



Zoning Board OKs variances for historic home renovation

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House of the Week

B1



170th YEAR NO. 19 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 2024 \$1.00

Coming: Cooper University Cape Regional Merger to bring more doctors, expanded ER facility to county

"The Cooper Board of Trustees and the senior leadership team have a major commitment to grow, invest in Cape Regional and expand to serve this community, and that's exactly what we wanted."

—Joanne Carrocino, president and CEO, Cape Regional Health System

By **JACK FICHTER**
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — Cape Regional Medical Center is finishing up a year-long process of merging with Cooper University Hospital, which will bring new technology and staffing to the local facility. Tabernacle United Methodist Church Men's Group invited Joanne Carrocino, president and CEO of Cape Regional Health System, and Tom Piratzky, executive director of the Cape Regional Foundation, to update the

public on the merger at an April 27 meeting.

Carrocino said the hospital is going through a very rigid process to ensure all of the assets of a not-for-profit hospital stay in the community for the best interests of the community.

She said Cape Regional has passed every regulatory hurdle so far and the last hurdle was filing a petition with Superior Court in Cape May County to finalize the merger. Carrocino said Cape Regional has the full approval of the state attorney general and

the commissioner of health.

A closing of the merger is anticipated July 1. The new name of the hospital will be Cooper University Cape Regional.

"We wanted 'university' in the name because we are going to become a teaching hospital," Carrocino said. "That's something Cooper takes great pride in and it's tremendous benefits for the community."

She said Cape Regional has been collaborating with Cooper for the past seven years, staffing Cape Regional's intensive care

unit with physicians with advanced training in critical care medicine. As a result, fewer critically ill patients have needed to be transferred from the county to Cooper University Hospital in Camden, Carrocino said.

"That's been our goal to keep the care local, so our patients and their families don't have to travel and that's going to be the continued goal going forward," she said.

Cooper University Hospital

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West Cape limits cannabis sales to just one business

By **JACK FICHTER**
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — The borough approved an ordinance limiting the number of licenses for cannabis retail stores to one.

A second prospective cannabis retail shop, Potent Petals, is no longer seeking to open a business in the borough, Mayor Carol Sabo said April 24.

Shore House Canna, the county's first cannabis dispensary, opened for business last October at 124 Sunset Blvd.

Deputy Mayor George Dick reported the borough received its first quarterly report of cannabis tax received in 2024 from Shore House Canna, which totaled \$43,000, nearly the same amount from the fourth quarter of 2023.

The borough also received about \$18,000 in occupancy tax for the first two months of the year, slightly less than year, he said, noting \$180,000 was received in total for 2023.

In other business, Borough Commission ap-

proved a shared services agreement with Cape May Point for the use of a street sweeper. Sabo said it was silly for each municipality to purchase all its needed equipment when it is in such close proximity to other towns.

West Cape May will purchase a street sweeper that it will share with Cape May Point.

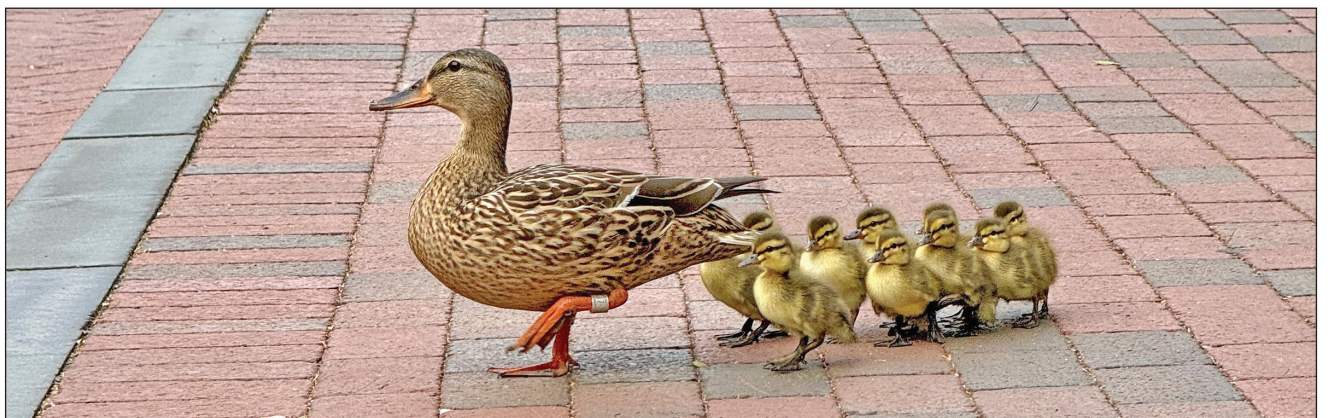
Dick said Cape May Point will purchase a storm drain vacuum truck that it will share with West Cape May. He said West Cape May applied for a grant that required a shared service agreement with another municipality.

A street sweeper is priced at \$250,000, he said, and a vacuum truck is priced at about \$200,000.

The Department of Environmental Protection "just put out some new laws where we are required twice a year to suck out all the storm sewers in the borough," Dick said.

Cape May Point is expected to approve a shared

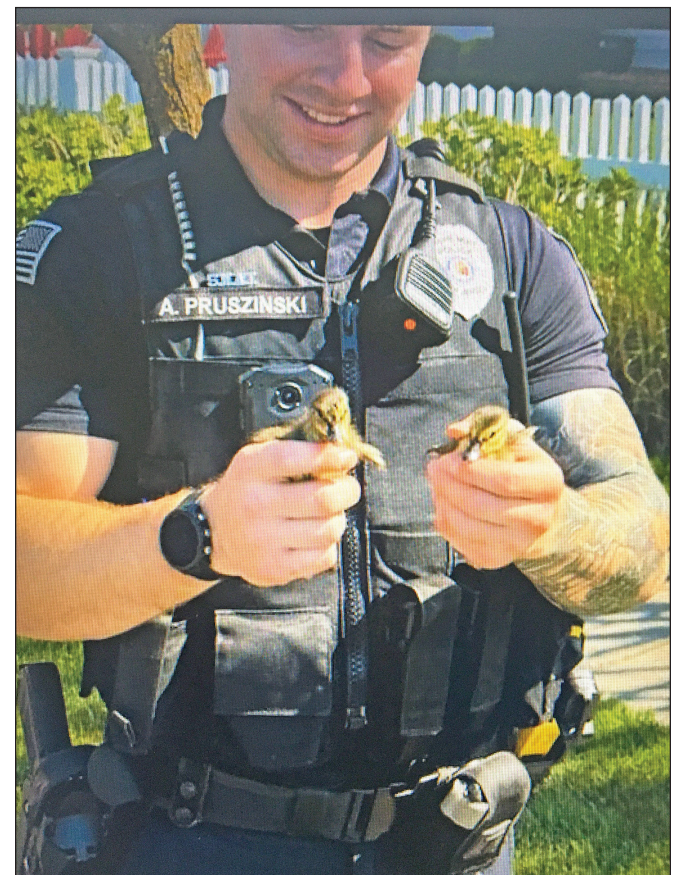
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Coffee Tyme photo (above)/Cape May Police Department (below)

Just ducky now

Cape May police Sgt. Scott Krissing, Ptlm. Alex Pruszinski and Ptlm. Nicole Fox saved three ducklings from a storm drain last week with the assistance of Cape May Public Works Department. Meanwhile, above, another mama duck and her ducklings paid a visit to Coffee Tyme on the Washington Street Mall, where the previous night three more ducks had been rescued.



Lower elementary budget increases tax rate 2 cents

By **JACK FICHTER**
Cape May Star and Wave

COLD SPRING — The Lower Township Elementary School District Board of Education approved its 2024-2025 budget, which totals \$26.4 million, down \$357,973.

More money is to be raised by the local purpose tax, \$19.8 million, up from \$19.2 million last year.

The local purpose tax rate is 53.3 cents per \$100 of assessed value, up 2 cents from 51.3 cents. The owner of a \$250,000 home in Lower Township will see a tax increase of \$21.33.

State aid is decreasing by \$136,000. Surplus will decrease \$1.1 million for a total of \$2.5 million.

At an April 24 meeting,

School Business Administrator Patricia Ryan said school choice aid increased from \$1.1 million to \$1.2 million. S-2 state legislation cuts total \$230,636, she said. State equalization aid is dropping from \$415,022 to \$184,386.

"We did get additional Choice Aid, which was an additional \$94,000, but we're still in the negative \$136,100," Ryan said.

The state is funding the district's preschool for 255 students, up from 252 this year, for a total of \$3.7 million, up from \$3.5 million.

Ryan said salaries and wages, which total \$14.5 million this year, are down \$55,119 from 2023-24. She said benefits, pensions and

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Study: Wind farms won't hurt CO2 absorption

By **JACK FICHTER**
Cape May Star and Wave

Plankton and shellfish help sequester carbon dioxide (CO2) absorbed by the ocean, but warmer water temperatures due to climate change decrease the effectiveness.

Offshore wind farms are seen as a defense against global warming, but debate continues about whether they do more harm than good.

The NJ Wind Works Coalition and the New Jersey League of Conservation Voters (NJLCV) presented a webinar May 2 showing neutral or potentially positive effects on the strength of carbon storage in the ocean around wind farms.

New Jersey is working toward a goal of 100 percent clean energy by 2035.

NJLCV Director James Thompson said the ocean is one of the greatest allies in the fight against climate change and offshore wind farms contribute to the partnership.

Heidi Yeh, policy director for the Pinelands Preservation Alliance and resident oceanographer of the Wind Works Coalition, said many misunderstandings about offshore wind are circulating among the general public. She said since the Industrial Revolution began in 1760, humans have increasingly been burning fossil fuels that emit CO2 and other gases into the atmo-

sphere, which creates a greenhouse effect generally warming the planet and causing climate change.

Yeh said some greenhouse gas emissions are sequestered by trees and oceans.

"The ocean has been absorbing about 31 percent of our CO2 emissions," she said. "The progression of climate change could actually be more rapid if we didn't have the ocean absorbing or sequestering part of this carbon pollution."

She addressed the question of whether building offshore wind farms puts this CO2 absorption at risk.

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