

West Cape May to require grading plan for new construction

By **BETTY WUND**
Special to the Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Borough Commission approved an ordinance March 22 that will require all development of single- and two-family homes submit a grading plan to be reviewed by the municipal engineer.

The ordinance was introduced at the March 8 Borough Commission meeting after weeks of discussion due to complaints of neighbors about new properties where single-family homes and duplexes are being built. Many are being affected by water runoff and drainage problems. The ordinance amends the

borough's zoning code. An application fee of \$35 is to be submitted along with a \$500 escrow fee for grading plan review.

"The municipal engineer, or other borough official designated by the Borough Commission, may waive the requirements of this section if substantial compliance with the purposes and terms of this section are demonstrated to the satisfaction of the engineer or official," states the ordinance.

"All development shall be graded to direct storm water away from adjacent properties and towards on-site storm water facilities or towards the street. If impossible to drain di-

rectly to the street, it shall be directed to a system of interior yard drainage approved by the municipal engineer, or other Borough official designated by the Borough Commission," the ordinance continues.

It states all lots, open spaces and planting areas shall be graded to secure proper drainage and to prevent the collection of storm water.

The grading shall be performed in a manner which will minimize the damage to or destruction of trees growing on the land.

Topsoil shall be provided and/or redistributed on the surface as cover and shall be stabilized

by seeding or planting and shall comply with the standards for soil erosion and sediment control in New Jersey. All provisions shall be approved by the Cape Atlantic Conservation District.

The ordinance requires no topsoil be removed from a construction site but be redistributed so as to provide at least 6 inches or spread cover to all seeding and shall comply with the standards for soil erosion and sediment control in New Jersey.

In the event that the quantity of topsoil at the site is insufficient to provide six inches of cover for all seeding and planting areas, the owner shall

provide and distribute a sufficient quantity of topsoil to provide such a cover in accordance with the standards for soil erosion and sediment control in New Jersey.

"The ground immediately adjacent to the foundation shall be sloped away from the building at a slope of not less than 5 percent for a minimum distance of 10 feet measured perpendicular to the face of the wall. If physical obstructions or lot lines

prohibit 10-foot horizontal distance, a 5 percent slope shall be provided to an approved alternate method of diverting water away from the foundation. Swales used for this purpose shall be sloped a minimum of 2 percent where located within 10 feet of the building foundation. Impervious surfaces within 10 feet of the building shall be sloped a minimum of 2 percent away from the building," states the ordinance.

Tourism jumps to sixth-largest industry

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Director of the state's Division of Travel and Tourism, said the most notable number from 2016's results was tourism employment rising to 517,000 jobs.

This growth propelled tourism from the seventh largest employer in the state, where it had been for a few years, to the sixth, he said.

"It's definitely a step in the right direction and we're hoping to continue that momentum next year," he said.

The four shore counties — Atlantic, Cape May, Monmouth and Ocean counties — represent a little less than half of the tourism in the state.

"We really have a good balance, a good diversity of assets to promote, but those four shore counties are our core market," Buganski said.

For those four counties, a tradition of vacation is an asset, according to Buganski.

"One of the key advantages in our beach communities in New Jersey versus some of the other Atlantic Coast states is the heritage we have here, the heritage, the hundreds of years of tradition we have for vacationing at the Jersey shore, and I think leveraging that to set us apart from those Atlantic coast states ... will be what propels us into the future," he said.

While Buganski said it is difficult to project too much, he said they are looking forward to more than 100 million visitors coming to New Jersey this year.

"We had 98 million visitors this year so we should relatively easily surpass that 100 million mark in 2017," he said.

Cape May County strong

The state's southern-most county, Cape May County, also saw a strong 2016, according to Vicki Clark, president of the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce.

She said while there was concern the Canadian exchange rate would "have a significant impact" on the overall numbers, she said domestic travel appeared to have made up for the loss of Canadian tourists.

While Canada is an important market for the county, they are branching out beyond Canada and the traditional tri-state area of New Jersey, Pennsylvania

and New York markets. Clark said, in terms of travel shows, they are also targeting areas such as New England. She said Cincinnati, Ohio, has also "shown a lot of interest" in the area.

The county is also seeing growth in newer industries.

Clark said while the county is "at its core, a family destination," they have seen growth in youth sports and large tournaments, weddings and couple's traveling.

She cited one of the conference's workshops, the Taste of Tourism, when discussing the many wineries, breweries and distilleries the county has, as well as the county's local oyster farming and farm-to-table dining options.

"It's really not a niche market, as it has been considered so much prior to now," she said.

Diane Wieland, director of the Cape May County Department of Tourism, said the county increased its tourism expenditures by 5 percent in 2016.

"When you talk about 5 percent of \$6 billion, it's a lot of money," Wieland said.

Ben Rose, director of Marketing & Public Relations for the Greater Wildwoods Tourism Authority, said 2016 was also strong for the Wildwoods, coming close to the record-setting year of 2015.

He said the year was better than expected. For 2017, they will unveil a new advertising and marketing campaign with a strong digital focus.

The campaign will focus

on the Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York markets, as well as northern Delaware, eastern Maryland, upstate New York and Canada.

Rose expected a stronger year for Canadian tourism this year as the exchange rate improves for Canadians.

About 12 percent of their visitors are from the Quebec province area, according to Rose.

Although summer is still the strongest, it is not the only season at the Jersey shore anymore.

According to Rose, some fall weekends "are as big as the Fourth of July."

In Wildwood, top fall events include the Irish Fall Festival, classic car show, an Italian festival, the New Jersey Firemen's Convention and more.

"Hotels are full every single weekend, and traditionally after Labor Day weekend hotels would close, hotel owners would go to Florida and wouldn't open again until Easter. Now they're staying open all the way until October and into November," he said.

Atlantic City on upswing

Larry Sieg, marketing director for the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA), said 2016 was a challenging year, one of a few challenging years for Atlantic City.

However, Sieg saw brighter days on the horizon.

He cited Hard Rock purchasing the closed Trump Taj Mahal casino,

an observation wheel being built on Steel Pier, new housing being built in Atlantic City's inlet section, the construction of a vertical roller coaster and the Stockton University's plans to open a campus in Atlantic City.

"I think seeing the projects that are taking place here right now and the future projects that are in the pipeline is definitely a great and positive sign for the destination," he said.

"I think it's going to take a couple years. I think we're going to see growth in the three to five years and the destination certainly will be flourishing again," he said.

Sieg said 24 million people are still working in Atlantic City annually.

"The casinos are still thriving. Yes, we had to sort of level out the market, but that's happening all over the country, so Atlantic City isn't any different than any other destination," he said.

He said they are trying to get information out to consumers about the non-gaming amenities Atlantic City offers.

"For so long, everyone focused on the gaming side. Gaming will always and will continue to be a very vital part of this community, as well as a vital part of the economic engine of this state, but I think the non-gaming amenities and by continuing to add non-gaming attractions to this destination, it will certainly bring in an entirely new market segment and I think that's where the future is going," Sieg said.



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