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Camp gives youth an inside look at police work
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Lower likely to OK Beach Drive sidewalk

Town Bank residents voice objections, fear future development

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Gathered at the kitchen table on a Friday morning, four longtime Town Bank residents voiced their objections to Lower Township's plan to build a sidewalk along Beach Drive that would include restructuring sand dunes.

Lower Township Council is expected to approve \$2.8 million in bonds at its meeting Monday, Aug. 7, to finance the controver-

sial sidewalk project on Beach Drive from Lincoln Boulevard to Fernwood Road in North Cape May.

Council introduced a bond ordinance at its meeting July 17 to appropriate \$3.2 million for the project, including a \$178,000 grant from the state Department of Transportation, and authorizing \$2.8 million in bonds. The project includes beach modifications, curb, sidewalk and drainage improvements on the west side of Beach Drive and curb and

handicap ramp improvements on the east side of Beach Drive from Whittier Avenue to Emerson Avenue. The project increases the cost of the township's road program in the capital budget from \$700,000 to \$3.9 million.

The proposed project has drawn criticism from the public since 2014.

Town Bank resident Dennis Markle said roads need paved and a tremendous drug problem exists in the area. He said from Oct. 1 to June 1, it's rare to see

anyone walking along Beach Drive. He said while improving safety along the road is fine, there is no data to back up the theory of a hazardous situation along the road.

"Everything I read seems to be negative against doing this. So the question I have is, why are we doing this?" he said.

Markle said he has spent summers here for 50 years and that his wife, Nan, has been coming to Town Bank since 1947.

"I think the reason people

come here is they like to see trees, they want to see birds, they want to see grass, they want to see a beach that looks like New England. We'd like to keep it that way," Markle said.

He added that he fears the project will lead to further development.

"The backing of this thing smells commercialization in some period of time, no matter what they say," he continued.

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Rising loonie spurs French Canadians to revisit region

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — If you have noticed the influx of Canadian license plates on the roads and in parking lots and have heard the French dialect in the stores and attractions in Cape May County, it is not your imagination.

According to the Cape May County Department of Tourism, visitors from the Province of Quebec are returning to the county in larger numbers after a three-year decline, and local businesses are happy to see them back. The Quebec Construction Holiday is traditionally the beginning of the influx of visitors from the province. This year the holiday started July 23 and runs through Aug. 6.

The Construction Holiday, which started in 1970, is a legislated two-week paid holiday for those in the construction industry in Quebec. Many other construction-related businesses also close during those two weeks and most of them plan their summer vacation during that time.

After a decline in Canadian tourism across the United States of more than 12 percent in 2015 and a decline of 6 percent last year, the U.S. is seeing an overall increase of 1 percent in Canadian visitors this year, according to the U.S. Travel Association. A 1 percent increase in visitors to the United States represents a potential growth of 200,000 visitors from Canada.

This is great news for Cape May County businesses. The weakened Canadian dollar over the past three years has affected Canadian travel in Cape May County and represented a 2 percent decrease in visitors over the past three years. Visitors from Quebec represented 11 percent of the total visitor base in 2015, dropping to 9 percent in 2016.

"We are continually watching the exchange rate and found the loonie was gaining since early February 2017, when it traded at 74 cents," said Freeholder E. Marie Hayes, who oversees the tourism department. "We noted fluctuations over the past few months and saw it at 76 cents in early July. Today the Canadian dollar is trading at 80 cents, from a low of under 69 cents in January 2016. This is very encouraging

See Rising loonie, Page A5



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Rare summer nor'easter hits beaches hard

A rare summer nor'easter July 29 brought an average of 3.2 inches of rain to Cape Island and high tides, leaving behind a sharp drop-off on the beach between Philadelphia and Pittsburg avenues. On July 31, the Public Works Department, under the supervision of Superintendent Joe Picard, knocked down the cliff of sand with a bulldozer.



Elementary schools' aid falling with enrollment

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

COLD SPRING — As a result of state aid being reduced to shrinking school districts in the new state budget, Lower Township Elementary School District lost \$203,543 for its four schools and Cape May City Elementary School lost \$11,384.

The state aid cut is based on 20 percent of the amount in excess uncapped aid, 2 percent of state aid from 2017, or 1.5 percent of the district's 2017 general fund budget, whichever has the least impact.

The state budget shifts \$31 million from schools with declining student population to those showing an increase. For much of the state, the aid shift proved positive.

"The state in its great wisdom, after we adopted our budget, they decided on June 30 to take \$203,000 away from Lower Township," Lower Township Elementary District Business Administrator John Hansen said.

The Board of Education approved a \$203,542 reduction to the school district's budget during a meeting July 25. He said the budget was adjusted

See School aid, Page A4

CMBP junior lifeguards learn lessons in life, life saving

By LYNN MARTENSTEIN
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — On the final day of the Cape May Beach Patrol Junior Lifeguard program last week, classmates Alexandra Back, 10, and Dade Lorentz, 11, raced one another across the beach to a large flag pole stuck in the sand at the finish line on Grant Street Beach. It was a close race, but Lorentz won, a feat he'd also accomplished for the past two years.

"Now it's all about keeping up my reputation," he said.

Both junior guards hope to become real lifeguards when they turn 16, the minimum age they can try out for the CMBP.

"Most developed lifesaving programs like Cape May's have an accompanying junior guard



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Youth ages 9 to 15 learn water and beach safety, teamwork, fitness and good health, and respect for the ocean through the Cape May Beach Patrol Junior Lifeguard program.

component as a feeder program and to raise public awareness of water safety," said Peter Davis, volunteer president of the U.S. Lifesaving Association (USLA), which governs open-water safe-

ty in the U.S. New Jersey law requires that all beachfront municipalities must have their beach patrols certified by the USLA.

"There was nothing like that when I was growing up around Steger Beach," said CMBP Chief Buzz Mogck, a career lifeguard for 50 years and CMBP Captain for 37 of them. Mogck was promoted to chief earlier this year.

"When I was a kid, there weren't a lot of things for young people, especially stuff about the ocean," he explained. "You basically had to learn how to operate in the water on your own and your parents had to watch you all the time."

Mogck changed that beach See Junior lifeguards, A3

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