

Icona owner seeks technical review before vote

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — An application to build a swimming pool, change parking and add new signage at the Icona Cape May Hotel, the former Palace Hotel at 1101 Beach Ave., was put on hold for 30 days until it is reviewed by a technical review committee.

At an Aug. 23 meeting, attorney Stephen Nehmad, representing applicant Eustace Mita and Palavest LLC, requested a technical

review of the project before it goes before the full Planning Board. Mita developed Hotel Icona Diamond Beach and the Grand at Diamond Beach and purchased the Golden Inn of Avalon.

Planning Board Chairman Harley Shuler, substituting for Bill Bezaire who recused himself from the application, said a committee would be assembled of Planning Board members consisting of himself, Joe Picard, Terri Swain, Mayor Edward Mahaney, board engineer Craig Hurless

and board solicitor Richard King.

The committee will not make any decisions but will conduct a technical review of the application, King said. The application is scheduled to be heard at the Planning Board's Sept. 27 meeting at 7 p.m.

During the Aug. 23 meeting, the audience contained neighborhood residents who had objections to the project.

According to plans filed with the city's Construction Office, the project in-

cludes the construction of a concrete pool and deck. A 195-square-foot addition would be constructed in the parking garage to house pool equipment and a restroom.

Four 36-inch helical piles would be installed at the end of support beams that would affect the current driveway, according to the plans. Four parking spaces would be added within the building setback off New Jersey Avenue.

In addition, 26 new "back out" parking spaces would

be created along Philadelphia Avenue partially within the right of way. In his written report, Hurless noted the applicant "should address conflicts from proposed back out parking at Philadelphia Avenue."

The property currently has a three-story hotel with 31 two-bedroom units with 33 parking spaces on ground level. The applicant seeks variance relief for the expansion of a dwelling on a lot that does not conform to the minimum lot frontage, lot width and

for front yard setbacks, accessory use (pool) and from the requirement that no impermeable surface be constructed within five feet of a property line.

A variance was being sought from the requirement for one parking space for each sleeping room plus one space per employee on the largest shift. The applicant proposed 56 off-street parking spaces where 66 were required with 26 spaces encroaching partially into the right of way and requiring back-out parking.

Lucille's labors a key ingredient at Chalfonte

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son started to work in the Magnolia Room, the dining room of the hotel, as a waitress, with Dot and her mother, who was the head waitress. She said she was off on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

"There was always a day you got off. Back in the day, we used to get Sunday evenings off because we didn't serve dinner on Sunday nights. We only did breakfast and lunch. The guests of the hotel would go out to a clambake out at Higbee's Beach, but the staff didn't go to it. We didn't serve dinner to the guest till around the 1970s," Thompson said.

She was a good waitress who was popular with the guests, she said.

"When the cooks died, the owners asked my mother to cook. But they said Lucille can stay in the dining room," Thompson said with a chuckle.

Eventually, Thompson was asked to work in the dining room as well as the kitchen. In the mid-1970s, she moved away because there were no jobs here in

the winter.

"Nor men," Thompson said with a grin. "So I moved to Princeton to find a job and a man. I used to come back on weekends, though. Eventually, I got both a job and a man, so I came back in 1984 and I have been working in the kitchen of the Chalfonte ever since."

Back then, just as it is today, Thompson's day in the kitchen starts about 5:50 in the morning with getting things ready for breakfast and she leaves around 6:50 in the evening. Working, though, really was a misnomer to Thompson. She said it never felt like work when she worked at the Chalfonte with family.

"It was fine. We had our little fights but it was great. The only time it was tough was in the fall. It gets kinda cold. You can burn up in the summer but it's just the opposite in the fall when you can freeze your butt off," she said.

It was also around this time when Thompson and her sister Dot used to be called "The Ladies" by many people in town, whether they worked in

'My grandkids are bugging the devil out of me to write a book. They say when I leave here in the fall that we are all getting together to write one. If I don't, they said they're going to do it.'

—Lucille Thompson

the kitchen or not. She said there was a comfort level in the way the place was run as well as the food that was served.

"Comfort food is definitely what it was. My favorite dish to make is the crab cakes. It used to be on every Tuesday and Fridays. Every day I make them now," Thompson said.

She takes pride in her work but she is also very selective in whom she shares her secrets with. As she was being interviewed, Thompson said she had just made new sauce for the crab cakes. When asked what the recipe of the sauce was, Thompson smiled warmly.

"Well, it's really not a secret," she said, "but I don't think I would like to give it out."

She shows pride in making the rolls. Thompson said her mother taught her how to do it and she has done it every day. But she admits she added something to the recipe after her

mother had passed away.

"And let me tell you," Thompson said. "My mother used to get eight dozen rolls out of a batch of dough. I get 13 dozen. But I'm not telling you that secret either."

When you are a local legend, you do see some things change. Thompson said they don't serve a lot of the things they used to serve.

"We always used to serve spoonbread and every Saturday, we always served string beans. The kids used to come in at 7 in the morning and help do the vegetables. We even did peas. For some reason, we have gotten away from those. But everything else is still what we served back in the day," she said.

Still, the customers don't seem to mind. Every year they keep coming back and thanking Thompson for the food she prepares and cooks for them.

"All the time they thank me," she said. "Sometimes it's when I'm out there in the dining room to check if we need something and they walk up and thank me. They love my rolls and they love my crab cakes. Some people have said they are the best they ever had. They are always thanking me for it."

Although her daughter Tina works in the kitchen doing some of the jobs her mother did, the remain-



John Alvarez/Special to the STAR AND WAVE
Lucille Thompson, who started working at the Chalfonte Hotel in 1940 when she was 7, makes dinner rolls for the Magnolia Room.

der of the staff are people whom Thompson calls "the kids in the kitchen." But they are grateful to Thompson for keeping an eye on them. And Thompson is grateful for them, too.

"I love them," Thompson said. "They are nice kids. They are all fond of me and they make sure I have coffee in the morning and plenty of water throughout the day. It's been very good to work here. Robert and Linda, the Mullocks are a nice family. I enjoy coming here because after I lost my sister, Dot, it's very

lonely at home. It's very hard. The Chalfonte is my salvation. There's a lot of love here."

As for her future, Thompson's family has an idea on what she should do next.

"My grandkids are bugging the devil out of me to write a book," she said with a big laugh. "They say when I leave here in the fall that we are all getting together to write one. If I don't, they said they're going to do it."

And the book, like Thompson herself, will probably be legendary.

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	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
31	8:02	8:18	1:45	1:48
1	8:45	8:59	2:27	2:32
2	9:25	9:37	3:07	3:15
3	10:03	10:14	3:44	3:56
4	10:41	10:51	4:20	4:37
5	11:19	11:29	4:56	4:37
6	11:59		5:31	6:02
7	12:09	12:42	6:08	6:50

MOON PHASES

Full moon, Sept. 6 • last quarter, Sept. 12

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