



City moves to ban artificial turf as landscaping

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House of the Week

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170th YEAR NO. 18 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 2024 \$1.00



Werner Tedesco/SPECIAL TO THE STAR AND WAVE

Bird's-eye view at the shore

An eagle standing on a rock in Town Bank eyes two dolphins passing by offshore last week.

Regional district tax levy up 1.9%; rate a mixed bag

West Cape decreases, city stable and township increases 1.8 cents

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — The Lower Cape May Regional School District Board of Education approved its 2024-25 budget that increases the tax levy by \$465,311, or 1.9 percent, over the current year.

There will be a slight increase in the tax rate for Lower Township, a decrease in West Cape May and no change in Cape May.

For regional school districts, the state calculates the share a municipality has to contribute to the funding of the district based on property values and the number of students.

Lower Township is funding 60.46 percent of the school district's budget, up from 59.18 percent; Cape May is funding 31.76 percent, down from 32.28 percent; and West Cape May is funding 7.78 percent, down from 8.54 percent.

The school tax rate for Lower Township is rising 1.8 cents from 39.2 cents per \$100 of assessed value to 40.8 cents.

In West Cape May, the school tax rate is decreasing 2.9 cents, from 39.8 cents per \$100 of assessed value to 36.9 cents, mainly due to a lower equalization valuation allocation.

The school tax rate for Cape May for 2024 remains the same at 26.9 cents per \$100 of as-

essed value.

At an April 24 meeting, Business Administrator Mark Mallett said total revenue this year would be \$7.1 million less than 2023-24, mainly due to capital projects, maintenance of equity aid and stabilization aid from the state.

The local tax levy totals \$24.4 million. State aid is flat at \$4 million, federal aid totals \$1.1 million and \$3.2 million in surplus is being used to fund the budget. Total revenue this year is anticipated at \$34 million, down from \$41.8 million, or 17 percent, from the previous year.

State legislation known as S-2 has reduced state aid to the school district by \$6.6 million over the past seven years, Mallett said.

"We've really been able to absorb that as we've been able to reduce staff through attrition and watch our costs," he said.

The owner of a \$250,000 home in Lower Township will see a \$40 increase, up from \$980 to \$1,020. The owner of a \$250,000 home in West Cape May will see a decrease of \$72 from \$995 to \$923.

The owner of a \$250,000 home in Cape May will see a \$1 decrease in their school tax, dropping from \$673 to \$672.

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MTRAC says more money to be made on beach tag sales

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city may be losing revenue when rental property owners buy seasonal beach tags for the tenants rather than purchasing commercial beach tags.

At an April 11 meeting of the Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee (MTRAC), member Martin Van Walsum said cash-based revenues for the Beach Utility increased 2.9 percent year over year but from interest income, not beach tag sales.

"We had a change in philosophy with respect to how the city's funds were going to be invested and that change in philosophy resulted in about \$100,000 of additional interest income being generated by the funds that are in the

beach utility," he said. "Actual beach tags sales were virtually flat, down three-tenths of percent, and that's because we didn't raise any of the rates in 2023. You sell the same number of beach tags at the same price, you get the same number."

Van Walsum said expenses for the Beach Utility increased 15 percent, driven by salaries and wages as a result of a newly negotiated contract with lifeguards. He said he believed there were some cash expenditures in 2023 related to back pay.

Non-payroll related costs other than salaries and wages decreased by 3.5 percent. Van Walsum said the beach utility is operating efficiently but labor costs will not decrease.

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County breaks ground on Tech Village II

Facility hailed as booster for local economy

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — The Cape May County Board of County Commissioners and guests turned shovels of dirt in a ceremonial groundbreaking for Tech Village II on April 23 at the county airport. The project is in partnership with the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA).

According to a news release, the groundbreaking "marks a significant milestone in the expansion of the county's Tech Village I, aimed to provide a dynamic and supportive environment for budding new industries to thrive and grow in the county."

Building on the success of the initial phase one tech facility, which quickly reached full occu-



Provided

Members of the Cape May County Board of County Commissioners and the U.S. Economic Development Administration toss ceremonial shovels of dirt April 23 at the site of the future Tech Village II building at the county airport.

pancy, the expansion involves the construction of a 16,434-square-foot facility, according to the news release.

The project, with an

estimated cost of \$6.45 million, is supported by nearly \$3 million in funding from the EDA.

Participating in the groundbreaking were

County Commission Director Leonard C. Desiderio, Commissioner Bob Barr, Commissioner Will

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