

Redesign adds more parking to Lafayette Street Park

By JOHN COOKE
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Amended plans for Lafayette Street Park include more space for vehicles, a hot commodity anywhere in Cape May.

The initial meeting of the revamped Lafayette Street Park Planning Committee was held March 1 at City Hall. Chaired by Deputy Mayor Shaune Meier and Councilwoman Bea Pesagno, the committee introduced concept plans for the next phase of the park.

Phase I included the remediation of the JCP&L site. The utility company owns the site of the former coal gasification plant, which left contaminants in the soil. The company's

contractor removed a layer of soil and constructed an underground containment wall for the affected area before replacing the soil last year.

"JCP&L expects to be completely done their end of the project by May 31 of this year," Meier said.

Representatives of Mott MacDonald, the city's contracted engineering firm, said the only concern once remediation was completed would be how deep foundations would need to be dug.

Mott MacDonald's responsibility included creating surveys, base maps and wetlands studies surrounding the proposed park. They have also coordinated with JCP&L on the remediation.

James Rutala, principal at

Rutala Associates, was hired by the city to consider options for concept planning for the park.

"Perhaps one of the most significant changes is an increase in the parking available and the movement of egress to and from the parking off Lafayette Street. An 'L shape' design would move cars onto the side street at Jefferson for access to parking," Rutala said.

The concept also expands the baseball field to regulation size, maintains multiple sports areas including basketball, soccer and tennis, and integrates the active portions of the park with a more passive, natural park of existing trails through 11 acres of wetlands.

Cape May Board of Educa-

tion President Dawn Austin expressed concern about being kept up to date with changes surrounding the parks conceptual design.

"The Board of Education wants to work with this committee and see this project move forward," Austin said. "These plans are drastically different from the original. We need to take these concepts back to our board to decide upon and get moving as quickly as possible."

She noted the school board was excited to work with the city and was eager to present the plans to the entire Board of Education for its input.

The school board's next meeting is scheduled for March 22. Meier asked if

the school board would be interested in having more of the activity-oriented features moved closer to the school.

The current plans include an adult softball field with a 290-foot center field line, basketball courts and tennis courts surrounded by 10-foot-high chain-link fence and a dog park with a shade structure.

Rutala cautioned building structures such as lavatories is prohibited on land purchased with Blue Acres grant funds. About \$750,000 in grant money is being used for the park's development, including a \$500,000 grant from the state's Green Acres fund as well as \$250,000 from the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

Committee members noted they are mindful of maintaining the history of the Wise, Anderson and Dellas families in the redesign of the park.

Shade Tree Commission members Jay Schatz and Mark Pasck discussed the idea of planting fifth-generation American chestnut tree seedlings.

"We could include the elementary school students in the planting," Meier suggested.

In addition to the ball field and activity areas, a future memorial garden and picnic area were proposed.

The overall estimate of completing the project was \$7 million. In 2016, City Council approved a bond ordinance of \$1.5 million. There was no public comment for or against the project.

West Cape considers allowing microbreweries in some zones

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — When the borough's zoning ordinance was established, microbreweries and small-scale distilleries did not exist, so they are neither an approved or prohibited use in the commercial zone.

During a Planning Board meeting Feb. 27, Mayor Carol Sabo said Zoning Officer Norm Roach questioned how the borough would handle a request from an applicant wishing to open one of the establishments. Sabo said the borough has received inquiries about whether those types of businesses were permitted in West Cape May.

Board solicitor Brock Russell said if a use is not specified in a zone, it is not a permitted use.

"Someone can make an application for interpretation but I think they would probably wind up needing a use variance," he said.

Russell said if the borough does not have a permitted use, it does not specify where a microbrewery could be located. He advised creating standards for microbreweries and establishing it as a permitted use in one of the borough's zones.

A microbrewery could be a conditional use, requiring it to meet certain standards or obtain a "D" variance, Russell said. Borough engineer Ray Roberts said he agreed with Russell.

Sabo said a microbrewery would not be appropriate in a residential zone.

Board member Paul Mul-

ligan noted Nauti Spirits Distillery in Lower Township is located on a farm and was granted its site plan as a farm use.

Board Chairman T.J. Belasco said hops grow well in West Cape May's climate, so a microbrewery on a farm would be a possibility. Sabo said a microbrewery does not require a liquor license.

Mulligan said the state considers microbreweries a manufacturing facility that is allowed to sell product but forbidden to sell food. He said distilleries may be farm-based or a commercial manufacturer. In regulating a brewery, square footage would apply as opposed to a restaurant, which would be regulated by the number of tables and seats.

Deputy Mayor Peter Burke said microbreweries are required to close around 8 p.m. Planning Board member Lisa Roselli said patrons could take food to microbreweries and businesses that sell food nearby could benefit from its presence.

Russell suggested the governing body may want to consider an ordinance change to allow microbreweries. He suggested the borough solicitor examine such ordinances from other towns.

Sabo said Borough Commission discussed the issue and was asking the Planning Board if the borough should consider microbreweries as a use within the commercial zone.

Mulligan said the borough is trying to sell a restaurant liquor license and allowing microbreweries may com-

pligate that process.

"You may find that having a brewery on Broadway and some restaurant next door who is going to buy such a license will now say, 'Why am I spending \$600,000 and there's all this beer being consumed in competition with me and all they paid was \$35 to the state of New Jersey?'" he said. "We could be welcoming to a brewery but if we're welcoming to a brewery, we might actually devalue the opportunity to sell the West Cape May license."

Roselli noted restaurants located elsewhere have breweries as part of their operation. Belasco said that would require a liquor license.

Sabo said those interested in the available restaurant liquor license have been invited to Borough Commission's March 14 meeting to discuss its parameters. She said the license was last offered for \$475,000 but no

bids were received.

Discussion at the meeting could include microbreweries, the mayor suggested. Belasco said microbreweries should be considered for the borough.

"It's only a matter of time because there's none south of the canal and somebody's going to get that idea that it would be nice to have one in biking distance for everyone south of the canal," he said.

Roach said distribution of their product outside the brewery could become an issue. Mulligan said a microbrewery would need a proper loading dock. Russell said the borough should consider making a microbrewery a conditional use in one of the commercial zones.

"It puts a tremendous incentive on the part of an applicant to comply because they don't want to have to ask for a 'D' variance, they want to ask for a 'C' vari-

ance or no variances," he said.

Russell said he believed

a microbrewery was consistent with the borough's master plan.

Free smoke detectors offered in Cape May, West Cape May

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The Cape May Fire Department and the West Cape May Volunteer Fire Company have free smoke detectors available for full-time residents.

The program is designed for senior citizens, those with mobility issues or those in financial need, according to Cape May Fire Department Lt. Mike Eck.

"Cape May Fire Department has always been on top of installing smoke detectors for anybody who can't afford them. Somebody that has a bad battery and they can't reach it or having issues getting a battery replaced, we'd certainly do that," he said.

The program is for single-family residences, not rental

units, Eck said. Applicants must fill out a one-page form.

In Cape May, residents may call the fire department's non-emergency line at (609) 884-9512 to request a smoke detector.

West Cape May Volunteer Fire Company Capt. Greg Basile said the borough is following the same criteria as Cape May for receiving smoke detectors.

In West Cape May, call Borough Clerk Suzanne M. Schumann at (609) 884-1005, ext. 100.

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