



Werner Tedesco/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Flying like the wind

A couple of kite surfers take advantage of strong winds March 8 off Higbee Beach in Lower Township.

Zoning code unclear on raising house

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — If you raise the height of your house to avoid future flood damage, what approvals are needed from the city's Zoning Board if the house would conform to all of the city's bulk and setback requirements?

At a March 7 City Council meeting, city solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz offered two potential amendments to the city's zoning code.

A potential amendment covers raising the height of houses. Gillin-Schwartz said the question becomes when a house is picked up and moved around on a lot, should the owner be required to apply to the Zoning Board for an approval. He said the answer was "yes" when expanding or creating the need for new variance relief.

He asked if a homeowner should they be required to submit a development application to alter the site and structure even if the design fully conforms with all the bulk setbacks, floor

area ratio, side and rear yard setbacks and building coverage.

"I think the commonsense answer to that should be 'yes,' if we're having someone trying to bring a lot or development into compliance," he said. "I think we want to encourage that at the zoning officer stage."

The city's zoning code is not clear on the issue because of the nature of a nonconforming use and a laundry list of ways to address it in the code, Gillin-Schwartz said.

He said there was no reason to appear before the Zoning Board if a raised house fully conforms to code.

Councilwoman Maureen McDade asked if a site survey were required after a house was raised. Gillin-Schwartz said the homeowner must provide existing conditions and then an "as-built" survey to close out permits.

Another suggested amendment to the zoning code: the city requires 5 feet of distance from an accessory structure on a

property to a right of way. A distance of 10 feet is required for a street or alley, he said.

There are areas where public property, not a street, would still justify having an increased setback because public property can be converted to various uses while a single-family home would not present that concern, Gillin-Schwartz said.

"To preserve light, air and open space, preserve setbacks, preserve the ability for appropriate development to happen in those areas and to leave the city with options, I think it makes a lot of sense to include a 10-foot setback for not just streets and alleys but any public property because of the nature of that use," he said.

Women

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dreds of local women that offers powerful speakers. "It promotes a camaraderie among multiple industries."

Addressing the gathering, she said she has been active in the business community as an owner and employee and has known the struggle of balancing life and work.

"I could not have done it without a network of support, and that's what we have here today. We are here representing many industries and walks of life. We each represent strengths and struggles that we have overcome," Stafford Jones said. "We are stronger as a group than we could ever be as individuals. We are here today to make connections and strengthen bonds."

Amy Mahon of Reich Asset Management, chairwoman of the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce board, welcomed the sold-out crowd, introduced the keynote speaker and later moderated the panel discussion "Pathway to

Leadership."

The keynote address was delivered by Capt. Kate Higgins-Bloom, deputy commander of U.S. Coast Guard Sector Delaware Bay. (See related story, page A1.)

A highlight of the day, the Chairwomen's Panel Discussion: "Pathway to Leadership," included four past heads of the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce — Maura McMahon Primus (2017-19), Ronnie Town (2007-09), Joyce Gould (2001-03) and Barbara Tomalino (1994-97). The event also included a break sponsored by Nauti Spirits Distillery and a lunch toast sponsored by Hawk Haven Vineyard & Winery.

Other scheduled speakers were Katie Zamulinsky of Drexel University, Michelle Dawn Mooney of "The Michelle Dawn Mooney Show" and Priscilla Frederick Loomis of the Priscilla Frederick Loomis Foundation.

Closing remarks were by E. Marie Hayes, vice director of the Cape May County Board of Commissioners.

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