

LCMR celebrates Senior Day with slugfest

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House of the week

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167th YEAR NO. 20 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 2021 \$1.00

Shorecast predicts 'tremendous' 2021 season

A.C. to benefit from cannabis tourism while the cape will see boost from open spaces

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

Everything is pointing to a "tremendous" 2021 tourist season, according to Matthew Doherty, executive director of the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority.

Doherty moderated the 13th annual Jersey Shorecast, sponsored by the Lloyd D. Levenson Institute of Gaming, Hospitality and Tourism at Stockton University, held May 12 via Zoom.

Doherty said it is a time to start

being optimistic as gatherings return, restrictions are lifted, the vaccination rate increases and the number of hospitalizations and positive COVID tests decline.

He said Atlantic City has allowed open containers of alcoholic beverages in the tourism district encompassing the entire boardwalk and the "orange loop," a section of the city that includes Tennessee Avenue, St. James Place and New York Avenue from Pacific Avenue to the boardwalk.

Doherty said the police issued no tickets and no arrests were

made in the open container area.

Diane Wieland, Cape May County director of tourism, said beach towns fared well in 2020 because the public was looking for a getaway after being cooped up in their homes during the pandemic. Tourism in the state was down 36 percent but Cape May County was down only 21 percent, she said.

In the beginning of April last year, the county's occupancy rate was down 99 percent, Wieland said, but tourism in fall 2020 outpaced the same time in 2019. Due to the loss of Canadian visitors

due to a closed border, the county tourism office tightened its radius for marketing.

In July and August, Canadians normally represent about 7 percent of visitors, she said.

"The campgrounds were a huge part of the resurgence," Wieland said. "People were looking for that safe vacation getaway."

She said nature-based vacation options are important and represent a \$700 million industry in Cape May County.

"We have a large number of baby boomers — about 47 percent

of our visitors are 55 plus — so now we're taking a look at how we reach and entice a younger generation, the millennials especially," Wieland said.

She said she was looking forward to another great year following momentum that started at the end of last July and carried into the fall. Reservations and rental numbers are skyrocketing, she said.

"We hope within the next two to three years, we can rebuild and get

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Tim Babasade/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Great leviathan from the deep

A humpback whale breaches 16 miles off the coast of Cape May Point as seen from the Cape May Whale Watcher.

Mullock suggests Cape May Point buy Lower water

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — Former borough commissioner Robert Mullock suggested Cape May Point consider purchasing water from Lower Township rather than from Cape May.

During a virtual Cape May Point Borough Commission meeting May 13, Mullock said Cape May Point has its own water tower that would allow the borough to purchase water directly from Lower Township.

"In that way, we would have a bulk rate that wouldn't be a desal rate. And you would think automatically Cape May would object to that, but I just think that with our reduction of gallonage for the city of Cape May to supply, they are right now looking at spending an enormous amount of money to meet the water needs of Cape May and the other communities," Mullock said. "Perhaps if Cape May Point and maybe even West Cape

May went off of that line, they might be able to save the cost of having to expand that system."

He said he believed that should be part of the negotiations with Cape May.

Mullock said in past years, the borough had two rates, a desalination rate from Cape May and a groundwater rate. He said currently Cape May charges the desalination rate for all the water the borough uses.

For the past several summers, Cape May has bought water from Lower Township. He said Cape May does not lower the rate for water the borough purchased from Lower Township.

Borough Commissioner Catherine Busch said she believed the borough's water contract with Cape May does not come up for renewal until 2025.

"We can consider other options but at this time, we're committed to purchasing our water from Cape May City and my

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Lower elementary school tax rate set to rise .8 cents

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

COLD SPRING — The Lower Township Elementary School Board of Education approved its 2021-22 budget featuring a .8-cent increase in the local purpose tax rate.

The local tax levy is \$18.3 million, up \$360,000 from last year. The tax rate is increasing from 49.3 cents per \$100 of assessed value to 50.1 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

Business administrator John Hansen said the district is continuing under severe budget cuts from the state. S-2 legislation for funding formulas is phasing out state adjustment aid to many schools in the county creating large deficits in operating funds and sending more

money to districts where state aid has not kept up with increasing enrollment.

He said the school district lost in excess of \$1.5 million due to S2 cuts. Hansen said appropriations were reviewed and reduced where possible.

"We looked at all our other expense appropriations, we looked at every classroom, every teacher," he said.

State aid was reduced for the operating budget by \$1.1 million. The budget shows an improved fund balance (surplus) of \$67,000, he said.

Money is being allocated from capital reserve of \$400,000 for projects including heating and air conditioning system im-

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Driver kills Lower man in N. Cape

ERMA — Lower Township police responded to the scene of an accident in which a motor vehicle struck a pedestrian at about 2:28 p.m. May 13 on Bay Drive in the Cape May Beach section of Lower Township.

Initial investigation revealed John M. Baldwin Jr. 65, of Cape May Beach, was crossing Bay Drive on foot when a 2013 Ford Escape traveling southbound struck him.

Baldwin was treated for life-threatening injuries and ultimately succumbed to injuries on scene.

Authorities said the investigation is ongoing.

West Cape May preparing rules for cannabis growth

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — If marijuana were permitted to be grown in the borough commercially, it would take place in an indoor warehouse facility and not in open farm fields.

During a Borough Commission meeting May 12, solicitor Frank Corrado said he received a reply from the general counsel for the New Jersey State League of Municipalities on a question of whether a cannabis facility could have multiple licenses for growing, manufacturing and retail. Corrado said that would be possible.

"He also indicated to me that if you cultivate

marijuana, typically it is grown in an indoor facility, a large sort of warehouse-type facility. It is not grown in an open field," Corrado said. "So, if we provide for the licensing of cultivation, we may have to deal with the notion of indoor cultivation, then zoning regulations for the warehouse facilities with indoor lighting and indoor watering systems."

Mayor Carol Sabo asked if the borough would have to amend its zoning code to accommodate such buildings. Corrado said the zoning code may have language dealing with traditional farm buildings and he would research the topic.

The state's Cannabis

Control Commission continues to work on setting policies and may not be ready to present its regulations until the Aug. 22 deadline for municipalities to pass their marijuana ordinances, according to the general counsel.

"He also indicated he didn't think any licenses would be issued until after the end of this year," Corrado said.

The counsel provided Corrado with copies of ordinances that have been adopted by the cities of Bayonne and Hackettstown that deal with the licensing and allowing marijuana businesses within their borders. He

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