

# West Cape May considers property tax increase

By **BETTY WUND**  
Special to the Star and Wave

**WEST CAPE MAY** — There is likely to be an increase in West Cape May's property tax rate for 2016. At a Feb. 10 budget work session, the proposed budget figures were reviewed and in the final analysis auditor Leon Costello stated that there would be an increase of no more than 1.9 cents. This was the first budget workshop.

"This is the first one (tax increase) in five years. We are using \$350,000 (of the fund balance) out of \$544,000, that is down from last year at \$372,000. That is the reason for the increase," said Costello, of Ford Scott and Associates.

Mayor Pam Kaithern stated that even half a percent increase in the budget would be seen as a hike. The proposed budget will be introduced at the Feb. 24 meeting. She said the budget could be adjusted until March 23, the day before the proposed public hearing. After the meeting, Kaithern said the borough operates on a temporary budget until it is clear what the state is contributing

in aid. She also said the budget does not have to be approved until May.

During the work session that followed, Kaithern said that it has come to her attention that there is a possibility to name a street in a new subdivision on the east side of Broadway for the late Mayor John Allen Vasser. Kaithern has contacted Lynda Anderson-Townes, representing the family and friends of Vasser, to ask if there would be any interest in a street there being named for him.

The commissioners agreed that a liquor license would be put out for bid without any change in hours. The resolution will be presented at the Feb. 24 meeting. The starting bid price will be \$525,000. To change the hours from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. to 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. would require an amendment to the ordinance, according to borough solicitor Frank Corrado.

Discussion followed about the National Flood Insurance Program. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has determined that there are about a dozen properties

that are not in compliance with current standards for flood management. Most can be compliant with certificates of elevation. The borough's flood insurance rating would be lowered with more compliance and would result in lower rates for the property owner.

Flood insurance is voluntary unless a property owner has a mortgage. That would most likely apply to primary residences, Borough Clerk Elaine Wallace said. She also stated that the construction office is responsible for following up on the compliance issue.

In a matter of crosswalks on Broadway below Sunset Boulevard, commission was told that letters need to be sent from the borough and the city of Cape May to the county asking for the crosswalks because only the sidewalks are part of the borough. The roadbed is part of Cape May.

In review of the Community Business Task Force report on minimum area and bulk requirements, the report calls for to the same standards for all areas of business development. Discussion of commission questioned how the com-

mercial area on Park Boulevard could be required to have parking in the back of the businesses, as the other districts, unless the present structures are torn down. Wetlands are behind most of Park Boulevard.

Because of setback requirements and limited space behind the buildings and the wetlands, businesses were built with parking in front. Kaithern suggested the commissioners get professional advice on the requests in the report. The commissioners agreed that without a formal presentation to the public, it would not be advisable to seek professional advice.

The commission has been asked to contribute to the Coast Guard Appreciation festivities May 6-8. Funds donated will be given to Coast Guard families as \$10 vouchers to use to buy products from the vendors at the event. The county, sponsor of the event, is asking for a minimum contribution of \$350 from small municipalities. No decision was made on the donation.

A second reading and public hearing before

adoption of the ordinance governing the general penalty for ordinance violation followed during the regular meeting. Corrado stated that the amendment would bring the borough ordinance in line with the state recommendations for penalties.

There was discussion as to whether multiple violations by a person would be covered by the amendment. To add more detail to the ordinance amendment

was unnecessary, Corrado said. The court will determine the penalties based on the details of the violations, he said. The ordinance was approved as written.

The meeting ended in closed session. Discussion of litigation pending on affordable housing and Willow Creek winery were to be included. Negotiations on water allocation were to be addressed as well as discussion about the construction office.

## Prestige

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transportation, personnel management, housing administration, separations, discharges and evaluations for a 43,000 active-duty work force.

Edwards said TRACEN would receive three Fast Response Cutters (FRC), with one arriving this summer. All three cutters will be stationed in Cape May by 2018, he said.

A number of families left

TRACEN when the Coast Guard moved two cutters, the Vigorous and Dependable, to Virginia due to the poor condition of a pier at TRACEN.

Edwards said once the new FRC's are deployed here, the difference between the number of personnel previously stationed here on the Vigorous and Dependable and the new cutters will be about 90 people.

"We'll be back almost to

where we were a couple of years ago," he said.

The Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutter is a new Coast Guard patrol boat that is capable of deploying independently to conduct missions that include port, waterways and coastal security; fishery patrols; search and rescue; and national defense.

Named after Coast Guard enlisted heroes, the FRCs are replacing the aging Island-class 110-foot patrol boats. The FRC's are 154 feet in length with a 25-foot beam and a draft of 9 feet, 6 inches. The cutters will have a top speed of 28 knots with a range of 2,950 nautical miles, an endurance of five days and a crew of 22.

## Cold Spring man pleads guilty to shooting, damaging drone

**CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE** — Cape May County Prosecutor Robert L. Taylor announced the guilty plea Feb. 12 of Russell Percenti, 34, of Cold Spring, for one count of criminal mischief, a crime of the fourth degree.

According to a news release, Percenti acknowledged that on Sept. 26, 2014, he used a shotgun in a residential neighborhood on Seashore Road to shoot at a remotely controlled drone. He also acknowledged that he caused a monetary loss of more than \$500 to the owner of the drone.

Taylor stated a fourth-degree crime can carry a penalty of up to 18 months in state prison. Percenti is to be sentenced to probation April 29, according to Taylor.

According to earlier police reports, the drone was being flown over a house under construction in order to take aerial photos in the area of Oreo's Pit, off Seashore Road and the Seashore Road Bridge. According to police, a friend of the homeowner was taking the aerial photos to mail to the property owner to show the progress of construction on the home.

At the time of arrest, Percenti stated to police he felt the drone was flying over his

house and he had the right to shoot it down. The drone received more than one shot. The owner of the drone was able to recover the craft but it had sustained damage, according to police.

The drone was valued at \$1,350.

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