

# Desalination plant needs expansion, other work

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city will need to replace major components of the desalination plant, as well as other water system infrastructure, in the next decade.

A master plan of the city's water system has been prepared by the engineering firm of Mott MacDonald.

At a March 3 City Council meeting, project manager Brian Dougherty said the city's water was supplied from 1910 to 1940 by shallow unconfined wells. From 1940 to 1980 water was supplied by Wells No. 3, 4 and 5 in the Cohansey Aquifer. Well No. 3 was taken offline in 1994 and Well No. 4 in 1997 due to saltwater intrusion.

Cape May constructed a desalination plant in 1998, he said, adding that the city

serves about 5,000 permanent customers in Cape May, Cape May Point, West Cape May and at the U.S. Coast Guard base.

Dougherty said the water system's average water demand is 1.1 million gallons per day (MGD) with a maximum day demand of 2.91 MGD. He said water demand in the summer is four times that of the off-season.

Unaccounted-for water makes up about 16 percent of water use, Dougherty said.

"Typically DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) wants to see that at 15 percent or below, so you're right on the threshold there," he said. "So it's something to keep an eye on."

A projection of future water demand shows a 5 percent increase over the next 10 years, Dougherty said.

"Most of the regional plan-

ning authorities are predicting an overall decrease in the full-time population but it will be offset by a modest increase in the tourism population," he said.

Dougherty said the system has about 36 miles of water mains with water storage tanks on Madison Avenue and Canning House Lane. He said the city has more than adequate water storage capacity.

He said Cape May sells water to West Cape May that is measured by six separate meters, "which is somewhat problematic." The report recommends a new Broadway transmission main.

A new transmission line from the desalination plant into the city, which crosses Cape Island Creek, will be replaced later this year.

Dougherty said the city's water is supplied by two

aquifers, the Atlantic City 800-Foot Sands Aquifer, which supplies the desalination plant, and the Cohansey Aquifer, which has increasing salt and iron levels. He said Well No. 5 is starting to show higher sodium concentrations.

Water Superintendent Carl Behrens said Cape May's water will eventually be totally supplied by the desalination plant. He recommended keeping Well No. 5 as a backup.

Dougherty said the study looked at the ability of Cape May to produce sufficient water if the largest pumping or treatment unit was out of service. He said if Well No. 5 were taken offline in summer, the city would be in a deficit situation.

The desalination plant is rated for 2 million gallons per day, supplied by Wells

No. 6 and No. 7 with Well No. 8 as a backup, he said. The plant has two reverse osmosis (RO) membranes, referred to as trains.

He recommended adding a third RO train that would boost capacity to 2.94 million gallons per day and provide more than enough water for future conditions.

"You'd have a surplus of about 500,000 gallons per day," Dougherty said.

He recommended planning for replacements of major equipment at the desalination plant, which is more than 20 years old. Expansion of the desalination plant is priced at \$7.4 million in a timeline of the next five to 10 years, he said.

Desalination plant membrane replacement cost is estimated at \$2.7 million. The study recommends replacement of 6,700 linear feet of

asbestos cement water mains, which can be done over a number of years in conjunction with road projects.

Dougherty said over 10 years, spending for improvements to the water system would average \$960,000 per year. The cost for all projects from 2023 to 2028 totals \$29 million, he said.

Behrens said the summer water demand in Cape May is increasing each year.

"I think 5 percent is a little conservative when you look at all the growth that could take place in what I call our consecutive systems," he said. "Not Cape May per se but the systems we sell water to, and there's a lot of room for growth there."

A third train installed in the desalination plant and continuing to use Well No. 5 would give Cape May more than it needs, Behrens said.

# West Cape discusses COVID-19, census participation

By RACHEL SHUBIN  
Special to the Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — The Board of Commissioners is monitoring the increasingly rapid spread of COVID-19.

During a meeting March 11, Mayor Carol Sabo said the commission continues to be updated from the state Department of Health.

"When looking over the guidelines sent out from the Department of Health, I don't see anything new," Sabo said. "But it bears repeating: avoid people who are sick, avoid touching your face, use proper cough etiquette and stay at home when sick."

At the time of the meeting, 23 cases were confirmed in New Jersey. Sabo urged the community to use common sense and good hygiene.

"There was also a concern about people who were coming around and knocking on doors and misrepresenting themselves as being from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention]," Sabo said. "Just like other scams, I don't know what their intent was but there was a notice to be on the lookout."

The 2020 census has begun and this is the first year answers can be submitted online.

"Mailers are coming out to peoples' houses with in-

structions on how to log on and submit responses," Sabo said. "It's required by law all residents register and answer all the questions."

Sabo said the answers submitted provide funding, voter count and legislation in the local government.

"It's really important all residents of the community get counted," Sabo said. "When you see the flier come in the mail, please read it through and register with the census."

More information will be available on [www.westcape-may.com](http://www.westcape-may.com) and the borough's Facebook page.

Engineer Ray Roberts reported the West Drive proj-

ect was almost complete.

"The only outstanding issue is a driveway which [had] a tire track and the contractor was told to clean it up," Roberts said. "They power washed it and left grooves on the brick, so now there is an issue between the contractor getting that brick replaced."

Paperwork was sent to the developer of Burgin Lane, with a list of items that need to be submitted as part of the agreement for the borough to accept the street.

The commissioners continued their discussion on requirements for eaves.

"I know in Sea Isle there is an ordinance section routine-

ly enforced, requiring gutters and downspouts," solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said. "In connection, if you want to send it to the Planning and Zoning Boards for review, you can."

Gillin-Schwartz put together suggested language for the commissioners to look over.

"Essentially what this new section would require is new construction to be outfitted with gutters and downspouts in order to direct rainwater toward the street," he said. "Or with interior yard drainage approved, similar to [Federal Emergency Management Agency] requirements."

Sabo asked if there was a

way to link this ordinance with the existing grading ordinance.

"Consider putting a maximum dimension on the eave itself," Roberts said. "An eave of no more than 18-inches would not be acceptable, so your side yard would be the edge of the building. Consider an eave cannot extend more than 15 inches into a setback that would fit everyone."

The commissioners accepted a resolution to codify resources within the borough to identify an individual employee to be a resource officer for someone experiencing a domestic violence situation.

## No tests

Continued from Page A1

available."

"We're not prepared as a nation or a state to do mass testing at this moment but we certainly are making preparations," Persichilli said.

She said two commercial labs were online as well as two hospital labs.

Murphy said the state was exploring any and all avenues to dramatically expand access to testing. He said he believed by the end of this week, "the testing reality in the state is going to be in a very meaningfully, incrementally different place than it is today."

Persichilli said testing did not change the treatment since there is no specific vaccine at this point with all treatment geared toward symptomatic relief.

The Star and Wave asked the state Department of Health on March 13 why coronavirus test kits were not available in the county.

Their emailed reply: "The New Jersey State Public Health and Environmental Labs has received enough test kits to test approximately 400 persons under investigations. We have ordered additional kits and are awaiting their arrival from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control.) Private labs are also conducting testing. In addition, Hackensack Meridian Health System also received approval from the NJ Department of Health to test."

The state Department of Health also emailed a press release from Hackensack Meridian Health stating it was pleased to announce that the Center for Discovery and Innovation (CDI) has created a test to dramatically reduce the time it takes for diagnosing COVID-19.

"The new diagnostic tool will reduce the current process of testing for COVID-19 from days to hours. The test permits the network to quarantine and treat patients suspected of having COVID-19 more rapidly or in the case of a negative result, spare the patient unnecessary time in the hospital. The Center for Discovery and Innovation received preliminary emergency use Authorization from the Food and Drug Administration to start using the test today. Additionally, the state Department of Health has also approved the test."

"As more hospital and commercial laboratories begin testing, New Jersey residents will have greater access to SARS-COV-2 diagnostic testing and public health officials will have a greater ability to monitor, track and respond to new cases," stated said Chris Neuwirth, assistant commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health.

The CDI test combines elements of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) diagnostic, and a test developed in Germany and adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO). CDI experts began work on the test in mid-January, following the outbreak of the virus first identified in China in December 2019.

Last week, the center received live virus and viral RNA, a crucial step toward bringing the test to use in clinical settings, said Dr. David S. Perlin, a global infectious-diseases expert who helped develop diagnostics for SARS and other infectious diseases. The CDI validated the results and completed FDA requirements to administer the test. Initially, the network will be able to test 24 patients every eight hours. Our goal is to capitalize on the technology and find ways to expand its use in the region.

When asked the availability of coronavirus tests, Shore Medical Center issued a statement.

"COVID-19 testing is being tightly managed by New Jersey Department of Health. This is a fluid situation and a few commercial labs are and others will likely be offering testing of submitted samples. Shore is following the New Jersey Department of Health and CDC recommendations closely to assist in guiding patients with testing questions. Shore Medical Center is not a specimen-collection site. Community members can call (800) 222-1222 for testing questions and progress on availability of testing.

"Patients with symptoms that would ordinarily lead them to call 911 or seek emergency evaluation should. If symptoms are mild then patients are encouraged to stay home and they may contact their primary provider for guidance. Shore Physician Group's primary offices are not offering testing at this time either nor collecting samples. Also, symptoms that bring patients to the emergency room will be taken care of and other common respiratory illnesses like the flu, bacterial and noninfectious causes will be ruled out first."

AtlantiCare urged the community to call before seeking care for symptoms of flu, COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses.

"AtlantiCare has seen a marked increase in the number of 'worried-well' patients seeking care in its urgent care centers and emergency departments. It continues to urge members of the community to call their primary care provider or pediatrician before seeking care in any medical setting for themselves or

children for symptoms of flu, flu-like illnesses, coronaviruses and other respiratory illnesses."

"It is critically important that as members of the community, we all follow the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and New Jersey Department of Health for preventing spread of coronavirus," said Manish Trivedi, M.D., director of the division of infectious diseases at AtlantiCare. "Your health care provider can give you direction about whether to seek care in a medical setting or to stay home to have supportive care."

"Having the right care in the right setting — which could include not going to a health care facility — will help to protect yourself, other patients, and health-care providers," Trivedi said. "Taking this precaution and following all precautions for preventing the spread of coronavirus and other illnesses will also ensure health care workers are available to provide timely, direct care for ill patients."

As of March 13, AtlantiCare was not testing patients in a widespread manner for coronavirus.

"We follow NJDOH testing criteria," Trivedi said. "This includes only testing patients who have had close contact with a person who was diagnosed as having COVID-19 and those who are ill enough to be hospitalized and for whom other sources of respiratory illness have been ruled out."

While testing was largely unavailable in Cape May County, 536 people were tested on March 13 at drive up site at no cost at the Wilmington riverfront by ChristianaCare, the state's largest hospital system. Testing started at 10 a.m. and ran through 2 p.m., according to WHYY.

## School board sells land to city

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Cape May City Elementary School Board of Education approved a sale of property behind the school to the city for use as a nature trail as part of Phase IV of the Lafayette Street Park project.

City engineer Tom Thornton noted the county Open Space Board does not grant funding to school properties but only to municipalities. The \$1 sale of the school property to the city will

## City to rebid transmission main project

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City engineer Tom Thornton is recommending a project to slip-line the transmission pipe that brings water into the city from the desalination plant be rebid this summer. The line runs under Cape Island Creek.

In January, City Council rejected all bids. The city received three bids, the lowest of which was \$1.7 million from Michael's Corp. The bids were 68 percent higher than Thornton's cost estimate of \$1 million for the project.

He said grants writer Mark Blauer submitted a proposed revised schedule for rebidding the project to the state Department of Community Affairs (DCA). He said Blauer was "cautiously optimistic" the DCA would approve the schedule.

Thornton said he is recommending advertising for new bids May 4, receiving bids July 8 and awarding a contract at council's Aug. 4 meeting, which would put the project on schedule for completion by the end of the year.

At a Jan. 21 council meeting, CFO Neil Young theorized the bids were high because the transmission

line crosses Cape Island Creek and transverses a marsh into Cape May.

"You don't know what you're going to run into out there," he said.

In other engineering business, Thornton said a Coastal Area Facilities Review Act (CAFRA) permit application has been submitted to the state Department of Environ-

mental Protection (DEP) for Lafayette Street Park.

"We'll be waiting for the DEP's approval of that CAFRA permit and in the meantime we'll be continuing with the design of some of the other features that aren't essential to the permit plans, such as the electric and structural design of the park," he said.

allow creation of a nature trail.

The city's Planning Board approved a minor subdivision of two lots. Thornton said it was important so that when the Open Space Board meets in April, the city would have ownership of the property.

One 29-acre lot was divided into two lots with 18 acres going to the nature trail area and 7 acres remaining as school property.

The site backs up to Cape Island Creek and is located in the R-3 District for

schools and municipal use.

Phase IV of Lafayette Street Park would consist of upland trails through a wooded area behind the school's athletic fields. In addition, it would include elevated boardwalks extending over a tidal marsh and a freshwater pond circling back the north end towards the school.

The concept plan included three, 20-foot by 12-foot observation platforms with pavilions overlooking the freshwater pond and towards the tidal marsh.

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