



House of the week

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Elward House roof damaged

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Pandemic forces Cape May to look at budget cuts

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – City Council held a video conference work session on April 14 to consider cuts to the 2020 municipal budget, which has not yet been approved, to offset anticipated lost revenue from a diminished tourist season.

“We all need to work together collectively to work on this budget to come to a consensus,” City Manager Jerry Inderwies said. “Provide us all of your input and that input can be vetted, it can be analyzed and brought back to you with what we think we can do,

what will work and what we think may not work in the short term and long term.”

He said revenue was a big unknown. Due to an extension from the state, council has until June 2 to adopt the city’s 2020 budget.

“We have time to work on it in the best interest of the taxpayers,” Inderwies said.

He acknowledged it was a huge challenge to come up with a budget due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chief Financial Officer Neil Young said his advice to council was to “slow play the budget” until it knows how the tourist

season will shape up. He said he discussed a number of administrative measures with Inderwies which could be put into place now to start saving money.

Inderwies said all purchases by the city must first be approved by him, no matter how small. He said he would also scrutinize seasonal employment with the city.

“I have not given the green light yet on the beach patrol to start any preseason work,” Inderwies said.

Young said areas of revenue that would be impacted were room tax, parking meters, beach tags, interest on investments and water/sewer bills. He said March,

April and May room tax revenue from 2019 was \$217,000.

“I’d say that’s at least the potential for us to be losing in 2020,” Young said.

Parking meter revenue from April and May 2019 totaled \$190,000. He said that revenue could be lost if social distancing measures were still in place through May.

Beach tag revenue is already down \$240,000 but due to pre-season sales “being off the chart” due to discounted rate at the end of 2019, Young said. Beach tags sales in April and May 2019 brought in \$186,000.

If beaches open, tags will be sold eventually and the \$186,000 of revenue regained with a June opening of the beaches, he said.

Young said he was concerned with water/sewer revenue because consumption was down 2.5 million gallons in the first quarter of 2020.

“If that continues for the second quarter as well, it could be substantial revenue that’s lost just from people not being in town,” he said.

Young said fee increases can be used to mitigate revenue losses.

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COVID-19

County details the virus cases

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – The Cape May County Department of Health announced two additional fatalities related to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on Monday, April 20, along with providing an update on the number of positive and recovered cases reported in the county.

The department also broke down other statistics include age range and cases by day.

In total, 15 Cape May County residents have passed away due to complications from COVID-19, according to the Department of Health. The most recent deaths involve a 51-year-old female from Upper Township and an 83-year-old male from Lower Township.

Overall, eleven of the deaths are in Lower Township, two are in Upper Township and one each in Dennis Township and Woodbine.

Lower Township has the most active cases with 43. Seventeen people in the township are now off quarantine.

Middle Township has 35 active cases, Upper Town-

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Winds April 13 took down tree from the 1860s outside Elaine’s Dinner Theater.

Historic tree casualty of wind storm

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – A tree with three giant trunks believed to be 160 years old, located in front of Elaine’s Dinner Theatre, 513 Lafayette St., was a casualty of an April 13 storm that brought 72 mph winds to the city.

Shade Tree Commission Chairman Jay Schatz said the Linden tree was split. He said parts of the tree were hollow from rotting. The tree was about 50 inches in diameter, according to Schatz.

Lindens routinely grow to a height of 50 to 80 feet. He said it was one of the older trees in Cape May.

Patrick Wall, an owner of Elaine’s, said he believed the tree was on the property prior to the building being constructed in 1860. He said the television series, “The Diggers,” seen on the National

Geographic Channel, taped a segment on the lawn of Elaine’s.

On the program, hosts George Wyant and Tim Saylor used metal detectors around the property as they searched for lost pieces of history.

Wyant went into the crawl space under the building and dug up an Indian Head penny from 1864. Digging on the lawn, they found a 1941 Mercury dime and a 3 cent piece from 1864.

Wall said the rest of the tree would be cut down. He said he hoped to use some of the wood from the fallen tree but the largest part of the trunk was compromised.

“What happens is in the cracks between the trunks, water gets in over the 160, 170 years it’s been around and then it gets compromised, he said. “The whole inner section was rotten on the inside.”

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Businesses in Lower Twp. want to reopen

Upset about SBA loans

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS – Lower Township businesses are anxious to reopen, particularly in light of the Small Business Administration (SBA) running out of money before many small business loans were approved.

An online question-and-answer session for Lower Township businesses was held Monday with township officials, staff from the First Legislative District, Assemblyman Erik Simonsen (R-1st) and Scott Weldon, press secretary for U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew.

“We have to go back to the world if we want the

world back,” said Sunset Beach complex owner Larry Hume. “If we lock away everyone from everything else, we just delay the results, the virus is out there, it’s not going away and I just hope there can be some common sense that comes forth in this great country of ours soon for all of us.”

Simonsen said he was confident a lot of soft openings of businesses were possible. He said Bumble Bee Tuna was setting a good example, preparing their staff in new safety standards and moving forward.

“Let’s face it, this is what it’s going to be like,” Simon-

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Lower Twp. swept for debris; pay taxes at box

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS – Although normal tree and branch pickup is temporarily halted in Lower Township, 13 crews were put on the road this past weekend to pick up limbs felled from an April 13 storm, according to Township Manager Jim Ridgway.

Council met Monday via a telephone conference call.

A quarterly property tax payment is due May 1 and a number of residents are making payments using a drop box at Township Hall, he said. Township Hall has been closed to the public since March 17.

“The procedure is moving along smoothly and we anticipate the next three weeks to be very busy in that operation,” Ridgway said. “Our tax collector will be supported with enough workers to get us through

this very important period.”

In other business, he said the engineering firm of Mott MacDonald was researching old easements on the Rotary Park property on Bayshore Road in front of the Lower Township Municipal Utilities Authority headquarters. The easements must be addressed before the township receives a proposal for a full upgrade of the park, according to Ridgway.

As per state regulations, the township must upgrade its Planning Board and Zoning Board meetings and bid openings, he said. Ridgway said the township is also researching video live-streaming of council meetings.

“We’re talking to the people that do Ocean City’s municipal meetings and getting some prices and quotes from two different sources,”

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Cape Regional Urgent Cares do COVID-19 tests

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

Cape Regional Urgent Care in Wildwood, Cape May Court House and Marmora are providing community COVID19 testing. There are no criteria to be tested. Call (609) 465-6364 to schedule an appointment and to discuss insurance coverage and fees.

“You do not have to have symptoms in order to be tested but you do need an appointment,” Susan Staeger, marketing and public relations coordinator, stated.

The Cape May County Department of Health and CompleteCare Health Network continue to partner to operating a drive-thru COVID-19 testing site. The drive-thru will be held on consecutive Wednesdays starting April 22, by appointment only. At this time, testing will only be for CompleteCare patients, as well as Cape May County residents, who are sick with symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath and that meet a certain criteria. Symptomatic first responders who are residents of the county will also be given priority testing. In order to receive testing, in-

dividuals can go to CompleteCareNJ.org/COVID19 or call (609) 465-0258 and request to be screened. Web registration is the best. The process for scheduling an appointment for COVID-19 drive-thru testing is on CompleteCareNJ.org/COVID19.

Residents who are not a CompleteCare patient – obtain a script from your doctor. Once having the script, go to completecarenj.org website. CompleteCare will forward the script to the county Health Department which will call and schedule the

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