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HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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CONCERT SERIES RETURNING FOR SUMMER

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Tourism jumps to sixth-largest industry

International travel down but better exchange rate should spur upswing

By **KRISTEN KELLEHER**
Cape May Star and Wave

ATLANTIC CITY — Vacationers are fond of New Jersey. Tourism is the state's sixth-largest industry, and, due in part to a sunny summer season, tourism spending reached \$44.1 billion in 2016. Last year was the seventh consecutive year of growth in tourism spending and visitation, according to figures announced earlier this month at the annual New Jersey Conference on Tourism. The conference was held

March 9-10 at Resorts Casino Hotel in Atlantic City. During those two days, attendees heard from Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno; learned about trends in unique dining, including wineries, breweries and distilleries; digital marketing, tourism and the arts; and about homeland security and crisis communication. At the conference, numbers about tourism's economic impact were also announced. Visitation expanded 3.3 percent last year to 98 million people, and spending on food,

recreation, and non-casino lodging drove much of the spending growth. Leisure market led the overall market growth. Overnight leisure trips grew at 4.2 percent. Leisure tourism represents 90 percent of tourism industry sales in New Jersey. Employment and wages paid to New Jersey tourism workers rose in 2016. Notably, lodging employment rose after three years of declines. Hotel room demand rose 2.3 percent. Lodging, at 27.4 percent, is the largest traveler-spending

category in New Jersey. In 2016, the tourism industry directly supported 321,231 jobs in New Jersey and sustained 517,559 jobs. Tourism accounts for 9.8 percent of the state's total employment and 6.5 percent of the state's Gross Domestic Product. Contributing to the strong season were low gas prices and good weather during the summer months. The only major weather event happened over Labor Day weekend, which affected the latter half of the weekend.

International travel falls

However, despite the strong year, 2016 was not as successful for international travel spending. A poor exchange rate for Canadians dropped international spending in 2016, with international visitor spending falling to \$2.9 billion, or 7 percent of all visitor spending. Of the international visitors, 6.7 percent were from overseas and .3 percent were Canadian. Jake Buganski, acting execu-

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John Cooke/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Warm and sunny signs of spring

Shoppers enjoy ice cream and frozen custard under sunny skies with a high temperature of 74 degrees March 25 outside Our Lady Star of the Sea Church on the Washington Street Mall in Cape May. Thursday is expected to be sunny but rain showers likely will dampen enthusiasm for spring late in the week.

City to amend cost structure for temporary outdoor seats

By **JACK FICHTER**
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council will amend an ordinance introduced last month to regulate temporary outdoor seating at bars, restaurants and hotels and to charge a fee for each seat, likely reducing fees ranging from \$150 to \$300 per seat annually. During a meeting March 21, Mayor Chuck Lear said council had received a lot of feedback and would address the fee structure of the ordinance, which he still hopes to get in place before summer.

All fees paid would be deposited into the city's parking trust fund to be used for the purpose of pursuing parking alternatives. Lear said an amended ordinance would be presented at council's meeting April 18, with a public hearing set for May 2. The ordinance, if approved, would take effect May 27, he said.

Member Jules Rauch said the seating committee consisted of the then mayor and city manager, one council member, the former city solicitor, fire chief, the police officer in charge of liquor licenses, two members of the city's Code Enforcement office, the consulting engineer for the Planning Board, two

citizens and four restaurant owners representing about 10 restaurants. He said the ordinance would waive the zoning requirement of one parking space for every four restaurant seats. "A second and equally important goal is to recognize that the status quo of restaurants just adding seats as they elect without any approvals is not acceptable and the codes and ordinances of the city must be uniformly enforced," Rauch said. He said the method of determining the value of a parking space took into account the amount of money generated by parking meters. Rauch said the base figure for a parking meter was \$1,200 per year. A temporary outdoor seating license would be issued annually assuming a four-month prime season of 120 days, he said.

Rauch said a restaurant with a liquor license at an annual fee of \$300 per seat would amount to \$2.50 per seat per day during prime season. For a restaurant without a liquor license with an annual fee of \$200 per year per seat would amount to \$1.66 per seat per day, he said.

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No sand dollars means no beach

By **JACK FICHTER**
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — With a \$1 billion budget cut proposed for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by the Trump administration, it is uncertain whether this town will receive future beach replenishment. Exactly what will be cut from the Army Corps' budget has not been specified. Further details are expected in May. But if beach replenishment ends, Cape May's beaches would revert to the configuration residents may remember from the 1950s through 1970s, according to Stewart Farrell, director and founder of Stockton University's

Congress should fund coastal infrastructure despite Trump's proposed budget cuts.
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Coastal Research Center. "The sand will slowly disappear to Cape May into the rips out into Delaware Bay because the jetties at Cold Spring block any sand coming from Wildwood," Farrell said. He said eventually the

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This view of Baltimore Avenue in 1978 shows water breaking on rocks along the seawall, a state of affairs some fear will come to pass if Congress cuts replenishment funds.

INSIDE

Law enforcers know penalties only one weapon in war on drugs.
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