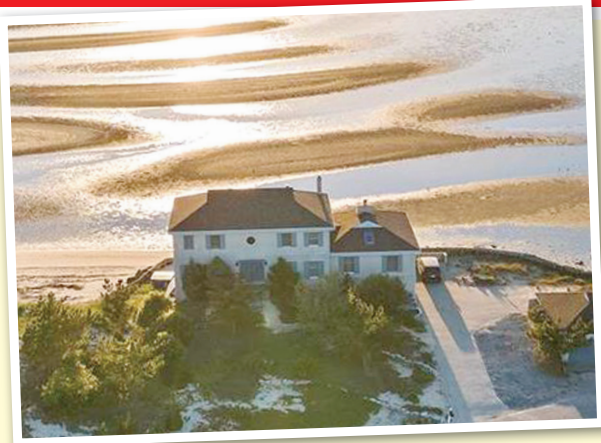


LCMRHS boys second at county XC championships

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House of the week

Real Estate Resource



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More calls for resignation but Bezaire won't go

Embattled councilman says he will not 'undermine democratic process,' weighing decision

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — With more than a dozen members of the audience holding up signs with one word on them, “resign,” four members of City Council called for Councilman Chris Bezaire to resign during a meeting Nov. 19. Councilwoman Lorraine Baldwin said she did not condone Bezaire’s behavior, calling it “unbecoming.”

“By remaining silent for as long as we have, I want to make sure that it’s not implied that I’m complicit; I am not,” she said. “I hope the city’s future focuses not on a recall.”

Bezaire said he was weighing his decisions; however, he would not make any decision prior to the Nov. 12 date when a recall petition could be signed by the



BEZAIRE

public. “I will not undermine the democratic process, so I am not going to say that I won’t make a decision at some point, but I will not make any decision prior to the Nov. 12 date,” he said.

According to state statutes, a recall committee of at least three registered voters is needed to initiate recall proceedings. This process may

not begin until 50 days before the completion of the incumbent’s first year of the current term in office.

Bezaire pleaded guilty Sept. 17 in Superior Court to two charges of contempt and stalking in the fourth degree in a plea agreement with the state of New Jersey. The state 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.

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 involving a former girlfriend. He was held in the Cape May County Jail until June 28, serving 13 days of incarceration. During public comment, attorney

See Bezaire, Page A3



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Members of City Council and other officials wield ceremonial shovels during a ground-breaking ceremony Oct. 21 outside the current fire station, which is slated for demolition.

City breaks ground on fire station

\$5 million facility expected to take 18 months to complete

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City officials, fire department personnel and City Council members manned ceremonial silver shovels to break ground for a new fire station Oct. 21.

Under blue skies outside the current fire station, Cape May Fire Chief Alex Coulter called it a monumental day, the culmination of something started in 2014. He thanked the city’s Public Works Department for help emptying the contents of the current fire

station, which is slated for demolition.

“We look forward to moving into our new building before the summer of ’23,” Coulter said. “Just to keep everyone’s mind at ease, we are set with our response plan, we’ve coordinated with the Coast Guard Fire Department and West Cape May, so there’ll be no lags in time.”

He said response time to fires would not be negatively affected as Cape May’s Fire Department operates from West Cape May’s firehall. Mayor Zack Mullock

Cape May gets low interest rate on fire station construction bond.
Page A4

thanked Coulter and his staff for working tirelessly to get the project to replace the fire station under way. He said the architect for the project, Robbie Conley, met the goals and time-

frame for the project.

City Councilwoman Lorraine Baldwin, council’s liaison to the Firehouse Task Force, said the current fire station was intended to be a temporary building but lasted for 45 years. She said she was pleased the Fire Department Museum would remain intact.

Earlier plans for a combined public safety building to accommodate the fire and police departments called for the museum to be demolished with an area of the new build-

See Fire station, Page A4

Diamond Beach flooding project OK over winter

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Relief from flooding in Diamond Beach may be on the way following permission from the state and federal governments to undertake work during the fall and winter season when it is least likely to affect wildlife.

During a Township Council meeting Oct. 18, Township Manager Mike Laffey said county Mosquito Control and the township Road Department were spearheading a project to reduce flooding in Diamond Beach. The state Department of Fish and Wildlife informed the township work could be undertaken between Oct. 25 and March 15.

During that period, work would not harm sensitive habitat for state-listed threatened or endangered species including the diamondback terrapin. Laffey said the township is also awaiting approval from U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

He said Mosquito Control was applying to undertake the work in the marsh since it has the needed permits.

Laffey said U.S. Fish and Wildlife issued a letter Oct. 15 after its review of the project and gave approval to conduct work between Sept. 15 and March 31.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife stated if the work were completed during that period, it would not affect red knots or swamp pink. Mosquito Control will call for a mark out of any underground

utilities in the area, he said.

Mosquito Control proposes excavating the end of the outfall pipe and extending that drainage into the marsh to help evacuate some of the water that builds up from storm drain inlets and the roads when heavy rains and flash flooding occurs.

The township is working with the Mosquito Control on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife refuge property to clear a swale along the fence line.

In other business, work began June 28 for renovation of the Clem Mulligan Sports Complex with the contractor making great progress, according to Laffey. Landscaping is under way as most of the site work has been completed. The project is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

“We are in contact with the Open Space Board regarding some fencing at that area that we want to add to the project to make it a little bit more secure, but we have to get the approval from the Open Space Board prior to doing that,” Laffey said.

There are some concerns about drainage around a building at the sports complex that will be addressed as a change order with the contractor, he said.

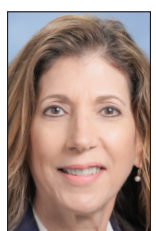
In other business, engineering designs are complete to address flooding at Cloverdale, Spruce and Evergreen avenues in Villas. Laffey said the township

See Diamond, Page A4

FIRST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT RACE

Garcia Balicki wants to level playing field

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave



GARCIA-BALICKI

Democrat Yolanda Garcia Balicki is challenging Republican state Sen. Mike Testa in the First Legislative District race Nov. 2.

The district includes all of Cape May and Cumberland counties and a small part of Atlantic County.

The candidates differ on issues of mask mandates, energy policy and immi-

gration.

Garcia Balicki spent much of her childhood in Woodbine and moved to Cumberland County at the age of 15. She said one reason she is running for the Senate is the Jan. 6 insurrection at the nation’s Capitol.

“I’m an attorney and believe in the Constitution and the rule of law,” she said. “It was very traumatic and unsettling.”

All segments of the population are not adequately represented at the district level, Garcia Balicki said, adding that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed many

See Democrat, Page A11

Testa: Team working to ease pandemic pain

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave



TESTA

Republican state Sen. Mike Testa, a Vineland attorney, is seeking re-election to a second term representing the First Legislative District.

The district includes all of Cape May and Cumberland counties and a small part of Atlantic County.

Testa, along with Assemblymen Antwan McClellan and Erik Simonsen, were

sworn in in January 2020, just three months before the COVID-19 pandemic began.

“It certainly took away some of the momentum that myself, Antwan McClellan and Erik Simonsen had built up,” Testa said.

Testa defeated Democrat Sen. Bob Andrzejczak in a special election in November 2019. Andrzejczak was the protégé of U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew and was appointed to his seat in the Senate after Van Drew won election to the House

See Republican, Page A11



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