

Cape May Star and Wave

153rd YEAR NO. 7 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2007 50¢

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FEBRUARY TIDE TABLE (eastern daylight time)			
LOW		HIGH	
am	pm	am	pm
15 5:55	6:19		12:09
16 6:43	7:06	12:00	12:53
17 7:28	7:51	12:50	1:36
18 8:13	8:37	1:41	2:19
19 8:58	9:24	2:31	3:02
20 9:45	10:12	3:23	3:46

Tents on beach an unwanted precedent

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – Some Cape May residents are concerned tents will soon cover Cape May's beaches from end to end, blocking the ocean view for tourists and residents alike.

Residents were responding to a letter sent to neighbors

within 200 feet of Congress Hall, which is seeking a general use CAFRA (Coastal Area Facility Review Act) permit for "seasonal beach amenities" – specifically cabana style tents. Guests of the hotel would be allowed to take advantage of the beach amenities.

City manager Luciano Corea said Congress Hall is one of three individuals or

organizations leasing beach space from the city.

Some residents are concerned the city is considering amending its ordinances to allow "non-permanent structures" such as tents that are 12 feet or more high. Chapter 158 (B)(2) of the city code permits beach tents that are not more than 150 square feet in area or six feet in height. The residents believe the city

is going to raise the allowable height of beach tents for the benefit of local businesses.

Corea said the city might look at allowing taller tents but nothing has transpired.

"Six feet is not practical. Tent sizes with a maximum of six-feet...some people couldn't stand in. It has been proposed to allow seven or eight feet at maximum," Corea said.

Corea said the city is waiting to hear from people who rent space on the beach.

Corea said some rent from the city and others own beach parcels, but either way they have to follow the city's ordinance.

Residents were concerned a CAFRA permit would allow those using beach tents to

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The beauty of winter

Frigid temperatures and a dusting of snow this week brought enhanced the inherent beauty of our area. Lilly Lake in Cape May Point, above left, froze solid enough for ice skating, left. Geese take to the skies on Stevens Street, in West Cape May, above right. The simple beauty of a beach landscape, right.

Photos by Jennifer Kopp



Share the tax: Tourism commission co-chair suggests

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – Tourism Commission co-chairman David Craig has suggested the commission "explore" ways to raising more revenue other than taxing the lodging industry.

Craig, who is a Cape May City Council member, also said he has asked the city solicitor to research state statutes and see if he could

find broader revenue sources, other than hotels, motels and other forms of lodging.

"This is just exploratory," Craig said, for the benefit of the press.

Craig did not want discussion of ideas to be misinterpreted as new policy or practice, as has been done in the past.

Commission member Bob Steenrod said there are places, such as the island of St. Martins, where there is a

"voluntary contribution" in lieu of a room tax. Guests will donate a dollar toward improving services to tourists.

However, the 7-percent room tax charged in Cape May is mandated by the state, with 5-percent going to the state and the other 2-percent going in the city's coffers.

Member Curtis Bashaw said another idea would be a sales-tax surcharge.

The idea is to take one cent off the room tax and add one

cent to the sales tax. That would give guests some relief from the combined 14-percent room tax/sales tax they are paying when they rent a room.

The upside is that an additional penny on the sales tax would be shared by everyone.

The down side, however, is that the additional penny on the sales tax would be shared by everyone. Year-round residents would have to pay the surcharge all year.

But Bashaw said the 14-per-

cent guests pay on rooms is the highest of any non-urban area on the east coast. And the tax does not go to promote tourism, but goes into the city's general fund.

"Other places fund tourism operations out of a room tax," Steenrod said.

Although the room tax revenue goes in to a general fund, the city can create a line item for tourism operations in the municipal budget.

Craig said he would like to find other ways to raise some

of the revenue and not put the burden all on the lodging industry.

City Council recently passed a resolution requesting the state legislature to amend the law to allow the room tax to be applied to seasonal and short term rentals of single-family homes.

The city has been charging a 2-percent room tax on hotel, motels and guesthouses since July 1, 2004.

Council, manager discuss '07 budget

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – Cape May City Council sat down with the auditor and chief financial officer to go over the proposed 2007 municipal budget, Tuesday, looking for ways to keep down the cost of running the city.

City manager Lou Corea has proposed a budget cost-

ing the city \$13,174,773.93 in 2007, which represents a \$71,265.54 decrease from the 2006 budget. Operating expenses were cut 14-percent from 2006.

Still, the budget requires a 2.9-cent tax rate increase because of increased costs and lower revenues. The tax rate increase could be reduced by using more of the city's surplus revenue, but that move is not being recom-

mended. Mayor Jerry Inderwies recommended council keep the 2007 budget intact along with the 2.9-cent tax increase.

"Based on the new four-percent cap we should be able to reserve as much as we can in fund balance to help us in 2008, so we don't have another tax increase," Inderwies said.

Other members of city council talked about keeping costs in check, questioning the hiring of an additional police officer plus an additional part time employee for the code enforcement office.

"Health insurance is 10-percent of the budget and it will continue to escalate," Councilman David Kurkowski said. "I'm concerned about adding any new employees."

Asked about the cost a new police officer considering salary, health insurance, stipends and other benefits, Corea said one officer would cost the city about \$50,000. Asked about the effect of a new officer on overtime, Corea said police overtime has actually gone down. Chief financial officer Bruce MacLeod said there are cer-

tain offsets in the police department that other city departments do not receive - between \$10,000 and \$20,000 per year.

Kurkowski's concerns about adding new employees were echoed by other council members including Councilwoman Linda Steenrod.

"I'm concerned about adding new employees," she said.

Steenrod suggested getting code enforcement employees additional training to lessen the workload on code enforcement officer John Queenan.

Deputy Mayor Niels Favre said his understanding is a new police officer would allow the city to have five officers per shift rather than four per shift. He said it would be helpful to get some statistics to justify a new officer. He said he had spoken to Cape May County Sheriff John Callanan, recently, who told him gang-related crime has been on the rise in the county.

Favre also wondered whether adding an officer

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Going to the dogs

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – The city would be better off going to the dogs than being a popular wedding destination.

Municipal clerk Diane Weldon said the city makes \$8 off a dog license, but only \$3 for every wedding license.

Mayor Jerry Inderwies said while being updated concerning fees for issuing a "civil union license," he learned that the state of New Jersey takes \$25 from every \$28

marriage license fee. The city gets to keep the other \$3.

"There is no way we cover our cost of a marriage license for \$3," Deputy Mayor Niels Favre said. "We should get at least \$10."

"Any license that doesn't cover the cost to the municipality is subsidized by the taxpayer," he said.

Weldon said there has been legislation proposed to allow municipalities to keep 50-percent of the license fee, which is set by state statute,

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Tourism Commission agrees to renew contract with PR firm

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
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CAPE MAY – The Tourism Commission met in closed session Tuesday evening and decided to renew its contract with the MWW Group, the firm hired to market Cape May regionally.

Co-chairman David Craig said the commission decided to renew the contract on a six month basis, and would pay MWW Group \$6,000 per month. The previous contract was for 12 months at \$5,000 a month.

In return, the Tourism Commission is asking for a 25-percent increase in the number of impressions the firm produces. An impression is an ad or article multiplied by the circulation of the publication in which the item appears.

Emily Buchanan, a vice-president with MWW Group, reported that last year, Cape May received about \$1.7 million in advertising value for articles written about Cape May. Craig said the commission is pleased with the amount of impressions they have gotten via MWW services, but it's hard to measure the effectiveness of one group when there are various marketing groups working for businesses and organizations in the city.

Craig said the Tourism Commission would be meeting with the MWW Group later in February or the beginning of March to get a formal proposal for services the PR firm will provide in the new contract.