



## Hansen, Harris, Rue advance to state wrestling tourney

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## House of the Week

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# HPC reviews conceptual plans for police station

## Commissioners to provide report to state Historic Preservation Office expressing support

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Architect Rob Conley presented conceptual plans for a new police station to the city's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) for an advisory review and conceptual approval.

The HPC will provide a positive report to the state Historic Preservation Office.

At a Feb. 6 City Council meeting, Vince Orlando, a contract engineer, said he believed

a diversion deal with the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for property in Lafayette Street Park to construct a police station would occur in the near future.

The city continues to wait for DEP approval of a land swap at the proposed park site. The proposal is to use land at St. John and Lafayette streets that was originally intended to be a portion of the park as a location for a police station. The city proposed a land swap with DEP for use of the parcel, which was

placed in the Green Acres program to be used as parkland.

Use of the lot for a police station would require the approval of the commissioner of the DEP and the State House Commission. In compensation for use of the quarter-acre lot, the city would dedicate 4.8 acres of land in the Sewell Tract as parkland.

At a special HPC meeting Feb. 15, City Manager Paul Dietrich said the recommendations of the HPC would be sent to the state Historic Preservation Office with hopes of put-

ting the project out to bid in late summer and begin construction in the fall.

Dietrich said the city received preliminary approval from DEP for the land swap and needs to submit a final survey, appraisal, and title documentation. The city must also work in coordination with Jersey Central Power and Light which owns the land, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Cape May Housing Authority, and neighboring Cape May City Elementary School,

he said.

An engineer is working on final plans to submit an application for a Coastal Area Facilities Review Act permit for Lafayette Street Park, Dietrich said, noting a CAFRA permit is not required to construct the police station.

Conley said he has been working with a committee of the HPC for the design of the building.

"We've tried to design the

See HPC, Page A3

## Grow facility proposed for W. Cape May

### Shore House Canna's owners want to use part of Rea Farm

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — The owners of Shore House Canna, the county's only cannabis dispensary, asked Borough Commission for a letter of support to the state to allow them to grow marijuana and industrial hemp on the 100-year-old Rea Farm.

To permit the growth of high-THC marijuana on the farm, Borough Commission would have to change an ordinance or have the Zoning/Planning Board grant a variance because the property is within 1,000 feet of residences.

In addition to cultivating marijuana, plans call for a manufacturing barn on the farm.

During a Borough Commission meeting Feb. 14, Mayor Carol Sabo said part of a cannabis zoning ordinance passed by the commission in 2021 allowed for a retail dispensary, cultivation and manufacturing. She said letters of support were sent to the state on behalf of Shorehouse Canna, which opened last September, and Potent Pedals, which has yet to open.

"We have been granted the ability to apply and vertically integrate our retail license and our delivery license into a grow and manufacture," Shore House Canna Chief Executive Officer Tom Nucis said. "We want to stay here in West Cape May. We like it here, so far we have been doing phenomenally well. We're not interfering with anything."

He said they reached out to Carol Rea Flynn about using some of the farm for a grow facility.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The parking area next to what locals refer to as the 'bridge to nowhere,' a remnant of the former lima bean operation on the Rea Farm, is the proposed site of a cannabis cultivation building.

Dave Christian, part of Shorehouse Canna ownership, said prior to coming to West Cape May, he was cultivating 116 acres of industrial hemp on a farm in Vermont. He said the hemp is virtually identical to cannabis. He said the farm used certified organic practices.

Manufacturing involves drying the plants and turning them into finished products, he said.

"As we've gone down this journey with opening our retail store, we've always had it in our minds that it would be really wonderful to be able to make our own products, to sell our own products and to have products that were locally made here in South Jersey using the same practices that I know how to do," Christian said.

The borough's ordinance requires only 5 acres of land for a grow facility, he said.

Kelly Patrick Kepple, a volunteer at the Rea Farm, said the continued viability of the farm is in question.

"We have been a lima bean, a strawberry and tomato farm for the last 25 years. Before that, it was primarily lima beans. But I'll be honest with you, it's really hard to make a living selling lima beans," he said.

Kepple said he believes most of the people in the meeting room purchase lima beans and fresh eggs from the farm but that was "not making the ends meet."

He said industrial hemp is a high-value crop that could be used to make plastic products and clothing. Kepple said the genus species of industrial hemp is the exact same genus and species as marijuana.

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## Popular park in Lower may get upgrades

### Township to apply for grants to fund \$2.2 million project

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — David C. Douglass Sr. Memorial Park is a popular spot to watch the ferries arrive and depart as well as view some of the best sunsets in the state, and Lower Township Council would like to upgrade the facility with more parking, seating and accessibility for the handicapped.

The township is submitting an application to the county Open Space Program for funding. At a Feb. 21 Township Council meeting, engineer Will Hanson, of DeBlasio and Associates, said the park has been used as a recreational space since the construction of the Cape May Canal, with pavilions built in the early 1970s. He said a goal is to increase accessibility and preserve the unique history of the site.

"This project is also a great candidate for the Cape May County Open Space Program which the township has had a lot of success in the past," Hanson said.

He said the township would apply for a Program Priority Grant, which could cover 90 percent of construction costs and 50 percent of soft costs. The park must remain in its current footprint since the state Department of Environmental Protection considers the site critical habitat for a number of species, Hanson said.

Part of the improvements would be creation of a turning circle wide enough

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# Planning board OKs changes for Montreal Beach Resort

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Planning Board approved a plan to build a roof over a dining area and other changes at Montreal Beach Resort.

The area where there currently is a tent will be roofed and an adjacent house will be converted from employee housing to guest accommodations.

The board granted preliminary and final site plan approval with nine variances for the project, which includes improvements to the Beach Avenue hotel and a guesthouse at the corner of Stockton and Madison avenues.

At a Feb. 13 meeting, attorney Tony Monzo, represent-

ing the applicant, said the site consists of a 70-unit hotel and a 277-seat restaurant/bar with a small liquor store. He said the board previously approved the guest house for employee housing with five bedrooms and the applicant was seeking to utilize the guest house for four additional guest rooms.

The applicant was seeking to remove the existing decks, stairs and landings at the guest house and construct a 60 square foot addition to change the house from employee accommodations to guest rooms associated with the hotel.

Existing concrete walkways will be removed and replaced with impervious areas and provide an additional 778 square feet of landscaping areas for the

hotel. Monzo said the project exceeds lot coverage, so the applicant is attempting to reduce lot coverage and create more green space.

He said the original plan called for filling in a 336 square foot children's swimming pool with a patio. He said Planning Board Engineer Craig Hurlless suggested creating a landscaped area instead of using concrete.

He said the applicant was seeking to cover an exposed deck on the fourth floor following the roof line of the main hotel. Some signage will be removed, and a monument sign will be installed in front that will hide a swimming pool equipment building.

City code requires 172 park-

ing spaces for the hotel which currently provides only 88 parking spaces. The project will reduce the number of required parking spaces by one and add two stacked parking spaces for employees in a driveway that leads to a parking lot, Monzo said.

The applicant wishes to undertake the project in phases with work starting on the guesthouse which would not require any state Department of Environmental Protection permits.

Morris Clarke, of DAS Architects, said a tent structure for restaurant seating will be removed and an addition will be constructed for the restaurant.

The roof area will be extended to create a lounge space for the hotel, he said.

Clarke said new egresses will be constructed for the guesthouse. He said the shape of some of the roof dormers of the hotel would be changed for signage up top without changing the height of the hotel.

Some columns and additional trim will be added to the building, Clarke said.

Monzo said the restaurant's mercantile license indicates 277 seats. Planning Board member Dennis Crowley asked for a breakdown of how many restaurant seats are currently indoors and outdoors.

"I think there's about 100 seats downstairs, which are all inside and I think there's about 177 seats upstairs," Monzo said.

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