



House of the week
Real Estate Resource



Everything, including the kitchen sink
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City Planning Board OKs updated master plan

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city's Planning Board approved a re-examination of Cape May's master plan in a 6-1 vote March 12.

Planning Board engineer and planner Craig Hurlless said the re-examination built upon the city's 2003 and 2009 master plan re-examinations. He said the master plan represented the city's vision for itself and the means for guiding land development policy and planning decisions.

"We directed the board to be forward-looking not just 10 years in advance but even outwards of

20 years," Hurlless said.

He said he advised the Planning Board to "think big, think outside the box, don't worry if there's no funding now, funding sources may become available later."

Hurlless offered a summary of the re-examination, saying Cape May has been losing population since 1980. From the 1990 census to the 2000 census, the city showed a 13.6 percent drop in population and a 10.6 percent drop from 2000 to 2010. Population loss has slowed, with a projected loss of 4.9 percent between 2010 and 2020 with an anticipated population of 3,429 persons, he said.

A 20 percent to 40 percent re-

gional decline in population was shown by other Cape May County municipalities, reflecting a trend of shore communities transitioning to more second home units while Cape May averaged a 10 percent decline, Hurlless said.

"We don't necessarily become a ghost town that other seashore communities become during the winter time," he said. "That's through a lot of planning and through a lot of city assets that are utilized to extend the season."

Hurlless said in the 2000 census, 51.4 percent of Cape May's homes were designated for seasonal use. Data from 2010 indicated the trend increased to 55.8 percent,

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Updated master plan recognizes need for workforce housing in Cape May.
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county data, he said. The city's full-time population is dominated by an older population with fewer children than most municipalities, he said.

"Housing stock in Cape May is becoming less and less affordable," Hurlless said.

In the 2000 census, the median housing value for owner-occupied units was \$212,900. By 2010, the median housing value had jumped to \$661,000, indicating a tripling in value, Hurlless said.

He said the re-examination recognized housing stock is expensive and prohibitive for local em-

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

A crowd, including a number of students from Lower Cape May Regional High School, gathered Monday at Cape May Convention Hall to protest the government's plans to allow seismic testing in the waters from Delaware Bay to Florida.

'We do not want this'

Officials, students, seniors protest seismic testing

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — More than 200 persons gathered Monday on the boardwalk next to Convention Hall, a few hundred feet from the deep blue Atlantic, to protest a plan by the Trump administration to permit seismic testing in the ocean.

Seismic airguns that can exceed 260 decibels — believed to have the ability to deafen or kill marine mammals such as whales and dolphins and scatter fish — would be shot in 10-second pulses to locate oil reserves.

The rally was sponsored by the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce, Clean Ocean Action, Rockaway Water Alliance and the Surfrider Foundation. Mayors, deputy mayors, council members and administrators from county coastal communities were well represented at the event along with a bus load of students from Lower Cape May Regional High School. Signs against seismic testing were held by senior citizens, students and officials from municipalities.

"You're here today because you know that the federal administration is determined to open the Atlantic

Ocean for offshore oil drilling, and the first step in that process is seismic testing, a noise that is so loud that it disturbs, injures and kills marine life, harms commercial fisheries and disrupts coastal economies," Cape May County Chamber of Commerce President Vicki Clark said.

She said blasts from seismic airguns are repeated every 10 seconds, 24 hours per day for days and weeks at a time. Clark said the permitting documents for the testing state the impacts from seismic blasts will

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CMCEA votes no confidence in school leaders

By LAUREN SUIT
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The members of the Cape May City Education Association asked the school board March 14 to intervene on their behalf after they announced they have lost all trust, faith and confidence in the current administration and its ability to lead the Cape May City School

District.

"We are submitting a vote of no confidence in our current administration," said preschool teacher Kelley Helbig, who is president of CMCEA.

A vote of no confidence is a symbolic, nonbinding vote taken by the membership of a union, usually against an administrator, expressing a collective lack of faith in that individual's

ability to perform basic job functions, usually as a result of some malfeasance or perceived failing. The goal of such a vote is often to express to a decision maker or a board that changes need to be made within an organization.

Helbig read a statement of no confidence to the school board while fellow teachers, education association members in red

shirts and parents listened from the audience. The teachers of Cape May City Elementary School have been working without a contract since June.

The CMCEA noted that the Cape May City School District has always been a district where decisions are made in a collaborative manner in the best interest

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Lower launches aggressive effort to draw business

State Opportunity Zone includes airport, Bayshore Road corridor

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Mayor Erik Simonsen hosted a meeting March 14 to kick off an aggressive effort to attract development to Lower Township's Opportunity Zone.

"We have brought together all the players — the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, Delaware River and Bay Authority (DRBA), Cape May County and township officials to work together to bring new jobs and ratables to Lower Township," he said.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) awarded a grant to Lower Township to fund the economic development and marketing plan for the Opportunity Zone, which includes the county airport and surrounding areas including the Bayshore Road commercial corridor. Rutala Associates, a local planning

firm, is leading the development strategy.

Economist Richard Perniciaro told those assembled at the meeting that economic realities in the county and Lower Township are a lack of economic diversity, a declining, aging population and an average household income that is 19 percent lower than the state average of \$76,000.

In order to be proactive in bolstering the economic development, the county and Lower Township are turning to the newly created Opportunity Zone as well as state incentives, boutique tourism and improving infrastructure in areas such as the county airport.

"The township is taking the right steps by working with all the stakeholders to marketing the Opportunity Zone," said Tim Sullivan, executive director of the New Jersey Economic De-

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Loss of state school aid worse than anticipated

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

COLD SPRING — Local school districts were aware of sharp cuts coming in state aid due to a new state funding formula and declining enrollments, but the reductions for 2019 were more severe than anticipated, nearing \$1 million each for the elementary and high school districts.

Lower Township Elementary School District Superintendent Jeff Samaniego said state aid in the district was reduced by \$947,285 for the 2019-20 budget. Choice Aid was re-

duced by \$168,790, which was the result of the per-pupil student allocation of 90 percent. The district is being funded for 72 seats.

The adjustment aid was reduced by \$778,315, which was the result of \$426,970 from the 13 percent reduction from state legislation. An additional reduction of \$351,344 was the direct result of a decrease of 29 students in enrollment.

Samaniego stated the district had anticipated the initial \$426,971 reduction, and the appropriations had to be reduced. In order to

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