

Shipwrecks litter the New Jersey coastline

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House of the week

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167th YEAR NO. 25 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 2021 \$1.00

School board miffed at lack of progress on park

Project stalled with deadline to begin phase IV or return land just two months away

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Last year, the Cape May City Elementary School Board of Education deeded a tract of land behind the school to the city of Cape May so it could be made into a nature trail as part of Lafayette Street Park.

The deed transfer required work to begin on what is known as

phase IV of the park in one year or the land would again become property of the school board.

Nearly a year has passed and no work has started on phase IV. The school board had set a deadline of Aug. 26, 2021.

County Open Space funding was available for phase IV but in order to receive that funding, the lots had to be deeded over to the city, since the open space program grants funding only to

municipalities.

At a June 17 Board of Education meeting, Facilities and Grounds Committee Chairman Mark LeMunyon said the committee met with Mayor Zack Mullock, City Manager Mike Voll and Deputy City Manager Lou Belasco.

"They made the announcement they're going to file an application to the DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) that wasn't filed in the past," LeMunyon said.

He said the DEP application would take nine months to process.

Jersey Central Power and Light (JCP&L) has a "malfunction" with the Cape May Housing Authority, LeMunyon said.

The housing authority needs to sign over a deed to JCP&L, which has been implementing deed notices on each property where impacted soils exceed residential direct contact regulations, since

contamination remains in deeper subsurface soils.

In addition to the former manufactured gas plant site, which is the bulk of the proposed park, impacted soils were removed from residential properties on St. John's Street and across Lafayette Street on public housing land.

Earlier in the year, Council-

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Celebrating Juneteenth in Cape May

The Harriet Tubman Museum in Cape May held a Juneteenth event June 19 in Rotary Park. Emily Dempsey, a descendant of Charles S. Bowes who fought with the 22nd Regiment — the U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War in Virginia — was honored. Dempsey was presented with a copy of the flag of the 22nd Regiment.

Chris Bezaire charged with cyber harassment

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — Cape May City Councilman and local real estate agent Christopher Bezaire, 43, has been charged with crimes related to the alleged cyber harassment of a former girlfriend.

Cape May County Prosecutor Jeffrey Sutherland and Chief Paul Skill of the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office announced Bezaire's arrest following the execution of a search warrant at his home in the 200 block of Windsor Avenue in Cape May.

Since May, detectives from the Prosecutor's Office, with the assistance of detectives from the Middle Township Police Department, have been conducting an investigation into allegations of cyber harassment by Bezaire.

On June 16, Bezaire was taken into custody without incident at his home while authorities searched there and at his place of employment in the 500 block of Washington Street.



BEZAIRE

Bezaire was charged with invasion of privacy, a crime of the third degree; cyber harassment, a crime of the fourth degree; stalking, a crime of the fourth degree; and contempt of court, a crime of the fourth degree.

Bezaire was lodged in the Cape May County Jail pending court proceedings.

According to Sutherland, individuals convicted of third-degree crimes can receive a sentence of three to five years in state prison and fourth-degree crimes can carry a sentence of as long as 18 months in prison.

Cape May Mayor Zack Mullock released the following statement on Bezaire's arrest:

"The city of Cape May has no tolerance for harassment of any kind. All parties involved are entitled to due process and that process will have to play itself out. The city will continue to cooperate with this investigation. To be fair to all parties, it would be inappropriate to comment further at this time."

Cape, West Cape schools will share superintendent

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Zack Palombo has been approved as new superintendent for Cape May City Elementary School and West Cape May Elementary School by both boards of education through a shared services agreement.

Palombo's contract runs through June 30, 2026. He replaces interim superintendent Robert Garguilo who served both schools.

Palombo's compensation will total \$127,500 per year with a 3 percent annual increase over the term of the contract.

At a June 17 Cape May City Elementary School Board of Education meeting, board Vice President Sharon Lee Kustra said the shared services agreement was a model for other schools in the county.

Palombo said he submitted a school reopening plan for the fall to Business Administrator John Thomas and school physician Dr. Dianna Deignan. He said

the school was in multiple weeks of the "green zone" which is low risk for COVID.

Summer school will begin on July 6 meeting Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The summer session will conclude the final week of July.

Palombo said summer school is open to all students. Summer school will be staffed by three regular teachers and three special education teachers, he said.

The board approved a food consolidation agreement with West Cape May Elementary School for the second year allowing Cape May Elementary to provide all food services to the West Cape May school.

Cape May Elementary School surveyed parents to determine if there was interest in pre-kindergarten program. Palombo said he believe he would have 12 enrollees for next year.

He said he was waiting for the state to move on the application process.



PALOMBO

Cape May not meeting DEP's rules on water

Desalination plant must be expanded to increase capacity in case of failure

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city needs to expand its desalination plant to increase water capacity to address equipment failures.

Water/Sewer Superintendent Robert Cumiskey updated City Council on the city's water capacity June 15. The water system has a total production capacity of 2.96 million gallons per day, he said.

"While it's adequate to meet our peak demand, which is 2.26 million gallons per day, it doesn't satisfy the regulations for safe drinking water from the DEP (Department of Environmental Protection), which says you have to be able to meet that peak demand even if your largest source goes offline," he said.

If the city lost well #5 in the middle of summer, it would not be able to meet demand. By expanding the desalination plant, the city would be able to use wells 6, 7 and 8 feeding the reverse-osmosis system and also have well #5, Cumiskey said.

In that case if well #5 were to fail, the combined output of the other three wells would total 2.94 million gallons per day, which would easily meet the city's water needs, he said.

"It will ensure that the

city, West Cape May, Cape May Point, U.S. Coast Guard Training Center community, has an adequate water supply for decades in the future," Cumiskey said.

He said new construction continues, especially in West Cape May.

"I know we talked about some of the allocation that we can't give to West Cape May and they're not meeting their need, so it's pretty obvious where we stand," he said.

Councilman Chris Bezaire said West Cape May had a stop order on new construction due to a lack of water allocation.

The city has funding appropriated for an engineering firm to prepare a feasibility study to expand the desalination plant as well as seeking federal and state aid to offset the cost of the expansion.

Cumiskey said in late March, well #6 began sucking in sand. He said the well is being rehabilitated.

Cumiskey said a booster pump, which forces water through membranes in the desalination plant, is out of service. He said a backup pump is in operation.

Both the well #6 rehabilitation and the booster pump replacement will be

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