



House of the week

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Story behind that curious street name

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166th YEAR NO. 12 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2020 \$1.00

Closings, curfews amid COVID-19

State implements strong measures to help stop spread

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

TRENTON — New restrictions on travel and widespread closings announced this week are aimed at encouraging residents to stay home and practice social distancing during the rapidly spreading worldwide novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont jointly announced a regional approach to combatting COVID-19 throughout the tri-state area.

The three states limited crowd

capacity to 50 people, effective 8 p.m. Monday, March 16. This follows updated guidance that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued March 15 recommending the cancellation or postponement of in-person events consisting of 50 people or more.

Just days before the announcement, Murphy called for the cancellation of public events with more than 250 people.

The three governors also announced that restaurants and bars will offer take-out and delivery services only. These establishments will be provided a waiver for carry-out

alcohol.

In addition, the three governors said they were temporarily closing all gyms, movie theaters and casinos effective March 16.

In addition, Murphy issued travel restrictions from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. statewide.

“All nonessential and nonemergency travel in New Jersey is strongly discouraged,” Murphy said. “If you don’t need to be on the roads, you shouldn’t be on the roads.”

New Jersey is the first state to implement such a curfew on night-

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

City resident Dave Delenick asks City Council members Stacy Sheehan and Zack Mullock to reconsider voting against a bond ordinance to fund construction of a public safety building.

Area students begin online classes

USCG suspends guest attendance; police limit contact

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

On March 15, the county Health Department and the president of the Cape May County Association of School Administrators made a decision to close all county schools from March 17 to March 30.

“We will continue to monitor the information available and any details that may require a longer closure than currently planned,” stated a release. “We will coordinate with our communities throughout the closure and provide updates and information specific to the firm date of schools reopening.”

Parents are advised to check school district websites, social media feeds and community outreach platforms for additional details.

“Again, the purpose of closing schools is to decrease contact among children, to minimize the risk of getting sick and to limit the spread of infection. Although a difficult decision, it is the best decision for our children, staff and communities,” noted the release.

Lower Cape May Regional High School District Superintendent Joseph Castellucci said prior to the school shutdown, large public events were postponed in the school district including the high school’s spring musical “Chicago” and a Richard M. Teitelman School musical in two weeks.

Castellucci said the plan for closing included lessons both online and workbooks.

“We’re sharing information that Comcast put out about how families can get free internet for two months,”

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John Alvarez/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Bare shelves were becoming common in grocery stores, such as the Acme in North Cape May, above, as shoppers were buying lots of food and other items, especially toilet paper, in preparation for the global pandemic of COVID-19.

Virus test difficult to find in Cape, Atlantic counties

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

Coronavirus testing kits were scarce to nonexistent last week in Atlantic and Cape May counties. Those with symptoms of fever and cough could be seen by physicians and tested for flu but not diagnosed with coronavirus.

County Health Department Public Health Coordinator Kevin Thomas said March 13 that persons needed a certain profile to get tested.

“They have to call their own doctor first,” he said.

If the doctor recommends a COVID-19 test, the person should call Cape Regional Medical Center, according to Thomas.

At a March 13 news conference with Gov. Phil Murphy, state Department of Health Commissioner Judith M. Persichilli quoted Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease: “Those who need testing not only should, but must get tested. Those who want testing, should get it when wide-scale testing is

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Colleges extend break, plan for remote studies

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

Extended spring breaks, canceled events, moratoriums on travel and mandatory online courses — welcome to college during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While there are no presumptive or confirmed cases on the region’s college campuses, schools are taking precautionary measures.

Stockton University in Galloway Township has extended its spring break through Tuesday, March

24, to allow faculty to finalize any instructional continuity plans.

On Wednesday, March 25, and continuing through Sunday, April 5, all classes will be held online.

“Right now we’re just working with the faculty and staff to make sure everybody is prepared to do the online classes for the two-week period afterward,” said Diane D’Amico, Stockton’s director of news and media relations. “We’re just see-

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County shuttering most services to limit spread

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — The Cape May County government ordered the closing of several facilities and changes affected by the spreading novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

As of March 16, no confirmed cases of the virus had been reported in Cape May or Atlantic counties.

The Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders held a special meeting March 15 to discuss plans within the county regarding the COVID-19 outbreak.

“Cape May County has a

significant elderly population and those individuals are at high risk,” Cape May County Freeholder Director Gerald Thornton said. “We have to do everything possible to limit the spread of the virus to ensure their safety. We are also taking these actions to protect our employees and the public through this event.”

The Cape May County Park and Zoo and all of the Cape May County Library branches will be closed to the public starting March 17.

Fare Free Transportation will provide medical trips only for life-saving treatments such as dialysis, che-

motherapy, radiation therapy and infusion therapy. It also will provide in-county shopping.

The only out-of-county trips will be for Northfield Dialysis. All nonessential trips have been canceled. The Fare Free Transportation service interruption went into effect March 17 and will remain until further notice.

The Cape May County Freeholder Board supports the decision by Gov. Phil Murphy to restrict bars and restaurants to only take-out and delivery service and only during daytime hours.

The Cape May County

Freeholder Board and Cape May County Health Officer Kevin Thomas recommend that all businesses limit employee and public interaction by restricting the number of customers to no more than 10 at a time. Social distancing measures help minimize the potential spread of COVID-19 in communities.

Cape May County government will also be doing its part to limit social interaction by continuing to restrict travel for county employees and limiting interaction with the public when possible by favoring teleconferences or

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Majority backs one combined safety building

Sheehan, Mullock present alternate plans at town hall

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan and Councilman Zack Mullock continued to show opposition to constructing a single public safety building on the current site of the firehouse at a special town hall meeting March 11 that included testimony by architects, the police and fire chiefs and residents in favor of the project.

Mayor Chuck Lear said the Public Safety Building Advisory Committee has been formulating its recommendations for two years.

“The Police Department located in City Hall and the nearby fire station are housed in functionally obsolete facilities that do not provide the necessary safe and secure living and working conditions for our law enforcement officers and our firefighters, and thus for our community,” he said. “We just didn’t learn this. This matter was discussed at length by the previous administration with no significant action.”

Lear said the next vote of City Council on a bond ordinance to finance a \$15 million joint fire and police station was critical. He said the bond requires four “yes” votes from council.

The mayor said information presented about the proposed building was not based on personal opinion or “wishful speculation,” but facts and figures known since the Public Safety Advisory Committee presented its findings Oct. 2, 2019.

“No more delays, my friends,” Lear said. “Delaying action on a new facility for our first responders wastes time and money and compromises their safety and ours,” Lear said.

Architect Dave Bender, of USA Architects, said the public safety building was designed from the inside out working with the police and fire chiefs and department personnel. He said the current firehouse has no space for decontamination of firefighters or gear and filling of air tanks.

The sally port for unloading arrestees at the present police station is not compliant with Department of Justice guidelines, Bender said. On the second floor of the new building, the police and fire departments would share a volunteer training room that would double as the Office of Emergency Management command center in a time of emergency.

On the third floor of the building, a fitness room would be shared by the two departments, he said.

Architect Andrew Ador-

nato said the Colonial House Museum would be untouched by the project. The public safety building would have a fire department training tower and an emergency generator for the entire facility.

“Parking was lost along Washington Street but also gained where the existing sally port is behind City Hall,” he said.

The building would have 53 parking spaces plus inside parking spaces for vehicles for the fire chief and deputy chief, Adornato said, giving the overall site 55 spaces.

Along Washington Street, the building would measure 124 feet. He said Congress Hall along Perry Street is 170 feet, so the public safety building would be 46 feet shorter.

Project designer Danny Hopkins said the building’s design would reflect the Victorian architecture of Cape May. He said the entrances on Washington Street would have pediments and roof overhangs that present a more horizontal scale. The gabled roof would have imbedded gables.

The façade would have battens, horizontal clapboard and wood trim, Hopkins said. The new fire museum portion of the building would maintain the angle of the current museum.

Adornato said the budget for the 35,000-square-foot building is \$15 million with the cost of construction at \$14 million. He said construction costs were about \$400 per square foot with \$400,000 for furnishings and \$600,000 for soft costs: architects, engineers and attorneys.

City auditor Leon Costello said every \$1 million spent on the building costs \$67,445 per year over the life of the bond, he said.

“It would take \$5 million roughly to move the tax rate 1 cent,” he said.

Costello predicted a 1-cent tax increase for a \$15 million project. The budget would still have room for \$14 million for other projects for the city, he said.

The city would not make its first debt payment on the new building for two years, Costello said.

Sheehan and Mullock, who oppose constructing one building and favor a separate police building at Broad and Elmira streets, showed a slide presentation of their suggested alternatives. They have voted against the bond for the project, deadlocking any progress.

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