

West Cape to rebuild West Drive, eliminate puddles

By **RACHEL SHUBIN**
Special to the Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Borough Commission awarded a bid Sept. 11 for the reconstruction of West Drive.

"We will notify the contractor tomorrow and set up a pre-construction meeting for Sept. 24," engineer Ray Roberts said. "We are looking to have the project completed by Nov. 22."

The main improvements will include reconstruction of the road for a smooth surface and elimination of puddles, which form during and after rainstorms.

"There will be no curb, sidewalk or speedbumps,"

Roberts said. "All driveways will be matched to new pavement so everyone will have access to their driveways other than the work day when they are paving."

Clerk Suzanne Schumann asked if residents would be notified.

"Residents of West Drive will be notified of any time the street may be temporarily inaccessible," Roberts said. "We are going to control the flow of traffic through the intersections."

"A problem we had on Leaming Avenue was people who were not full-time residents, they aren't necessarily going to know," Deputy Mayor Peter Burke said.

Schumann said letters went to addresses of residents on file.

"Everybody on that street and 200 feet did receive notice," Roberts said. "We have that information, both the contractor and ourselves, and will continue to use it for the project."

Roberts also reported they are still waiting for information from the contractors to close the borough parking lot project, the Broad Street project and the Leaming Avenue project.

"We are still working on the safe routes to school project," Roberts said.

Mayor Carol Sabo said she is continuing conver-

sations with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection on protection of borough-owned property.

Commissioners amended a tent ordinance that provides for the licensing of temporary tents for commercial properties.

"A question came up if you're allowed to have a tent for one event for three days," solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said. "Or did you want something more like Cape May which indicates you get an event license that will be up to 72 hours or longer if you think they need time for set up and break down."

The tent ordinance has

exemptions for nonprofits and charitable organizations.

"The idea is there would be a process for an applicant to make an application," Gillin-Schwartz said.

He provided a definition of tents for the ordinance, including 100 square feet, with or without sides.

"If commercial premises are being sponsored or events are on behalf of a nonprofit, I just wanted to propose more flexibility to the tent ordinance to avoid unnecessary confusion," Gillin-Schwartz said.

The ordinance allows three licenses for three separate events up to 72

hours per event.

On Saturday, Sept. 21, the West Cape May Environmental Commission is having an electronic-waste-recycling event from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event is open to everyone.

"People even came to it last year from out of the county," Commissioner John Francis III said.

A meeting for the reconstruction of Sunset Boulevard is scheduled for 4 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 3. The meeting is open to all stakeholders, residents and all members of the community to attend and ask any questions to the design and engineering team.

West Cape May considers plastic bag ban

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dents if a store is out of compliance. The city can then write a citation."

Kwart said the week the plastic ban bag went into effect in her hometown of Ventnor, people were carrying out their items in their hands.

"People don't want to pay the fee," Kwart said. "I know it's small and doesn't seem like it will make a difference, but when it becomes more than just grocery stores, people bring bags to the stores."

Kwart showed the commissioners a bag the CVS in Ventnor provides. The bag is thicker than a plastic bag and more durable.

"For a business like CVS charging 5 cents a bag, how does that fee address the problem in a store like that when more people have their heads wrapped around grocery stores over a small business?" Sabo asked.

"It becomes a blanket issue when it's more stores than just grocery stores," Kwart said.

Clerk Suzanne Schumann asked who collects the fee.

"Merchants," Kwart said. "It offsets the fee of purchasing the bags, or switching to paper. In New Jersey, the only legal way to enact the fee on bags is the fee remaining with the store, not even the city."

Sabo asked Kwart if there is the ability to ban bags entirely.

"Some towns ban plastic bags and charge for paper bags," Kwart said. "We believe that is the best option."

She said Ventnor's ban has a weakness, not requiring merchants to charge fees on reusable bags.

"We've learned something new every time we've passed this legislation," Kwart said. "That is one of the ways we can make it stronger and bet-

ter in other municipalities, by passing a fee on reusable bags."

There are businesses in West Cape May that already have stopped using plastic bags.

"Westside Market is a great example," Commissioner John Francis III said. "They did this on their own. I'd like to see maybe a period, where we wait to see if education works, and if not we go with an ordinance."

The difference between education and legislation is a time sensitive issue.

"Ideally, what we would like to see is a ban on all single-use plastics like Styrofoam containers, plastic cutlery, all things that end up on our beaches," West Cape May resident and Surfrider Foundation member Allison Morgan said. "We don't have a lot of time. The production of plastics is supposed to increase fourfold by 2050, that's 30 years from now, that's my lifetime."

Morgan said she was drawn to live in West Cape May because of its natural beauty.

"We have to do something now or in the next five to 10 years ... why not be the forefront?" Morgan said. "I've been here for six years and the draw to me moving to West Cape May is the beautiful nature, farmland, wineries. It's part of the brand of the West Cape May brand."

The European Parliament voted to ban single-use plastics by 2021, Morgan said. A March 28 article by Time.com said items in the ban include straws, food containers and cotton bud sticks. The ban was passed to tackle marine litter and encourage sustainable alternatives.

"If the European Union can do it, West Cape May can do it," Morgan said.

Solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said commissioners could start small as a test gauge to see how

legislation works.

"The beauty of an ordinance is you can enact, repeal or amend it," Gillin-Schwartz said. "You can make changes as you see fit."

Deputy Mayor Peter Burke said there are businesses in West Cape May already using paper straws.

"There are aspects of business that are already moving in that direction," Burke said. "We can talk to the West Cape May Business Association."

Kwart recommended the commissioners look at the ordinance in Bradley Beach.

"Bradley Beach has the strongest ban," Kwart said. "The definitions in their ordinances are very good. We've already provided a lot of advice to Cape May as well. We recommended they look at Avalon and Stone Harbor's ordinances, which includes plastic bags and all plastic packaging products, but there is a weakness."

The weakness, according to Kwart, is the exemption for bio-plastics.

"The plastic is not made from oil, but corn or another bio-based product," Kwart said. "They act like plastic when they are recycled and need to go to a composting facility."

Sabo said the ban on plastics is not a fiscal priority but a health priority.

"We are seeing what other businesses are already doing and it's a very good idea to get a read on the business community and see what their thoughts are," Kwart said. "Certain businesses would love to charge for paper bags because it is more expensive than plastic."

Kwart gave an example of a business not wanting to be the only one charging for paper bags, and customers could go down the street to a different store and get a paper bag for free.

"If all stores have to put fees on bags, it helps all the businesses get on board at once and not feel like they're in competition with one another," Kwart said. "It's something to consider."

West Cape May resident and Cape May business owner Hilary Pritchard spoke from a business owner's perspective.

"At Whale's Tale, we have always used paper bags," Pritchard said. "I ask you to look at it from a merchant's point of view. Our staff has to explain why consumers are paying a fee for a paper bag. Think about what it's like for the people who have to deliver this news, for people who don't know or have this ban."

Plá said Pritchard's question was one that Stone Harbor asked before enacting an ordinance. The question being, how does the municipality or town educate the public once the ban is enacted, especially to visitors, who may not have this ban where they are visiting from?

Realtors are a large point of entry for many of Cape May's visitors, which was suggested as another option to spread the message if there is a plastics ban.

"There is education and an opportunity there," Francis said. "To hand a something, like a little card which explains why there is a fee and why it is important."

The Surfrider Founda-

tion has an ocean-friendly restaurants program that offers restaurants an easy way to show their commitment to making sustainable choices for the ocean, according to the Surfrider Foundation website.

There are five criteria for restaurants to follow: no expanded polystyrene use (Styrofoam), proper recycling practices followed, only reusable food ware is used for onsite dining, no plastic bags are offered with take out or to-go orders and utensils are provided only upon request, and paper

straws are provided only on request.

There are several other optional criterion offered, with a minimum of two required.

"Good Earth Organic Eatery and Exit Zero are two restaurants in West Cape May which are ocean-friendly," Morgan said. "We are the southernmost point of New Jersey, which is the last defense for plastic in the ocean. People who are landlocked look to us."

Sabo said the next step would be to approach the businesses association.



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