



## Lower Regional girls tennis team loses semifinal

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## House of the week

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'Your unwillingness to acknowledge the truth that your eligibility to serve has been irreparably injured ... that you continue to underestimate the severity of your wrongdoings, that you misunderstand the significance of your position ... and that you undervalue the integrity of our community.' - Justine Magariel, Cape May

# Women call for Bezaire to resign in Cape May

### Movement forming to recall city councilman after arrest, guilty plea to stalking former girlfriend

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave



BEZAIRE

CAPE MAY — A coalition is forming intent on recalling Councilman Chris Bezaire following his arrest and guilty plea last month in Superior Court to crimes against women. Bezaire, 43, pleaded guilty Sept. 17 to fourth-degree charges of contempt and stalking of a former girlfriend in a plea agreement with the

state, which is recommending a term of probation of three to five years with a condition of 30 to 60 days in the county jail at the discretion of Judge Bernard DeLury. Sentencing is scheduled for Jan. 21. During a City Council meeting Oct. 5, city resident Justine Magariel asked Bezaire to resign. Two other women joined her in doing so during the meeting. The Cape May County Prosecutor's Office arrested Bezaire on June 16 on charges of invasion of privacy, cyber harassment, stalking and contempt of court. He was released from the

Cape May County Jail on June 28 following 13 days of incarceration. "In August, you told the council, 'My ability to serve the citizens of Cape May will not be affected,'" Magariel said. "In September, you said you'd been given the opportunity to examine your behaviors — that examination has yet to be seen." "Your unwillingness to acknowledge the truth that your eligibility to serve has been irreparably injured, that you are no longer fit, points to the fact that you continue to underestimate the severity of your wrongdoings, that you misunderstand

the significance of your position as an elected official and that you undervalue the integrity of our community," she continued. Magariel said she had voted for Bezaire and was "aware of his past," and believed that he had changed. "You have betrayed me and my family just like you betrayed all of the citizens of this town," Magariel said. "That you committed such crimes again during your campaign and after taking office renders these scars even deeper." Cape May is a small town where everyone knows everyone, she said, which is precisely

the precept that protects us "from people like you." "There is no amount of name recognition or professional allegiance that will harbor an abuser in a place like Cape May," Magariel said. She said she returned to the city to raise her son in an atmosphere of decency, morality and trust, a place represented by officials who embody those values. Magariel said with a coalition of Cape May voters, a petition for Bezaire's recall would be created and alliances formed with "businesses, in households

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## Icona shares its plans for luxury hotel

The seven-story structure proposed for Beach Ave.

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Icona Resorts is proposing a seven-story hotel on the site of the Beach Theatre on Beach Avenue. Eustace Mita, chairman and CEO of Icona Resorts, and architect David Schultz, co-founding partner in DAS Architects of Philadelphia, presented conceptual drawings to City Council during a meeting Oct. 5. The front of the hotel would have pillars, balusters, brass railings, flower boxes and a cedar roof, Mita said. Schultz said the building would have a raised porch two stories in height. The hotel would have a center lobby with one or two restaurants or cafes and retail shops with a spiral stair to the second floor, which would have a ballroom and a restaurant with porch dining offering an ocean view. He said the hotel's design would be simple and timeless. "It's a classic-looking building with the Cape May-style windows, almost all the rooms have balconies," Schultz said. Mita said the hotel would have a lawn where a game of croquet could be played or guests could sit and relax. The design includes a rooftop swimming pool that would not be visible from ground level. The hotel lobby would have a domed ceiling as the great hall hotels in Cape May did in the past, he said.



DAS Architects

Icona Resorts proposed to City Council building this seven-story hotel on the site of the former Beach Theatre. Architect David Schultz said the design would be reminiscent of the city's historic grand hotels.

"Our theme is timeless elegance where dreams come to rest," Mita said. He said the building gets smaller as it goes west. The project includes a four-story townhome which will include Terry Shields' bicycle rental business. Schultz said the bulk of the building would face Beach Avenue. The proposal includes a parking garage that would more than cover parking requirements and would not be visible from the street, he said. The hotel would have four levels of parking, all valet, for maximum capacity. Hotel rooms would begin on the third floor, he said. The top floors would be built into the roof line and have dormers, Schultz said. The former Palace Hotel was remodeled and rebranded as Icona Cape May, the former Pier 6600 in Diamond Beach became an Icona resort and the site of the Grand Hotel became condominiums.

Icona purchased and renovated the Golden Inn in Avalon, Mita said. He said when Icona bought the Palace Hotel in Cape May, it was rated the 34th of 37 hotels in the city. He said it was rated No. 1 by TripAdvisor a year after renovations were complete. Mita and Schultz showed council a video documenting the great hotels in Cape May through its history, including the Mount Vernon, Christian Admiral and the Chalfonte. "You look at all the great and grand hotels and we said to ourselves, 'What if we could recreate that?'" he said. Mita said he contacted Bruce Frank, who owned the Beach Theatre, more than 10 years ago and tried to buy the site. The property went into foreclosure and was sold at auction in November 2019 to Icona Resorts and partners for

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## EMS arrived in 4 minutes, Lower shows

Debunks claim it took Inspira quarter-hour on drowning call

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

DIAMOND BEACH — Lower Township officials are disputing a claim by a Diamond View Condominium resident who said it took more than a quarter-hour for help to arrive Sept. 13 at the scene of a possible drowning. Gregory Morris told Lower Township Council on Sept. 20 that a nurse at the condominium complex performed CPR for 15 to 20 minutes before an ambulance arrived. He said he believed the individual would have died if the nurse had not been present. At the meeting, Lower Township Police Chief William Priole said Wildwood Crest Rescue responded as mutual aid within 4 minutes and Inspira arrived in 11 to 11.5 minutes. He said the response to calls by Inspira is significantly better than what Lower Township Rescue Squad provided. Priole said he has received nothing but positive reviews from officers on Inspira's professionalism. Lower Township Manager Mike Laffey told the Star and Wave that Inspira was aware CPR was being administered at the Diamond View pool and called Wildwood Crest Rescue for mutual aid. He said Inspira arrived on scene in 11:57. According to county dispatch records, the 911 call was received at 5:37 p.m. AtlantiCare paramedics were dispatched at 5:38 and arrived on scene at 5:49 p.m.

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# DRBA studying replacement of aging ferry fleet

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

NORTH CAPE MAY — The Delaware River and Bay Authority (DRBA) is studying how to replace its aging Cape May-Lewes Ferry fleet with new vessels that may be smaller than current ferries. The current fleet was built in the 1970s and 1980s. Heath Gehrke, director of ferry operations, said it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep the older

ferries running. He said it would take five or more years to construct a new ferry fleet. Kristen Kissinger, a planner with KPFF Engineers, said vessel design would take all of 2022 and if funding is in place, construction could start in 2024. Three options are on the table, the first being similar to the current fleet of three 100-vehicle vessels. "The big difference there would be to shrink

the passenger capacity," she said. The new ferries would have a passenger capacity of 440, about half the current capacity. Kissinger said the current vessels have more walk-on capacity than needed. She said a second option would be for a midsize fleet of three or four 75-vehicle ferries with passenger capacity of 330. A third option would be five 55-vehicle ferries, Kissinger said.

Martha Hart, of KPFF, said a 2019 study showed ridership peaks in summer and wanes in winter, she said, adding that ferries are not running at capacity. "Even on the maximum day when analyzed, the ferry could have carried almost 400 more vehicles than it did," Hart said. She said the busiest time of day in summer is between 10 a.m. and 5



File Photo/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE The Miss Chris party fishing boat passes one of the Cape May-Lewes Ferry vessels just outside the Cape May Terminal.

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