



City decides to keep 3-day beach tags

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House of the week

Real Estate Resource



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DEP rule would add 5 feet to flood elevation

City may oppose change pertaining to homes, buildings, roadways and parking lots

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Deputy City Manager Lou Belasco said the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is mandating Cape May and Atlantic counties adopt new flood damage-prevention ordinances that would require homes, buildings and roads be raised by 5 feet in areas expected to be under water by the year 2100 due to climate change. Belasco, who also serves as the

city's flood plain manager, said the timing was unusual because such mandates typically follow adoption of a new flood map.

"It was voluntary up until two to three months ago and it became mandatory, and they're starting down here," Belasco said. "One of the main issues we've been having with this ordinance is it would automatically adopt the rules that are being made at NJDEP referred to as PACT (Protection Against Climate Threats), and in PACT it now adopts 5 feet of

freeboard on not just homes but on roadways and parking lots."

He said the DEP is usurping municipal land use rules by mandating the city adopt the ordinance or risk being expelled from the Community Ratings System (CRS) program or the National Flood Insurance Program.

The program was initially voluntary but only one municipality in the state cooperated, Belasco said. The Atlantic County Board of Commissioners has adopted a resolution opposing the DEP

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—Lou Belasco,
Deputy City Manager

mandate and Cape May County commissioners are expected to follow suit, he said.

"The process that they followed completely cuts out local decision

making," Belasco said.

He said City Council is expected to discuss the issue at its next meeting, when Belasco will provide a sample resolution for council to consider.

The Planning Board could pass a similar resolution against PACT, he said.

Belasco said the situation is an example of what happens when something is not vetted through the proper legislative channels.

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City considering electric-powered police patrol cars

Funds in budget to purchase two vehicles for Cape May PD

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Two electric vehicles may join the police department's fleet this year.

City Manager Mike Voll said during a City Council meeting March 15 that Police Chief Dekon Fashaw has been extensively researching electric vehicles. Voll said the police department may be able to purchase two this year. A report on the vehicles will be presented to City Council, he said.

Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan expressed concerns about charging times for electric police vehicles. Voll said the electric vehicles could travel 300 miles before recharging.

"The intent is to move more electric as the county is moving in that direction," he said. "The chief has spent a lot of time researching this and I can assure you that we won't miss a beat on patrol

and run out of electric."

Chief Financial Officer Neil Young said the state and federal governments are encouraging municipalities to purchase electric vehicles. He said the city should not be reliant on any one energy source. Funding for the vehicles was included in this year's capital spending plan.

Fashaw said he has been in conversation with several car dealerships as well as the state Board of Public Utilities concerning available grant funding. He said both vehicles would include a level two charging station.

The police department ordered two hybrid vehicles, which may not arrive until July or August due to the current shortage of computer chips, Fashaw said.

"I cannot have a completely electric fleet," he said.

Mayor Zack Mullock has asked the city to reduce its

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Lots on Fulling Mill Road to be rezoned for housing

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Parcels of land have sat empty for decades off Fulling Mill Road between the runways of the county airport and the Middle Township border, but a pending zoning change would allow homes to be built on the lots.

Lower Township Council introduced an ordinance March 7 to adopt a redevelopment plan for the section of the township and designate it as an "area in need of redevelopment."

The change would allow construction of age-restricted single-family homes and townhouses in the area that has been zoned industrial but has had no takers for such a use.

The property consists of just over 53 acres. The redevelopment area is bound by Middle Township on the north and residential development along Centennial Drive. The Cape May Par 3 Golf and Driving Range is located across Fulling Mill Road to the east, to the west is undeveloped land with a self-storage facility to the south.

In April 2019, council authorized the township's Planning Board to conduct an investigation and prepare a map to determine if the zone was an area in need of rehabilitation and in May 2019, Township Council formally designated the area as in need of redevelopment.

In January 2022, council

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Frank Scott/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Forbert serenades the ladies with 'Romeo's Tune'

Singer-songwriter Steve Forbert, left, played to a full house March 26 at Cape May Presbyterian Church. Forbert is known for his 1979 hit single 'Romeo's Tune' and albums including 'Jackrabbit Slim.'

State to rule on railroad track parking

City wants more spaces at Welcome Center lot, awaiting DOT decision

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Since June 2015, the city has wanted to expand parking at the Welcome Center by allowing cars on long-unused railroad tracks adjacent to the building but the plan has been tied up in litigation with Cape May Seashore Lines, which has not run a train into Cape May in more than a decade. The city was also seeking to improve lighting in the Welcome Center parking lot.

Allowing parking on the unused railroad bed would create 20 to 25 spaces. Cape May is cut off from the main railroad line by a non-functioning bridge over the Cape May Canal. Tracks from Middle Township to Cape May have not seen a train since 2011.

At a March 15 City Council meeting, city engineer Vince Orlando, of Engineering Design Associates, said his firm completed a conceptual parking plan for the Welcome Center and held a meeting on Zoom with NJ Transit and the Department of Transportation (DOT). He said the city submitted a revised plan to the



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Long-unused tracks leased to Cape May Seashore Lines lead from Cape May Canal to the Welcome Center, where the city is hoping to add 25 parking spots to help alleviate constant troubles in the summer season.

two agencies three weeks ago.

Orlando said he would present the plans to council after the DOT signs off on them. He said the DOT was emphatic the railroad tracks remain intact at the Welcome Center.

Orlando said the DOT wanted a full-fledged railroad crossing across Broad Street even though the only

vehicles on the tracks are rail bikes operated by a tour company. Rail bikes operate from the Welcome Center on the tracks ending at the railroad bridge.

"New Jersey Transit and DOT are currently looking at it. Hope-

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