

Cape May Star and Wave

153rd YEAR NO. 32 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY THURSDAY, AUGUST 2, 2007 50¢

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AUGUST TIDE TABLE

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2	11:08	11:24	4:48	5:02
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Cape May Point property owners facing reval

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT - Cape May County has once again asked the Borough of Cape May Point to do a revaluation of properties, which is intended to ensure people pay their fair amount of taxes.

Whenever the county tax administrator determines the assessed value of municipality falls below 85 percent of

the market value, the municipality is requested to perform a revaluation.

The last revaluation in Cape May Point took place in 2001 for 2002, costing the borough about \$60,000. According to Commissioner Carl Schupp, director of finance for Cape May Point, a house to house survey was conducted, describing each structure.

"It was a complete reval," Schupp said. "This one is going to be a hybrid."

Schupp said there have not been many changes in the housing stock over the five years since the last revaluation, and they would look primarily at new construction, home renovations and resales.

The new revaluation, which will be scheduled for 2008 to be effective in 2009, will be performed mainly by borough local tax assessor Mike Jones. Schupp said the computer work would go to Vital

Resources, which specializes in doing revaluations.

"It costs less to do it this way," Schupp said. "The total cost is going to be less than \$30,000...less than half of last year."

Schupp said the law requires municipalities to keep accurate records of property values to ensure property owners pay what is fair. He said where revaluations or reassessments are done only when a house sells,

identical homes on adjoining properties can be valued much differently if one of the houses sells several times, for example.

Schupp said the revaluation really doesn't benefit the borough because the borough only collects the amount of tax they need to balance the budget.

"Whatever you need is what you collect, but (the reval)

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A retreat by the sea

Leslie Truluck/Cape May Star and Wave

Sister of Saint Joseph Rita Michael Scully, takes a moment to reflect and gaze over the inner courtyard at St. Mary's-By-The-Sea in Cape May Point.



By LESLIE TRULUCK
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT - To add to the plethora of historical landmarks Cape Island has to offer, Saint Mary By-The-Sea contributes with an extensive history and a modern purpose.

Built as the Shoreham Hotel in 1890 and once owned by the prominent Philadelphia businessman John Wanamaker, Saint Mary was purchased - fully furnished - by the Sisters of Saint Joseph (SSJ) for \$9,000 in 1909.

It was renamed Saint Mary By-The-Sea because Father McDermott, pastor of old Saint Mary's Church in Philadelphia who negotiated the sale and provided the money, requested that it be named after his parish. The one-time hotel ballroom was converted into the chapel and crosses were placed on the red roof to signify the change from a secular to a

spiritual retreat house. The SSJ originated in France and the red roof is reminiscent of the red terracotta roofs found on Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia that reflects their origin. Chestnut Hill College is the central house of the Penn-Jersey SSJ.

During WWII from 1942 to 1946 Saint Mary's was leased to the government and used as a military barracks for troops stationed at the encampment located where Cape May Point State Park is today. Of the four hotels built along Beach Avenue in Cape May Point between 1875 and 1890 - the Sea Grove House, Centennial House, Cape House and the Shoreham Hotel - the former Shoreham is the only one remaining. The others were washed into the ocean during storms and through continual beach erosion. To prevent a similar folly, the retreat house eventu-

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West Cape May to install solar panels on Borough Hall

By LESLIE TRULUCK
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY - The Board of Commissioners has resolved to use the county rebate from the Joint Venture Program to install solar panels on Borough Hall.

"We had notification from the county that we qualify to receive money for the municipality for more good investments for the town. The solar panel project was a joint idea because all of the commissioners like to conserve energy so we do green projects to reduce (waste) and recycle as much as possible," Mayor Pamela Kaithern said. As

Commissioner of Public Works, Richard Rigby is spearheading the project. Rigby said monthly bills well over \$2,000 from Atlantic Electric triggered the idea. The solar panels are expected to supply electricity, lighting and heat to the municipal and public works buildings.

"We do not have a total figure yet, but the majority of funding will come from the county surplus set back. Each municipality gets at least \$50,000 based on tax rates. More than likely it will cost more than the \$50,000 that the county has allotted us for investments but the money will not come from tax pay-

ers," Kaithern said.

The Municipal Joint Venture Program enables communities to receive a rebate when there is a surplus of tax money with the stipulation that the money is used for a particular investment in the community. Though based on tax rates each municipality receives a minimum of \$50,000. This is the second year of the program and all sixteen municipalities are eligible.

Last year the rebate had to be used for recreation so it was used to build Backyard Park behind Borough Hall and a new playground at West Cape May Elementary.

"This years rebate needs to be used for infrastructure and tourism," Rigby said.

"The state mandates that electric utilities use renewable resources so they issue a certificate to give credit for buying solar output. We are anticipating a net cost of under \$50,000 after the rebate from the county and the certificate from the electric utilities," Rigby said.

The solar panel project is still in the planning stage.

"We still have to go through the process of creating a bid package, taking proposals from companies, and purchasing," Mayor Kaithern said the commissioners are

looking for good business records as criteria for companies interested in installing the solar panels on WCM Borough Hall.

"The State Green Energy Program gave us a list of suppliers of solar panels," Rigby said, "We are restricting our bids to companies in southern New Jersey with references and experience of ten or more installations."

"We presume the panels will be on the roof but companies may have different approaches and products yet the objective to reduce expenses is the same. We require that the panels are able to withstand winds of 110 mph, hurricanes, and the like. It's only speculative until we get hard bids but we have authorized our resolution with the county," Rigby expects the bids to open in September.

"It is too soon to know when the panels may be installed," he said.

Mayor Kaithern said the solar panels could have a ten-year return (as in the money they save in ten years would pay for the panels) because one company estimated it could save the Borough up to \$600 monthly, which adds to \$72,000 in ten years.

"We have to spend money to save money," Rigby said.

Kaithern and Rigby hope the project will promote using renewable resources.

"We are looking forward to something that can help save money and we hope that our conservation will be a model for our residents," Kaithern said.

"We hope to be a demonstration and encouragement to the people to use renewable resources," Rigby said.

Jogger wins in 'speed bump' case

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY - A woman who tripped over a municipal speed bump and broke her arm won a jury verdict over the joint insurance fund (JIF) representing West Cape May.

A New Jersey Superior Court jury awarded Bonnie Offerdahl of Warminster, Pa., \$85,000, for the Aug. 16, 2003, but determined she was 40-percent responsible for the accident.

According to attorney Robert Fineberg, who represented Offerdahl, said his client received a net amount of \$49,308 after deducting a percentage for comparative negligence and adding court costs. According to Fineberg, Offerdahl was jogging on First Avenue on the date of the accident, and she was dis-

tracted by a car, which appeared to be ready to pull into the roadway. He said Offerdahl was watching the car and stumbled over the bump, falling and breaking her arm.

"The issue was whether (the speed bump) should have been there in the first place," Fineberg said.

According to Fineberg, in this sort of case the plaintiff does not seek a specified amount, but rather the jury decides what is fair compensation. Fineberg, who described the verdict as fair, said a portion of the award went to reimburse the Offerdahl's insurance company for medical expenses.

Mayor Pam Kaithern said it was good the borough was participating in the Atlantic County Joint Insurance Fund, which will pay the award from the jury verdict. She said there were other benefits

to belonging to the self-insurance fund.

"They (the JIF) offer not only great (rate) savings but they have a lot of training and classes that make people aware of safety measures. It all helps," she said.

Kaithern said the settlement would have no direct impact on taxes, and there would be no direct payment from the borough, but the verdict would have an effect on the borough's rating.

"It will affect premiums but they are still a substantial saving over the market," Kaithern said.

Kaithern said the borough has a safety committee, which meets four times a year to monitor a safety objective. If the borough meets the objective or scores highly it has the opportunity to "win" money back in rebates. The money can be used to buy protective gear

for borough employees, for example. West Cape May received almost \$3,500 last year.

Kaithern said the speed bumps previously placed on four streets before her administration took office have been removed. She said the issue of speed bumps came up during her campaign, and she subsequently received a lot of feedback from professional and residents. Now they are using electronic signs to show drivers their speed to alert them if they are driving too fast. The borough has also asked the police department to monitor and address speeding on certain streets.

"We also have to depend on our own citizens. A lot of time locals are rushing to get somewhere and not paying attention," she said.

Early deadlines

The Cape May Star and Wave offices will be closed next Tuesday and maybe Wednesday, as well, due to an electrical problem within the Park Center Complex. Therefore, the newspaper will be printed early and the following deadlines will be in place:

Classified and display advertising:

Friday, Aug. 3 by noon.

Legal advertisements:

Thursday,

Aug. 2 by 5 p.m.

Editorial: Friday, Aug. 3 by 5 p.m.

Thank you for your patience.