

Resiliency expert paints bleak future for West Cape May

By **BETTY WUND**
Special to the Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Predictions for the year 2050 were the subject of a presentation by Jack Heide from The College of New Jersey at the May 11 borough commission work session.

Heide's project initially offers help to municipalities by mapping the future of coastal towns and predicting what would happen if a major storm hit the area in 2050. That year was chosen because that would be the average length of a mortgage established now, according to Heide.

He said predictions show the borough heavily flooded even though it does not have a beachfront. The program is working with a grant from the National Wildlife Federation and the Department of Environmental Protection to help 20 coastal towns including Cape May and Cape May Point.

Manager of the Resiliency Program of the Sustainability Institute at the college, Heide outlined three steps the borough could do to avoid disastrous flooding. He also showed how doing so would lead the borough to qualify for certification by Sustainable Jersey.

Sustainable Jersey is a nonprofit organization that provides tools, training and financial incentives to support communities as they pursue sustainability programs. The organization supports community efforts to reduce waste, cut greenhouse gas emissions and improve environmental equity. Certification will be in line with the DEP tool Going to Resiliency (GTR) and qualify the borough for grants and bonds.

The first step for GTR is to hold meetings with a committee of the municipality to assess vulnerability when storms flood the area as sea levels rise with climate change. The Federal Emergency Management Agency predicts that by 2050, the rise will be 1.3 feet at high tide.

The second is to list the assets of the borough, including emergency preparedness with regard to the municipal offices, fire stations, police and evacuation routes with regard to bridges and roadways. Assessment of farms, open space and wetlands would also be included. Natural assets include anything important to the community. Amenities such as historic buildings, schools

and grocery stores would be included to determine the level of flooding that would be possible. Assessment would include the effects on these structures in the event of a storm.

The third is to engage technical assistance from experts from organizations working with the program. The Jacques Cousteau National Estuaries Reserve and the Barnegat Bay Partnership are included, as are several area colleges. He referenced the web site prepareyourcommunity.com as outlining how to proceed toward GTR. The commission will present a resolution to join the Resiliency Program at its next meeting.

The fourth step is to enlist experts to propose a plan.

"It is a great idea. Too often we think that we know our problems and don't do anything about it. We think we are going to solve them but we don't do anything about it. What kind of plans are we going to make according to a master plan to get a plan to prioritize what the issues are and see what the impact is going to be even from a capital improvement program to go after grants? This kind of information with the different kinds of expertise is only

a bonus for you. It will prepare the borough as to what is coming down," Borough Engineer Ray Roberts said.

Christina Davis and Diane Stopyra also presented their plan to provide running tours of the Cape May area.

Run Cape is a touring company for runners who desire to run in small groups and get to know an area. It is a niche market appealing to runners in small groups, according to Davis and Stopyra. They have chosen to base their business in West Cape May. Approved operation in West Cape May would allow them to operate in the borough and neighboring communities.

Since they do not require a storefront, a mercantile license is not necessary, according to Borough Solicitor Frank Corrado. He said the only requirement to operate is by a resolution of Borough Commission. Corrado said he would draw up a resolution and stipulate that the runners be no more than 10 with a group leader and the hours of operation be from dawn to dusk. The resolution will also be introduced for first reading at the June 22 meeting of the commissioners.

At the commissioners'

regular meeting, an amendment to the zoning code regarding porches was introduced. The amendment eliminates lot coverage requirements. A second reading and public hearing is scheduled for June 22.

With no reports from the commissioners, the meeting ended with a lengthy closed session that addressed pending litigation with Willow Creek Farm and Winery and negotiations with the construction office.

Motel

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Beach Shack call for 49 spaces for self-parking out of 79 parking spaces in the rear of the property.

"We would have to be over 62 percent occupancy to even need to stack the cars," Bashaw said. "In the summer, that's generally the case. We hope so or it would be a bad summer."

Attorney Eric Garrabrant, representing homeowners in the adjacent Heritage Triangle Homeowners Association and Seaboard Walk Condominium Association, questioned if the parking spaces along Beach Avenue would be metered. Bashaw said that decision belonged to City Council. He said those spots would be reserved for public use, with hotel parking on the property. A number of homeowners from the two condominium developments were seated in the audience.

Vince Orlando, engineer for the project, said only one curb cut exists on Heritage Lane at the rear of the property used for a loading dock and trash collection. He said trucks back down Heritage Lane because it is very narrow.

Orlando said he met with county planners who liked the idea of creating 24 additional parking spaces for the neighborhood along the curb line of Beach Avenue and eliminating 34 spaces that require motorists to back out onto the busy road. He said the hotel would have 41 spaces in front with 17 spaces within the site that would be moved 20 feet to remove them from the county right of way with a 20-foot driveway, which would fall not only on the hotel property but also within the county right of way.

Mayor Edward Mahaney, a Planning Board member, said the county had not yet approved the new parking plan within its right of way. He said the city's fire chief had a number of concerns for fighting fires in the complex after viewing the plans.

The mayor questioned whether space remained on Beach Avenue to allow a bicycle lane. Orlando said 20

feet was available from the centerline to the curb line of Beach Avenue, which could accommodate a bike lane.

He said the applicant was seeking four bulk variances from the board. The expansion of the building on the southwest corner of the site would require two setback variances. Orlando said the setback from the front property line to the closest point along the right of way is 18 feet, an existing condition that is being expanded to 20 feet, requiring a variance.

The setback along the southwest property line is 6 feet where 10 feet is required, an expansion of a current nonconforming condition requiring a sideyard

variance, he said. A variance is being sought for the trash enclosure with no setback where 10 feet is required.

Lot coverage would be decreased from 88 percent to 86 percent, while the city's maximum standard is 75 percent thus requiring a variance, Orlando said.

He said the hotel currently has 88 parking spaces on site while the city requires 140 spaces. Plans call for 89 spaces on site and 24 spaces offsite adjacent to the prop-

erty for a total of 113 spaces. Nehmad said the 24 spaces would be along Beach Avenue in the public right of way with parking meters.

Traffic consultant for the project David Shropshire said the renovated hotel would have minimal impact on traffic near the site. Additional testimony will be heard at the May 24 meeting from the project's architect and Planning Board engineer as well as public comment.

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