



## House of the week

Real Estate Resource



## Lower to boost patrols around Lepore's Pit

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164th YEAR NO. 35 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 29, 2018 \$1.00

# Eight options for new Ocean Drive bridges

## Engineers estimate cost of \$200-\$250 million, four years starting in 2021

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Eight designs concepts have been created for replacement of the Mill Creek, Middle Thorofare and Upper Thorofare bridges and elevating Ocean Drive above flood level from Route 109 at the base of the Garden State Parkway to Diamond Beach.

The South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO), in conjunction with Cape May County and the state Department of Transportation,

held two information sessions Aug. 23 at Lower Township Hall.

The three bridges were built in 1939 and are beyond their serviceable life at more than 75 years old, according to the SJTPO. Due to the overall condition of the Middle Thorofare Bridge, heavy truck traffic is prohibited, with a sign indicating no loads over 15 tons.

County Engineer Dale Foster said the project began in 1999. The current study will determine a preferred path for a new Middle Thorofare Bridge, the larger of the three spans, he said.

Project Manager Joseph Roma-

no, of Michael Baker International, said the project encompasses 2.7 miles. In addition to the three bridges, it includes reconstruction of a culvert that serves sensitive ecological and environmental resources, he said.

The project is in a phase of developing alternatives for the alignment of the Middle Thorofare Bridge using public input. Romano said a final alignment for the bridge would be chosen in the fall. The start of construction of a new bridge is at least four years away and is expected to take about three years, he said.

Of eight possible alternatives for the path of a new Middle Thorofare Bridge, Alternative 1 is to do nothing other than routine maintenance and repair, which has been deemed unacceptable, Romano said. Alternative 2 would rehabilitate the Middle Thorofare Bridge and replace the Mill Creek and Upper Thorofare bridges. The roadways from Route 109 to Diamond Beach would be raised to meet the 100-year flood elevation.

In alternatives 3, 4, 5, 6A and 6B, all three bridges would be replaced using precast concrete girders with a new two-way ac-

cess road to local businesses. Romano said alternatives 3, 4 and 5 would realign the Middle Thorofare Bridge to the south, realign the Mill Creek and Upper Thorofare bridges to the north. In those alternatives, the Middle Thorofare would not be replaced with a drawbridge but with a fixed bridge with 80-foot vertical clearance. The channel under the bridge would increase from 50 to 80 feet in width.

For alternatives 6A and 6B, all three bridges would be aligned

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Deborah McGuire/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

## Sailing off into the sunset

The A.J. Meerwald, a restored oyster-dredging schooner that became the state's official tall ship, sails to the Cape May-Lewes Ferry dock at sunset Aug. 25. The Bayshore Center is offering public sails aboard the Meerwald from North Cape May through Sept. 3. See story, Page B4.

## City changes landscaping deal after tree removal

By JOHN COOKE

Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council passed a resolution Aug. 21 amending an agreement with the Fund for Cape May regarding the maintenance of Rotary Park after a tree was cut down without approval from the city.

The fund must now keep the city fully advised of its proposed landscaping activity in advance of any action. The fund may not plant or remove any tree at Rotary Park without first notifying and gaining permission of the city and its Shade Tree Commission. The fund does not need approval for incidental planting of flow-

ers or shrubbery or for the routine landscaping and maintenance.

On June 16, photographer Werner Tedesco posted a photo to the Cool Cape May Facebook page of a recently cut tree stump.

"I went over to the park to sit by the fountain and compose a shot that I've had bouncing around in my head for a while," Tedesco said. "A stump from a healthy, freshly fallen tree is what I found."

"The subject of my shot is no more," he continued. Many photographers used the tree as a frame for landscape photos.

Earlier that day, a commercial tree contractor was

trimming dead wood from the tops of the remaining sycamore trees in the park.

"The contractor told me he was hired by the Fund for Cape May to trim dead wood from the tops of the sycamore tree; he told me nothing about taking down any trees," Cape May City Shade Tree Commission Chairman Jay Schatz said.

Phone calls to two other Shade Tree Commission members produced similar replies. The Shade Tree Commission was not consulted on removal of the tree.

According to Schatz, if a private homeowner takes down a tree more than 8 inches in diameter, it can

result in a \$10,000 fine.

"We take them to municipal court," Schatz said.

Until the council's meeting Aug. 21, Rotary Park was governed under a different set of rules. On July 2, 2016, the city entered into an agreement with the Fund for Cape May that gave the group responsibility for all landscaping services at the park. This included planting and maintaining all trees and flowers, lawn care and maintenance.

The city assumed responsibility for snow and trash removal, maintenance of the gazebo and fountain, gas lamps and electric street-

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# Feds provide \$3 million for drone facility

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross announced Tuesday that the department's Economic Development Administration (EDA) is awarding a \$3 million grant to Cape May County to help build a 20,000-square-foot multitenant building that will fulfill the needs of companies in the Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) industry.

The facility will be located at the Cape May County Airport. According to grantee estimates, the project is expected to create 130 jobs

and spur \$1.9 million in private investment.

"President Trump and the entire Trump administration are working diligently to empower innovators who help fuel job creation in communities across the nation," Ross said. "This project will allow businesses in one of the most advanced sectors with the tools they need to grow and thrive."

"This multimillion-dollar federal investment in Cape May's future is a testament to the power of pub-

Drone facility, Page A8

# Murphy vetoes tax breaks for airport growth

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

TRENTON — Legislation sponsored by Sen. Jeff Van Drew that would boost the economic development potential of certain airports, including the Cape May County Airport in Lower Township, was conditionally vetoed by Gov. Phil Murphy on Monday.

"I am profoundly disappointed that this bill was not signed into law. South Jersey is hurting, and needs this type of economic growth. We were finally able to find an industry that had the potential to grow in our state, we need these things," said Van Drew, D-Cape May, Cumberland, Atlantic. "This was very personal for our area, and would have had a substantial positive impact. South Jersey needs to diversify its economy. We cannot depend solely on

tourism and casinos alone. This is a missed opportunity that would have helped South Jersey."

The bill, S-250, would have extended the state's Grow New Jersey Assistance Program to businesses located at certain airports. The bill would allow eligible businesses located at the airports to receive a base tax credit of \$5,000 a year for each job created or retained by the business.

The Cape May County Airport owns an industrial park that has attracted new tenants, including a commercial and video production company and a technical start-up incubator for drone technology companies. Cape May Brewing Co. is also located at the industrial complex.

By allowing businesses located at the airports to

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