

## Caper Tiger girls basketball wins opener

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## House of the week

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# Cape Regional, Cooper announce merger plan

## Board chair attributes decision to difficulties operating independently

CAPE MAY — Cooper University Health Care and Cape Regional Health System have announced they intend to merge.

When complete, the partnership would join two health systems to expand access to specialty services to residents and visitors of Cape May County, according to a news release.

"For more than 135 years, Cooper has continued to expand its reach to provide advanced health care to the people of South Jersey,"

said George E. Norcross III, chairman of Cooper's board of trustees. "This merger of two trusted health care organizations will benefit tens of thousands of residents and visitors to Cape May County and strengthen the overall health care system in South Jersey."

Garry Gilbert, chairman of Cape Regional Health System's board of trustees, attributed the merger to difficulties remaining independent.

"As it becomes more and more

challenging for smaller health systems to operate independently, merging with Cooper made the most sense as we share the same commitment to the communities we serve and to providing the highest quality care to our patients," Gilbert stated in the news release.

Joanne Carrocino, president and CEO of Cape Regional, said the health system and Cooper have had a strong working relationship for many years.

"Cooper has staffed our inten-

sive care unit with fellowship-trained intensivists physicians as well as provided tele-ICU, tele-stroke and tele-neurology services that have truly enhanced the quality of care for our community," Carrocino stated in the release.

Cooper, with its MD Anderson Cancer Center, is based in Camden and is southern New Jersey's only academic health system and Level I trauma center, with \$2 billion in revenue, according to the news release.

Cape Regional has earned the Gold Seal of Approval from the Joint Commission and is an integrated health care delivery system serving residents throughout Cape May County, the release stated.

"Cooper is incredibly honored to be given an opportunity to partner with the nearly 1,500 Cape Regional team members who have built a distinguished health system of high-quality clinical outcomes

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

## A Dickens of a Christmas display

The Carroll Gallery at the Emlen Physick Estate in Cape May features an 'An Old-fashioned Christmas' exhibit with a huge Christmas tree suspended from the ceiling, model trains and an elaborate Dept. 56 Dickens Village collection.

# Problems persist at Villas sports complex

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Unruly youths continue to harass residents and damage property at the refurbished Clem Mulligan Sports Complex.

At a Dec. 6 Lower Township Council meeting, a resident of Carolina Avenue told council a mother was attacked recently in the park.

The woman was struck in the head and her child covered in blood, according to the woman.

"I know there is some kind of law for these children and your hands are tied, but something needs to be done," she said.

The woman invited council members to her home when the weather is nice "to see what we have to endure, daily, continuously in that park."

Deputy Mayor David Perry asked Township Manager Mike Laffey if he was aware of the situation in the complex. Laffey said "issues" have been addressed in other parts of the township in the past couple of months.

**'No punk kids are going to tell me where and when I can't go if I'm paying taxes in this town.'**  
-Villas resident Sabina Bloom, who intends to defend herself

He said he would need to get reports from the police department and contact the woman for a meeting with the chief and superior staff.

The woman claimed a security camera system in the complex was not working. Laffey said the camera system is operable.

"It goes to the police department. There's 19 cameras, I believe, in that location, and it's monitored by the police," he said. "There's not anyone actually sitting in front of those to do that but if we get a complaint, we can review that and get that footage and hopefully enforce what they can enforce with whatever's going on down there."

Prior to the meeting, juveniles were riding dirt bikes in the sports

complex, the woman said.

When chased out of the complex, the youth often cross the lawns of nearby homes, she said.

"They're stealing from us, they're damaging stuff on our properties, they are knocking on our doors to use our bathrooms," the woman said.

Laffey asked if she was calling police for each incident.

"It takes 30 minutes, and we were informed they don't have enough police," the resident replied.

She suggested every hour a police officer walk through the complex with a flashlight.

She said the juveniles hide in the skating rink and among the sliding boards.

"Maybe they won't want to hang there and drink and do whatever they do," she said.

Perry said Mulligan Sports Complex was not the only location in the township with juvenile problems.

Resident Sabina Bloom said the youth problems would discourage

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# MTRAC: Increase licensing fees for accommodations

## Chairman says cost 'frozen,' with no change for 20 years

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city's Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee (MTRAC) is recommending City Council increase mercantile license fees for accommodations and food and beverage businesses by 40 percent to keep up with inflation.

On Dec. 8, MTRAC Chairman Dennis Crowley said he requested a list of mercantile licenses issued this year and separated it into categories. He said under accommodations licenses, there were six residential categories, hotels and motels, tourist houses and guest houses apart from restaurants and retail businesses.

In the last municipal budget, residential rental mercantile licenses generated \$150,000 while hotels, motels, tourist and guest houses generated \$60,000 due to the city charging \$35 per room, Crowley said.

He said each unit of residential rentals generated \$142 while hotel and motels were generating \$32 per unit.

"So, if you compare these two segments of the accommodations industry, one of them is current and up to date with respect to inflation

and economy, because we just did it, the others have never been updated," Crowley said. "They're existing in a rate that was created 20 years ago."

The average federal government inflationary rate was 3 percent per year, except for the past couple of years, since 2012, he said.

"The \$32 has never been subjected to any effect of the inflation rate while everything else is," Crowley said.

Noting she was playing devil's advocate, MTRAC member and Councilwoman-elect Maureen McDade said the recent increase in the occupancy tax from 2 percent to 3 percent should be kept in mind. She said the increased room tax was passed onto customers.

McDade said the city received criticism on the increased occupancy tax.

"I'm not suggesting we don't look at it, but I think we just need to recognize and be sensitive," she said.

Crowley said a lot of people would not like an increase in mercantile license fees.

"We also need to recognize our task is not to make people happy," he said.

The cost of ordering a bloody Mary in a bar is not

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# Missing sailors rescued after several days adrift

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — Two men aboard a sailboat that left Cape May on Nov. 27 for Marathon, Fla., and had been reported missing were rescued after several days adrift.

The crew of the Hong Kong-flagged tanker vessel Silver Muna rescued the duo aboard the Atrevida II.

The U.S. Coast Guard brought Kevin Hyde, 65, and Joe Ditomasso, 76,

ashore from the tanker Dec. 14. Hyde and Ditomasso were last in contact with family and friends Dec. 3 after departing Oregon Inlet, N.C.

On Dec. 11, watchstanders at the Coast Guard Fifth District command center were notified the sailboat was overdue at its destination. The U.S. Coast Guard began issuing urgent marine information broadcasts and initiated direct commu-

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