



Drainage restored from Lake Lily to Delaware Bay

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House of the Week

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170th YEAR NO. 25 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19, 2024 \$1.00



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

A book brigade stretches down Washington Street, featuring volunteers passing books hand to hand June 13 from the former Cape May County Library branch on Ocean Street around the corner to the new facility on Franklin Street.

New chapter for book brigade

Volunteers pass items hand to hand to fill shelves at new library

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A new 16,000-square-foot county library branch, inside the restored Franklin Street School, was dedicated June 13 with a book brigade from the old library and a ribbon cutting.

The school opened in 1928 as an elementary school for African American children. The students did not have access to a gymnasium which was attached to the building and used only by the white students at the neighboring high school.

The wall separating the gym and school has been demolished except for a small section left as reminder of segregation and marked with a sign.

The architecture of the school remains intact but renewed with refinished floors and restored windows. The brickwork on the exterior of the building looks fresh and new. One of the reasons the state helped fund the project was its restoration of an historic building.

Some of the old steam radiators have been kept as decorations in the building which is now air conditioned. The tin ceilings in the building were largely replaced by new materials that match the original design.

An elevator was installed in the building that stops at five floors even though the school portion of the building has three floors. Most of the book stacks are in the former gymnasium where a second-floor mezzanine was installed. The elevator doors open to both sides of the building.

The building has more space than the previous



Above, the main stacks in the new library are in the former gymnasium. Right, Mayor Zack Mullock and Branch Manager Nina Wise hold a 1928 Bible during the library book brigade June 13 in Cape May.

library building for small meetings and activities and features a demonstration kitchen in the basement for cooking classes.

Steel beams have been installed to shore up the building.

Two small additions were added to the building that accommodate a teen lounge, a computer lounge and a "quiet study room." The Center for Community Arts (CCA) will move from across the street to the library building, including its radio station.

The ceremonial events began at 1 p.m. with several hundred participants forming a brigade, passing



books from the old library on Ocean Street, around the corner onto Washington Street, and up Franklin Street to the new library.

Councilman Shaine Meier helped organize the

book brigade with Deputy Mayor Lorraine Baldwin. He researched back copies of the Star and Wave to find details of a book

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Service agencies discuss unifying on housing crisis

Roundtable forum discusses collaborating to advocate for shelter, affordable rent, food

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — Imagine a county with thousands of rental properties but nowhere for locals to live full time.

Estimates place the number of properties that have become short-term rentals in Cape May and Lower Township at between 800 and 1,000 homes. In addition, the county has ignored the pleas of non-profit organizations to open a shelter for homeless persons.

Lower Township Healthy Youth Coalition, Cape Assist and Tabernacle United Methodist Church held a faith-based roundtable forum June 8 to review outreach programs and identify unmet needs such as homelessness and lack of affordable housing.

Yvonne Sullivan, of Family Promise, said the organization provides meals, shelter and case management to families with children. It owns a home in Villas to provide shelter to families and leases another house.

She said she cannot find housing for clients.

"There is nothing out there. Everybody has converted to Airbnbs, and landlords are selling their properties and asking people to leave," Sullivan said. "The

families that we serve are normally people that are getting evicted — maybe they had a house fire, somebody lost a job, somebody got sick."

Many people are only a few paychecks away from being homeless, she said.

The non-profit started a landlord network and is asking short-term rental owners to revert to monthly or annual rentals. Sullivan said Family Promise would back up its clients as renters as long as needed.

Family Promise case manager Kathleen O'Neill said the county needs a shelter where all the non-profit groups could work together to assist the homeless.

"It really is the working families that we serve that can't get help," she said. "You go to social services while you're working, and you can't get help."

O'Neill said Family Promise has had a 78 percent success rate in keeping families in homes and continues to serve 20 families that graduated from the program.

Jodi Corbett, a prevention educator with Cape Assist and coordinator of the Healthy Youth Coalition who was moderator of the meeting, said organizations

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Proposed DEP rules may raise minimum elevation for homes

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — New stricter regulations proposed by the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to protect homes from expected sea level rise would require they be built higher.

In addition, flood zones would be extended to encompass more area, putting more homes in a higher-risk area.

Last month, Gov. Phil Murphy and Commissioner of Environmental Protection Shawn M. Louette announced the administration's intent to modernize a suite of DEP regulations to better protect New Jersey communities from coastal flooding, sea-level rise and other public health and safety risks that are increasing due to climate change.

The forthcoming rule proposal, known as Resilient Environments and Landscapes (REAL) re-

forms, would make New Jersey the first state in the nation to initiate a comprehensive update of land resource protection regulations to address the current and future effects of a changing climate.

At a June 5 City Council meeting, City Manager Paul Dietrich said council joined many other coastal communities when it passed a resolution last year objecting to the new regulations.

"We've been working with the county and other stakeholders at the chamber in fighting these rules. We've been at stakeholder meetings with the DEP," he said. "They are clearly just plowing ahead and not listening to some of our suggestions."

He said the DEP was trying to address the complications of potential sea level rise in "one fell swoop" to accommodate occurrences that may happen 100 years in the

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