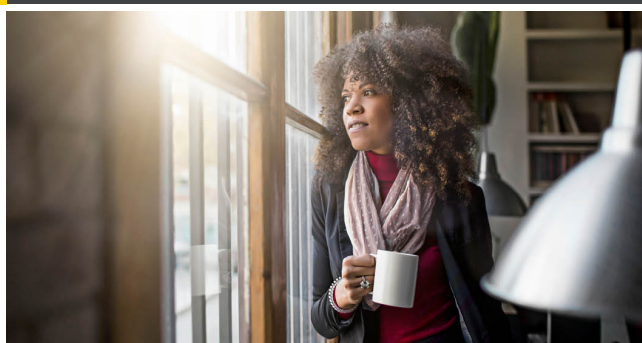


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City OKs two EV charging stations

By **JACK FICHTER**
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council approved the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at City Hall and the Welcome Center and saved money by not using a state contract.

Mayor Zack Mullock said the amount of cost for the installation of EV charging stations through a state contract was \$432,000.

"We thought that was a little high," he said. "Instead of going with a state contract, which is kind of the norm, we put it out to bid and the bid came in \$110,000."

Mullock said after using grant funds, the project totals \$45,000.

The state requires EV charging stations in new parking lots.

The city gained 23 parking spaces in the center of town when it opened addi-

tional parking at the Welcome Center on Lafayette Street.

The city received over \$280,000 in grants for charging stations, he said.

The city received a bid of \$322,600 for installation of the EV charging stations from Bryan Electric and \$418,352 from Systems Electric LLC.

As low bidder, Bryan Electric, of Hamilton, was awarded the contract by the city.

Lease

Continued from Page A1

the space with the community.

ELTC is planning to construct a "bump out" to the back of the building to be used as a lounge area with dressing rooms and bathrooms.

Former councilman Roger Furlin said the objections he heard to ELTC leasing the church were mainly about modifying the building. He said the city's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) standards indicate additions should be located on the rear of historic buildings and not appear to be a part of the original structure.

Furlin said he served on the HPC for seven years and additions were generally approved by the commission. The HPC will review any modifications to the church, he said.

HPC Commissioner Jim Testa called ELTC's move to the AME Church, "a theater company finally coming home." He said ELTC had hoped to occupy the former Beach Theater 15 years ago but that did not come to fruition.

Center for Community Arts Executive Director David Mackenzie said ELTC was important to the city and its vibrant arts community.

ELTC Board of Directors member Daniel Magariel said the AME Church has been decommissioned and the parent institution has endorsed ELTC's occupan-

cy of the building.

"We have photos that show clearly an extension once stood behind this church, which ought to assuage any protest against a responsible addition," he said.

Resident Jules Rauch said most of the non-profit organizations in Cape May that have a \$1 per year lease of a city-owned property assume a 100% obligation for the structure and "don't come to the taxpayer or the city looking for support." He said the lease states the city is obligated for major repairs or replacements of structural or mechanical systems.

Rauch said the lease obligates the city for half the cost of the pews, if they are required by the state Historic Preservation Office to be reinstalled in the building. He said the lease contains a list of items for which the tenant will have the right to do with the only supervision the city has in the manner ELTC accomplishes the activity.

In most landlord-tenant relationships if a tenant wants to make an improvement, it must submit that request to the landlord, who reviews the request, and either approves it or adds conditions to it, Rauch said. He said any changes to the building should be required to be approved by the HPC and City Council, so there is no obligation to the city to assume improvements.

City solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said ELTC was

not receiving a special deal with the city. He said the lease includes public use of the building that the city may not have with other \$1 annual leases with other non-profit organizations.

He said when ELTC is not using the church, the city will have the opportunity to coordinate public access to the building which can include city programs. He said the tenant is coming to the table with proposed improvements which are outlined in the lease.

Gillin-Schwartz said the public would benefit from those improvements to the church. ELTC understands it is stepping into a web of regulations dealing with an historic building, he said.

Former councilwoman Stacy Sheehan asked if an addition to the church would need approval of the city's planning and zoning boards. Mayor Zack Mullock said that was a requirement.

He said ELTC would pay for an addition to the church.

Cape May Court House resident Judy Curtis, who identified herself as a singer and music teacher, said she had been seeking children's theater in the area for many years. She said she has been looking for places to send her students for a community theater experience.

"I have been completely excited to the point that I have volunteered my time to help with presenting children's theater in the off season for our students not only in Cape May proper but throughout the county, I have many young students," Curtis said.

She said Tischler assured her children's theater would have a home with ELTC's move to the AME Church.

Testa said the city was in part subsidizing ELTC but there was equity and value in the relationship.

"Most of us here would agree that's a fair and just and equitable thing to do, so it's not just the specifics, it's the idea that you're going to be making a contribution for a very valuable asset to the city," he said.

Mullock called the approval of the lease by council an historic moment for the city and ELTC.

The city purchased the historic church in 2021 following a 2019 fire that damaged the steeple, bell tower and parts of the interior.



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