



## House of the week

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## More stores staying open all winter

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# 'To protect our beaches'

## County business leaders try to rally opposition to offshore drilling plan

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — The leader of a countywide business organization is highly opposed to plans for oil and gas exploration off the coast, and wants others to get involved to try to stop it.

"Once again, we are fighting to protect our beaches, ocean waters and backbay estuaries from the threat of offshore oil exploration and expansion along the Atlantic coast," warns an email from Cape May County Chamber of Commerce President Vicki Clark sent to its membership as well as to members of the Lower Township Chamber of Commerce.

The alert notes the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) announced Jan. 8 in the Federal Register the release of its draft proposal for the 2019 to 2024 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. This new plan includes the entire Atlantic Seaboard from Maine to Florida, including the waters off New Jersey within three miles of the beach.

County leaders also have organized a rally for 9:30 a.m. Monday, Feb. 26, at the Ocean City Music Pier, Moorlyn Terrace and the Boardwalk.

Clark said U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo, who has verbally opposed the drilling plan, confirmed he would attend. Others planning to be there include Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders Director Gerald Thornton and Ocean City Mayor Jay Gillian.

Clark urged chamber members to cut and paste a letter in the email she sent out or to write their own and submit it before March 9 to regulations.gov under BOEM-2017-0074-001 or mail to: Ms. Kelly Hammerie, Chief, National Oil and Gas Leasing Program,



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Cape May's pristine beaches could be threatened by the Trump administration's proposal to allow oil drilling off the Atlantic coast. The county Chamber of Commerce is urging members to protest the plan to the Bureau of Ocean Management.

Development and Coordination Branch, Leasing Division, Office of Strategic Resources, BOEM (VAM-LD), 45600 Woodland Rd, Mailstop VAM-LD, Sterling, Va. 20166.

The letter reads: "Dear BOEM, I am submitting comments today opposing the proposed 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

Current estimates of the amount of technically recoverable oil off the entire Atlantic coast from Maine to Florida would only last the nation approximately 229 days and the amount of technically recoverable gas would only last approximately 562 days. The risks of offshore drilling far outweigh the benefits.

When you drill, you spill. It is inevitable. The oil industry

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- Vicki Clark, president, Cape May County Chamber of Commerce

touts a 99 percent safety record but that 1 percent is horrific for people living in the vicinity of a spill when it occurs. The federal government predicts at least one spill per year for every 1,000 barrels in the Gulf of Mexico over the next 40 years — a spill of 10,000 barrels or more every three to four years. Oil spills travel vast distance and the Gulf

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# Boutique-hotel plan goes back to WCM board

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Two men who hope to turn an old home into a boutique hotel with a restaurant have returned to the Planning Board with a scaled-back version of their proposal.

The borough's Planning Board received its third visit from Mark Lukas and Edward Celata, who hope to turn their historic home at 119 Myrtle Ave. into a three-story, 17,570-square-foot boutique hotel to be known as "The Ewing." A home at 123 Broadway would be demolished to allow access from Broadway to a rear parking area.

The applicants appeared before the board in October and the hearing continued into December, when the plan was altered after input from neighbors. At that

time, a number of variances were needed for the project and a vote of the board was against approval.

The applicants returned Feb. 13 with a revised plan with no variances requested other than for pre-existing conditions, according to the attorney for the applicants, Dottie Bolinsky. She said the hotel would contain 23 rooms and a restaurant.

Project architect Pam Fine said the existing historic home would remain with an addition.

"We tried to take the existing historic house, find what makes it beautiful, take those characteristics and just continue those in the addition to really create a seamless, timeless addition," she said.

Project engineer/planner Vince Orlando said the need

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# Roseann Avenue bids exceed existing funds

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council rejected bids from contractors for roadway and utility improvements on Roseann Avenue after the lowest bid substantially exceeded available funds.

Council approved a resolution rejecting two bids at their meeting Feb. 5.

In a letter dated Feb. 2 to Lower Township Manager Jim Ridgway, Mark Sray, senior engineer with Mott MacDonald, stated two contractors submitted sealed bids for the project Jan. 31 after 12 contractors picked up bid packages.

Mathis Construction submitted a base bid of \$7.5 million. Perna Finnigan Inc. submitted a base bid of \$8.8 million. Sray stated both

bids exceed the amount of township funds available for the project and he advised council to reject both bids.

A decision to offer another bid period for the project would be a future decision of council.

In 2016, council passed a \$4.7 million bond to provide for drainage and storm water improvements and road reconstruction on Roseann Avenue and the Bayshore Estates area. The project would include a pump station to increase drainage flow into Cox Hall Creek. Residents on Roseann Avenue have been experiencing flooding problems since at least 1985.

Mott MacDonald had estimated a cost of \$5.2 million to replace a main trunk line and install a large pump station to create gravity relief at all times of storm water.

# Opioid series earns staff statewide 'Responsible Journalism' award

Cape May Star and Wave

OCEAN CITY — Staff writers Kristen Kelleher and Eric Avedissian won first place for their series on the opioid epidemic in the annual New Jersey Press Association Better Newspaper Contest for 2017.

The Cape May Star and Wave and its sister newspapers earned 31 NJPA awards — including 12 first-place awards — for reporting, editing, photography and advertising.

"Editor Craig Schenck and I worked with Kristen and Eric on the opioid series that ran in all of our newspapers and we were incredibly impressed with the stories they produced over the course of a few months early last year," said David Nahan, editor and publisher of the Ocean City Sentinel and its sister newspapers, the Cape May Star and Wave, Upper Township Sentinel and The Sentinel of Somers Point, Linwood and Northfield.



Avedissian



KELLEHER



NAHAN



SCHENCK

The opioid series ran in all of the newspapers. "All of our staff members contribute to all of our publications," Nahan said. "That is the nature of com-

munity journalism."

Talking about the winning series, he added, "We have seen the damage the opioid crisis has been having here in southern New Jersey and

our reporters were able to personalize the issue with in-depth interviews with people who have been personally affected and solid reporting about the problem and those working to fight it. I believe this series was among the best and most important work that our newspapers have done in recent years."

The series won the Responsible Journalism Enterprise category, which "recognizes enterprise, initiative and resourcefulness

by a staff reporter or reporters, in uncovering newsworthy happenings that are not necessarily hard news."

Staff members won two other awards related to the series.

Kelleher earned a third place in the Feature Writing category for her story from the series on a mother who turned into an educator after her daughter's drug use and recovery.

Nahan earned a first place

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