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The MIDDLE TOWNSHIP GAZETTE

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Jens Arthur

Avalon Beach Rocks

Katie Fox and Tommy Green, with the band Hunky Dory of Philadelphia, sing The Who's "Baba O'Riley" for a beach concert Saturday at 30th street beach in Avalon. Beach concerts will be held every Saturday and Sunday from noon to 3 p.m. Also performing with the band is Tom McHugh and Julia Tascia, not pictured.

Businesses, resident save this year's fireworks

MIDDLE TOWNSHIP – A handful of businesses and a resident are the saviors of this year's fireworks display set for Monday, July 4.

Hard economic times almost meant there would not be an Independence Day celebration at the Clarence and Georgiana Davies Sports Complex, 626 Goshen Road, Cape May Court House.

"We are very fortunate we have a very, very generous community," said Jill Zarharchuk, township director of economic development, who helps put together the celebration.

Among businesses that kicked in dollars include Avalon Marine Center, Sturdy Savings Bank, Smeltzer & Sons Inc., Kindle Ford-Mercury-Lincoln Inc., Shellbay Campground, Marsh & McLennan Agency, Atkinson's Tavern, Discount Hydraulics and McDonald's of Cape May Court House. Steven

Russell of Cape May Court House also contributed money.

As of Wednesday morning, Zarharchuk said over \$6,000 has been raised for the show. A total of \$6,695 is needed to pay Pyrotecnico, which puts on the fireworks. Donations are still being sought.

Deputy Mayor Nate Doughty said at a township committee meeting earlier this month the amount of money needed will be raised in time.

This isn't the first time businesses have been asked for donations, however. Fundraising took place for last year's celebration, too.

Doughty pledged last year to no longer use tax dollars to pay for the fireworks.

And more people are expected to watch this year's show at the Complex, township recreation director Chuck McDonnell said.

See page 13 for full list of Independence Day events

He attributes the possible increase in turnout from the show taking place on a week night.

The 22-minute show starts around 9 p.m. Often, between 2,500 and 3,000 people come for the show, but most of them aren't township residents.

McDonnell said a unique aspect of the show includes illuminating a sign with Middle Township, ushering in the grand finale.

"We always have a great finale," Zarharchuk said.

Hydeway will perform from 5 to 9 p.m. There will also be rock climbing and pony rides. Fire truck tours will be given as well.

Rain date is July 5, which includes no entertainment.

– Alex Davis

Indifference, skepticism for zoning change

By ALEX DAVIS
Staff Writer

MIDDLE TOWNSHIP – Some Cape May Court House businesses are mum over the township's proposed zoning changes.

People interviewed at businesses Tuesday said they had no knowledge of changes, could not comment on them or said that the manager was unavailable.

But the businesses contacted would be affected by the planned creation of town centers, mainly along routes 9 and 47.

The plan comes from the state Office of Smart Growth's plan to concentrate development in town centers, which proponents say makes for better planning for towns and for better preservation of the less developed areas outside the centers.

The areas would "promote a desirable mix of commercial, office,

civic and residential land use within a compact, vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, town center environment, with an emphasis on uses that serve the community and regional needs where there is adequate road infrastructure," according to the draft zoning ordinance.

There are skeptics.

The American Littoral Society has some major contentions with the proposed zoning changes and the 2010 master plan. The proposed zoning changes included in an ordinance set for its first vote by Township Committee come from the master plan.

"Middle Township officials and this (master) plan (and by extension, the state agencies involved in the negotiations surrounding the proposal) have failed to seriously consider the implications and impacts that such growth and habitat fragmentation will

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Renewed push for a countywide dispatch system

Safety, not savings would be the goal

By MARY LINEHAN
Correspondent

STONE HARBOR – The Borough's council cast its votes in favor of a countywide emergency communications system at the regular meeting at the end of last month, adding its voice to the collective call for such a system.

The council passed a similar resolution in 2009, which was attached to the 2011 version.

"...[T]he governing body of the borough of Stone Harbor strongly endorses the Cape May Conference of Mayor's request to the Board of Chosen Freeholders to investigate and establish a county wide public safety dispatch service," according to the most recent resolution.

According to county officials, Stone Harbor joins West Cape May, West Wildwood, and Lower, Middle and Upper Townships is asking the county to move forward in its investigation and planning for such a system.

"I anticipate by the end of the year that we'll have a consultant in place to research and develop a plan. We will be spending a lot of time reaching out to the municipalities to gauge their interest and commitment to the project," said Cape May County Administrator Stephen O'Connor.

"It is not a quick or simple process to pull together this kind of system. There's some work ahead of all of us before we get there," said O'Connor.

The county's administrator said that the goal of such a consolidated communications system would be improved service and that he was unsure whether the plan would net any significant cost savings.

"It is just too early to tell. That is what the consultant will be able to tell us," he said.

County Emergency Services Director Frank McCall offered more details.

"This will, essentially, be a three continued on Page 18

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Indifference, skepticism for zoning change

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have on the community character, traffic, water quality, and natural resources of international importance," said Delaware Bay Program Manager Matthew Blake.

He said the plan would chart what will be done with the township's remaining unprotected open space and farmland.

Not only that, the plan would establish if "the refuge will succeed in acquiring enough core acreage to be ecologically viable," he said.

That makes him nervous. "The Cape May Refuge protects one of the most important migratory bird sites in North America — not just for shorebirds dependent on abundant horseshoe crab eggs, but for tens of thousands of neo-tropical songbirds representing over 200 species, which depend on the county's dwindling forestlands to refuel and rest in after crossing the Delaware Bay," Blake said.

The refuge, administered by the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service, includes thousands of acres through-

out Cape May County, including a swath of Middle Township. The areas are not contingent, and include sections along the Delaware Bay and in Cape May Court House.

The 2010 master plan includes three occasions in which developers would be allowed to put "high-density housing adjacent to existing refuge lands in environmentally sensitive areas long ago approved for inclusion in the refuge," Blake said.

"If the public lets them get away with it, the town

will only be emboldened to do it again and again until the refuge becomes too fragmented to serve its purpose, to protect irreplaceable wildlife," Blake said.

He did say the 2010 master plan is better than the current one.

And the 2010 master plan is expected to be endorsed in August by the state Office of Planning Advocacy.

Yet it "needs to do more to discourage sprawl and fragmentation of woodlands and farms in the environs," Blake said.

What's more, zoning

changes would mean an increase from 16,405 residents to 28,029, a 70 percent increase, Blake said.

"This increase does not include the 96,440 additional new summer residents projected to be visiting the county by 2025," he said.

"Both Middle Township officials and its residents need to seriously consider the implications and impacts that such growth will have on their quality of life. With growth comes more maddening traffic, more air and water pollution, and certainly higher taxes

needed to support public infrastructure and services such as police, schools and fire protection."

The introduction of the zoning ordinance is set for 3 p.m. Wednesday, July 6, at 33 Mechanic St., Cape May Court House, and a public hearing and final vote are expected Monday, Aug. 1, at township hall.

Renewed push for a countywide dispatch system

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phase process. First, we'll have Verizon come in toward the end of the summer to discuss the future of 911 networks in New Jersey," said McCall. "There have been a number of significant changes in the 911 network," according to McCall.

Secondly, said McCall, the county will work with state officials regarding "grant availability and cost savings under the shared services model." The third phase, according to the emergency services czar, is the hiring of a communications consultant — as referenced by O'Connor.

"This is a highly specialized area. Not only would be looking at the value of a consolidated communications system, but we'd also have to be briefed on compliance with federal regulations that come into effect in 2013," he said.

"I imagine there will be objections from some agencies — I don't know who they are. But, there will be agencies that do not want to participate for whatever reason, because they have other options," he said.

"We want to hear from everybody. The consultant, the planning will offer solid information that we can work from, giving everyone a new look at emergency communications. We are in early days. There needs to a lot of discussion," McCall said.

Stone Harbor's resolution referred to the support of countywide dispatch from the borough's Fire Department and Rescue Squad, specifically. And, according to McCall, fire and emergency medical services seem pretty squarely behind the idea for establishment of county services.

"There is a difference in the communications model and usage among fire, medical services and police," he said, noting that 90 percent of 911 calls come in for police service, but that fire services ultimately use 40 percent of over air communications.

"Calls come in at the highest rate for police, but the difference in services requires the higher usage for fire departments," he said. "It is my sense that fire districts and emergency medical service providers are firmly behind the county dispatch model," he said.

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