



## Community solar projects available to local residents

Page A2



## House of the Week

B1



170th YEAR NO. 12 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2024 \$1.00

# Panel seeks safer routes for walkers, bicyclists

## Committee-formed action plan to encompass Cape Island, part of Lower Twp.

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Heavy traffic, narrow streets and visitors to Cape Island for the first time all contribute to crashes, in particular those affecting pedestrians and bicyclists.

The first meeting of a steering committee for a Cape Island Safe Streets and Roads Program Action Plan took place March 13 at City Hall. The core of the group is Cape May's Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee,

which was joined by members of the governing bodies of Cape May Point and West Cape May. While a portion of Lower Township is included in the coming action plan, no representative of the township attended the meeting.

Last year, City Council awarded a contract to Greenman-Pedersen Inc. (GPI) to begin a traffic study and safe streets action plan for Cape Island to be paid for by a \$200,000 grant.

Dave Kuhn, a project manager with the engineering firm of

GPI, a former state Department of Transportation staffer, said he wanted to ensure the committee understood the requirements of the action plan, their role in the development of the plan, input of safety issues on Cape Island and update a stakeholder list.

"The idea is that it is an actionable plan that will help us to prevent roadway deaths and injuries on the public roads in Cape Island," he said.

Kuhn said the action plan grant provides a foundation for applying for funding for either imple-

mentation grants, which would cover design and construction or for supplemental planning grants to do additional research or planning.

A goal of the plan is to set a zero goal or major reduction goal of traffic fatalities and serious injuries on Cape Island, he said. Statistics show the percentage of drivers over the age of 64 on Cape Island is much higher than the state and national averages, Kuhn said.

He said the final action plan would be posted for access to

the public. Another traffic safety plan is being developed by the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization for four counties including Cape May County which is also being prepared by GPI.

The Cape Island action plan is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year, Kuhn said.

Engineer Julia Stepanenko, of GPI, said from 2017 to 2021, a total of 379 crashes took place on public roads on Cape Island. One

See Safer routes, Page A2

# Three sources will fund work on Promenade

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY- —The city's Promenade will see improvements from three funding sources, the most recent a federal grant of \$6.8 million administered by the state.

Last month, Gov. Phil Murphy announced the award of \$100 million in Boardwalk Preservation Fund grants to 18 municipalities to assist them in addressing the most critical and necessary capital needs of boardwalks in their communities.

Administered by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, the grant funding also aims to help shore communities remain vibrant tourism destinations in the long term by investing in state-of-the-art materials that increase storm resiliency and ensure longer lasting infrastructure.

The Boardwalk Preservation Fund is made possi-

ble through federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, which have been dedicated by the Governor and the Legislature to an array of economic recovery and revitalization projects across New Jersey.

Mayor Zack Mullock said March 5 the original grant application totaled \$20 million, so everything the city wished to undertake could not be accomplished in one phase.

During public comment, resident Jules Rauch asked what would happen if the city exceeded the \$6.8 million.

"I think we as a council are going to have to look at this and say, 'Are we going to dedicate any funds to this?'" Mullock said.

Deputy City Manager Justin Riggs said the city must contribute a 10 percent match for the Boardwalk Preservation Fund

See Promenade, Page A7



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

## Retiring Old Glory

West Cape May Boy Scout Troop 73 and Cape May VFW Post 386 held a flag retirement ceremony March 16 at Kiwanis Park in Cape May to dispose of damaged American flags in fire.

# West Cape moves plan ahead for its affordable houses

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Borough Commission passed a resolution endorsing and seeking court approval of an amended affordable housing plan, the final action before it moves to court for a combined fairness and compliance hearing.

The borough continues to have an obligation to the state to provide two affordable housing units under the third round of the Council on Affordable Housing regulations because accessory apartments were not constructed despite a program being in place.

At a March 13 meeting, affordable housing counsel

Eric Nolan said to meet its obligation, the borough decided to work with Habitat for Humanity to construct two units on borough-owned lots.

Last August, the borough entered into an agreement with Habitat for Humanity and amended its spending plan to support the project, he said. Nolan said the borough entered into negotiations with the Fair Share Housing Center because it had to amend its settlement agreement.

He said the Planning Board approved a subdivision of the borough owned property into three lots and an agreement was reached

See Affordable, Page A3

# West Cape budget raises tax rate .5 cents

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Borough Commission introduced its 2024 municipal budget with a half-cent increase in the local purpose tax rate, which will increase from 42.6 cents to 43.1 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

The local purpose tax levy is increasing from \$2,256,069 to \$2,305,448, an increase of \$49,379, or 2.19 percent.

The assessed value of property in the borough has increased from \$530 million to almost \$535 million.

The proposed budget uses \$650,000 of surplus

funds of an available \$1.1 million, leaving a balance of \$474,174.

Salaries and wages total \$734,050, up \$75,000 or 11.38 percent, from 2023. Debt service totals \$580,000, up \$24,000, or 4.32 percent.

At a March 13 meeting, auditor Leon Costello said Borough Commission could amend the budget at its April 10 meeting.

Borough Commission introduced an ordinance to establish a cap bank to ensure the budget stays within the state spending cap law. Costello said the state allows a 2.5 percent increase in appropriations and the cap bank takes the borough to 3.5 percent.

"We need that, or we'll be \$19,000 short if we don't have that cap," he said. "The ordinance for the cap bank will put you \$110 to the good, so we really can't spend any more money is what it comes down to."

He said the borough needs the ordinance to stay within the state spending cap.

Costello said the borough's surplus fund gained \$120,000. A penny on the tax rate equals \$50,000, he said.

Deputy Mayor George Dick asked Costello how he determined an appropriate surplus balance. Costello said the amount of surplus the borough uses as a revenue should

be able to be earned back during the year. He said last year's budget used \$500,000 and the borough earned that money back.

Costello said it would be foolish if the borough decided to use an additional \$50,000 to reduce the tax levy because that amount would probably not be earned back, putting the borough in a hole for next year's budget.

"This is my 50th year doing this and one thing I can tell you is that you'll spend more money next year than you did this year," he said.

A public hearing for the budget will be held during Borough Commission's April 10 meeting.



WINTER HARVEST FARM-TO-TABLE DINNERS  
AT LOUISA'S CAFÉ

Thaw the cold with a wintertime farm-to-table dinner experience unlike any other.

Reserve Tickets at [BeachPlumFarmCapeMay.com](http://BeachPlumFarmCapeMay.com)  
(609) 459-0121 • @BeachPlumFarm

Beach Plum