

# Cape May decides to keep three-day beach tags

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city will continue to offer three-day beach tags despite effort to eliminate them.

City Council introduced an ordinance in February that would have done away with three-day tags and create weekly tags that run from Friday to Friday rather than Saturday to Saturday, but during a public hearing March 15 the ordinance was voted down.

During public comment, John Cooke, general manager of the Sea Crest Inn, said he was concerned about the bad optics of taking away an amenity for visitors especially on what is potentially another rebound year for Cape May.

"I'm concerned there's a lot of people dependent on the three-day beach tag when they come to Cape May. It saves them a few dollars on buying the whole week and it saves them a few dollars on buying indi-

vidual tags," he said.

Cooke said the optics would last all summer when beach patrons arrived at the beach and found out for the first time the city took away their three-day tags.

"They're going to say you took it away in addition to asking them for an additional 1 percent occupancy tax after they just paid a record number of dollars to fill their gas tank," he said.

Councilwoman Lorraine Baldwin said she received a number of emails in opposition to eliminating three-day tags as well as changing the start and finish days of weekly tags.

"I'm looking at this year coming up," Councilman Mike Yeager said. "There's people that are going to come to Cape May that the gas prices and house prices and beach tags don't mean a thing to them — they can afford it and they'll be quite happy — but we have to be sensitive to the people

that this is going to be the only vacation they can have because they can afford to come from Philadelphia, they hope."

Beach Tag Supervisor Ed Rotz said the city lost about \$148,000 last year selling three-day tags.

Mayor Zack Mullock asked council if they felt the weekly tag should be changed to Friday to Friday. Yeager suggested changing weekly tags to run from Friday to Saturday.

Councilman Shaine Meier said he believes the public wants a three-day tag.

"You are getting a three-day tag, you're getting it in the weekly tag and you're saving the visitor \$4 and by doing that you're recouping some of the \$148,000 we lost last year," Rotz said.

Rotz said no other beach town in New Jersey offers a three-day beach tag. He said daily tags are priced at \$8, three-day tags at \$15 and weekly tags at \$20.

Three-day tags are difficult to enforce and labor

intensive with changing the colors of tags and the need to punch them at the beach, Rotz said.

Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan noted if a beach patron buys a daily tag each day for three days, they spend \$24 while the city sells the weekly tag for \$20.

During public comment, Dennis Crowley, chairman of the city's Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee, said concerns were being raised by the accommodations industry but that was the same group that could purchase a commercial beach tag for use by their guests.

City Clerk Erin Burke said last year the city sold 29,363 three-day tags, or 17 percent of tags sold.

Sheehan suggested changing weekly tags to run from Friday to Saturday of the following week.

Mullock said he did not think many persons would take advantage of the eighth day on such a weekly beach tag.

A motion by Sheehan to change weekly tags to Friday through Saturday and discontinue the three-day tag failed.

Mullock said the three-day tag may save money for families coming to the beach and may be an incentive to bring visitors to Cape May. He said many rentals

in the city run Saturday to Saturday which mirrors the current weekly beach tag.

Mullock, Meier, Baldwin and Yeager voted against the motion. Sheehan cast the lone "yes" vote. Mullock said a councilmember could present a new ordinance at a future meeting if he or she wished.

## Ring-tailed lemur born at Cape May County Zoo



CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — The Cape May County Zoo has announced the birth of a ring-tailed lemur. The infant, whose gender has not been determined, was born March 13 to first-time mother Felana and father Darwin.

"This is great news for the zoo; it is the first ring-tailed Lemur infant born at the Zoo in 10 years. Felana is taking very good care of her new baby and if you are lucky, you will be able to spot the infant hanging onto mom's chest or riding on her back," Associate Veterinarian Dr. Alex Ernst said.

Baby lemurs weigh about 3.52 ounces and are about 4 inches at birth. Lemurs usually have single births but twins are not uncommon.

Ring-tailed lemurs are an endangered species of primate that is found only on the island of Madagascar. Because their natural range is so limited and that natural range is being threatened, they are in critical need of conservation.

"The Cape May County Zoo cooperates with the Ring-tailed Lemur Species Survival Plan to propagate genetically strong and di-

verse individuals in zoos to safeguard against their extinction," Ernst said. "Felana and Darwin's baby is one small but potentially significant contribution to the survival of this species in the wild."

There are an estimated 2,000 to 2,400 ring-tailed lemurs left in the wild. They are omnivores and their diet consists mostly of leaves, flowers and insects. They also eat fruits, herbs and small vertebrates.

The Cape May County Zoo is open daily and is free to the public. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

## State

Continued from Page A1

fully we'll get a response soon and be able to move forward with that project," he said.

The agencies wanted changes to the plan including moving handicapped parking spaces and not having curbed entrances to the Welcome Center along Broad Street, Orlando said.

"The main thrust of the conversation was if you keep the tracks in place, you won't have to come to us for a permit for a crossing," he said. "That led us to the design we're moving ahead with."

Cape May Seashore Lines would continue to have 200 feet of track at the Welcome Center. A lawsuit against the railroad went to mediation.

The project has been delayed six years due to issues with Tony Macrie, president of Cape May Seashore Lines, who claimed the city's plans for the re-configuration of parking at the Welcome Center posed a safety hazard.

City solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said the railroad has a defined area that would not be encroached by the city installing parking spaces.

Councilman Shaine Meier asked the status of a broken swing bridge over the Cape May Canal that prevents trains from entering Cape May. Orlando said the state agencies would not comment on the condition of the railroad bridge.

"We believe that the trains will never really be coming back because of that turnstile crossing that's there, that's probably welded in place and can't be replaced," he said.

Meier questioned if the railroad tracks were safe for rail bikes since much of the track has no foundation. Orlando said that decision is up to NJ Transit.

"Those tracks are not safe," Meier said.

Gillin-Schwartz said he did not know if the state had inspected the tracks.

"It's certainly something that the operating company should have a concern with,

the state should have a concern with. They own the underlying tracks," he said.

While the city probably has no liability in relation to the tracks, it is in the interest of the city that any operation occurring in the city be safe, Gillin-Schwartz said.

Councilwoman Lorraine Baldwin concurred with Meier of seeing areas of tracks in poor condition.

In many areas of the track, wooden railroad ties have rotted away.

City Manager Mike Voll said it seemed the state did not want to hear the tracks into Cape May were cut off from the main line due to the non-functioning railroad bridge. He said he would like to see council contact the DOT to request removal of the tracks.

"Unless you have an American Flyer that's go-

ing to fly over the water, it's never coming back," Voll said.

In 2019, the U.S. Coast Guard received a report that portions of the Cape May Canal railroad bridge fender had collapsed.

Meier suggested the tracks be removed and replaced with a walking trail. He suggested Cape May work with West Cape May and Lower Township and say, "these train tracks are done."

Mayor Zack Mullock said the DOT estimated the cost of replacing the railroad crossing at Broad Street at \$500,000 for a railroad station that no longer exists.

The state granted two leases, one to Cape May for the Welcome Center property and a lease for the tracks to Cape May Seashore lines, Gillin-Schwartz said.

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	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
30	7:32	7:59	1:02	1:34
31	8:17	8:41	1:52	2:16
1	8:59	9:20	2:38	2:55
2	9:39	9:57	3:22	3:32
3	10:18	10:34	4:05	4:08
4	10:56	11:10	4:47	4:43
5	11:36	11:49	5:30	5:19
6		12:20	6:15	5:57

**MOON PHASES**  
New moon, April 1 • first quarter, April 9

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