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House of the week

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Second Congressional District to expand in size

Census data show population losses, forcing boundaries to change to keep numbers even

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP — U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew's congressional district, already the largest geographically in the state, is going to get larger thanks to the 2020 U.S. Census that saw population drops in the southernmost counties — Cape May, Cumberland and Salem.

Although it's still speculation at this point, the Republican may get a boost in conservative voters as his and Democratic Rep. Andy Kim's Third District get new boundaries. Kim could pick up more Demo-

cratic voters.

Geographically, the Second Congressional District stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Delaware Bay and Delaware state line, encompassing all of Cape May, Atlantic, Cumberland and Salem counties and parts of Gloucester, Camden, Burlington and Ocean. The southernmost counties lost an average of 5 percent of residents: Cape May dropped 5.4 percent from 97,257 to 92,039; Cumberland dropped 4.5 percent from 156,627 to 149,527; and Salem is down 5.6 percent from 66,072 to 62,385.

His district is down about 14,000

residents.

Overall, New Jersey is not losing a seat based on the Census, unlike neighboring Pennsylvania, but population shifts mean redistricting for its 12 congressional seats and reapportionment for the 40 state legislative districts. At one point New Jersey had 15 congressional districts, but lost one each after the census in 1980, 1990 and 2010.

John Froomjian, executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University, said as the south lost residents over the past decade, the northern part of the state grew.

"We've seen much higher growth in the cities, in Newark, Jersey City, the urban areas up north, and in northern Ocean County we've seen quite a bit of growth," he said.

Whether it's the congressional or state legislative districts, "the southernmost district will need to grow in geographic size to take in more people and in the northern areas they're going to probably shrink in size."

Pundits have started speculating what it's going to mean for various districts, including the Second and Third with Van Drew and Kim, respectively. The talk is whether

there would be an attempt to dilute the conservative nature of the Second District or to cede it and bolster the number of Democratic voters in the Third.

Van Drew won his 2020 re-election campaign by a roughly 22,000-vote margin over Democrat Amy Kennedy after switching his party affiliation to Republican at the end of 2019. He was elected in 2018 as a Democrat, an affiliation he held throughout his time in municipal, county and state offices.

Van Drew won the district in

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Evolution in aeronautical engineering

An F-22 Raptor and the P-51 Mustang fly over Naval Air Station Wildwood on Sept. 4 during its annual Airfest, which drew crowds to see World War II aircraft from its own collection and the Military Aviation Museum and Fighter Factory of Virginia Beach, Va.

City Council rejects 6 bids for firehouse

Seeking new ones opportunity to 'sharpen pencils,' mayor says

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council voted unanimously to reject all six bids for construction of a firehouse, ranging from \$5.9 million to \$6.7 million, during a special meeting Sept. 3.

The city plans to rebid the job in hopes of getting a better offer.

Architect Rob Conley opened the bids Aug. 31. Merrell and Garaguso Inc. of Swedesboro submitted a base bid of \$5 million with an alternate No. 1 bid of \$73,480 and alternate No. 2 bid of \$201,899. Alternates are features or options for the building the city would like to have but can live without.

J.R. Contracting and Environmental Consultants of Wayne submitted a base bid of \$6.7 million with alternate one priced at \$25,000 and alternate two priced at \$30,000.

Shore Building Contrac-

tors of Hammonton submitted a base bid of \$6.2 million with alternate one at \$21,750 and alternate two at \$184,000.

Duall Building Restoration of Mount Laurel submitted a base bid of \$4.9 million with alternate one at \$21,000 and alternate two representing a deduction of \$236,000, according to Conley.

Dandrea Construction Co. of Berlin submitted a base bid of \$6.3 million with alternate one at \$28,000 and alternate two at \$138,000.

Fabbri Builders of Vineland submitted a base bid of \$6.3 million with alternate one at \$29,960 and alternate two at \$110,000.

Conley reviewed bid packages and made a recommendation to the mayor and council.

Several bidders at City Hall during the bid opening asked for a list of sub-

City Council, Page A4

Students back in classroom under mix of restrictions

Masking required at high school, middle school

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — Lower Cape May Regional High School and the Richard M. Teitelman School are open five days a week with 100 percent student capacity each day for the new school year.

During a virtual town meeting Aug. 31, Superintendent Joseph Castellucci said quarantine requirements are much more relaxed this year than in the past.

"Any student that is fully vaccinated and is identified as a close contact — whether it be in school, in the home, on the athletic field, in a student activity — those students that are vaccinated and

identified as a close contact will not be required to quarantine at this time as long as we have proof of vaccination on that student," he said.

Students who have not been vaccinated and are identified as a close contact will be required to quarantine for the minimum 14 days, Castellucci said, adding that vaccinated students will be required to quarantine if they begin to show symptoms.

Castellucci said the definition of a close contact also has changed.

"Last year a close contact was any person that you were within 6 feet distance of whether you wore a mask or not for more than 15 minutes

in a 24-hour period," Castellucci said.

This year for students, based on Department of Health recommendations, a student who is more than 3 feet away from an infected person and is properly wearing a mask for the entirety of the time with that person will not be identified as a close contact, he said.

"We want to encourage all our students to wear their mask appropriately, diligently, at all times while in the building, and if at that point a student sitting two chairs away from you or 3.5 feet away from you does come down with the virus,

See Masking, Page A7

Elementary schools to emphasize hand-washing

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

COLD SPRING — Lower Township Elementary School students have returned to full-day instruction with precautionary measures in place as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread.

Superintendent Jeff Samaniego told the Star and Wave that masks are mandatory for all students, staff and family members who enter the school. They are also mandatory for students and staff riding the bus.

He said teachers would give students multiple breaks from wearing masks throughout the day by going

outside.

"We are happy to be back to full days after a year of early dismissal," he said.

In a letter to parents, he stated teachers will urge students to wash their hands throughout the day.

"We will ask each family to screen your child every morning and fill out our electronic questionnaire on our website or through our automated text," he stated.

Parents are educated and encouraged to keep children home should they exhibit any symptoms of COVID-19.

In a presentation to the Board of Education, Samaniego stated not all school-age children are eligible to receive a vaccine.

Schools are encouraged to have a system in place to determine the vaccination status of students and staff. However, if a school district is unable to determine the vaccination status of individual students or staff, those individuals should be considered not fully vaccinated, he stated.

"All employees of the Lower Township Elementary School Board of Education who have received a COVID-19 vaccine from a health care provider must provide written proof of vaccination from the vaccine administrator, health care provider or pharmacy, or a CDC-

Hand-washing, Page A2

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