



Holiday Happenings

LOOK INSIDE



House of the week

B1



168th YEAR NO. 50 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2022 \$1.00

Sheehan, others question cost of city arch project

Councilwoman says no deal exists for funding endeavor

By JACK FICHTER

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — St. Louis has its Gateway Arch and McDonald's has golden arches, but Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan made it clear she doesn't want an overarching decision on six decorative arches for the Promenade until it's clear what expense the city would bear.

On Dec. 6, Sheehan asked that an item on City Council's bill list be removed from consideration for payment, \$43,995 to Ricky Slade Construction for footings for arches on the Promenade.

"My reason for pulling it — because, again, this is a project council never voted on — we don't know how much it's costing and yet we're receiving bills," she said.

Sheehan said council had the responsibility of determining whether an expenditure of any category would exceed the bid threshold within a fiscal year, which is \$44,000. The bill for footings for the arch was just below the threshold, meaning it would not have to be put out for bid, she said.

A proposal for installation of six arches over the Promenade uses 12 footings, Sheehan said, noting she was unaware of the details. Mayor Zack Mullock said council received a 22-minute presentation on the arches in the past.

The bill notes the contractor will supply labor and materials with anchor bolts and templates supplied by others, she said, adding the cost of the footings would exceed the city's bid threshold.

She said no financial plan is in place. Sheehan said the Fund for Cape May would donate \$125,000 but the cost already is close to that and it's not complete.

The city paid a bill for electrical conduit to be installed on the Promenade, she said. Mullock said the bill for the conduit totaled \$19,900 and it was approved by council.

Sheehan said the city would also receive a bill for engineering costs for the footings. Mullock said council received multiple presentations on the arches.

"A presentation does not mean we accept something,"

See Arches, Page A2

Coast Guard looking for sailboat from Cape May

CAPE MAY — The U.S. Coast Guard is seeking the help of the public in locating the *Atrevida II*, an overdue 30-foot Catalina sailboat with a bluish-purple hull, with a white superstructure, and white sails with two aboard, Kevin Hyde, age 64 and Joe DiTommasso, age 76.

The boat was traveling from Cape May, to Marathon, Fla. and was last seen Dec. 3 when it departed Oregon Inlet, NC on its way to Jupiter, FL.

The *Atrevida II* may have stopped in Morehead City, NC, but this is not confirmed.

Anyone with information regarding the missing boat, is asked to call the Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command Center at 757-398-6700.

At right, the *Atrevida II* that set sail from Cape May but hasn't been seen since Dec. 3. The Coast Guard is searching for it and its two



Jack Fichter
CAPE MAY STAR
AND WAVE

Light up the night with holiday cheer

A home in the 600 block of Petticoat Creek Lane in North Cape May is a perennial favorite with its lawn brimming with lights, figures and inflatables.



Police station task force discusses green options

By JACK FICHTER

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A city task force is working on the design of a new police station with the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and seeking to include green infrastructure in the building.

Councilman Mike Yeager provided City Council with an update on the task force's progress Dec. 6. He said the task force began its last meeting by reviewing a number of changes to the proposed building's interior suggested by Police Chief Dekon Fashaw and his staff.

Yeager said the task force met with HPC Chairman Warren Coupland.

"Basically, he and the architect were interacting on the design of the building, which is pretty exciting to see, and I think the two of them get along really well and see eye-to-eye and had some great ideas together," he said.

The task force began discussion about making a new police station more environmentally friendly, Yeager said.

"They made architectural design changes to be sure we can have solar energy up on that building either in the form of shingles or in the form of panels on the roof," he said.

See Task force, Page A3

MTRAC: Rental rule scoffaws numerous

By JACK FICHTER

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city's Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee (MTRAC) wants to consult with real estate firms on ways to get more rental property owners to register with city.

MTRAC Chairman Dennis Crowley said Dec. 8 the committee presented a report to City Council on residential rentals and mercantile license applications and the status of that following the city raising fees.

When MTRAC reviewed all of the filings from the city, compliance jumped from 464 licenses purchased in 2020 to 924 in 2021, Crowley said.

When an ordinance took effect creating six tiers of fees for the rental mercantile licenses, the city sold at total of 1,040 licenses. Current compliance of rental property owners is 38 percent, he said.

Crowley said MTRAC looked at the

websites of five real estate agencies. He said not all agencies listed the address of the property or the sleeping capacity, so the committee found five agencies that provided that information.

The committee extracted from that any advertised property that listed five or more bedrooms and removed any duplicates, rentals that were listed with more than one agency, Crowley said.

"We found 155 residential rentals that were listed and then we checked the mercantile listings and we found that 86 of them had a mercantile license, which means 65 didn't," he said. "How can we as a city get to a point where everyone who is renting their property has a mercantile license?"

Chris Bezaire, of Coldwell Banker Sol Needles Real Estate in Cape May and a former city councilman, said every agency he has dealt with uses listing agreements that require rental

homeowners to obtain a mercantile license. He said he was a little surprised by the low compliance rate.

Some properties could be listed on real estate agency sites that are not available for rental but must remain on the site until the end of the fiscal year, Bezaire said.

"To make the study more accurate, I would look for properties that were not only advertised but had availability," he said.

Bezaire confirmed some rental property owners will sign with a real estate agency but also list the property on Airbnb and VRBO. He said his agency uses a third-party company to advertise properties on VRBO.

Crowley said he spoke with representatives from Airbnb and it would be possible for them to identify the properties have rented in Cape May they. He said a state report indicates how much occupancy tax comes from

See MTRAC, Page A4

Point requires rental owners to buy commercial beach tags

By JACK FICHTER

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — Borough Commission passed an ordinance requiring the purchase of more costly commercial beach tags aimed at those who rent out their homes and provide them as part of the rental.

During a meeting Dec. 9, resident Sandy Allison asked how the borough would know if owners of rental properties were complying with the new regulation.

Borough Administrator Ed Grant said neighbors would often report something that is out of compliance with Cape May Point's regulations.

"When you buy seasonal beach tags, there's a number and a name associated with it, so there is a way of auditing, documenting and pursuing it," he said.

Grant said if he were offering a home for rent, he would buy commercial beach tags. If caught providing seasonal tags instead of

commercial tags, a property owner could lose their renter's license and not be able to fulfill reservations, he said.

"That's probably the biggest fine ever levied against anybody in Cape May Point on what that damage could be if they can't fulfill those rentals," Grant said.

"I don't know how many people are willing to roll those dice as far as using their seasonal tags as an amenity and, of course, we'll be looking at different sites,

we'll be looking at Airbnb and all the other ones," he continued.

Grant said if an official sees a rental house listing that includes beach tags as an amenity, someone will check to make sure commercial beach tags were purchased rather than seasonal tags.

"I think if we catch one, word will really get around," he said.

The enabling ordinance states seasonal tags are for personal use. A commercial

entity includes anyone who rents or makes rooms or living space available to the public for a fee that requires a rental permit, it states.

Seasonal tags are priced at \$36 per person if purchased before May 31 and \$45 thereafter. Commercial tags are priced at \$100 each.

In other business, Commissioner Catherine Busch reported the Department of Public Works was engaged in winter activities, some of which take place out of the eyes of the public.

She said personnel have been clearing storm drains and repairing and refurbishing lifeguard and beach equipment including lifeboats.

Busch said she and Public Works Director Bill Gibson met with representatives of New Jersey Audubon to discuss work that will take place this winter from an ongoing contract to remove invasive species around Lake Lily. She said public works personnel would assist in that work.



INTIMATE. ELEGANT.

Take a seat, order your drink and stay a while.
The Lounge menu is back at the Ebbitt Room.

View the menu at EBBITTROOM.COM
Located at the Virginia Hotel | 25 Jackson Street, Cape May | (609) 884-5700

THE
EBBITT
ROOM

AT THE VIRGINIA