

Planners question purpose of parking trust fund

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city has a parking trust fund, but the most recent master plan re-examination recommended removing it from the zoning code since no one is using it. The use of the fund is unclear in its enabling ordinance.

During a meeting July 27, the city's Planning Board recommended City Council examine the parking trust fund and perhaps add language or policy to the ordinance to clarify its use. Planning Board engineer Craig Hurless said it was discovered during the master plan re-examination the parking trust fund was

not used at all.

Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan said the fund currently contains about \$175,000. She said \$25 from each mercantile license fee goes into the parking trust.

"We haven't used any money out of it for a number of years but coming from council, there are a couple of parking projects that are

on the table right now that we could use this money for," she said.

Hurless said he was not suggesting the city get rid of the parking trust account but get rid of the requirement in the zoning code that states an applicant must contribute \$5,000 per space when a project falls short of parking requirements.

"In the event an applicant has insufficient land or 100 percent of the required off street parking spaces required by subsection C, based on proposed use or uses of the site, the approving authority may still approve the application conditioned upon the applicant installing the spaces for which there is sufficient land and contributing \$5,000 for each additional parking space omitted up to the required number to a city parking trust account maintained by the city specifically for the periodic purchase, lease acquisition or maintenance of off street parking lots to serve the city...." states the regulation.

The contribution to the parking trust fund was to be used only for the conversion of buildings in existence. No contribution was permitted for the construction of a new building or an addition to an existing building, Hurless said.

He said in the event of new construction, applicants may apply for a parking variance when they cannot meet parking regulations. He said the trust fund

was set up for conversions of historic buildings, but a "gray area" existed in the enabling ordinance.

Planning Board attorney Richard King said the trust fund was mentioned once in an application in the past five years. He said it was unclear about what "conversions" were in the ordinance.

"If someone is doing a conversion and they don't have the parking, they're going to ask for variance," King said.

He said council could still pass other ordinances that would contribute funds to the parking trust fund. Sheehan suggested changing regulations to fulfill the purpose of the parking trust fund and make its purpose clear.

Hurless said he believed the original intent of the parking trust fund was to promote historic conversions which typically sit on small lots without sufficient land for parking. By paying \$5,000 for each missing parking space, the structure could have a viable use, he said.

Planning Board member Bob Elwell suggested the trust fund could pay for a project such as resurfacing the Bank Street parking lot. Mullock said the funds could be used when the city repaves the Welcome Center parking lot.

In other business, the Planning Board voted to recommend to council revisiting flood height standards

slightly higher to an elevation of 10 feet which would effectively raise building heights by .3 feet and facilitate building more resilient buildings by encouraging added heights to minimum first floor elevations.

Hurless said building heights are currently measured from elevation of 11 feet which is datum from 1929. He said the modern standard compatible with Federal Emergency Management Agency flood regulations use data from 1988.

The equivalent reference elevation is 9.7 feet, Hurless said.

"All the surveyors, all the architects, all the professionals are currently using the 1988 datum," he said.

Cape May's ordinance is "behind the curve" by using 1929 data, Hurless said.

The board tabled a motion to recommend to council to increase maximum lot coverage in the R1 zone from 30 percent to 40 percent. The R-1B district along Cape May Avenue currently allows 40 percent lot coverage, he said.

In addition, the board voted to recommend council address uses permitted in the S1 district along the Promenade. Hurless said the city code does not permit the retail sale of prepared food and goods and eating establishments in the S1 district.

He said those uses exist on the Promenade and should be incorporated into zoning regulations.

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Frank Scott/Speial to the STAR AND WAVE

Adeline Yerk crowned Queen Maysea

North Cape May resident Adeline Yerk, 9, a student at Maud Abrams School, was crowned Queen Maysea on July 28. Her future ambition is to become a second-grade teacher.

Report

Continued from Page A1

Margate, North Wildwood, Ocean City, Sea Isle City, Stone Harbor, Upper Township and Wildwood Crest.

She said the borough's floodplain manager compiles data for engineer Paul Dietrich which is sent to CRS.

At a July 27 Borough Com-

mission work session, Commissioner Catherine Busch reported the Environmental Commission is suggesting butterfly milkweed be planted along the roadway on the dune side of Harvard Avenue and part of Lincoln and Crystal avenues.

She said the milkweed could be planted only 4 feet

from the edge of the road since Public Works mows along the roads.

Busch said public works will install snow fencing for a section of dune past St. Mary's Retreat and the State Park property line. Public Works has also requested seeding of dune grass in that area.

Bonds

Continued from Page A1

covers \$258,000 for vehicles and equipment including two patrol vehicles for the police department — which will be the city's first hybrid vehicles — a dump truck with a plow for the Public Works Department, replacing a 2006

model year dump truck that will be passed along to the water/sewer utility, Young said.

Public Works will receive a utility truck replacing a 2009 vehicle as well as a trencher and lawn mowing equipment.

Young said the bond includes \$1.2 million for

improvements to city buildings and \$60,000 for city-wide technology upgrades such as computers and servers. The bond covers personal protective equipment for the fire department, he said, adding that a complete set of turnout gear for a firefighter costs \$4,000.

Boats

Continued from Page A1

remove a sunken vessel. Councilman Shaine Meier said he was in favor

of keeping the registration requirement in the ordinance. He said he was aware of extra resources needed to monitor boats.

Sheehan said both articles should not be in the ordinance if both were not going to be enforced. Meier said article three outlines fines and fees.

Sheehan made a motion to remove the registration requirement, noting the city has been asking the police department to undertake more week-end work. Meier said he believes the registration requirement would be beneficial if there were ever a need to hire a harbor master or put up warning signs.

"I'm trying to prevent us from going down that path and causing the city more finances to support the registration of vessels," Sheehan said.

She said code enforcement has enough to do without adding on boat enforcement. Article three was removed from the ordinance in a unanimous vote.

Gillman-Schwartz said the city still has the ability to act on sunken and abandoned boats and impound the vessels.



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