



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

Page B1



NATURE CENTER HOSTS WREATH WORKSHOPS

Page A6



Sewell Tract dispute coming to a head

Legal wrangling between ECMA, DEP over 100-acre site may go to trial next summer

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The fate of the city's last undeveloped environmental resource, the Sewell Tract, may be decided by a trial beginning in June 2017.

The Sewell Tract is a 100-acre undeveloped plot in East Cape May whose origins date back to the 1950s. The acreage is the last

undeveloped land in Cape May.

Thomas Brodesser and Philip Robinson, who developed Village Greene in Cape May, purchased the Sewell Tract in 1951. In 1990, the land was conveyed to East Cape May Associates, (ECMA) also owned by Brodesser and Robinson. They sought to develop much of the 100-acre tract.

Ensuing environmental regulation both at the federal and state

levels frustrated ECMA's large-scale development plans for the Sewell Tract. Likewise, protracted litigation between ECMA and the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has led to the conclusion that ECMA's property interest in the tract will be considered the subject of a regulatory taking by the state for which the developer must be paid unless the state permits ECMA to

exploit enough of the tract to avoid that result.

In 2014, the DEP cobbled together a building development scheme, essentially offering for development the 20 to 25 acres on the northwest section of the tract known as Area II through what is known as the "amelioration offer," according to trustee Charles Hendricks of Concerned Citizens for Sewell Tract Preservation.

He said the process of generating the offer allowed the DEP essentially to disregard its normal protection standards, and in reality the offer was simply a sacrifice of environmental principles in order to avoid paying for ECMA. Concerned Citizens believes the amelioration offer is illegal and its mission is to have the offer

See Sewell Tract, Page A4



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Decking the halls in Cape May

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. Cape May Public Works employees have been decorating the newly refurbished Rotary Park for several days. The Christmas tree will be lit in a ceremony at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 2. See related stories about Christmas events on Page 2.

Long-delayed bike trail connector inching closer

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

RIO GRANDE — A number of hurdles such as utility pole guy wires in the way and residents who aren't keen on a bike path traversing a right of way on their property have delayed connecting the Lower Town-

ship and Middle Township bicycle paths.

At a Nov. 21 Lower Township Council, Erma resident George Doherty inquired about the progress of connecting the two bike paths. He noted Middle Township's bike path ends at Walmart.

"We're down to the last

two documents that need to be signed," Lower Township Manager Jim Ridgway said.

He said he spoke earlier in the day with the township engineer who informed him an environmental permit should be received for the project this week. Ridgway said the township still

needs Atlantic City Electric to sign off on the project.

"I can't tell you if that's going to be next week or it's going to be the following week, but we need a sign off on the timetable," he said.

Atlantic City Electric has moved some guy wires to

See Bike trail, Page A8

Synthetic drugs, heroin a deadly mix, Taylor says

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — An ever-increasing wave of novel synthetic — so-called "designer" — drugs is being detected in street heroin samples in Cape May County, according to Prosecutor Robert Taylor.

"It's been a trend we've been seeing for a while, and it's taken us a little while to try to figure out what exactly is in these bags of heroin," Taylor said. "It kind of varies from seizure to seizure."

Recently the Cape May County Prosecutor's Laboratory has found that mixtures of heroin, fentanyl and the synthetic opioid U-4770, which the Drug Enforcement Administration banned Nov. 14, were mixed together in one sample.

This is the first case in Cape May County in which the presence of U-4770 has been detected, Taylor said.

Law enforcement officers throughout the county are administering more naloxone (Narcan), a heroin antidote used to reverse the effects of opioids, and have started carrying multiple doses for quick

deployment.

"Heroin mixed in with fentanyl is very powerful and dangerous and can result in fatal overdoses all by itself. Now being mixed with this U-4770, it's even more dangerous and powerful," Taylor said. "That's why we're trying to get the word out there. It's so powerful that one deployment of Narcan will not bring them back. In some instances they're having to deploy the Narcan more than once to bring them back."

Taylor said the dangerous combination of illegal drugs can be fatal for first-time users as well as those addicted for years. These designer drugs are undetectable to the user and may be in any street drug, Taylor said, adding street drugs are now appropriately called "poisons."

This designer heroin is both homegrown and originating from various locations and entering the county, according to Taylor.

Abuse of heroin, an opiate painkiller, has become a national epidemic. Since 2004, there have been 5,217 heroin-related deaths in

See Synthetic, Page A3

Army Corps planning to stem Delaware Avenue erosion

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Following a request from the county, the Army Corps of Engineers Philadelphia District has investigated various options for reducing the risk of shoreline erosion on a section of Delaware Avenue.

Ongoing erosion is undermining the road, which serves as the main route for the delivery of supplies to the U.S. Coast Guard Training Center and threatens an underground sewer utility line that runs along the road. The sewer line was exposed by erosive forces during

Hurricane Sandy in October 2012 as well as during other historic storms, according to the Army Corps.

About 75 buildings are located along Delaware Avenue, primarily multifamily residential, and about 50 buildings on the Coast Guard Training Center are serviced by the sewer line. The sewer line is public infrastructure that is owned and operated by the city of Cape May. The Coast Guard base is a customer of the city.

According to the Army Corps, the preferred solution for the erosion is the construction of an approximately 2,200-linear-foot rip-

rap embankment along the Cape May Harbor side of Delaware Avenue. An Army Corps draft environmental assessment blames Hurricane Sandy for much of the erosion.

An Army Corps reports states Hurricane Sandy made landfall just north of Atlantic City on Oct. 29, 2012, as a "post-tropical cyclone." The Cape May Canal tide gauge recorded Sandy water level maximums as the highest on record. The storm surge plus simultaneous spring astronomical tides and wave action resulted in severe shoreline erosion on the harbor side of the city.

The Delaware Avenue project area was also affected by the nor'easter Jan. 22-24, which resulted in the highest tide level ever recorded in Cape May Harbor. The U.S. Geological Survey tide gauge in Cape May Harbor reached +6.6 feet on Jan. 23, which was higher than the maximum height recorded during Hurricane Sandy of 5.5 feet above the standard control height.

Longtime local officials that were present during the nor'easter indicated waves on the harbor were the highest they had ever witnessed, ac-

See Army Corps, A5



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Delaware Avenue leading to the U.S. Coast Guard base.



WASHINGTON INN

Open Friday and Saturday from 5pm

Holiday Gift Certificates make the Perfect Gift!

THE WINE BAR
Five for Friday

\$5

glasses of wine
appetizers specials

