

Volunteers cleaning up Civil War-era cemetery

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Several very tall trees lay across headstones in a cemetery that once was the site of the first black settlement in the southern part of the county. In addition, Union Bethel Church was once on the grounds.

Over the years, Union Bethel Cemetery has had periodic maintenance from volunteers but nature creeps back in with downed trees and weeds. Lower Township Mayor Erik Simonsen said a cleanup was conducted at the cemetery the week of Feb. 13.

"It's basically a graveyard that features residents from Lower Township as well as others that

have fought in the Civil War," he said.

Paul Shulte, a science teacher from the Richard M. Teitelman School, took a group of students to the cemetery to assist in the cleanup two weekends ago, Simonsen said.

Lower Township employee Judy Gillis told Township Council about the cleanup at a Feb. 22 meeting. Public Works provided a dumpster.

"Those kids worked their hearts and souls out," she said. "We'd like to give them a shout out and some credit."

"These kids exceeded all our expectations," Gillis continued. "Six adults said, 'There was no way we're going to get this dump-

ster full.'"

Another cleanup is scheduled to begin at 11 a.m. March 4. The cemetery is located down a path off Tabernacle Road near the fork in the road with Fishing Creek Road.

"Anybody can bring blowers, rakes, chainsaws, we need it all. We'll take all the help we can get," Gillis said. "It looks good now but it needs a little bit more work done."

A headstone at the entrance to the cemetery states, "Gravesite of nine black sailors found on Delaware Bay beach in Lower Township, circa 1850." The headstone was placed in the cemetery by American Legion Post 193, Cape May.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Another cleanup at Union Bethel Church cemetery is scheduled for 11 a.m. Saturday, March 4.



Lower Township officers honored

The Coalition Against Rape and Abuse presented awards to Lower Township police Ptlm. Stephen Flitcroft, second from left, and Cpl. Robert Hartman on Feb. 22 during the Lower Township Council meeting. CARA representative Nikki Nichols presented purple ribbon recognition awards to the officers for their exemplary treatment of domestic violence victims and their advocates.

Armed intruder arrested in Villas

ERMA — Lower Township police arrested a knife-wielding intruder after he forced his way into a Villas residence and fought with two occupants of the home, authorities said.

Officers Jordan Saini and Kenneth Walker responded

to a residence on Fulling Mill Road in Villas at about 9:38 p.m. Feb. 20 for a report of an armed intruder.

Upon arrival, they made contact with the reported intruder later identified as Michael A. Wollaver, 36, who resides on Locust Road

in Villas.

According to police, Wollaver was fighting with the occupants of the residence on the rear porch. The officers immediately intervened and attempted to take Wollaver into custody. He resisted their efforts and attempted several times to elbow one of the officers in the face. The officers were successful in taking custody of Wollaver after a short struggle.

Victims and witnesses stated Wollaver knocked on the front door of the residence wearing a mask and wielding a knife. A resident opened the door and Wollaver attacked one of the male occupants, forcing his way into the home. A struggle ensued through the first floor of the home and a second male occupant became involved. Wollaver attempted, unsuccessfully, to slash the second occupant with the knife. The knife was knocked to the floor and the mask Wollaver was wearing came off. The fight continued out the rear door of the residence onto the rear porch where officers made contact.

Wollaver was transported to Lower Township police headquarters, where he was charged with burglary, two counts of aggravated assault, resisting arrest, possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose and unlawful possession of a weapon. Wollaver was lodged in the Cape May County Jail, where he awaits further adjudication.

DRBA approves four leases in industrial park at airport

ERMA — Delaware River and Bay Authority officials announced four leases for the new light-industrial building at 251 Ranger Road in the Cape May Airport Industrial Park.

The DRBA Commissioners unanimously authorized the lease arrangements at the January monthly meeting. The new leases represent 7,500 square feet of the 15,000-square-foot building.

"Working with Cape May County officials, we're focused on creating an environment where businesses can flourish at Cape May Airport," said Thomas J. Cook, executive director at the DRBA. "The airport is currently undergoing a significant transformation to improve infrastructure and add facilities that will attract new companies, facilitate the growth of its existing tenants and create new job opportunities for the residents of Cape May County. We're just getting started."

The first four tenants include SRL Floor Covering,

Surfside Custom Marine Canvas, George's Auto Repair and a gym/training facility.

SRL Floor Covering, which currently occupies 1,500 square feet of existing space in the business park, is relocating and expanding to 3,000 square feet in the new building.

The owner of Surfside Custom Marine Canvas — a canvas and upholstery fabrication shop looking to expand and grow the business — is leasing 1,500 square feet at the new facility.

George's Auto Repair, a strong anchor tenant, is relocating to the new space, while a fourth tenant plans to establish a gym and training facility in a 1,500-square-foot section of the building. Tenant fit-out is expected to begin in March and continue into the summer.

According to Victor Ferzetti, chief financial officer for the DRBA, additional businesses are coming.

"We continue to have commercial, industrial and re-

tail prospects who have expressed interest in being part of the airport business community," Ferzetti said. "Local interest and business activity has been incredible and it appears we may need more space."

In June 2016, the DRBA began construction on a light-industrial building on Ranger Road, west of the intersection with Hornet Road, which is currently under county construction. In January, the 15,000-square-foot "core and shell" building was completed and current plans call for four finished units, three at 1,500 square feet each and one larger 3,000-square-foot unit. The remaining sections of the building are available for fit-out in 1,500-square-foot increments. The site plan also envisions the construction of a similar building nearby.

For information on prospective business opportunities at Cape May Airport, call Michelle Griscom at (302) 571-6482 or email michelle.griscom@drba.net.

Airport redevelopment

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DRBA and also with the township to try and determine what makes the most sense for the future steps the airport is taking," said Arsenault.

He said those discussions led to the request for Lower Township Council to adopt a resolution referring to the Planning Board the question of whether or not the airport as a complex, or some subset of the complex, should be designated as an area in need of redevelopment.

"That sounds scarier than in actuality it may be," Arsenault said.

He said the process requires cooperation and "give and take" among the county, the sponsor of the project and the township as the ultimate governing body.

He said a redevelopment plan could in rare circumstances lead to rezoning of the area down to the level of a single parcel of which the airport is considered. Arsenault said nothing the county or DRBA is proposing in the next steps of a redevelopment plan seeks to alter local zoning. The county believes economical redevelopment and revitalization can occur in the office complex park under the strictures of local zoning that has been adopted

as part of the township's master plan, he said.

After hearings take place before the Planning Board, a report developed in cooperation with the county and DRBA would be referred to Township Council for adoption.

"The adoption of an approved municipal redevelopment plan triggers several things on state and national level that could make the industrial park an even more attractive of a location for tenants to come in to," Arsenault said. "It can trigger for example state tax incentives, it can trigger waivers, it can trigger eligibility for certain programs."

Such incentives would assist the county and DRBA in marketing the airport as an engine of economic development.

"We think it's important to take those steps so that we are in the best position possible, we have maximized all leverage we can on both a local, regional, state and federal level to put as much incentive for folks to invest in Cape May County, specifically the airport," he said.

Arsenault said the county had an idea of what type of industries may want to locate to the airport but it needed a marketable plan to be sent to key industries with the entire process starting with the Planning Board.

He said the DRBA recently constructed a multi-tenant building at the airport and the county has made infrastructure improvements to Hornet and Ranger roads.

Arsenault spoke of the future demolition of the Everlon building. He noted environmental concerns

with the property due to past manufacturing processes on the site. He said a redevelopment plan could aid in environmental remediation costs for the DRBA and county.

"That building will not be cheap to remediate," Arsenault said.

He said final demolition plans were underway. Township Manager Jim Ridgway said the county plans to have the Everlon Building demolished by June 2018.

The airport is divided into several classes of property: aviation use which is managed by DRBA and retained properties which the county controls, Arsenault said. "Excluded" properties include those providing county services such as Fare Free transportation and the historic sector including Naval Air Station Wildwood museum, he said.

Arsenault said if township identified a property as advantageous but it was located in a sector of the airport under county control, it would partner to try to bring the project to fruition.

DRBA also has as part of its charge the development of new businesses coming to the airport, he said.

The county will retain the Everlon property, Arsenault said.

"When that building is down, that site is clear to be developed into a multi-tenant office park of the county's own construction, again to try and hopefully draw in to the county and the township those high tech businesses that would find a presence on the airport to be advantageous but also any other industry that is compatible with your local zoning," he said.

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DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
1	9:44	10:08	3:22	3:46
2	10:31	10:58	4:13	4:32
3	11:23	11:53	5:09	5:23
4		12:22	6:10	6:21
5	12:57	1:31	7:18	7:25
6	2:08	2:45	8:29	8:33
7	3:19	3:56	9:37	9:41
8	4:26	4:59	10:39	10:43

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