



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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CAPE MAY CELEBRATES HARBOR FEST

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Lower may assume MUA debt Local Finance Board must approve the action

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council voted 3-2 Monday to assume the debt of the Lower Township Municipal Utilities Authority, not to exceed \$17.8 million, if dissolution of the authority receives approval of the state Local Finance Board and council.

Representatives of Lower Township and the LTMUA will appear July 16 before the state's Local Finance Board, which must approve dissolution of the authority.

Accountant Robert Swartz, of Ford Scott and Associates, presented findings of Phoenix

Advisors. He said the Local Finance Board required an analysis and certification that the township was choosing the best method to assume the debt of the LTMUA. The township could assume the debt or refinance it.

Phoenix Associates "concluded that assuming it would be best for the township if you proceed," he said.

The LTMUA has two low-interest USDA loans with two other outstanding obligations in refunded bonds that were issued in 2012 at low interest, said attorney Alexis Batten, of Parker McCay of Mount Laurel.

Swartz said assuming the

Lower Township Council shoots down referendum on moving police station to Villas.

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LTMUA's debt would increase the township's percentage of debt only for the first year, from .42 percent to .85 percent, due to the fact a new township water utility would not have a history of being self-liquidating.

He said the state allows a debt limit of 3.5 percent. Swartz said the township water utility would be self-liquidating, meaning the percentage of net debt would drop drastically.

The debt of a utility fund is paid by the users of the utility, so it does not have any adverse effect on the users of the system or taxpayers, he said.

Batten said the revenue of the utility could go directly toward the debt service.

Mayor Michael Beck said the township already guarantees the bonds of the LTMUA.

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Keep LTMUA intact, vice chairman argues

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Brian O'Connor, vice chairman of the Lower Township Municipal Utilities Authority (LTMUA), wants to see the authority remain an independent entity.

Lower Township is working toward dissolution of the LTMUA and the creation of a township water/sewer department.

"We're going to try to fight for the workers and ratepayers," said O'Connor, who is a GIS Specialist with the county Planning Department.

The newest member of the authority's Board of Commissioners said he would have resigned from the board if

members' attitude were to give up and wait for the township to dissolve the LTMUA. O'Connor said dissolving the LTMUA may be a good idea if water and sewer infrastructure were completed for the entire township.

"We're adding customers at a phenomenal pace because of the USDA grant we got, and we also applied for a USDA grant to finish the Villas and also to start putting in some more sewer mains," he said.

O'Connor expressed concerns over the ability of the township to address the breakage of a water or sewer main. A recent main break on Roch-

See O'Connor, Page A2

Police seek suspect for lewd acts in three towns

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — Police are searching for a man who has been performing lewd acts on the streets of several Cape May County towns.

Authorities report that a man drives to various locations, gets out of his vehicle with his pants down and begins to masturbate.

As of June 13, there were five incidents involving this type of crime: two in Middle Township, two in Cape May and one in Lower Township.

Cape May County Prosecutor Robert L. Taylor, Cape May City Police Chief Robert Sheehan, Lower Township Police Chief William Mastriani and Middle Township Police Chief Christopher Leusner report that they have received several complaints.

The suspect is described as a white male wearing dark sunglasses with short hair and a stocky build. He is operating a dark-colored minivan or truck and wearing athletic-type shorts.

Law enforcement is asking the public to be vigilant and to contact their local police department by dialing 911 with any information regarding similar incidents.

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Blessing of the Waters in Cape May



Kim Royster/Special to the CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The annual Blessing of the Waters ceremony was held under rainy skies June 13 at the Fisherman's Memorial in Cape May. The wall records the names of Cape May fishermen who lost their lives at sea pursuing the most dangerous of all occupations. Located at Cape May Harbor, at the end of Missouri Avenue, the Fisherman's Memorial offers a degree of closure for those families whose members have been lost at sea. The solemn time of reflection has a two-fold purpose, to commemorate those who lost their lives pursuing their chosen vocation and to offer prayers for a safe and productive fishing season. See more photos from Cape May's Harbor Festival on Page A8.

Cape May Point considers further tree-removal rules

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — Mayor Anita VanHeeswyk said she believes there are huge loopholes in the vegetation and landscaping plan ordinance, and encouraged discussion by the Environmental Commission on the topic and referral to the Planning Board.

A number of lots have been clear-cut despite a borough requirement to submit a landscaping and vegetation plan before a home is built, an addition is constructed or 25 percent of vegetation is removed from a property.

Emelia Oleson, a member of Cape

May Point's Environmental Commission, raised questions about tree removal from properties at a June 12 Borough Commission meeting.

She said it was her understanding that trees could be removed from the footprint of a structure with no requirement for replacement. Removing trees outside the home's footprint are governed by the borough's property code, she said.

The code states, "All existing trees outside a building footprint having a 3-inch-diameter trunk measured from 3 feet above the ground shall remain if said trees are in excess of 6 feet from the outside of the exterior wall of the proposed structure. In the event that

an applicant wishes to remove a tree or trees as above described, that applicant shall then be required to plant two trees for each tree removed, which such replacement trees shall be of at least 2 inches in diameter at 3 feet above the ground at a location on the property to be chosen by the applicant."

Oleson questioned cutting down a 100-year-old tree and being allowed to replace it with two, 5-foot Bradford pear trees.

"That hardly makes a complete replacement," Oleson said.

VanHeeswyk said a property owner has the right to clear-cut their lot.

"What we require is what goes back

in," she said.

Properties that have been clear-cut for new homes generally have new vegetation planted that helps the property recover in a few years, vanHeeswyk said.

Borough Solicitor Brock Russell said trees could be removed as long as the property owner plants two trees for each tree taken out. He suggested the borough's Environmental Commission could craft an ordinance as part of the building permit application process to require submission of a landscape plan to the borough.

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A crowning achievement

Miss New Jersey 2014 is crowned at the Music Pier in Ocean City. Find out who won on Page B6.