



## Cape May Stage celebrates life, legacy of Dr. Ruth

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## House of the Week

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170th YEAR NO. 23 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5, 2024 \$1.00

# Court OKs Cape Regional, Cooper merger

## Combined system to provide care to patients in Cape May, Atlantic counties

'We are thrilled to have this final approval and look forward to joining Cooper University Health Care. Our respective health systems have a long history of working together to serve the residents and visitors of Cape May County.'

—Joanne Carrocino, president and CEO, Cape Regional Health System

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — The New Jersey Superior Court in Cape May County has approved Cape Regional Health System joining Cooper University Health Care.

"This historic agreement will provide the residents and visitors of Cape May and Atlantic counties with greater access to more health care resources, innovative technologies and specialists," George E. Norcross III, chairman of Cooper University Health Care's board of trustees, stated in a news release announcing the step. "As the leading academic health system in the region, we com-

mitted to working with our new colleagues to provide the highest level of advanced health care and serve the health care needs of more communities across southern New Jersey."

"Over the past year and a half, both systems worked diligently to bring together these two trusted health systems to serve the health care needs of the residents and visitors in our communities. We are delighted that our work has come to fruition. As we forge together as one, we remain committed to providing the highest quality health care to our communities," stated Garry

Gilbert, chairman of Cape Regional Health System's board of trustees.

The transaction was announced in December 2022, followed by execution of a Definitive Agreement in April 2023. Since then, Cooper and Cape Regional have worked through the necessary regulatory approvals, according to the release.

"We are thrilled to have this final approval and look forward to joining Cooper University Health Care. Our respective health systems have a long history of working together to serve the residents and visitors

of Cape May County," stated Joanne Carrocino, president and CEO of Cape Regional Health System.

Cooper, with its market-leading MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper, is based in Camden and is southern New Jersey's leading academic health system and Level I trauma center, with more than \$2.2 billion in revenue, the release stated.

Cape Regional Health System has earned the Gold Seal of Approval from the Joint Commission and is an integrat-

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David Nahan/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

## Cape May Music Festival

Okorie "OkCello" Johnson performs Saturday night at the Episcopal Church of the Advent as part of Cape May MAC's Cape May Music Festival. OKCello is a cellist, song-writer, looper, improviser and storyteller who engaged an appreciative audience with his diverse playing, humor and stories. With themes of the African Diaspora, OkCello played his own songs and creative versions of classical and popular music and had the audience enthusiastically participating. The Cape May Music Festival continues through June 23 with Bach's Lunches, the Bay Atlantic Symphony, Jazz Brunch, Midday Music, indie-pop group Bailen, New Jersey Symphony Players and Erich Cabala and The Uptown Band. Learn more at capemaymac.org.

# Budget passed, capital projects next on agenda

## Replacing desalination plant expected to cost taxpayers in Cape May about \$20 million

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — With the municipal budget adopted, the city is ready to move forward with capital projects totaling \$9.9 million.

At a May 21 City Council meeting, City Manager Paul Dietrich said the budget contains \$1.1 million for capital projects, so future bonding would not be affected.

"We try to peel off some of the projects that we know we are not starting this year and may be in a future year," he said.

Dietrich said the city would be evaluating repainting the water tower, but that would not take place in the next six months.

Capital projects for the beach total \$1.4 million including a matching portion of a grant for Promenade improvements as well as funding miscellaneous equipment and improvements.

Dietrich said he met with auditor Leon Costello,

Deputy City Manager Justin Riggs and CFO Kevin Hanie to discuss future projects.

"We have upwards of \$50 million of potential bonding capacity before it would even affect the budget," Dietrich said.

He said a large amount of bonds would be dropping off in 2025 and in 2031. The city averages about \$5.6 million per year in debt repayment, Dietrich said.

A bond ordinance is in the works for council. He said for the June 18 meeting, he would schedule project engineers to discuss in detail those the city is ready to start. A summary of projects would be available on the city's website prior to the introduction of the bond ordinance.

Consulting and Municipal Engineers (CME) has proceeded with preliminary designs of a water desalination plant, Dietrich said. The city received a \$600,000 grant from the Environmental Protection

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# Lower tackling drainage, upgrading roads, parks throughout the township

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township has more than a dozen projects in the works for improvements to streets, stormwater drainage and upgrades to parks.

At a May 20 Township Council meeting, engineer Will Hanson, of DeBlasio and Associates, said improvements to Diamond Beach Park include new playground and fitness

equipment, pickleball courts, a shade structure and a restroom building, which is under construction. A pickleball fence and curbing has been installed, he said.

Due to weather-related delays, the contractor has requested an extension of three to four weeks to complete the project by the July 4 weekend, Hanson said.

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# HPC: Ban parking beneath homes

## Alternate plan to extend historic district standards to whole city

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Parking under historic houses has long been decried by the city's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) as inappropriate, but now it is taking it a step further.

At a May 20 meeting, Commissioner Jim Testa said the HPC was proposing an ordinance to prohibit parking under structures even outside the historic district.

Commissioner John Boecker said one proposal

would be no parking under structures anywhere in Cape May except in the R5 and NC districts at Texas and Yacht avenues.

"The reason for that is so we don't have all these homes that are a full story above grade when you are at the first floor and we start looking like all these other shore towns that are not like Cape May," he said.

Boecker said variances would be available when parking under a house can be hidden. He said an alternative would be to extend

HPC design standards for the historic district to the entire city with no parking permitted past the front façade of the house and garage doors cannot face a street, with exceptions for Yacht Avenue.

Testa said the HPC recognizes there are businesses and structures that require parking underneath the buildings.

Chairman Warren Coupland said extending HPC design standard to the entire city seemed to be a more reasonable approach.

HPC solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said an ordinance prohibiting parking under structures would first have to be considered by the Planning Board for a master plan consistency review. He noted the city's master plan is loaded with comments and concerns regarding parking shortages.

"We're here for preservation and the Planning Board is going to be very concerned about how this is eliminating opportunities for parking,"

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## SPRING FARM-TO-TABLE DINNERS

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