



House of the week
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Morning fire destroys home in Lower Twp.
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Board rejects redevelopment designation

Planners find little to no evidence buildings dilapidated as reported

INSIDE

Mayor Chuck Lear writes open letter to city on redevelopment issue.
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By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Before a standing-room-only crowd Jan. 9 at in City Hall, the Planning Board voted 7-2 against declaring the Washington Commons, City Hall, the firehouse, Macedonia Baptist Church, the Franklin Street School, the Blue Rose Inn and other buildings between Franklin and Ocean streets an area in need of redevelopment.

Board member Bob Elwell said if the buildings in the block were substandard, dilapidated and obsolete, as stated in a "Determination of Need Report" written by Planning Board engineer Craig Hurless, "code enforcement would be shutting them down."
Board member Mike Jones, the city's former tax assessor, voted "yes" to declare a redevelopment area. He said each building in the block has insufficient parking.

Mayor Chuck Lear, a Planning Board member, voted in favor of a creating a redevelopment area. He said the city's 2009 master plan update stated the block "needed work."
Hurless' report states a designation of an area in need of redevelopment permits a municipality to undertake a number of activities to help revitalize and redevelop the study area, activities that would not otherwise be possible. These include the preparation of a redevelopment

plan that enables the issuance of bonds for redevelopment projects, including leasing or selling property without public bidding, contracts with private entities and the use of various tax-abatement programs.
At the opening of the meeting, Hurless said the city would not use eminent domain in such an area. He said the Planning Board would make a recommendation to City Council
See **Redevelopment, Page A3**



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Murphy vows to do better for veterans

Gov. Phil Murphy, left, and First Lady Tammy Murphy hold their hand over their heart during a ceremony honoring veterans Sunday, Jan. 14, at the Wildwoods Convention Center. A study found New Jersey ranks 50th in the country in caring for veterans, something the new governor promises to fix as he takes office. See story on A4.

Lower takes big step on sidewalk for Beach Drive

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council approved a \$1.9 million contract Jan. 3 for the construction of a sidewalk and other pedestrian-safety improvements along Beach Drive in North Cape May. Plans call for the project to be done in time for summer.

A total of seven bids were submitted, with Asphalt Paving Systems submitting the winning bid. Engineer Mark Sray, of Mott MacDonald, the township's purchasing agent, and Gary Douglass, director of Public Works, reviewed the bids, according to the enabling resolution. The highest bid was \$4.2 million.
Asphalt Paving Systems' contract includes \$50,000 for mobilization and demobilization, \$20,000 for a traffic-control plan and devices and \$10,000 for the allowance of asphalt price adjustments. Various

hot mixes of asphalt total \$422,200. Inlet pipes total \$88,000 with 4-inch-thick concrete sidewalks totaling \$391,040. Dune excavation and grading totals \$109,000, sand totals \$23,000 and dune plantings \$106,000.

Councilman David Perry said a pedestrian-safety study was undertaken for Beach Drive in 2011. He said sand dunes encroaching on the roadway created a very dangerous situation for pedestrians and bicycle traffic interacting with motor vehicle traffic.

In 2014, the project was approved in a unanimous vote of council but was later put on hold in a 3-2 vote, Perry said. He said the project was revived in 2017.

In June 2014, Township Council voted 3-2 not to apply to the county for funding to construct a sidewalk along 1.5 miles of Beach Drive.

In May 2014, more than
Beach Drive, Page A4

LoBiondo seeks hearing in county on oil drilling

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WASHINGTON — New Jersey's lawmakers have requested a hearing and written letters to federal officials and Gov. Chris Christie to try to stop oil exploration off the state's coast.

These actions followed an announcement of a draft proposal two weeks ago from the Trump administration to open up 47 coastal areas for offshore oil drilling and Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke tweeting he was exempting Florida from the proposal.

U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo is calling for a public hearing in Cape May County



LoBiondo

on the proposal for oil and natural gas exploration off the Mid-Atlantic Coast. In June, LoBiondo joined local business leaders, environmental groups and elected officials in Avalon to rally against plans to proceed with seismic testing off the coast, a precursor to drilling.

In a letter sent Jan. 10 to Walter Cruickshank, acting director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management of the U.S. Department of the Interior, LoBiondo asked for a public meeting to discuss the Department of the Interior's Draft Proposed Plan (DPP) for a new National

LoBiondo, Page A2

Franklin Street School exhibit opens on MLK Day

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Center for Community Arts opened an exhibit tracing the history of the segregated Franklin Street School on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in the Carroll Gallery at the Emlen Physick Estate.

Michael Zuckerman, director of the Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts and Humanities, noted the first joint exhibit with the CCA opened in January 1999 and was called "A Feeling of Community." Since then, CCA exhibits have focused on Urban Renewal, the black business community in Cape May, segregated schools, athletics and the city's beaches.

"There have been so many important stories that in partnership we've been able to tell to thousands and thousands of people," Zuckerman said.

Assemblyman Bob Andrzejczak, who presented a proclamation at the opening, said it was important to know



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

CCA Executive Director David McKenzie speaks at the opening of the Franklin Street School exhibit in the Carroll Gallery at the Emlen Physick Estate. With him are Michael Zuckerman of MAC, center, and Assemblyman Bob Andrzejczak.

Exhibit opens, Page A4

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