

## Caper Tiger wrestlers compete at District 32

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## House of the week

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168th YEAR NO. 8 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2022 \$1.00

# HPC: Elaine's outdoor bar doesn't fit aesthetic

By RACHEL SHUBIN  
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — It was a unanimous “no” vote for an outside gazebo and bar at Elaine’s Dinner Theatre during a Feb. 14 Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) meeting. The bar in question was already built and in place on the contributing property at 513 Lafayette St.

“We started this project before the pandemic,” owner Shirley Phinney said. “We wanted to transition to a boutique hotel with more outside (options). One bar wasn’t approved so we’re trying to come into compliance.”

She said she has owned the property for 33 years, previously alongside her late father, Mark Phinney.

HPC Chairman Warren Coupland said the original plan was created by Fenwick Architects of Linwood. The plan had since been changed and Coupland was not made aware of an outdoor bar.

“Fenwick has a good relationship with the commission and did present, as I recall, a correction to the center of the building,” Coupland said. “The people mentioned would’ve known that the HPC (involvement) would have been required.”

Phinney said her attorney, Ron Gelzun, submitted the original

plan to the Zoning Board that included outdoor renovations such as parking for additional rooms. Vince Orlando was involved on the project, prior to taking his position as the city’s engineer.

“Everyone was trying to figure out who was going to present (the plan) to the city, and I guess Ron Gelzun wasn’t going to do it,” Phinney said. “He assumed Steve Fenwick should’ve presented but we didn’t send him through. It’s not because we were trying to cheat the system.”

Fenwick said this approval fell through the cracks and he did not realize the bar was of unapproved status.

‘It looks contemporary to me and doesn’t fit Cape May or the existing property.’

—Warren Coupland, chairman, Historic Preservation Commission

“I didn’t even know about the bar, as we designed the additions and came to the board and went over it,” Fenwick said. “We resubmitted and got an approval, but we didn’t design or present the bar, so it fell through the cracks.”

Coupland asked Phinney if she had a building permit or yellow card for the outside bar. She said she was under the impression she did.

“At the end of the day, you had no permit. It’s a shame that it’s constructed and done before it came to the HPC,” Coupland said. “It looks contemporary to me and doesn’t fit Cape May or the existing property.”

Other HPC members spoke their opinions on the bar structure.

“A lot of things were being thrown up in town to help busi-

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## Fire Department sees busiest year in its long history

New firehouse in the works, calls reach 10-year high and historic pumper is restored



By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city’s Fire Department completed its busiest year in its 145-year history in 2021, according to its annual report issued last week.

Call volume has been rising for the past decade, according to Fire Chief Alex Coulter. COVID affected the way the Fire Department interacted with the public to limit exposure and protect everyone.

He noted the increase in calls for service proves the city is more of a year-round community now than in the past.

“The days of Labor Day being the end of the season are long gone,” he said. “The shoulder seasons are filled with residents and visitors enjoying the city and making Cape May what it is.”

Calls for service requiring a fire or technical rescue response have increased 60 percent in a 10-year period, growing from 590 calls in 2011 to 986 in 2021, according to the report.

The report noted one of the highlights of 2021 was the groundbreaking for a new firehouse. After years of work, the city demolished the 40-year-old pole barn that housed firefighters. A new firehouse is expected to open in spring 2023.

In 2021, the fire department along with West Cape May and Cape May Point fire companies transitioned to the county’s central radio communications system. The change ensures a higher level of safety for firefighters and citizens with more dispatchers available and a reduction in lag time for requested additional resources.

The department answered 28 fire incident calls in 2021, of which seven were building fires.



Jack Fichter (file)/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Cape May city officials gathered Oct. 21 for a ceremonial ground-breaking for a firehouse being built on the site of the 40-year-old pole barn that was rife with mold and other problems. Completion is slated for spring 2023. At top, the LaFrance pumper returns from restoration.

A total of 41 calls to assist EMS personnel were answered, including eight motor vehicle accidents with injuries. The fire department had a yearly total of 89 rescue and emergency medical service incident calls.

The department answered 35 natural gas leak calls, 17 electrical hazards, six downed power lines, 12 arcing or shorted electrical equipment calls and two bomb removals for a total of 97 hazardous condition calls.

The department experienced 21 false alarms or false calls and 20 smoke detector activations due to malfunction.

A total of 155 alarm system activation calls with no fire or unintentional activation were answered for a total of 309 false alarm

or false calls as well as 60 alarm system calls for sounding due to malfunction.

Under Emergency Medical Services, the department receives calls ranging from a ring stuck on a finger to cardiac arrest. The department has seen a 30 percent increase in calls for medical assistance since 2011 growing from 1,080 calls in 2011 to 1,408 in 2021, according to the report.

Among EMS calls were 32 altered mental states, 14 assaults, 30 breathing problems, seven cardiac arrest, 35 chest pain, 259 fall victims, 56 medical alarms, 118 unspecified medical emergencies, 60 motor vehicle accidents, five overdoses, seven head injuries, 45 respiratory problems and 52 standby

assignments for fires for a grand total of 1,408 calls for service.

According to the report, fire prevention events normally held indoors were moved to outdoor space and public tours of the fire station were halted but equipment was brought out to showcase to those interested in firefighting.

“As first responders, we are constantly exposed to danger and disease but with our continued extensive training, we are able to protect ourselves and the public while not wavering in our response and quality of service we provide,” stated Coulter.

In the spring of 2021, the department’s 1928 American LaFrance firetruck returned to Cape May following an extensive resto-

## FEMA changes calculation for flood coverage

Home value part of equation, meaning newer homes likely to see increase in the spring

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — Newer homes will see a hike in National Flood Insurance rates beginning this spring.

On Feb. 10, Deputy Mayor Anita van Heeswyk said the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has rolled out Risk Rating 2.0.

She said the Coastal Coalition met two weeks ago with Tom Heist of Thomas Heist Insurance, who explained the changes from an insurance agency perspective.

“The bulk of the rate change is going to happen in April,” she said.

FEMA will no longer use flood zones to calculate rates. Instead an individual property’s risk will be based on factors such as the foundation type, the elevation, structure placement, cost, frequency of floods and distance to water.

“The newest actuarial practice will be used to calculate rates,” van Heeswyk said. “FEMA is saying the

rates are going to be easier to understand.”

“Everybody involved in this is still trying to figure it out and they are saying agents will have an easier time generating flood insurance quotes,” she continued.

Those whose flood insurance premiums are due after April will see changes. Pre-FIRM homes, those built prior to the flood rules created in the 1970s, for the most part will find their rates decreasing, van Heeswyk said.

“It looks like the newer homes, because they are going to be using the value of the home now and they weren’t before, those may be going up,” she said.

Questions can be directed to Cape May Point’s floodplain manager, Lou Belasco, at [cmpfloodinfo@gmail.com](mailto:cmpfloodinfo@gmail.com).

The Cape May County Chamber of Commerce has scheduled a webinar for 4 p.m. Feb. 28 regarding the National Flood Insurance Reauthorization Act. Registration information is available at [capemaycountychamber.com](http://capemaycountychamber.com).

## Cape May will further study its Black history

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council approved a professional services agreement not to exceed \$45,000 with Nancy Zerbe, of ARCH2, for the production of “technically and permissibly correct and sufficient additional documentation to supplement the city’s National Historic Landmark status.”

According to the en-

abling resolution, Zerbe will provide research on the African American history of Cape May. She will serve as principal investigator on the architectural history and oversee all aspects of the project. The resolution notes Zerbe meets the National Park Service’s professional qualification standards as a historian and architectural historian.

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