**Veterans affordable housing project slated for Brigantine**

BRIGANTINE — The city is working with Volunteers of America Delaware Valley to bring affordable housing to the island by turning the site of the former civic center into housing units for veterans.

"Brigantine is proud to partner with Volunteers of America to build affordable housing for our veterans," said Mayor Vince Sera. "While we can never fully repay the debt we owe our veterans for their brave service, we certainly can take steps like this to show our appreciation and respect for all they have done to make our country one of the greatest places to live on Earth."

There are approximately 357 veterans living in Brigantine, according to population characteristics data on the United States Census Bureau's website.

Five apartments will be made available to preferably low- or moderate-income veterans at the site.

The units, which include one- to two-bedrooms apartments, are expected to be ready by July 2025.

"The city entered a memorandum of understanding with Volunteers of America Delaware Valley to do a veteran's preference project in the city. And we were having difficulty finding a site for this project, but we had the former Civic Center, a site that has been abandoned and is currently a vacant lot," said

Brigantine City Solicitor Linda Galella said the city had been working under a memorandum of understanding with the VOA to do a veterans project, but had been having problems finding a suitable site.

The civic center, however, presented an opportunity because it's vacant.

Galella said the VOA came up with a concept plan for that site that led to an agreement.

The group will buy the 31st Street South property from the city for $350,000.

The proposed new facility would help the city meet its affordable housing obligations.

The plan includes a 30-year payment in lieu of taxes agreement for the project in order to ensure its long-term affordability, said Sera. Under the PILOT, Volunteers of America will have their taxes phased in over a period of time.

"Every municipality in the state has a legal responsibility to provide affordable housing, and what better way to meet this obligation than to provide affordable housing for our veterans," said Sera.

As part of agreement the city will contribute $850,000 from its Affordable Housing Trust Fund to the project. The money will go toward construction, engineering and other soft costs associated with the project. Volunteers of America is also going to seek funding from the state Department of Community Affairs.

Regarding next steps, Galella said the city will give VOA access to the site so they can perform a review before finalizing the purchase.