

West Cape May working to reduce flood insurance costs

By RACHEL SHUBIN

Special to the Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Additional progress is being made toward the borough participating in a program to lower flood insurance premium rates for homeowners.

Tax assessor Louis Belasco was officially approved as the Community Rating System (CRS) officer and is already at work.

“He has received confirmation of 15 pre-FIRM (Flood Insurance Rate Map) buildings in the borough,” Mayor Pam Kaithern announced during a Board of Commissioners meeting Oct. 11. “Pre-FIRM means they were possibly not built to standards that are required for flood protection now. The properties will need modification or a certificate

for elevation.”

On April 1, 2018, residents will begin receiving new flood insurance rates. The largest premium increases will be for pre-FIRM homeowners.

“Most of our properties are primary residences, but some of the secondary homeowners and houses built before 1983 might see increases take effect,” Kaithern said. “This increase is why we are working as a municipality to become NFIP (National Flood Insurance Program) certified.”

The borough is acquiring 185 E. Mechanic St. at the bequest of the estate of Elizabeth Smith. Borough Commission authorized a \$2,000 payment for the discharge of the tax sale certificate from 2008.

“We are picking up this

parcel of land to benefit the whole community,” Kaithern said. “There are a lot of good attributes for that. There are deed restrictions for non-development.”

Borough engineer Ray Roberts submitted a draft report noting streets in the borough in need of additional speed limit signs. Sixth Avenue will be added to the list of streets needing a speed limit or safety sign.

“Sixth Avenue has several speed limit signs; however there is a big gap in the street where it becomes open and where speeding will occur,” Roberts said. “On Fifth Avenue near West Cape May Elementary there are also drivers who double park when dropping kids off and other unsafe vehicular activity.”

Concerns of adding bump

outs and taking away existing parking spaces could increase double parking, he said. There are streets throughout the borough that have speed limit as well as children at play signs.

“If the budget allows, we should put children at play signs, too. Stop bars are also eye-catching for people coming up to a stop sign that could be shielded by a parked car,” Roberts said. “There is also a lot of bicycle traffic to the wineries and farms, and our recommendation is that we at least have share the road chevrons painted on the pavement.”

Kaithern said the board has invited the county to meetings to discuss the traffic patterns and need for speed limit signs. The county engaged a profes-

sional engineering service to make improvements on Sunset Boulevard. They are looking for input and volunteers from West Cape May residents. The first meeting will be held in December.

Numerous events are taking place around the borough for the remainder of October.

On Oct. 18, there will be a borough-wide bulk trash pickup. Items that will be picked up include furniture, mattresses, boards, tied tree limbs and pieces of wood (no more than 5 feet in length and 50 pounds).

On Oct. 20, the West Cape May Environmental Commission is hosting a free backyard-composting workshop from 7 to 9 p.m. at Borough Hall. Geobins will be available for purchase. There will be a discounted

rate for West Cape May residents.

On Oct. 22, there will be a West Cape May Christmas Parade fundraiser from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Chalfonte Hotel. Dinner will include all the Chalfonte offerings, including Dot's famous fried chicken. Tickets are \$25 and reservations are required.

Sponsored by Exit Zero Cookhouse, there will be another Christmas Parade fundraiser, a “Curry” Scary dinner, on Oct. 25. Both curry and non-curry fare will be available and there will be scary music and costumes. Tickets are \$20 for three courses; reservations are required.

Trick or treating throughout the borough will take place from 5 to 7 p.m. Oct. 31 to coordinate with Cape May and Lower Township.

‘Boutique’ hotel planned in West Cape May

Continued from Page A1

and not well maintained when he and Celata bought it 15 years ago. Lukas said the home is now “one of the most beautiful we think in West Cape May.” He said the home once belonged to Capt. Samuel E. Ewing, a former mayor of West Cape May, a sea captain and contractor. The home was moved from Cove Beach in 1904, Lukas said.

“It was originally Gothic Revival but it was converted into Colonial Revival, and that’s going to be really important when you see the end design we’re presenting this evening,” he said. “We’re really focusing on a Colonial Revival element. All the elements are coming from the original structure.”

When the borough up-

dated its master plan and created a downtown area, the house was rezoned allowing commercial use of the 6,800-square-foot home, Lukas said. The hotel will have luxurious rooms with amenities catering to couples with disposable income, he said.

Lukas said they wanted to create a hotel different from existing hotels in Cape May. The hotel will not cater to children, he said.

“We want to be a place where people can come and relax and enjoy,” he said.

Architect Pam Fine said the hotel would have three floors, a restaurant, elevators and a solarium. The addition would follow the design of the house with bays, bump outs, balconies, balusters and cedar shingles.

The rooftop pool would have a buffer of plantings 4.5 feet high, she said. Fine said the restaurant would measure 2,100 square feet, or less than 10 percent of the total building.

Project planner and engineer Vince Orlando said the applicants are aware the project, including the demolition of the house on Broadway, would need the approval of the borough’s Historic Preservation Commission. He said the property is L-shaped and located in the C-2 zoning district. The Albert Stevens Inn, a 10-room bed and breakfast inn, is located next to the home, he noted. Orlando said the zone has an accessory provision for restaurants, allowing two seats per unit.

The existing driveway from Myrtle Avenue would

be converted to a paver surface and be used for deliveries and trash pick-up, he said. Orlando said the parking area from Broadway would be served by a 20-foot by 24-foot entry consisting of porous pavers, allowing storm water to be absorbed into the ground with no run off. He said the parking lot was designed to accept water from adjacent properties.

The entrance to the hotel would be accessed from Broadway, he said. Orlando said he provided a concept plan to the fire company for the ingress and egress of emergency vehicles from the property that had not been fully reviewed at the time of the hearing. He said standpipes would be installed to service the building.

Reducing the number of proposed restaurant seats from 80 to 50 eliminated the need for a parking variance, Orlando said. The plan calls for the required 33 parking spaces, he said. One space is required for every six restaurant seats or one space for every 150 square feet related to restaurant use.

Orlando said the project has three pre-existing, non-conforming conditions that are not being worsened by the application — lot frontage, lot width and front yard setback. He said the hotel project requires variances for lot area, fence height, parking in the front yard, sign height and landscaping and vegetation.

Regulations for lot area would require 33,500 square feet but the lot measures 31,278 square feet, making a variance necessary, Orlando said. Regulations require a 4-foot parking buffer but the hotel project proposes 1.5 feet for about 190 feet, he said.

Fence regulations allow a 4-foot-high fence but a 6-foot-high fence is proposed as a buffer from a residential area, Orlando said.

He said parking in the front yard would occur along Broadway with the first parking space within the 20-foot setback. Zoning regulations do not allow front yard parking. A landscaping/vegetation buffer is required for 35 percent of the overall site but the project proposes 26.5 percent on the ground.

“If you count the pool area, which is the planters within the pool surface, that’s another 2.5 percent for a total of 29 percent,” Orlando said.

Board member Carol Sabo questioned applying planters on the roof to the overall landscaping buffer.

The proposed driveway drive aisle width is proposed at 21.7 feet while 24 feet is required by zoning codes, and height of the hotel sign is proposed at 6 feet while only 4 feet is permitted, Boliney said.

Lucas said the purpose of the 6-foot fence was to contain noise and headlights on the hotel property. He said 17 trees would be planted along with an English laurel hedge along the fence on Myrtle Avenue.

“I am very concerned about the neighbors, and I don’t want to create any kind of nuisance. I want to be a good neighbor,” Lukas said.

In his report, engineer Ray Roberts said in reference to the applicant requesting a variance for front yard parking off Broadway, two proposed parking spaces would be impacted. He said the 21.7-foot-wide driveway would impact three parking spaces.

“If those two variances were not granted, they would only have 28 spaces,” Roberts said.

During public comment, York Avenue resident Glenn Fala said he was concerned with noise from a rooftop pool. He said York Avenue, which would back up to the hotel, is a quiet neighborhood.

Broadway resident Paul Niemczura said his house would be less than 5 feet from the property line of the hotel.

“Now you’ve taken these parking spaces and I will have vehicles pulling in and out up to my house from 5 foot away, the entire length of my property,” he said.

Due to the lateness of the hour, the hearing was adjourned until the Planning Board’s meeting Dec. 12.

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19	8:23	8:38	1:56	2:21
20	9:01	9:17	2:35	3:04
21	9:39	9:56	3:13	3:45
22	10:16	10:35	3:49	4:27
23	10:54	11:15	4:25	5:09
24	11:34	11:58	5:01	6:41
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