



HPC in favor of arches project on Promenade

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House of the week

B1



168th YEAR NO. 13 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2022 \$1.00

Ørsted survey boats damaging fishing gear

Fishers say wind-energy company's reimbursement process too difficult to navigate

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Several commercial fishermen claim survey boats hired by wind turbine developer Ørsted inadvertently cut their lines, causing their lobster and conch traps to be lost in the ocean, and are seeking compensation for the lost gear and income.

Joe Wagner, a second-generation fisherman of lobster, sea bass and conch, said that last year he

lost 157 lobster traps to Ørsted, which is partnering with PSEG on the Ocean Wind 1 project that aims to erect as many as 99 wind turbines in an area 15 miles off the coast of Cape May and Atlantic counties.

"They only paid me for a handful of them because they say it wasn't their boats," he said.

Wagner said Ørsted made that claim based on tracking data of the survey boats. He said he caught the survey boats frequently turning off their tracking

devices.

Last year his father lost 100 lobster pots to Ørsted survey boats, Wagner asserted, again with Ørsted claiming their boats were not to blame. The cost of lobster pots is \$180 to \$220 each with a possible two-year delay to receive all the replacements due to supply chain issues, he said.

Wagner said Ørsted sends a weekly email to fishermen with a photo of their leased areas stating "our vessels might be in your area" but does not give exact

coordinates.

"The leased ground is a pretty big area, and they could be in the far north corner of it, and I won't ever see them because I'm 10 miles from them," Wagner said. "We've got gear stretched all through there."

During the last incident of damage by a survey boat, the U.S. Coast Guard heard Wagner call the survey craft on radio multiple times and required Ørsted to pull up their tracking records. He said Ørsted reimbursed him for some

of the lost lobster pots but refused to reimburse him for all of them due to disparities between GPS tracking and old navigation system numbers based on LORAN signals, which are still used by local fishermen.

"If you don't have the old electronics, you won't get the exact pinpoint location on a chart," he noted.

Newer navigation systems have a cross reference for TD

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John Alvarez/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Betty Shelton, who lost her husband to the sea in 1957, and her son, who was born a month after the loss, place a wreath on the Fisherman's Memorial statue April 2 during the Blessing of the Waters ceremony.

Blessing of the Waters honors lost, offers prayers for safety on the sea

By JOHN ALVAREZ
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A majestic blue sky was the perfect backdrop for the Blessing of the Waters service April 2 at the Fisherman's Memorial on Cape May Harbor.

The event, sponsored by the Friends of the Cape May Fisherman's Memorial, was attended by a crowd of several dozen ranging in age from grade schoolers to elderly seamen and women who came to pay their

respects to the fishermen of Cape May who never returned home.

The tradition started in 2008 with a two-fold intention. First, to remember the local fishermen who had lost their lives following their chosen profession and second to offer prayers and blessings for safety in the coming season.

The ceremony started with the ritual of the sounding of the conch shell performed by Kevin Vrieze. An integral part in Native American mythology, the conch shell is used

to make an "aum" sound when it is blown to purify the environment from all evil effects.

Cape May Star and Wave columnist Mark Allen emceed the ceremony along with Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan. Several pastors delivered brief ecumenical readings, bagpiper Jeff McNeal played "Amazing Grace" and musicians of the U.S. Coast Guard Recruit Band performed "Eternal Father, Strong to Save," a hymn that

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West Cape budget increases tax rate by 1.7 cents/\$100

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Borough Commission approved its \$3.2 million 2022 municipal budget March 23, featuring a 1.7-cent tax rate increase.

The tax rate will rise to 40.7 cents per \$100 of assessed value, up from 39 cents last year. The amount to be raised by the local purpose tax totals \$2.1 million, up \$133,000 from last year.

Ratables in West Cape May total \$523 million, up \$10 million from 2021 due to new construction.

At a March 23 meeting, auditor Leon Costello said the borough's surplus fund is slightly less than last year and the percentage of tax collection remains at 98 percent.

"Everything is provided for in this budget that was

requested," he said. "It's a solid, no-gimmick budget. There's no one-timers in here to offset expenses, so there's nothing to haunt you next year with something not recurring."

During public comment, innkeeper Doug Carnes asked if new sources of revenue were included in the budget: occupancy tax and marijuana business fees. Deputy Mayor Peter Burke said the borough would not see occupancy tax until next year but it would be used to fund the general budget.

Carnes asked if occupancy tax could be used to support tourism as it does in Cape May.

"My business alone will generate about \$30,000 every year that will come back to this borough," he said.

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West Cape backs applications for two retail cannabis stores

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Borough Commission adopted resolutions of support for two potential cannabis retail stores in the 100 block of Sunset Boulevard.

Operators of proposed cannabis businesses are required to demonstrate municipal support for the suitability and appropriateness of its business location, according to a state statute. Potent Petal LLC seeks a

conditional license from the state to operate a cannabis retail business from 109 Sunset Blvd., Suite D.

The resolution notes the owners of the business, Jennifer Modica and Erika Kaplan, are county residents and "as a woman-owned business is consistent with the type of candidate for licensure identified for preference by the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission (CRC) as a 'dis-

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Experts: Boost medicinal cannabis access, education

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

TRENTON — While medical marijuana may help treat a myriad of diseases from autoimmune to mental disorders, it is underprescribed and more education is needed for clinicians, an expert said.

Mary Bridgeman, clinical professor at the School of Pharmacy at Rutgers University and an adult in-

ternal medicine pharmacist at Robert Wood Johnson Hospital in New Brunswick, spoke to the state Cannabis Regulatory Commission (CRC) on March 24 about protecting and expanding access for medicinal cannabis patients.

She has served on the state Department of Health Medicinal Marijuana Review Panel. Bridgeman said most clinicians have limited formal training re-

lated to cannabis as medicine.

In 2019, the first systematic review of health professionals' beliefs, knowledge and concerns regarding medical cannabis use was undertaken. She said while health care providers generally supported medical cannabis use, there was a near-unanimous lack of self-perceived knowledge regarding clinical effects and concerns about canna-

bis' direct harm to patients and indirect societal harms.

"When a new medication becomes available, clinicians receive education and guidance about use of that medication delineated in the medication's prescribing information," Bridgeman said. "Of course, medical cannabis doesn't come with a prescribing guideline or standardized guidance on clinical use, and this is one factor that

has resulted in health care provider reluctance to incorporate medical cannabis into clinical practice."

Bridgeman said health care providers need guardrails and guidance in how to navigate the therapeutic use of cannabis. She asked the CRC to consider how to support health care providers in incorporating cannabis into their practices given a dearth of scientific evidence, safety and best

practice guidelines available.

"Providers additionally require training on how to create a safe space for patients to disclose recreational or adult use of cannabis and even for our medical patients to disclose that they are in fact medical users without a fear of stigmatization," Bridgeman said.

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