

Board clears path for city to ban artificial turf in yards

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city's Planning Board has found a proposed ordinance prohibiting the use of artificial turf is consistent with the city's master plan.

At a March 26 meeting, Planning Board engineer Craig Hurless said the historic preservation element of the master plan addresses appropriate historic dis-

trict streetscape. He said the master plan also addresses conservation and landscaping.

Planning Board member Bob Gorgone said he served on an ad hoc committee on artificial turf that included representation from the Historic Preservation Commission, Shade Tree Commission, Zoning Board, and the Environmental Commission.

"Ultimately, we came to

a consensus that we would prohibit the use of artificial turf as part of the landscaping of properties, whether it be in the historic district or any place within Cape May, that's for residential use," he said.

Gorgone said the committee suggested if a property owner wanted to add artificial turf in some manner, other than landscaping, such as a gazebo over a concrete slab or a second-

floor deck, they could apply to the Planning Board for a variance or waiver.

Artificial turf would be prohibited as use as landscaping or in gardens. He said if a property owner has already installed artificial turf, it would be "grandfathered in until it needs to be removed because it's outlived its useful life."

Gorgone said homeowners would not be permitted

to replace the artificial turf with same.

The committee suggested an exception for commercial use such as miniature golf courses. Gorgone said the city would also be granted an exception such as installing artificial turf in a batting cage in a municipal park.

Planning Board solicitor Richard King said a request for a variance for artificial turf would be heard

by the Zoning Board unless it was part of a site plan approval.

The recommendation of the Planning Board will be sent to City Council which has the option of introducing an ordinance to prohibit the residential use of artificial turf. Council delayed introducing an ordinance to ban artificial turf last November until comments were received from the Planning Board.

Promenade upgrades

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said.

The first phase of the project is making repairs to the concrete and exposed timber, upgrading the ADA ramps, some resurfacing of the existing surface plus the engineering and permitting for the second phase of work, which will cost about \$7 million including Cape May's 5 percent cost share, he said.

Dietrich said the second phase of the project would widen the Promenade over the existing seawall and build a resiliency wall with seating, using the same design as the seawall extension of

the east side of the city.

The cost estimate for that phase of the project is \$13 million to \$15 million, for which the city could apply for a FEMA mitigation grant to help fund the work, he said.

"I've met with each of the council members to go over the project and scoping, and I anticipate having two or three consultants working on the project," he said.

Dietrich said all encumbrances have to be completed for the preservation grant by the end of the year. The city has until 2026 to spend the money, he said.

"The thought would be to have phase one

designed over the summertime and to have construction maybe over two seasons, phase 1A in the fall/winter upcoming and then the second one during the 2025-2026 winter season," Dietrich said.

During public comment, former councilwoman Stacy Sheehan asked for clarification on where the Promenade would be widened.

Dietrich said concrete and stone revetment exist on the ocean side of most the Promenade. As part of phase one, the city will apply for engineering and permitting for minor widening and construction of a seating wall to increase resiliency and

flood height, he said.

Councilwoman Maureen McDade said the city would be prepared if it was able to secure funding for phase two, which includes the widening.

A full assessment of the Promenade prepared by Colliers Engineering is available on the city's website. The assessment proposes a program of concrete repairs to the Promenade and applying a protective coating to the concrete wall and bring 10 existing ADA ramps up to code and repair where necessary, plus the construction of six new ramps.

The assessment recommends widening the Promenade between Jackson Street and First Avenue. It notes the timber bulkhead on the south side of the Promenade is in a state of disrepair with "areas experiencing significant deterioration and loss of retained earth, leading to the formation of sinkholes on the Prom-

enade walking surface."

The widening of the Promenade would facilitate the installation of a steel bulkhead seawall in front of the deteriorated timber bulkhead and enable extension of the seawall height, establishing a dedicated sitting area, according to the report.

Colliers Engineering proposes the construction of a sitting/seawall extension along the south side of the remaining Promenade sections starting from the area between Philadelphia Avenue and Madison Avenue and continuing along the entire length of the Promenade to the west end.

That would increase the height of the existing seawall by approximately 2 feet, thereby elevating the flood protection level from an average of 10.5 feet to 12.65 feet.

The assessment states the existing walking surface on the Promenade is in fair condition but is showing signs of age in

the form of cracking, fading and settlement.

"We propose to resurface and coat the walking surface to prolong the useful life of the asphalt," states the report.

The assessment gives the Promenade at Patterson Avenue a grade of "D," noting the timber bulkhead along the road is in poor condition and is missing planks and the top board is weathered and loose.

The Promenade at South Broadway is also given a grade of "D" for the timber bulkhead being in poor condition and the concrete wall in need of repairs.

The assessment offers a conclusion that a preservation effort not only bolsters the resiliency of the Promenade against storms but also enhances accessibility for individuals with mobility impairments, ensuring its structural integrity for future generations of tourists and residents.

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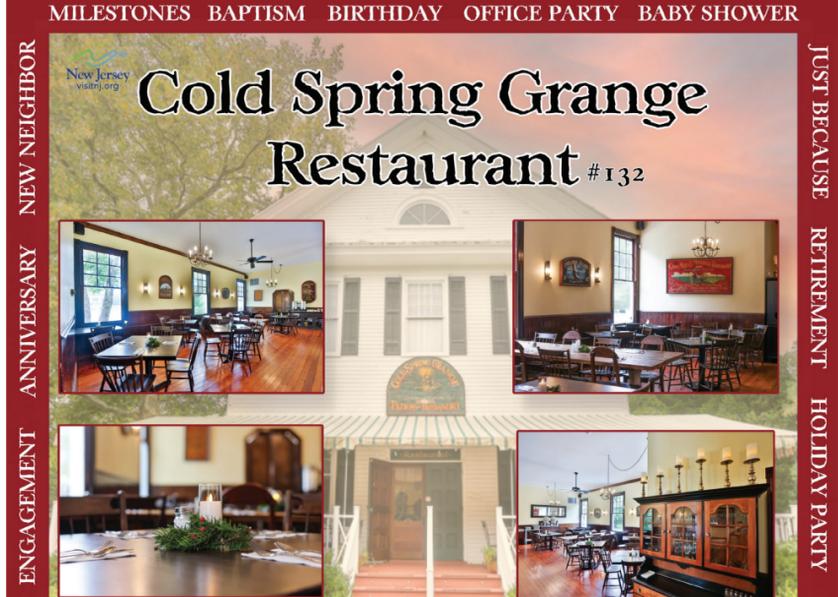
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