



House of the week

Real Estate Resource



Escape the Cape draws hundreds to Lower Twp.

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City backs preservation of entire Sewell Tract

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — In a 2-1 vote, City Council approved a resolution supporting preservation and opposing development of the Sewell Tract, a 100-acre undeveloped plot in East Cape May whose origins date back to the 1950s. The acreage is the last undeveloped land in Cape May.

The Sewell Tract was purchased in 1951 by Thomas Brodesser and Philip Robinson, who also devel-

oped Village Greene in Cape May. In 1990, the land was conveyed to East Cape May Associates, also owned by Brodesser and Robinson. They sought to develop much of the 96-acre tract. As litigation has dragged on for decades, the Department of Environmental Protection made an amelioration offer to allow East Cape May Associates to develop 20 to 25 acres of the Sewell Tract, much of which is believed to be wetlands.

Council's resolution states Concerned Citizens for Sewell Tract

Preservation, a not-for-profit corporation, intervened in the litigation to support the position that Sewell Tract should remain undeveloped and be preserved.

"If the Sewell Tract is developed, it is possible the city may expend costs to provide services to any newly developed area and whereas, the city remains committed to promoting preservation of, and concern for, the environment, its citizens and the unique wildlife that live and migrate through the city and surrounding

area," it states.

During a council meeting June 4, Councilwoman Bea Pessagno, who cast a dissenting vote, said she felt there were inaccuracies in the resolution. She said it stated that the city's Environmental Commission and the Seawall/Promenade Advisory Committee told City Council they support the positions of Concerned Citizens for Sewell Tract Preservation.

In a written statement, Councilman Roger Furlin, who was absent from the meeting, stated he did

not recall either group advising council of their position on the tract. She suggested the resolution be tabled until a future meeting.

Councilwoman Patricia Hendricks abstained from the voting on the resolution because her husband is a member of Concerned Citizens for Sewell Tract Preservation.

"I think it's the right time for the city to have an official opinion on this matter," Deputy Mayor

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Electricity line accident sets church ablaze

Allen AME steeple razed after suffering extensive damage in fire Saturday

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Allen AME Church suffered severe damage June 9 as the result of a moving van snagging a utility pole guy wire, resulting in a high-voltage line falling on the church's steeple tower.

The initial fire call was issued about 11:30 a.m. from the church, at 717 Franklin St.

According to Fire Chief Alex Coulter, the fire started as a result of a moving truck driving down Osborne Street, catching a guy wire from a utility pole and pulling the pole over into the church. The high-voltage lines caught the church's steeple tower, setting it on fire, he said.

Fire crews were not able to make an immediate attack due to the entire building being electrically charged. The fire department had to wait for power to be turned off by Atlantic City Electric, but that included half of Cape May, Coulter said.

Once power was shut down, crews were able to make an aggressive attack to bring the fire under control within 15 minutes, and declared it out about an hour and a half after the first call. The building, constructed in 1888, suffered very heavy damage and was being evaluated by Cape May Building and Code Enforcement departments.

The church was sprayed with foam to prevent rekindling, Coulter said. Later in the afternoon, the church's tower, heavily damaged by the blaze, was demolished.

Due to the fire and dam-



John Alvarez/Special to the STAR AND WAVE
Firefighters cut into the roof of the steeple tower at Allen AME Church, which was severely damaged by fire. Bottom, firefighters battle the blaze around the front door.

Allen AME Church suffered severe damage Saturday, June 9, after a moving van snagged a utility pole guy wire, resulting in a high-voltage line coming into contact with the church's steeple tower and setting it ablaze.

age to electricity lines, the core of Cape May was without power for 10 hours. The Washington Inn, post office, Acme market and Oyster Bay closed for the day.

Fire departments assisted from the U.S. Coast Guard, West Cape May, Town Bank, Rio Grande, Erma and Wildwood, as well as Lower Township Rescue and Middle Township EMS.

Coulter said the pastor, who lives in Pleasantville, arrived at the fire scene. He said when he arrived on scene, the front door area was ablaze and flames were working their way up to the tower. A secondary power line landed on a metal railing at the front entrance, Coulter said.



John Cooke/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Cape May talks redevelopment of theater area

Hires law firm to study whether area qualifies

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — In a 3-1 vote, City Council approved retaining a special attorney in connection with possible redevelopment of the block that formerly housed the Beach Theatre and stores on the Promenade across Beach Avenue.

During a meeting June 4, Deputy Mayor Shaine Meier said that block is a secondary business district for the city.

"It is my opinion, since the Beach Theatre has left that area, that business district is not as strong as it once was," he said. "I think that the back portion of the current Beach Theatre is unsightly and underutilized."

Meier said the city is trying to create an incentive for someone to come in and "assume a risk" and build some type of facility that would

enhance the district.

City Clerk Patricia Harbora read a letter from Councilman Roger Furlin, who was absent from the meeting. He stated he supported redevelopment of the Beach Theatre area and Beach Avenue between Stockton Place and Gurney Street and buildings along the Promenade between Howard and Gurney streets.

Furlin stated he supported hiring the proposed legal firm, Maley Givens of Collingswood.

"However, because of public mistrust during the last redevelopment cycle, it is imperative that the scope of the redevelopment effort be specifically limited to the area outlined," he stated in the letter.

Furlin stated he objected to language of a nonspe-

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Lafayette Street Park maintenance lacking

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Before it was built, a resident questioned who would take care of the trees and landscaping at Lafayette Street Park. That question is still being as a lack of care has taken its toll on trees and allowed weeds to replace grass.

During a meeting of the Lafayette Street Park Advisory Committee on June 7, member Sharon Lee Kustra, who is also a Cape May City Elementary School Board of Education member, said during phase one of the construction, grass needed to be

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Committee looks at two concepts for the next phase of park rehabilitation.

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mowed, borders needed edged with grass growing into the sidewalk and weeds needed be cut under fences and benches and around trees. The city is leasing part of the park

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