

School board gets update on stalled Lafayette park

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A committee of the Cape May City Elementary School Board of Education met with city officials last week to get an update on the stalled Lafayette Street Park project.

The school deeded land to the city for portions of the proposed park, which is largely built on the site of a former coal gasification plant that left widespread contamination underground.

During a meeting Aug. 19, the Board of Education approved allowing its solicitor, Robert Fineberg, to draft an amendment to a deed of land granted to the city to develop phase four

of the park.

An earlier agreement that gave the city one year to start work on phase four of the park on land owned by the school runs out this month.

Board of Education Vice President Sharon Lee Kustra said there was progress in phases two, three and four of the park but there were "hang ups" with the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Jersey Central Power and Light (JCP&L) and delays with the Cape May Housing Authority deeding land to the city all stopping development.

The city removed arches from phase one of the project on school property that were rotting away, she said.

"We talked about the soccer field and the fact that irrigation has never been turned on and there's hardly any grass there any-more," Kustra said. "We were assured that when phase two and three were nearing the finishing stage, then they would take care of that, they will either re-sod or seed and make sure the irrigation is up and running properly."

The city is to provide maintenance and water to the park, according to a contract between the city and the school.

No irrigation was installed near the school's playground where sycamore trees were planted, Kustra said. The city's Shade Tree Commission has agreed to take care of the trees.

In the school's contract with the city for phase one, an old concession stand on the property was to be demolished by the city but has not been, she said.

Kustra said the city asked the school board to consider keeping the concession stand, which the city would restore at its expense. She said it would be difficult for the city to erect future buildings in the park due to DEP regu-

lations against disturbing the soil.

Mark LeMuyon, chairman of the school board's Facility and Grounds Committee, said he has wanted the stand torn down for the past 20 years, noting it has been set on fire and burglarized. He said the city was willing to spend \$20,000 "to make it look pretty."

The school board agreed to look at the city's plans for the building.

Phases two and three of the park are stalled at this time, Kustra said.

"There has been some positive improvement. The city has hired the Archer and Greiner law firm to handle all aspects of the park project," she said.

The law firm is experiencing in DEP issues, Kustra said. The city has the original plans for the park even though it dismissed the architectural firm that prepared the plans, she said.

Kustra said the city will honor the plans the Lafayette Street Park Advisory Committee worked on for more than two years. Baseball, tennis and Bocci ball courts will be built, she said.

The original funding

for phases two and three remains in place but the funding will not be disbursed until JCP&L and the housing authority submit deeds to their properties to the city, Kustra said.

"They project a start date for phases two and three in 2022 because of the JCP&L and the housing authority deeds," she said.

Kustra said JCP&L must monitor whatever land it deeds to the city in perpetuity. JCP&L offered the city \$190,000 for replacement obligations for the park. She said the city is in the process of negotiating more funds for that purpose.

The county Open Space Board turned down a design for a decorative fountain in the park. The city will pursue a new design, Kustra said.

An application is in the works for a permit for phase four of the park, which includes a nature trail to Cape Island Creek. She said the application for the permit has not been submitted to the DEP, which is in the process of site investigation involving analyzing soil.

School Administrator John Thomas said the DEP collected soil samples in

late May and early June.

"Once the application is submitted, it could take nine to 12 months but because of COVID they are estimating nine to 18 months for approval," Kustra said.

She said the city stated Green Acres was aware the city was waiting a permit and the funding for phase four of the project is still in place. She said the city will apply for county Open Space funding for phase four once the permit is approved.

The city's new contracted engineer, Vince Orlando, of Engineering Design Associates, will oversee all phases of construction, Kustra said. She said the school board's park committee asked to continue to work directly with the city to oversee all phases of the park plan as stated in the original contract between the school and the city.

"We still have final say over any changes that occur expressly with the interest of the safety of the school and the children at hand," she said.

The school board park committee requested to meet with the city on the project every two months for an update.

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Lifeguard

Continued from Page A1

FundMe page to help with medical bills. As of Monday, more than 2,000 persons had contributed to the account.

"The Lord called my beautiful nephew Norman home last night. The family is overwhelmed with sorrow. The bright light in this tragedy is the support and prayers that have been pouring in," she stated in a Facebook post.

Later she noted how wonderful the support has been and how grateful the family is to learn the beach in Cape May is being named after Norman.

"Norman Inferrera's family is overwhelmed by the kindness and words of encouragement by such an astonishing amount of people. Your love and support at this time of complete devastation will forever be remembered," Inferrera Price wrote.

"We received news from the Cape May Beach Patrol today that a beach in Cape May is being named after Norman," she added in the post. "The family is deeply moved and became very emotional upon the news. The CMBP also made us aware than 100 percent of the medical bills will be covered through the city insurance."

"Based on this, we anticipate there will be a substantial amount of funds remaining. We are establishing scholarships in memory of Norma V. Inferrera III. The scholarships will be issued on an annual basis to the Cape May Beach Patrol Cannone Scholarship Fund and Norman's high school Phoenixville Area High School," she wrote. "Champ would be so glad to know that he will be helping future college-bound students achieve their dreams and goals. I can clearly see his smile now."

The city will charter a bus Aug. 27 to transport Cape May Beach Patrol members to Phoenixville to attend Inferrera's memorial service. Cape May's beaches will be guarded that day by members of other beach patrols, according to Voll.



Provided

Ledwins win Garden of the Month

Norm and Mary Ellen Ledwin of 1041 New York Ave. in Cape May are the proud owners of the Cape May Garden Club's Garden of the Month for August. The couple has lived in the home for more than four years and, although the property had good bones, has cultivated, removed, added and changed plants to make it their own. They recently added white limelight hydrangea trees within the existing English boxwood squares in the backyard, which look very stately and beautiful. Take a nice shady walk down New York Avenue and enjoy this beautiful property. To view the backyard, visit from noon to 3 p.m.

Group

Continued from Page A1

lieve Inspira was receiving federal Title 41 money which was exhausted by Lower Township Rescue Squad. Sanford asked why Wildwood Crest Rescue Squad, which is three minutes away from Diamond Beach, could not receive Title 41 money and serve Diamond Beach.

He said he has been monitoring the situation for a year and would get emergency response figures for Diamond Beach for August.

"You can't do it unless

you put an ambulance in Diamond Beach and there's no reason not to do that," Sanford said. "The easiest thing to do is work out a mutual agreement with the Crest. You did it with the fire, there's no reason we can't do it."

Taking an average of the eight medical assistance calls to Diamond Beach, eliminating the longest response time of 19 minutes, the average was still 12 minutes, he said. Persons served in five of the eight medical assistance calls were transported to a hospital, Sanford said.

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