



Caper Tigers boys soccer tops Mainland

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House of the week

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168th YEAR NO. 38 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2022 \$1.00

City Council hires architect to design police station

Sheehan votes against the contract, saying land should be secured before a building is designed

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council voted 4-1 to approve a contract with architect Rob Conley for initial design services for a new police station with an amount not to exceed \$80,000.

The city has not locked down a location for the facility.

At a Sept. 6 meeting, Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan said the city assembled a police station task force that never made a presentation of its findings to council or provided a report.

“I don’t understand why we are basing it on recommendations in a report that as a council member I’ve never received,” she said.

Mayor Zack Mullock said the task force was recently formed and the group wanted to work with an engineer to make a presentation to council.

“We’re going to pay someone to design a facility but yet we don’t have the ground or the place to put it yet,” Sheehan said. “I think we’re putting the cart before the horse. Let’s secure the land before we do the building.”

Conley created two designs

when the city issued a request for proposals for a joint public safety building, one for the firehouse and one for a police station, she said. Voters turned down the concept of one public safety building.

Sheehan said she did not understand why the city was paying Conley \$80,000 “to do something that was already done once.”

Mullock said Sheehan was wrong, that Conley was doing the first phase of the work for \$30,000, less than the cost of the first phase for the firehouse being built.

He said Conley’s firm was

doing a wonderful job with the firehouse.

“It made all the sense in the world to work with the people that we’ve been comfortable with. They’ve done a great job and are willing to do it for \$30,000 to get the ball rolling,” Mullock said.

Sheehan said phases one and two total \$80,000. Mullock concurred the second phase would cost \$50,000.

According to the enabling resolution, overall architectural services would total \$368,000.

Sheehan said she did not oppose using Conley but thinks the

city should wait until it secures land so the architect can design a building appropriate to the size of the lot.

The city is eying a parcel of land at St. John and Lafayette streets that was originally intended to be a portion of Lafayette Street Park. The city has proposed a land swap with the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for use of the St. John Street parcel that was placed in the Green Acres program to be used as parkland.

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Dennis Flanagan/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

A royal banquet

A monarch butterfly shares a meal with a silver-spotted skipper butterfly during the fall migration at Cape May Point.

Lower considers rental properties a revenue stream

Ordinance would impose 3% accommodations tax

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — With the proliferation of short-term house rentals through Airbnb and VRBO, Lower Township introduced an ordinance Sept. 7 to levy a 3 percent occupancy tax on hotel/motel rooms and transient accommodations.

In 2019, the state enacted legislation allowing municipalities to impose an accommodations tax not to exceed 3 percent. The accommodations tax is in addition to state sales tax.

The enabling ordinance states the township recognizes the exponential growth of the transient rental marketplace over the course of the past several years and the impact that has had on township resources and the public.

Township Manager Mike Laffey said he estimated 740 rental properties in the township. Mercantile fees for rentals are based on the number of persons that can sleep in a property, he said.

Laffey projected the occupancy tax could generate

\$750,000 to \$1.2 million next year. The tax would begin in January. He noted more visitors generate more demands on township services including code enforcement.

Neighboring Cape May is expected to collect in excess of \$2 million this year in accommodations tax.

In other business, council approved extending site plan approval for outdoor dining from November 2022 to November 2024. The state has enacted a similar law.

In 2020, due to the COVID pandemic, council temporarily relaxed the procedures associated with site plan review and approval to permit restaurants and bars to locate tables outdoors in the township right of way or in other locations on site.

The ordinance notes that since the beginning of the COVID pandemic in 2020, outdoor dining has become popular but that restaurants and bars have suffered economic loss.

Council approved a resolution endorsing a grant

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Homeless ‘camping out’ in Kiwanis Park

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Information was shared Sept. 13 during a meeting of the borough’s Shade Tree Commission that a homeless person may be living in Wilbraham Park.

During a Borough Commission meeting the next evening, resident Linda Barr said she believes one or two people are “camping out” in Wilbraham Park and using public water and electricity. She said a five-gallon water container is being used for “toileting.”

Barr asked what the borough was doing to limit

“vagrancy.”

Mayor Carol Sabo said as a social worker, much of her advocacy work has been on behalf of the homeless.

“We need housing in this county, not just in West Cape May,” she said. “We need the homeless problem to be addressed by county government and all be a partner in finding a solution for unsheltered people.”

“We need to be kind to people, we need to reach and extend a hand to humans that are suffering in this community,” Sabo continued. “It’s happening in West Cape May, it’s happening in the city of

Cape May. These are not transient people, these are people who live here that have become unsheltered.”

She said she is not sure any behavior has been observed that was a danger to residents. A process is available for dangerous individuals to get them to safety, Sabo said.

Barr said she believed “toileting” was being done in the park in public and there was misuse of an electrical outlet in Wilbraham Park.

Sabo said if there were a safety issue, the borough would refer it to the police.

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City hires engineer for drainage work

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Residents know to avoid the Washington Street exit from the city at the curve near the Riggins service station during or after a heavy rain due to flooding.

On Sept. 6, City Council approved a \$13,000 contract with DeBlasio and Associates for surveying, engineering and permit services to install a second storm sewer outfall pipe discharging into Schellenger Creek and a tidal control valve.

The enabling resolution states that due to improvements being proposed below the mean high-water line, it is likely a state Department

of Environmental Protection Waterfront Individual Permit will be required.

City Manager Mike Voll said the county was making a repair on a flapper valve into the creek, sometimes referred to as a “duck bill.”

“It’s been broken and that’s one of our issues,” he said.

Voll said the road is an evacuation route in the event of a major storm. He said the city has a verbal agreement from the county that it will undertake the construction work if Cape May completes the engineering study.

Mayor Zack Mullock said the county did not have the project on its radar until Voll and Deputy City Manager Lou Belasco approached of-

ficials about the problem.

Mullock said the improved drainage on the road may help the city’s Community Ratings System status, which could lower resident’s flood insurance premiums.

Belasco said a “duck bill,” which is officially known as a tide flex valve, can be disabled by a soda bottle becoming stuck inside its structure.

Mullock said drainage from the street goes down Texas Avenue to an outfall pipe into the harbor near the Dry Dock restaurant. The new outfall pipe would empty into the harbor much closer to Washington Street, he said.

“Two systems instead of one will hopefully work better,” the mayor said.

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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