

Fundraising under way to remove abandoned boat

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — There's a boat sitting on the bottom of Cape May Harbor, barely visible above the waterline, that presents a hazard to marine traffic.

The Nor'easter II sank in the harbor and there it remains. The owner is deceased and thus removal falls on the shoulders of the city. The cost estimates to raise and remove the boat are around \$30,000, something not in the city budget.

Jeff Elliott, chairman of the city's Green Team and pastor of Cape May Lutheran Church, is leading efforts to raise funds for removal of the boat. He presented a PowerPoint presentation during Cape May's Town Hall meeting July 8. A group has been created called "Friends of Cape May Harbor," which is an affiliate of Cape May Forum, he said.

A fundraising dinner will



Dan Shustack/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

The Nor'easter was abandoned in Cape May Harbor and has since made its way to the bottom. It now poses a navigation hazard and possibly an environmental one.

be held Sept. 26 at the Corinthian Yacht Club in Cape May, with tickets priced at \$100. Donations will also be accepted. Checks should be made payable to Cape May Forum and may be mailed to 509 Pittsburg Ave., Cape

May, NJ 08204.

According to Elliott, the boat is a hazard to navigation and a possible source of environmental pollution, as well as a bad first impression for people who visit the city by boat.

"Children sail in these waters, kayakers from the Nature Center paddle through here and recreational boaters need to dodge around it," he said. "The people who head up the dragon boat races are uncertain if they should continue them in our harbor because of this hazard to participants."

For those who ask why not get a church youth group or volunteers to pull the boat out of the water, Elliott said due to the time the Nor'easter has spent in the water, it would not stay in one piece.

"We would haul up the frame while the heavy engines would remain on the bottom," he said.

The boat would need to be salvaged piece by piece, which could include using divers, a crane and a barge, he said. Rather than raise taxes to remove the boat, Elliott suggested the project could be undertaken as a community project.

"If all of us just do a little bit, this is not a big project

for us to do," he said.

According to Star and Wave columnist and marine expert Mark Allen, the Abandoned Vessel Disposition Law (N.J.S.A. 12:7C-9) makes it unlawful for any owner to abandon a vessel

upon public waters and establishes timetables for impoundment. However, in the absence of an owner to pay fines and removal costs, the law has no provision for active removal of an abandoned vessel.

City prohibits release of helium balloons

By JACK FICHTER
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CAPE MAY — City Council passed an ordinance July 5 prohibiting the release of helium-filled balloons in the city due to the risk they pose to wildlife and marine animals, particularly when they are consumed by animals mistaking them for food.

The ordinance received opposition from Dale Florio, a balloon lobbyist based in Trenton. He presented several deflated balloons to each member of council. Florio said he represented the Balloon Council, a group of balloon manufacturers.

When a retailer sells a Mylar balloon, referred to in the balloon industry as a silver balloon, they are supposed to attach a small weight to it so it does not float away, he said. Balloon releases are not as prevalent today as they were in the 1990s, according to Florio. He said latex balloons are biodegradable and

should be hand-tied with no strings or any other attachment.

"We're also advising adults to monitor young children when they're playing with balloons because we've had to deal with the Consumer Product Safety Commission," Florio said.

He said there have been child deaths associated with balloons.

Florio said statistics from New Jersey beach cleanups from Clean Ocean Action showed 12 categories of debris more prevalent than balloons. During a 2016 beach cleanup, 580 fragments of latex balloons were collected along a 120-mile coastline, he said, which accounts for .4 percent of the 219,000 pieces of debris collected.

"The industry is urging people to hold onto their balloons," Florio said. "I'm not sure that litter of balloon fragments are the problem that maybe the ordinance suggests."

He said the Balloon Council has researched records and the suggestion that balloons are harming marine life is not founded. Florio questioned the ordinance posing a fine of as much as \$500 for an intentional balloon release. He said the city code offers only a \$100 fine for discarding bottles and glass.

City Solicitor Frank Corrado said the maximum fine for littering is \$100. Council amended the ordinance to reduce the fine to a maximum of \$100 for a balloon release.

Mayor Chuck Lear said a presentation council viewed on dangers to marine life from balloons was pretty compelling.

According to onegreenplanet.org: "When balloons make their way into the water, their tattered ends and floating pieces can resemble jellyfish or other sea life consumed by marine animals such as sea turtles, fish and dolphins."

When the pieces of latex or Mylar are mistaken for food and ingested, they can get lodged in the digestive tract, inhibiting animals' ability to eat and causing a slow and painful death by starvation.

"Wildlife can also fall victim to balloons and balloon strings when the pieces fall to the ground or onto trees and bushes. Birds have been found injured with ribbons wrapped around their beaks or wings and have strangled themselves when they become entangled in strings attached to trees or power lines. And just like marine animals, they can succumb to a painful death after ingesting balloons."

"The negative impact on animals and the environment prompted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and local chapters of the National Audubon Society to urge people to stop releasing balloons and instead find more humane alternatives that are safer for animals and our planet."

Raking

Continued from Page A1

authorizations to address the safety issues and in this case scarping, those high walls of sand," she said.

Hendricks said scarping happens too frequently, not necessarily as the result of a storm but due to the direction Cape May's beaches are oriented to ocean waves at the end of a cape.

For safety reasons, the scarps have to be addressed when they are discovered, prior to people going onto the beach, she said.

"It's really not practical for the city to get a permit every time a scarp is leveled," Hendricks said.

The Beach Safety Committee made a recommendation to the city, which was placed in the city's beach management plan application to DEP, that scarps could be removed by raking the beach, Hendricks said.

The work would involve dragging a log-sized object over the sand to level out the scarp with no excavating, she said.

"It is our hope the DEP understands this is all the city wants to do and will consider this activity to

be added to our permit as a special condition which allows us to do this on an ongoing basis," Hendricks said.

Beach Safety Committee Chairman Dennis DeSatnick said the committee was given the opportunity to work with every department head in the city. He said each department head and employee has cooperated to help improve beach safety.

"With the aid of the Cape May Beach Patrol, we reached out to 1,760 students, mostly at the elementary level," he said. "In conjunction with the Environmental Commission, we reached out to the Environmental Science program at the high school and put together a beach safety environmental program."

Cape May's Environmental Commission will meet with the Safety Committee at 6 p.m. Aug. 28, DeSatnick said.

Cape May honors volunteers

CAPE MAY — City Council honored the city's Fire Police and other volunteers during a Town Hall meeting on July 8.

Formed in 2004, the Fire Police help divert and direct traffic during fire calls, accident scenes and special events.

Also honored was Harvey Williams for serving as a volunteer firefighter in Cape May for 69 years. He joined in 1948.

Williams was Cape May's postmaster for 40 years and past emergency management coordinator. He served as a lieutenant and captain of Engine Company 53.

Wister "Barney" Dougherty was honored for serving as a volunteer firefighter for 62 years. He was first chief of the city's heavy rescue unit, a lieutenant and captain with Engine



Williams

Dougherty

Company 51 and served as chief of the volunteer fire department for 25 years.

Paul "Barkey" Lundholm was honored for 53 years of volunteer



service to the city's fire department. He served as lieutenant and captain of Engine Company 51 and was past president of the volunteer fire company.

Lundholm

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Wonder Woman PG-13 12:20, 3:40, (6:40, 9:35)
**Girls Trip (Thursday Premiere) R (7:00, 9:40)
Baby Driver PG-13 11:30, 2:00, (4:40, 7:10, 9:40)
**Dunkirk (Thursday Premiere) PG-13 (6:30, 9:00)
*No Passes (Fri-Wed) (Thursday)

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