



## House of the week

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## Follow rules, be patient for seed success

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# Bank Street one-way? No way, opponents say

## Residents, business owners object to plan aimed at creating parking spaces

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A move by City Council to make Bank Street one-way toward the center of town, along with creating 20 parking spaces on a portion of the road, met with a cold reception from business owners and residents Feb. 19 during a City Council meeting.

There was about 90 minutes of public comment on the topic as council held a hearing on an ordinance to make the changes.

Ultimately, the ordinance was tabled for further consideration but could resurface at a future meeting.

At issue: flooding on portions of Bank Street and Venice Avenue, the narrowness of Bank Street and losing a street favored by bicyclists for its safety.

Steven Miller, owner of restaurants at 410 and 412 Bank St., said he did not understand how eliminating half the width of the street would increase traffic flow. He said parking was available when he opened his busi-

nesses 35 years ago but it was removed to allow fire apparatus to navigate the street.

Terri Swain, owner of Swain's Hardware, which has an access road onto Bank Street, said Cape Island Creek affects Bank Street with ongoing high tide surges and flooding during hurricanes and winter storms.

Bank Street resident Terry Diubaldi said city officials and the Parking Advisory Committee discussed Atlantic City Electric's reconstruction of its substation at Elmira Street and Ven-

'Making Bank Street one-way in any direction would force bicyclists to use the heavily traveled Elmira Street.'

—Terry Diubaldi of Bank Street

ice Avenue at a November town hall meeting and in a private meeting with the Bank, Elmira, Venice and Broad Street neighborhood group. She said it was confirmed that no consideration of parking on Bank Street would be addressed until a flooding issue from Cape Island Creek was

resolved. An engineering study would take place in cooperation with Atlantic City Electric, with subsequent repair to improve drainage, she said.

"I was quite surprised when this ordinance proposal came about," Diubaldi said.

"Making Bank Street one-way in any direction would force bicyclists to use the heavily traveled Elmira Street," she said.

Ronald Diubaldi said he has a good view of the Bank Street

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John Alvarez/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

## Cape Aid Benefit Concert

The Salty Dogs Jazz Ensemble performs during the third annual Cape Aid Benefit Concert on Feb. 24 at First Presbyterian Church of Cape May. The event, hosted by A Voice for the Homeless of Cape May County, was a benefit for The Branches Outreach Center in Rio Grande, which provides food and clothing to the homeless. The concert featured local bands and entertainers who donated their time and talent. See a story on the county meeting with nonprofits on A4.

# Parking debate delaying public safety building

## City Council yet to name architect for the project

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — After a year and a half of work by the Public Safety Building Advisory Committee, the city seems to be no closer to constructing a new public safety building due to continuing discussion over parking issues.

City Council has not approved a contract with an architect despite the committee recommending a firm, USA Architects.

City auditor Leon Costello was expected to explain financing options for the proposed building and its impact on the tax rate at meeting of the committee Feb. 22 but was unable to attend at the last moment.

Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan said one of her biggest concerns was parking when putting the police and fire stations together on the

site of the current firehouse.

Committee Vice Chairman Barney Dougherty said one architect came up with a conceptual plan for the fire department with an area of 7,307 square feet and another with a plan of 6,300 square feet. He said the city's request for proposals (RFP) stated 4,140 square feet, which is about 280 square feet less than the fire department has currently. The RFP needs to be altered, Dougherty said.

The cost to renovate the Franklin Street School into a library is estimated at \$6 million, he said. He noted the Allen AME Church on Franklin Street that was damaged in a fire last year is not anxious to rebuild. Dougherty said the church has just eight members.

"There is a possibility the city could acquire that piece

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# Cape May seeks .9-cent rate hike

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Manager Neil Young presented his 2019 proposed municipal budget calling for a .9-cent tax rate increase.

The local purpose tax rate would increase to 35.9 cents per \$100 of assessed value, up from 35 cents last year. The local purpose tax in \$10.2 million.

Council is scheduled to introduce the budget March 5, with a public hearing and adoption of the budget expected April 2. Young noted council has the ability

to change line items in the budget until its adoption.

The budget totals \$30.8 million, with \$19.8 million earmarked for the general fund, \$2.6 million for the beach utility, \$1.3 million for the tourism utility and \$7.1 million for the water-sewer utility.

Over two years, the tourism utility budget has grown by 6.8 percent, a positive indicator, Young said, while the water-sewer utility declined 0.97 percent, which shows the city may have to raise water-sewer rates in a

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# Food pantry founder Manfre honored

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Jessica Manfre was named Military Spouse of the Year for District 5 and now is in the running to be named the Armed Forces Insurance Military Spouse of the Year in conjunction with Military Spouses magazine.

The award recognizes military spouses' important contributions and unwavering commitment to the military community and country, and gives recognition to military spouses from all branches of service.

The program receives nominations from the military community and civilians.

A panel of judges narrowed down the field to three spouses per service. Manfre, who set up a food pantry at Coast Guard Training Center Cape May during the partial government shutdown, was named military spouse of the year for District 5, covering the Mid-Atlantic

area from New Jersey to South Carolina, and is in the list of the top 18 spouses.

"It's determined 75 percent by a panel and 25 percent on voting," Manfre said.

The food pantry Manfre set up not only received enough donations for the Cape May base but was able to send food and household items to other bases, such as in Atlantic City. She said she held her breathe when the possibility of a second government shutdown loomed, but that threat has passed.

The large pantry was shut down last week and, according to Manfre, families stocked up and cleared out the inventory. Excess items will be given to The Branches ministry to the homeless in Rio Grande and the Community FoodBank of New Jersey, she said.

A continuing food pantry operates on base from a smaller space. She said the food pantry received many gift cards and she spent about \$2,000 per week to pur-



Provided

Jessica Manfre is in the running for the Military Spouse of the Year award.

See Food pantry, A3

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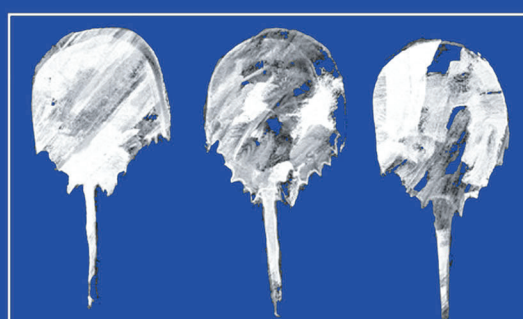
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