

Borough considers crackdown on commercial trailers

By RACHEL SHUBIN
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — Borough Commission wants to crack down on contractors leaving commercial trailers on Cape May Point's street for extended times and sometimes overnight.

Mayor Anita VanHeeswyk, Deputy Mayor Elise Geiger and Commissioner Suzanne Yunghans discussed the issue Jan. 28.

"One of the issues is trailers are parked too close to stop signs and it's an issue when the trailers are here during the day," VanHeeswyk said. "Cape May has dealt with it [by ordinance], and we can certainly look at how we want to deal with it from our point of view."

The mayor added that an ordinance could require the trailers be parked on the work site property instead of on the road, but noted some work sites have multiple trailers. Geiger asked about the enforceability of the issue at hand, specifically with overnight parking.

"If the issue is somebody parking too close to the stop sign, maybe we get Cape May [police], to use the bad word, 'ticket,' people who were too close to stop signs," Geiger said. "If it's one property with stop signs and the issues, maybe we take care of it that way, or do we really feel we want

to have it [as] a ticket offense or summons offense."

The length of some projects also is proving problematic.

"In some instances, these projects are taking well over a year and we've had cases where there are various subs and they'll bring their trailers with equipment, unhook their truck and leave the trailer overnight because it's cheaper to drive their truck back," VanHeeswyk said.

She added there was an instance in which five to six trailers were left during a large portion of a construction project on a busy street.

"I think the bigger problem is during the day, when there is traffic, and having them move trailers from midnight to 8 a.m. doesn't solve the problem of the street being lined with trailers," VanHeeswyk said. "I see that as being a little dangerous with kids and bicycles on the street."

She proposed charging a fee for leaving behind trailers, similar to the fee charged for dumpsters.

"Maybe charging a fee for leaving a trailer on the street for a period of time might be a deterrent," she said.

Department of Public Works Supervisor Bill Gibson said having trailers on the street can delay emergency vehicles.

"I've already had an instance two weeks ago, trying to get down

Stites Avenue with the fire truck. I had to get out and go to the contractors because we couldn't fit and they had to come out and move a truck parked across from a trailer," Gibson said. "Even just telling them they can't keep it here overnight will eliminate a lot of them because they're not going to bring it back until they need it again."

Gibson said it was not uncommon for contractors to leave trailers when they go to job sites in Cape May.

"The problem with construction trailers is we have small streets and it takes up more room than a contractor's van," Gibson said. "If you think about it, they bring the trailer here and unload the equipment if they know they can't leave the trailer here overnight."

She said the lack of regulations prompts contractors to leave the trailers behind.

"Knowing they can let it sit there is why they let it sit there," Gibsons said. "90 percent of the time, there is no reason for the trailer to be there."

Yunghans asked Gibson if the trailers hindered the snow removal after the early January storm.

"When we know we're going to get snow, we go around to contractors and tell them to take the trailers because we're going to have to plow," he said. "Somehow, they're very quick to take them home, but

as soon as the roads are clear they bring them back."

VanHeeswyk asked solicitor John Amenhauser if there were the potential to charge a fee for construction trailers being left during the day.

"I would have to look at it because it's a vehicle, in a sense, typically allowed to park on the street," Amenhauser said. "I'm not sure if you could discriminate against trailers, and charge a fee that a regular sedan or truck might be able to do."

Geiger brought up landscaping trucks with trailers and differentiated between the types.

"You might not be able to prevent them in the daytime, but overnight parking may be enough of a nudge to say don't leave it here," Geiger said. "I think we would have to explore how that could be enforced."

The Cape May ordinance mentions a 2,000-pound weight quantifier for trailers, which the commissioners said may make sense to remove from their definition. VanHeeswyk said using the Cape May ordinance as a template would be a good start.

"John would have to work with the [wording] because, with mobile homes and campers, there are some people packing up and ready to leave and will park the trailer overnight," Geiger said. "Do we want to include that our private

citizens sometimes have to have something parked outside of their house for short term, versus what I think we're trying to do is perceived abuse of what is going on with the construction."

Amenhauser agreed that the ordinance was needed more for commercial purposes than for private citizens. Clerk Elaine Wallace said she would investigate the ordinance wording on whether the police and/or code enforcement monitors the trailers.

"I think commercial is a better word," VanHeeswyk said. "This is a good start with the overnight concept. We can look at what John comes up with for our next work session."

Geiger said she thought ticketing would be the easiest way to enforce a ban on overnight parking.

Amenhauser said he would prepare an ordinance.

"I agree with Commissioner Geiger, it does seem like here it has to be just the police that are enforcing [it] based on the hours of restriction," Amenhauser said. "There's no way a code enforcement officer is working between 12 a.m. and 6 a.m."

VanHeeswyk said if anything needs to be tweaked or changed, it can be done during a work session. Geiger added she was planning to speak with Cape May police about their trailer ordinance.

Rally shows solidarity

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in January alone.

Protest rallies have begun to pop up around the country. In Rio Grande, ralliers waved signs, chanted "No human being is illegal" and committed to acting beyond the event.

Cape May County Indivisible is a local grassroots group that fights for social, racial, reproductive, economic and environmental justice. It formed after Trump's first election in 2016.

"These are our neighbors, friends and family members. We feel strongly about protecting and keeping each other safe, and real safety comes from a strong community based on mutual aid and prosperity," Bove' said.

According to the group, there were between 40 and 50 people when the rally was the busiest, but because of the weather many people came and went throughout the event.

"I think it's a good start. It was a powerful gathering of people who showed up with

love and courage and solidarity," Bove' said, noting there also was a public commitment to keep organizing and protecting each other. "We urge everyone who showed up to stay involved, not just for a rally but every day as well."

She said they gathered to "take a stand for immigrant rights, because we refuse to stay silent while our immigrant neighbors are facing harassment, detention and deportation."

Born and raised in Cape May County, Bove' is a tattoo artist at Peregrine Moon in West Cape May and a board member of Equality Cape May. She said the shop, run by all women, is "a safe and inclusive place and a hub of activism."

Those interested in learning more can apply to join



Provided

Community members gather with Cape May County Indivisible members Feb. 5 at the intersection of Routes 9 and 47 in the Rio Grande section of Middle Township.

the private Facebook group cmcindivisible@gmail.com. Cape May County Indivisible, which has more than 1,600 members, or email

Monthly meetings have been held at the Inn of Cape May, where the next one is

scheduled for Feb. 28, but going forward will be held at West Cape May Borough Hall.

Mayor Sippel

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new playground equipment, shade structures, a fitness area, pickleball courts, picnic tables, trash cans, park benches, bike ramps, an air pump, water stations and bathroom upgrades.

"We give recreation a lot

of priority, because in our view, the youth is really important, to keep them off the street," Sippel said. "They are the future of the township, so we try to keep them active and always have something to do."

Sippel noted the township recently started a youth football program and is starting youth camps.

"Coming up this year for the first time in the history of Lower Township, we're going to be running camps for kids," Sippel said. "We're looking at two camps, four weeks each, with 60 kids per camp projected."

Sippel said the township is in the process of hiring staff for the camps, which will be in addition to the annual police youth camp that is designed to nurture a positive interaction between police and children

in the community.

Other projects in progress include replacing the Public Works building. The project started in 2024 and will continue into this year.

"The building is outdated and needs to be replaced," Sippel said. "We had the opportunity to move the entire Public Works to the airport, including trash and recycling, but ran into resistance from the Federal Aviation Administration [that it] might attract too many birds and interfere with planes."

The final design for the building is expected to go out to bid soon. The project includes a new administration building with associated utilities, a new site layout and improved entrance safety.

Personnel changes

Several vacant positions

have been filled and new positions created.

"We had no tax assessor for a period of time, but we hired one and a deputy tax assessor, which brought us up to date on where we need to be," the mayor said. "We recently hired a deputy manager in the township, which we never had that before."

Christina Lewis is the deputy manager, working under Township Manager Michael Laffey. Liz Ross is tax assessor and Marissa McCorkel deputy tax assessor.

"In the past, when the manger wasn't there, sometimes things didn't move as quickly as it should," Sippel said. "This way we look at our government [to] be much more efficient in operating."

There also were changes to Township Council, following the retirement of David Perry as deputy mayor. Kevin Coombs is now deputy mayor and Joseph Wareham was sworn in to fill the vacant seat.

"Change [can be] good and any time you bring fresh people on council, you get fresh ideas," Sippel said. "Sometimes change can be positive."

DEP regulations

Municipalities statewide are preparing for implementation of the Department of Environmental Protection's New Jersey Protecting Against Climate Threats (NJPACT) and Resilient Environmental and Landscapes (REAL), which are a response to sea level rise.

"The DEP is looking to put restrictions as far as permits," Sippel said. "There is a possibility when you get a permit, if you do [renovation] more than 50% of the value of the house, you have to raise it."

Sippel said Lower Township is pushing back on the proposals. "We don't believe in projecting 75 years out and they only have a 17% chance that's even going to happen," Sippel said. "We think that data is incorrect and we're asking them to review this data every 15 to 20 years and make adjustments in increments and not all at one time."

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