



House of the week

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Spring flowers popping up all over

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165th YEAR NO. 13 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, 2019 \$1.00

City OKs architect for public safety building

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Councilman Mullock: Police, fire stations should be separate, cost less.
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By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — In a 3-2 vote, City Council approved a professional services contract for \$142,000 with USA Architects for the first two phases of the design of a public safety building to house the city's fire and police departments. Council members Zack Mullock and Stacy Sheehan voted against awarding the contract. The amount of the contract

represents 20 percent of the total proposed contract. The first two phases of the contract cover programming/concept design and schematic design.

During a council meeting March 19, Police Chief Tony Marino noted while the Public Safety Building Advisory Committee was unanimous in its decision to recommend USA Architects for the project, the committee was not unanimous in its choice to build a combined fire and police station on the current

site of the city's firehouse.

"I know that there will be push-back on that. However, myself and Chief Coulter talked numerous times and we are very comfortable with the idea of the fire department and police department being unified in that location as well as making space for OEM (Office of Emergency Management) and lifeguards in that building," Marino said.

A number of members of the police and fire departments were

present at the meeting to support the project.

Public Safety Building Advisory Committee Vice Chairman Barney Dougherty said USA Architects submitted as part of its proposal a concept drawing for a Cape May public safety building and for another in Collingswood. He said both buildings measured 30,000 square feet.

Dougherty suggested the city

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Oldest home demolished

Cape May Point explores historic preservation commission

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — The borough's oldest home was demolished March 19.

A number of members of the public have reacted, at least on social media, with dismay to the demise of the Theobald house at 310 Cape Ave., built in 1820.

During a Planning Board meeting March 20, member Ned Hood said he spoke with Planning Board Chairman Gregg Greenberg in February about establishing a committee to develop a historic preservation plan.

Hood said Greenberg requested that he and board member David Yunghans form a committee.

Two phone meetings have followed, he said. Hood said the committee has contacted Jonathan Kinney, historic preservation specialist with the state Department of Environmental Protection.

"He's offered his assistance to help us develop a plan for Cape May Point," he said.

On March 12, Hood submitted a list of potential buildings and community areas that should be considered in a preservation plan. The list includes over 50 private residences and 14 community areas as a starting point, he said.

"I advised Mr. Greenberg on March 15 that the owner of Willow Creek Winery and Farm had vol-



John Reilly/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

The home at 310 Cape Ave. in Cape May Point, known as the Theobald house, circa 1820, was demolished March 19 to make way for a new, modern home. The borough was powerless to prevent it.

unteered to create a space on Stevens Street for the original Theobald house that was built, Hood said.

He said Willow Creek offered to provide a space for the historic home should the Planning Board be able to move the house.

Hood said Greenberg contacted the owner of 310 Cape Ave. and asked if he would consider allowing some time to create a plan to move the house. He said

Greenberg did not receive a response from the homeowner.

Borough Commissioner Bob Mullock said he had met with the homeowners, who were waiting for a demolition permit to be issued.

"We had a two-week period there to do something and they were very willing to work with us in that

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Planning Board recommends weekend, holiday restrictions on construction, landscaping.
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Cape May adds firefighters and recycling crew to 2019 budget

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council introduced the proposed 2019 municipal budget with a local purpose tax increase of 1.25 cents, up from .88 cents from an earlier discussion of the budget, to hire three additional firefighters and four employees to pick up recycling, a task formerly handled by a private contractor.

The city's proposed budget is being raised to hire three additional firefighters, increasing salary and wages by \$72,000, additional staffing in the construction office for \$10,000, additional expenses to enhance trolley service in Cape May at \$80,000 and staff health insurance increasing by \$90,000, City Manager Neil Young said March 19 during a council meeting.

On March 5, Fire Chief Alex Coulter said he was concerned with the number of fire personnel working on each shift. He said the minimum in Cape May has been set at five persons per shift, which is not sufficient according to the National Fire Protection Association to respond to an incident in a 2,000-square-foot building.

He said an incident in August caused him to change how the department responds to incidents based on crew integrity in the station. Two firefighters responded to a house fire where there was almost an entrapped occupant, Coulter said.

The city's contract for recycling with a trash collection company expired in January. According to Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan, the city received a bid with a cost increase from \$180,000 annually to \$550,000.

She said Young undertook a study of how much it would cost the city to go into the recycling business. Analyzing the cost of the trucks, salaries and benefits, Young found the city picking up recycling would save more than \$1 million over a five-year period compared with a contract with a trash hauler.

Council approved the purchase of a recycling truck. Young said the first of two recycling trucks would be available in a few weeks. Lower Township had no interest in picking up recyclables in Cape May as a shared service contract, he said.

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Lower budget seeks .9-cent tax rate hike

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council approved its 2019 budget March 18 featuring a .9-cent increase in the local purpose tax rate, just short of 1 cent.

Auditor Leon Costello said the budget was not changed since its introduction in February.

"You are well under the spending caps," he said. "You could spend another \$1.7 million if you wanted to and legally do that in this budget."

Every \$324,000 in the budget equals 1 cent on the tax rate, according to Costello, who said the surplus account was in a healthy position but dropped some from last year.

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City seeks grant for park natural areas

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city is applying for a grant for the proposed natural portion of Lafayette Street Park that would include boardwalks over a tidal marsh and birdwatching platforms along a freshwater pond.

City Council approved a resolution March 19 to apply to the state Department of Environmental

Protection (DEP) for a Green Acres grant. City engineer Tom Thornton said the application to Green Acres was for a 50 percent grant for Phase IV of the Lafayette Street Park.

Phase IV consists of upland trails through a wooded area behind the athletic fields. In addition, it would include elevated boardwalks extending over a tidal marsh and a freshwater pond circling

back the north end toward Cape May City Elementary School.

The concept plan includes three 20-foot by 12-foot observation platforms with pavilions overlooking the freshwater pond and toward the tidal marsh.

"Each would be equipped with a permanently fixed scope for birdwatching," he said. "The elevated boardwalk would be 8 feet wide and it would tie back into the

trails that go through the woods, which would have interpretive signage."

The 50 percent Green Acres grant would be the first step, followed by re-approaching the county Open Space Board for funding. The board previously expressed an interest in the project, Thornton said.

Mayor Chuck Lear said the grant would enable the

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