

Cape May Star and Wave

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HOUSE OF THE WEEK
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Van Drew asks SJTA for better public transportation

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

TRENTON — State Sen. Jeff Van Drew is calling on the South Jersey Transportation Authority (SJTA) to assist with public transportation challenges in the 1st District. He said the lack of public transportation in the district affects the economy and access to higher education for residents. Van Drew sent a letter to the state

Transportation Commissioner Jamie Fox, who also serves as chairman of the SJTA board, requesting assistance to address a sorely needed expansion of public transportation in Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland counties.

Noting the existing challenges already facing the region, the senator said the lack of transportation makes it difficult for thousands of residents in the Cape May and Cumberland

area to get to work and creates challenges for students who attend local colleges. In his letter to Fox, Van Drew requested that the SJTA conduct an evaluation of authority funding streams in an attempt to bring more transportation services to the three-county area.

"I firmly believe that we are underserved in our three counties and I am calling upon the South Jersey Transportation Authority to aid and

assist with this vital issue," Van Drew wrote.

Van Drew, who serves as chairman of the 1st District Economic Development Task Force, also noted that the region faces the highest rate of joblessness in the state, the lowest per-capita income and extremely high rates of poverty. Residents in these three counties also experience one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy, drug use, childhood obesity, infant

mortality and domestic violence in New Jersey. He said the lack of mobility, which limits residents' access to employment and educational opportunities, only increases the challenges facing those living in the area.

"This all adds up to some of the worst health in the state, both economic and physiological. The lack of mobility limits our residents' access

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REINVENTING ROTARY PARK

New plan for park preserves old trees

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — It's as quaint as a Norman Rockwell painting.

Rotary Park, the little park in the center of town with a bandstand and benches hosts concerts in the summer and serves as the location of Cape May's official Christmas tree. Santa Claus makes visits and so do Washington Street Mall employees who want a quiet spot to eat lunch in warm weather.

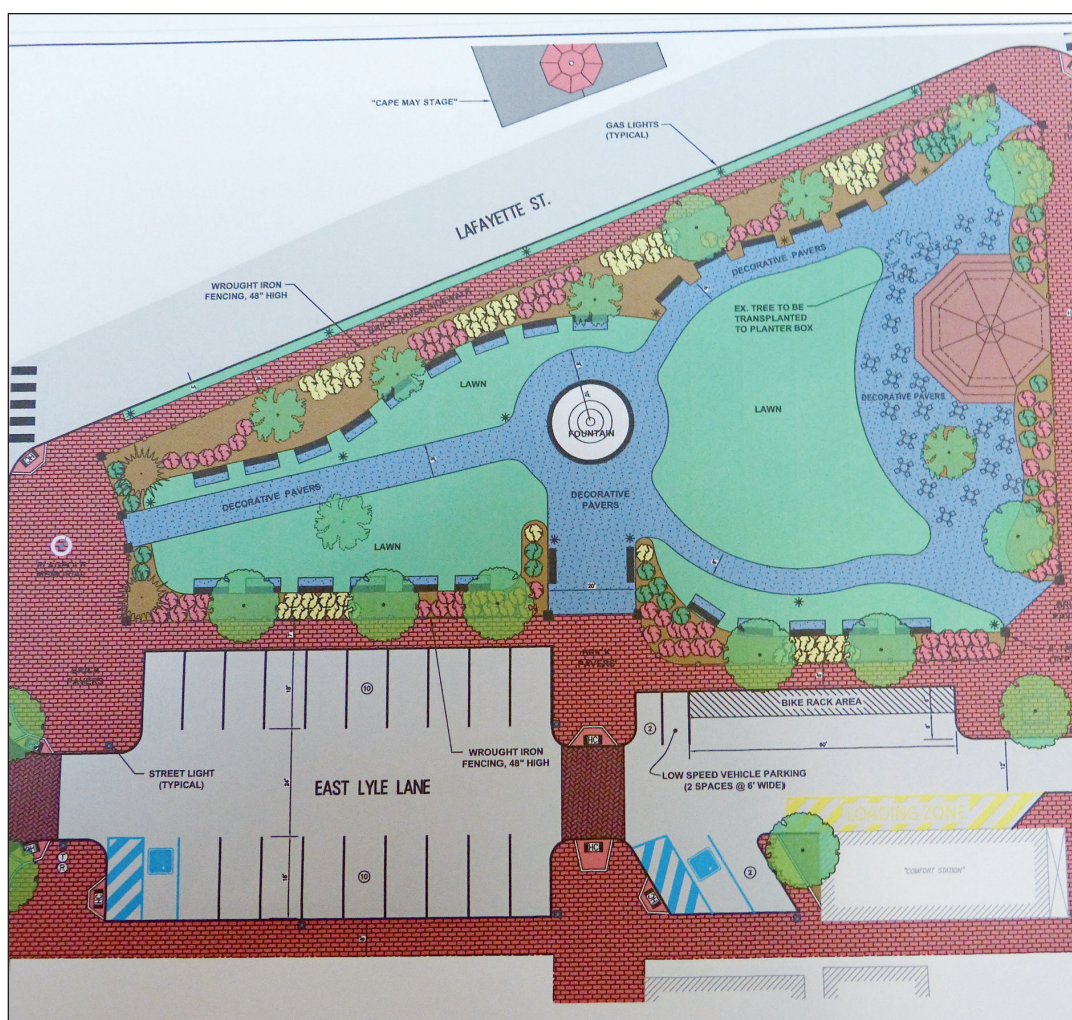
The Mayor's Advisory Committee chairman has been examining how to refurbish Rotary Park. Early designs were submitted by Temple University landscape architecture students in 2009-10. An intern from Temple University continued working on the design in 2011, according to Mayor Edward Mahaney.

"At this point, we have garnered the necessary funding to undertake this project and we intend to do it as a council when we do the reconstruction of the 400 block of Lyle Lane right after Jan. 1, 2016," he said during a Feb. 3 City Council meeting.

During the past year, the Mayor's Advisory Committee has been refining and adjusting concept plans for the park to be presented to City Council and to the public at a future meeting for their input.

Committee Chairman Curtis Bashaw said the largest changes since the original Temple University students' plan involved rethinking whether all the trees in the park needed to be removed. He said the current plan preserves seven or eight of the existing trees.

Bashaw said an earlier design called for the entire park to be excavated and regraded to slope down toward the bandstand, but the new concept has the new bandstand just two steps above grade and even in height with the sidewalk on Decatur Street. The new design will not require retaining walls around the entire park,



The Mayor's Advisory Committee in Cape May has been examining how to refurbish Rotary Park, and the city now plans to move forward with the project. "At this point, we have garnered the necessary funding to undertake this project and we intend to do it as a council when we do the reconstruction of the 400 block of Lyle Lane right after Jan. 1, 2016," Mayor Edward Mahaney said.

he said. "The park will have two entrances, one from the Washington Street Mall through the sidewalk next to Casale's Shoes, maintaining the width of vista across Lyle Lane to a prominent entrance to the park featuring a fountain," Bashaw said. "Then behind the fountain, the backdrop of the entrance to the Cape May Stage building, the old church, is prominently featured on the access."

Bashaw said the second entrance would begin on Jackson Street with a flagpole that would line up with the fountain and bandstand.

The park would offer plenty of room for seating and the new bandstand would not have a railing around it to obstruct the view of the audience, he said.

For certain types of events, the bandstand would use drop downs to project sound toward the fountain and flagpole to avoid conflict with Cape May

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE
The gazebo at Rotary Park in Cape May will be replaced as part of the greater plan to revamp the entire park.

Inderwies: Use more surplus to cut tax-rate hike

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Councilman Jerry Inderwies suggested City Council use more surplus funds to decrease the 1.3-cent tax increase in the proposed 2015 budget.

At a Feb. 3 City Council meeting, Inderwies said that at a time when City Council was investigating a possible change in the Lower Cape May Regional School District funding formula to lower taxes, he would be remiss if he did not address the current amount of surplus funds.

"Unlike the school funding formula, applying surplus to the budget for tax relief is something we have control over," he said.

Inderwies noted the city's 2014 available surplus was \$3.4 million, with \$2.1 million applied to the budget.

Available surplus for 2015 is \$3.7 million, with the city manager recommending applying \$2.1 million, or 55 percent, to the budget. Inderwies said with the city showing a larger surplus this year, it could ap-

ply \$2.4 million to the budget and have virtually the same remaining balance as last year. "Over the last 30 years, 60 to 70 percent use of the surplus has been normal," he said.

City Manager Bruce MacLeod said \$3.7 million in surplus was an unaudited number and the actual surplus totaled \$3.6 million. He asked if the 2015 proposed budget used \$2.4 million of surplus funds, what are the city's means to replenish that amount by this time next year.

The city has an AA bond rating which is in part due to keeping a strong surplus, MacLeod said.

"If we take \$2.4 million for this year, is that our new horizon? Is that our new plateau so that year in and year out, we'll be at \$2.4 million with each moving forward budget?" he asked.

MacLeod said he wouldn't want to find the surplus dropping back to \$2.1 million in one year. He said \$280,609 equaled one cent on the tax rate.

Mayor Edward Mahaney

See **Surplus**, Page A2

Schellenger's Landing sewer-pipe replacement may disrupt businesses

By BETTY WUND
Special to the Star and Wave

VILLAS — How will replacement of a sewer pipe on Schellenger's Landing affect the Lobster House and other businesses nearby? That was the question that Lower Township Councilman Erik Simonsen brought up at the Lower Township Municipal Utilities Authority Board of Commissioners meeting Feb. 4.

As Third Ward councilman, he said he was concerned about his constituents, especially the Lobster House, losing business if the project takes place this spring. He asked why it could not be postponed until fall or winter.

MUA Commissioner Pete

Bitting said the project could not be delayed any longer.

"We have been having trouble with that for the last five or six years. We have been cleaning it (the pipe) probably twice a month. The pipe is so full of grease that if we keep cleaning it, we are afraid we are going to bust through it. When we bust through it, it will be closed down by the Department of Environmental Protection until it is done," Bitting said. "For the first 250 feet, we will put the pipe in and asphalt it right away so that traffic will not be stopped for the first two days. It will be open for everyone. This job has to be done. If we do not do it now, and this pipe

See **Disruption**, Page A3



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