

Cape May Star and Wave

161ST YEAR NO. 5 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2015 75¢



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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TEEN EARNS EAGLE SCOUT RANK AT NASW

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Beck argues GOP majority 'hijacking' manager position

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council appointed Jim Ridgway as township manager Jan. 21 in 3-2 vote.

In a vote along party lines — with three Republican councilmen casting “yes” votes and independents Mayor Michael Beck and Deputy Mayor Norris Clark casting “no” votes — Township Manager Mike Voll was removed from his position and replaced by Ridgway. Clark re-

quested the resolution be amended to allow the township to issue a request for qualifications to search for a new manager. He said when the township issued an RFQ in 2010, it received 24 applications.

“We need to make sure we scour the landscape,” Clark said. “This is a best practice when hiring a manager, and I think we should pursue that best practice.”

The vote for an amendment failed 3-2, with the vote again following party lines.

“The bottom line, as I sit here right now, I don’t even have so much as a resume for Jim Ridgway,” Beck said. “Can you guaranty me we have the best-qualified candidate that we can find for this township?”

“In my opinion, yes,” Councilman Tom Conrad replied.

Beck said as Lower Township’s assistant superintendent of recreation, Ridgway did a good job staging summer concerts at the Cape May-Lewes Ferry terminal.

Councilman David Perry said he

was holding a piece of paper that had some of the highlights of Ridgway’s career. Perry said Ridgway “managed quite a few businesses throughout the years starting back in the 1980s.” He said Ridgway taught business law at Lower Cape May Regional High School.

Beck asked Perry when he received Ridgway’s resume. Conrad said he received a resume before the start of the council meeting.

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OUR VIEW

To the victor go the spoils? Not the best way to run a township.

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Beach tag bill faces opposition in county

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — The Cape May County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors recently announced its opposition to Senate bill S648 and S2368, which would ban beach tag fees in shore municipalities accepting certain government beach-replenishment funding.

The legislation also dedicates 2 percent of taxable receipts under the sales and use tax collected in the shore municipalities to those municipalities.

Cape May County Chamber of Commerce President Vicki Clark said beach fees are an important part of guarding and maintaining beaches in shore communities.

“Our beaches are best for everybody if they’re well-maintained and guarded. The enabling legislation to allow beach tags is very specific about how that revenue is to be used,” Clark said. “It’s a user fee. You only pay it if you use the beach.”

Clark said New Jersey tourism generates more than \$40 billion for the state’s economy, with half of that derived from the four coastal counties of Atlantic, Cape May, Monmouth and Ocean.

“Everybody would like things to be free, but in this case it (beach tags) provides assurance that your beach experience is going to be a pleasant one,” Clark said.

Cape May County municipalities charging beach fees include Avalon, Cape May, Cape May Point, Ocean City, Sea Isle City and Stone Harbor.

State Sen. Michael Doherty, R-23rd, who represents Hunterdon, Somerset and Warren counties, sponsored the legislation. In 2012, following Hurricane Sandy, Doherty sponsored similar legislation (S2368) for municipalities charging beach tag fees.

In December 2012, a host of Cape May County mayors held a news conference to publicly condemn the legislation. According to the mayors, beach tag sales fund regular beach maintenance and cleanup, and subsidize beach protection.

In a May 29, 2014, editorial published in The Asbury Park Press, Doherty defended S648 and advocated for free beaches and the elimination of beach tag fees.

“I understand the substantial expenses that coastal municipalities bear for beach cleaning, lifeguards and maintaining order and public safety for both resi-

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Despite forecasts of 6 to 12 inches of snow, only about an inch fell silently on Cape May and the surrounding region overnight and into Tuesday morning.

Nor’easter shifts east, strikes only glancing blow to region

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — With little snowfall overnight Jan. 26, residents in most of southern New Jersey could clear their car windows with a brush. Light snow continued to fall during the morning of Tuesday, Jan. 27.

While forecasts called for 6 to 12 inches of snowfall in Cape May County, most areas received an inch or less.

The forecasted snowfall totals never materialized when the bulk of the storm shifted to the east, remained offshore and the nor’easter gained strength later than originally forecast. Radar and satellite imagery overnight showed an area of dry air over much of Cape May county.

According to WIBG Radio meteorologist “Nor’easter

Nick” Pittman, an inverted trough over western Pennsylvania did not transfer its energy to the upper-level low-pressure system that was forming off the coast.

“Since you didn’t have that transfer happen, that energy over Pennsylvania blocked the coastal low from retrograding back toward the shore,” he said. “That kept the heavier bands right off of the coast line.”

Nor’easter Nick said if we were located 20 miles further to the east, the area would have been hit hard.

The American GFS computer model forecast of the storm indicated a possible dry slot over southern New Jersey. The GFS model was correct on the amount of snow accumulation, said Nor’easter Nick.

“Anytime you have sinking

air on the back end of a low-pressure system, that creates a precipitation void, and that’s definitely what we saw all the way up through early morning,” he said.

A missed forecast can lessen the credibility of meteorologists going forward over time, Pittman said.

“It has the potential to be a Sandy situation where people don’t take heed or ignore warnings,” he said. “The world of weather is very fickle, and changes occur in every system that develops.”

Cape May’s streets were slippery before county salt trucks arrived at 8 a.m. Tuesday.

Schools were closed in Cape May and Lower Township. A travel ban imposed by State Police at 11 p.m. Monday was lifted by 7 a.m. Tuesday.

Wichterman barred from closed talks in Cape May

Move does not ban former councilman from future sessions

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A resolution to allow former Deputy Mayor Jack Wichterman to attend a closed session of City Council with special attorney Vito Gagliardi was pulled from the Jan. 20 meeting agenda at the request of Councilman Shaine Meier.

The Jan. 22 closed session meeting updated three new council members — Jerry Indervies Jr., Bea Pessagno and Meier — on the history of Cape May’s quest to change the funding formula of Lower Cape May Regional High School and future plans.

Meier said he believed it was premature to ask Wichterman for his assistance even though he had “done a lot for the cause.”

“I would prefer to have a candid discussion this first day just with City Council members so we can feel each other out without a past council member’s input,” Meier said.

Mayor Edward Mahaney said he disagreed because the purpose of including Wichterman in the closed session was not for him to make comments but be present

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Meier calls for better communications with nonprofits.

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Hotel Icona gets OK to move bulkhead, add 6th floor

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — The Lower Township Planning Board granted preliminary site plan approval Jan. 22 to Eustace Mita and Achristavest LLC to move its beach bulkhead 200 feet closer to the ocean and add a sixth story to Hotel Icona at 9600 Atlantic Ave in the Diamond Beach section of the township.

Achristavest will need additional approvals from the state Department of Environmental Protection

(DEP) to move the bulkhead. If it receives such approvals, Achristavest would return to the Planning Board to apply for final site plan approval.

Mita built the neighboring The Grand at Diamond Beach condominiums and purchased the former Pier 6600 motel and rebuilt it into an upscale hotel. Hotel Icona is the only hotel in New Jersey with a 425-foot private beach.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to construct a 16-foot-tall, 150-foot-wide dune from north-

ern New Jersey south to Cape May to offer storm protection to the coastline. Attorney Frank Corrado, representing Mita and Achristavest, said the hotel would effectively lose use of its beach to provide the amenities it now provides as a first-class hotel.

Landscape architect Al Gryga, of CMC Engineering of Kimberton, Pa., confirmed Hotel Icona uses its beach from the edge of its parking lot out past the site of the proposed dune. Mita said the proposed dune would go through the location of the

hotel’s current bulkhead. “We would lose our beach shack. We would lose our wedding (area), beach bar. It sits right where that 16-foot berm would go,” he said.

Mita said it could not place its beach amenities in front of the dune because they would be too close to the ocean nor place them behind the proposed dune because there is not enough room between the existing bulkhead and proposed dune. He said by moving the bulkhead for-

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