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## Committee: Public safety building best at current site

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city's Public Safety Building Advisory Committee has advised City Council the best location for a new firehouse or combined fire/police station is the site of the current building.

During a City Council meeting Oct. 3, Public Safety Building Committee Vice Chairman Barney Dougherty said a city-owned site on Pittsburg Avenue, next to Cape May Lutheran Church, initially was considered to be a possibility but proved to be too far away from the central part of Cape May and too distant from Cape May Point, which receives emergency medical services from the city.

Committee Chairman Jerry Gaffney said the committee unanimously agreed a new firehouse and police station are desperately needed. He said the committee reviewed four parcels of city-owned property.

Gaffney said he spoke with city engineer Tom Thornton concerning the Colonial House museum, located adjacent to City Hall. The museum, a small house, is on very valuable land, Gaffney said.

"I think the group that runs that house would love to see it moved to another site," he said.

The house could be moved to an area with more visibility, Gaffney said.

"That's prime real estate and we could really open that whole area up," he said.

Councilwoman Patricia Hendricks questioned whether the Colonial House could be moved and not "fall like a house of sticks."

Gaffney said he and Dougherty met with developer Curtis Bashaw last week to discuss his plans for the Acme market and parking lot.

Council passed a resolution at the meeting authorizing the Planning Board

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

If the city deemed the area in need of redevelopment, it would benefit plans for the construction of a new Acme market and a parking garage on the site. The Planning Board is now tasked with studying the area bordered by Franklin, Ocean, Lafayette and Washington streets to determine whether it meets any of the criteria.

## In need of redevelopment?

Planning Board to study area around Acme, City Hall

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council passed a resolution Oct. 3 authorizing the Planning Board to conduct a preliminary investigation into establishing a redevelopment area for the block bordered by Franklin, Ocean, Lafayette and Washington streets, which takes in the Acme market, firehouse, Franklin Street School and Macedonia Baptist Church property, including a former parsonage.

City solicitor Frank Corrado said state statutes allow the establishment of redevelopment areas through a long and complex process. He said it begins with council asking the Planning Board to consider whether a specific area qualifies as an area in need of redevelopment.

"The statute sets forth seven or eight criteria, any one of which if met would qualify an area for being an area in need of redevelopment," Corrado said.

He said the Planning Board would be required to conduct a study with no

time limit. Corrado said the study requires public notice and a public hearing, with the Planning Board going to council with a recommendation as to whether the area is in need of redevelopment.

"The council would then consider that," he said. "It could modify that recommendation if it wanted to and then if it decided that it wanted to go forward with the redevelopment plan, it would adopt an ordinance that would in essence require that a plan for that area be developed and that plan would consider the various ways in which the area could be redeveloped."

Corrado said the benefits of having an area in need of redevelopment is that the zoning rules and rules for site plan and construction can be modified to accomplish whatever goals the city desires for the specific area. He said tax incentives could be included in an area in need of redevelopment.

"If the city needs to acquire property, it can do so without going through the normal statutory process for acquiring property," he said.

The Planning Board can

recommend a block or a portion of a block as a redevelopment area, Corrado said.

Resident Christine Miller urged City Council not to pass the resolution. She said a redevelopment area means parking, zoning, height and environmental regulations could be waived "to build

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## Bashaw looking at concepts for Acme, a parking garage in potential redevelopment

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Developer and local resident Curtis Bashaw has confirmed his organization is looking at concepts for a new Acme store in Washington Commons and the possibility of a parking garage in the parking lot that could fit the city's Victorian-era architecture.

This on the heels of City Council approving the Planning Board undertaking a study to see if the block between Franklin and Ocean streets and Lafayette and Washington streets should be declared an area in need of redevelopment. (See related story in this edition).

"We appreciate that the city has started the process of looking at the Washington Commons site as an area in need of redevelopment," Bashaw said. "We are pleased to have Acme as a partner in a long-term plan for the site and felt that this is a good time to take a holistic view of how we can make Washington Commons function more effectively as a town center."

"This process can enable us to look even more holistically at the community and how to facilitate the best public safety building opportunity possible and the

what you want."

Miller said under redevelopment law, a referendum cannot be undertaken against any bond ordinances. She said she objected because the redevelopment area would not be just Wash-

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ing Commons has its origin in a 1960s shopping center, plopped in the middle of a historic village, Bashaw said.

"Cape May is a special place and special places need to be tended with care," he said.

Washington Commons has its origin in a 1960s shopping center, plopped in the middle of a historic village, Bashaw said.

He said now that a 50-year lease has ended with Acme, the opportunity is available to explore how this very large tract could be better integrated into the historic context of Cape May.

"We are excited to have the city's willing participation in the discussion and we are grateful that council unanimously moved the redevelopment planning process forward," Bashaw said.

Those who feared Cape May could find itself without a grocery store can put their fears to rest. Bashaw said his organization has executed a 20-year lease renewal with Acme, which is a willing partner in the planning process.

## CCA committed to preserving school

By JOHN ALVAREZ  
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Franklin Street School opened its doors as an elementary school for Cape May's black children in September 1928.

The doors of the school remained open until 20 years later, when New Jersey's new constitution banned segregation. For years, the building stood as a reminder of Cape May's past, while at the same time attesting to the vivacity of Cape May's black

community.

In 2002, the Center for Community Arts (CCA) received a 25-year lease on the school from the city of Cape May and has been renovating the building to convert it into a community arts and cultural center. Today, as stated on the CCA's website, the Franklin Street School stands out as a contributing building to Cape May's status as a National Historic Landmark and is designated by the state as an African American Historic site.

During a City Council meeting last week, Robbie Conley, a consulting architect for a study to build a public safety building for Cape May, stated the Franklin Street School is the best location for a new police station. All the city had to do was rehabilitate the building. During the meeting, Barney Dougherty, a member of the Public Safety Building Advisory Committee, spoke on his own behalf when he said some sort of plaque could be placed on the building to acknowledge its past

history in Cape May.

"That would be very sad," said Emily Dempsey, an oral historian and native of Cape May.

She not only was one of the founders of the CCA, but Dempsey also attended Franklin Street School from kindergarten until 1948, when the schools in New Jersey were integrated and she began to attend Cape May public school.

"We convinced the state of New Jersey by showing the Franklin Street

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