



House of the week

Real Estate Resource



Mellow vibe at Jessie Creek Winery

Page B1



165th YEAR NO. 7 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2019 \$1.00

City may sue over Welcome Center parking

Lack of response from railroad operator has delayed project for years

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — In June 2015, city engineer Tom Thornton, of Mott MacDonald, suggested the city consider expanding parking at the Welcome Center by parking cars on long-unused railroad tracks adjacent to the building. The city was also seeking to improve lighting of the Welcome Center parking lot.

At that time, he said the Welcome Center had 10 poles with

light fixtures that had “disassociated” from the arms that support them. Thornton also said the lighting plan could incorporate additional parking behind the Welcome Center on the railroad bed. He said he believed parking on the railroad bed would create an additional 20 to 25 spaces.

Fast forward three and a half years and not a light has been replaced nor more parking created on unused railroad tracks. The delay has been a failure of Tony Macrie, president of Cape

May Seashore Lines, to respond to numerous queries by the city. Cape May Seashore Lines holds a long-term lease on tracks through the county owned by NJ Transit.

During a City Council meeting Feb. 5, Thornton said he and city officials sat in a room with Macrie and representatives of the state Department of Transportation and NJ Transit almost a year ago.

“We came to an understanding of what the operator of the

railroad wanted. We had to revise our plans to accommodate his request,” Thornton said. “He was then to enter into an agreement. That’s when we lost contact.”

City solicitor Frank Corrado said Macrie “was simply not contacting us.”

Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan asked what the next step was for the city. Corrado said the city has two options — to sue Macrie for breach of his lease with NJ Transit as third-party beneficiary. “The other is to build around

it,” he said.

Corrado said he was not a big fan of filing lawsuits because it commits the city to an expenditure without knowing the ultimate cost. He said it was preferable to get the problem solved short of litigation.

If the city begins the project, it dares Macrie to sue for infringing on his rights, according to Corrado. He said the city would continue to try to reach

See Welcome, Page A5

Developer seeks 21 home sites on part of former Ponderlodge

Variance sought for property wrongly zoned conservation area

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Hall was filled with residents Feb. 7 as the Zoning Board heard an application for a use variance to allow 21 home sites at 10 Shawmount Ave. on a forested piece of land at the entrance to Cox Hall Creek Wildlife Management Area, the former Ponderlodge golf course.

Attorney Jeff Barnes represented the applicant, Marcello Mogavero, who intends to buy the property. He said part of the property is in a conservation zone and the other a residential zone.

In 1997, the former owner of Ponderlodge had a proposal for a residential development but the application stalled due to the sewer service not being available, Barnes said. On March 1, 2012, the current owner of the property appeared before the Zoning Board seeking a use variance for 22 residential lots. The owner of the property, Susan Adreassi LLC, of Philadelphia, received the land in 2002 from the owner of Ponderlodge as payment for a debt. Barnes said the prop-



Developer Marcello Mogavero is seeking a variance from the Lower Township Zoning Board to turn 7 acres of wooded property (top) into 21 home sites (bottom).

erty was rezoned in 2010 to a conservation zone as an amendment to the township’s master plan re-examination.

“The township believed, even though they did a search, that the prop-

erty was all owned by Ponderlodge and not the carved-out portion owned by the current applicant,” he said.

The conservation rezoning was all owned by Ponderlodge and not the carved-out portion owned by the current applicant,” he said.

See Developer, Page A4



USA Architects

This overview shows the project area that would be used for construction of a new public safety building in Cape May. Under the concept, the Colonial House would remain but the fire station would be demolished to make way for a combined police and fire headquarters.

Architect yet to be named for public safety building

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council viewed concept drawings of a new public safety building as it moved closer to awarding a contract to an architectural firm for the project.

During a meeting Feb. 5, Robert Fritz, architect and vice president of Mott MacDonald engineering, presented concept drawings of a new combined fire and police station prepared by USA Architects. He noted the city’s Public Safety Building Advisory Committee selected the current fire station site for the location of a combined headquarters.

Mott MacDonald was asked to develop a request for qualifications (RFQ) last June to aid the committee in selecting an architect for the project, Fritz said. He said the committee received eight architect/engineer proposals in September that were reviewed by a committee of eight people. The committee selected USA Architects based on a scoring system, according to Fritz.

USA Architects proposed leaving the Colonial House in its current location and connecting the city’s fire museum to the new fire/police station via a covered walkway, he said.

Councilman Shaine Meier said the drawings were conceptual and not finalized. He said the architectural design of the fire/police station was based on a house on Beach Avenue.

Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan asked how many parking spaces would be lost at City Hall. Fritz said the goal of the committee was to maintain 60 parking spaces. He said space behind City Hall currently used by the police department for a sally port to unload arrestees from police vehicles would be available for parking.

“They did not present a floorplan to us, so we don’t know exactly the functional spaces they may envision,” Fritz said.

Meier said USA Architects was open to holding meetings to get public input for the building’s design. Police Chief Tony Marino said USA Archi-

itects held a meeting in another city where residents were able to vote electronically on the exterior design of a new building.

He said USA Architects is currently rehabilitating the former Philadelphia Inquirer building in Philadelphia into a new police headquarters.

Fritz said council needs to award the architectural contract. Following that, the programming/concept design phase would begin and take about 30 days. The police and fire departments would continue to be interviewed to refine the concept. The schematic design would take another 30 days.

Rooms would be developed in the design development phase, which would take 45 days. The construction document phase would follow, involving drawings, details and specifications, Fritz said. He projected a date in July for that phase to be completed.

Fritz said putting the project out to bid would take 90 days, followed by

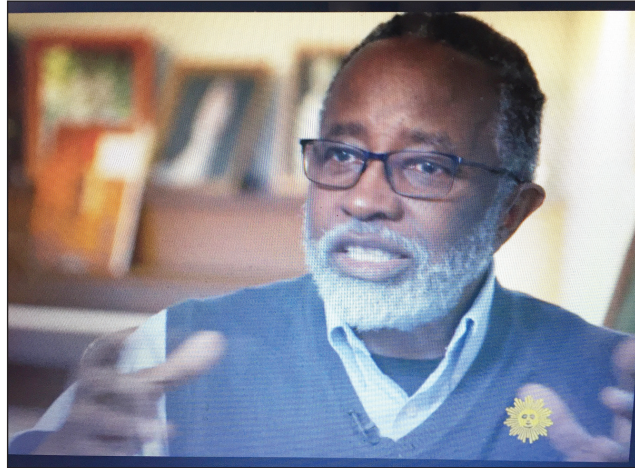
See Design, Page A3

‘Planet Walker’ on ‘Sunday Morning’

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Was that Borough Commissioner John Francis Jr. on CBS “Sunday Morning” on Feb. 10 playing a banjo and chatting with reporter Susan Spencer? Yes, it was.

Francis’ world extends far beyond Cape May County. In fact, it covers the entire Earth. He is known as the “Planet Walker” and has been profiled in this newspaper as well as in National Geographic magazine and numerous other



West Cape May Commissioner John Francis Jr. appears Feb. 10 on CBS’s ‘Sunday Morning’ with Susan Spencer.

See Planet Walker, A8



WILL YOU BE OUR VALENTINE?

WASHINGTON INN

OPEN FEBRUARY 14TH - FEBRUARY 17TH

609.884.5697 | WASHINGTONINN.COM