



Lower comes up with the win in girls LAX thriller

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House of the week

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Murphy: State COVID restrictions to ease May 19

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

TRENTON – Gov. Phil Murphy announced the “most aggressive steps” yet to reopen New Jersey’s economy during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a slew of eased restrictions coming May 19 – well before Memorial Day weekend.

These should come as great comfort to businesses at the Jersey shore, given that the holiday weekend is the unofficial kickoff to the summer season. Last year the restrictions were severe and didn’t ease up until the July

Fourth weekend – and even then the limits greatly restricted most businesses.

That is changing in time for this summer season.

The governor stressed the same mantra he used throughout the past year that all decisions about the state’s economy would be based on public health metrics, not politics. And those metrics have been improving steadily.

In his coronavirus press conference Monday, Murphy announced a range of percentage capacity restrictions would be dropped so long as businesses – from bars and

restaurants to retailers – ensured customers would continue to mask up and socially distance indoors.

Gone May 19 is the 50 percent capacity on restaurants and bars. They will be allowed to operate at whatever capacity they can provided groups at tables are kept at least 6 feet apart.

That aligns indoor dining with outdoor dining, which had been allowed without restrictions except for the distance between tables.

Gone will be the limits of a maximum of eight people per table, and tables may be closer than 6 feet if there are partitions

between them. Seating will be allowed again at bars, but there must be social distancing between customer groups or partitions.

For other indoor settings, the 50 percent limit will be dropped but the requirement will remain to have 6 feet between groups. Those settings include religious services, retail establishments, casinos, gyms and fitness clubs, personal care businesses, indoor and outdoor amusement and recreation businesses, and indoor and outdoor pools.

For private gatherings, such as birthday parties, the limit of people in one location has in-

creased to 50.

For large indoor venues – those with at least 1,000 fixed seats – they will be allowed to operate at 30 percent capacity (with masking and social distancing between groups).

Indoor catered events, funerals, memorial services, performances, political activities and commercial gatherings such as conferences and trade shows will be allowed to have up to 250 people so long as social distancing is maintained.

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Lower Regional to continue with hybrid schedule

Schools cannot meet social distance rules, see an uptick in cases

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — The Lower Cape May Regional School District will remain on a hybrid schedule for the remainder of the school year due to social distancing requirements and a recent increase in COVID cases in the middle school and high school.

“After careful analysis and consideration, I have recommended to our Board of Education that the Lower Cape Regional School District remain on the current hybrid schedule for the remainder of the school year. While current virus data is trending downward as more adults are receiving vaccines, the district is currently experiencing an uptick in positive cases among students in both schools. The district is also at this time unable to guarantee a minimum 3-foot distancing in all educational and cafeteria settings when we

do return to full student capacity,” Superintendent Joe Castellucci wrote in a letter to parents last week.

“The Lower Cape May Regional School District has successfully managed this health crisis since our reopening in September with only one brief closure in December due to staffing issues,” he continued.

“We have successfully concluded the fall and winter athletic seasons in both schools with few issues or interruptions and are currently navigating through the spring athletic season, the only season to be completely canceled last spring due to the state closure of all schools. We have found creative and safe ways to operate various extra-curricular programs throughout the school year and we continue to plan to implement more activities this spring.

“We are hopeful that we can provide our junior and

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Regional school tax rate up in city, falls in WCM, Lower

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — The Lower Cape May Regional School Board approved the district’s 2021-22 budget that will raise taxes in Cape May and decrease taxes in Lower Township and West Cape May.

Total appropriations are \$38 million, up 1.5 percent from last year. A total of \$23 million is to be raised by local taxes, according to Business Administrator Mark Mallett.

As a regional school district, the state calculates the share a municipality is to contribute to the fund-

ing of the district based on property values and enrollment.

Cape May’s percentage of funding the school district is increasing from 30.42 percent last year to 33.68 percent for 2021-22. Lower Township’s share is declining from 61.17 percent to 59.73 percent. West Cape May’s share is decreasing from 8.41 percent to 6.59 percent.

Mallett said the tax rate increase for Cape May is mainly due to a higher equalization value. The tax rate for Cape May is increasing 2.8 cents to 27.6

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Several dozen people, including Cape May County Board of Commissioners Director Gerald Thornton, gathered April 27 outside the County Administration Building in Cape May Court House to protest plans for Ocean Wind, an offshore wind farm planned for 15 miles off the coast of southern New Jersey. Detractors questions its impact on nature, tourism.

Thornton: ‘This is a nightmare’

County Commission director questions impact of proposed offshore wind farm on marine life

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — A quiet protest took place April 27 outside the County Administration Building against a project that would erect as many as 99 wind turbines 15 miles off the coast to generate electricity.

Several dozen participants held signs with messages against the project. The only speaker at the event was County Commission Director Gerald Thornton, who said he opposes the wind project.

Earlier during a caucus meeting, representatives of the fishing community — including Greg DiDomenico and Jeff Kaelin of Lund’s Fisheries, Annie Hawkins of the Responsible Offshore Development Alliance and Scot Mackey of the Garden State Seafood Association — spoke to county commissioners.

The members unanimously passed a resolution opposing Ørsted’s offshore wind project, Ocean Wind. Thornton said he personally wrote a letter to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management opposing the project.

“This is a nightmare, and I can tell you it’s an uphill battle because the feds and the state are for it,” he said.

Thornton said in order for electricity from the wind turbines to get to shore, a 15-mile-long trench must be dug 18 feet deep and 12 feet wide. He asked what impact that would have.

“Another fallacy, I can’t find out that it is going to generate a lot of jobs for Cape May County,” Thornton said.

He said wind-produced electricity is the costliest and residents would pay the price.

Thornton said he spoke with U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew (R-2nd), who promised to reach out to Atlantic and Ocean counties “and get everybody on board.”

“It’s a David and Goliath story, because we’re in south Jersey, where there aren’t many votes, and the people in north Jersey and New York state don’t want this. So they came down to south Jersey, where they figure there’s not many people who will protest it because they did,” Ocean City resident Martha Oldach said.

“My grandchildren will never see the ocean without windmills on it in their lifetime,” Oldach said.

She said she had concerns for migrating birds since each wind turbine tower would have a light.

Organizer of the event, Tricia Conte, of Save Our Shoreline, said her hope was that all the county

commissioners agreed with Thornton and would oppose offshore wind farms. Conte was wearing a “save our whales” T-shirt.

“I didn’t realize how important whales were to the ecosystem of the ocean until I did more research about it; they are incredibly vital,” she said.

Conte said only 360 Atlantic right whales remain in existence, adding that they visit the New Jersey shore frequently. Another of her concerns was the fate of fluke.

She said a fish similar to fluke in the United Kingdom won’t cross the electromagnetic fields generated by wind turbines. Conte said fluke is important to commercial and recreational fishing in this area.

In other countries and in California, electricity prices have gone up between 25 percent and 100 percent because of wind turbine energy, she said.

“It’s shocking how many people have no idea this major project is even happening,” Joe Conte said.

One protester said placing wind turbines offshore that would be visible from beaches should have been put before voters as a ballot question.

Cape May Court House resident

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