



House of the week

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Enlisted memorial at TRACEN

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165th YEAR NO. 18

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 2019 \$1.00



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The F6F-3 Hellcat is unloaded Monday at the Naval Air Station Wildwood Aviation Museum following its trip from the National Aviation Museum in Pensacola, Fla.

F6F-3 Hellcat arrives at NASW

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — A crew of volunteers anxiously awaited the arrival of the Naval Air Station Wildwood Aviation Museum's latest acquisition, an F6F-3 Hellcat, the U.S. Navy's premier fighter of World War II.

The plane did not fly into the county airport Monday but arrived on a low-boy trailer with its wings and horizontal stabilizers removed. Aviation Museum founder Joseph Salvatore and crew marveled at the good condition of the plane. The Hellcat came from the National Aviation Museum in Pensacola.

It was expertly moved by Chuck Mosely of All Coast Aircraft Recovery. The plane was lifted off the trailer with a crane and the Hellcat was lowered to sit on its landing gear on the museum's tarmac.

Salvatore said the plane needed only one wing repaired.

"It's the kind of airplane we always wanted," he said. "The history on it is spectacular."

Hellcats destroyed 5,156 enemy aircraft and accounted for 75 percent of the Navy's aerial victories in just two years of combat. The plane was flown in World War II by LTJG Arthur Ray Hawkins of Fighting Squad-

ron 31 off the carrier the USS Cabot. In 1944, before he had reached the age of 21, Hawkins had downed 14 enemy aircraft in aerial combat to become the 10th-ranking Navy ace of all time.

The Hellcat was delivered to Carrier Aircraft Service Five in October 1943. It was serving with Fighting Squadron 21 at North Island, Calif., when ditched at sea by its pilot in 1945. Recovered 12 miles off San Diego in 1971, the aircraft was in excellent condition. Despite 26 years under 1,800 feet of water, many systems were operational. The guns after cleaning and replacement of electrical equipment were capable of firing. The aircraft

is the only surviving F6F-3 of more than 4,000 built.

As part of its loan agreement with the national museum, NASW will continue with the restoration of the Hellcat — which includes the reattachment of the starboard wing. NASW will be using its own funds but is also seeking donations to help cover costs via a GoFundMe campaign. The Hellcat will be on display this summer.

Naval Air Station Wildwood Aviation Museum is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily and located inside historic Hangar #1 at the Cape May County Airport in Lower Township. For more information, visit usnasw.org or call (609) 886-8787.

Plans to drill for oil off N.J. coast on hold

Environmental groups: It's not time to celebrate

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, in an interview with the Wall Street Journal, said plans for five-year leases for oil drilling in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans are on hold after U.S. District Court Judge Sharon Gleason stopped efforts of the Trump administration to reverse a ban on such drilling enacted by the Obama administration.

Gleason stated Trump exceeded his authority by signing an executive order that challenged limits on offshore oil drilling.

The court ruling raised questions for the Department of the Interior on how to proceed regarding offshore drilling. An appeal from the Trump administration is expected. Bernhardt told the Wall Street Journal by the time the court rules, it would be "discomfounding to our plan."

Molly Block, a spokeswoman for the Department of the Interior, stated the

agency was "evaluating all its options."

Meanwhile, environmental groups are cautiously optimistic.

"No amount of delay is going to change the fact that the American people do not want more drilling off our coasts. Bernhardt has lost in the courtroom and he has lost in the court of public opinion. It's time for him to give up on his radical offshore-drilling plan once and for all," said Athan Manuel, director of the Sierra Club's Lands Protection Program.

Jeff Tittel, director of the New Jersey chapter of the Sierra Club, told the Star and Wave the turnabout took place only because the Sierra Club and other groups initiated lawsuits in federal court.

"What we are concerned about is that depending on what happens with the court case, it could come back," he said.

Tittel said Trump could once again change his mind on offshore drilling as he

Oil drilling, Page A3

Library feasibility study among town hall topics

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A feasibility study on placing a county library inside the Franklin Street School, prepared by architect Michael Calafati, will be presented during a town hall meeting at 6 p.m. Wednesday, May 1, at Convention Hall.

Also on hand for the li-

brary presentation will be county Board of Freeholders Director Gerald Thornton, Freeholder E. Marie Hayes and Center for Community Arts Executive Director David MacKenzie. The study has been submitted to the county Library Commission and city of Cape May.

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Mullock seeks coalition to create nature center at St. Mary's

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — Borough Commissioner Bob Mullock is hopeful St. Mary by-the-Sea can be preserved as the Cape May Point Environmental and Nature Retreat Center.

The building, referred to by locals as "the convent," may be demolished after 2021. The Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill, Phila., released a statement in 2016 regarding the future of Saint Mary by-the-Sea, a congregationally owned and operated retreat house, saying they wish it to return to nature.

The sisters have owned and operated the retreat house since 1909, providing retreats for sisters and laity.

"As we engage in both demographic and financial planning, we believe it is necessary for us to plan for the divestment of this property. Given its beachfront location and our congregational commitment to care for Earth, our desire is eventually to return this land to nature rather than use it for further development," they stated.

At an April 23 Borough Commission meeting, Mullock read a statement regarding St. Mary by-the-Sea during public comment. He

noted Cape May Point has a long history of protecting its precious natural environment.

"As a community, we have rejected commercialism of our town," Mullock stated. "Instead we have just two commercial licenses."

In June 2018, Borough Commission unanimously approved the support of an application of the Sisters of St. Joseph to the county Open Space Program. The commissioners stated the property is of great environmental and historic value to the borough. Mullock said the borough also expressed its support for the preserva-

tion of St. Mary's Retreat House.

"In a letter to the Open Space Board, we asserted that given the opportunity, an effective effort can be made to spearhead a coalition of nonprofit environmental and education groups that would step forward to provide the funding and programmatic activities to make the preservation of St. Mary's a viable and exceptionally worthwhile undertaking that would benefit both the residents and visitors of Cape May County," he stated.

"The Sisters of St. Joseph

Nature center, Page A3



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Borough Commissioner Bob Mullock wants to keep the building at Saint Mary's by-the-Sea for use as a nature center after the Sisters of St. Joseph divest of the property.

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