



## Lake Lily fairing well amid heat, humidity of summer

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## House of the week

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167th YEAR NO. 33 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2021 \$1.00



Michelle Miles/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

### A true newshound

Everybody loves reading the Cape May Star and Wave, America's oldest weekly resort newspaper, including Winston, above, who wears spectacles so as not to miss a word.

## Testa goes on defensive about vaccine comments

Blogger questions legislator during CMTA meeting

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — State Sen. Michael Testa, guest speaker at the Cape May Taxpayers Association's annual meeting Aug. 12, took offense at questions from freelance writer and Cape May news blogger Robert Dreyfuss on why Testa spoke on television against COVID-19 vaccinations and Dr. Anthony Fauci.

"Back in April, you made some very disturbing comments about the COVID vaccine. You were giving an interview on television and said a lot of your constituents don't want the vaccine," Dreyfuss said.

"You said only a weatherman and Dr. Fauci can be wrong that much and they're the ones that ought to lose their jobs," Dreyfuss continued. "You called it an experimental vaccine not yet fully approved by FDA. You didn't exactly go out of your way to encourage people in Cape May County to get vaccines against the disease that has killed thousands and thousands of people in New Jersey."

He asked if Testa was willing to apologize for "those misleading statements" and if he was ready to call on his reluctant or vaccine resistant constituents to wake up and get vaccinated. Dreyfuss asked Testa if he has been vaccinated.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

State Sen. Michael Testa, R-Cape May, Cumberland, Atlantic, spoke before the Cape May Taxpayers Association on Aug. 12, when a freelance blogger questioned him about his anti-vaccine comments.

Testa, R-Cape May, Cumberland, Atlantic, told Dreyfuss his medical status was none of his business.

Dreyfuss said Testa declared on television it was illegal for Rutgers University to require its students to be vaccinated, something that is being required

by hundreds of universities.

"It's actually a federal law that you cannot mandate a vaccine that is only approved for experimental use, which was absolutely true at the time that I made those statements,"

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## Strategist: Region's Joint Insurance Fund financially stable

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Your local town has no insurance — that is, in the traditional sense. Virtually every town in Cape May and Atlantic counties insures itself through its membership in the Atlantic County Municipal Joint Insurance Fund (JIF).

It was formed in 1987 when insurance companies stopped insuring municipalities due to claims from ambulance squads, police and fire departments and public works, according to Paul Miola,

JIF executive municipal strategist, who provided an update on the fund's health Aug. 11 to West Cape May Borough Commission. The borough's membership in the JIF is up for renewal this year.

He said JIF's coverage is designed specifically for municipalities.

Loss funding is the amount of money actuaries tell the JIF to put in its budget to pay claims, Miola said, which has been flat to a little below previous years, due in part to towns participating in safety and risk management programs. He said West Cape May has an excel-

lent loss ratio.

Miola said the borough would see an \$8,000 reduction in its premiums since its last renewal.

"Because we're not an insurance company, but we're a consortium of municipalities, every penny that's not spent by the fund is returned to the members as dividends," he said. "We've returned over \$44 million in dividends to our members since we formed and that's money that would have been insurance company profits had this been an insurance company."

The JIF returned \$3.6 million to its members last year and was an-

icipating about the same amount of return this year, Miola said.

He said West Cape May has received almost \$90,000 in dividends including \$12,600 last year.

The JIF has more than \$46 million in the bank with a \$20 million surplus, Miola said. About 18 months ago when budgets were being created for 2020, COVID-19 was not a factor, he said.

Miola said recreational marijuana, social inflation: a large increase in jury awards, the hardening insurance market and cyberthreats make it important the JIF has financial strength.

The JIF provides worker's compensation insurance for municipal employees.

"The statute was amended to say that employees, especially emergency responders that contracted COVID-19, were assumed to have gotten it on the job and have to be proved otherwise," he said.

The JIF has had almost 800 COVID claims with about \$1.5 million of incurred losses, Miola said.

In December 2019, the state Legislature extended the statute of limitations on civil actions

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## County to study area's broadband access

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — County Commission may fund a study with federal American Rescue Plan Act money to determine how many county residents have no access to broadband internet service.

On Aug. 10, acting County Administrator Kevin Lare said funds from the Rescue Plan Act are sitting in the bank. The county received \$8.9 million of a total expected \$17.8 million.

He said the county had a \$2.5 million loss in revenue in 2020 that it used "rescue money" to cover. A total of \$6.4 million of rescue money remains in the bank, Lare said.

Lare offered three items for consideration:

— A \$250,000 proposal

for a broadband internet mapping initiative to identify all those in the county who do not have internet access or have very weak access

— Increasing the advertising budget for the county Department of Tourism by \$250,000 to help the shoulder seasons

— A \$150,000 advertising program for COVID-19 information to deal with an uptick in cases in the county

Lare said providing internet access is a priority of the federal government. He said the internet study probably would take a year to complete.

The study would potentially outline all the options to provide internet to all county residents, he said, adding that no central database of information of who

is connected or not exists.

He said the county is expecting its second payment of rescue money of \$8.9 million in May 2022.

Commission Director Gerald Thornton said the county should be prepared for the increases in COVID-19 cases it is seeing.

"Let's be prepared here; we don't want to get caught off guard," he said. "We've got to get everybody vaccinated if at all possible."

Thornton said there was no possibility the county could be shut down again due to COVID-19.

Commissioner E. Marie Hayes and Thornton said they were previously not aware some county residents had no access to the internet. Hayes said a number of students have been hurt by the lack of an internet connection.

She said rescue plan funds can be used to provide internet service and possibly additional money would be available from the federal infrastructure bills.

"It's a shame that people can't afford to have cables run to their home because they have to pay for it," Hayes said.

Lare said the model for receiving internet service was similar to that of the county Municipal Utilities Authority in installing pipes in areas.

"The more users, the more they expand," he said.

There are pockets in the county that may not have enough potential internet customers to make it worthwhile for a cable provider to install lines into a neighborhood, Lare said.

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## Two restaurants close for weekend following positive COVID tests

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A restaurant in Cape May and another in Lower Township closed temporarily over the weekend due to positive COVID-19 tests of employees.

Harpoons on the Bay in North Cape May announced a temporary closing on its Facebook page Aug. 13: "Harpoons has been informed by an employee and the Cape May County Health Department of a positive COVID-19 test. Out of an abundance of caution, Harpoons has elected to close tonight, Aug. 13, for dinner and tomorrow (Saturday) for lunch. This

will allow Harpoons time to completely disinfect and clean food prep, restrooms, dining areas and all public areas. All staff members will be offered the opportunity to test, and those identified as having close contact will be required to test. Additionally, Harpoons is working with the county Health Department to identify any potential exposures. At this time, they do not believe any customers were exposed.

"South Jersey is experiencing a surge in COVID cases, making it more difficult to schedule testing appointments. To ensure all employ-

See Close, Page A4

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