



Bezaire gets 45 days in jail or monitoring

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House of the week

B1



168th YEAR NO. 11 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2022 \$1.00

City Council looks to bond for police station

Plans \$5 million structure at St. John and Lafayette streets that will require DEP land swap

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council voted 4-1 to introduce an ordinance that would bond \$4.7 million for the construction of a police station on the corner of Lafayette and St. John streets.

The plan would involve the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) approving a land swap. The city has contacted the DEP Green Acres Program proposing to dispose

of 0.14 acres of future parkland along St. John Street near the intersection of Lafayette Street. As compensation, the city proposes to dedicate about 4.86 acres of city-owned land at the Sewell Tract as parkland.

At a March 16 council meeting, Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan, who voted against the ordinance, said she is in favor of building a police station but upset because the city was not open and transparent in the process of deciding the location. She said the city did

not conduct a feasibility study.

“How much is it going to cost at this location, the size, the parking, the public parking?” Sheehan asked. “At one time, we had talked about putting it at the Welcome Center, which is publicly owned property by the city.”

“This spot where we want to put it, the city does not own this property as of right now,” she continued. “It is my understanding that the city is going through a land swap to get this land.”

Sheehan said the proposal should have been presented to council, asking how far land swap hearings with the DEP and Jersey Central Power and Light, which owns some of the park property, have progressed.

“We should have had a public presentation on this. This is a big step forward with this police station where we would have had a full disclosure, the timing of the project, the cost to the taxpayers, the annual operating expenses,” she said.

Sheehan asked if Cape May Point and West Cape May, which pay Cape May for police services, would contribute to the construction cost.

Mayor Zack Mullock said a new police station has been debated for decades. He said a million reasons could be found not to build it.

The public voted for separate fire and police stations, he said. “This bonding tonight fulfills

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Pair winery tour, visit to pot facility, experts say

Cannabis tourism creates chance to reach new clients

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP — If you are in a tourism-related business, you may want to add cannabis to the equation such as smoky yoga and pot painting.

The Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce and the Cannabis and Hemp Research Institute at Stockton University held a panel discussion March 15 called “Destination Cannabis, Opportunities for New Jersey Hospitality and Tourism.”

Jane Bokunewicz, faculty director of the Lloyd D. Levenson Institute of Gaming, Hospitality and Tourism at Stockton University School of Business, said development of a recreational cannabis industry in New Jersey will have significant benefits on the state’s existing businesses and will create new and unique opportunities for hospitality and tourism.

Panel member Robert Meija, an adjunct professor in Stockton’s Cannabis Studies Department, said if a municipality allows it, a dispensary may also have a consumption lounge on the premises. The state has 560 municipalities but only nine currently permit consumption lounges, he said.

Brian Applegarth, founder of the Cannabis Travel Association International, said there is a “canna-curious audience, the cannabis wellness traveler as well as the cannabis enthusiast traveler.” California has a pending bill to allow cannabis catering for events such as weddings and conferences. He said the California State Fair was incorporating cannabis into its awards program.

Susan Dupej, a social sciences and humanities research postdoctoral fellow in Ontario, Canada, who studies cannabis tourism, said partnerships are key to success.

“Dispensaries are great. That’s where the tourists can access the cannabis, but what is that paired with?” she asked. “The tourism aspect comes in with respect to the experience around it.”

She suggested tours of cannabis farms such as those held at wineries.

Applegarth said there is a stigma about cannabis travel.

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John Cooke/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Cape May names poet laureate

Cape May City Council declared Sylvia Kuhner Baer its 2022 poet laureate on March 15. She and her husband, John, created a “poet tree” at their home, where poems hang from branches. At the meeting, she read a poem about what makes Cape May so appealing. Above, Mayor Zack Mullock presents her with a proclamation

City proposes no tax hike in its new budget

Rate to remain at 36.3 cents

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council introduced its 2022 municipal budget March 15 featuring no increase in the local purpose tax rate, which will remain at 36.3 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

The budget totals \$22 million with \$10.6 million to be raised by taxes. The city has \$25 million in new ratables due to construction. The budget is up \$606,438.

At the end of 2021, the city had \$9.4 million in surplus funds. The 2022 budget uses \$3.4 million, leaving a balance of \$6.4 million.

Auditor Leon Costello said the budget can be changed until final passage, scheduled for April 19. If the budget is altered by more than 10 percent on an expenditure, it must be advertised and another hearing scheduled, he said.

Costello said the budget is well under the state spending caps. He said the city has a “phenomenal” tax collection rate.

Councilman Shaine Meier asked Costello how hard the city would be hit by high gasoline prices. Costello said he doubted it would have much impact on the city. He said he has lived in Ocean City for 68 years and went the economy gets tight, the shore communities do well because travelers schedule short driving trips.

“I don’t see any problem with the tourism revenue, the beach revenue,” Costello said. “I’m confident that ’22 is going to be a good year.”

Chief Financial Officer Neil Young said

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More changes likely for Lafayette Street Park

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A proposal to build a new police station at the corner of St. John and Lafayette streets could force changes to plans for the completion of Lafayette Street Park.

Engineer Vince Orlando told City Council on March 15 that the city has submitted an archeological study of the property to the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), saying it’s the “last piece of the puzzle” so the DEP can decide on phases two and three of the park. He said it does not include phase four, which is a nature trail to Cape Island Creek.

“We did complete a conceptual plan looking at some of the elements,” Orlando said, noting it needs some work and the input of council.

“At some point in time, we’ll



Provided

Plans for phases two and three of Lafayette Street Park may have to be altered if the city decides to build a police station at the corner of St. John and Lafayette streets.

modify that plan that’s currently up at the state,” he said. “We’ll have a modification for our CAFRA (Coastal Area Fa-

cilities Review Act) permit for the application.”

The park land is located on the site of a former coal

gasification plant that left widespread contamination underground.

Jersey Central Power and Light (JCP&L) has agreed to pay the city \$275,000 for replacement of basketball and tennis courts and lighting demolished during remediation of underground contamination on the site.

Councilman Shaine Meier said it is important the Wise, Anderson and Dellas families are recognized when the park is reconstructed. The plot was formerly called Wise-Anderson Park with Della’s Field for baseball. He said he was pleased with Orlando’s alterations to the park plans.

Orlando said lively discussion on elements of the park, such as having a pickleball court, a dog park and fountains, could take place in the future.

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