



DELAWARE Coast Press



Divine
director

page **A6**

FREE

OCTOBER 11, 2007

Delaware
CoastPress.com
powered by delmarvanow!com

A GANNETT NEWSPAPER

HHA's offer doesn't appease Rudder critics

By **Daniel Divilio**
Staff Writer

Two compromises have been offered by the development company looking to turn Dewey Beach's landmark Ruddertowne complex into a luxury resort.

Harvey, Hanna and Associates Inc. are planning to finalize their purchase of the collection of restaurants and retail stores at Ruddertowne from Highway One Partners at the end of the month.

They had initially proposed a 68-foot-tall hotel and condominium hybrid for the site, with commercial spaces on the first floor and retaining current Ruddertowne hotspots – the Lighthouse Restaurant and Raw Bar and the Baycenter.

HHA's plan has met with criticism over being nearly twice as tall as Dewey's current 35-foot height limit for new construction.

According to HHA's attorney, Shawn Tucker, the Ruddertowne proposal was drafted based on the Dewey Beach Comprehensive Development Plan.

The proposal relies on the idea of relaxed bulk standards as listed in the comprehensive plan for the Resort Business-1 Overlay district – which Ruddertowne stands to be labeled.

It has also been criticized for proposing a new hotel. The town currently has an ordinance prohibiting the construction of any new hotels or motels.

A group of Dewey property owners called Citizens to Preserve Dewey Beach formed over the summer in opposition of HHA's proposal.

See **RUDDER**, Page **A11**



Marc Clery photo

Gary Wray stands near a World War II observation tower at the Delaware State Seashore Park near Dewey Beach. Wray is part of an effort to raise money to restore the tower.

Sussex groups take on a towering task

By **Bruce Pringle**
Staff Writer

It all began, Gary Wray says, with members of a couple coastal Sussex County organizations tossing around ideas about how to promote understanding of World War II.

Folks in the Fort Miles Historical Association, of which he is president, and their counterparts in the Delaware Seashore Preservation Foundation talked of creating a memorial to that conflict's veterans.

They also thought it would be wise to provide the public with hands-on access in Seashore State Park to one of the World War II observation towers — those mysterious, round hunks of concrete rising from oceanfront beaches — from which soldiers watched for Nazi boats and submarines.

One such tower is open for the public to climb, but it's near Cape Henlopen. Summer visitors to Bethany Beach and Fenwick Island must brave the traffic of the Rehoboth Beach-Lewes area to reach it.

So the two groups, along with Delaware state parks officials, have undertaken a campaign to implement both ideas — with a high-tech twist.

They aim to raise \$500,000 over seven years to spruce up a 64-foot observation tower just outside Dewey Beach, at the north end of Seashore State Park. And part of the funds to accomplish that will come from donors who will provide names of World War II

See **TOWERS**, Page **A8**

TOWERS from Page A1

veterans that are to be listed in an online data base visitors can tap into from the tower — a cyber version of the stone monuments honoring veterans in communities across the country.

A contribution of \$350 will entitle a giver to supply one name. Wray plans to commemorate his father, Roy Wray Jr., who left his home in Beckley, W.Va., to serve as an aerial engineer on a B26 crew.

It was from his dad, Wray said, that he gained a love of

RESTORATION

Two local groups, along with Delaware's state parks system, aim to restore a former World War II observation tower just south of Dewey Beach. Information on how to contribute to the effort — and possibly honor a war veteran by doing so — is available at savethetower.org.

military history that led to his co-authoring "Images of America — Fort Miles," an illustrated tale of the former Lewes-area Army base, whose troops manned the towers.

Wray, a retired history teacher and public schools administrator, also is president of Cape Henlopen Board of Education.

The Army built the towers in 1942 and 1943 and expected them to last only 20 years, Wray said, but they remain almost as good as new.

An engineer recently

inspected the tower that is to be renovated and found it to be "about 99 percent what it was in 1943," Wray said.

To make it fit for visitors, it will need a few repairs and the addition of at least one amenity it's never had — a spiral staircase.

"The guys (in wartime) went up a ladder," Wray said. "The

last guy pulled the ladder up."

By whatever means they get there, folks at the top of the structure will have a 14-mile line of sight on clear days — one of the reasons the Cape Henlopen tower is one of Delaware's more popular park attractions.

■ *E-mail Bruce Pringle at bxpringle@dmg.gannett.com.*



Delaware
Coast Press
without the scratchy throat
DCP@GANNETT.COM

RUDDER from Page A1

Tucker proposed two compromises regarding his clients' plans at an Oct. 6 Dewey Beach Planning and Zoning Commission meeting.

HHA's first compromise is to knock 20 feet off the structure's height, bringing it down to 48 feet.

The second compromise Tucker offered, he said, is to waive the 60-day deadline the town's Planning and Zoning Commission has to finish reviewing a set of draft ordinances for Ruddertowne's rezoning as part instituting the comprehensive plan.

The town council had, back in July, sent a batch of ordinances drafted by Tucker for rezoning Ruddertowne to the planning commission.

The planning commissioners had 60 days, which Tucker has offered to extend to 90, to review the ordinances and make recommendations on them to the town council.

But John Brady, representing the town, advised the planning commissioners that they must follow the town's regular course of action in reviewing and recommending the ordinances or be open to legal action.

The town council has scheduled a special meeting on

Oct. 20 to hear the planning commissioners' recommendations.

Tucker also announced that HHA is in talks with two major hotel chains to operate the Ruddertowne resort.

HHA representative Jim Baeurle said that Marriott and Sherwood hotels see Ruddertowne's convention center as the component that makes for a viable, year-round investment.

Both compromises were met with vocal opposition at the Oct. 6 meeting.

Joy Howell, of the Citizens to Preserve Dewey Beach, is not satisfied with HHA's proposed compromise on height.

She said that people have been loudly speaking out against anything over 35 feet tall.

"What do we have to do to get people to hear that?" Howell said.

According to her, people should have a say in any proposed construction over the town's current height limit.

She also pointed out that HHA is still proposing a hotel, despite the current law prohibiting new hotels.

"That's a problem for us," Howell said. According to her, no one in town has said they want a new hotel.

On Monday, Tucker sent a 10-

page letter to Brady.

Tucker argued in his letter that a violation of his clients' property rights would open the town up to a lawsuit.

"Furthermore, private individuals who may conspire with government officials to violate our client's protected right are also subject to liability," Tucker wrote in his letter.

Dewey mayor Dell Tush has criticized HHA for what she has seen as pushing up the town's deadline for implementing the comprehensive plan. The state allows 18 months from a plan's certification for the town to enact it through new and revised ordinances.

Howell, in agreement with Tush, said that town officials need the full 18 months to write

the comprehensive plan's zoning in a thoughtful manner.

She said that the Citizens to Preserve Dewey Beach would be happy to sit down with HHA or another developer to look at compromise.

According to her, the proposed hotel and a 48-foot-tall structure are "non-starters."

■ Reach Daniel Divilio at ddivilio@dmg.gannett.com