



House of the week

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'Bernhardt' performance at Cape May Stage

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164th YEAR NO. 34 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 22, 2018 \$1.00

Attorney explains redevelopment process

Residents question need for designation, continue argument against potential change

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Residents attending a town hall meeting Aug. 13 grilled a redevelopment attorney hired by the city to present the nuts and bolts of declaring an area in need of redevelopment or rehabilitation.

James Maley, a redevelopment attorney for 30 years and mayor of Collingswood since 1997, was the key speaker at the well-attended town hall meeting in Convention Hall. He said he met several times with Cape May's governing body

prior to the meeting.

Mayor Chuck Lear said the meeting would focus on what redevelopment is, how it is used and how it may be useful to Cape May.

"You might think we drove the redevelopment topic into the ground at the January Planning Board meeting," he said.

But Lear said the city did not previously offer a proper orientation to the state's redevelopment law and its application.

Before a standing-room-only crowd Jan. 9 in City Hall Auditorium, the city's Planning Board voted 7-2 against declaring the

area encompassing Washington Commons, City Hall, the firehouse, Macedonia Baptist Church, the Franklin Street School, the Blue Rose Inn and other buildings between Franklin and Ocean streets an area in need of redevelopment.

At that time, board member Bob Elwell said if the buildings in the block were substandard, dilapidated and/or obsolete, as stated in a "Determination of Need Report" authored by Planning Board engineer Craig Hurlless, "Code enforcement would be shutting them down."

Maley said redevelopment offers

an opportunity for a community to have better control over how, when and if development takes place in their town. Maley noted if someone wants to build something that goes against the zoning code, the applicant can apply for a variance and take it to court on appeal if denied.

Redevelopment allows towns to act more like a business, he said.

"It allows a negotiation process, it allows as public a process as it can be or as quick a process as it can be, depending on what it is," Maley said.

"The conservation and rehabilitation of any structure or im-

provement satisfies the state law as a redevelopment area," Maley continued. "A building that is in not great shape can be declared an area in need of redevelopment that under the law equals a blighted property."

He said designating a redevelopment area does not mean every property is an unfit property. Maley said redevelopment is a tool for a community to decide where, when and how it wants to develop. "It also gives you the control to say 'no,'" he said.

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Rising Nation River Journey

Lenni Lenape finish trip at Sunset Beach

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

LOWER TOWNSHIP — Beginning in Hancock, N.Y., members of the Lenni Lenape nation began a river trip by boat that ended Aug. 18 at Sunset Beach.

Paddlers from the Lenni Lenape nation and friends arrived at Sunset Beach and were welcomed by Rising Nation's drumming and singing, followed by a friendship dance. A Lenape culture program followed Sunday at Rea's Farm in West Cape May.

On Aug. 19, a treaty signing and finale celebration took place at Rea's Farm. The treaty states that those who sign acknowledge the Lenape as the indigenous caretakers of these lands and agree to support the Lenape tribe in their own unique way. Although this is not a legal, binding document, it is an agreement of heart, mind and spirit, according to Rising Nation.

"Its words carry the integrity of our ancestors and the hope of our children. Those organizations and individuals who sign this treaty will forever be a part of our mutual history and the stories that we tell



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Members of the Rising Nation welcome paddlers from the Lenni Lenape tribe with drumming and singing Aug. 18 at Sunset Beach in Lower Township following the Rising Nation River Journey down the Delaware River and through the bay.

our children. They must make the commitment to "stand up well" as a living testament to the fact that environmental, cultural, and historical awareness is the key to our future," according to a press release.

Shelly DePaul, chief of education and language, said the Rising Nation River Journey has been undertaken every four years since 2002.

"We travel down the entire Delaware River and meet with conservancies and other people along the way who would like to sign our treaty," she said.

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John Alvarez/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Members of the Lenni Lenape gathered Aug. 19 at Rea's Farm in West Cape May for a treaty signing and finale celebration.

Squatting, drug activity alleged at Lepore's Pit

Neighbors say vacant farm now campsite for vagrants

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — The abandoned site of what was once to become a vineyard has become a campsite for vagrants and drug users.

During a Lower Township Council meeting Aug. 20, Erma resident Brianna Turner said some streets between Holly Shores Campground and Waggin' Tail Pet Store, off Route 9, back up to a privately owned farm that connects to a wildlife area known as Lepore's Pits. She said residents are concerned with drug activity taking place on the farm.

Turner said activity on the farm is not being monitored.

"One owner does not live in the country and the other owner does not live in the county," she said. "It has been vacant and people are able to do what they want in there for over five years."

She said people are riding bikes and walking through neighborhoods to

get to the farm to go to the wildlife area, where they have taken up residence. Turner provided photos to council of makeshift campsites.

"There's a ton of needles, heroin baggies," Turner said. "My biggest concern is in two weeks, we have 30 kids in our neighborhood that are going to be standing and waiting at the bus stop."

For the past five years, people living illegally on the farm and pits have been entering the neighborhood from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., Turner said. She said school bus stops are located along the farm frontage.

"It is extremely concerning to me that it continues to go on and on," Turner said. "We just had a death a few weeks ago in the pits."

Lower Township police found a Villas man dead in the pits. An autopsy conducted by the Southern Regional Medical Exam-

See **Squatting**, A8

Cape May elementary considering raising cost of child care program

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Cape May City Elementary School may have to raise fees for its before- and after-school child care program known as Children Reaching Excellence Weekly (C.R.E.W.) due to a drop in participation.

According to Business Administrator John Thomas, the program had a surplus its first three to four years of operating but participation

dipped last year. He said the school has maintained the same fee for the past three to four years.

Before fees are raised, Superintendent Victoria Zelenak said the school would wait to see how many children are enrolled in the new school year. She said the program does not begin until the second week of school.

When the program first began, the Board of Education subsidized the program but it became self-sufficient

for a number of years. During a meeting Aug. 16, board member Shawn Deigan asked if additional expenses were associated with the child care program. Thomas said there was initially a subsidy for children from public housing through Rutgers University. He said the program spends about \$200 to \$300 per year on supplies.

Zelenak said the fee is \$3 for the before-school care and \$12 for the afternoon program. She said there was no extra charge on early dismissal days for providing care from 1 to 4:30 p.m. Attendance in the program has been low Fridays, Zelenak said.

"What about the idea of raising the rate?" asked Dawn Austin, board president. "It would cost you a lot more to pay for a sitter."

Board member Larry Reed said the number of children participating in C.R.E.W. varies from day to day. Information on the program is available on the school's website at cmcboc.

org. Click on C.R.E.W.

In other business, the school is seeking an armed security guard. Reed said the city does not support the school using a Class III police officer as a security guard.

"We are hiring our own person and that person will be armed," he said.

Austin said the Lower Township and Wildwood Crest school districts employ their own security guards. Reed said he believed the police depart-

ment did not want to take on the added liability of an armed security officer that they would need to supervise in a school environment.

The guard will receive additional school resource officer training, he said.

The school is also seeking an office secretary who can also act as a substitute teacher when needed. Zelenak said the applicant must be certified as a substitute

See **Elementary**, A4

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