



## Caper Tigers preparing for winter sports

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## House of the Week

Real Estate Resource



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# City seeking grant funds for desalination plant

## Cape May considering increasing water rate to build up utility's surplus

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city's consultants are lining up grants and loans to replace Cape May's water desalination plant, a project with a price tag in the range of \$25 million to \$30 million.

The plant was built to address saltwater intrusion into the city's aquifers.

Project manager Mike Dziubeck, of Consulting and Municipal Engineers, told City Council on Dec. 3 that the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is worried about a capacity shortfall

for the current plant. The reverse osmosis system uses two units referred to as "trains."

"There is no redundancy in the trains; if one of the trains were to go out of service during a peak day, there would be issues with that treatment plant meeting the water demands of the city," he said.

Dziubeck said the existing plant is inside the city's waterworks building, which was built around 1926. The building will be preserved and a new plant constructed in what is now a parking lot.

The proposed new plant would use technology similar to the current facility, he said. It would need

a train for desalination and another to remove iron from the water, Dziubeck said.

"There are three wells in the city in the Atlantic City Sands Aquifer that have saltwater intrusion, high sodium and chlorides ... and they will be treated in the new plant using cartridge filters," he said.

Feed pumps will move water from wells and boost the pressure to pump it through the reverse osmosis train. He said two pressure filters would remove relatively high iron content from one well in the Cohansey Aquifer.

A backwash tank will be on the site for the iron removal system

as well as a lime silo, according to Dziubeck. Very little impervious surface will be created by the project, he said.

Dziubeck said the front façade of the new building would match the old waterworks building.

"Behind that front of the building will be a metal building, so this is just aesthetics in the front to match the appearance of the site," he said.

Dziubeck said the current water plant is at an elevation of 11.5 feet with the required flood elevation for a 500-year storm at 10.5 feet. The new facility would have a flood elevation of 13.5 feet, he said.

Adequate space will be available to add another train if needed in the future, Dziubeck said.

He said the capacity of the new plant with one train out of service would total 3.2 million gallons per day (GPD). The current plant can produce 2 million GPD, according to Dziubeck.

Michael Zumpino, chief executive officer of grant consultant Triad Associates, said the firm met with federal and state partners and congressional representatives on site. He said the plant is a very expensive project but has significant

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Deborah McGuire and Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

## Merry and bright

Congress Hall, which has been celebrating Christmas since 1816, is holding its annual Winter Wonderland on its lawn, where there is a carousel and a train ride.



## MTRAC: City should establish a policy on use of surplus funds

Board recommends Cape May spend it to reduce debt service

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city's Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee (MTRAC) is recommending the city adopt a formal policy of how it uses its ever-growing surplus account.

At a Dec. 12 meeting, MTRAC Chairman Dennis Crowley said the city's surplus has grown from \$4 million in 2016 to almost \$15 million currently. He said during that period, there has been significant growth in debt service and surplus.

Crowley said new revenues include property tax, occupancy tax, mercantile licenses and parking meter fees.

"Most of those revenues have come from recommendations that the council has accepted from MTRAC," he said.

Property taxes have in-

creased because a number of homes have been sold and reassessed at higher rates, and while the property tax rate has not changed over the past four years, the amounts upon which that rate is applied have generated increases in revenues, Crowley said.

Councilwoman Maureen McDade said the city is creating a digital tax map at a cost of \$200,000.

Crowley said the primary sources of new revenue for the city from 2008 to 2023 were room tax and parking meters. He said the other driving factor with the surplus is a general unstated unofficial policy of conservative revenue estimates.

"These conservative revenues basically are a hedge against unanticipated costs, variable spending patterns, a routine cushion, a rainy-day fund," he said.

The city budget for the

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## Planning Board OKs two worker units on the Mall

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city's Planning Board approved converting an unused five-bedroom apartment above Queen May Jewelry at 518 Washington St. into two two-bedroom apartments to provide workforce housing.

At a Dec. 10 meeting, the applicants, 518 Washington Street LLC, received preliminary and final site plan approval and variances for rear yard setback, lot coverage and off-street parking. Regulations require eight parking spaces and the project provides none.

Attorney John Amenhauer said the plan was to take a mixed-use building on the Washington Street Mall, containing two commercial units on the

ground floor and one residential unit upstairs, and convert the residential unit into two apartments.

Owner Daniel Uffleman said the apartments could be used for employee housing.

Architect Pamela Fine said the second floor has five large bedrooms, a kitchen, a bathroom, a powder room and an open space that may at one time have been a living room. Plans call for the creation of two apartments with two bathrooms and a kitchen, living and dining areas.

John Halbruner, engineer/planner for the project, said the building occupies nearly the entire lot. He said no changes were proposed for the exterior of the building.

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## HOLIDAY FARM-TO-TABLE DINNER SERIES

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