



Cape May Lighthouse reopens

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House of the week

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Economic recovery at shore may be year away

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

The nation and region are in recession, that's not in doubt. But how much will the local economy contract and how long will it take for it to bounce back? Those are the important questions.

Oliver Cooke, associate professor of economics at Stockton University, addressed a virtual Cape May County Chamber of Commerce "luncheon" July 10. He said the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in

March ended the longest business cycle expansion in history and that people should not expect a quick recovery.

Cooke said since the middle of 2009, the U.S. economy was in expansion mode, recovering from the Great Recession. The economy peaked in February and fell into recession beginning with the March lockdown, he said.

He used May economic figures since June data will not be available until later in the month. Job totals were down 27 percent from May

2019 in Cape County, representing a loss of 12,000 jobs. He said the majority of those jobs, nearly 70 percent, we're tied to leisure and hospitality, which includes accommodations, restaurants, bars and entertainment. Retail showed an 11 percent job loss from May 2019.

Atlantic City jobs totals were down 32 percent from May 2019, representing a loss of 43,000 jobs. In May, on a national basis, employment was off about 12 percent and leisure and hospitality accounted for 40 percent of job losses, Cooke

said.

Unemployment in Ocean City in May rose to 24.6 percent while unemployment in Atlantic City reached 32.7 percent.

Cooke said there were a number of issues that make it difficult to parse out what was going on with the unemployment rates. He said the basic unemployment rate is determined by counting the number of people that are unemployed and dividing it by the labor force.

"The official government definition of who is in the labor force

and who is unemployed demands that someone be actively searching, but for obvious reasons, this is a poorly suited measure given lockdowns that are asking people to stay home," Cooke said.

The U6 unemployment rate is a broader alternative metric published every month by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and gives a sense of underutilization of labor resources in economy, he said. The U6 in May showed a national unemployment

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Canadians can't cross border to vacation in U.S. Campgrounds, retailers, eateries, bars, room tax hurting amid COVID-19

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — O Canada, where are thy citizens on our roads and in our campgrounds and hotels?

Don't look for any Canadian license plates on vehicles in our county for at least the next month.

Canadians are unable to cross the border into the U.S. due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Canada is expected to keep its borders with the U.S. closed until Aug. 21.

According to county Tourism Director Diane Wieland, Canadians represent 7 percent of Cape May County's tourist trade. She said a number of Canadians normally visit here during the Quebec construction holiday that began last Sunday and lasts for two weeks.

"We thought that the border would be open by the beginning of July and then

that was changed until July 21 and now they are saying another 30 days because of the increase in positive cases on both sides of the border," Wieland said.

She said the Canadians have probably already found locations to vacation within Canada. Campgrounds in the county were reporting cancellations in July when the border closing was extended past the Fourth of July weekend, Wieland said.

"One campground said about 71 percent of his Canadian visitors had canceled," Wieland said. "When you look at the last two weeks in July during the construction holiday, some of the campgrounds were reporting in prior years 90 to 95 percent of their renters were from the province of Quebec."

Canadians tend to return year after year, she said.

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

It's a heatwave!

At sunrise Monday, the temperature on Cape May's beaches was 80 degrees with 77 percent humidity. The heatwave was forecast to continue through Thursday.

State to follow DOE on opening schools

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

New Jersey will be looking at federal Department of Education guidelines on remote learning for students, Gov. Phil Murphy said Monday during his 97th news conference on COVID-19 since the pandemic began in March.

The governor said the state would allow for the step, but it is too early to know what it will involve and how that will affect teachers and staff members.

Murphy said the DOE guidelines are being re-released later this week that will allow parents to choose all-remote learning for their children.

"We will allow for this step. This is about as complex a step as we or any other state will take," Mur-

phy said about figuring out what education will look like this fall.

Students began remote learning in mid-March in New Jersey when the COVID-19 pandemic prompted New Jersey's schools to close for in-person instruction. Inevitably, schools remained closed for the rest of the school year as coronavirus conditions did not improve enough. The state's schools conducted classes remotely, with students learning from home and teachers teaching from home.

New Jersey already is planning for the school buildings to reopen in September, but there have been concerns from parents and educators about the precautions necessary to prevent

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Provided

Cape May resident Jack Riehl uses old shutters he collects as material for the birdhouses he makes and sells.

Man builds birdhouses from remnants of past

By JACK FICHTER
Sure Guide

CAPE MAY — Jack Riehl makes birdhouses, lots of them. Two weeks ago, he presented his 1,000th birdhouse to the Chalfonte Hotel.

His birdhouses have found their way to China, Ireland, the United Kingdom and 25 states.

The Cape May resident began making birdhouses

while working as the handyman at the Chalfonte from 2008-10.

The birdhouses are built to last. He said his chosen material is old shutters.

"A lot of contractors know me and a lot of the carpenters around town, and they know what I do and they call me, they drop them off or I pick them up," Riehl said. "I keep an eye open when

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COVID case numbers in county spike in July

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

The number of cases of COVID-19 has increased in Cape May County in July compared to June. County officials cite eased business restrictions by the governor, the large influx of tourists and younger people not following social distancing protocols.

Overall, however, the number of new cases per day among county residents is relatively low. There are additional cases among out-of-county residents and there have been more fatalities as the total number of confirmed cases rose to 909 as of Monday, July 20, with 79 fatalities.

On Monday, there were 140 active cases in the county, with 35 in Middle Township, 27 in Lower Township and 23 in Upper Township. Cape May, with 13 cases, and North Wildwood, with 10 cases, were the only other communities in the county in the double digits. There also were 143 active cases among non-residents.

There were seven new cases overall in the county

reported Monday, five of them in Cape May and one each in Dennis and Upper townships. There were nine new cases reported Sunday, eight each on Saturday and Friday, and 17 on Thursday, July 16, including seven in Middle Township and five in Upper Township. On Wednesday, July 15, there were eight new cases.

From July 15 to 20, there also were 43 cases of COVID-19 reported among non-residents visiting Cape May County.

The Department of Health on Friday reported an 88-year-old man and 91-year-old woman from North Wildwood had died and on Monday that a 100-year-old woman and 68-year-old woman from Lower Township had died from complications of the coronavirus.

Denis Brown, administrative aide to the county Board of Chosen Freeholders, said focusing on new cases per day may be the most accurate way of looking at the trends in the county rather than on the

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