City seeks grants for tennis courts, beach access

By JACK FICHTER Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY Council approved applying for state grants to remove mobility barriers and improve beachfront access at Poverty Beach and the Cape May Tennis Club that hinder access for handicapped persons and the el-

At a Nov. 18 meeting, Mark Blauer, a grant writer with Blauer Associates, said each year the city has an opportunity to apply for \$400,000 through the state Department of Communi-ty Affairs (DCA) which is funded by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD.) The funding is known as the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG).

He said HUD gives grants to each of the 50 states with the states deciding how to manage the program on behalf of non-entitlement communities. Large cities such as Atlantic City and Trenton receive a direct grant from HUD each year and certain counties with a population in excess of 200,000, most counties in the state, fall into that category except Cape May, Cumberland, Salem, Warren, Hunterdon and Sussex counties which are classed as non-entitle-

If Cape May was located in Gloucester County, it would receive a share of the county's annual entitlement, Blauer said.

"We have an opportunity to compete for a portion of \$6.5 million," he said. "I've been working for the city since 2008, most of the years, if not all those years, we applied, most of those years we won."

The 2021 grant was used to create a redundant water transmission main, he

Blauer said the 2022 grant was used for making Kiwanis Park compliant with the Americans with

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Disabilities Act (ADA).

The 2023 grant project, beach mats that run parallel to the Promenade, is nearly completed which will include additional beach wheelchairs. He said part of the grant is being used to reconstruct the Mount Vernon Avenue beach access ramp.

"We're purchasing the materials out of the grant and using our own staff in the offseason to do the reconstruction," Blauer said.

He said approximately \$90,000 in grant money remained which could be used to extend the beach mats to Poverty Beach. Mayor Zack Mullock said he wasn't sure if the mats would extend all the way to Poverty Beach.

In 2024, the city will use CDBG funds for phase one of ADA compliance at the Cape May Tennis Club. Blauer said the city requested \$360,00 and received \$240,000 noting the city could reapply for the amount of money it did not

The project could also be used for an ADA compliant walkway network between the tennis club and the Emlen Physick Estate, he said. The city's contracted engineering firm, Engineering Design Associates will be asked to create a concept along with City Manager Paul Dietrich to request about \$400,000 to continue the tennis club project, Blauer said.

"If there's money left over in the \$400,000 request, maybe we can throw some more beach mats in,"

Blauer said year and year the city returns to ADA compliance projects because handicapped persons, according to HUD, are 100% low income. He said senior citizens regardless of their actual income are viewed as 100% low to moderate income.

The 2020 census changed the status of Cape May, it is no longer primarily low to moderate income citywide, Blauer said, the census showing the city is 45% low to moderate income.

"So, if I propose something with citywide benefit in Cape May, I run the risk of being turned down cold because you didn't qualify," he said.

During public comment, former city councilwoman Stacy Sheehan suggested a pavilion be constructed at Poverty Beach, similar to

the structure at cove beach. Blauer said it was possible to build projects in phases, requesting funds each year and building upon what has been accomplished in previous years. He said the grants require

a 10% match from the city. For the tennis club project, he said the DCA was not measuring the number of persons who play tennis but if the city has a facility that is not accessible to the handicapped, its out of compliance and needs to be brought into compliance.

"Perhaps, somebody wants to accompany somebody to the tennis club whose themselves handicapped or can't play tennis but needs to use the rest-room," Blauer said. "They have to have an ADA com-

plaint facility to use."

Resident Bill Seeger asked in the city's post office qualified for grant money for accessibility

facilities ADA compliant. "If you have a facil- he said.

renovations Blauer said the ity that is federally owned federal government was that you don't think is ADA responsible to make their complaint, you might want to call your congressman,









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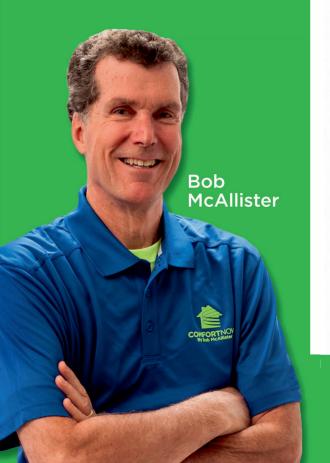


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