City hopes Kiwanis Park upgrades done by mid-summer

By JACK FICHTER Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council approved a \$960,000 contract with Command Company Inc. for refurbishment of Kiwanis Community Park on Madison Avenue to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The project was offered for rebid when initial bids were too high.

Chief Financial Officer Kevin Hanie said funding for the project was coming from capital budget line items for open space acqui-

Department of Community Affairs Small Cities Community Development Block Grant for \$400,000.

During public comment, former councilwoman Stacy Sheehan said \$550,000 was a lot of money to spend to make the park ADA compliant when the city's water tower needs repainted, which could cost \$1 million.

She said the water tower is overdue for repainting, which must be completed

sitions and improvements, every 10 years. City Manimprovements to buildings and grounds and a state for repainting the water.

Physick Estate from Madispect walkers, autistic children, speech and sight impediant and get some benches inside, Welsh said. tower are in the 2024 capital budget.

Mayor Zack Mullock said the city had been waiting for a park on Lafayette Street for close to a dozen years. He said he hoped Kiwanis Park would be completed by mid-summer.

"It will be such a nice thing for our school children and our youth in the city," Mullock said.

It will also provide a walkway to the Cape May Tennis Club and the Emlen

park will include a new play structure and soft sur-

faces for safety. Last year, landscape architect Nichol Welsh, of Engineering Design Associates, said playground fixtures in the park were outdated and the park had about 20 trees in decline.

The DCA grant for handicap accessibility is not for just one type of disability but is for all "abilities and inabilities," serving those in wheelchairs and

parking handicap space will be provided on

the site with six additional

parking spaces created for

a total of 12. A gazebo near

She said the poured-inplace soft rubber surfaces in several areas would be about 4 inches thick.

NOTICE TO WEST CAPE MAY WATER CUSTOMERS 2023 WATER MAIN FLUSHING SCHEDULE

Water mains in the Borough of West Cape May will be "flushed" to remove the build-up of rust and sediment. This procedure will help improve the quality of drinking water. While flushing does not "cut off" the supply of water, it will "stir up" the rust and sediments in the water lines.

Customers should **REFRAIN** from doing laundry.

Flushing dates are as follows:

May 8, 2022

MYRTLE AVENUE-CENTRAL AVENUE

(EAST OF BROADWAY)

May 9, 10, 11, 12 2023 (WEST OF BROADWAY)

Flushing will occur between 7 am & 3 pm.

Any questions, please call the Borough of West Cape May Water Department

609-884-1005 ext. #108

Harris

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the family Bible.
"I didn't find this Black doctor in there, but I saw a host of names I hadn't heard of. They were all family members," Harris said.

She learned James Still was an herbal doctor who taught himself medicine and lived in the Medford area, which is where the "tall pines" reference came from. She also learned he was the brother of William

Still family was large. "I found out that the first Black to come to Ocean

City was a Still," she said.
"Our connection to the Still family is rather remote. My father said we were related, but to me it's rather remote.'

Jacob Still, she noted, opened the first saltwater taffy shop in Ocean City. His business was in the Brower Building at Eighth Street and the boardwalk.

After her conversation with her aunt, she decided her contribution to the family history would be to pick one person, do the research and give the information to her aunt.

Little did she know what

she was starting. "I picked John Brooks Thompson because I liked the name. It turned out he was this great-grandfather who had come here right after turn of century, in 1900, and had this business handling baggage at the train station. He lived right at Seventh and West Avenue. He died in the 1920s so I never knew him but his house was only a block

away," Harris said. John Brooks Thompson was originally from Salem City in Salem County and his wife, her great-grandmother, also was from Sa-

lem County.

She was able to trace the line back to her greatgreat-grandfather was born about 1805 and died in 1892 back in Salem. Harris said she tries to take back every family line into the 1700s, but couldn't quite get there with her great-grandfather.

This was supposed to be one contribution, she said, "but I was hooked."

"How can your greatgrandfather live a block away and I didn't know it? And to boot was one of the founders of my father's church?

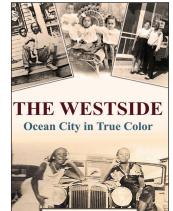
She now lives in Upper Township and she has to drive down a little dirt road to get there and has to

go by an old cemetery.
"For years I had been passing the cemetery where (my great-grandfather) was buried with-out ever knowing it," she said. "I think that's enough to get you hooked on the story. And learning about my family. In the process I was learning about other families and I had to spread out to get the big picture."

Harris has been doing research on her family for 30 years or so and as she did it, she began to get calls from other people asking her to help with their family history.

She added their histories to her tree on ancestry.com, a gift from her daughters, because the computer helps her re-

search. "I found so many people did not know their family history either. They knew even less than I did and when I shared the information, there is always a lot of emotion and a lot of tears. They were so happy and relieved to know who they were and how they fit in this world. I still help a



lot of people because it's

really rewarding."

"As I attach people to my family tree, it becomes a community tree," she added with a laugh. "I have profiles on over 80,000 people."

She said the large number of people isn't cumbersome because she does profiles one a time, some long, some short. She is now known as an Ancestry

The company asked her to split up the tree because it was so big, but she decided not to because then she would have too many trees. Her tree used to be public, but she made private because she got so many requests she couldn't get to her own work. She also said people were copying the information but not taking the time to verify it. Just because she puts something down in her notes, it might not be correct, Harris explained.

She does volunteer information if she gets mesand volumes" of it. The Ocean City Histori-

Now she has "volumes

cal Museum asked her to join its board because it realized it was lacking history about the African-American population in the resort. Harris agreed with the proviso she could use the museum's resourc-

es.
"The deal was, I'll help you if you help me. They have information here that's good. You start tying it all together. That's how I started work with museum. They showed interest in getting some African-American history here in the city. I thought that was a good thing."

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