



State awards \$150 million in municipal aid

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House of the Week

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170th YEAR NO. 47 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2024 \$1.00

West Cape May OKs island-wide Safe Streets plan

Study identifies risk areas, puts participating municipalities in better position to acquire grants

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Borough Commission approved the Cape Island Safe Streets and Roads Action Plan as produced by GPI, a consulting firm.

The goal was to develop a plan to have zero fatalities and serious injuries on public roads on Cape Island by 2040.

Last year, Cape May City Council awarded a contract to the engineering firm of Greenman-Ped-

ersen Inc. (GPI) to begin a traffic study and safe streets action plan for Cape Island to be paid for by a \$200,000 federal Department of Transportation grant.

Representatives of the borough, Lower Township and Cape May Point along with Cape May's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee met a number of times since last winter.

At a Nov. 13 West Cape May Commission meeting, Dave Kuhn, a project manager with GPI, said the plan doesn't look only at infra-

structure but also at other types of strategies to improve behavior of drivers, pedestrians and bicycle riders.

"This plan will also provide an opportunity for application for future grants for implementation," he said.

To apply for implementation grants, an action plan must be in place, Kuhn said.

From 2017 to 2021, a total of 379 crashes took place on public roads on Cape Island. One fatal crash took place in 2017 and 2019, but

no fatal crashes happened in 2018 or 2020. Five serious injuries were recorded in 2021.

"While there are not a lot of fatal and serious injury crashes on the island, no fatal or serious injury crashes are acceptable," Kuhn said.

Under Cape Island crash attributes, drowsy/distracted drivers were responsible for three serious injuries and one fatality, followed by lane departure representing two serious injuries. Unlicensed drivers were responsible for two

serious injuries and aggressive drivers caused three injuries.

Kuhn said a crash may have more than one cause.

The plan looks at Cape Island's underserved populations using census data. He said what stands out is the senior citizen population, which represents 29% of residents.

Data was examined two ways: hot spots, which are the locations of crashes and injuries, and a systemic approach looking at road-

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Drought warning in effect statewide due to lack of rain

Gov. Murphy advises residents to conserve water, prevent fires

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

TRENTON — The state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) declared a drought warning Nov. 13, a significant uptick from a drought watch, according to Gov. Phil Murphy.

During an online news conference the same day on drought and wildfires, he said every resident in the state needs to conserve water and avoid lighting any outdoor fires, including grills and fire pits.

Murphy said unseasonably dry conditions throughout the northeastern U.S. has produced what he termed a "staggering" number of wildfires.

"Since early October, the New Jersey Forest Fire Service has responded to 537 fires," he said. "To put that in context, that is 500 more fires than we saw during the exact same period last year, which put differently is a 1,300% increase."

Murphy thanked the members of the Forest Fire Service for working "heroically and tirelessly" to extinguish these fires.

A small amount of rain earlier in the month was not enough to relieve drought conditions and it appears the lack of rainfall

will not be ending any time soon, including a forecast of a dry winter, he said.

"This drought could grow more severe, which may eventually require mandatory water restrictions," Murphy said. "We're not there yet, and if we all act accordingly now, we can hopefully avoid that outcome."

He said the DEP recently released a statewide water supply plan that offers up-to-date information on how climate change is affecting the state's water supply.

Murphy said the drought is just one example of how a changing climate is affecting the state today.

"So now more than ever New Jersey's commitment to combating and adapting to climate change is unwavering and unshakable. Regardless of which administration is empowered at the federal level, our state is not going to back down," he said.

DEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette said the agency does continuous "90-day look-backs" on precipitation, stream flow, reservoir storage and unconfined ground waters. The state receives its drinking water from both groundwater sources and

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Zoning Board OKs rebuilding Washington St. carriage house

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — What happened to the carriage house at 1145 Washington St.? The house contributes to the historic district and while it was supposed to receive a new foundation and renovations, a subcontractor tore down the structure.

Attorney Ron Gelzunas represented property owners Jack and Ellen Oakes at a Nov. 12 Zoning Board meeting. He said the exterior grounds of the home

were improved to include a patio and screened-in pavilion with part of the project to include renovating a detached carriage house that included lifting the structure to build a new foundation.

The structure was to be lowered back onto the new foundation and be renovated, Gelzunas said.

"During that phase of the project, the framing crew, which was hired by the general contractor, made its

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Deborah McGuire/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Tots with their eyes all aglow

Cape May hosted the Christmas Makers Market on Nov. 16-17, when the children of the Young family of Havertown, Pa., found much to be excited about during the event.

Clemans honored among Women of Wonder

OCEAN CITY — Atlantic Cape Community College trustee Christina Clemans was one of four inspirational Cape May County women honored by the Atlantic Cape Foundation and the Cape May County Women's Commission during the annual Women of Wonder Luncheon Nov. 14

at The Flanders Hotel in Ocean City.

Clemans, who has served on the Atlantic Cape board of trustees for the past 10 years, was honored along with Deborah Brasch, Amy Mahon and Chaplain Denise Venturini-South.

"Thank you for celebrating the accomplishments

of our honorees here today and for supporting students attending Atlantic Cape. Women of Wonder events have raised over \$100,000 since 2011," Atlantic Cape Foundation Executive Director Jean McAlister said.

The Atlantic Cape Foundation provides funding

and support to the college, its students and educational endeavors through special event fundraising and community philanthropy. The foundation annually awards nearly \$700,000 in scholarships.

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Borough finalizing land sale for affordable housing

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — The appeal period has ended for the borough's court-approved, affordable housing plan, according to borough solicitor Erika Lezama Simonson.

"Counsel is now working with Habitat (for Humanity) to finalize a conveyance," she said

Nov. 13 during a Borough Commission meeting.

A resolution for review will be provided to Simonson before the next commission meeting, authorizing the mayor to sign the closing documents. The resolution will appear on the commission's next meeting agenda, Simonson said.

She said she was optimistic that closing would occur before the end of

the year. Simonson said it was a "very straightforward matter."

The borough is in receipt of the final executed order from Judge John C. Porto to fulfill an affordable housing obligation by providing lots on Willow Avenue for Habitat for Humanity to construct two homes.

Habitat for Humanity will pay West Cape May \$1 for each lot, a trans-

action that was permitted under municipal land use law. The borough's Council on Affordable Housing Trust Fund will reimburse the borough general fund about \$350,000.

Deed restrictions on the houses will be in place for 30 years.

In other business, the commission has been

See Land sale, Page A3



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