Short-term rental ordinance tabled for more work

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — For the second time in a month, City Council delayed introducing an ordinance that would require registration with the city of all homes used for short-term rentals and have mercantile license fees and base mercantile license fees on the square footage of rental properties.

The ordinance proposed raising mercantile fees for residential rental properties from a $75 flat fee for all sizes of residences to $125 for 4,000 square feet, $250 for 4,001 to 5,000 square feet, $400 for 5,001 to 6,000 square feet, $650 for 6,001 to 7,000 square feet and larger.

Each room occupied for sleeping purposes by at least one person must contain no less than 70 square feet.

At a Dec. 7 meeting, Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan noted a lot of controversy surrounding what the ordinance states and what it does not state. She suggested passing only the base structure section of the ordinance. Sheehan noted all owners of residential properties purposed for a 30-day rental will have to show a non-hoarding license or a 15-bedroom house license to the city clerk, fire official and police.

“Is that something we need to look at,” Mayor Sheehan said. “I think we need to look at a lot more strategically and include every related rezoning from what we talked about the last meeting.”

The council is not on the ordinance in its entirety and make recommendations before it reappraises on council’s agenda.

“Those fees haven’t been changed in 15 or 20 years even though rental prices have gone up astronomically,” said Mullock.

Mullock said he believes council agreed to the new fee schedule for residential rental properties. He noted the strain on the city’s tax base, which will require an upgrade or replacement of the dissolved building plan, was coming from buildings and large houses.

The council approved sending the initial rental ordinance to a meeting, she said. She said properly enacting regulations requires the city council to do their job.

Mullock said 300 years ago, the population of the city was larger than it is today.

That speaks volumes of what Cape May is,” he said. “It’s a large segment of the accommodations industry that supports this economy, but there are clear regulations that can help control this. The city council needs to work with council and said Mullock needed to be addressed in the ordinance, Mullock said.

City solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said there was “no time bomb” that is going to go off if you don’t take this step.

He said the city has a fee schedule and a system for fire inspections, mercantile license and an enforce- ment mechanism in place. “If you didn’t just amend that fee schedule, your fees will be out of date,” he said for inspecting and licens- ing mercantile, said that fees.

Deeanne Mullock, chair of the town’s Munici- pal Codes and Reve- nue Advisory Committee, also spoke to city council and said it was important to have the ordinance clear and concise.

He said and believed it was mistaken for council to not introduce the ordinance. Crowley said the ordinance had “a lot of new stuff in it” and needed to be discus- sed properly.

“Cape May is trapped in a transformation into a huge commercial enterprise,” said Mullin. He said Cape May was larger than it is today.

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Theresa McRae suggested passing only the ordinance. Crowley suggested the ordinance be in- troduced.

Mullock said he had no con- cerns about the time frame, but if you don’t do every- thing in there that the city is asking for, you are somehow handcuffed or ex- cluded.

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Please note that the Bureau of Fire Safety, Township of Lower has provided the below schedule of meetings for the year 2022.

DATE HIGH LOW A.M. P.M. A.M. P.M.
22 9:40 10:14 3:01 4:07
23 10:17 10:56 3:41 4:46
24 10:58 11:42 4:26 5:28
25 11:43 5:17 6:12
26 12:35 12:35 6:16 7:01
27 13:33 13:34 7:22 7:54
28 2:32 2:38 8:30 8:40
29 2:32 2:43 9:36 9:44

Please note that the Bureau of Fire Safety meeting schedule for April 27th and September 28th, 2022, will be attended by the Lower Township Fire Commissioners of Fire Districts 1, 2 and 3. These meetings will be held at the Lower Township Mu- nicipal Building, 2600 Bayshore Road, Villas, NJ.

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Cape May Star & Wave
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2021

Our community can build a world class environmental center

Cape May Point is bounded by St. Mary’s by the Sea – an environmental and historic architectural holy site – and the historic community of Cape May Point. Cape May Point is being developed near the Atlantic Flyway, at the nexus of the Atlantic Ocean, the Delaware Bay & the Delaware River, where one of the most important predatory birds migrations exists in all of the continental United States. Monarch butterflies and other insects gather for favorable conditions to continue their impressive migration. Where just as majestic is that which is unseen, the millions of fish and mammals which call the Atlantic Ocean right off our shores.

St. Mary’s by the Sea, a historic landmark in Cape May, will become The Cape May Point Science Center which will advocate, educate and encourage people to appreciate the nature in which we live.