

Summer concert series returning to ferry terminal

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council approved a shared services agreement with the Delaware Bay and River Authority (DRBA) to bring back concerts on the ferry terminal lawn beginning in July following a pause of several years.

The township will be solely responsible for all costs incurred with booking the bands. The concert series opens July 10 with Split Decision, followed by The Big House Band on

July 17, Legacy on July 24, Jimmy and the Parrots on July 31, Fat Mezz on Aug. 7 and the Amish Outlaws on Aug. 20.

Fees paid to the bands range from \$2,000 to \$5,000 for a total of \$21,500 for the concert series.

DRBA will provide the venue, stage, security and trash disposal. The concerts are free of charge to the public, who will be permitted to bring food, non-alcoholic beverages and coolers.

The Aug. 20 concert will be a benefit for the Lower Township Children's Fund

where outside vendors will be permitted to sell goods, food and services to the public.

At an April 15 council meeting, Ben Werner, representing residents of Seagrove Avenue, requested speed humps on the street.

"Seagrove is a shortcut that the public takes in order to get to the lighthouse, the state park and to the beaches of Cape May Point," he said.

Werner said Seagrove is a 1.5-mile straightaway with a speed limit of 25 mph.

"We asked Officer Priole, of the Lower Township police, to come out and help us enforce the speed limit," he said. "After he reviewed the problem, he said there really wasn't anything he could do. He didn't have the resources to enforce the speed limit."

In May 2023, every resident of Seagrove Avenue signed a petition requesting a speed hump. Werner said he sent it to the township engineer and did not receive a response. He said he also left a copy of the petition with the Department

of Public Works. Cape May Point installed a low-speed hump on nearby Lighthouse Avenue that slows cars to under 25 mph, Werner said. He said Seagrove Avenue would probably need two or three speed humps.

Mayor Frank Sipple said he and Township Manager Mike Laffey had his petition and visited the street.

Werner said cars have been backing onto Seagrove Avenue from a new park on the street, creating a safety hazard.

In other business, coun-

cil approved installing flashing beacon pedestrian crossing signs in conjunction with the state Department of Transportation (DOT) on Schellenger's Landing at Route 109 and Second Avenue and Route 109 and Schellenger's Landing Road. The signs will have pedestrian push buttons, lighting, flashing beacons known as a Rectangular Flashing Beacon System.

DOT will be responsible for 75% of the cost of the signs and the township the remaining 25%.

Robust revenue

Continued from Page A1

largest new item was \$40,000 for reaccreditation of the police department.

Some additional vehicles have been budgeted through Enterprise Leasing. Statutory and deferred charges are increasing by \$300,000 due to health and liability insurance increases as well as an additional \$100,000 to fund historic bond ordinances.

He said debt service is up by \$700,000.

"It's usually a little flatter. The reason it's a \$700,000 this year is our 2014 debt issuance comes due this year, our 2013 comes due in 2027 and typically for the debt payment schedules, you have higher principal payments in the later years of the bonds and also we issued bonds last year, so there is a bit of an overlap there. It should smooth out in the coming years," Hanie said.

The Water/Sewer Utility opened 2024 with about \$2.4 million in surplus, of which \$400,000 is being used to fund its budget, which is well within what the utility can regenerate, he said.

The utility is budgeting \$6.8 million in revenue from water customers. Hanie said salaries and wages for the Water/Sewer Utility were increasing by \$100,000 due to union agreements and hiring seasonal employees.

"Operating expenses, we're able to actually cut by \$50,000 because looking at some of the historic expenditures in each of the budget lines, there's some items that

we been overbudgeting for a couple of years and we're knocking them down to better align with what we spent in the past," Hanie said.

The Beach Utility at the start of the year had a surplus of \$2.6 million, of which \$1.1 million was used to fund its budget, up from \$600,000 last year due to significant salary increases for lifeguards and beach taggers. He said some salary line items are being moved to the Beach Utility from the current fund to reflect work done for the utility.

Hanie said the city is officially anticipating \$3 million from beach tags sales but expects about \$3.7 million, which allows more money to be used from surplus.

The city's Tourism Utility began the year with \$2 million in surplus and won't use any to fund its budget, he said.

Councilwoman Maureen McDade said the city had enough surplus funds for unexpected road repairs last year and to prevent a tax increase.

Dietrich said the city was hiring a firefighter, one administrative clerk and a Public Works em-

ployee who will aid the department in handling projects in house instead of placing the work out to bid.

He said the city has two full-time code enforcement officers and a part-time seasonal employee. The officers have been equipped with handheld devices so they can obtain information on properties out in the field.

Hanie said the cost of state health benefits used by city employees increased by 7.4 percent.

MTRAC Chairman Dennis Crowley asked the status of its recommendation that mercantile fees receive an across-the-board hike. Dietrich said it was not possible to raise fees for this season and he would have a recommendation for council before autumn.

MTRAC member Martin Van Walsum said a fairness issue exists with respect to uneven enforcement for mercantile licenses.

"The only way we can start to resolve the fairness issue is to put more bodies on the street that are looking at mercantile licenses where people are scofflaws, looking at

the beach tags and understanding that people aren't abiding by the ordinance, looking at violations of the zoning code that are being done in projects in town and people get away with it because there is no follow-up," he said.

Crowley said he looked at the budgets for all the

towns in the county. He said extracted from those budgets is the ratio of property tax to total revenue, ranging from a low of 31 percent to a high of 72 percent.

Cape May counts on the taxpayer for 40 percent of its revenue, Crowley said, noting Avalon gets 72 percent of its revenue

from property taxes.

"What we're trying to do with MTRAC is to make sure we tap every available source of revenue before we lay new burdens on the property taxpayer," he said.

Crowley said Cape May has the most vibrant revenue stream in the county.



NEW HOURS

MONDAY:	CLOSED
TUESDAY:	12PM-8PM
WEDNESDAY:	12PM-8PM
THURSDAY:	12PM-8PM
FRIDAY:	12PM-8PM
SATURDAY:	12PM-8PM
SUNDAY:	12PM-6PM

WEEKLY ENTERTAINMENT

- Tues. Boardgames & Brews
- Wed. Cornhole Challenges
- Thur. Changes Weekly
- Fri. Open Mic Night & FirePit Fridays
- Sat. Live Music Performances
- Sun. Changes Weekly

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TIDES: April 24-May 1, 2024

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
24	9:05	9:21	2:52	2:47
25	9:39	9:54	3:28	3:18
26	10:14	10:30	4:06	3:50
27	10:53	11:10	4:47	4:27
28	11:39	11:59	5:36	5:13
29		12:33	6:31	6:10
30	12:55	1:35	7:29	7:15
1	1:57	2:43	8:29	8:27

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