

## Cape May awards contract for nature trails

Page A2



## House of the Week

B1



170th YEAR NO. 49 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2024 \$1.00



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

### Host of Christmases past

Cape May MAC (Museums+Arts+Culture) has decorated its Victorian House Museum, the 1879 Emlen Physick House, in true Victorian style for Christmas. On the Emlen Physick Estate Tour, a guide takes visitors through the first and second floors of the 18-room mansion and explains its importance and the history of the family and staff who lived and worked there. Learn about Victorian Christmas traditions along the way. Afterward, visit the Carroll Gallery in the estate's Carriage House to see 'An Old-Fashioned Christmas' exhibit.'



## Cape May mourns loss of Lois Smith



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE  
Lois Smith sings alongside saxophonist Alan Weber in 2019.

*Editor's note: Lois Smith passed away last week, silencing a voice that sang for generations on the concert stage and church platform in Cape May.*

By **BERNADETTE J. MATTHEWS**  
For the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Lois Smith's remarkable talent, artistry and personality have made her a beloved and respected person in the community known for her humor, fiery spirit and kindness.

Smith's journey is a beautiful testament to the power of passion and perseverance. Born in Cape May, she grew up in a vibrant environment that nurtured her artistic talents from an early age. Her experiences in her mother's guest house and her father's piano les-

sons laid the foundation for a life deeply intertwined with music and community.

Lois Kathryn Brown was born in her parents' home at Brown's Cottage in Cape May on what was then 17 Lafayette St. Her mother ran a 14-room guest house. As a young girl, Lois had duties that included serving dinner to the people residing there.

Her father, Herman Brown, taught her to play the piano at the cottage. She was a storyteller and on occasion would recall an event that happened when she was a teenager.

One day in her mother's rooming house, she was timidly singing gospel tunes when a visiting vocalist reprimanded her.

See Lois Smith, Page A2

## Planners discuss solutions to two major problems

### Propose workforce housing on the mall, parking garage

By **JACK FICHTER**  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Planning Board discussed two of the city's big problems—the lack of adequate parking and employee housing.

Possible solutions proposed are building a parking garage and creating workforce apartments above stores on the Washington Street Mall.

Board engineer Craig Hurless said during a meeting Nov. 26 that the city's master plan is recommending the board comprehensively re-examine and address the standards for the C-1 district, the Washington Street Mall primary business district.

"Availability of off-street parking in this area is extremely lacking and the ability to develop new parking is problematic due to land availability," it states. "Availability of workforce housing has also been cited as a concern. This area is pedestrian friendly and complimentary to apartments over commercial uses, which are permitted currently."

The ability to convert unused areas above commercial uses has been curtailed by a lack of parking, and relaxing or eliminating the parking requirement for apartment uses in this district should be investigated, the master plan states.

Hurless recommended the city revise how parking requirements are calculated. He said the city does not have standards for apartments over commercial uses but typically it falls on the Residential Site Improvement Standards.

He said an item for discussion is eliminating parking requirements in the C-1 district for apartments over commercial uses to facilitate the creation of workforce housing, which is different from affordable housing.

Workforce housing is for workers, full-time or seasonal, and does not have to meet the state affordable housing requirements.

Planning Board Chairman Bill Bezaire said workforce housing can be market rate housing. He said the C-1 district goes beyond the mall to Lafayette Street and the Washington Commons shopping center.

Board member Dennis Crowley said it is assumed those in workforce housing do not own a car.

"We need housing for young families," Bezaire said.

Hurless said those who lived above business in the C-1 district would not be able to park in that district.

"Unless we start talking about a parking garage," Bezaire said, noting two lots, one next to Collier's Liquors and the city owned lot on Bank Street.

Crowley said the master plan recommends discussion of a parking garage.

Bezaire said Savannah, Ga., and St. Augustine, Fla., have parking garages that do not detract from the ambience of the historic towns.

"That's really a council decision to do a parking garage. We could recommend it, but they've got to make the call, they've got to pay for it," he said. "There's a lot of things you can do with a parking garage. You can condo them out, sell spaces to the businesses or to houses in the area that don't have parking."

Mayor Zack Mullock asked if the current apartments above businesses on the mall were legal. Bezaire said the apartments are legal and there is a lot of space above the stores that could be turned into apartments.

Planning Board solicitor Richard King theorized if a two- or three-bedroom apartment was created on the mall above stores, he did

See Planners, Page A2

## West Cape OKs lot transfers

By **JACK FICHTER**  
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Borough Commission authorized Mayor Carol Sabo to sign closing documents to transfer two borough-owned lots to Habitat for Humanity for the construction of two homes to fulfill West Cape May's affordable housing obligations.

The borough secured an immunity order to protect itself from all exclusionary zoning lawsuits, including builder's remedy proceedings, while it pursued approval of its Housing Element and Fair Share Plan.

A settlement agreement was entered into with the Fair Share Housing Center under the supervision of Judge Steven P. Perskie.

The amended housing and fair share plan were approved by the court.

At a Nov. 27 meeting, borough solicitor Frank Corrado said he expected closing on the lots by the end of the year.

Borough Commissioner Jack Antonicello raised objections to approving the transaction and abstained

from voting on the resolution.

At a June 2023 meeting, Jennifer Antonicello, Jack Antonicello's wife, stated she and her husband owned a lot on Willow Avenue adjacent to the proposed affordable housing site, asking if the borough had the authority to donate land to whom-ever it wanted or whether it was a matter for a vote of the public.

Jack Antonicello said a press release from the state Department of Community

See West Cape, Page A2

## HPC chair Coupland to retire

### Landmark status endangered when he joined

By **JACK FICHTER**  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Historic Preservation Commission Chairman Warren Coupland is retiring from the HPC at the end of December.

"There is no circumstance that prompts that decision except for the celebration of my 79th birthday," he said Nov. 25 during an HPC meeting. "Since joining the HPC in 2007, I'm proud to be able

to share in our collective success."

He said in his early days on the HPC, they discovered Cape May was on the Secretary of the Interior's watchlist for endangered national landmarks. Coupland said as a group, the HPC successfully corrected those issues and has come full circle, receiving awards from the state.

"After 18 years, it's time to retire and turn the reins over to new leadership," he said.

Coupland noted Cape May continues as the only national historic landmark city in America. He said he enjoyed working with HPC members past and present as well as city administration.

Commissioner Jim Testa said thought everyone on the HPC has grown in their roles under his leadership.

Coupland was a leader in obtaining state recog-

See Coupland, Page A7



### HOLIDAY FARM-TO-TABLE DINNER SERIES

THURSDAYS, FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS AT BEACH PLUM FARM

Celebrate the most wonderful time of the year in the warm glow of Beach Plum Farm's rustic, yet elegant hoop house. This multi-course meal, served family style, highlights our pasture-raised turkeys, heritage pork, winter vegetables and fresh herbs.

Reserve Tickets at [BeachPlumFarmCapeMay.com](http://BeachPlumFarmCapeMay.com)  
(609) 459-0121 • @BeachPlumFarm

Beach Plum