

Zoners grant final OK to offsite affordable housing

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Zoning Board approved a variance for front yard setback for the only affordable housing to be constructed in Cape May since 2018, in this case offsite from the development.

At a June 27 meeting,

attorney Dawn DiDonato Burke represented Thomas DiDonato who constructed 13 market-priced homes on Pittsburgh Avenue.

Last year, City Council tabled a resolution authorizing a 30-year deed restriction between 1134 Lafayette Street LLC and the city for an offsite affordable housing obligation for

the 13 new homes. In March 2023, the city's Planning Board approved two affordable housing units required for a 13-lot subdivision off Pittsburgh Avenue, known as Cape May Cove, be permitted to be provided offsite in an existing house at 1134 Lafayette St.

The Planning Board's approval was an amendment to a condition placed on prior approvals based on a change in the law. A developer has the discretion of

placing affordable housing units on or offsite.

The issue for Cape Cove dates back to 2010 with 10 years of litigation with a preliminary subdivision approval granted by the Planning Board in 2018. A requirement under Cape May's fair share housing ordinance is that when five or more units are constructed, it must include low and moderate-income units.

In preliminary approval, the Planning Board required two affordable housing units be provided on site. Ten months later, the Planning Board adopted a new fair share housing ordinance which allowed for low and moderate-income units to be provided offsite.

The offsite affordable housing units on Lafayette Street are a two bedroom and a three-bedroom apartment.

The applicant received building permits from the city for interior renovations to 1134 Lafayette St. to convert the structure to a two-bedroom rental unit available to very low-income families, and a three-bedroom rental unit available to low-income families.

Since 2018, no affordable

housing units have been made available in Cape May.

At an Aug. 1, 2023, council meeting, former councilwoman Stacy Sheehan said Thomas DiDonato, initially received Planning Board approval to reserve two units in the development for affordable housing but returned to the board and asked to move the affordable housing to a house on Lafayette Street.

Burke said they were seeking variance relief since the city's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) required the applicant to construct a false roof in the front of the building over the window and front door to improve the façade of the building. She said her client followed the HPC's direction.

The roof overhang is taking the front yard setback from 18.8 feet, which is non-conforming, to 15 feet when 25 feet is required.

Burke said a certificate of occupancy was granted by the city and a firm has been contracted to locate low-income renters for the property.

Zoning Board member Mary Notch said it has been a very slow process to provide housing for low-income persons.

"The other houses built on Pittsburgh Avenue are already sold and people are living in them, and the affordable housing project has not been finished and people are not living there," she said. "I have a real problem with that."

Burke said a deed restriction is in place and "it took some time to get the rest of it going."

Zoning Board engineer Craig Hurless said the applicant does not control who rents in the low-income property, it goes into a lottery system which has a lot of advertising requirements.

"There has to be background checks to make sure that the potential renters are meeting the affordability requirements, so it's not exactly a normal, quick rental process," he said.

Notch said she lived within 200 feet of the applicant's property and Zoning Board solicitor Richard King said asked her not to vote on the application. Notch said she was not notified of the Zoning Board hearing even though she lived within 200 feet of the property.

Hurless determined Notch lived further than 200 feet from the applicant's property.

FLIGHT DECK DINER Fly on in

OPEN DAILY • 7:30am – 2:00pm

Frequent Flyer?
Join our BREAKFAST CLUB

Cape May Airport off Breakwater Road
609-886-1105
Flightdeckdiner.com

CAUTION:
SLOW DOWN,
LOOK TWICE,
SAVE A LIFE

The 1800s come to life when you visit 27 restored, historic buildings, speak with historic interpreters dressed in period clothing and stroll along the shell-lined pathways under old shade trees.

Upcoming Events

Americana Celebration
July 6th & 7th

Generously Sponsored By:
The J. Byrne Agency

Automobiles, Trains & Planes
July 13th & 14th

Generously Sponsored By:
Kindle Auto Plaza

To Purchase Tickets, Scan QR, Visit Our Website or Purchase at the Gate

735 SEASHORE ROAD, CAPE MAY, NJ - www.hcsv.org - 609.898.2300

PRODUCE PLACE

3714 BAYSHORE ROAD AT TOWNBANK ROAD • NORTH CAPE MAY
609-889-9045

OPEN YEAR ROUND • SALE PRICES GOOD NOW THROUGH TUESDAY JULY 9th, 3PM

Accepting VISA • M/C DEBIT CARDS FAMILY FIRST CARDS

HOURS: MON.-SAT. 9AM-5PM SUNDAY 9AM-4PM

HOT PEPPER CHEESE \$5.99 LB.	SPECIAL Homestyle, Black Pepper, Cajun TURKEY \$4.99 LB.	SPECIAL PRE-SLICED TURKEY \$3.99 LB.	SPECIAL Homestyle, Rotisserie CHICKEN \$4.99 LB.	OUR OWN STORE COOKED ROAST PORK \$5.99 LB.
--	--	--	--	--

German Bologna.....\$3.99 lb
Ham Capicola.....\$4.99 lb
Peppered Ham.....\$4.99 lb
Smoked Turkey.....\$4.99 lb
Virginia Baked Ham.....\$5.99 lb
Honey Ham.....\$5.99 lb
Gourmet Turkey.....\$5.99 lb

Special DOMESTIC HAM
\$2.99 lb

NJ Green Beans..... 99¢ lb
NJ Peaches..... 99¢ lb
NJ Black Berries.....\$1.99 ea
Romaine Lettuce.....99¢ ea
Vadalia Onions..... 99¢ lb
Local White Corn..... 3/\$1.50
Russett Potatoes..... 5lb/\$1.99
Seedless Watermelon \$4.99 ea

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK FOR ALL YOUR RETAIL & WHOLESALE NEEDS

Utz & Herts
Potato Chips
LARGE BAGS 2 FOR \$7
MUST BUY 2

PLEASE CALL AHEAD FOR ALL LARGE HOAGIE AND BREAD ORDERS SO WE CAN SERVICE YOUR NEEDS

EVENTS at Cape May County Library

Art Classes & Crafts

Cooking Classes

Fitness & Wellness Classes

Zumba

Tai Chi

Yoga

Book Clubs

Concerts

Presentations

Local History

Nature

Technology Workshops

...and much, much more!

Featured Event in July 2024:
Author Visit with Jane Green
NYT Bestselling Author
Saturday July 13th, 2pm-3:30pm
Sea Isle City Library

PLEASE VISIT www.cmclibrary.org TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR FUN, INFORMATIVE, AND FREE EVENTS!

BROADWAY ON THE BOARDWALK

The 17th Anniversary show will feature two former OCTC stars who recently made their Broadway debuts!

Angel Sigala of Broadway's *New York, New York!*

Morgan Kirner of Broadway's *Merrily We Roll Along!*

JULY 17 AT 7:30PM

Tickets \$22-25
Ocean City Music Pier
Moorlyn Terrace & Boardwalk
oceanacitytheatrecompany.com

GREATER OCTC
OCEANCITYTHEATRECOMPANY.COM