protection of sand dunes and beach protection structures, increasing fines for the cutting, removal or pruning of vegetation on dunes. At a Jan. 24 meeting, Cape May Point Mayor Robert Moffatt emphasized that a \$2,000 fine for each separate violation can be levied to any person, firm or partnership that is in violation of any provisions of the ordinance. At a Nov. 22 meeting, borough solicitor John Amenhauser said the fines in the previous ordinance were too low to pre-

Cape Island, Page A2

## Mall merchants oppose raising sales tax to 8%

BID wants MTRAC to clarify how funds would be utilized

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — While the city's Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee is researching the benefits of adding 1 percent to the sales tax, perhaps to development a better jitney/shuttle service for Cape May, Washington Street Mall merchants have gone on record opposing it.

Cally Zebrowski, treasurer of the Washington Street Mall Business Improvement District (BID), told MTRAC Chairman Dennis Crowley at a Dec. 14 meeting that the mall management company wished to voice its opposition to raising the sale tax to benefit the city.

She said the BID was unclear what businesses would be taxed and did not like the idea of an additional tax to their customers. Zebrowski said visitors from Delaware currently question taxes on various

items.

Crowley said as a fourth-class city, Cape May has the right to add 1 percent on sales tax to various commodities — such as drinks sold in bars and restaurants, rooms and accommodations, beach chairs and admission to theaters and public performances — and use that money to fund a comprehensive shuttle service. He presented a draft resolution to city solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz, who is examining the issue for MTRAC from a legal standpoint.

City Councilwoman Maureen McDade said the state allows fourth-class towns to levy a local sales tax, particularly those that rely on tourism for their revenue.

MTRAC member Russ Dickhart said fourth-class status is for towns bordering the Atlantic Ocean that are summer resorts regardless of population.

See Mall, Page A8

## Point may move restricted beach

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — The beach reserved for endangered nesting birds and rare plants may be moved from Alexander Avenue to Light House Avenue.

The borough's beach management plan dates to 2016 and the Department of Environmental Protection notified the borough during the last beach replenishment that the plan needed to be updated.

At a Dec. 19 Borough Commission meeting, Commissioner Catherine Busch said she and Public Works Director Bill Gibson met with state endangered species officials.

"The point of the beach management plan, for those who have never read it, is to protect portions of our beach for the benefit of beach-nesting birds that are endangered and for certain plants, notably the seabeach amaranth," she said.

The borough distributed a draft of the beach management plan received from the state.

The biggest change would be the location of the precautionary beach, the one with the most restrictions because it may be used by endangered species, Busch said. She said the borough's precautionary beach would change to

Light House Avenue, which borders the state park and is not used for swimming.

Light House Avenue beach is much deeper than Alexander Avenue.

"Alexander is getting harder for us to fully comply with staying at the high-water tide level for vehicle use," she said. "Also, it's getting a lot more use at Alexander beach than it once did with people, now that the adjacent state park beach at Sunset (Boulevard) has become so attractive."

Busch said the new precautionary beach would be adjacent to an area of the state park set aside as a precautionary area and be more conducive to beach nesters and seabeach amaranth growth.

A borough ordinance prohibiting dogs on the beach from March 15 to Oct. 31 does not match a prohibition at the state park, which has caused problems with persons walking their dogs from the state park onto borough beaches, she said.

The state recommended the borough begin its dog prohibition on its beaches beginning April 1 to match the state park's schedule.

The state beach management plan references the borough's prohibition of flying kites during certain

Cape May Point, Page A8



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