



CMPD on lookout for bicycle helmet scofflaws

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House of the week

Real Estate Resource



168th YEAR NO. 34 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31, 2022 \$1.00



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Out on the water

The Cape May Canal at Delaware Bay was busy with boat traffic from the Cape May-Lewes Ferry, Cape May Whale Watcher, parasails and yachts Aug. 28.



Lower schools ready to begin 'normal' year

Masks are optional for students, otherwise COVID thing of past

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

COLD SPRING — After three years of COVID precautions and mandates, Lower Township elementary schools are mostly back to normal.

Superintendent Jeff Samaniego said the school district developed what it considers the least restrictive plan in which masks are optional.

"If you want to wear a mask, that is quite all right and you'll be well respected whatever your decision is," he said.

Students and staff are being asked to wash their hands multiple times per day, Samaniego said.

He said if an individual is COVID-positive, he or she must quarantine for five days and when they return to school on day six, a mask is still optional.

"We are excited to start off the school year as we are every year," he said. "But this year in particular, because this year is the planning of a regular year."

For the past two and half years, all school lunches were free for students but the USDA program that funded the meals has ended. Samaniego said parents can fill out paperwork to deter-

mine if they are eligible for assistance.

He said many families incorrectly believe they do not qualify for the program.

Nationwide, school districts are experiencing teacher shortages. Samaniego said the Lower Township Elementary School District has an opening for a music teacher and a special education teacher.

"Staffing for other programs like classroom aides, paraprofessionals, cafeteria workers and day care aides are very difficult to find as well," he said.

The school district's preschool has grown from 11 half-day classrooms to 20 full-day classrooms.

"We totally believe that is where learning begins. Students are able to not only learn through organized play, but they are able to endure a regular school day as well," Samaniego said.

The preschool expanded when it opened the program to 3-year-olds.

A new preschool playground was installed at the Carl T. Mitnick School with rubberized flooring. Samaniego said the district ran an extensive summer school program mindful that students may have lost learning opportunities due to the COVID pandemic.

Committee suggests 20 mph limit in city

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Should the speed limit throughout the city be reduced to 20 mph?

That was the question discussed at a speed limit committee meeting that included Police Chief Dekon Fashaw, city solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz, City Manager Mike Voll, Deputy City Manager Lou Belasco, Superintendent of Public Works Eric Prusinski and city engineer Vince Orlando.

At an Aug. 16 City Council meeting, Councilman Mike Yeager said reduction of a speed limit from 30 mph to 20 mph would drastically reduce bicycle and pedestrian injuries.

"We're looking for the

county to reduce all the speed limits in our town to 20 (mph)," he said. "So are our neighboring municipalities; they are definitely with us."

Hoboken went through a very long, expensive study and reduced the speed limit in its city to 20 mph. Yeager said Hoboken has narrow streets like Cape May and lots of people riding bicycles, both conventional and electric.

He said Gillin-Schwartz and Fashaw suggested changing the speed limit to 20 mph throughout Cape May. Some streets in the city need a slower speed limit than 20 mph, Yeager said.

"There's absolutely nothing to lose by changing the speed limit to 20 mph," he

said. "People might say it's going to take a lot longer to get from A to B."

Yeager said he lives on the longest east-west street, Virginia Avenue in Village Green. He said he drove the length of the street at 25 mph and again at 20 mph and the total difference in time was about 15 to 20 seconds.

Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan said reducing the speed limit would be "grand," but it had to be enforced.

"Our biggest problem is we're at 25 (mph) now and we're not enforcing it," she said.

Sheehan suggested keeping the speed limit at 25 mph and enforcing it. She said changing the speed limit to 20 mph would require signs

in residential neighborhoods.

"In front of what \$2 million house are you going to put a speed sign?" Sheehan asked.

Councilman Shaine Meier said he likes speed limits painted on the street such as on Sidney Avenue.

Yeager suggested hanging a banner at the entrance to Cape May urging drivers to obey the speed limit.

Sheehan said drivers are speeding at 40 mph or more on Lafayette Street, day and night. She said the police department reported 111 traffic stops in one month, which equated to three traffic stops per day.

More than three cars an

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City again considers invasive-plant controls

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — No homeowner wants to see bamboo creeping onto their property from the yard next door like an attacking army on the march.

The city is considering an ordinance to control invasive plant species such as bamboo and English ivy. The ordinance would concentrate on preventing the

planting of invasive species while promoting the planting of native species.

At an Aug. 16 meeting, Councilman Mike Yeager, who serves as council liaison to the city's Environmental Commission, said the commission wants council to pass an invasive species ordinance. In December 2020, council withdrew an ordinance with new regulations for the control and elimination of evasive

species of plants, classing it has too severe.

He said many municipalities in the state have invasive species ordinances on the books.

"I think that the problem in the past, if I understand correctly, has been an enforcement issue more than anything and I know some people are sensitive to being told what they can or cannot plant," Yeager said.

City solicitor Chris Gillin-

Schwartz crafted a draft ordinance which Yeager described as less invasive than in the past but would have positive benefits for Cape May.

Yeager said the ordinance states the failure of an individual to control the spread of vegetation beyond the boundaries of a property would be a violation.

"This is not demanding

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Beach safety committee acquires surveys done by Coastal Research Center

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Beach Safety Advisory Committee is seeking a coastal engineer to work with the city in hopes of finding a solution to the sharp beach drop-off in the surf zone that has been blamed for neck and back injuries to bathers.

At a Aug. 23 committee meeting, Councilwoman Lorraine Baldwin said volunteer engineer Marc DeBlasio has copies of beach surveys from Stockton University's Coastal Research Center and the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

She said a coastal engineer would be expected to complete 3D and computer-generated models that would mimic the waves in the city's position on the coast.

The modeling could take six to eight months to complete, Baldwin said, adding that an engineer would seek a solution to the beach slope by altering the jetty system or other means.

To consider changing the

template for beach replenishment, the state would require a model.

Committee member William Kurtz asked how many people have been injured in the surf zone this summer. Deputy Fire Chief Mike Eck said he did not want to provide an inaccurate figure but believes it was less than 15 persons.

The Cape May Star and Wave filed an Open Public Records Act request with the city for data on surf zone injuries. A report from the fire department listed three from May 1 to June 30:

— On June 17, a person was tossed in the waves while body boarding at Wilmington Avenue. The 28-year-old man suffered a laceration on the chin and refused further treatment.

— On June 20, a 26-year-old woman injured her right ankle after stepping in a hole while entering the ocean at Stockton Place. She refused treatment.

— On June 21, an 18-year-old woman was tossed in the surf at Wilmington Avenue

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NAILED IT. Rusty Nail

The Rusty Nail is back! Our famed surfer bar and restaurant is back open for the 2022 season. Stop by for breakfast, lunch and dinner—as well as delicious cocktails and the coldest draft beer in Cape May (as verified by Exit Zero Magazine).

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