

Lower Township proceeding with park, road projects

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Three parks and three roads are set for renovation and reconstruction in Lower Township.

At a March 18 Township Council meeting, engineer Will Hanson, of DeBlasio and Associates, said the New Jersey Municipal Aid Local Transportation Fund Program is funding reconstruction of Wildwood Avenue, which includes new drainage infrastructure and resurfacing from the western end to Bayshore Road. He said two New Jersey Department of Transportation grants are being used for the project.

A bid opening for the project was held March 13, when a \$498,860 contract was awarded to Paving Plus.

Hanson said the next capital project is the resurfacing of Bay Drive from Wildwood Avenue to Mallow Road. A bid opening was held the same day, when a

\$553,877 contract was awarded to Paving Plus. The project will soon be under way, he said.

A notice to proceed has been issued for the beach path survey and installation along Delaware Bay. Hanson said the township is waiting for piling to be delivered to begin the work, which was expected to start this week.

A \$400,000 Small Cities grant was received for renovation of Rotary Community Park. Work includes new playground equipment, shade structures, a single-use restroom, parking areas and Americans with Disabilities Act access. The project will be completed in two stages due to permitting issues with wetlands, he said.

“Stage one of the project is well into construction as you can see driving down Bayshore Road,” Hanson said. “The site’s been cleared, concrete has been installed, the playground has been installed and the site is currently being prepped for the safety surface to be put in and we are

still awaiting approval from the NJDEP (Department of Environmental Protection) for the wetlands permits we needed to get to the design of phase two.”

The design work for the extension of 12 outfall pipes into the bay to help alleviate flooding and improve drainage has been completed and submitted to the state and the township is awaiting approval, Hanson said. Permitting could take up to six months, he said.

He said Ridgewood Avenue will be repaved from its western end to Bayshore Road. The project has a \$200,000 DOT grant and is in the design phase.

The Ohio Avenue pump station emergency storm sewer replacement included replacing the defunct corrugated metal pipe from the Ohio Avenue pump station to the creek which feeds the pump station.

Hanson said proposed work for the David C. Douglass Memorial Park includes reconstruction and expansion of the

parking lot, a new restroom building, relocation of the existing memorial, a new decorative footpath along the canal and an observation deck. He said his office prepared an application for a county development grant that has been submitted to the Open Space Board.

A concept design is being prepared for a new Department of Public Works building on Seashore Road as well as investigating under the current building for possible soil contamination.

“The good news is the initial results show no contamination of a serious nature,” Hanson said.

A preliminary design for the building has been submitted to the Department of Public Works.

In other business, Township Council renewed the annual cannabis retail license of Sea and Leaf LLC. The cannabis dispensary is expected to open soon in North Cape May.

Council approved moving an inactive liquor license to the Fish House at 502 Sunset Blvd.

During public comment, Historic Preservation Commission Chairwoman Pary Tell said she was waiting to hear from Township Manager Mike Laffey regarding investigation into the historic Foster House as to asbestos and lead-based paint, so the commission can work on the interior of the house.

At a council meeting last summer, Tell questioned why work on the Foster House was at a standstill. At that time, she said the wallpaper and paint was peeling off and the window surrounds were beginning to rot.

At the time, Councilman Tom Conrad said architectural plans are needed for restoration of the interior.

Tell said the homeowner of the property adjacent to the Union Bethel Cemetery, which shares a driveway with the historic graveyard, asked permission to pour a concrete apron to deal with potholes along the edge of the road. She said the homeowner would pay for the work.

Survivors say Storm of '62 brought community together

Continued from Page A1

“My friend Lenny’s dad, Leonard [Bonitt Sr.], was the manager at the American Store (now Acme). He and others brought food to my uncle’s house from the store when the tide went down. I remember getting a Tastykake Kandy Kake and watching ‘Top Cat’ on TV,” LaRosa said.

He recalled a tipping point.

“At the high tide on Wednesday night, things started to fall into the ocean — the Madeline Theater toppled, then the boardwalk went. The Excursion House, the largest building on the island, got knocked down. The tide didn’t drop. The meadows became submerged as the ocean and the bay met.”

Other buildings gone with

the tide included the Sisters of Mercy Convent, the Surfside Hotel and parts of the Windsor Hotel.

On Thursday, when it was time to evacuate, LaRosa’s dad loaded his family into the bucket of his helicopter truck to get to the helicopter loading zone. Nearly all of Sea Isle City’s 1,200 residents were forced to evacuate. Everyone was allowed to bring one suitcase.

Residents were airlifted to Ocean View and Woodbine. After reaching the mainland, LaRosa and his family went by train and cab to spend a week with relatives in the Port Richmond section of Philadelphia.

LaRosa pointed out that many of the men remained in town, including his father and Bonitt.

As in Sea Isle, residents

of nearby shore towns had to evacuate. Many Cape May residents had to leave their homes after they lost essential services. Atlantic City was pummeled by 25-foot waves and wind gusts up to 58 mph.

Every survivor has a story

“I remember my father telling me I didn’t have to go to work because of flooding,” said Loretta Henry, who was 19 when the storm hit. “I was out of work for two weeks. My dad made sure we were out of town on Tuesday. He drove our family to Woodbine and then came back to town.”

Sea Isle City resident Dianna Perry recalled surveying the destruction.

“To stand there and watch the buildings go

down — the theater, which belonged to my grandfather — we knew things were bad. I remember we packed up what we could,” she said. “All I wanted was to get out with my kids. Every street we tried to drive down was flooded and filled with debris. We stalled. We had to wade through the water to get to a friend’s house, which had heat and electricity. We were there three days.”

Perry was reunited with her mother there.

“A bus picked us up and took us to the helicopter boarding area,” she said. “We landed in Ocean View and stayed with a cousin before heading to Philadelphia. Dad stayed in Sea Isle.”

Pat Haffert, 10 days short of his 13th birthday when the storm struck, recalled,

being right on the beach at 50th Street.

“We had heat, electricity and we had relatives come over,” he said. “It was getting better until it wasn’t.”

Haffert said his family lived in an apartment his father carved out of an old rooming house. Their home was in the Surfside Hotel, a boarding house-style hotel owned by the family.

“I remember the howling wind, porches breaking off,” Haffert said. “It was very noisy with the rain and the wind.”

The lobby was getting flooded and waves were crashing through the front

door.

“The tide surged,” Haffert recalled. “Waves knocked through the bulkheads, and the building started shaking. All of the sudden, the building lurched forward at a 15 degree angle. The picture window exploded. All the cabinets opened up, dishes were flying and breaking.”

At that point, his father Horace told his mother Helen “to take the children and run.” Pat, his younger brothers, Mark and Gregory, and his cousins, Michael and Jan, led the way,

See Survivors, page A6



40th Street Sea Isle City 1962 Storm

Tom Kinnemand Photo

Photos courtesy Sea Isle City Historical Society/STAR AND WAVE

The aftermath of the 1962 storm in Sea Isle City. An aerial view of 40th Street and the demolished boardwalk.

TIDES: March 27-April 3, 2024				
DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
27	10:04	10:22	3:48	3:51
28	10:36	10:55	4:23	4:20
29	11:10	11:32	5:02	4:52
30	11:50		5:48	5:32
31	12:17	12:39	6:42	6:23
1	1:10	1:38	7:42	7:24
2	2:13	2:52	8:49	8:36
3	3:28	4:13	10:00	9:56

MOON PHASES
Last quarter, April 2 • new moon, April 8

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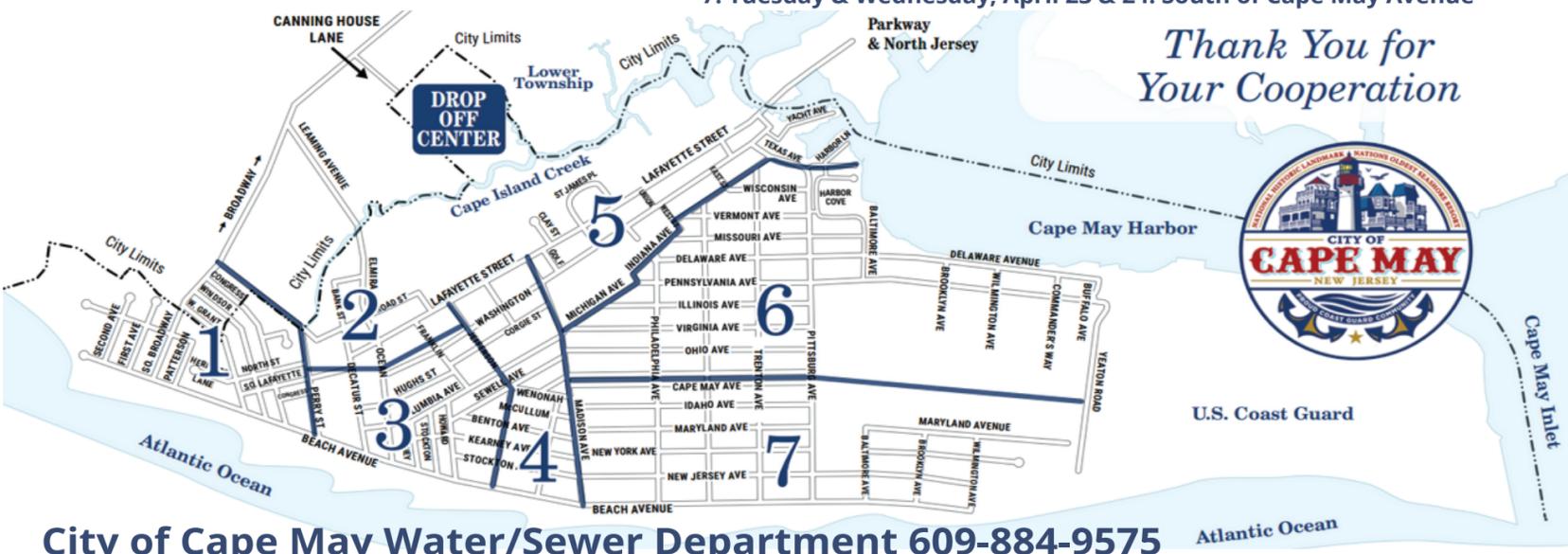
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2024 Spring Water Main Flushing Schedule April 8 - April 24

Notice to City of Cape May Water Customers

While flushing does not cut off the supply of water, it does “stir up” sediment. If discolored water occurs, run the **cold water** for a few minutes until it clears so the sediment can work its way through the pipes. The discoloration does not affect the water quality. Please check for discolored water before doing laundry. Wait until the water runs clear at the tap first. If water pressure seems low after flushing in your area, check the faucet screens for trapped particles.

1. Monday & Tuesday, April 8 & 9: West of Perry St.
2. Wednesday, April 10: North of Mall: Perry to Jefferson
3. Thursday & Friday, April 11 & 12: South of Mall, Perry to Jefferson
4. Monday & Tuesday, April 15 & 16: Jefferson to Madison
5. Wednesday & Thursday, April 17 & 18: North of Michigan, Indiana & Massachusetts Aves.
6. Friday & Monday, April 19 & April 22: North of Cape May Avenue
7. Tuesday & Wednesday, April 23 & 24: South of Cape May Avenue



City of Cape May Water/Sewer Department 609-884-9575