

OUR VIEW

Towns must resume offering audio/video of meetings

With movie theaters closed, restaurant dining permitted only outdoors and most churches holding services via iPhone video, local towns should not end their video and phone feeds of their council and commission meetings.

Towns are now talking of resuming council and commission meetings in person, but that may be a dangerous choice. COVID-19 has not suddenly disappeared because we wished it away to start our summer tourist season. The number of new cases and deaths are down in Cape May County but have spiked in states where people are being careless.

A house party in this county recently resulted in a dozen cases of COVID-19 carried back to Bucks County, Pa. Visit any tourist area of our county and count how many persons are wearing masks. We recently witnessed a man at an ice cream stand pull his T-shirt over his nose and mouth as a makeshift mask, not a recommended form of personal protective equipment.

An engineer at a municipal meeting last week spoke of attending a professional conference earlier in the day where none of the participants was wearing a mask.

Cape May has live-streamed its meetings for several years but other Cape Island towns and Lower Township had not attempted such a service until the COVID-19 pandemic.

West Cape May has done a good job of presenting its meetings using the Zoom platform. Cape May Point and Lower Township have done a poor job using phone conferences to conduct their municipal meetings. They have been of poor audio quality plagued with background noise of participants rattling their dinner dishes and talking to other persons in their home.

Towns need to continue to provide video or phone coverage of their municipal meet-

ings. Cape May Point's small meeting room above the fire hall provides a poor opportunity for social distancing. The Point's tiny conference room in Borough Hall used for commission work sessions should not be used at all since it consistently has had poor ventilation.

Lower Township has done a poor job of making its meetings available to the public on video. The township records its meetings with a professional camera but the videos appear haphazardly on YouTube weeks later if they appear at all. Lower Township needs to live-stream its meetings in the same manner as Cape May.

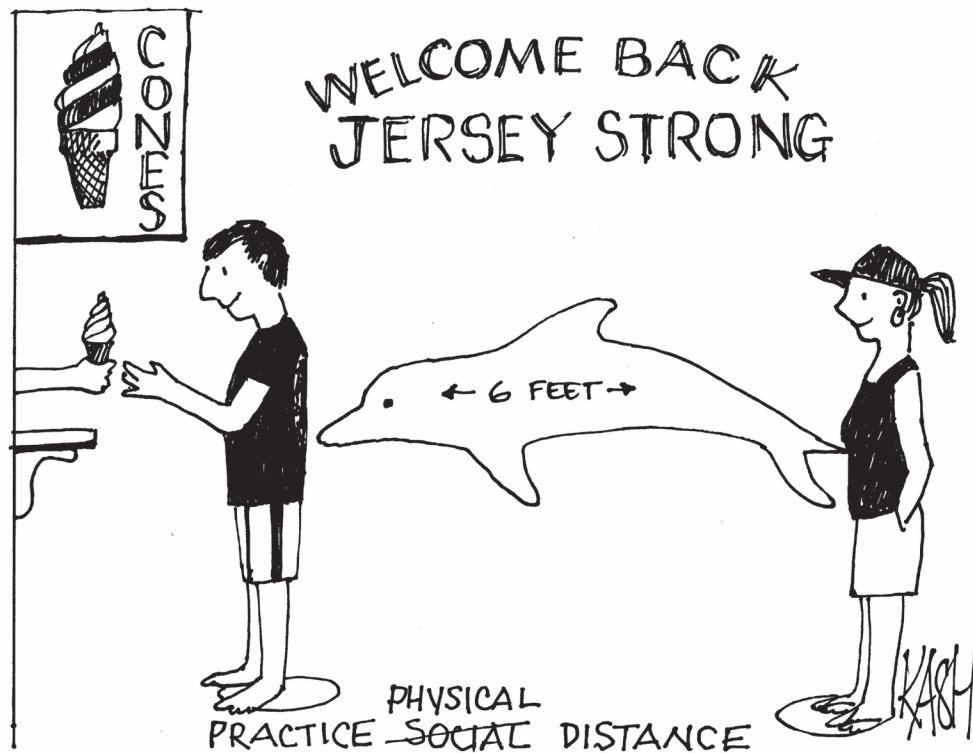
West Cape May holds work sessions in a tiny caucus room. Those meetings need to be moved to the main meeting room and live-streamed. The borough needs to invest in the equipment needed to live-stream its two monthly commission meetings.

The public should not be expected to risk their health to see a municipal meeting. It puts reporters at even greater risk who spend their weekday evenings going from one municipal meeting to another.

In addition, live-streaming all year would provide transparency for the many part-time residents who leave after the season. Yearly budgets are struck between January and April when a number of residents are residing elsewhere.

There are inexpensive ways to present meetings on video; Facebook offers a live platform. Meetings can be recorded and quickly posted as YouTube videos.

COVID-19 will be with us for some time. Dr. Ashish Jha, director of the Harvard Global Health Institute, predicts an additional 100,000 people will die from coronavirus by September. Let's not rush to bring the public back into meetings without an alternative means to watch the proceedings at home.



YOUR VIEWS

Parking tickets took employees in Cape May by surprise

To the Editor:
Parking tickets in Cape May: an unpleasant reality for vacationers, but far worse when they end up on the windshields of local employees finally back to work after struggling through the COVID-19 crisis. Recently, with absolutely no

warning to businesses or their employees, parking meters suddenly became active. Many income-starved locals returning to partially reopened businesses found on their windshield at the close of the first day a ticket demanding a hefty fine.

How about a little compassion, Cape May? A parking ticket is not what your local business employees needed after three months of joblessness. Every one of them should be reimbursed.

Barbara Evans
Glassboro

OVER THE BACK FENCE

By Jack Fichter

Watching birds, living in past bring comfort amid COVID

My advice to myself and others in this awful time in history is don't freak out. I tell myself that after I read the morning newspaper and watch the evening news. COVID-19 is in my thoughts all day since most of what I am writing about is related to the pandemic.

At some point, I have to think about something else. My relief is two-fold: look at nature and retreat into the past.

Right now, everything seems to be in bloom. Spring is my favorite time of year. Summer is good but I don't like hot weather.

I try to spend a portion of my day sitting outside watching bird feeders in the yard. We have a hanging tube, a "sock" filled with tiny seeds for birds such as goldfinches and suet for woodpeckers, an army of blackbirds and four very annoy-

ing squirrels. One of the squirrels figured out how to open the door on top of the tube feeder and put his furry face inside to gorge on seeds. We spray the pole that holds the feeder with PAM to keep him off, but it only lasts until the next rainfall, which seems to be every other day.

In the bird and animal world, it is business as usual; they are not impacted by pandemics or economics. It's nice to see the planet is functioning well other than with human beings that have a track record of ruining everything they touch. If you could shake all of us off the planet, like someone shaking the crumbs off a tablecloth at a picnic, the world would be just fine. The seasons would change, the tides would come in and animals would raise their young

without us here to see it.

My other relief from our current time is to put my mind in the past. I joined a Facebook group two weeks ago of persons who grew up in a Pennsauken, N.J. subdivision called Meadowbrook. If you are familiar with Pennsauken, Meadowbrook runs roughly from Park Avenue to Grant Avenue in between Union and Cooper avenues. The center of life in Meadowbrook was Ben Franklin Elementary School.

Other folks in their 60s reminiscence on the Facebook page about the idyllic childhood we had growing up in Meadowbrook. The subdivision was built in the mid-1950s when the Korean War had ended and everyone wanted to buy

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THE OTHER SIDE

Socializing amid COVID, Cape May Harbor style

By MARK ALLEN

It's a question we've all been asking: "How are we supposed to socialize during a pandemic?" Here on Cape May's Other Side, those of us live or work in proximity to the harbor have our own perspective and solution.

For example, last Friday, four of us decided that we wanted to get together for cocktails and conversation, but we wanted to maintain the required social distancing, so we agreed to meet at 5 p.m. on the edge of the harbor, in front of the Nature Center of Cape May.

It was a beautiful spring evening, warm without being hot, cool without being cold. Since it was late in the afternoon, the ocean breeze had already kicked in, and it was coming off the harbor at about 10 mph; just enough to keep the gnats at bay, but not too much.

I called the Chalfonte and Dillon picked up. He assured me that the King Eddie bar was manned; Paul was on that night. I ordered a cosmopolitan made with Tito's for my wife and an old fashioned created with Makers Mark for myself. Dillon took the order and told me that he would be right out with the take-out cocktails.

We had set up on the rim of the harbor on a small bluff directly in front of the Nature Center next to where Jeff, from

Aqua Trails, stores his kayaks. This is just down from the Fisher's Memorial at the end of Missouri Avenue.

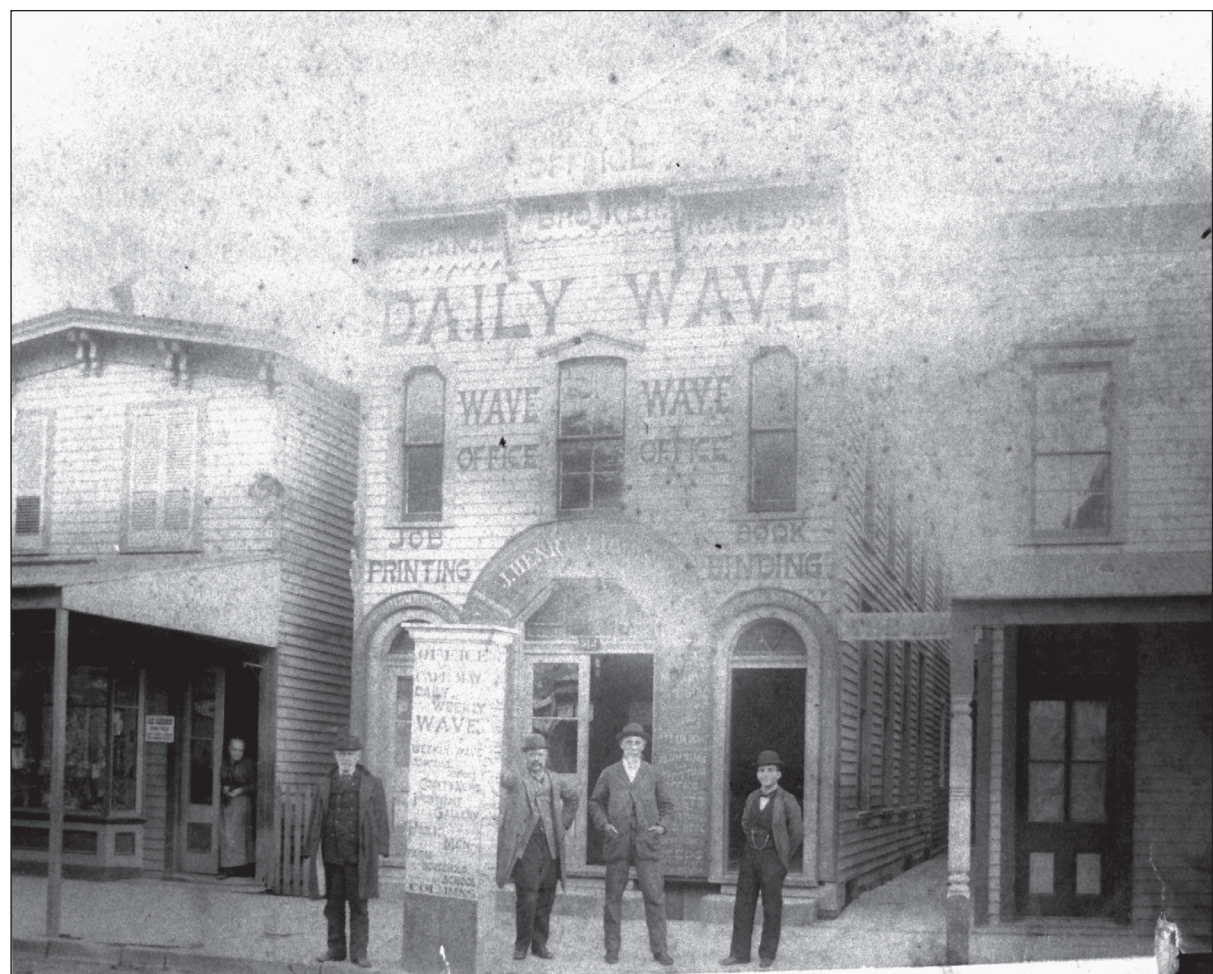
This location has several advantages over most other waterfront venues in Cape May. First of all, we were able to park right next to where we set up our chairs, so the distance we had to walk carrying those chairs was minimal. In addition, parking on Delaware Avenue, or anywhere in the harbor area, is free and beach tags are not required, nor are lifeguards present or even needed.

Right about then, Dillon showed up, wearing his mask and carrying our iced cocktails in small mason jars. He looked at us and said, "This is perfect. You guys really know how to do it. Do you come out here often?"

"Almost every evening," I told him, "but tonight is special because you're delivering our custom-made libations." Dillon laughed and then got back in his car and drove away.

The really nice thing about socializing harbor side is that there is always activity on the harbor to keep your attention. With the boat traffic, the wildlife and the paddleboarders, something or someone is always coming and going. The harbor isn't a bad place to swim, either. Although the

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Views from the Past

The Ocean Wave's office in Cape May in the late 1800s and early 1900s, when the Wave became a daily newspaper during the summer season. From the collection of the Museum of Cape May County, cmcmuseum.org.

Cape May Star & Wave

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Sen. Michael Testa (R), Assemblyman Erik Simonsen, (R), Assemblyman Antoine McClellan (R) — Contact state legislators at: School House Office Park, 211 S. Main St., Suite 104, Cape May

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Local Government

Cape May: Mayor Chuck Lear and City Hall, (609) 884-9535, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Cape May Point: Mayor Robert Moffatt, Borough Hall, (609) 884-8468, ext. 20, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Lower Township: Mayor Frank Sippel and Township Hall, (609) 886-2005, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

West Cape May: Mayor Carol Sabo and Borough Hall, (609) 884-1005, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.