

Short-term rentals to boost BID budget

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House of the week

B1



167th YEAR NO. 50 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2021 \$1.00

Firm proposes \$30M. desalination plant

CME Associates says timing right: Facility old, inadequate and funding available

'Washington has passed an infrastructure bill that's going to provide billions of dollars statewide and in every state in the United States. Why shouldn't we here in South Jersey take advantage of that?'
-Nick Asselta, CME Associates

By JACK FICHTER
 Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A consulting engineering firm is recommending the city replace its desalination water plant at a cost of nearly \$30 million. During a City Council meeting Dec. 7, Nick Asselta, a former First District state senator, represented CME Associates. Asselta said he worked with former Cape May mayor Edward Mahaney to build Cape May's original desalination plant 25 years ago. In

1991, City Council assembled a committee to study saltwater intrusion and the possibility of building the plant, Asselta said. He said demand on the plant would increase in the future with neighboring towns seeking "more and more clean, drinkable water." Asselta said saltwater intrusion into wells would not decrease in the future. CME Associates Director of Water and Wastewater Keith Chiaravallo said his firm has reviewed and prepared conceptual plans. He said the plant receives water

from two sources — wells six, seven and eight, which draw water from the Atlantic City Sands Aquifer that passes through the reverse osmosis (RO) process due to salt content, and well five, which draws water from the Cohansey Aquifer that does not pass through the RO process. The plant was built in 1995 in an existing building that contains two RO units, Chiaravallo said. He said during a site visit to the plant, they collected as-built drawings. He said electrical equipment is located in the water treatment area,

a damp and humid environment. Since the RO units were installed in an existing building, little space is available and maintenance is difficult to perform, Chiaravallo said. There is no storage area available for waste from the plant and water sometimes has to be pumped to a municipal sewer a half-mile away, he said. "One of the biggest issues with the plant is the treatment capacity does not meet firm capacity according to

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Engineer change continues to stall city project work

Mott MacDonald still has not turned over vital documents

By JACK FICHTER
 Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city continues to be delayed in several capital projects due to a rough transition from one engineering firm to another. In January, City Council ended the city's contract with the engineering firm of Mott MacDonald, replacing the position with a contract with Engineering Design Associates (EDA). Earlier in the month, council approved a \$136,818 settlement/release agreement with Mott MacDonald following disputes with the firm over billing for past projects. Council authorized payment of the settlement Dec. 6. In the first quarter of 2021, statements from Mott MacDonald were placed on council's list of bills to pay but removed indefinitely. The city has requested files, plans and maps created by the firm, stating they are

'That plan was approved by Tony McCrea ... and we are currently waiting for the survey and previous plans by Mott MacDonald to complete our construction drawings.'

-Vince Orlando, Engineering Design Associates

property of the city and must be transferred to the new engineering firm. Principal Vince Orlando said EDA completed a conceptual site plan for additional parking at the city's Welcome Center, he said, adding the plan was modified due to a sidewalk crossing the railroad tracks. In June 2015, Mott MacDonald suggested the city

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Cape May shines and sparkles

Shop windows on the Washington Street Mall are aglow, such as this one at Bath Time.

COVID cases continue rise around the county

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — The number of active COVID cases continues to rise in Cape May County, with the Health Department's weekly update issued Dec. 10 reporting 594 cases, up from 452 active resident cases last week, 267 cases Nov. 26 and 191 cases Nov. 19. Lower Township led the county with 163 cases, followed by Middle Township with and Ocean City with 74. Reported cases in other municipalities: Avalon: 4, Cape May: 14, Cape May Point: 1, Dennis Township: 38, North Wildwood: 19, Sea Isle City: 9, Stone Harbor: 0, Upper Township: 66, West Cape May: 5, Wildwood: 36, Wildwood

Crest: 24 and Woodbine: 18. The county announced three deaths this week due to COVID: a 72-year-old woman and an 83-year-old woman from Ocean City and a 44-year-old woman from Middle Township. The county Department of Health (DOH) is now hosting weekly COVID-19 vaccination clinics at its offices at 6 Moore Road in Cape May Court House. The clinic will be held from 2 to 5 p.m. every Wednesday in December. The Health Department will be providing all Moderna and Johnson & Johnson COVID vaccinations, including booster doses,

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AMC Church restoration continues

Sheehan questions replacing recent roof with cedar shake one

By JACK FICHTER
 Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan questioned whether the roof recently replaced on the city-owned Allen AME Church was scheduled to be replaced with a historically correct cedar shake roof. During a City Council meeting Dec. 6, Deputy City Manager Lou Belasco said the current contract does not include installing a historically correct roof constructed of cedar shakes. He said the city's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has not yet been approached for phase two of the restoration project. Belasco said phase one, which included the building's foundation, windows, paint, gutting the interior, removing fire damage and correcting some structural deficiencies — received HPC approval. Mayor Zack Mullock said the city would install a cedar shake roof



File/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The city purchased the Allen AME Church and is getting help from the county and state to restore it to its former splendor.

if it has money left from grant funds. If funds are exhausted, a cedar shake roof would not be installed, he said.

Sheehan said the city was seeking bids for the roof. Belasco said bids are being sought for a general contractor to stabilize the building. Sheehan said that included the roof and joists. "If you wish for it to be an add alternate, we can put it on as an add alternate," Belasco said of the cedar shake roof. Council amended the resolution to state a new roof would be an "add-on." In addition, council also approved an additional \$10,000 in work from architect Catherine Lorentz on the church. In March, council authorized a proposal from Lorentz in the amount of \$12,500. On Oct. 15, she submitted a proposal for services not to exceed \$10,000 for scope of work not included in the original contract.

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