

Dining restrictions force innovation, creating new vibe

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House of the week

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166th YEAR NO. 35 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2020 \$1.00

City voters to see competing ballot questions

Council rejects ordinance to build \$5 million firehouse; issue to be decided Nov. 3

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A citizens' initiative ballot question asking whether voters want the city to construct a \$5 million fire station will compete on the Nov. 3 election ballot with a question about building a \$15 million public safety building to house the fire and police departments and the city's emergency services.

During a virtual City Council meeting Aug. 18, in a 3-2 vote, a bond ordinance providing for

the construction of a fire station appropriating \$5 million was defeated. It required the approval of four council members. Councilman Zack Mullock and Councilwoman Stacy Sheehan voted for the ordinance, while Mayor Chuck Lear, Deputy Mayor Patricia Hendricks and Councilman Shaine Meier cast negative votes.

The vote was the exact opposite of a vote in July for a \$15 million bond ordinance to finance construction of a public safety building to house both the fire and police departments.

During public comment received via telephone, Bill Seeger, vice president of the Taxpayers Association of Cape May, read a statement noting council could not come to an agreement on plans and financing for facilities for the police and fire departments.

"It now leaves that task to the voting electorate of Cape May," he said.

Seeger said petitions for both ballot questions followed the necessary steps and both were certified by the city clerk. He said USA Architects prepared plans for the

\$15 million public safety building and architect Rob Conley offered a design for a \$5 million firehouse.

"Should the \$15 million plan alone be offered and declined by the voters, no decision will be made and no progress will have been made toward that decision," Seeger said. "However, by giving the voters a choice between the two plans, it is likely a decision will come to closure and progress on approving the necessary bond and proceeding with construction may begin."

Sheehan said the \$5 million

fire station would preserve the current fire museum and the firehouse would blend in with other buildings on the block.

Mullock said given the city's financial situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more reasonable to build a \$5 million fire station.

Hendricks said the \$5 million bond addresses the needs of the fire department but not the police department. She said the proposals and deliberations of

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Robert Newkirk/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Cape to Cape Paddle

The DeSatnick Foundation held its annual Cape to Cape Paddle on Aug. 23. The mission of the foundation is to provide financial assistance to those living with paralysis and spinal cord injuries. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's race was shortened to start and finish at the Fisherman's Memorial in Cape May Harbor.

Acme, Wawa resisting city's plastic bag ban

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — While many businesses in the city have cooperated with a phase-out of plastic bags, Wawa and Acme have been less cooperative.

During a virtual City Council meeting Aug. 18, Deputy Mayor Patricia Hendricks said full enforcement of the city's plastics ordinance takes effect in September. She noted the use of takeout food containers has greatly increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council approved an ordinance Jan. 21 to take effect in seven months banning single-use plastic bags, Styrofoam takeout containers and disposable food ware that cannot be recycled. Operators of stores may provide single-use paper bags to customers or have reusable bags available for sale to customers. Food and grocery establishments utilizing disposable food service must use recyclable or combustible products.

Businesses may request a one-year exemption if the ordinance would create an undue hardship or

practical difficulty not generally applicable to other persons in similar circumstances.

Violations of the ordinance may result in a fine of as much as \$100 for the first offense and \$500 for each offense thereafter.

Environmental Commission Chairwoman Heather Bruno said local businesses have done a wonderful job of converting to the use of totes and paper bags.

"However, Acme and Wawa are inexcusable. They have models in

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LCMR schools to open Sept. 8 at 25% capacity

Distance learning Wednesdays for all as facilities are sanitized

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — The Lower Cape May Regional Board of Education approved a reopening plan for the schools, which has also been approved by the county executive superintendent, bringing in 25 percent of students Sept. 8.

During a virtual meeting Aug. 19, Superintendent Joe Castellucci said the district has been working on the reopening plan since June, when Gov. Phil Murphy released guidelines.

"We formed a Reopening Task Force, which consisted of teachers, administrators, parents, community members, all working as an overarching committee to review the guidelines and discuss our reopening plans," Castellucci said. "Each school had a Pandemic Response Team, which consisted of staff members including teachers, support staff, administrators, students, parents, and they worked specifically to the needs of their school and we had special committees to deal with issues outside of those three committees."

Committees were formed for curriculum, finance,

maintenance, transportation and athletics and activities. Each committee reported to the Reopening Task Force, Castellucci said. He said he met with a representative of the teachers association.

"We believe everything is in place at this point that will allow us to successfully reopen and implement this plan," Castellucci said.

The plan meets and in many cases exceeds the state's guidelines, he said. The school district is reopening at 25 percent capacity for students for at least the first two weeks, Castellucci said.

Students will be assigned groupings with the names "Caper Tiger" "Spirit" and "Pride," assigned to allow social distancing on buses. All students and staff will be required to wear masks. On Wednesdays, all students will learn from home while the school is cleaned.

A goal is to open in the third week of school at 50 percent student capacity, which still allows for adequate social distancing in all areas of the two schools, Castellucci said.

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County OKs Cape May school's new reopening plan

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city's elementary school received approval of its reopening plan from the county executive school superintendent after submitting a third addendum.

"The plan will continue to be fluid and there is the possibility that we'll have to make adjustments as we move forward as new guidelines come out," Principal Zack Palombo said at an Aug. 20 Cape May City Elementary School Board of Education meeting.

Superintendent Robert Garguilo suggested a meeting Aug. 31 of the school board before school opens Sept. 8. He said the school received an air quality report that had nothing in it related to COVID-19. Maintenance has been completed on the heating and air conditioning system as well as replacement of some floor tiles.

Garguilo said the school is ready to open.

School board President Dawn Austin said the school's floors look great and repainted walls give

the school a clean, fresh appearance.

The Taxpayers Association of Cape May had requested use of the school's auditorium for a candidates night during the last week of September, according to Business Administrator John Thomas. He said he explained if the gathering does not conform to state requirements under COVID-19, it could not be held in the school.

Thomas said he believed the Taxpayers Association was considering moving the event to an outdoor venue such as Rotary Park.

The board discussed a \$124,200 grant given to the city in 2012 when Edward Mahaney was mayor. School board member Anita DeSatnick said in the past, Mahaney said the money was given to the city by Ed Ross for an educational purpose.

She said City Manager Jerry Inderwies told her the grant was listed by the city for general use with no documentation stating the money was for educational purposes.

"City Council could decide to give the school some money from this

grant but that's a discussion for City Council to have," DeSatnick said.

Austin said she would follow up on the matter with the city.

The board approved a shared services agreement with the Stone Harbor School District for a Spanish teacher, Matthew Andris, at a cost of \$13,890.

A list of substitute teachers, custodians and school nurses was approved by the board. Lunch prices for the 2020-21 school year were set at \$3 per day for students, 40 cents for reduced price lunches,

milk at 50 cents and staff lunches at \$4.50.

The board accepted the resignation/retirement of teacher/librarian Sandy Sandmeyer Bryan effective Nov. 1. DeSatnick said Sandmeyer Bryan taught her youngest son, who speaks well of her.

"Thank you for all she has done for the children of Cape May, the parents of Cape May and Cape May City," she said.

Austin said Sandmeyer Bryan taught her children and influenced her family to become more eco-friendly.

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