



House of the week

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Electric cars showing up at the shore

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165th YEAR NO. 35 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2019 \$1.00

Public safety building bond unlikely to pass

Sheehan says she will not vote in favor of combined building; Mullock says it's overpriced

'From where I stand with the public safety building, and that is I would not be that fourth vote to get that bond, as it stands now, with putting the police station and fire station together where the firehouse is now.'

—Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A positive vote of four members of City Council would be necessary to approve a bond ordinance to finance a new public safety building for the city. During a council meeting Aug. 20, Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan said she would not vote to approve a bond ordinance.

"From where I stand with the public safety building, and that is I would not be that fourth vote to get that bond, as it stands now,

with putting the police station and fire station together where the firehouse is now," she said.

Sheehan said in order for police and the fire department to have a building that could be expanded in the future, two separate buildings should be constructed.

"We should not be building for now, we should be building for the future," she said.

Sheehan also said she feared a two- to three-story building would ruin the streetscape of the neighborhood.

Councilman Zack Mullock said

the city is four years into the project with the Public Safety Building Advisory Committee in existence for two years.

"In the past, we would have had multiple town hall meetings by this time, that's my opinion," he said. "And I think we should still have multiple town hall meetings in regard to this."

Mullock said cost estimates for the building from USA Architects ranged from \$18 million to \$23 million, which did not include professional services, such as architect's fees and the interior

items.

When figures were submitted by USA Architects that far exceeded the city's expectations, a council meeting scheduled for Aug. 13 to present concept plans was canceled in a 3-2 vote, with Mullock and Sheehan voting to hold the meeting.

He noted a request to live stream Public Safety Building Advisory Committee meetings was voted down by council in a 3-2 vote. He called for the com-

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Raising house can help lower high costs of flood insurance

By JACK FICHTER
Sure Guide

With flood insurance premiums expected to become much more expensive in the next few years, it may make financial sense to raise your house to above base flood level.

A bill sponsored by U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., could allow flood insurance premiums to rise as much as 18 percent per year on primary homes and a high as 25 percent on second homes.

A bill introduced by U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J., would cap allowable annual premium increases to 9 percent.

SJ Hauck Construction, of Egg Harbor Township, has raised a number of houses in Cape May and Atlantic counties and beyond. Owner Steven Hauck said he has been busy primarily due to changes in the National Flood Insurance Flood Program (NFIP) maps and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding some flood mitigation.

He said his company's lifting work now is related to mitigating homes that are high-risk flood properties. Hauck said FEMA found it valuable to write grants to lift specific homes to minimize flood claims.

"Severe repetitive loss, repetitive loss homes, homes that have had multiple flood claims in a given amount of time, can qualify for grants," he said.

FEMA will pay for the entire cost of lifting a home if it's a severe repetitive loss home. For a repetitive loss home, FEMA will pay 90 percent of the lifting cost. For a "policy home," one that has experienced claims in a serious flood zone, FEMA will pay 75 percent.

Hauck said FEMA caps the cost, not paying for items such as new kitchens or upgraded siding. He said it is expected flood insurance will reach actuarial rates in the next few years.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

A home is being raised on Jefferson Street at Beach Avenue in Cape May. The process requires the home to be jacked up, the original foundation demolished and rebuilt to the new higher elevation, then the home lowered onto it, as well as new steps and decks built.

The cost of lifting a house is not just raising a home to a higher level.

"It's building a foundation, it's building new decks and new forms of egress, reconnecting the water lines, the electric," Hauck said.

He said it is rarely cheaper than \$100,000 to lift a house. Hauck said an alternative is to do nothing about flooding and risk high flood insurance rates or losing the property to flood waters.

"We call that the cost of doing nothing," he said. "What's the cost of doing nothing compared to the cost of doing something?"

The cost of lifting a house can be financed.

Hauck said it costs about \$450 per month to borrow \$100,000. Flood insurance in the future could cost \$1,000 per month, Hauck said, but if your house is above base flood elevation, flood insurance premiums could be reduced to as little as \$600 per year.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

SJ Hauck of Egg Harbor Township raised this home on Second Avenue in Lower Township. It is important to determine whether the home is worth the investment.

"Your house is now mitigated against any flooding and that fear goes away and also you increase the equity in your home by lifting it up, it's worth more," he said.

Hauck said if a homeowner is spending \$6,000 to \$7,000 per year on flood insurance, it makes sense to increase the equity of

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Lower may give a tax exemption for Tech Village

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council introduced an ordinance Aug. 19 to provide a 30-year tax exemption to the county for the future Tech Village at the county airport.

Council deemed the property as a redevelopment area in 2017 to stimulate redevelopment in the airport. Council approved a redevelopment plan for the tract in July and the county named the Atlantic County Improvement Authority the developer. The enabling township ordinance states all project improvements owned by the county shall be exempt from taxation.

At the end of 30 years, project improvements would be assessed and taxed. The county would pay an annual service charge to the township on a quarterly basis. The ordinance states the annual service charge is in an amount equal to 10

percent of the projected annual gross revenues generated in connection with the project.

For years seven through 12, the annual service charge would be equal to 20 percent of applicable taxes, agreed upon as \$8,805. For years 13 to 18, the annual service charge would be 40 percent of applicable taxes, or \$17,610.

During years 19 through 24, the annual service charge would increase to 60 percent of applicable taxes, or \$26,415. In years 25 through the end of the agreement, the annual service charge would increase to 80 percent of applicable taxes, or \$35,220.

The county would also pay an annual administrative fee to Lower Township of 2 percent of the annual service charge. An auditor's report must be submitted annually to the township on the Tech Village property.

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Small staff requires a lot of overtime for police in Cape May

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Cape May Police Department is short-staffed, resulting in the need for officers to work overtime and increasing their stress level.

Police Chief Tony Marino said over the years for various reasons, whether political or budgetary, staffing has varied from two, three or four officers per patrol squad as well as the administrative staff varying in size.

In 2002, Cape May reached

an agreement with West Cape May and Cape May Point to provide police services. Marino said the agreement provided an increase in patrol squads to four officers due to an increase in service area and calls for service. The initial agreement was for seven years, which was renewed in 2009 and again in 2015.

He said the police department is operating with a minimum of three-officer squads. He said three-officer squads are not optimal, particularly

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MARINO

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