

INSIDE



THEATER

Lower Cape May Regional opens 'Sweet Charity' tonight, **B1, 2**

CAPE MAY

Sherlock Holmes Weekend: The Mystery of the Music Boxes: Can you figure out whodunnit? **A3**

NATURE

Is it time to go fishing yet? Lou Rodia has the answer, **B5**

Time to plant those poppies, **B5**

Inside: Our Spring Brides special edition!

MARCH TIDE TABLE

		HIGH		LOW	
		am	pm	am	pm
3/13	12:45	1:17	7:12	7:07	
3/14	1:52	2:31	8:22	8:16	
3/15	3:06	3:50	9:35	9:30	
3/16	4:22	5:03	10:44	10:41	
3/17	5:28	6:04	11:43	11:44	
3/18	6:24	6:55		12:34	
3/19	7:13	7:40	12:38	1:19	

State to pay 60-percent of Beesley Bridge restoration

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE - The state has issued a memorandum of agreement to Cape May County indicating the state would pay 60-percent of the approximately \$20 million it would take to repair and open the Beesley's Point Bridge.

Freeholder Director Dan Beyel said county and state officials met with the state transportation commissioner Monday and received the memorandum of agreement indicating the state would pay \$12 million toward the cost of repairing the bridge, which

has been closed since June 2006. The county would pay the other \$8 million with tolls collected from the Beesley's Point Bridge.

Cape May County Bridge Commission director Stephen O'Connor said the Beesley's Point Bridge would become part of the county bridge system, but would be operated like none of the other five bridges. He said 60-percent of the tolls collected on the Beesley's Point Bridge would be applied to debt service on the bond needed to pay for the restoration. The other 40-percent would go to operation and maintenance costs. According to O'Connor, about 3,000 vehicles per day or

about 1.7 million each year were using the Beesley's Point Bridge before it closed. With vehicles paying 60 cents each way, the bridge raised around \$860,000 in its last year of operation. O'Connor said the state would pick up the \$1.3 million in debt service for the first three years while the bridge is being rehabilitated.

Once the bridge is open the state would pay 60-percent of the debt service, or about \$784,000. The county would pay the remainder, or about \$313,000 in debt service. O'Connor said once tolls are being collected, 60-percent of that amount would go to paying debt service. The remain-

ing 40-percent would go to maintenance and operation costs. O'Connor said the goal is for the bridge to eventually pay for its own upkeep.

Additionally, O'Connor said the union representing Bridge Commission employees has agreed not to insist on union for scale wages for employees at the Beesley's Point Bridge. The agreement was to retain former employees who are on familiar terms with local residents who would again use the Beesley's Point Bridge.

State Sen. Jeff Van Drew announced the news of the agreement at the beginning of the Transportation Conference, gave a word of caution concerning potential delays. He said the bridge is still privately owned, and the owners still owe the state \$1 million from a previous loan. Van Drew said the money was put into bridge repairs, and still needs to be paid back with interest.

Secondly, the attorney general's office has to make sure the bridge is free of litigation before the deal is finalized.

"The lengthiest process will be with the attorney general's portion," he said. Van Drew said his hope is that a deputy attorney general would be assigned to the case.

Van Drew said the Beesley's Point Bridge is a

major concern for Cape May County. He said he became acutely aware of how serious it could be during his participation on an Evacuation Task Force.

"Evacuation is a serious concern across the state, from Monmouth to Cape May County," he said.

He said the task force was concerned with infrastructure and timeliness, and the scenario in Cape May County was not good.

"The real truth is it's going to be tough," Van Drew said. "The Beesley's Point Bridge being closed puts us at a serious disadvantage."

He said the bridge was not just a convenience, but a matter of public safety. He said a real crisis could occur if the Great Egg Harbor Bridge is closed due to an accident. The bridge does not have shoulders, and traffic tie-ups would prevent ambulances from reaching Shore Memorial Hospital.

Van Drew also called it a matter of "fairness" and "respect," saying this situation would not be allowed to happen anywhere else in New Jersey. After dealing with the problem for three and a half years, Van Drew said, the governor and the commissioner of Transportation have

Please see **Bridge**, Page A2

Polka Dot.Com gala



CCA gala committee members and YAP art teachers, Tina Giamo and Janet Payne show off their "dots" with YAP students (from left to right) Izaah Richardson, Quinn Bithell, and Lilly Swan. Additional polka dot-themed artwork created by YAP participants will be displayed at the Polka Dot.Com event on March 14.

CAPE MAY - The Youth Arts Program (YAP), a free program run by the Center for Community Arts (CCA), has been busy creating decorations for CCA's annual gala. This year's theme - Polka Dot.com will celebrate the Dot.

This community gala fundraiser takes place on March 14 from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. in the Congress Hall Ballroom. The Ballroom has been donated courtesy

of the Congress Hall Hotel. There will be dancing to the sounds of the Dr. Cheeko band while guests dine on a variety of foods donated from local restaurants as well as scrumptious desserts and a cash bar. The suggested attire is none other than polka dots and prizes will be awarded in three categories (men, women, and youth) for the most creative use of the dot in one's outfit or accessory. There

will also be a silent auction featuring artwork, gift certificates, and prize baskets.

Tickets are \$40 in advance and can be purchased at the CCA office, 712 Lafayette Street, Whale's Tale, 312 Washington Street, and at Swain's Ace Hardware, 305 Jackson Street. The cost at the door is \$50.

The Youth Arts Program is now at three locations,

Please see **Gala**, Page A13

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY - The Cape May Historic Preservation Commission voted to approve a new demolition permit for the Coachman Holdings project, which includes the demolition of the Coachman Motor Inn and Rusty Nail bar/restaurant and replace them with a new three-story hotel and 190 seat restaurant.

Sandy Montano, the senior project manager for the Coachman project, asked the HPC to extend the demolition permit because demolition could not be completed, and construction begun before the moratorium went into effect.

HPC solicitor Robert Fineberg said, generally, approvals from the HPC can be extended beyond the two-year limit, with the exception

of demolition permits, which are only good for a year and cannot be extended.

"You would have to treat this as a new application for demolition," Fineberg said.

However, Fineberg also told the HPC members they could make the decision to issue the new demolition permit based on the previous resolution to grant a permit. A memorializing resolution was recorded on Dec. 11, 2006, and expired on the same date 2007. The HPC voted 7-0 to grant the new demolition permit.

Montano said Coachman Holdings is still in the process of getting technical drawings approved by city construction officials. She said the project has already received approval from the Planning Board and the HPC. The Coachman Motor Inn is

Please see **HPC**, Page A2

Wilbraham Mansion now considered a hotel, say boards

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH

Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY - On Tuesday, the joint West Cape May Planning/Zoning Board determined the Wilbraham Mansion to be a hotel, rather than a tourist guesthouse, eliminating the need for certain variances.

The decision, and subsequent votes, cleared the way for Wilbraham Mansion owner Dough Carnes to add a three story addition on the back of the historic structure, which now operates as a 10-room lodging facility.

Carnes was ordered to stop work on his addition after learning he did not have site plan approval. According to his attorney, Robert DeSanto, Carnes went to West Cape May zoning officer Norm Roach and asked what he could build on the nearly 30,000 square-foot lot behind the Wilbraham Mansion. After consulting the zoning ordinance and speaking with Carnes' architect, Roach told Carnes he could build an additional 12 units, and a building permit was issued. Roach said he never talked about numbers of units.

After the stop work order,

Carnes learned he would have to get relief for parking space requirements and buffers. In addition, if the Wilbraham Mansion was a guesthouse it would need a use variance to host special events. As a hotel, it would not.

Board attorney Brock Russell advised the joint Planning/Zoning board to first determine if the Wilbraham was a hotel or a guesthouse, and then it would know what variances needed to be dealt with.

The zoning ordinance describes a hotel as "a dwelling having three or

more individual sleeping units and which is designed for transient travelers not permanently residing." The description of a tourist guesthouse defined it as "any residential appearing structure for transient use, which when

viewed does not appear to be a hotel/motel."

Carnes' attorney argued that the Wilbraham Mansion shares common characteristics with national motel chains like Best Western, Days Inn or Ramada.

Additionally, the owner does not maintain an onsite residence, which is characteristic of a bed and breakfast or guesthouse.

Ronald Galzun, an attor

Please see **Hotel**, Page A13

WCM Mayor 'up in arms'

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY - Mayor Pam Kaithern of West Cape May joined the fight for local autonomy at the War Memorial in Trenton, last week, joining other local officials objecting to the loss of state aid.

Kaithern said the League of Municipalities sponsored a meeting with officials from the state Division of Local Government Services, Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Joseph V. Doria Jr., and acting Treasurer David Rousseau. She said the state made a presentation on cuts in state aid for small municipalities.

"They are going to eliminate state funding for municipalities with less than 10,000 people," she said.

Kaithern said about 200 people were expected to attend the meeting at the War Memorial, and some 400 showed up. Kaithern said most were upset, as she is, that the state has arbitrarily made this decision, while providing no documentation showing small towns are less efficient than large towns.

"We have four statutory employees (in West Cape May) and they are all part time. We have shared services, we have bought into the plan, we have shared services and participated with our neighbors," she said. "Now instead of rewarding us they are taking away state aid. They should take it away from towns that are not doing what they should be doing."

She said West Cape May eliminated its police force, shares ambulance service, water service, utilizes county

health services, and so on. She said now the aid is arbitrarily being taken from small towns and given to large towns.

"We've eliminated full time positions, gone to part time people, and it's made it hard to function. We've sacrificed to maintain autonomy," she said.

Kaithern said most municipalities have already calculated state aid into their budgets, which include municipal contracts and agreements, and now they are being told there won't be any aid.

"This will affect tax rates, budgets..." she said.

Kaithern said 12 out of 16 municipalities in Cape May County have year around populations under 10,000.

"But what are they in the

Please see **Mayor**, Page A2



Photo by Harry B. Scheeler, Jr.

Star 2 runs aground

A 75-foot fishing boat with three people aboard ran aground Saturday 25-yards off the coast of Wildwood Crest. The Coast Guard received a call at 2 a.m. the morning of March 8 reporting the Star II aground. Wildwood Fire and Rescue arrived on scene and transported the three people aboard to shore. A commercial salvage company was hired by the owner of the boat to remove the 200 gallons of fuel aboard and towed the fishing boat from the beach Tuesday.