



House of the week

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Photographer's Porch Project

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166th YEAR NO. 19 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2020 \$1.00

Schools will stay closed through end of school year

Plans unclear for summer, fall; no spring sports, but alternative graduations possible

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, public and private school buildings throughout New Jersey will remain closed to the end of the school year and students and teachers will continue remote learning.

There will be no spring sports season for student athletes and the state will help districts come up with alternative means for celebrations such as graduations and school proms.

Plans are still up in the air for summer school, and what will happen in September for the start of the 2020-21 school year.

Gov. Phil Murphy made

the announcement at his daily press conference on Monday, May 4, 11 days ahead of his self-imposed deadline.

"We reached this conclusion based on the guidance of our public health experts and with a single goal in mind, the safety and wellbeing of our children, of our educators, our administrators and staff," Murphy said.

"We hoped we could get back to a sense of normal to let students return to the schools they love and their friends and classmates. The reality is we cannot safely reopen our schools to provide students and families or faculties and staff the confidence to return to in-person instruction," he added.

He revised his mantra that public health creates economic health, by saying public health also leads to educational health.

"If standards are high for businesses, they're even higher for schools filled with our most precious assets, our children," Murphy said. "We simply could not find a way to reconcile that core principle and open our school buildings at this time. The hurdles, logistical, educational and most of all practical that would have allowed them to return even for a short while could not be overcome."

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Governor: 'Fiscal disaster' is weeks away for NJ

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

Gov. Phil Murphy said "a fiscal disaster" is weeks away for New Jersey.

In his daily press conference Monday, May 4, the governor said aiming for a \$1.28 billion surplus this year is no longer realistic "because of plummeting revenues" caused by the near-shutdown of the state's economy and

the "skyrocketing cost" of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

The big fight right now is pushing for direct federal aid, Murphy said. He took an indirect shot at U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky), who in April called federal aid to states a "blue state bailout" even though states such as New Jersey and New York send far

more tax dollars to the federal government than they get back, unlike Kentucky, a red "taker" state that is annually bailed out by federal funds. McConnell said states should consider bankruptcy instead.

Murphy said the federal government needs to "step forward to invest in states both red and blue" and "bankruptcy is not an option."

The governor signed an executive order last year to achieve the surplus by the end of this fiscal year. Absent significant outside assistance, he said, "this is no longer feasible."

He will continue to push for direct federal assistance and work with the Legislature for short-term borrowing to bridge im-

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Point may reopen its beaches later on

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT – The borough is looking at a slow, careful reopening of its beaches.

At an April 28 Borough Commission virtual meeting, Borough Administrator Steve O'Connor said the county assembled a business recovery task force including members of the county Board of Chosen Freeholders and number local businesspersons that have come up with a plan for a gradual phase-in of reopening businesses.

He said the timeline was "pretty ambitious with things pretty well being open by the beginning of June."

"One of the key issues of this is every item that is presented in the plan cannot be implemented without the stay-at-home executive order being appealed by the governor," O'Connor said. "The only two issues that probably the Point will face is the beaches being open and the parks being open just for recreation, that's permissible by the municipality."

O'Connor said social distancing would continue on the beaches and parks and no groups or loitering would be permitted. He said he suspected the borough would be looking at that issue in the very near future.

The governor will come up with a regional approach working with New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Rhode Island, O'Connor said.

Deputy Mayor Anita Van-

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Deborah McGuire/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Back on the green at Cape May National

Stan Glowacki of Sea Isle City tees off at Cape May National Golf Club on May 2, the day courses were permitted to reopen.

Cape May Elementary approves budget without any tax increase

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – The Cape May Elementary School Board of Education approved its \$4.2 million 2020 budget with no tax increase.

The local purpose tax levy is \$1.8 million. The local purpose tax rate will be 6.6 cents per \$100 of assessed property value.

The budget anticipates \$165,000 in School Choice aid and \$700,000 in federal Impact Aid due to the number of children from Coast Guard families and public housing attending the school.

At an April 30 virtual meeting, Business Administrator John Thomas said the enrollment projection for the 2020-2021 school budget was 175 students. He said realistically enrollment would be in the range of 150 to 175 students.

Students often just appear on the first day of school, Thomas said.

Principal Zack Palumbo said the closure of Cape Trinity School by the Catholic Diocese of Camden has generated inquiries for enrollment at Cape May Elementary School.

State adjustment aid has been decreasing, Thomas

said. State legislation took money from more affluent districts and gave it to poorer school districts, he said. The state adjustment aid is dropping from \$217,000 to \$174,000.

Thomas said the school lost \$61,543 this year in total state aid. The budget uses \$740,841 in surplus funds, up from \$600,900 last year.

Regular instruction costs, including teacher salaries, totaled \$1.1 million, down from \$1.3 million this year. Thomas said a staff member retired who had a high sal-

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Cape May may relax outdoor dining rules

Closing streets considered

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – City Council is considering easing regulations to allow additional outdoor tables for restaurants considering social distancing may continue through what could be a shortened summer season.

In addition, a street or two could be closed to accommodate outdoor tables or merchandise tables from Washington Street Mall shops.

Mayor Chuck Lear told the Star and Wave City Manager Jerry Inderwies was leading a city COVID-19 task force to discuss

how to handle the summer season. The mayor said the city could work with businesses to look at every available space, even use of parking lots.

Lear said the task force discussed closing Jackson Street through the mall as well as Decatur Street.

"We're talking with the BID (Business Improvement District) and the chamber, would they be interested and how can we make it equitable to everyone," he said.

A minimal amount of space is available on the mall in front of stores and

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Cape May settles suit with officer: \$275,000

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – City Council approved a \$275,000 settlement with Cape May Police Patrolman Douglas Henderson.

City Solicitor Frank Corrado said the city was paying \$91,665 while the Joint Insurance Fund (JIF) is paying \$183,334.

"Henderson will retire in good standing effective June 1, 2020 and receive health benefits and reimbursement for unused time that he would get as a retiring police officer and he will dismiss his lawsuit against the city and give the city a

full and complete release for any claims that he had or could have had against the city up through this date," he said. "This settlement has been vetted by our JIF counselor and by JIF and they are in favor of this."

Corrado said he was in favor of the settlement noting if the case went to trial, it would cost the city far more than \$90,000 in legal fees for the city to participate.

"Additionally, this is a fee shifting case and if Henderson were to prevail, even for a relatively small amount, the city and the county, who was also a party, would be

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