



Cape May gets all four wells up and running

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House of the week

Real Estate Resource



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MTRAC: Create comprehensive rental regulations

Committee believes thousands renting homes without mercantile license, paying taxes

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — More homeowners using their properties for rental income have purchased mercantile licenses this year, but there still are many with an unknown use and little regulation of commercial use of residential properties.

Dennis Crowley, chairman of the Municipal Taxation Revenue Advisory Committee (MTRAC), said the committee would like the city to consider crafting and adopting a comprehensive ordi-

nance governing commercial use of residential properties.

He said Cape May has a 250-year history of lodging guests. Now rental homes far outnumber homes occupied by full-time residents.

Crowley said Cape May is a business and “we all live within that business.”

As of 2020, the city had 3,455 residential ratables with 612 occupied by owners. Of those properties, 464 held a mercantile license while 2,379 had an unknown use.

After City Council adopted an

ordinance requiring a mercantile license short-term house, Cape May has had a 90 percent increase in the number of issued for residential rental properties, Crowley said.

He said the number of mercantile licenses for residential rental properties increased from 484 in 2020 to 886 this year.

“The bad news is we are looking at still a very unknown number of residential properties and the uses of that property,” Crowley said.

In 2020, the city issued 166 mercantile licenses for rental

condominiums, which increased to 333 this year. Crowley said Cape May has 1,079 condominium units with one-third holding a mercantile license.

He said some condos are used a second homes and others as con-hotels. Crowley described rentals in Cape May as a fragmented marketplace divided in three portions with rentals from real estate agents, transient space, and private options.

The transient marketplace, rentals through Airbnb and VRBO, for early August show 776 rentals in the 08204 zip code

of which 92 percent are whole house rentals. While some of the rentals are in Lower Township, Cape May has a higher percentage of such rentals, Crowley said. The average nightly rental rate is \$401 with a 97 percent occupancy rate, he said.

The data comes from a website entitled AirDNA.com.

Crowley said the 2020 Cape May master plan reexamination raised a concern of avoiding McMansions.

“The McMansions they were

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County has most new daily COVID cases in the state

By DAVID NAHAN
Cape May Star and Wave

The number of COVID-19 cases is jumping statewide, with increases in Atlantic County and Cape May County leading the state in daily new cases. With schools opening in just under four weeks, Gov. Phil Murphy said students and staff will be wearing masks inside school buildings to start the new academic year.

In Atlantic County, where Mainland Regional High School will return students Sept. 8, new COVID-19 cases jumped again in the past week to 308 from Aug. 3 to 9, from 209 cases the week prior.

In Cape May County, where Ocean City and Lower Cape May Regional schools will have students walk in the doors a day earlier, on Sept. 7, the numbers of active cases nearly doubled, even though officials have taken pains to point out that active cases remain “well below” winter highs.

State and local officials put the highly transmissible

Delta variant of the coronavirus at the heart of the rising numbers.

The Cape May County Board of Commissioners said the county’s daily base rate rose over the week leading up to the Aug. 6 report. “It appears the more transmissible Delta variant of the COVID virus is within the county population and is likely accounting for many of the new cases,” the county public information office wrote. “Fortunately, hospitalizations have remained relatively low, with 11 covid positive patients admitted as of Thursday’s report.”

The county is averaging about 20 cases per day over the prior 10 days, which is about half the number when COVID-19 cases were peaking in January.

County officials pointed to covidactnow.org, which tracks coronavirus cases. It shows Cape May County leads the state with the highest number of daily new cases per 100,000 population

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Sailing takes them away

Young sailors from the Corinthian Yacht Club of Cape May participate in a summer sailing camp in Cape May Harbor.

Lower Twp., LTPD reach new contract

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council ratified a four-year contract with the Lower Township Police Officers’ Benevolent Association (PBA) Local 59.

The previous collective bargaining agreement in effect from January 2016 to December 2019 was modified. The contract now includes wage increases for sergeants of 2.5 percent retroactive to 2020 and 1 percent in 2021 through 2023. Officers moving off the guide will receive a 1 percent salary increase yearly from 2020 through 2023.

Officers will move one step on the guide annu-

ally until they reach the maximum step and will be removed from the guide.

Longevity pay was eliminated for all members at the rank of officer and corporal. Sergeants hired prior to May 10, 2013, or hired after April 4, 2013, and promoted prior to Dec. 31, 2019, will receive longevity pay in accordance with their years of service. All other sergeants are not entitled to longevity pay according to the agreement.

The township will provide health benefits for all permanent and provisional employees working 30 hours or more per week and their dependents up to and including children up to

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West Cape may adjust its historic district

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — The borough’s Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is creating a list of properties located outside West Cape May’s historic district.

During a Borough Commission meeting July 28, Mayor Carol Sabo said a question was raised about the boundaries of the his-

toric district. She said the borough’s map is correct. The borough maintains a survey of all historic homes within its borders.

“Not all of those homes contained in the survey are in the historic preservation district,” she said. “At this time, the Historic Preservation Commission has been tasked with creating a list of properties outside of the district that they may want to be

included within the district.”

Borough solicitor Frank Corrado said the properties could be designated as historic sites as opposed to including them in the historic district because in either case, the designation or inclusion would subject the properties to the borough’s historic preservation ordinance.

“They are going to do both,” he said. “They are

going to look at the possibility of expanding or redefining or modifying in some way the historic district and they are also going through that survey, and they are going to determine whether there are any properties in that survey which are now not subject to the HPC ordinance that ought to be designated historic structures.”

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City may move to county dispatch permanently

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Lightning disabled the city’s police dispatch center and wiped out computers, network switches, routers and printers at City Hall.

Following the lightning strike July 21, the city has been using county dispatch and City Council approved a temporary agreement to continue the service.

At issue is whether to rebuild the city’s police dispatch system or keep 911 communications operating through the county.

Mayor Zack Mullock said Aug. 3 the city had been considering switching to county dispatch for the past six months at the recommendation of police officers and firefighters.

He said council wanted to ensure none of city’s 911 dispatchers would lose

their job by switching to the county system. Mullock said Cape May’s dispatchers would receive a higher salary from the county.

Police Chief Dekon Fashaw said it is undetermined whether City Hall was struck directly by lightning or the surge entered through a Comcast cable. He lauded dispatcher Adam Delp for trying to make emergency repairs following the incident.

Fashaw said it would be difficult and expensive to repair the city’s antiquated radio equipment. He said county dispatch has backup systems not available to Cape May.

“We’ve been putting Band-Aids on Band-Aids,” he said.

Mullock said in the past when the city’s dispatch has received too many si-

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