



Cape May elementary nixes summer school

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House of the week

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166th YEAR NO. 28 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, JULY 8, 2020 \$1.00

CMBP limiting beach density, contact among guards

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city's beaches are crowded, and the Cape May Beach Patrol has instituted new protocols and procedures to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lifeguards are monitoring the number of persons on each beach and guards are practicing social distancing among themselves.

Chief Geoff Rife said procedures and protocols have been changed in dealing with the public and staff.

"We're being more proactive and preventative to try and reduce

the chances of having to go in (the ocean) and get someone," he said. "We have had to save maybe five or six people so far this summer, but what we've been doing is trying to set guards up on a paddleboard in every section to try and keep people in a little bit."

Like police and fire services, there is an inherent nature in guarding the beach, Rife said.

The city reached out to its contracted engineering firm to produce a beach-density grid.

"I have given this to all the lieutenants. If they believe that a beach has reached its full capacity, we're going to put a sign

at the entrance ramps directing people to select another beach," Rife said.

Rife said beach-taggers are asking beach patrons to practice social distancing on the beach.

Crowds on the beach seem to be larger than normal, Rife said. Taking into account travel restrictions to Europe and the hesitancy of the public to fly, Rife said he believes people are flocking to the shore.

For the safety of lifeguards, they are not permitted to enter Lifeguard Headquarters, Rife said. Guards sign in on an outdoor table and roll call is held out on the sand. Indoor showers are closed, he said.

Only one lifeguard at a time occupies each stand, Rife said, adding that a second lifeguard stands at the top of the berm. Doubles rowing of lifeboats is also prohibited.

"I'm trying to do the best job I can of social distancing our staff to reduce the risk of cross contamination," he said.

Visitors are also not permitted in Lifeguard Headquarters. This year's Junior Lifeguard Program was canceled, as was the annual SuperAthalon Lifeguard Competition, he said.

Rife, who is also a paramedic, held an orientation for staff with

information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Lifesaving Association. The CMBP is fully staffed this summer.

More candidates tried out for the rookie lifeguard test this year than in the past four to five years, Rife said. Every beach is open this year.

Completion of Phase II of installation of a beach public address system from Convention Hall to Poverty Beach has been delayed due to city budget constraints as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, he said. The system is operational from the Cove to Convention Hall.

COVID cases among visitors triple residents

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — There is nearly triple the number of COVID-19 cases among people visiting Cape May County than among county residents, and health officials are warning that younger people are making up the majority of new cases.

From July 1 to Monday, July 6, there were 32 new cases of COVID-19 among county residents, but 89 cases of out-of-county residents testing positive for the novel coronavirus.

There was only one new case of COVID-19 in long-term care over that period, which was reported in Ocean City on July 5.

According to the Cape May County Department of Health on July 2, Cape Regional Medical Center reported that most of the recent out-of-county positive COVID-19 cases have involved young people between the ages of 16 and 22. "Over the past two days

the Health Department has confirmed eight positive cases yesterday and another 23 today within this same age group. Not one of these cases was in need of hospitalization."

On Monday, the county department added, "Visitors and residents in the areas of Ocean City, Sea Isle City, Avalon and Wildwood should be aware that an increase in numbers of mostly out-of-state positive cases of COVID-19 have been detected over the past week. The age group is mainly between 15 and 25. Therefore, safety measures should be taken including adherence to social distancing and wearing a mask."

"Although widespread testing is being done throughout New Jersey, these new cases are coming from people failing to social distance. The majority of new cases testing positive in Cape May County within the last few days were young adults who

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Murphy calls COVID spike a 'warning sign'

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

Gov. Phil Murphy said the increasing rate of transmission of the COVID-19 virus in New Jersey is "a warning sign we need to do more."

In his coronavirus briefing Monday, July 6, the governor said the increase can be attributed in part to reopening the economy and in part to cases from infected people coming from hot spots outside the state.

A transmission rate that has climbed to 1.03 — above 1.0 for the first time in 10 weeks — shows an increasing rate of spread of the virus statewide, Murphy said. The transmission rate is how many people are infected by each new case. It hit a low in mid-June of 0.70, or less than one new person infected for each case. Now it has climbed just above one new case for

each person infected. Murphy said over the holiday weekend there were various outbreaks reported in New Jersey linked to travel to other COVID-19 hot spots nationwide. He cited an anecdotal finding in Hoboken that 13 cases were travel-related, including a dozen to hot spots, but that daily contact tracing helped uncover that detail quickly.

"We need to be smarter and we need to work harder," Murphy said. The 14-day self-quarantine for people coming from or going through a hot-spot exists to prevent flare-ups, he added. The website covid19.nj.gov/travel provides guidelines to determine if self-quarantine is necessary.

The governor thanked the millions of people who are being responsible, but chided

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

A salute from the sky

Two World War II-era AT-6s flew over Cape May four times on the evening of July 4, courtesy of David Schultz Airshows.

Study: N.J. temps, sea rising fastest in region

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

A study conducted by the state Department of Environmental Protection found that New Jersey is warming and its seas are rising more quickly than the rest of the Northeast region and the world.

According to a report of its findings, New Jersey has seen the evidence of climate change in its increasingly mild winters, more intense rainfalls, flooding along inland streams and rivers, and more tidal flooding along the coast.

"DEP's new climate

change report shows that New Jersey is even more vulnerable to climate change than they thought. If (Hurricane) Sandy was a wake-up call, this is a bullhorn in your ear saying we need to do more about climate change and act faster," said Jeff Tittel, director of the New Jersey chapter of the Sierra Club.

"Despite these unnerving findings, the administration shows no sense of urgency to strengthen adaptation and mitigation. They are releasing studies when they should be updating our maps and our rules and regulations to deal with the

impacts of climate change and sea-level rise."

The report states water supplies will be stressed from the resultant longer growing season and extreme temperatures expected, rising sea levels may lead to increased saltwater intrusion in aquifers and freshwater intakes and aquifer recharge areas may be threatened if sea-level rise pushes the salt front further upriver.

"As New Jerseyans know too well, the impacts of climate change threaten our property, public health, safety, and can wreak long-lasting damage to our economy," Gov. Phil Murphy

said. "Almost eight years later, some residents of our state are still struggling to recover from Superstorm Sandy (October 2012), and there are businesses and beloved landmarks that have never recovered. Just as we have seen with respect to the COVID-19 crisis, our commitment to environmental health will, too, create economic health. We know that now is the time for climate action, and DEP's Scientific Report on Climate Change will shape our planning and response to this coming crisis."

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Property tax collection stable, other revenue off

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

TRENTON — The New Jersey League of Municipalities has been offering advice to towns on how to handle the COVID-19 pandemic from a financial basis.

Most mayors and council members in the state attend League of Municipalities functions.

The league held a webinar earlier in the month called "Financial State of Affairs,"

during which Doug Golm-acher, of Moody's Investor Service, said the collection of sales tax and income tax nationally has declined. He said it will take some time to return to normal levels.

Property tax collections is much stronger, Golm-acher said, adding that local governments have a lot of buffers against financial stress.

"You do have some flexibility to reduce costs and cut services," Golm-acher said.

He said most towns have

solid reserves and liquidity. Even before the pandemic, personal income has not been growing since the last recession in New Jersey as well as it has nationally, Golm-acher said.

The recovery in New Jersey will lag behind the nation, according to Golm-acher. He said trends were positive for local governments at the start of the year.

Property taxes collections to date have been steady. He said the August quarter was

being watched carefully. Some of the positive property tax figures may have been because mortgage companies were paying from escrow, Golm-acher said.

He said with the exception of the most heavily impacted areas, COVID-19 related expenses from municipalities have been modest, Golm-acher said.

"This has been more of a revenue problem than

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