

Cape May Star and Wave

160TH YEAR NO. 30 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2014 75¢



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

Page B1



FATHER, SON RUN FROM CALIF. TO O.C.

Page A8



Cape May seeks state funds for Lafayette park

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city is applying to the state Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres program for a \$500,000 low-interest loan for phase one of the development of a Lafayette Street park.

The city held a public hearing July 15 to explain phase one of the project. The conceptual designs include playing fields, a concession stand, a dog park and basketball courts. Trails would be created into the wetlands area.

Grant consultant James Rutala

said the city applied for grant funding two years ago and was successful in purchasing the former Vance's Bar property on Lafayette Street.

He said there was stiff competition for grants and low-interest loan funding.

"I can tell you that this project scores well on really every criteria," Rutala said.

He said the positive aspects include the fact the project is along the gateway site to the city, has economic development potential, is located on Cape Island Creek and would offer passive and active recreation.

"It is significant the fact it is being done in phases, it is something Green Acres likes to be involved in and they actually fund phases as we go forward," he said. "They have already funded both a Green Acres acquisition grant and a Blue Acres acquisition grant for this property."

Rutala said the state likes to see comprehensive, well-planned parks. He said the project had a history dating back to 2008, when the property was discussed in a re-examination of Cape May's master plan, noting the city should acquire the 38-acre property that extends from Cape May Elementary School to St. Johns

Street.

From 2010 to 2012, the city worked with Temple University to develop very detailed concept plans that included meetings for public input, he said.

In 2002, the city developed a vision plan that focused on the Lafayette Street property and the need for more recreation within the community, Rutala said.

He said City Council applied for grants and bonded for the project.

Phase one of the project would focus on the open field areas of the future park.

He said there were parcels that

have not yet been purchased by the city, including the site of a former coal-gasification plant owned by Jersey Central Power and Light (JCP&L) that requires environmental cleanup.

Rutala said the mitigation site is not part of phase one of the project.

"For the application purposes, we would talk about phase one being the practice baseball fields, the multipurpose field and the picnic area including Dellas Field," Rutala said.

He said the DEP looks for projects that are ready to be built in the next

See State funds, Page A3

U.S. State Dept. has oversight of J-1 visa program

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WILDWOOD — J-1 work/travel visa holders are found working in Cape May County in food service, retail, amusements and laundry services. The overseas students arrive with the tourists and depart for their own travels when the weather cools and the visitor season wanes.

Robin J. Lerner, who oversees the J-1 program for the State Department as deputy assistant secretary with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, visited Morey's Piers two weeks ago.

Lerner previously spent one year working under then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. She also served as counsel for Sen. John Kerry on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, handling issues such as human trafficking, human rights, refugees and gender equality.

She that last year, about 80,000 students were part of the J-1 work/travel program.

Overseas university students can apply for a J-1 visa by working through an American sponsor.

Morey's Piers provides foreign workers with cultural education opportunities.

Page A2

"That's an organization that the State Department designates to be a sponsor of exchange," Lerner said. "Our consular affairs colleagues will adjudicate the visa based on the law."

The applicants go through a process with consulates before receiving a visa, she said.

J-1 students come to America during their college breaks. The program is privately funded and brings benefits to the employer and student, she said. The State Department writes the regulations that require a cultural aspect to the J-1s' work experience.

Valentina Sacaliuc, 23, of Romania, who is working at

See Oversight, Page A2



Deborah McGuire/Special to the CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Robert Bergeron, left, salutes John Fitzgerald prior to being presented with a plaque July 20 at Naval Air Station Wildwood. Bergeron trained at NASW in 1944 and later was awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses and a Gold Star for his actions in the Pacific Theater during World War II. It was his first visit to NASW in 70 years.

NASW honors decorated WWII pilot

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — Robert Francis Bergeron learned how to fly dive-bombers at Naval Air Station Wildwood (NASW) in 1944.

On July 20, at the age of 94, he returned to the site, which now houses a museum of the same name, to be honored in a ceremony. After receiving advanced dive-bomber training in TBF Avenger torpedo bomber aircraft 70 years ago, Bergeron went on to an outstanding career in the Navy that continued until 1969.

He was awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses and a Gold Star for actions during his tour of the South Pacific in late 1944. Bergeron flew the Curtiss Helldiver, a carrier-based dive-bomber aircraft.

With his wife, Jean, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren watching, Bergeron was presented a plaque

featuring a photo of him as a young pilot.

NASW Aviation Museum volunteer John Fitzgerald met Bergeron's son Terry during a presentation about the museum in Smithville.

Fitzgerald said Terry Bergeron showed him a photo of his father being presented a medal by Adm. Bull Halsey.

"Then I saw a second picture of him standing in front of a helldiver right out here on the apron," Fitzgerald said.

"I've won a few honors and I've given a lot of plaques out, nothing touches this one," continued Fitzgerald. "You're talking about a genuine American hero, and I am honored beyond all thoughts to be allowed to present this to Robert Francis Bergeron."

The two men saluted before presentation of the plaque.

"I'll put it where my children and grandchildren can see it," Bergeron said. Bergeron received his first Distinguished

Flying Cross as a lieutenant for heroism and extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight while serving as a division leader in a carrier-based bombing squadron on Oct. 13, 1944.

"In an attack on a heavily fortified enemy harbor near Japan, despite extremely adverse weather conditions and in the face of intense anti-aircraft fire, he flew through the clouds and pressed home his attack at low altitude with the result that severe damage was inflicted on enemy shipping and harbor installations," reads the medal's description.

His second Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded for heroism and extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight in operations against Japanese shipping in Manila Bay on Nov. 25, 1944.

See WWII pilot, Page A4

School-withdrawal vote approved for Cape May

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A board of review of the state Department of Education on July 18 approved allowing a voter referendum on the question of whether Cape May should be permitted to withdraw from the Lower Cape May Regional School District.

The board of review included state acting Commissioner of Education David Hespe.

Voters in Cape May, Lower Township and West Cape May will go to the polls in a special

election, which may not be scheduled until December, according to Cape May Deputy Mayor Jack Wichterman, who attended the board of review hearing.

Wichterman called the hearing a "nonevent" because both Lower Township and the Lower Cape May Regional Board of Education have endorsed a referendum.

Both sides presented their case, he said, followed by a short adjournment. Wichterman said the board recon-

See Referendum, page A5

N. Cape May man faces charges of sex with student

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — Cape May County Prosecutor Robert L. Taylor and Middle Township Police Chief Christopher Leusner announced the arrest of 34-year-old Middle Township High School teacher Joseph Towns, of North Cape May, on charges

of sexual assault, endangering the welfare of a child, criminal sexual contact, official misconduct, possession of child pornography and obscenity of persons under 18.

The state alleges that while employed by Middle Township High School as an English

teacher, Towns committed the crimes against a student there from October 2012 through October 2013, while he had supervisory or disciplinary power over the victim by virtue of his occupational status.

At about 1 p.m. Tuesday, Towns surrendered at the

Cape May County Prosecutor's Office, where he was placed into custody. Judge John C. Porto set bail at \$175,000 cash/bond, with no 10 percent option. He was processed and lodged in the Cape May County Correctional Facility until he posted the required bail.

Searching for the best wines?

TAKE A FLIGHT TO YOUR DESTINATION
A TASTE OF THE GRAPE, THE SUN AND THE WIND
WINE FLIGHTS AT

THE WINE BAR

WASHINGTON INN + 801 WASHINGTON STREET + 609-884-5697 + WWW.WASHINGTONINN.COM