



Improving volleyball team loses close one to Egg Harbor Twp.

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House of the week

Real Estate Resource



Fitting future into the past

City wants to limit 5G equipment, where it goes, how it looks

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city is likely to see a number of boxes mounted high on utility poles to provide 5G cellular service to Cape May.

Numerous pole-mounted devices are a cause for concern for a town with historic streetscapes.

During a virtual meeting March 23, the city's Planning Board ruled a pending ordinance establishing standards for the installation of 5G cell service equipment in rights of way around the city was consistent with Cape May's master plan.

The board requested City Council make its best efforts to maximize the regulations to reduce the number of 5G installations on utility poles as permitted under Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations.

Planning Board engineer Craig Hurlless said the 5G cells are mounted on utility poles as opposed to the previous generations of equipment, which had been placed on tall buildings and water towers. He said if it complies with all conditions, it becomes a permitted use.

In cases in which a cell carrier was not complying, they would need to seek a variance from the Zoning Board, Hurlless said. The ordinance sets height, location and some aesthetic requirements.

"It also recognizes we are an historic city with historic architecture and we're trying to preserve that, so it also allows for the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to review these and offer their insight," Hurlless said.

He said one of the stated goals of the city's master plan was to ensure the provision and maintenance of adequate range and availability of infrastructure to accommodate current and future residents and visitors.

Hurlless said 5G is modernization and an upgrade of wireless facilities and is consistent with the city's master plan. He said much of the ordinance was driven by the FCC Telecommunications Act as well as other utility boards.

There are a number of items the city cannot change in installations, Hurlless said. He said the Planning Board had 10 days to deem 5G applications as complete, shorter than the usual 45-day period.

Planning Board member Bob Gorgone said a neutral host provider can provide service for more than one wireless company with a lease or wireless providers can each request an installation.

"You could have a situation where you have a lot of antennas on a single pole in a particular area," he said.

Gorgone said the 5G signal covered a



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

A 5G pole has been installed next to Cape May Point Borough Hall in the shadow of the Cape May Lighthouse. Victorian Cape May wants to control how many poles are placed, where they go and what they look like.

short distance. He asked if an application could be limited to a neutral host provider.

Hurlless said he did not believe the city could control who was the provider. He said he did not know how many poles a wireless provider needed to use to service Cape May.

5G will increase the capacity of wireless service in a town and enhances 911

emergency calls, Gargone said.

Board member Linda Wolfe said a number of persons relocated to their shore house during the pandemic and work from their secondary home and intended to sell their primary home and live in Cape May.

"It seems to me that this whole piv-

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More 5G poles coming to Cape May Point

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — Borough Commission approved an application for use of a borough right of way for seven 5G cell phone equipment poles from Verizon Wireless.

Borough engineer Bruce Graham examined the application and added requirements to the enabling resolution, according to John Amenhauser, borough solicitor. The resolution stipulates Verizon Wireless must obtain all necessary local, state and federal permits and notify adjacent homeowners seven days before installation begins.

During a virtual meeting March 23, Commissioner Catherine Busch said this was the second application from a cell phone carrier to place 5G equipment in the borough. She said she reviewed all the proposed sites for 5G poles.

During public comment, resident

'We made this ordinance as borough-friendly as we could given the constraints with the federal government controlling this. We have put as many limitations on it as we possibly could.'

—Cape May Point Deputy Mayor
Anita vanHeeswyk

Helen Chezem asked about the size of the equipment cabinets that will be placed on the poles. Borough Clerk Elaine Wallace said she believes the cabinets could not exceed 3 cubic feet.

Deputy Mayor Anita vanHeeswyk said a 5G equipment pole had been installed to the side of Borough Hall and another on Pearl Avenue. She said the 5G poles are 3 feet higher

than a standard utility pole with a can structure on the top and a box on the side.

Resident Roland Bullard asked if the equipment emitted any sound. Busch said fans may run to keep the equipment cool when necessary.

Resident Jim Fraatz said he lives across the street from a 5G pole in Pennsylvania and the fan could be heard running during hot weather. Busch said the borough had no choice in making rights of way available to the cell phone carrier.

Amenhauser said the borough engineer determined the application met all requirements of a borough ordinance. Vanheeswyk said the ordinance has been in place for several years following the borough hiring a top expert on 5G.

"We made this ordinance as borough-friendly as we could given the constraints with the federal govern-

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LCMRHS plans return to school for all full time

CDC halves recommended social distancing standards

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — Lower Cape May Regional High School district is considering bringing all students back into school buildings following relaxed social distancing guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control.

In a letter to students and parents, Superintendent Joseph Castellucci stated the CDC revised its distance recommendation.

"Moving that standard from 6 feet to 3 feet was designed to provide schools greater flexibility with their plans to reopen," he stated. "This new guideline has been discussed and utilized by school districts the past couple of months and several districts in our county will use this revised standard to open their schools to all students every day.

"While middle and high schools face significant challenges to opening their buildings at 100 percent capacity, an increasing number of such schools are proceeding in that direction.

"We are currently ana-

lyzing whether these new guidelines will enable our district to finally bring all of our students back into our buildings every day," Castellucci continued. "I have directed our school principals to survey every classroom to measure distance between desks to ensure the minimum 3 foot spacing at 100 percent capacity. They have also been directed to find alternate settings for areas where 6-foot distancing must still be maintained such as in our band and choir classes and our lunchrooms, where students must function without wearing face coverings."

Castellucci stated he was working with the district's transportation director to be sure they can maintain reasonable safety protocols on school busses.

"I have asked each of our principals and supervisors to provide a final determination to me about their ability to meet the new requirements in all settings in the coming days," he stated. "Assuming that

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MTRAC has its sights set on 'vacant' rental homes as source of tax revenue

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Something doesn't add up: Cape May has issued 513 mercantile licenses for house rentals from a total of 3,400 homes in the city, but U.S. Census data states 70 percent of the houses in Cape May are listed as vacant, perhaps indicating many unlicensed rental properties.

The city's Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee (MTRAC) met March 22 to discuss additional revenue sources for the city.

"I can't tell you that's an accurate number because we keep no data on how many of these residential properties are actually rental units," Dennis Crowley said.

The MTRAC chairman added that the rental market has changed to using Airbnb and other services that do not involve the city or using a real estate agent. Crowley said the number of mercantile licenses for rental homes needs to be looked at with some measure of suspicion.

MTRAC member Michael Yeager said it was astounding that owners of homes being rented for \$5,000 to \$10,000 per week up to 10 weeks per year pay a

mercantile license fee of only \$75.

Crowley said the city also included a tourism utility fee on mercantile licenses of \$50 and a parking assessment fee of \$25.

Deputy City Manager Lou Belasco said owners of whole-house rentals pay occupancy tax if the home is rented through a platform such as Airbnb. Homes rented through a real estate agent are exempt from occupancy tax, he said.

"Expanding the occupancy tax onto all transient rentals within the city is really about fairness in taxation than about revenue generation," Belasco said. "Our hotels and our bed and breakfasts are in competition with all transient rentals, not just those that decide to call themselves a hotel or a bed and breakfast. The fairest thing to do is to have the tax apply evenly."

MTRAC member Russ Dickhart said 190 out of 195 municipalities in the state that have a room tax charge 3 percent, while Cape May has only a 2 percent room tax.

"The argument the accommodations industry makes with regard to that tax is a good one," Crowley said. "They're bearing

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