



New website includes pertinent information from around region

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House of the week

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166th YEAR NO. 13 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2020 \$1.00

Cape May was prepared for COVID-19 shutdown

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — All municipal buildings in the city were closed to the public as of March 16, following Gov. Phil Murphy's executive order to close all public buildings in the state until further notice to protect the public's health and well-being and to contain the threat and spread of illness from COVID-19.

Cape May's recreation programs and meetings of city boards, commissions and advisory committees are also canceled until further notice.

At a March 17 City Council meeting attended by few but video live streamed, City Manager Jerry Inderwies said he met with the city's department heads and asked for their assistance in implementing procedures and strategies to get through the crisis and to keep the city running on as close to a normal basis as possible.

Essential services of the city are operating: police, fire and emergency management.

"There is a challenge for them as well and the unknowns that are out there, and they are doing their best in utilizing the equip-

ment that they have in place and in their training," Inderwies said.

He noted the county Board of Chosen Freeholders tried to discourage vacation home owners from coming to Cape May County, but it was evident they had arrived.

Inderwies said isolation was the key to prevent the spread of the virus. Working with city department heads, a detailed operational list was assembled for each department and posted on the city website and social media with phone numbers of each department.

He noted the crisis was changing by the hour.

"We're staying on top of it, we're keeping our city employees safe, our residents safe as we can. We just need the help from the public to assist us with the self-isolation," Inderwies said.

Cape May's 9-1-1 communications officers will ask callers if there is anyone with flu-like symptoms in their home even if it is not a medical call, he said. "If someone is having flu-like symptoms, please let them know," Inderwies said.

He noted the playground next to Cape May City Elementary

School has been closed, something that was requested by the Joint Insurance Fund.

Council approved a resolution for emergency, temporary appropriations. Inderwies said the city was operating on a temporary budget of 26 percent of last year's budget for the first quarter.

"Given the fact that we really aren't sure whether we can have a meeting on April 7, where we're going to be at that point, we felt it necessary to keep the city financially moving and

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Gov: Stay home

It is not 'business as usual'

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

OCEAN CITY — At 1 p.m. Saturday, Gov. Phillip Murphy signed an executive order directing nearly all New Jersey residents to stay home until further notice and to cancel gatherings. The order closes all nonessential retail businesses as of 9 p.m. Saturday, March 21.

"All gatherings are canceled," Murphy said. "This means no weddings, funerals or birthday parties. I don't take this action lightly, but my goal is to make sure we can all gather safely with family and friends later."

"Further," he continued, "all nonessential retail businesses must indefinitely close their physical stores to the public at 9 p.m. tonight. Only businesses critical to our response may remain open."

Murphy listed "places like grocery stores and food banks, pharmacies, medical supply stores, gas stations, banks, pet supply stores." He added that includes restaurants and bars providing take-out and delivery only.

The governor banned eat-in dining at restaurants and bars last week.

He said all businesses must move to "100 percent work-from-home where possible."

Hospitals and health care facilities, along with "essential" public health, safety and social services remain open.

The governor said people can take walks outside, buy groceries or get take-out,



David Nahan and Jack Fichter/STAR AND WAVE

COVID-19 impacts

The COVID-19 virus and statewide restrictions because of it have had an impact on the area. Above, the beach was practically empty in spite of the relatively nice weather last week. At left, the Washington Street Mall, with mostly retail stores, was also empty because of the order closing most retailers. Below, an empty Beach Avenue with few people or vehicles.

but he urged them to continue to practice social distancing. "But otherwise, we need you to stay at home. This is no time for business as usual."

He added, "This is a time for all of us to come together to flatten the curve and

slow, and eventually halt, the spread of coronavirus."

When the governor refers to "the curve," he means a graph curve that reflects a steep curve showing a spike with peak infections. Flattening the curve would limit the spread or would

allow a slower infection rate, hence a flatter curve.

According to the state website, covid19.nj.gov, the stay-at-home order "provides for certain exceptions, such as obtaining

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Message about staying away sparks debate

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

A number of residents of Pennsylvania, New York and northern New Jersey decided to travel to Cape May County to spend the shutdown in their second homes, which angered a number of local residents. Some stated the out-of-towners were emptying local grocery stores and bringing their germs from areas that had COVID-19 cases.

At the same time, county Freeholder Director Gerald M. Thornton in a statement urged visitors to stay home during the two-week period.

"Many people have come down to use their second home or to stay with family at the shore while schools are closed throughout most of the country. These additional visitors have put an additional strain on the local supermarkets but could eventually be a burden on the medical system in Cape May County, should a significant outbreak of COVID-19 take place here," Thornton stated.

"We love all of our visitors from Pennsylvania, North Jersey, New York and further away," he said. "But this is not the time to be visiting the shore as we try to focus resources needed during this pandemic to our residents."

Thornton noted reports of limited supplies at certain supermarkets and other stores, which is an issue nationwide but has been compounded locally by the number of visitors to Cape May County. He stated Cape May County has only one hospital and he wanted to ensure its resources are not overtaxed if potentially sick people visit the county causing a mass outbreak.

Also, based on Gov. Phil Murphy's orders, restaurants are doing take-out

only or have closed completely. Movie theaters and many other gathering locations are closed, Thornton stated.

"We are hoping that people act responsibly now so we can minimize the health impacts in as short of a period of time as possible," Thornton stated. "It would be best if people could stay in their full-time residence for now as we address this current outbreak."

The newspaper's read-

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Petition: Don't visit Ocean City right now

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

OCEAN CITY — After a public official asked people to stay away from Cape May County last week, a change.org petition has begun in Ocean City to ask summer residents, vacationers and day-trippers to stay away from the resort to avoid spreading COVID-19.

Across New Jersey, Pennsylvania and other states, governments have put in restrictions on people and businesses in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic that is affecting New Jersey, the nation and other countries around the world.

According to reports Saturday morning, March 21, nearly 300,000 people across the world had gotten the corona virus called COVID-19 and about 11,500 had died. In the United States, the figures were roughly 20,000 people infected with 250 deaths, including some in New Jersey.

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COVID-19 tests remain in short supply in this area

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

Testing kits for coronavirus (COVID-19) remain in short supply in Cape May and Atlantic counties, with most of the tests being administered to those admitted to a hospital.

Cape May County Health Department Public Health Coordinator Kevin Thomas said some doctors were conducting COVID-19 testing on their own as well as a couple of urgent care clinics. He said testing was sporadic, with some running out of tests.

"It's difficult to get the test. However, if you meet all the cri-

teria, you'll have to talk to your doctor and they'll refer you to the hospital," he said. "You can't just show up for tests."

While local residents may see drive-thru testing in Pennsylvania and northern New Jersey, it has not been made available here.

"There's no resources to do it," Thomas said.

He said COVID-19 tests taking place in northern New Jersey were being conducted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"Try to get a kit down here," Thomas said. "The hospital's calling me saying 'we're running out of test kits.'"

He said the county Health Department does not have test kits. Thomas said he has asked for tests from the state for the past three weeks but received nothing.

"How do you open a drive-thru when you've got nothing from them?" he asked. "They haven't given me a dime either, no money at all."

Three to four weeks ago the state Department of Health stated they received \$1.7 million.

"I have not seen dime one and even if I did have dime one, I can't order anything because it's way back ordered," Thomas said.

He said he hoped the situation would soon change. Thomas said

he believed test kits would be sent to densely populated areas with many cases of the virus.

"COVID-19 is out there. If you feel sick with a fever, you probably have it," Thomas said. "The probability of having it is high." He said flu is also out there but a person should treat it as COVID-19 and isolate at home instead of waiting to be tested.

"It would be great to have the test to rule it out because the flu is still in the neighborhood," Thomas said.

If a person reaches a high level of breathing distress, they should contact a hospital, Thomas said.

He said he sent a letter to camp-

ground owners telling them to delay their opening.

Cape Regional Health Systems is doing COVID-19 testing on a case-by-case basis, according to marketing and public relations coordinator Susan Staeger.

"What we're asking the public is to follow the CDC guidelines, which is if you have a fever of 100.4 or higher with a dry cough and shortness of breath, that you should call your primary care doctor and they will screen you over the phone, ask you questions, and based on that, give you instruc-

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