

EHT board OKs affordable housing plan

■ The plan calls for 76 apartments near Fire Road and Gravesmith Drive.

By CHRISTIAN HETRICK
Staff Writer

Egg Harbor Township's Planning Board unanimously approved the first of a two-phase major site plan Monday to construct an affordable housing development.

Phase one of the project establishes groundwork for the con-

struction of 76 rental apartments in four buildings, a clubhouse and off-street parking for 152 vehicles. The approval also allows the applicant, Egg Harbor Family Associates LLC, an affiliate of The Michaels Organization, to make improvements to Gravesmith Drive and Ravenworth Court to create a connection road between Fire Road and Gravesmith Drive and an entry drive during construction. The property is located

within Columbus Avenue, Fire Road, Doughty Road and Decadon Drive.

Preference for residence will be given to people displaced by Hurricane Sandy, said Jonathan Lubonski, a development officer for The Michaels Organization. He said there also could be a waiting list for Egg Harbor Township residents who want to live on the property.

Lubonski said residents will be

in two income categories: those who earn within 50 percent of area median income and those who earn 60 percent. Rent for a one-bedroom apartment at the 50 percent level will be \$596 per month. At the 60 percent level, it will cost \$718 per month, Lubonski said. A three-bedroom apartment will cost \$885 per month for those at the 50 percent level and \$1,062 per month for those at the 60 percent level.

Lubonski described the potential residents as being entry-level teachers or police officers.

Lubonski said the entire project will cost \$20 million to \$21 million, which will be paid with funds from the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, a 4 percent tax credit and a CitiBank subordinate loan. He said an application for financing is due at

□ See Housing, C3



Seventh-graders Natalie White, left, and Kylie Hafner, both 12, look at an anti-bullying mural at Alder Avenue School in Egg Harbor Township. The district raised its anti-bullying score from 66 last year to 71 in 2013-14.

Schools show progress in the fight vs. bullying

But meeting the law's demands is still a challenge

Anti-bullying grades

Schools were scored on harassment, intimidation and bullying, or HIB, based on a self-assessment developed by the New Jersey Department of Education. The maximum possible score is 78.

The eight core areas are:

1. School HIB programs, approaches and other initiatives: 15 points
2. Training on the board-approved HIB policy: 9 points
3. Other staff instruction and training programs: 15 points
4. Curriculum and instruction on HIB-related information and skills: 6 points
5. HIB personnel: 9 points
6. School-level HIB incident reporting procedures: 6 points
7. HIB investigative procedures: 12 points
8. HIB state reporting: 6 points

By DIANE D'AMICO
Education Writer

School districts in New Jersey are making progress in implementing the 2011 Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act, but still grapple with the time it takes to both prevent and thoroughly investigate bullying in their schools.

All school districts had until Jan. 9 to post on their website home pages the results of their 2013-14 self-assessment reports. The reports include eight criteria that range from implementing harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB) programs to training staff, providing student instruction and investigating incidents.

Reports for schools in Atlantic, Cape, Cumberland and Ocean counties show most districts making progress. But some still lag, and anti-bullying advocates are concerned that the self-assessment alone is not sufficient to ensure that schools are following the law.

"It is good if schools are honestly using it to improve," said Stuart Green, director of the N.J. Coalition for Bullying Awareness. "But it provides too much

room for self-filtered reliability. It's good to use, but it's also like telling students they can grade their own tests."

Schools can earn a maximum of 78 points on the self-assessment, and local reports show many districts approaching that goal. Each school does its own self-assessment report, which is then also averaged into a district score. Locally, nine districts in Atlantic County, eight in Cape May County, four in Cumberland County and 14 in Ocean County scored at least 70 points. But nine districts in those four counties are also still scoring 60 below.

Currently there is no minimum score districts must reach, or formal steps to intervene in districts with low scores. State Department of Education spokesman David Saenz Jr. said in an email that the department is in the process of reviewing potential criteria and guidelines. He said the state supports school districts by providing information on anti-bullying and resources, and responding to phone call and email inquiries requesting assistance or guidance.

Green said he would like the state to do more to make sure districts are complying. He said the state provides a School Climate Survey but schools are not required to implement it.

Hamilton Township school Superintendent Michelle Cappelluti said they have found the self-assessment useful in providing clear expectations and reminders of what districts should be doing to comply with the law. The district's score rose from 70 last year to 76 this year.

"Knowing and understanding every element within each indicator helps us

□ See Bully, C3

Top local districts

Avalon: 78
Stone Harbor: 78
Brigantine: 77
Northfield: 77
Ventnor: 77
Cape May Technical High School: 77
Hamilton Township: 76
Long Beach Island: 76
Lower Township: 76
Cape May 75
Folsom: 75

Bottom local districts

Somers Point: 60
Stafford Township: 60
Little Egg Harbor Township: 56
Upper Deerfield Township: 56
Woodbine: 55
Commercial Township: 55
Maurice River Township: 53
Pleasantville: 55
Port Republic 51
Deerfield Township: 48
Source: N.J. Department of Education

A.C. library cuts budget, will be open one day less

■ Falling property values are expected to take a toll on revenue, and casino-tax legislation could have 'a large impact,' the library's director says.

By JOHN V. SANTORE
Staff Writer

The Tennessee Avenue branch of the Atlantic City Free Public Library will end Sunday operations after March 1, and the system could see further service reductions due to budget cuts, Director Maureen Sherr Frank said Monday.

The library, which saw usage increase 40 percent last year over 2013, according to official statistics, received just over \$5 million in 2014 from property taxes, almost its entire budget.

Sherr Frank said an additional \$40,000 came from grants and state aid. The library is not part of the Atlantic County Library System, and therefore is responsible for its own funding.

But dropping property values in Atlantic City have forced the library to cut its anticipated 2015 budget by 25 percent, to \$3.76 million, Sherr Frank said, adding that the elimination of Sunday service is a response to that new reality.

Additionally, the Casino Property Tax Stabilization Act, introduced in December by State Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney, could further reduce the library's remaining

□ See Library, C3



Photo provided by Mayor Don Guardian's office

Atlantic City Mayor Don Guardian, left, and developer Glenn Straub discuss ideas for the Revel property and city projects Monday.

New Revel buyer, A.C. mayor meet

Atlantic City's mayor met with the new buyer of Revel for the first time Monday.

While Don Guardian said he has read a lot about Glenn Straub in the media, he had never before met the Florida real estate developer.

"He shared with me how he would like to help us create a vibrant city with cranes in the sky putting people back to work," the mayor said. "I shared with him all the exciting development projects and municipal service improvements the city has been initiating since I became mayor."

Straub has offered a grand vision for Revel's rebirth, including a \$108 million water park and high-speed ferries or catamarans between Atlantic City and Manhattan to tap the New York market.

Guardian said he welcomes Straub's "enthusiasm toward remaking Atlantic City into a destination that goes beyond gaming."

He said they both agree Atlantic City's best days are ahead of it.

Lynda Cohen

Servers with a smile at Atlantic Cape

■ A Galloway Township firm's donation will allow the college to upgrade its computer science curricula.

By DIANE D'AMICO
Education Writer

MAYS LANDING — The 42 Supermicro Superservers just installed at Atlantic Cape Community College might not

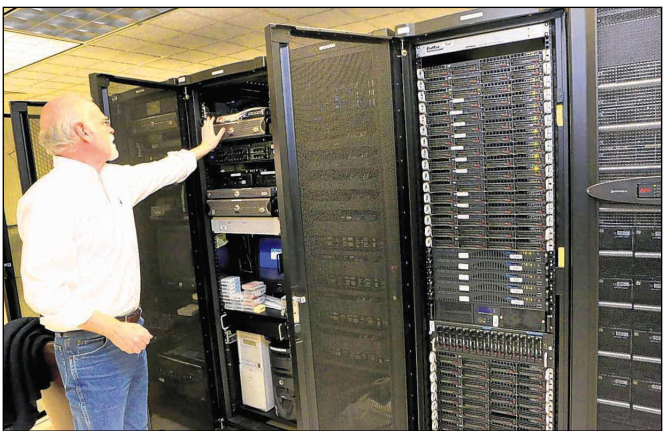
be brand new, but they are far newer than what the college was using, and better yet, they were free.

"For us, these are just broken in," said Douglas Hedges, dean of information technology services at Atlantic Cape, noting that the old servers they will replace have been around for more than a decade.

The servers, which are 3 to 5

years old, were donated by Galloway Township-based Linode LLC, a Linux virtual private server or VPS cloud hosting provider, which has been donating its slightly used servers to colleges across the state for the past few years through its IT Workforce Preparation Initiative. The company was founded in

□ See Servers, C3



Atlantic Cape Community College dean of information technology services Douglas Hedges says the donated servers will replace those that are more than a decade old.

Staff photo by Vernon Ogronek

Regalbuto becomes Wildwood’s 13th police chief

■ The city also promotes two officers and swears in seven new ones after the department’s switch to 12-hour shifts.

By **CHRISTIE ROTONDO**
Staff Writer

A former police captain who has been on the force for more than 20 years was sworn in as Wildwood’s new police chief last week, the city said.

Former Capt. Robert Regalbuto was sworn in Friday, and said he hopes to move the city forward as its 13th police chief.

“This is a new change for the City of Wildwood Police Department and a new chapter in our book,” Regalbuto said in a news release from the city. “We have great men and women here who are going to help us move the

City of Wildwood and the Wildwood Police Department into the future.”

Regalbuto was hired as a Class II officer in 1989. He became a full-time officer a year later and worked his way through the ranks. He takes the place of Chief Steven Long, who retired.

“It’s always important when you’re chief that when you leave, you feel that you are leaving the department in capable hands,” Long said. “As far as I’m concerned, these guys are more than capable and will take it to the next level. This police department will be well-served.”

Also Friday, Joseph Murphy was promoted to captain and former Sgt. Edward Ramsey was sworn in as lieutenant. Seven new police officers were sworn to the force before beginning their training at the Cape May County Police

Academy, the city said.

Friday’s swearing-in ceremony followed other Police Department changes that were announced in December. Under a new contract with the city’s police unions, officers have switched from working eight-hour shifts to 12-hour shifts, a move the city said will put a greater police presence on the city’s streets.

Those contracts also called for a higher starting salary of \$29,000 for newly hired officers. That change was implemented to attract better-qualified officers for the positions.

“There are exciting times ahead with a lot of new ideas,” Public Safety Commissioner Tony Leonetti said. “We just can’t wait to make this all happen.”

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Photo provided by Wildwood
Wildwood Municipal Court Judge Dorothy Garrabrant, left, swears in Robert Regalbuto as police chief Friday as his wife, Danielle, holds the Bible.

Car hits gas line at A.C.’s Ritz condos

The Ritz Condominiums in Atlantic City was partially evacuated Monday morning after a vehicle struck a high-pressure gas line, the fire chief said.

The accident occurred in the main entrance area, Chief Dennis Brooks said.

Response from security,

the condo association and emergency workers was very quick, Assistant Manager Jamie Greco said.

A resident accidentally hit the meter, prompting the partial evacuation mostly on the first floor, she said.

“Everyone is safe,” Greco said.

The evacuated residents were allowed to return after South Jersey Gas turned off the gas.

Atlantic City police blocked off the area of South Iowa Avenue at the Boardwalk blocked while crews from the gas company made repairs.

“Hose lines are in place,” Brooks said. “Everything we’ve done right now is precautionary.”

The smell of gas was strong in the area prior to crews arriving about 11 a.m.

Christie Rotondo and Lynda Cohen

Boardwalk Hall ranks among busiest venues

From Press staff reports

Even as Atlantic City’s casinos struggled, Boardwalk Hall remained one of the top venues in the nation, according to rankings in the industry publications Pollstar and Venues Today.

Venues Today ranked the hall as the No. 2 busiest venue in the country among all arenas its size for the year ending Oct. 15, according to a release Monday by Global Spectrum, which took over operations at the hall last year.

The publication also ranked the 14,000-capacity hall overall as the 56th busiest venue in North America.

In the Pollstar rankings, the hall was listed as the No. 41 venue in the United States and No. 86 worldwide.

In its announcement, Global Spectrum said it increased the number of ticketed events at the hall by 26 percent during 2014 and sold more than 250,000 tickets during the year.

Global Spectrum said it has seven concerts already announced for the first three months of this year, which it said is more than the first quarter of any year since the arena was renovated in 2001.

Lacey gas leak forces Route 9 detour, delays

LACEY TOWNSHIP—An overnight gas leak forced motorists to take a detour Monday along Route 9 in Lanoka Harbor.

The gas leak was determined at 11 p.m. Sunday after Officer George Resetar, who was on patrol, was informed of a natural gas odor coming from the

area of Route 9 and Bay Way, police Lt. Michael C. DiBella said.

The Lanoka Harbor Fire Department detected high levels of natural gas in this area, and New Jersey Natural Gas responded to the scene. The gas leak was confirmed to be along Route 9 just south of the

Cedar Creek Bridge, police said.

New Jersey Natural Gas was repairing the leak Monday, police said.

The portion of Route 9 between the border of Lacey and Berkeley townships that crosses the Cedar Creek was open. However, traffic was reduced to one

lane of travel, causing delays.

Police were urging motorists who normally use the section of Route 9 to find alternate routes until repairs were completed. There was no estimated time of completion as of Monday morning, police said.

Police: Sex-assault suspect met victim, 12, via app

A Mays Landing man has been charged with aggravated sexual assault and luring a child after he allegedly assaulted a 12-year-old he contacted through a social messaging app, Hamilton Township police said.

Police said Aaron Johnson, 23, contacted the child through Kik, a free messaging applica-

tion that can be used to send messages over a wireless network. He later met with the victim at a location in Mays Landing, where the assault occurred, police said.

Johnson was charged with first-degree aggravated sexual assault, as well as luring in the second degree and endangering

the welfare of a child.

Police said Johnson also was charged with luring and endangering the welfare of a child after contacting a 17-year-old through Kik.

Johnson was lodged in Atlantic County Jail on \$300,000 bail.

Christie Rotondo



JOHNSON

Servers

(Continued from C1)

2003 by Christopher S. Aker.

Chief Operating Officer Thomas Asaro said because of the work they do they must upgrade servers frequently, and donating the still-usable servers to colleges is a way to keep the servers in operation, and help colleges upgrade services for staff and students.

“We have to do it to stay competitive, and it also helps the colleges,” Asaro said.

Linode management views the donations as an investment in future em-



ASARO

ployees. The newer servers will allow colleges to offer students upgraded computer science curricula, making them better prepared for jobs.

About a half-dozen colleges in the state have benefited from the donations, including Rutgers, Richard Stockton, and the New Jersey Institute of Technology.

Keith Craig, public relations manager for Linode, said as the cloud expands, a larger workforce will be needed to manage it. A community college such as Atlantic Cape can train students fairly quickly, and if students can learn more advanced programming on upgraded servers, they

become more marketable as employees.

“The ideal would be to have them job ready at graduation so they could come in at the middle instead of the bottom entry level,” Craig said. The company has had to hire new employees from out of state because they could not find qualified candidates in New Jersey.

Sean Fischer, dean of resource development at Atlantic Cape, said the college welcomes businesses and other groups as partners.

The college has received theater equipment through the Schultz-Hill Foundation, and other groups offer in-kind services for college fund-raised to help reduce costs.

Vice President of Aca-

demic Services Otto Hernandez said technology is a particular challenge because typically what is offered is too outdated to be useful.

“That’s what made this such a great opportunity,” he said. The college had been looking for grants and other funding to help upgrade its technology, and will be opening a new science building later this month.

Hedges said when the company called, he was delighted to accept.

“They asked if I was interested, and I just said, ‘How many do you have,’” Hedges said. “It came at a great time.”

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Library

(Continued from C1)

revenue, she said, leading to an overall funding drop of 70 percent compared to last year’s budget.

The current version of the Stabilization Act, which has yet to become law, fails to explicitly direct money to the library system, while also removing Atlantic City’s casinos from the pool of ratables the city can tax.

Under the bill, the casinos will deliver a collective payment-in-lieu-of-taxes, or PILOT, of \$150 million at their current level of profitability, money the library can’t tap.

A December state analysis of the Stabilization Act’s impact on Atlantic City found that \$2.8 million of the library’s \$5 million in tax revenue came from casinos. It concluded that the legislation, as structured, could therefore “significantly” reduce the library’s revenue stream.

Sherr Frank said that library purchasing is

already being adjusted, and the range of programming it offers, including age-specific workshops, English classes, and computer literacy training, is being evaluated.

“We are already working to cut costs and provide as much service as we can,” Sherr Frank said. “It’s the additional decrease (caused by the Stabilization Act) that will have such a large impact.”

“People are turning to the library in increasing numbers for help connecting with government services, for searching for jobs, for services for families, childrens and teens,” she said, adding that the library’s branches fielded 48,697 requests for information last year.

“We want to maintain those services that are so critically needed,” she said.

On Monday, Sherr Frank met with Assemblyman Vincent Mazzeo, D-Atlantic, where she said she advocated for a legislatively mandated direct payment plan to support the library system.

“That was what we

would like to see, and I think at this point there will be further discussion about how that will work,” Sherr Frank said afterward. “The library will be working with our legislators and (the) Atlantic City administration to develop a funding formula for the continuation of library services.”

For his part, Mazzeo said Monday that while a legislative fix was possible, he thought the matter might be better handled at the municipal level.

“I think perhaps this would have to be discussed further between the city and the library first,” he said.

State Sen. Jim Whelan, D-Atlantic, took a similar approach.

“There is less money because of the decline in the ratable base, and it’s certainly a concern, but my hope would be that the mayor would try to work with the library to make sure they have enough money to function,” he said Monday.

Chris Filicciello, chief of staff to Atlantic City Mayor

Don Guardian, said Monday that the mayor “will continue to push for a percentage of the PILOT to be used for library funds, similar to how the library is being funded now.”

But Councilman Timothy Mancuso, who chairs the council’s Revenue and Finance Committee, said Monday that passage of the Stabilization Act shouldn’t be delayed by the needs of any particular city entity.

“We can’t have this state PILOT program messed up,” he said. “We can’t have the library come in at the last minute saying, ‘Hey, what about us?’ I’m all for the library. I think they do a wonderful job. But we can’t stop the wheels on having the state pass this plan.”

Mancuso said budget cuts were being faced by numerous city departments, and the library would have to make do as well.

“We can’t afford a \$5 million dollar library,” he said.

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Bully

(Continued from C1)

to plan effectively for the following year.” Cappelluti said.

Kimberly Gruccio, Egg Harbor Township assistant superintendent and anti-bullying coordinator, said the biggest challenge remains separating bullying incidents from student conflict, though both still require intervention. The district raised its anti-bullying score from 66 last year to 71 in 2013-14.

“Often a situation is two-sided,” Gruccio said. “But you have to do the investigation to find that.”

Gruccio said a large part of their program is creating a positive school environment, using the Believe in You program. Students created a mural at Alder Avenue School, and staff members get training every year. But that does not mean incidents don’t happen. Last year, the district had 15 confirmed incidents of HIB, and 64 incidents of violence.

Gruccio said their data follows the state trend that shows most bullying happens at the middle-school level.

“Part of it is just adolescence,” she said. “But we follow up with counseling for both the victim, and the bully.”

Scores can vary within a district, and school officials said part of their job is to develop consistency.

Vineland raised its score from 49 to 65 for 2013-14, but individual school scores ranged from 47 at Veterans Memorial Middle School to 77 at Pauline Petway Elementary School.

John Frangipani, Vineland assistant superintendent and anti-bullying coordinator, said that since each school does its own assessment, each report is a reflection of how staff members think they are doing. He said he visited principals at schools with lower scores to discuss what they need to improve.

He said each school picks its own anti-bullying or character education program, and staff can share how they are implementing the programs. Petway has been recognized nationally for its Positive Behavior program.

“If you want everyone to buy into it, it has to come from the ground up, and not the top down,” he said. He said the self-assessments are useful in identifying which schools may be more effective and which still need help.

Green said a lot more has been done to create positive climates in schools, and that is a very positive step, but districts also have to do more to reach out to parents and individual students who may be likely perpetrators or victims of bullying, and not just wait until something happens.

He said he still receives many calls from parents complaining that the school is not doing anything, when often what they just need is better communication.

“The schools fall back on the student confidentiality and say they can’t talk about what they did, but they can give a parent much more information than they do,” he said.

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Housing

(Continued from C1)

the end of the month, and if approved, construction could begin as early as July.

The development includes eight single-bedroom, 44 two-bedroom and 24 three-bedroom apartments within four buildings. Three of the buildings have 24 apartments and are three stories high. The fourth, a two-story building, will have four apartments and a clubhouse. The clubhouse will have a leasing office, a

maintenance office, a community room, exercise equipment and a laundry room. All of the apartments have a hookup for individual washing machines.

The development will eventually have 136 apartments once the second phase is completed. Peter Miller, township administrator, said that even with this development and others, the township still has a way to go to meet the 763 affordable housing units required of the township.

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