

Lafayette park on hold while DEP works out permit issues

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Lafayette Street Park is “mulling along,” engineer Vince Orlando told City Council on Feb. 21.

He said a couple of meetings have been held on a land swap with the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) that has implications with permitting.

The city wants to use land originally intended to be part of Lafayette Street Park for a new police station.

The city proposed a land swap with the DEP for use of the parcel, which was placed in the Green Acres program to be used as parkland.

Use of the lot for a police station would require approval of the DEP commissioner and State House Commission. In compensation for use of the quarter-acre lot, the city would dedicate 4.8 acres of land in the Sewell Tract as parkland.

“We’ve kind of drug our feet a little bit to make sure the land swap for the police station happens, because that does have an impact on the park

and the application to the state,” Orlando said.

Mayor Zack Mullock said approval was also needed from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Phase four of Lafayette Street Park was intended to offer pedestrian access around a pond behind Cape May City Elementary School.

Orlando said when his firm took over the project from the city’s previous engineering firm, the design consisted of going through a Transition Area Waiver portion between the freshwater wetlands and the wetland buffer and also a coastal wetland, requiring two separate permits.

He said he felt comfortable for the Transition Area Waiver for the freshwater wetlands but had some concern with a coastal wetlands permit.

“Our recommendation was to redesign in such a manner that it takes the same form but it doesn’t go all the way around (the pond),” Orlando said. “It goes out to two points, it would be two different staging areas for viewing.”

He said he was surprised

the wetlands line established by the previous firm never received a Letter of Interpretation (LOI) from the DEP. An LOI confirms the wetlands lines established by an engineer are correct, he said.

Mott MacDonald’s wetlands line was tied to the wetlands line determined by engineers from Atlantic City Electric, which also did not have an LOI from DEP, Orlando said.

A team from Orlando’s firm, Engineering Design Associates, ventured into the thick brush of the phase four area of Lafayette Street Park and mapped the wetlands line. City Council approved a survey firm to locate the freshwater wetland flags placed on the tract and provide topographic information in the Transition Area Waiver portion of the property.

Orlando said Mott MacDonald’s survey stopped short of the wetlands transition area.

In order to receive the waiver from DEP, topographic information must be provided, he said.

Mullock said he hoped the city would receive the permits this summer and

have phase four as a project to be undertaken next winter.

While the paths for phase four would be shorter, Orlando said it would have the same impact for the people that use it.

“It’s going to get them through the woods, it’s going to get them through the ecological wetland. There will be a boardwalk and then once we get to the area, we’ll have viewing stations, we’ll have some benches, some handicap access,” he said.

Deputy Mayor Lorraine Baldwin asked how much the trails would differ from the original design. Orlando said the trail would not go all the way around the pond.

He compared the trail design to a “smiley face.” “Because halfway through that pond it converts from fresh water to coastal,” he said.

In other business, Orlando said an application for the renovation of Kiwanis Park was sent to the county Open Space Board two weeks ago.

“We added the open space elements the county requires in order to try and effectuate some

funds to the county,” he said. “We’re waiting to hear from them to see the funding source and how much funding before we award to the low bid.”

He said the city is in a holding pattern with the Kiwanis Park project until it hears from the county.

Orlando said the city is seeking about \$900,000 for the project. A state Department of Community Affairs grant was received for \$500,000, he said.

According to Orlando,

the city received approval from DEP to install a water line to balance two wells with bids to be received in May. He recommended delaying the start of the project until September given the large amount of water use in summer.

That project also required a Transition Area Waiver from DEP because the water line will run through a wetlands buffer, Orlando said. DEP’s office of Fish and Wildlife had to sign off on the permit.

County averaging 13 reports of new COVID cases per day

Cape May County is averaging 13 reported cases of COVID per day, a 37 percent decrease from the average two weeks ago.

The county had 101 new cases last week, according to COVIDACTNOW.org.

The county Health Department stopped report-

ing COVID cases in June 2022. COVIDACTNOW reported 19 hospital admissions per 100,000 persons in the county.

The COVID risk level is medium. Since many test for COVID at home without reporting positive cases to health care providers, the level is likely much higher.

Statewide, 835 new confirmed cases via PCR testing were reported, as well as 284 new probable cases by antigen testing and 13 hospital deaths. As of Feb. 24, 67 of New Jersey’s 70 hospitals reported 779 patients with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID and 37 patients on ventilators.

DRBA

Continued from Page A1

ing with unique traffic.”

Waterhouse said the design of the vessels will take seven to eight months with construction beginning in the fourth quarter of 2024. He said it would take about two years to build the first vessel, with delivery expected in the fourth quarter of 2026, Waterhouse said.

Answering a question submitted by a member of the public asking if the DRBA considered ridership over the next 40 years, Gehrke said they had not but a modest level of growth is expected, 1.5 percent per year for the next 10 to 15 years.

“For the last 15 to 20 years, we saw sort of a continuing decline and

we reduced the fleet size and in the last couple of years, we have seen some growth,” Gehrke said.

Kissinger said the new ferries could provide additional capacity for vehicles and passengers.

If in the future the DRBA wants to operate the ferries as hybrids, it may be able to phase in batteries, Gehrke said, if that technology is selected.

With four boats operating in the peak summer season, the DRBA would have the ability to get 350 additional cars across the bay per day by operating

more trips, Gehrke said.

In summer, boats could be added as needed to meet the demand.

“So, if you know you’re going to have a busy weekend, you could put two or even three boats on the run to handle that and drop it back to a single boat during the middle of the week,” Waterhouse said.

A smaller ferry can load and unload cars more quickly, allowing more trips, he said. Waterhouse said the smaller vessels will have fuel savings in the winter and shoulder seasons.

SEA & DO
Culinary, medicinal herb use workshop

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cape May County Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources has scheduled a workshop on culinary and medicinal uses of garden herbs for 6:30 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, March 22, at Rutgers Cooperative Extension, 355 Courthouse—South Dennis Road in Cape May Court House.

Main presenter Norma Lindbloom-Cruz, a certified herbalist, will discuss how to identify garden herbs by both their common and Latin names, their traditional culinary and medicinal uses. Co-presenter Jen Sawyer Caraballo, ANR County Program Associate for Commercial Agriculture, RCE Cape May County, will discuss how to best grow herbs at home.

This is a beginner class and no experience is needed. The cost is \$5 and snacks and drinks will be provided. Seating is limited. Register at go.rutgers.edu. Call (609) 465-5115, ext. 3607, or email capemayag@njaes.rutgers.edu for more information.

WCFA 101.5FM
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TIDES: March 1-8, 2023

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
1	3:27	4:02	9:55	2:44
2	4:26	4:58	10:51	10:32
3	5:17	5:46	11:38	11:21
4	6:02	6:27		12:18
5	6:41	7:06	12:05	12:54
6	7:18	7:42	12:45	1:27
7	7:53	8:16	1:23	1:58
8	8:26	8:49	2:00	2:28

MOON PHASES

Full moon, March 1 • last quarter, March 15

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EVENTS THIS MONTH AT CAPE MAY COUNTY LIBRARY
March 2023

☆ Please visit www.cmclibrary.org to learn more ☆ about our fun, informative, and FREE events!
► Please note that some events require registration and a valid library card.

Featured Event:
ELVISTory: King of the Silver Screen
Mon. Mar. 13th, 6:30pm-7:30pm
Wildwood Crest Library

Arts & Crafts:
Please see our online calendar for this month's arts & crafts classes.

Cooking Classes:
Please see our online calendar for this month's cooking demonstrations.

Ongoing Groups/Clubs:
1st Thursday Book Club
Mystery at the Library Book Club
Great Books Club
Sustainable Book Club
Jersey Cape Writers
American Mah Jongg
Conversational Lenape Language
Memory Café
Al-Anon Meetings

See our online calendar for more info.

Featured Educational/Entertainment:
South Jersey Winter Raptors
Wed. March 8th, 6pm-7:30pm
Lower Township Library
How Flowers Got Their Names
Thurs. March 16th, 6pm-7pm
Court House Library
The Photography of Weegee
Tues. March 21st, 1pm-2pm
Court House Library

Mind Reading
Thurs. March 23rd, 6pm-7pm
Court House Library &
Fri. March 24th, 1pm-2pm
Sea Isle City Library
SAT/ACT Success Workshop for Parents
Thurs. March 30th, 7pm-8pm
Online - Zoom

Fitness/Wellness Classes:
MONDAYS
• 12pm- Line Dancing
• 5pm- Meditative Drum Circle
• 5:30pm- Chair Yoga
TUESDAYS
• 5pm- Zumba with Kellie
WEDNESDAYS
• 9:15am- Barre Star
• 10am & 11:30am- Tai Chi & Qigong
• 1:30pm & 5pm- Meditation Meet-Up
• 5pm- Virtual Zumba with Kellie
• 6pm- Zumba
THURSDAYS
• 10am- Tai Chi & Qigong
• 5:30pm- Gentle Yoga
• 5:30pm- Stretch & Burn
• 6pm- Zumba
FRIDAYS
• 9:15am- Anything Goes Fitness

See our online calendar for locations.

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