



House of the week

Page B1



Ferry donates food

Page A2



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Self-employed can get unemployment compensation

Chambers of commerce have Q&A on who can get paid, how and when

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

The state had 140,000 additional unemployment insurance claimants last week bringing the total of state claimants since COVID-19 hit to 858,000, according to state Department of Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo.

The Chamber of Commerce of Cape May County and Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce hosted a virtual webinar on the topic

of unemployment compensation and its impact on seasonal businesses with Asaro-Angelo fielding questions.

He said the state sent payments to 556,000 claimants so far but hundreds of thousands of claimants have not yet received a payment.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance gives benefits to independent contractors and self-employed persons who were otherwise ineligible for unemployment

insurance, he said.

Employees and employers have paid into unemployment insurance over time through W2 earnings, Asaro-Angelo said. Independent contractors and the self-employed have not been paying into unemployment insurance, so the state does not have any proof they have actually had any earnings. He said that has been the biggest hurdle in bringing the process on board.

"Every New Jerseyan whose is

eligible for any of these benefits will get every dime, every penny that they are owed," he said.

The CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act provides \$600 of federal pandemic unemployment compensation, which is added on to every week of eligible unemployment assistance payments starting the week of March 29 until the last week of July, Asaro-Angelo said.

He said the \$600 will arrive as a separate payment three to four

days after the unemployment assistance payment. The first \$600 payments were sent April 14 covering the first week of April.

Asaro-Angelo said the Department of Labor has received the most claims in the state from Atlantic County by proportion of population. He said his department has increased its number of employees but 92 percent of claimants were filing online.

See Benefits Q&A, page A6

COVID-19 'Road Back'

Don't expect a normal start to the season in Murphy's plan

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

Gov. Phil Murphy said he wants nothing more than to see "the shore humming throughout the summer" along with Main Streets filled with shoppers and construction sites across the state "roaring."

To that end Monday, he offered a six-step "The Road Back" economic recovery plan for New Jersey, but Murphy offered no exact timeline for the first four steps to be in place to start the economic recovery. One hint was when he said the state hoped to get to step two - the necessary expanded testing - by the end of May, which appears to put local Jersey shore Memorial Day openings in question.

Even when the state does start to reopen, the governor expects social distancing measures to continue, such

See The Road, page B2



Benita Battaglia/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Gardens bloom in Cape May

Gardens on Cape May's Jackson Street are in bloom under the April sun. The flowers are among the bright spots during the pandemic restrictions.

Cape May passes budget without making changes

City Council vote is 3-2

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY - In a 3-2 vote, City Council approved the city's 2020 budget as it was crafted before the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Mayor Chuck Lear, Deputy Mayor Patricia Hendricks and Councilman Shaine Meier voted in favor of the budget while Councilman Zack Mullock and Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan voted against approving the budget.

Chief Financial Officer Neil Young said currently parking meter revenue was down \$1,300 through March 31. He provided council with a report of revenues at risk for the next five months.

Young said he calculated a 25 percent loss for June and 10 percent losses for July and August which equated to \$336,000 in lost parking meter revenue.

For room tax, the loss would be \$355,000, Emergency Medical Services loss at \$33,000, court revenue loss at \$8,000, construction office losses at \$136,000 and interest on investments loss at \$148,000 in the current

fund. "That total loss based off those assumptions was about \$1 million to the current fund," Young said.

The Beach Utility could lose \$640,000 from beach tag revenue and \$30,000 from loss of interest on investments, he said.

Young said if the Beach Utility was down 25 percent for June and 10 percent for July and August, it could show a loss of \$914,000. In 2019, beach revenues totaled \$2.6 million. The surplus fund for the beach utility is \$1.4 million.

He said the water/sewer utility was highly dependent on tourism revenue because excess usage created excess revenue. With hotel/motels and transient accommodations shutdown in April into May, the city will lose excess water consumption which creates revenue.

Each year, \$3.5 million is paid to the county Municipal Utilities Authority for sewage disposal, he said. Young said water/sewer rates would have to be raised to help mitigate any loss of revenue due to

See Budget, page A6

COVID-19 adds impact, emphasis to congressional candidates' priorities

Editor's note: The Sentinel posed questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic to all five Democrats running in the primary for the Second Congressional District, which includes Atlantic and Cape May counties. Will Cunningham didn't respond in time for this story.

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

OCEAN CITY - Although the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the Democrats running for the

Second Congressional District seat to change their campaigning, it hasn't been having an impact on their priorities.

Dr. John Francis of West Cape May, one of the five Democrats running for the seat held by former Democrat, and now Republican Congressman Jeff Van Drew, said his priorities haven't changed, but the pandemic may have an impact on the urgency of his message.

Francis said his focus is on "protecting the environment and providing education and economic

equity." He added, "Our survival depends on love, kindness, and cooperation, not only in our relationships but in our politics and social institutions. This pandemic has laid bare the fallacies and frailties of our social and economic system. Today, universal health care, a tighter social service net, and a guaranteed income may not seem so absurd or too progressive."

"I still believe that how we treat each other manifests in the physical environment around us, like pollution, loss of species, and climate change," Francis said. "I

now add the COVID-19 pandemic to the list. I am now able to talk more forcefully about our environment responding to how we treat each other, personally, socially, politically, institutionally, economically."

Although his priorities haven't changed, Francis hopes that is not the case in Washington.

"I hope that this pandemic will have changed some priorities in Congress," Francis said. "If elected, I hope to continue to be a catalyst for those around me for the kind of government that

we aspire."

Robert Turkavage of Brigantine said the pandemic has shown his top two priorities "were well-placed. First is protecting the national security of the United States and second is "ensuring that all laws passed by the U.S. Congress are fair to all our citizens."

"In my opinion, COVID-19 exposed a National Security (NS) weakness or 'gap,'" Turkavage said. "In its simplest terms, there are three components to dealing

See Congress, page B2

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