



City proposes raising fees for parking lots

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House of the week

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167th YEAR NO. 37 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2021 \$1.00

Bezaire: End outdoor dining concessions early

Proposal sparks firestorm of criticism from restaurateurs, who counted on Dec. 31 deadline

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Saying he would like to get the city back to pre-pandemic condition, Councilman Chris Bezaire drew a firestorm of criticism when he attempted to put an end to city concessions for outdoor dining at the end of October instead of December.

In 2020, the city began allowing restaurants to set up tables in parking lots, sidewalks and closed streets to help them survive the COVID-19 pandemic. City Council then extended that period several times.

Following much negative comment during the meeting Sept. 7, the proposed ordinance was removed from the agenda.

Bezaire argued that an ordinance passed in March allowing dining in parking lots and rights of way is set to expire Dec. 31. He said council picked that date because it did not want to have to revisit the issue over the summer.

Last year, the county removed barricades set up on Beach Avenue that allowed for outdoor dining at the end of October, Bezaire said.

"I asked that council relook at this because we've gotten through

the summer," he said.

Bezaire said he received indications from the Governor's Office that Gov. Phil Murphy did not plan to impose any further restrictions on indoor dining.

"There are some spikes and some concerns over COVID. However, we have the vaccine in place now," he said.

Most states and municipalities are giving businesses the option of requiring proof of vaccination or negative COVID tests for indoor dining without capacity restrictions, Bezaire said.

"The keyword throughout this

entire process, whether it was resolutions or ordinance, was 'temporary,'" he said. "By nature, parking lots are not designed to have dining in them, roadways are not designed to be closed off indefinitely to help businesses."

Bezaire said he was the strongest advocate for restaurants during the pandemic. He said no establishment is supposed to have seating that exceeds the number indicated on its mercantile license.

Council will need to revisit the concept of outdoor dining, he said, adding that in some form it is here to stay — but not in parking lots

and streets.

Bezaire said most of the business representatives with whom he spoke concurred with the Oct. 31 deadline.

"In how I had Mr. Gillin-Schwartz draft it, this does not end outdoor dining, it simply does away with it in any public right of way and any parking lot," Bezaire said.

Councilman Shaine Meier said all were aware of an uptick in COVID especially in Cape May County. He noted council was once again wearing masks inside City Hall.

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Chief Warrent Officer 2 Timothy Tamargo/USCG

Communities come together to mark 9/11

Above, a U.S. Coast Guard recruit ceremonial drill team and color guard participate in Cape May's ceremony marking the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the United States. At right, Lower Township Council and police officers participate in a ceremony at Sunset Beach.



Cape May Point property owners don't want HPC

Survey favors preservation body but falls short of benchmark set

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — The people have spoken, and they do not want a historic preservation commission (HPC) in the borough, where old houses have been torn down in earnest over the past 20 years, often replaced with much larger two-story homes.

A borough committee mailed a survey card to every property owner, not just registered voters, asking if they were in favor of the borough creating an HPC.

At a Sept. 9 Borough Commission meeting, Borough Administrator Ed Grant said it was clearly stated that to move forward with the formation of an HPC, a majority vote would be necessary, 339 votes in the affirmative. He said 186 votes were received in favor of creating an HPC, which was 153 votes short of the majority threshold established by the committee.

Based on the survey results, going forward with an HPC is not supported at this time, Grant said.

"The process was carefully constructed, processed and monitored by staff," he said. "No commissioners handled any part of the process."

He said borough staff had no interest "one way or the

other" for creating an HPC and was unbiased. The survey questions were drafted by the staff and reviewed by the borough solicitor John Amenhauser.

Participants were able to cast their vote for or against forming an HPC by replying in person, online or by mail, Grant said.

He said Borough Clerk Elaine Wallace did a wonderful job and handled the survey like an election, ensuring it was audited.

Amenhauser said he received correspondence from members of the public regarding some confusion they had with the explanatory statement on the survey card. He said he felt the questions about forming an HPC were clearly stated as to the impact of a yes or no vote.

"I'm not sure we could have worded it any clearer," Amenhauser said.

At the same time, borough resident John Reilly has gathered 4,910 signatures to save St. Mary's by the Sea, which is slated for demolition by its owners, the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

"We have organized alternatives, advocated and raised a substantial offer with the hope of saving the history of the building but

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Diamond Beach group leader questions Inspira failure to note incident location

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Diamond Beach Citizens Action Group President James Sanford is raising a number of questions about emergency medical services Inspira is providing to Lower Township, including the number of transports to the hospital and its refusal to offer mutual aid to other towns.

During a Lower Town-

ship Council meeting Sept. 8, Sanford said he made an Open Public Records Act request and received Inspira's monthly rescue call report submitted to the township as well as reports from county dispatch.

Inspira replaced Lower Township Rescue Squad to answer medical emergency calls in the township. Sanford said the Inspira reports did not identify the location of the ambulance calls.

"On every line item where they went to a call, they don't identify which section of town it was," he said. "They also do not use the emergency dispatchers ID system; they have their own."

Sanford said based on information he received from the county, comparing the dates and the times to the Inspira reports, Diamond

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City joins county dispatch system after lightning toasts equipment

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — In a 4-1 vote, City Council approved a five-year shared services agreement for Cape May to use the county dispatch center for 911 calls. The annual cost would be \$245,000.

On Sept. 7, Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan cast the sole vote against the agreement with the county. She asked

that the vote be delayed to allow for the gathering of more financial information and a treasurer's certification of where the money would come from in the city budget.

Council approved the agreement with the county contingent on the treasurer providing certification for funding of the contract.

Mayor Zack Mullock said police and fire personnel told him in January they were

very interested in switching to county dispatch. He said City Manager Mike Voll and Deputy City Manager Lou Belasco reached out to county Emergency Management Coordinator Marty Pagliughi and other county officials about making the switch.

On July 21, a lightning strike disabled the city's

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