

Closing

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corporate sponsorship provided by the Twinings Tea Company.

"That corporate sponsorship made it a profit center," Zuckerman said.

However, Twinings Tea was taken over by Ovaltine, which had no interest in supporting a tearoom. With the loss of support, the tearoom could not do better than break even, and the past couple of years were, Zuckerman said, not the best of times for the operation.

"We had a small loss in 2010, and that ballooned into a significant loss in 2011," he said.

Part of the reason for losses was Hurricane Irene, which shut down Cape May County for what should have been a busy weekend in Cape May. In addition, the state of the national economy is being felt locally.

"For any of us who make

their living with tourism, in this economy household income and disposable incomes have been cut back," Zuckerman said.

In light of the current conditions and economic climate, the management team made the recommendation to the Board of Trustees that the tearoom be closed two months early. Asked about the future of the tearoom, Zuckerman said that is something just now being considered. In his press release announcing the early closing, Zuckerman said, "Interested parties are encouraged to send proposals to MAC Director Michael Zuckerman at mzuckerman@capemaymac.org."

Zuckerman said MAC would probably consider most appropriate uses for the tearoom, which could include leasing the space for a restaurant, renting it out for private parties, and so on.

Zuckerman said MAC has been forced to make changes

in reaction to the economic climate for a number of years. In 2009 there was what Zuckerman called a "significant belt-tightening" at MAC, which included some staff members taking pay cuts and some formerly paid positions being staffed by volunteers.

"Those measures brought us two years of stability," Zuckerman said. "That ended around June 30."

Zuckerman said the summer was disappointing for MAC, with Hurricane Irene dealing a significant financial blow. He said MAC was fortunate that their facility was left physically intact after the storm. He said structural damage from the hurricane would have made matters much, much worse.

Zuckerman said in its peak year, 2007, MAC had a budget of \$4.6 million. Although he declined to provide a financial statement, Zuckerman said the operating budget is now

\$3.5 million, of which per-

sonnel costs are about half. He said according to MAC's annual audit, administrative overhead (including salaries) is less than 20 percent of its operating costs.

"That's way below the national average," Zuckerman said.

Zuckerman said he is bullish about the future of MAC and Cape May. He said after the late August storm, people started to come back to Cape May and to MAC events by mid-September. He said MAC's gross income for Victorian Weekend was dead on what they were a year ago. While some would rate that as a loss, Zuckerman sees it as a positive sign.

"If in this kind of economic climate we can hold steady, we consider that a triumph," he said.

Zuckerman said MAC continues to try new things to keep them alive and growing.

"We continue to come up with creative new ways to

revive public interest in coming to our site," he said.

He said part of his planning philosophy has always been to try a lot of things and see what works.

"Every little thing we try has the potential to be a seed that will grow and catch on," he said.

Zuckerman said for three full weekends they have Halloween events, something they weren't doing 10 years ago. They would have a party at the end of the Halloween Parade plus trick or treat for the kids. He said they have added a number of tours and other events, including a scarecrow contest for individuals and groups in the community.

Zuckerman said mid-September through the New Year is a peak part of the year for MAC, with the Victorian Christmas season holding up well.

When asked what MAC needs to continue to grow and

do well, Zuckerman said the first thing is Convention Hall. He said they are anxiously awaiting its opening for Memorial Day 2012. He said he would like to see a return to the former number of hotel rooms in Cape May County.

"There are not enough overnight accommodations. We've lost a third of the hotel rooms in Wildwood, and we've lost a third of the B&Bs in Cape May, which is certainly hurting us," he said.

He said expanding the number of rooms in the Cape May area would help MAC.

Zuckerman said a return of consumer confidence would also help historical operations. He said in a normal recession, the economy sees a 3 percent decline. This recession has resulted in a 7 percent decline in the overall economy. He said one of the things that suffers in a recession is entertainment, of which visiting historic sites is a part.

Dead

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Ridding the area of kudzu is part of an early detection and rapid response effort, which means eradicating an emerging invasive plant before it gets out of control like some other non-native plants have. She said warm winters have allowed the plant to grow farther north.

Treyger said many of these invasive plants can be bought in local nurseries and garden centers. When people plant them at home, they tend to spread rather quickly into surrounding areas. She said birds can also spread the seeds and plants across the area, as they eat the porcelain-berries and build nests with other invasive plants.

Considering the project on Elmira and Leaming was near the wetlands, it was important

to spray only the target plants. Treyger said the project was a coordinated effort between the CIHRTF and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which provided the herbicide spray known as glyphosate.

Treyger said this chemical is nothing more than store bought Roundup. Using the glyphosate, the volunteers and service members sprayed only the leaves of the non-native plants. Treyger said eliminating these plants would not only help the native species, but also allow better water flow through the marsh.

"As far as conservation, Cape Island is a very special case, which is why we started this," Treyger said.

She said the CIHRTF has been volunteering in the Cape May Point State Park's Forest Restoration Project

and helping the area eliminate the threat of invasive plants, which Treyger considers to be the biggest objective right now. She said they plan to do the same at the Cape Island Creek Preserve next year along with the Nature Conservancy. She said hopefully they can interest enough private landowners in the effort and convince them to create friendly backyard habitats with more native plants.

Treyger said this would be part of a community outreach, in which local nurseries and garden centers were informed of how harmful these invasive non-native plants can be. She said many of these plants the CIHRTF is trying to eliminate are still being sold and planted on private property.

"There is so much more we would like to accomplish,"

she said. "This is a problem pretty much all over the place."

She said New Jersey currently has no regulations in place to stop the planting of these invasive species, and she hopes local municipalities will do so. Treyger said Cape May Point lists certain plants that cannot be planted in the borough, but West Cape May, Cape May City and Lower Township do not.

She said the CIHRTF is always looking for volunteers to help with these projects. For more information, visit www.njaudubon.org or call the New Jersey Audubon Society at 609-861-0700.

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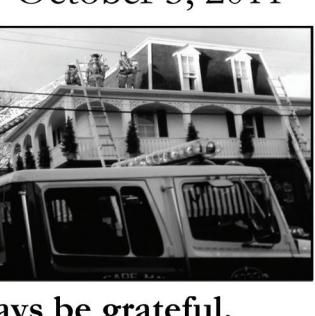
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from other sections of the beachfront and moving it to an area where more sand is needed.

He said the project on

Wilmington, constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers, will have a base amount of 40,000 cubic yards of sand, and two amounts of 15,000 cubic feet optional. He said this should improve the slope of the beaches, however, it is a trial effort since it has never been done in Cape May. MacLeod said there has also been a contract awarded to the Coast Guard for beach dredging, in which 640,000 cubic yards of sand will be placed there and taken from a "borrow area." He said the city would not be responsible for the cost of this portion of the project, but will need to pay \$67,277.38 for the Wilmington Avenue section.

He said the city received additional funding for revenue this year because of an ADA grant received. The capital improvement fund is also used to pay for these items over time according to MacLeod. He said putting money down on these loans and grants before they reach full financing helps decrease the chance of any long-term debt.

"It's a 'pay as you go' process," he said.

The beach utility also contains statutory expenditures, such as its social security system program for employees and the lifeguard pension program, which many shore towns do not have, according to MacLeod. He said boroughs are not required to have a pension program for lifeguards, but Cape May must since it is designated as a city.

In 2010, Cape May anticipated \$2,124,139 in appropriations and so far, paid out \$2,041,111, leaving a reserve amount of \$82,849. MacLeod said if no more of this money is spent, it will be placed in the 2012 surplus. He said standard accounting procedures are used for the beach utility budget and it is simply there to make sure the beachfront operates efficiently. He said its intention is to keep the beaches clean and safe for visitors, tourists and those who live here.

Point

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sioners said it would be up to Cape May County to do because it is part of the county road system. Van Heeswyk urged residents to write to County Engineer Dale Foster to voice their complaints about the road's condition.

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