



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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Bashaw shares visions of Cape May's future

Proposes car-free zone, joint marketing, affordable housing, business-friendly zoning

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — A car-free zone downtown, affordable housing in East Cape May or near the public housing project, one elementary school and more efficient zoning laws were among visions offered for Cape May's future by developer Curtis Bashaw, co-founder and co-managing partner of Cape Advisors and Cape Resorts Group.

He offered a talk, "Cape May Looking Forward," during a March 9 luncheon of the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Cape May at the Grand Hotel.

Bashaw said it has been 40 years since his first job in Cape May at Congress Hall, which will celebrate its 200th anniversary this year. He said in 1977, at the age of 17, he looked around Congress Hall's dining room and wished he could fix up the hotel. Bashaw said looking at the long history of the hotel made him realize how fragile and vulnerable the

local economy is to change. He said that fact kept him "restless." "Restless for our community, restless at work," he said. Bashaw said one of his superstitions was to never turn back or stop once he started a project. He said 25 years passed from the time he wished he could restore Congress Hall until its reopening. When the Virginia Hotel reopened in 1989, it employed 25 people, Bashaw

said. He said his group issued 387 paychecks in March and with many more to come in summer.

"The responsibility of that, all the car payments, the rent payments, the insurance payments, the obligation we have to our guests to give them what we promised they would get when they arrived," he said. Bashaw cautioned about fighting over ideas and issues among residents.

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"We are all interdependent in a community. We need each other but we can be our own worst enemies. To avoid this, we need to walk in each other's shoes. We need to try to understand what the other person's perspective is. We need to extend the benefit of the doubt."

—Curtis Bashaw, Cape Resorts Group

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Voucher motels not a problem in Lower

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — While motels in Rio Grande have been in the news for a few of their transient residents accused of crimes including murder, armed robbery, counterfeiting, prostitution and distribution of illegal drugs, the voucher motel problem has largely left Lower Township.

At a March 7 Lower Township Council meeting, resident George Dougherty asked if the township had laws on the book to prevent motels from renting rooms to prisoners recently released from jails in other counties and state prison.

Mayor Michael Beck said the township was battling the Sweet Briar Motel 10 years ago. The motel is under new ownership that seems to be acting responsibly, he said.

"We do keep an eye out," Beck said.

When the Sweet Briar Motel was a source of criminal activity, Beck said he contacted the state Attorney General's Office to see if the township could check the records of those being placed there by county social service agencies.

"The end result was they wouldn't even talk to me about

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John Cooke/Special to the CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Catching up with the latest technology

Eager Cape May City Elementary School students try to catch tennis balls that Micah Wenker, Cape May Vocational Technical School's re-engineering technology instructor and robotics adviser, launched from a robot during the Green Scene festival March 10. The event celebrated the beauty and importance of the Earth's natural resources and explored being 'green' with everyday choices. It featured activities, giveaways, school and community exhibits and a food cafe. Cape May City Elementary School earned a bronze-level award with the Sustainable Jersey for Schools program.

Windows in City Hall leaking 'like a faucet'

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Windows in City Hall, the city's former high school building constructed in 1917, continue to leak.

During a City Council meeting March 2, Tom Thornton, of the engineering firm of Hatch Mott MacDonald, said it was his goal to have had some documents available to receive

quotes for an investigation of what may have contributed to the ongoing leaking of windows in City Hall. In a recent winter storm, additional water infiltration was observed not just from the sills but also from lintels, structures across the tops of the windows, he said.

"In talking to our architect, he thinks we really need to do some probes

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'The Drowsy Chaperone' at LCMRHS

Ryan Hastings portrays Mr. Feldzieg and Sarah Portewig plays Kitty in the Lower Cape May Regional High School production of 'The Drowsy Chaperone,' on stage March 17-20 at the school in Erma. See story, A3

Lower public safety center construction to start in fall

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Reconstruction of the public safety building at the Cape May Airport will begin immediately after Labor Day, with the building being vacated other than the Lower Township Police Department, according to Township Manager Jim Ridgway.

"The police are going to move to the south end of the building while the north and a portion of the south is being renovated," he said.

A new dispatch center will be located in the south section of the building. Police will be working for nine to 12 months until the project is complete in about 20,000 square feet of the building as opposed to the current 46,000 square feet, Ridgway said.

Lower Township Municipal Court will move to the meeting room of Township Hall beginning in the fall.

"To accommodate that, we've had to make some moves, and we've been working to get the building next door ready for our construction office so they can go over there sometime in late April or early May," he said.

Ridgway said the township Bureau of Fire Safety will move out of the airport into two offices and a conference room in the back of the township's Recreation Center for the period of time it takes to build its section of the public safety building.

He said plans to move Lower Township Rescue Squad from the airport during construction have not been finalized. Ridgway said Villas Volunteer Fire Company would house some rescue vehicles.

"Their transformation won't take as long as the other areas because there isn't as much change as to where they are and where they're going to be," he said.

Ridgway said county representatives were scheduled to meet last week with township officials on the timetable for the dispatch center, since it will be a shared service with the county.

He said the county would bond the project in June with construction beginning in the fall. Ann Marie McMahon, of county facilities and services, is heading a design team, Ridgway said.

The project has been changing every two weeks with an eye toward speeding up progress rather than delaying it, he said.

"We see some savings there of substantial dollars the sooner we complete the project," Ridgway said.

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