



## Tennis wins two playoff matches, falls in semifinal

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## House of the week

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168th YEAR NO. 42 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2022 \$1.00



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Officials break ground on the Cape May City Library at Franklin Street School on Oct. 10. Mayor Zack Mullock credited the Center for Community Arts with preserving the building long enough for other organizations to help get it restored.

## Preserving city's Black history

### Restoration begins to turn Franklin Street School into library

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — While a groundbreaking ceremony was being held on the front lawn of the Franklin Street School, construction work was already under way inside to convert the historic building into a branch library.

With the sound of construction from the city's new firehouse and repairs to the Allen AME Church taking place in the neighborhood Oct. 10, Mayor Zack Mullock noted grant funding for the project came from the county, the county Library Commission, the state of New Jersey and the state Historic Trust. He thanked the Center for Community Arts (CCA) for its efforts to preserve the Franklin Street School building for more than 20 years.

"Without the CCA, we would not have a building here that would be viable to be fixed up," Mullock said.

He said city residents cannot wait to get inside the refurbished building to socialize, study, learn and have a

little fun.

CCA Director David Mackenzie said the organization invested about \$700,000 in the building, including \$90,000 for window restoration. He said CCA had an additional \$600,000 in state grant funds.

Mackenzie said of the \$700,000, about half came from local residents and businesses.

The facility was built in 1927 as a segregated elementary school and is now a designated New Jersey African American Historic Site.

County Commissioner E. Marie Hayes said she received a phone call years ago from then-mayor Chuck Lear suggesting a larger library for the city and inviting her to tour the Franklin Street School.

"When I went in and I walked the halls, the walls talked to me and they told me a story that I didn't want to hear — but it's history and this building needed to stay," she said. "At that point in time, we didn't know how we were going to do it."

Hayes acknowledged retired library director and consultant Susan

Briant, who volunteered her time to help secure state funding. She said the determination of Lear and former councilwoman Patricia Hendricks kept the project moving forward.

A perfect storm of positive events came together to allow restoration of the school building, Hayes said. She said the building would be a library and a community center.

"This was in my heart, but it was in a whole lot of other people's hearts, too — we needed to do this," Hayes said.

Officials and guests donned hard hats and turned over dirt with golden shovels. Emily Dempsey, a founder of CCA, was front and center in the ceremonial groundbreaking.

Anita DeSatnick, Cape May Library's story lady for more than 47 years, said when she saw the sign outside the school naming the principles of the restoration project, it made her realize it was really happening.

"I couldn't be happier," she said. The library is expected to be completed by December 2023.

## Lower approves 3% tax on hotel, transient rentals

### Township expects to collect up to \$1.3 million annually

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Committee has approved an ordinance to levy a 3 percent occupancy tax on hotel/motel rooms and transient accommodations effective Jan. 1.

In 2019, the state enacted legislation allowing municipalities to impose an accommodations tax not to exceed 3 percent. The tax is in addition to state sales tax.

The enabling ordinance states the township recognizes the exponential growth of the transient rental marketplace over the course of the past several years and the impact that has had on township resources and the public.

During public comment at an Oct. 3 council meeting, resident Steven Ewing said he owns one of the few motels in the township and received comments from guests about the amount of tax on their bill.

"They're not going to be happy about additional taxes, so I think it's going to adversely affect the hotel and motel businesses in the township, including mine," he said.

According to state statutes, the township could have levied at 2 percent or 1 percent tax, Ewing said.

He said in consideration of how few motels and hotels are located in the township, he would have liked to have been informed of the proposed tax early in the discussion phase so he could have had some input.

Ewing said he guessed the accommodations tax was a method of raising revenue. He said he opposes a 3 percent accommodations tax.

An estimated 740 rental properties are located in the township, mostly Airbnb and VRBO rentals. The occupancy tax is projected to generate \$750,000 to \$1.2 million next year.

In other business, council approved \$731,000 as an emergency appropriation for the preparation of a new tax map. The cost will be spread through five annual budgets.

Council approved a bid of \$54,103 from T&C Sports to install a tile floor in the hockey rink at Freeman Douglass Park.

Approval was granted by council to apply for a state Council for the Arts, county Division of Culture and Heritage grant of \$20,000 to carry out a local program to facilitate free youth and adult arts programming at various

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## Car hits, kills Villas man crossing Bayshore Road

VILLAS — A 42-year-old Villas man was killed Oct. 8 when he was struck by a vehicle as he crossed Bayshore Road.

Lower Township police responded to a report of the motor vehicle crash at about 8:28 p.m. Oct. 8 in Villas.

According to police, initial investigation revealed Eric J. Sloan was crossing on foot in the area of the CVS pharmacy when he was struck by a 2016 Ford Escape traveling

southbound. It was initially reported via 911 that a pedestrian was struck by a motor vehicle and that the victim had suffered severe injuries.

Sloan was treated for life-threatening injuries but died on the scene.

Authorities said the incident is an open and ongoing investigation. Anyone with additional information can contact the Lower Township Police Department at (609) 886-1619, ext. 156.

## MTRAC: City to take in \$1.8M in room tax

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Census figures show the city has a large inventory of rental properties with an unknown number of Airbnb/VRBO rentals and only 21 percent of homes having an owner occupying the property.

At an Oct. 4 City Council meeting, Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee (MTRAC) Chairman Dennis Crowley said the committee projects the city will bring in \$1.8 million this year of new revenue from the increased occupancy tax, anticipating a strong shoulder season.

Cape May issued 513 residential rental mercantile licenses in 2019, which dropped to 464 in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, he said. In 2021, the number of residential rental mercantile licenses increased to 924, a 99.1 percent increase that generated \$69,000 for the city in license fees.

Cape May has six categories of licenses ranging from \$100 to \$500 based on the size of the accommodation. This year the city issued 1,040 residential rental licenses totaling \$148,000.

The city has three sources to determine how many rental properties exist in

the city: local rental agencies, the transient marketplace and other private options, Crowley said.

Using 2020 census data, 882, or 21 percent of residential units in the city, have an owner living on the property. A total of 500 units, or 12 percent, are full-time rentals.

"The rest of them the Census Bureau calls vacant, which means nobody is registered as a resident of that property. Therefore, it sits without a census number," Crowley said. "Do we think all of those 2,700 houses are rented? Absolutely not, but we don't know how many are. We do know that 1,000 people

took out a license," he continued.

Crowley said MTRAC looked at the websites of five local real estate agents, noting every rental property that was listed as five bedrooms or more, and looked at rentals listed by sleeping capacity. Those properties were cross-referenced with licenses issued by the city, showing 155 rental houses in Cape May of five or more bedrooms, he said.

Of those, 27 properties were advertised as sleeping 20 or more persons, 49 properties able to sleep 15 to 19 persons and 79 rent-

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## High school locks down following 'swatting' call

ERMA — Lower Cape May Regional High School went into shelter in place mode Oct. 14 after the school received a phone call reporting an active shooter on campus, authorities said.

Lower Township police conducted a search of the school and deemed the call a hoax.

Route 9 was temporarily shut down between Tabernacle Road and Route 109.

Students were dismissed an hour earlier than usual.

State Police deemed the incident "swatting," a fake call made to 911 to draw a large police presence to a location. Similar calls were made Oct. 14 to schools in Middle Township, Jackson Township, Toms River, Hamilton Township, Barnegat Township, Newark, East Brunswick and Vineland.

The website Wired reported 90 false-shooter reports were made nationwide during the last two weeks of September.

# NAILED IT. Rusty Nail

The Rusty Nail is back! Our famed surfer bar and restaurant is back open for the 2022 season. Stop by for breakfast, lunch and dinner—as well as delicious cocktails and the coldest draft beer in Cape May (as verified by Exit Zero Magazine).

205 BEACH AVE, CAPE MAY • RUSTYNAILCAPEMAY.COM • WALK-INS WELCOME

