



## HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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## EVENT CELEBRATES HORSESHOE GRABS, SHOREBIRDS

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# County tourism a \$6 billion industry

## Annual receipts have tripled from \$2 billion in 1994

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — Tourism expenditures in Cape May County last year rose 4.3 percent to \$6.04 billion, the highest number since the state began measuring tourism activity.

County Freeholder Marie Hayes shared that positive news at the county's 2016 Tourism Conference. She said the county is well situated to meet the demands of guests who are looking for travel options that are close to home.

Hayes said the county Depart-

ment of Tourism met potential customers at 16 travel shows from January to April in Connecticut, Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Ohio and Montreal, Canada.

"A record number of marketing pieces — more than 250,000 brochures, destination guides and rack cards representing the resorts of Cape May County — were distributed through these shows," she said.

County Director of Tourism Diane Wieland said the county's tourism industry has grown from \$2 billion in 1994 to \$6 billion in

2015. Tourism grew \$246 million from 2014 to 2015, she said.

Rental properties in the county generated \$1.9 billion, according to Wieland. She said 47 percent of the dwellings in the county are second homes.

"Fifty three percent of [homeowners] rent them, the rest of them use them just as their second home," Wieland said.

She said owners of second homes come to the county all year and use their homes to celebrate anniversaries, birthdays and holidays. According to surveys, 59 percent of second-home owners

are from Pennsylvania.

Wieland said tourism represents 56 percent of the county's private employment industry, with 25,884 direct jobs and 36,369 jobs not directly part of the tourism industry but connected to suppliers and services to the industry.

"I look at Cape May County, and I don't know any business that does not do better in the summer," she said.

### Room for growth

Wieland said the county collected \$533 million in state and

local sales tax in 2015 but needs to increase the number of visitors that stay overnight, a sector that is not growing. Hotel/motel and bed and breakfast inn guests pay room taxes, buy more meals and visit more attractions, she said.

The county collected \$9.5 million in room tax last year, up 8.9 percent over 2014. Wieland said room tax collections for January and February this year are up about 4 percent.

She said about 12.5 million visitors come to Cape May County in

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## Proposal threatens lifeguard pensions

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Proposed state legislation introduced last week could eliminate pensions for both present and future lifeguards. City Council voted to offer a resolution of support for the bill at May 5 special meeting.

Bill S-2085, which is pending before the state Senate, says: "Current statutes provide for the establishment of a pension fund for members of the lifeguard force of cities of the fourth class, which are seaside or summer resort cities bordering on the Atlantic Ocean. Atlantic City, for example, pays more than \$1 million to its retired lifeguards each year. The seven statutes governing these lifeguard pension funds were enacted in 1928 and last amended in 1936."

The bill provides that the governing body of a municipality that has established a pension fund for lifeguards may adopt an ordinance directing that those provisions of the law will not apply to any person becoming a member of the lifeguard force subsequent to the passage of such ordinance or terminating the pension fund for lifeguards altogether.

Mayor Edward Mahaney said Cape May is one of nine towns mandated by the state in a 1929 law to provide a lifeguard pension system. He said the city would need to track the bill through the Senate and Assembly to see whether it passes before taking action.

"This is a bill that has major financial ramifications to the city, and the city in

See Lifeguard, Page A7



## Coast Guard Community Festival



Frank Scott/Special to the CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

At top, Air Station Atlantic City conducted a search-and-rescue demonstration over Cape May Harbor on Saturday, May 7, as part of the Coast Guard Community Festival. Thousands visited Coast Guard Training Center Cape May to tour ships, watch a K-9 demonstration, a silent drill team and examine boats and a helicopter. Above left, Matthew Whithead of Horsham, Pa., checks out the pilothouse of a Coast Guard Patrol Boat. Above right, Ryder, a rescue Coast Guard K-9 handled by Petty Officer Nick Antis, is a hit with the children. **More photos, A4.**

## Lower moves court amid renovations

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Municipal Court will move to Township Hall at 2600 Bayshore Road in Villas beginning May 17.

According to Township Manager Jim Ridgway, court will temporarily operate from the meeting room in Township

Hall until reconstruction of the Public Safety Building at the county airport is completed.

"We've been moving different groups over the past couple of weeks," he said.

The construction and planning offices have been moved to the building next to Township Hall, where they resided for a number of years. Ridgway said the Bureau of Fire

Safety has been moved from the airport to the township's Recreation Center behind Township Hall.

Municipal court will be held Tuesdays and the public entering Township Hall for other business will be required to pass through a metal detector, he said. Ridgway said three police officers would be present in the building on court day.

## Beach safety panel holds first meeting

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The first Beach Safety Committee meeting held May 2 at City Hall was attended by Dennis DeSatnick, Anita DeSatnick and Chad DeSatnick, who suffered a spinal injury on the beach 16 years ago. Also in attendance were Mayor Edward Mahaney, Deputy Mayor Bea Pessagno, Superintendent of Public Works Joe Picard and City Manager Bruce MacLeod.

The meeting lasted almost two hours, according to MacLeod, who described it as "open and forthright" in its discussion. He said topics included new beach-safety brochures and signage, continuing education of the public and the need to continue communication with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), including clarifying the city's ability to move sand on the beaches.

"Most importantly, the management of the surf zone, which is the area between the high-tide watermark and the low-tide watermark and whether we can make improvements there with equipment to realign the sand, move the sand with the

See Beach safety, Page A8

## Mayor suggests 3-tiered cost for outdoor seating

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Does having outdoor seating for light dining or serving liquor throughout the city affect establishments on the mall? Should seating on private property be governed by the city as it does seats on city-owned property?

Those questions were raised at a City Council meeting May 3 that handled no official business since only Mayor Edward Mahaney and Deputy Mayor Bea Pessagno were present. The mayor suggested public comment should be solicited on the outdoor seating issue since a number of business representatives were seated in the audience.

Mahaney said patio permits for the

See Outdoor seating, Page A8

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