



House of the week

Real Estate Resource



No. 5 lucky for retailer in Cape May

Page B1



Experts: Poverty fueling county opioid epidemic

Childhood trauma, lack of year-round jobs, affordable housing drive addiction

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The county's lack of year-round employment and affordable housing has created a cycle of unemployment and poverty that is feeding the opioid epidemic, according to a panel of experts.

Sponsored by Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey and the Horizon Foundation for New Jersey, a town hall meeting billed as Knock Out Opioid Abuse was held Oct. 2 in Convention Hall.

The event was moderated by Paul Rotella, CEO and president of the New Jersey Broadcaster's Association. Partners in the event were the city of Cape May, Cape Assist, Cape May County Chamber of Commerce and Cape Regional Health System.

In the audience were students from the hospitality program of Cape May County Technical High School and culinary students from Lower Cape May Regional High School. Law enforcement officials from the county, Middle Township and Cape May were also in

attendance.

"I am sadly stunned when I think of how many people that I know that have suffered in some way because of opioids," Cape May Mayor Chuck Lear said.

Cape May Fire Chief Alex Coulter said emergency medical technicians wear special gloves that are resistant to Fentanyl and masks when entering a situation where it's believed an opioid has been abused or is present. All the city's ambulances carry NARCAN, the antidote for an opioid overdose.

"The amounts of NARCAN we've actually gone through since the program began is very disturbing to us," Coulter said.

Vicki Clark, president and CEO of the county Chamber of Commerce, said long, grueling hours of working in the tourism industry can contribute to the substance abuse crisis here.

Childhood trauma leads to addiction

Joe Faldetta, director of prevention for Cape Assist, said there is

no "silver bullet" or one strategy that would solve the opioid crisis. He said his agency has seen success in prevention of addiction in youth by focusing on resiliency and life skills and effective ways to deal with stress and anxiety.

"What we're seeing more of is cycles of trauma, or what we're referring to as adverse childhood experiences (ACES)," Faldetta said. "And what we have is a lot of youth that are being exposed to repeated trauma, day in and

See Poverty, Page A3



Rachel Shubin/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Members of the public take a look at plans for a bicycle and pedestrian path to be built alongside Sunset Boulevard in West Cape May to provide a safer place to ride and walk.

Public gets a look at bike path plans along Sunset Blvd.

By RACHEL SHUBIN
Special to the Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Bicycle riders will have an alternative in the future to riding on the narrow shoulders of Sunset Boulevard while coming and going from Sunset Beach and Cape May Point.

A public information meeting for the Sunset Boulevard improvements project was held Oct. 3 at West Cape May Borough Hall. The Cape May community attended to review exhibits of the project, ask questions and provide feedback.

NV5 Director of Highways and Utilities Drew Markewicz spoke to attendees about the proposals for Sunset Boulevard. The timeline and cost for the project are to be determined in the future.

"I don't know the specific times, because a lot of it has to do with permits and funding," Markewicz said. "But I can tell you how it's typically phased. We did a concept design and a preliminary design and this is what came out."

NV5, the engineering and consultants, examined the environment, utilities and improvements to cre-

ate the preliminary design. "It has met the method objectives and goals," Markewicz said. "It is the initially preferred alternative; that means you can take this and advance it. After tonight we finish the preliminary design report and submit it. The next step depends on a lot of things outside of our reign."

If the report is accepted, then the final design stage is entered.

"We would submit for the right of way easement for the Nature Conservancy," Markewicz said. "We've already started coordinating with the environmental permits. Then utility coordination gets initiated also."

The project proposal includes pavement, drainage and roadway improvements.

An addition of a bicycle and pedestrian shared-use path will be incorporated, as will raised boardwalk segments, improved signage and pavement markings.

"We looked at all different kinds of alternatives for the bikes, to avoid or minimize the right of way

See Bike path, Page A4

Safety building cost estimates are \$12 million to \$16 million

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city's Public Safety Building Advisory Committee and USA Architects presented all findings and concepts for a combined fire and police station during a four-hour City Council meeting Oct. 1.

Committee Vice Chair Rose Traficante said the mission of the committee was to construct one building that addresses the day-to-day needs and emergency situations in the city.

The committee's mission statement notes the current police and fire stations are outdated, hazardous, crowded and, in some cases, toxic. Traficante said the committee looked at every available piece of city-owned property for the location of the building.

Architect Robbie Conley conducted needs assessments for the fire and police stations and recommended a conjoined building for the department, built on the site of the current firehouse, at an estimated cost of \$11.8 million, she said.

Grants consultant Jim Rutala said the first alternate site for the building examined was 1.15 acres on the southeast corner of Pittsburgh and Cape May avenues.

"Wetlands encumber a good portion of the site," he said. "Without doing



CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

USA Architects, which won the contract to design the public safety building for Cape May, designed this building for Collingswood. It's similar in size to the preferred model for the city and its estimated cost is \$10 million to \$11 million.

specific delineation, it is difficult to identify exactly how much area is available for development."

The parcel is large enough for a public safety building, Rutala said, but it is not centrally located.

He said the Transportation Center at Broad and Elmira streets was a second alternate site considered by the committee. Rutala said a portion of the site is owned by the state Department of Transportation.

The site is in the center of town but would result in the loss of public parking, he said.

Rutala said a third alternative site was Kiwanis Park, which is encumbered by the state Green Acres program.

Substandard accommodations

Fire Chief Alex Coulter said the current firehouse, built in 1975, lacks space for equipment and personnel. He said new firetrucks are larger than past models. "Because it's a pre-fabricated building, it does not meet the current lateral load requirements," Coulter said.

On windy days, the building creaks and cracks and items mounted to the wall move, he said.

"You can't put an addition on a pole barn; our building is a pole barn," Coulter said.

Personal protective equipment in the firehouse is not separated from exhaust from vehicles, he said. The basement is used as a boiler room, Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) decontamination area, extinguisher storage, workshop and

See Building, Page A9

Auditor: Building would raise tax rate 1 cent at most

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Leon Costello, the city's contracted auditor, said constructing a new public safety building in the range of \$11 million to \$15 million would at worst add less than 1 cent to the tax rate.

At an Oct. 1 City Council meeting, Costello said the building could be financed with a 20-year or 25-year bond. Debt service in 2020 will decrease by \$36,000, he said. The city had a bond sale two weeks ago and received a rate of 2 percent.

"At \$11 million, we'd be almost on par where we were with our debt service line before this, so \$11 million is kind of a break-even point, which means that an \$11 million building doesn't cost the taxpayers anything in tax dollars starting from 2021 on," he said.

Costello said the average cost per year would be \$741,000, or \$67,000 per million on an \$11 million bond sale.

"If we went to \$12 million, we'd increase our budget by \$67,000," he said. "If we went to \$13 million, it would be \$134,000."

Currently, \$281,000 equals one penny on the tax rate, Costello said. If an additional \$4.2 million were spent on a public safety building, totaling \$15.2 million, the tax rate would increase by about 1 cent, he said.

"And that's at today's rates. We're increasing rates all the time, so it would be slightly less than a cent increase, if we went to \$4.2 million more in spending," he said.

Costello said if the building were bonded for 25 years, the cost per year would be less but it would

incur more interest. He said 20-year bonding would be ideal for the project.

The interest rate Costello projected was 3 percent on the bond.

"We just sold a 2 percent," he said. "Who knows in 2020 what the rates will be?"

The city would receive a premium for selling the bond. Costello said if the city received a 10 percent premium on a \$15 million sale, the city would receive \$1.5 million.

Costello addressed con- See Auditor, Page A9

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