



HPC rejects vinyl windows on contributing home

Page A3



House of the week

B1



167th YEAR NO. 48 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2021 \$1.00

Lower Twp. prepared for inclement weather

Emergency shelters, transportation, warming center available; county has four facilities

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Office of Emergency Management Coordinator Ed Donohue presented his annual report to Township Council on Nov. 15.

“We certainly have capable and professional fire chiefs and a police chief, and my job is not to tell them what to do but to ask them what they need,” he said.

Donohue said one of his projects this year was updating the township’s emergency operations

plans, which are the size of several New York City phonebooks.

The plans cover police communications, county dispatch, fire, police, rescue and hazmat incidents.

He said another major project was hazard mitigation, which included identifying the municipality’s worst areas for flooding. Donohue noted flooding was mitigated in the Roseann Avenue area in North Cape May via the installation of a large pumping station.

A tidal flooding issue continues on Wilson Drive on Schellenger’s

Landing that may be resolved by elevating the road or installing a bulkhead, he said.

Residents are encouraged to leave the area during a hurricane. Donohue said available shelters are limited to three- to seven-day stays. The township’s main shelter is the Millman Center where a generator is available, Donohue said.

The back-up shelter is the Lower Township Recreation Center, behind Township Hall. He noted the rec center does not have a kitchen, which would require the township to provide food from outside while

in operation.

Shelters would be staffed by recreation department employees with a Class II police officer on duty if an emergency situation ran for some time, according to Donohue. As a last resort, the Villas and Town Bank firehalls could be used for shelters since they have kitchens and generators.

“The trend has been to get away from that because those places are going to be used for firefighters and first responders,” he said.

The township has a number of school buildings that could be used

but they lack emergency generators. Some of schools have limited generator capacity, Donohue said. He said that is an issue to discuss with school boards, noting grants from Homeland Security or the Federal Emergency Management Agency may be available to buy generators.

For emergencies lasting beyond seven days, residents would be encouraged to use four county shelters, such as the Woodbine Developmental Center that can house

See Lower, Page A5

Cape May settles suit with former engineering firm

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council approved a \$136,818 settlement/release agreement with the city’s former contracted engineering firm, Mott MacDonald, following disputes with the firm over billing for past projects.

At a Nov. 15 meeting, city solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said earlier in the year, statements from Mott MacDonald were placed on council’s list of bills to pay but removed indefinitely.

“In the interim, there’s been back and forth with Mott MacDonald and the city, and the city obviously hired a new engineer as of Jan. 1 and required cooperation and transition from the old engineer to the new engineer,” he said.

He said it was a common occurrence for municipal governments to change the professionals with which they contract. Gillin-Schwartz said files, plans and maps by the engineer were the property of the city and needed to be transferred to the new

engineering firm.

“I think there was some disconnect on transitioning those materials and Mott MacDonald was not paid but the city of Cape May is well within its rights not to pay bills when they are not getting materials,” he said. “Instead of sparring about this in court, I’ve been going back and forth with Mott MacDonald’s general counsel to try and get this resolved and what you have before you tonight will provide the city with the work product that our current city engineer indicates that they need in order to move these projects forward, which includes Lafayette Street Park, the Welcome Center and a seawall on there as well.”

The bills included in the settlement are not new bills, Gillin-Schwartz said. He called the bills “ancient history” in terms of invoices. Mott MacDonald was waving invoicing work on Soldiers and Sailors Park from this year.

See Cape May, Page A4



Carly Kanter/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Footprints in the sand

Evidence of past visitors is visible in the sand at The Cove in Cape May, reminding beachgoers of warmer days and sunshine.

Lawmakers seek flood insurance reform

Say FEMA’s Risk Rating 2.0 threatens to drive up premium costs

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — Flood insurance could become much more expensive under the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s new Risk Rating 2.0.

At a Nov. 22 Borough Commission meeting, Deputy Mayor Anita van Heeswyk said Risk Rating 2.0 has been implemented. She said Sen. Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) attended a focus group on the topic in Wildwood two years ago. At that time, he expressed concerns that flood insurance rates would soar once the changes went into effect.

“There’s a congressional effort to reform the program that’s rolling out now,” she said. “It is Robert Menendez and Corey Booker along with a bipar-

tisan group of lawmakers from coastal states. They are worried this is going to drive rates up so high that people will drop their flood insurance.”

Menendez discussed other methods to implement the changes without overly affecting persons of lesser means who live at the shore, van Heeswyk said.

“I think everyone thinks it’s just wealthy people that have big houses that need flood insurance and that’s not the case,” she said.

Sen. Bill Cassidy, (R-La.) and Menendez introduced what they are calling the National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization and Reform Act, which would protect policyholders from exorbitant premium hikes by capping annual increases at 9 percent.

The act would provide

a comprehensive means-tested voucher for millions of low- and middle-income homeowners if their flood insurance premium became overly burdensome, significantly increasing the affordability of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

It would also freeze interest payments on the NFIP debt and reinvests savings toward efforts to restore the program to solvency and reduce future borrowing.

The act also calls for more accurate mapping, increasing funding for flood mapping to implement Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) technology for more accurate flood risk across the country, generating data that will lead to better building and land use.

The borough has some

small properties that are worth a lot of money, van Heeswyk said.

“Hopefully, something can be done to prevent these rates from soaring here,” she said.

More than 5 million Americans depend on the National Flood Insurance Program, including 220,000 New Jerseyans. U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone Jr. (N.J.-06) is the prime sponsor of the legislation in the House of Representatives.

“The new Risk Rating program FEMA is unilaterally imposing will increase premiums for over 170,000 policy holders in New Jersey,” U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell said. “Our bipartisan bill will make the program more affordable and fairer. Additionally, our legislation

See Lawmakers, Page A4

City Council approves 25-year Nature Center lease extension

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council authorized a 25-year lease agreement with the New Jersey Audubon Society for the Nature Center of Cape May at 1600 Delaware Ave.

“I think we all agree they do such a wonderful job,” Mayor Zack Mullock said at a Nov. 15 council meeting. “It’s such an asset to our city, we’re proud to do this again.”

The lease notes the city owns land abutting Cape May Harbor that it obtained with a grant and loan from the state Department of Environmental Protection Green Trust in 1995. Use of the property is dedicated to non-profit organizations and institutions for the development of environmental education, conservation and research programs about the special wildlife habitat in and around

Cape May Harbor. In 1995, the Environmental Commission recommended the city lease the property to the New Jersey Audubon Society for operation of a nature interpretive center.

The property contains a one-story, 1,344-square-foot building renovated by the city in 1993 and a two-story frame dwelling constructed in 1969 and renovated by New Jersey Audubon in 2007. That building contains about 2,376 square feet of habitable area plus a large deck and porch and detached outbuilding/classroom containing about 352 square feet plus a storage shed.

The lease with the city totals \$1 per year. The Nature Center must provide as much as \$2 million of comprehensive general liability insurance. The tenant pays all utilities and maintenance costs.



HOLIDAY BY THE HEARTH

CLASSIC AMERICAN FARE
BY OUR WOOD-BURNING FIREPLACE

Located at Congress Hall in Cape May • TheBluePigTavern.com • (609) 884-6422

THE BLUE PIG TAVERN

