

Cape May Star and Wave

153rd YEAR NO. 29 CAPE MAY, N.J.

SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY

THURSDAY, JULY 12, 2007

50¢

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JULY TIDE TABLE

	HIGH am	LOW pm	HIGH am	LOW pm
12	6:47	7:13	12:40	12:25
13	7:44	8:05	1:35	1:21
14	8:36	8:54	2:27	2:13
15	9:26	9:40	3:15	3:03
16	10:13	10:24	4:01	3:52
17	10:58	11:06	4:44	4:39
18	11:42	11:47	5:25	5:26

Crab House floor collapses: 9 injured

By LESLIE TRULUCK
 Cape May Star and Wave

LOWER TOWNSHIP – Approximately 900 people were present when the concrete floor crumbled at The Two Mile Crab House the evening of Saturday, July 7. Nine people were taken to the Cape Regional Medical Center for different injuries while EMTs treated several people on the scene. The collapsing floor gave off a series

of loud pops that an employee initially thought to be gunshots. The first calls to the Lower Township Police were reported as shots fired. Throughout the night a barrage of police, fire, and rescue units responded including Lower Township, Cape May, Wildwood and Wildwood Crest police, the Coast Guard, the New Jersey State Police Patrol Boats and New Jersey State Police with State Police scuba divers.

Among the confusion reports of people unaccounted for and concern because the electric and gas was still on inside the building led the on-scene commander for Search and Rescue Operations Warren Miller to request mutual aid assistance from several fire departments in the area. Lower Township Police Chief Ed Donohue praised the efforts of the county wide mutual aid agreements and

the restaurant owners and staff for their efforts in evacuating the building including an employee locked inside a freezer until staff removed the hinges. "All of our police officers, firefighters, and EMTs from various organizations worked well together as a team in order to clear the building, treat the injured and stabilize the situation," said Donohue. "This is a double-edged sword," Lower Township

Mayor Walt Craig said while on the scene the night of the incident. "This restaurant employs a lot of local people and is good for the economy. It's also a landmark." Craig also praised the efficiency of the response. "It was picture perfect," he said. "We can see that all the hours of hard training have paid off." The cause of the collapse is

Please see Crab, Page A5



Scenes from area Independence Day celebrations include, clockwise from top left, Cape May's Queen Maysea and strutters during the city's annual Parade. A float in Lower Township at its celebration. A tot all dressed up for the occasion in Cape May and children celebrating at Congress Hall. Photos by Christopher South and Jennifer Kopp



HPC may reopen hearing on Beach Theatre demolition

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
 Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – The Cape May Historic Preservation Commission voted 4-3 to table a memorializing resolution which would have completed the approval process for a partial demolition permit for the Beach Theatre. Instead, the HPC will discuss reopening the hearing on the application made by Frank Investments for a permit to demolish the 1950 theater. Frank Investments made plans to demolish the theater while preserving the adjacent retail shops, and

then build two floors of condominiums above the retail space, creating parking where the theater presently stands. At the start of Monday's meeting, HPC attorney Robert Fineberg said HPC member Pip Campbell wished to reopen the hearing in order to hear from Joan Berkey, a historic preservation consultant who completed a historic survey on the Beach Theatre. Fineberg said Berkey had determined the Beach Theatre was eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and an updated survey of Cape May's historic district

would more than likely include the Beach Theatre. The theater is currently not listed as a contributing or key building in the historic district. Fineberg said a hearing before the HPC can be reopened after a decision is made – subject to certain conditions. First, there must be reasons showing good cause for reopening the hearing. Then it must be done before a final decision is made. Fineberg said the final decision was the memorializing resolution, which the HPC tabled, Monday night. If the HPC did not want to have discussion to consider reopening

the hearing, Fineberg added, they could simply pass the resolution. Commission members Gerry Beauchamp, Tom Carroll, Corbin Cogswell and Bob Steenrod voted to table the resolution for Berkey's testimony. Carroll said Berkey indicated the Beach Theatre would be listed as either a key or contributing building in the next survey of the historic district. Berkey wrote in her evaluation of the Beach Theatre, "...the Beach Theatre appears to be individually eligible for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places..."

"If Joan Berkey feels it would be eligible for the National Register, perhaps we should listen," Cogswell said. Cogswell asked why this information had not come to light prior to the votes to first reject, then approve the demolition permit. "Why didn't the Beach

Theatre Foundation present this information during the hearing?" he asked. Foundation president Steve Jackson, contacted while on a business trip to London, England, said although BTF board member Harley Shuler was present for the hearing, Please see Demo, Page A2

WiFi survey included with tax bills

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
 Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – The city will be sending out a survey with the next quarter's tax bills to see how many property owners are interested in subscribing to a citywide wireless Internet service. Councilman David Kurkowski, who has spearheaded an effort to have inexpensive wireless Internet available to all city residents and businesses, said the survey is intended to determine how much interest there is in setting up a municipal WiFi network, which may include West Cape May and Cape May Point. Kurkowski said the survey asks people if they would be willing to pay around \$15 or \$20 per month for high speed Internet service. Businesses, which may be on-line for

much of the workday, would be asked to pay about \$50 per month. Kurkowski said the survey would help the city decide how to proceed. "If it is determined that there is enough demand, the council then would hold discussions on how best to proceed," he said. Kurkowski said he doesn't know what the final form of the WiFi system would look like at this point, saying it could be run by a non-profit, a for profit business, or even owned by the city. Ocean City has gone out to bid on a WiFi system with the intention that the city would own the WiFi system and would lease it to a business. Ocean City is hoping its WiFi system would make money for the system. Kurkowski said the hope in Cape May is that it would not cost the city anything. "In any event it would not

rely on tax revenue to support it," he said. Asked if it would become a self-sustaining utility like the Beach Utility, Kurkowski said it could be, but there were other options. "There are a lot of options for what it could eventually look like, and the survey is intended to see if there is support in the community," he said. So far, Kurkowski said, there seems to be support from community members. He said people have been asking when the city is getting the WiFi system, and some people calling for reservations at Cape May lodging establishments are asking if the WiFi system is in place. Kurkowski said people can return the survey in same envelope with their tax payment or drop them in a drop box. The Cape May Taxpayers Association would

tabulate the results of the survey. At the same time, the Chamber of Commerce will be doing a survey of certain businesses to see if they are willing to participate. Kurkowski said there are certain cost savings and increased efficiency. He said Cape May's chief financial officer, Bruce MacLeod, said the city would save money by replacing employees' cell phones with WiFi phones and replacing a satellite-based system for police in-car computers. The city would also be able to activate a system for using credit cards to pay parking meters. There would also be a security function, with surveillance cameras linked into the WiFi system. "It's estimated we could save \$30,000 to \$60,000 a year," Kurkowski said. Please see WiFi, Page A5

Unseasonable weather douses Cape May fireworks

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
 Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – Some say the weather never takes a holiday. The weather can steal the fun out of a holiday as people in Cape May saw on July 4. Or more precisely, what they didn't see. At the Coast Guard's urging, the fireworks display scheduled for July 4 in Cape May was cancelled due to a small craft advisory. City manager Lou Corea said the Coast Guard called about 1 p.m. on July 4 and said the waves were too high for a barge firing explosive devices. Additionally, wind gusts of 30 mph would have carried the embers over the city, which is filled with wood frame historic structures. "The waves were just unacceptable," Corea said, "and the weather predictions for next day equally as bad." That being the case, the decision was made to cancel the fireworks display entirely. Corea said scheduling problems with the barge contributed to the decision to cancel the fireworks. The fireworks display was being funded through contributions by the city of Cape May, Congress Hall and Sun Bank. According to a representative of the National Weather Service – Mount Holly Station, there was a small craft advisory posted from Great Egg Harbor to Cape May through the afternoon of July 5. There were southerly winds of 20 mph with gusts of 30 mph, and waves of 4-6 feet. The conditions also led to a risk of rip currents, which increased on July 4 and remained high the next day. There was also a tornado watch on July 4 for most of the area monitored by the Mount Holly Station, extending as far south as Cumberland County. Please see Fireworks, Page A2