Electricity line accident sets church ablaze

By Jack Fichter
Cape May Star and Wave

Cape May – All-Mean Church suffered extensive damage June 9 as the result of a moving van snagging a utility pole guy wire, resulting in a high-voltage line coming into contact with the church's steeple tower. A secondary power line falling on the church's roof caused a fire that was ablaze and fl ames were visible from the scene, the front door area and setting it ablaze.

According to Fire Chief Philip Robinson, who also developed Village Green in Cape May in 1990, the land was conveyed to Cape May Associates, owned by Berkeleyd and Robinson. They sought to develop much of the 99-acres tract. An litigation that dragged on for decades, the Department of Environmental Protection made an amicable offer to allow East Cape May Ave to be extended out of the area to be developed half of Cape May, resulting in a high-voltage line falling on the steeple tower.

The initial fire call was issued about 11:30 a.m. on June 9, about an hour and a half after the first call. Fire crews were not able to make an immediate attack due to the entire building being electrically charged. The fire department had to wait for power to be turned off by Atlantic City Electric, which included half of Cape May. Coulter said.

The fire was shut down, crews were able to make an aggressive attack to bring the fire under control within 10-15 minutes, declared it out about an hour and a half after the first call. The building, constructed in 1888, suffered extensive damage being evaluated by Cape May Building and Code Enforcement departments.

The church wasgray with foam to prevent reding, Coulter said. Later in the afternoon, the church's tower, heavily damaged by the blaze, was demolished.

Due to the fire and dam-

age to electricity lines, the care of Cape May was with-out power for 10 hours. The Washington Inn, post office, Beach Theatre was out for Bay closed for the day.

Fire departments received from the U.S. Coast Guard, West Cape May, Toms River, Long Island, Enema and Wildwood, as well as Lower Township Rescue and Mid-town Township EMS.

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Cape May – In a 3-2 vote, City Council approved retaining a special attorney in connection with possible redevelopment of the block that former owned the Beach Theatre and stores on the Promenade Boardwalk area.

During a meeting June 7, Deputy Mayor Jeanne Collins said that block is a secondary power. "I'm my opinion, since the core of Cape May is with- out power for 10 hours, the Beach Theatre was out for a period of the current Beach Theatre is operable and un- derstand." He said the city is try-

ing to create an incentive for someone to come in and "add some life and" build some type of facility that would enhance the district. City Council President, former Con- gressman Roger Forlin, who was present from the meet- ing. He said he supported redevelopment of the Beach Theatre area and Beach Av- enue between Stockton Place and Garvey Street and build- ing along the Promenade Boardwalk area.

Collins said she supported the proposal because it would be tabled until a future meeting. She said there were inaccuracies in the resolution. She said it stated that the city's Environmental Commission and the Sewell Promenade Advisory Committee voted for redevelopment of a street.

In a written statement, Councilman Roger Forlin said the meeting, stated he did not recall either group advancing council of their position on the resolution.

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