



## Christmas cheer in Florida includes booze and theft

Page A4



## House of the Week

B1



169th YEAR NO. 52 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2023 \$1.00



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

### Sunrise on the solstice

The sun rose on the morning of the winter solstice at the Cape May Lighthouse, as it has done for the past 164 years.

## Workers to return stipends paid out of housing funds

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council passed resolutions to recover stipends paid to city employees from Cape May's affordable housing fund.

In 2020, then city manager Jerry Inderwies paid stipends to six workers from the city's Affordable Housing Trust Fund totaling \$100,000.

Neither the state Department of Community Affairs (DCA) nor the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office charged Inderwies with any wrongdoing. The state allows 20 percent of affordable housing funds to be paid for administrative costs.

The city asked the employees to return the stipends.

In September, council approved a resolution in a 4-1 vote authorizing voluntary deduction of employee earned paid time off in lieu of monetary payment to resolve overpayment of wages in 2020 in connection with the city's Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

At a Dec. 19 meeting, city solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said council approved a settlement agreement with the city's former purchasing agent Dan Shustack, who will make a down payment followed by 27 monthly installments to return \$16,314 to the city.

See Stipends, Page A8



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE  
Mayor Frank Sippel, left in center, presents Detective Kevin O'Brien, right, with the 'Top Cop' award.

## LTPD officer honored for most DWI arrests

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS —If you had a few drinks and decided to go for a drive, you may have met Detective Kevin O'Brien, the township and county's "top cop" for arresting those driving while intoxicated (DWI).

During a Lower Township Council meeting Dec. 18, Mayor Frank Sippel and Deputy Mayor Dave Perry presented O'Brien with the "Top Cop" award along with a Mothers Against Drunk

Driving (MADD) Recognition of Excellence Award.

In 2022 while a patrol officer, O'Brien made 11 DWI arrests leading not only the Lower Police Department but also Cape May County. "Your diligence and professionalism have saved and protected countless lives for 2022," Sippel said.

Lower Township Police Chief Kevin Lewis said O'Brien arrives at work ready to handle any task.

Sippel noted O'Brien did not miss one day of work in 2022.

## Lower Township Year in Review 2023

### JANUARY

— A 100-foot section of the railroad bridge over Cape Island Creek that connects Cape May to the mainland fell into the Cape May Canal. Sea Tow Cape May posted a warning to boaters. The bridge is inoperable, and trains have not crossed the canal for more than a decade. Using side scan sonar, Sea Tow located the debris and removed it working with H. Arenberg Marine Construction.

— Lower Township Council created an overlay zone that confines cannabis retail stores and offices of cannabis delivery services to a specific section of the General

Business Zone. In 2021, council amended the land development code and authorized the issuance of no more than two Class 5 cannabis retail licenses and no more than two Class 6 cannabis delivery licenses to operate within the GB-1 and industrial zoning districts.

In addition, council expanded the permitted zones in which Class 5 and Class 6 licenses are permitted to include the Marine Development Commercial Zone. The overlay zone is confined to the shopping center in North Cape May that houses the Acme market and the shopping center across the street that houses the post office and a dollar store.

— Shawcrest Mobile Home Park

residents asked Township Council to adopt a rent-control ordinance. On Jan. 18, John Niewinski said he represented the park's tenants.

He said Middle Township adopted an ordinance to control the increase in rent a landlord can impose. He said residents of the mobile home park received rental agreements for 2023 with an average lot rent increase of 14.1 percent. The lowest rent increase was 8.3 percent and the highest was 18.6 percent, he said. "We believe these increases have not been justified and are deemed unconscionable," Niewinski said, noting Legacy Communities purchased the complex in 2020. "Since then, we have experienced a 27 per-

cent increase with a 7.1 percent increase in 2022 and an average of 14.1 percent in 2023."

— Lower Cape May Regional High School Superintendent Joe Castellucci announced his retirement as of June 30 after 27.5 years with the school district. Castellucci, 60, had 38 years in public education in New Jersey.

— Cape May County had 228 new cases of COVID during the third week of January, according to Covidactnow.org, which reported 21 hospital admissions per 100,000 persons in the county. The risk level was high. According to the New York Times, which was monitoring Cape May County COVID cases, an average of 32 cases

per day were reported, a 42 percent increase from the average two weeks ago.

### FEBRUARY

— Lower Township Council approved a resolution supporting Lower Township police reinforcing a curfew ordinance due to a juvenile delinquency problem in some neighborhoods. At a Feb. 6 meeting, Mayor Frank Sippel said a curfew ordinance in a northern New Jersey municipality had been declared unconstitutional because some provisions of a state statute were left out. "We do have a cur-

See Lower Township, Page A2



### INTRODUCING THE CAFÉ MENU

It's winter at The Ebbitt Room — and we've prepared a delicious café menu, perfect for a cozy and elegant evening.

View the menu at [EBBITTROOM.COM](http://EBBITTROOM.COM)

Located at the Virginia Hotel | 25 Jackson Street, Cape May | (609) 884-5700

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