

Ten LCMR athletes sign letters of intent for collegiate sports

Page A9



House of the week

B1



167th YEAR NO. 24 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2021 \$1.00

Planners reject demo of motel, lot subdivision

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Planning Board denied an application in a 4-4 vote for the demolition of the 25-unit Mount Vernon Motel to subdivide the property into three undersized lots for future construction of single-family homes.

During a meeting June 8, attorney Ron Gelzunas appeared on behalf of the applicant, Howbrow Inc. The motel at 301 Beach Ave. is owned by the Hober family, longtime Cape May residents.

Tiffany Morrisey, planner for the project, said the motel was

built in 1964 and has no special architectural features. Proposed was a 6,200-square-foot lot that would have frontage on First Avenue, and two 6,000-square-foot lots, one on the corner of Beach and First avenues and another on Beach Avenue. Morrisey said the lot sizes were consistent with others in the neighborhood.

"There have been efforts to try and sell the motel. COVID had a change in the hospitality market and the way the world has worked in terms of what people we're looking for and what has happened basically over the past two years," she said. The applicant was seeking a

variance for lot sizes, which are required in the C3 zone to be 11,250 square feet or larger with a width of 75 feet. She said the applicants were seeking only subdivision and had no plans for development. Any party that built on the lots would have to conform to the bulk requirements.

Morrisey said of 40 residential lots in a three-block area of the motel, 28 are undersized with nine at 6,000 square feet or less.

New structures with more appropriate architecture would advance the historic preservation aspect of the city, Morrisey said.

"We believe that the three single-family lots would create a develop-

ment that is more consistent with the surrounding residential nature of the area and would create an opportunity for improved development design and technique and enhancement more consistent with what you are looking for in the city of Cape May," she said.

Morrisey said many of the nearby homes have a Victorian flair but the nearby motels have more of a 1960s design.

Mayor Zack Mullock, a Planning Board member, said he agreed three homes would be the least-intensive use of the property.

Board engineer Craig Hurlless said variances were needed for

lot size, width and frontage for lot 13.01, variances for lot size and width for lot 13.02 and variances for lot size, width and frontage for lot 13.03.

Hurlless said the current motel could not be built today without numerous variances. He said future development must follow the city's stormwater management regulations.

Board member Mike Jones said the demolition of the motel meant the city would lose 25 transient units. Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan, a Planning Board member,

See Planners, Page A3

City to ban smoking on Washington Street Mall

Move intended to help control use of cannabis

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council introduced an ordinance that would ban all smoking on the Washington Street Mall, including vaping devices.

According to Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan, the reason council considered the ordinance was to help enforce the prohibition of marijuana smoking on the mall.

At a June 1 meeting, Councilman Chris Bezair said he spoke with merchants in the mall's Business Improvement District (BID) to determine their opinion of a smoking ban. He said he received an email from the BID chairperson containing 15 responses with majority in favor of the smoking ban.

Bezair said there were some negative comments.

"One was their concern for overregulation and the negative affect it may have with visitors, they come here to relax, and they are told, no, no, no, no this, no that," he said. "The other major concern was they were for it, but we can't enforce no dogs, so how are we going to start enforcing no smoking?"

There was also a question of employees of some of the mall businesses that walk onto Draper Way or Carpenter's Lane to smoke, Bezair said.

A public hearing will be held for the ordinance at council's July 6 meeting.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Sgt. Tony Genaro, left, Ptl. Kara Murphy and Special Officer Class II Stephen Scheer with their body cameras. All officers in the city began wearing the cameras June 1. There also are multiple cameras in each patrol vehicle.

Say 'Cheese!': City police now wearing body cameras

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — All Cape May police officers began wearing body cameras June 1 while on patrol.

The Axon Body 3 Wearable Body Camera also functions as a camera and DVR combination to collect video and audio evidence. Officers also are using in-car video cameras.

According to Police Chief Dekon Fashaw, the use of body-worn video camera technology will be valuable to accurately document events,

actions, conditions and statements made during investigative stops, field interviews, arrests and critical incidents. The use of body cameras will follow the guidelines issued by the state attorney general and the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office, along with policies set by the Cape May Police Department.

Although it does not capture everything the officer sees, it will be beneficial for court and document a clearer picture of what happened during an incident, according to Fashaw.

The body camera is normally affixed to the officer's shirt or vest in the middle of the chest. The camera documents the officers view of incidents.

Inside police vehicles there are two separate cameras, one front and one rear, to document a broader part of the incident. The front camera is affixed to the side of the rearview mirror in all vehicles and faces forward. The rear camera is affixed to the ceiling of the vehicle in the back seat.

See Body cameras, Page A2

Lower cuts tax increase in half with COVID aid

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township approved its 2021 municipal budget passing an amendment to cut an earlier proposed tax increase in half by using \$2.2 million in federal COVID stimulus money.

Council delayed approving the budget in April because the state had not established rules of how municipalities could apply federal COVID stimulus money.

Township Council introduced its 2021 proposed budget on March 1 featuring a 2-cent local purpose tax increase. At that time, Township Manager Mike Laffey said the tax levy was \$22.1 million compared to last year's \$21.3 million, an increase of \$855,770.

The amount of surplus supporting this year's budget had decreased from 2020 by \$186,359 or 4.45 percent.

At a June 7 council meeting, Laffey said the township is receiving half of the \$2.2 federal money this year and the other half in 2022. The township reduced the amount of surplus money being used in the budget by \$500,000.

"We added \$262,000 in capital expenditures including police vehicles, in-car cameras for police vehicles, solar speed limit signs and computers," he said.

Laffey said the purchases could be made without the need of a capital ordinance and are fully funded in the budget and will not incur debt. The amount to be raised by taxes was reduced by \$365,168 reducing the tax increase from almost 2 cents to 1 cent, he said.

Estimated tax bills will be mailed June 30 for third quarter payments with a due date of August 1. The township is sending estimated tax bills because the county has not adopted its budget.

Property owners will receive a final tax bill for 2021 and preliminary 2022 by Sept. 30.

Lower Township Rescue Squad folds, Inspira taking over EMS

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — Lower Township Rescue Squad will cease operations June 19 when Inspira takes over emergency medical and ambulance services.

The squad has operated as a non-profit organization since 1950.

According to squad captain Tom Conrad, who also is a township councilman, the rescue squad's financial condition has been deteriorating for years and the COVID

pandemic contributed to its demise.

Township Manager Mike Laffey said Inspira will place two ambulances in the township and eventually three ambulances from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. May 15 through Oct. 15. He said Inspira originally was set to take over EMS services Sept. 1.

Early in the year, the township issued a request for proposals (RFP) for EMS services and received no response, Laffey said. The RFP was reissued in March and Inspira was the sole bidder at a cost of \$36,000 per year.

Inspira was scheduled to respond with Lower Township Rescue Squad until Sept. 1. Laffey said the rescue squad notified the state it would cease operations after June 19.

"Therefore, we worked a little bit harder with Inspira to try and get them to come into Lower Township sooner than Sept. 1 and they've agreed to do that," he said.

Laffey said the shutdown announcement from the rescue squad happened very quickly.

He said if there is a need for more ambulances in the township,

Inspira will consider more units. He said Inspira would provide mutual aid to neighboring communities as needed.

Inspira will operate from the public safety building at the Cape May County Airport but will position ambulances in different sections of the township for optimum response time, Laffey said.

He said Inspira held a job fair last week and interviewed 36 applicants, many of who were Lower Township Rescue Squad employees.

Conrad said he believes every

emergency medical technician who works for Lower Township Rescue that wanted to be interviewed was interviewed and offered employment.

Laffey said Inspira advertised per diem positions, part-time permanent positions and full-time positions.

"Their goal was to try to hire people that live in this area," he said.

Inspira has 350 employees for EMS and basic life support services

See Rescue squad, Page A3

You Deserve The Best Cancer Support!

Wednesday, June 23 | 12pm - Getting Healthy After Cancer Treatment

Now that cancer treatment is complete, you may find that getting back to "regular" life is harder than you expected. Join us to talk about nutrition, exercise, dealing with side effects, and more. This webinar will focus on practical and realistic expectations to assist survivors with quality living.

Speakers: Vickie Riskie, MSN, RN, OCN, NE-BC & Anneliese Kuemmerle, MS, RD

For information or to RSVP to this free event, please visit shoremicalcenter.org/events



ShoreMedicalCenter.org

100 Medical Center Way, Somers Point, NJ