

Rate

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like to make changes before adoption, such as reducing police overtime from \$202,000 to \$100,000.

Councilman William Murray expressed his views concerning Mahaney and Swain continuing to oppose introducing the budget at the March 22 meeting.

"It has been three weeks since two members of this council inexplicably denied the public the right to view and vet the 2011 City of Cape May local municipal budget by refusing to allow its introduction on March 1," he said. "Suppression of important public information in any form is anathema to the transparent form of government that the citizens of Cape May want and deserve."

Murray has repeatedly questioned the public safety cuts involving the police and

fire departments, as well as the beach patrol that Mahaney proposed at the February meetings. Mahaney proposed \$276,700 in reductions to the budget that was presented to council in January by City Manager Bruce MacLeod. The mayor's recommendations would not have called for any firings or lay-offs, but one retiring police sergeant would not be replaced and two full-time positions in the fire department would be filled by part-time employees.

"I do not believe that public safety should be compromised by short-sighted, ill-considered cuts and realignments in our police and fire departments," Murray said.

Murray said that salaries and wages constitute approximately 41 percent of the proposed budget, and he was in favor of the scrutiny given to

it by MacLeod, who reduced the total by \$207,000 in the second attempt to introduce the budget.

"I very reluctantly agree that salaries and wages should not be increased in 2011," he said.

Councilwoman Deanna Fiocca accused Mahaney and Swain, two senior members of council, of playing games with the budget. She said if there had been earlier workshops the budget could have been introduced March 1.

Costello said he will make the adjustments that were presented yesterday and will have the amended budget ready for the public hearing on April 20 at 7 p.m. Mahaney said the budget will be adopted at the May 3 meeting, scheduled for 1 p.m. in City Hall.

McQueen

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Morristown, but he lived in Cape May for 15 years. After high school he went to Drew University for Theater Arts, and he came to Cape May where he "did the acting thing" for a while. He also worked at the Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts and Humanities as one of the project managers/facilitators for the Designer Showhouse program, working with designers and rehabilitation people, and helping MAC organize dinners and tours.

He said he made the decision to apply to Union Theological Seminary in New York City about six years ago. He said he applied rather late, submitting his application at the tail end of the application process, but with his mother's breast cancer he decided to put off the move for a year.

"I ended up going a year later. Then I heard they didn't even have housing," he said.

McQueen was able to make the move with the assistance

of local people who knew him, his work in Cape May, and his desire to preach. Vicky Watson of the Merion Inn helped him with the move. Once there, he stayed in an apartment belonging to East Lynne's Gail Stahlhuth and Lee O'Connor. A year later he got on-campus housing.

McQueen started seminary at age 40, but he said the idea of going into the ministry started when he was much younger.

"I actually think the call came to me when I was fairly young, but I was a little scared, so I decided to go into theater instead," he said.

Then the pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Cape May was not able to preach one Sunday, and McQueen was asked to take the pulpit. McQueen said he was also encouraged by Jo Tolley and her husband, who told him, "You really need to go to seminary."

Jo Tolley is also a graduate of Union Theological Seminary.

"After that, I realized I couldn't put it off anymore,"

he said. "Then everything moved smoothly when I said yes to the call."

McQueen said his calling and his past work were integrated from the start. He said being able to merge two styles of worship – the traditional black church and the style of First Presbyterian – parlay his experience into working in the worship office for two years.

He is now living in Manhattan's Upper West Side and is pursuing the ordination process through the Presbyterian Church USA in New York.

"To be ordained in the Presbyterian Church you have to be ordained into a ministry or congregation," McQueen said.

He is working on a Ph.D. in Homiletics and New Testament and is looking forward to a career of teaching in seminary. Currently he is attending one of the oldest and historically black churches in Harlem, St. James.

"I do a lot of work with the congregation there," he said.

License

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MacLeod said the exception for needing a mercantile license as it pertains to lawn cutters would be self-employed persons who

do not have other employees working for them and do not use a vehicle to transport their equipment.

"This puts everyone on a level playing field," Mayor Edward Mahaney said.

Deputy Mayor Jack Wichterman said this fee would not affect this year's budget, because all the money collected goes into the surplus line item.

During public comment, Nels Johnson who owns a lawn cutting business said he was speaking on behalf of multiple lawn and landscaping business owners who pride themselves on not having had to raise their rates in the past four years. He said with the climbing gas prices and now this mercantile license fee, those owners will have no choice but to raise prices.

He said he realized that the city was trying to increase revenue in tough economic times.

"Every municipality and township is in trouble," he said.

Despite that realization, he said this ordinance would not reduce the tax burden of Cape May residents because lawn cutters will have to increase their rates due to the new expenses.

"This is going to be a burden on us and we're going to have to pass it on," Johnson said. "It will be a catalyst for other towns."

WCM

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anything to work with us," McPherson said.

McPherson claimed that after settling all the items mandated by the state, he would have less than \$10,000 to run the fire service.

Kaithern has repeatedly told the fire company they should concentrate on fundraising for more money instead of asking for more from the taxpayers.

"You're telling me that I'm a burden on the taxpayers?" McPherson said. "I don't think we could get our hands in the pockets of the taxpayers – there's hands already in there."

He said he didn't see how fundraising would "pick up the slack" that the fire service needed, thus they need a commitment from the borough.

"You have over \$100,000 in commitment," Kaithern replied.

Kaithern was referring to the overall funding the fire company is given on a yearly basis. At the March 9 meeting, it was concluded that the borough had \$40,000 in the budget for equipment and equipment testing, gear and vehicle maintenance. The fire hall also receives \$22,000 for the firehouse and grounds used for utilities and inspections, as well as \$10,000 for insurance. In addition, the fire company receives free Comcast cable and Internet costing around \$720 and free trash disposal, which amounts to \$1,600 a year. Electric bills are average between \$16,000 and \$17,000 for the fire hall and insurance is \$9,236. All these expenses are paid by the borough.

Kaithern also provided documentation that showed tax funded capital improvement expenses totaling \$468,177 between 1999 and 2010. Over 13 years, that amount would average around \$36,000 a year for the fire company.

These expenses included a new roof, various renovations to the firehouse, an HVAC system and various other repairs to the building.

McPherson said money for the building didn't mean money for the fire department. He said if the fire service left the building today, the borough would still have to pay for maintaining the building because it is the property of West Cape May – not the fire service. He claimed it would actually cost more to maintain it if the fire service left, because the firefighters put much of the labor into maintaining the building.

Deputy Mayor Peter Burke said the commission increased the amount of budget items for the fire company by nearly 3.5 percent, but could not give the amount of money requested, which would have been 11.5 percent.

"There is an increase in your line item and we do want to help," Kaithern said. "We have to work together to get you the money you need."

Kaithern said fundraising through community events and renting out the fire hall could increase the amount of money the fire company receives. She said this would require the fire service and the borough to work together cooperatively.

She suggested holding events in Wilbraham Park, an antique car show in the fire hall and municipal building parking lot, which could all raise money for the fire company. She recommended hiring a marketing person to be in charge of renting the fire company's banquet hall. Kaithern suggested this at a previous meeting as well, after Deputy Fire Chief Steve Nelson said the volunteers are trained firefighters – not trained fundraisers.

McPherson said he couldn't attach his firefighters to the fire company anymore than he already has because many

of the volunteers are putting in 22 hours a week as it is. He said they can't be called up to work multiple fundraising events as well.

McPherson said the fire company's budget was cut after the borough began to pay legal bills during a lawsuit filed by Sixth Street Partners developers.

"With the money that was spent on Sixth Street Partners, I could have run the fire company for 12 years," he said.

Kaithern said former borough commissioner Kevin Lare was responsible for cutting the budget, not the current administration.

Kaithern said the municipality did not have extra funding for the fire company in tax dollars. She has repeatedly said that she and the rest of the borough appreciate what the fire service does as volunteers but they need to concentrate of other ways of finding more income.

"Let's work on fundraising," she said.

Kaithern asked for a list of all the events currently booked at the banquet hall so the borough could put together more fundraisers.

McPherson said if the borough would like to hold a fundraiser, the fire service would be happy to collect the proceeds. Borough Commissioner Ramsey Geyer suggested that a fundraising plan for the fire company be created and presented by the governing body.

Geyer, as commissioner of public safety, said after the meeting he would like to make it clear that no matter what the budget for the fire company may be, the residents of West Cape May and the surrounding communities are in no danger.

"The firefighters will continue to respond to every call and use their training to get the job done no matter how much money they have," he said.

Ferry implements April fuel surcharge

Rising vessel fuel cited; surcharge subject to change

NORTH CAPE MAY – Due to the rising price of fuel and the volatility in the fuel markets, the Cape May – Lewes Ferry (CMLF) will be implementing a fuel surcharge on all vehicle fares effective

April 1. The surcharge, which is \$2 per vehicle from April 1-April 30, 2011, is designed to pass along a portion of the increased cost of fuel to the customer. There is no separate surcharge for passengers.

"Fuel prices have increased significantly for the Cape

May – Lewes Ferry in recent years," said Heath Gehrke, Director of Ferry Operations. "The surcharge is tied directly to the price of fuel and the Ferry will continue to absorb a portion of the increase in fuel costs, thus sharing the impact of these increased costs with our customers."

Gehrke noted that some of the increase in fuel costs is the result of EPA regulations, which mandate all vessels to burn lower emissions-producing, cleaner fuel.

"The downside is cost, but the upside is we are a greener operation, leaving less of a footprint on the environment," Gehrke said.

The fuel surcharge is determined on a month-to-month basis. The price of vessel fuel is reviewed on the 15th of each month to determine if the fuel surcharge will be implemented for the following calendar month. When the price of fuel exceeds the pre-established benchmark, the fuel surcharge is assessed on the first of the following month. For the past two years, CMLF fuel price increases did not exceed the operation's 8-year fuel price trend amounts that would have triggered a fuel surcharge until this month.

"The fuel surcharge will not become a permanent part of fares, but will turn on and off as the price we pay for fuel increases and decreases," Gehrke added. "If the price of fuel drops to below the benchmark, we will eliminate the fuel surcharge."

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