

## Lower Township scraps sidewalk plan

Continued from Page A1

Boulevard to Pinewood Avenue to improve pedestrian safety.

The project proposal called for a 6-foot-wide sidewalk with a raised curb that would include marked crosswalks and drainage and American with Disabilities Act improvements.

According to the grant application, in addition to improving pedestrian safety, the project would have enhanced access to existing beach paths. Drifting sand from dunes partially covers some areas of the southbound lane of Beach Drive.

Lower Township Grants Coordinator Colleen Crippen presented a PowerPoint presentation covering the specifics of the project. The audience called out comments, including profanity, interrupting the presentation numerous times.

Crippen said the state Department of Environmental Protection issued a permit for the proposed project in January. She noted Township Council approved a resolution only to apply to the county Open Space Board for funding for the sidewalk project.

"There was no project in the works, it was an application to apply for the funds," Crippen said.

She said there were rumors circulating that the town-

ship was going to develop the beach. Crippen noted the township purchased the beachfront in 2002 from developers to prevent such actions.

She said there were no plans to build a fishing pier, sell beach tags or remove a sand dune, only to build a sidewalk for pedestrian safety. Native vegetation would have been planted to reinforce the dune, Crippen said.

The neighborhood is not in a flood zone. She said the worst storm surge from Hurricane Sandy was 9 feet in New York's Battery district.

"Your neighborhood elevation hovers 12 to 18 feet," Crippen said.

Stewart Farrell, director of the Coastal Research Center at Richard Stockton College, said he had been working with the township in regard to FEMA flood zone maps dealing with expansion of "V" zones and "A" zones. He said the shoreline has been retreating about 2 feet per year since 1832, which allows beachgoers to walk out 500 to 600 feet at low tide.

"The beach is actually a wind-blown pile of sand sitting on a bluff of Cape May Formation, which is sand and small gravel pieces that is 120,000 years old in terms of its geologic history," he said.

Farrell said some dune sand would have been taken for the sidewalk project but it

would have been moved over the crest of the primary dune into a valley between a second dune closer to the shore line.

"The net change in the volume of sand in that profile is essentially zero," he said.

Farrell said Lower and Middle townships could receive sand on bay beaches for an ecological restoration through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers if Congress funds the project.

During a question and answer period, a Town Bank resident suggested the funding instead be used to fix roads, which elicited cheers from the audience. Neville said the county open space funding was only available for recreation not for paving streets.

Resident Lois Jacobs said her family has owned a home on Beach Drive since 1946. She brought photos of the aftermath of the Nor'easter of 1962 showing damage to the dune along Beach Drive. She said if the township removed soil and vegetation, the whole ecosystem would be in jeopardy.

Caspian Avenue resident Pat Molinari expressed fears that home values would be diminished by construction of the sidewalk. She said improvements would bring many more people to the beach, which neighborhood residents did not want.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Stewart Farrell, director of the Coastal Research Center at Richard Stockton College, said some dune sand would have been taken for the sidewalk project but that it would have been moved over the crest into a valley between dunes.

## Tourism campaigns target baby boomers

Continued from Page A1

and own 59 percent of second homes in the county, she said. "We're advertising in publications they tend to read,

like AAA Magazine, a lot of travel guides, they like print," Wieland said. "About 47 percent of our customers are baby boomers."

The report noted boomers

tend to have a higher income and travel more than any other age group. Nearly 44 percent spend \$1,500 to \$3,000 while on vacation at the shore.

According to the county

tourism report, baby boomers continue to dominate the travel market. With a population of 1.5 billion, they are still the largest domestic and international travel segment and control a huge amount of wealth. They will inherit \$8 trillion and control 70 percent of all wealth in the U.S. They earn \$2 trillion annually and have more disposable income than any other age group, spending 74 percent more on vacations than non-boomers. They take 3.7 trips per year and spend \$157 billion on vacation annually, according to the report.

Those introduced to Cape May County early in life tend to establish a tradition of re-

turning, especially if a second home is passed down from generation to generation, Wieland said.

"It's something they are comfortable with, something that they are familiar with, and they want to share the memory they had as a child with their children and grandchildren," she said. "When they say 'down the shore,' it's their own little piece of paradise, and for so many in the Philadelphia market, it's us."

There are geographic ties between the county's towns and certain section of Philadelphia, Wieland said. Folks from some parts of Philadelphia may all vacation in Sea Isle

City, while others may go to Ocean City, she said.

The county Department of Tourism launched the Boomerang Campaign in July 2013, promoting fall events and attractions during the height of the season to target the largest mass of visitors to the county. Using cooperative marketing grant funding from the state Division of Travel and Tourism, the department was able to develop a fall campaign that focused on convincing vacationers to return, or boomerang back, to get a totally different experience after the summer.

"We were targeting those who are not tied to the school calendar," Wieland said.

The tourism survey showed 48 percent of the respondents were couples traveling without children.

"They are staying at their jobs longer, they have more disposable income, more chance to vacation," she said. "That trend is here for the next decade. We'll see the younger half of the baby boomers dominating what the others had in the past."

According to the county tourism report, the 48,350 second homes in the county provide a built-in audience for the shoulder season. Many second-home owners use their property only as a vacation home, but 53 percent rent their property for all or part of the summer season. For those who rent out homes for income, the shoulder season is their time to escape to the cape, the report said. The county's second-home owner survey indicated 35 percent are using their vacation homes throughout the year, coming in the fall, winter and spring.

The report states boomers are the fastest-growing segment on Facebook. They are not only the world's wealthiest segment, they also are the most demanding. Customer service is crucial and they tend to have little tolerance for bad service. They tend to prefer traveling in the shoulder season and take vacations for rest and relaxation, according to report.

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\*\* No Passes