



House of the week

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Cape May County talks with gov about reopening

Proposal would lift most limits on retailers, restaurants after Memorial Day

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE – On May 5, a task force headed by Freeholder Vice Director Leonard Desiderio and Freeholder Will Morey sent a proposal to Gov. Phil Murphy on reopening the economy in Cape May County in steps.

Most of the reopening steps come after Memorial Day weekend, a concession that the traditional holiday weekend at the shore used to usher in the official tourist season is not going to happen.

“I don’t begrudge Cape May County for trying to lay a plan out,” Murphy

said Thursday, May 7, at his daily COVID-19 briefing in Trenton. “Tourism is a huge part of their economic reality. We respect that. Understand that. We want to do everything we can, responsibly, to support it.” While pointing out that beaches and boardwalks remain the domain of local decisions, the governor has still not laid out any timeline for removing restrictions on businesses.

Freeholders talked with the governor’s chief of staff last week and were to talk with the governor’s office again Tuesday.

Desiderio, who noted the task force spent “many, many, many hours” work-

ing, said the initial response from the governor’s office was that it was an “A1 report” and they would be discussing it more with

county officials.

“The most important thing is we have a dialogue now. There is an open dialogue between Cape May

County and the governor’s office,” Desiderio said. “And I know this report is going across the state. Other counties are looking

at it and other legislators ... I personally got calls from freeholders and freeholder

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Local rates up; state may announce ‘hard dates’

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

this week.

Cape May and Atlantic are among the New Jersey counties with higher rates of COVID-19 cases doubling. Both counties reported more cases and fatalities over the past few days as Gov. Phil Murphy said he may announce “hard dates” for reopening the state’s economy later

Across the state, most counties now have doubling rates of 30 days or more. They also have far more cases than in south Jersey. Cape May County now is at a 17-day doubling rate, Atlantic County is at 15 and Cumberland at 14.5. Salem is at 18.5 day and Camden at 26.

The state reports new cases are continuing their

decline across the state, as are the number of ventilators in use and people in intensive care. On Monday, there were 26,397 positive tests in long-term care, but 4,890 deaths at those facilities. Statewide, there are more than 140,000 cases and more than 9,310 fatalities.

The national death toll from COVID-19 has surpassed 80,000.

Hard hit are veterans retirement facilities where 362 of the 672 residents have tested positive and there have been 129 deaths, state officials said Monday.

“I hope to have news to report later this week,” Murphy said at his daily press conference Monday. He said that would include “hard dates” on reopening

See **Local Rates**, B2

Sewell Tract group pulls request for city funds

Letter blasts opponents

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – Concerned Citizens for Sewell Tract Preservation, the plaintiff intervenor in the ongoing litigation to preserve the 100-acre Sewell Tract, announced May 4 that it had withdrawn its requests for financial aid from the city of Cape May to better conduct the trial after months of stalemate and political squabbling over the issue on City Council.

In its letter addressing the topic, Concerned Citizens told council, “We are now in a position to advise you that, in the intervening weeks while our proposals have languished, Concerned Citizens’ generous donors once again have responded to provide sufficient funds with which we can proceed to trial on a reasonable basis.”

“Our donors have continued to recognize the importance of preserving Sewell Tract to the environmental and economic health of the city. They have continued to act responsibly as good citizens for the benefit of the community, while the city government has been paralyzed by irresponsibility,” the letter continued.

“Therefore, as a result of our renewed funding commitments, Concerned Citizens hereby withdraws its proposals requesting funding from the city,” stated the letter. “In so doing, we also rescind all offers made in those proposals to afford the city coordination and

See **Sewell** page A2



Jack Fichter/STAR AND WAVE

Food drive

Lower Township Mayor Frank Sippel loads donated groceries into a pickup truck while Councilman Tom Conrad (background) unloads a donor’s vehicle during a May 9 food drive at Township Hall. At right, a steady stream of vehicles came to a drop-off food drive May 9 by Township Hall.



Convention Hall litigation dropped

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – City Council approved a resolution for settlement and dismissal of litigation filed by the prior administration against Kimmel Bogrette, the architectural firm that designed Convention Hall.

At issue, the mechanical room of Con-

vention Hall, which houses sump pumps and fire suppression equipment, was built at 8.5 feet above flood level despite the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requiring a minimum height of 15 feet. The height of the mechanical room was not mentioned on the building’s Flood

See **Convention**, page B2

Food, beverage service may expand outdoors in Cape May

By DEBORAH McGUIRE
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – As regulations regarding business closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic begin to ease, City Council discussed options for the city’s shops and restaurants once they are permitted to open.

“Everybody here is all onboard that we want to keep everyone

safe in Cape May,” Councilwoman Stacey Sheehan said. “We want to make sure that when we open, we keep everyone safe because it’s a benefit to everyone, the citizens, also to the businesses because if we have an outbreak then no one is going to want to visit us.”

During a May 5 council meeting, the possibility of closing certain city streets to allow businesses

and restaurants to operate outdoors or offer outdoor seating was discussed.

According to Mayor Chuck Lear, opening up additional space for retail and restaurants is something that needs to be addressed in a timely fashion.

In order to ensure fairness to all businesses and restaurants, the city’s re-opening task force will

develop a list of recommended streets, what type of venues will be affected and what type of items will be offered under the proposed plan. City Manager Jerry Inderwies said the task force currently includes representatives from local retail establishments, the Business Improvement District

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