

Damn

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based on the municipalities' ability to pay, with that ability to pay being determined by property values. The resolution says changes to the funding scheme would have a profound negative impact on students, teachers, curriculum, special education and class size. It says Lower Township would not be able to replace the lost revenue, with an additional estimated

cost of \$5.5 million (as determined by a feasibility study commissioned by Cape May) to the residents of Lower Township. Mayor Mike Beck said he believes the actual burden put on township taxpayers would be much higher, perhaps as much as \$10 million. The resolution also stated concern that the quality of education would be impacted. "I'm concerned about the impact on curriculum," Pitts

said. "Everyone pays on the same formula," resident Ed Butler said. "It's the responsibility of people to pay for education." Pitts said there would always be "inequity" because taxes are determined by property value. She said residents within one municipality pay different tax amounts based on their assessment. Resident Fred Long said he seconded comments made by resident John Sporsky, say-

ing Lower Cape May Regional is a quality educational facility. "I had five grandchildren graduate from Lower Cape May Regional, all of them have gone to college. Three work in the city of Cape May," Long said. Pitts said there are 70 regional school districts in New Jersey, and conflicts regarding funding formulas only arise where there is a wealthy community that

wishes to lower its tax burden. Resident George Dougherty asked if the township could survive without the current funding from Cape May. "I realize you weren't here, but we had a long discussion on this at our last meeting," Beck said. "I said if they hit the school, they will hit the town, and if they hit the town they will hit Cape May." Beck said he expected the issue to move to the county

superintendent of schools. He said the township couldn't afford to lose any funding. "In the end we all have to live together but we can't afford to lose the fight. If you give kids a second rate education you are basically handicapping them. And (Cape May) will be hurting themselves. See if they don't fall," Beck said.

Chief

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is a challenging task that requires cooperation at the state, county and local level. He said current leadership at the county level has been a catalyst for the area's successful outcome during the last three major storms, which included a snow blizzard in 2010, Hurricane Irene in 2011 and Hurricane Sandy last year.

"We're fortunate to have an excellent county coordinator, Martin Pagliughi, and his deputy coordinator, Arthur Treon. Our county engineer Dale Foster is extremely helpful and very responsive to our needs," Smith said.

What makes the job especially difficult is the county's vulnerable location along the shoreline, having water on three sides and only three highways to use for coastal evacuation routes. Cape May County was listed as the sixth most difficult place in the nation to evacuate during a hurricane, according to a list compiled by Florida-based engineering firm Post, Buckley, Schuh & Jernigan, Inc. (PBS&J). Since that list

was published in 2010, Cape May County residents have been evacuated twice - during Hurricanes Irene and Sandy. However, during each storm, Smith said Cape May County's Office of Emergency Management and local teams were extremely organized and successful in evacuating citizens safely and efficiently.

"Both of those storms occurred during the summer. Cape May city alone goes from about 4,000 in the offseason to 35,000 or more daily in the summer, so the logistics of getting that many people moved takes a lot of teamwork," he said.

He said there are about 50 volunteers who serve on the city's emergency management team.

"They consist of members who work shelters, personnel who work in communications, public relations and able-bodied men who just go out to do what needs to be done," he said.

Smith said the West Cape May Volunteer Fire Company is the only emergency shelter on the island, but because it is in such a low lying area it is susceptible to flooding, people

were encouraged to leave and stay at shelters on the mainland, such as the Woodbine Developmental Center, during Irene and Sandy.

Prior to and during an emergency such as a major storm, emergency management works closely with the local fire and police departments, beach patrol, water and sewer department and public works to make preparations for such an event. He said public works is especially important during a storm, making sure roads and the city's drainage systems are clear. According to Smith, the departments typically prep for about two to three days before a major storm like Irene or Sandy boarding up windows, clearing the promenade and beachfront, making sure necessary equipment is up and running and other vital tasks.

At a local level, each of the four municipalities that encompass Cape Island work together and are in constant communication with one another during a catastrophic event. He said communication technology has advanced astoundingly since he became

involved with emergency management, which has made warning the public much simpler during these events.

"The way we used to be able to notify the public in the past was by having a team of men and women sitting by the phones, who maintained a phone list for all of the different areas in Cape May. So, if we had to evacuate, they would go through a series of phone calls notifying people in the lowest lying areas first," Smith said. "Now, we have the Reverse-911 system, which is much more efficient."

He said the modern technology such as cell phones allow on-the-go access to social media and the county website, which is updated frequently during an emergency, also keeps citizens informed.

During his two decades with the city's emergency management team, Sandy and Irene were the first county-wide evacuations Smith was involved in. However, he had organized multiple Cape May evacuations prior to those storms.

"Prior to around 1990, when we had the beach replenish-

ment project, we frequently had flooding along the beachfront and the eastern portion of Cape May," he said. "We did evacuations there on numerous occasions. Mostly, we would be moving cars out of low lying areas and relocating people for short-term evacuations. Locals would typically move in with friends on parts of the island that weren't flooded."

Smith said there is always room for improvement when dealing with catastrophic events, which is why the Emergency Operation Plans are updated every year and completely overhauled every three years. He said local emergency management teams have quarterly meetings with the Cape May County Office of Emergency Management while there is also the Emergency Preparedness Conference in the spring open to the public.

He said it's not only important for local and county officials to be prepared, but everyone living in the area. Smith noted those who require special services during an emergency because of a disability or medical issue

should call the city or the County Office of Emergency Management at (609) 463-6570 to fill out the proper form and be put on the call list, Smith said even though Cape May County has been fortunate overall during the last three storms, citizens should never take a weather emergency or evacuation lightly.

"The data that's been put forth about the water level rising is now being seen as true. We're seeing a lot more flooding than in the past due to things like the ice melt, rise in water temperature and basically, climate change," he said. "The data has been out there for a while, but I think people are finally beginning to realize the climate change is having an immediate impact on our lives."

For more information about the Cape May County OEM and tips for how to prepare for an emergency, visit the county website at www.capemay-countygov.net and click on "Emergency Management."

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TIDES
JULY 2013
Eastern Standard Time

	High	Low	High	Low
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
17	2:46	3:43	8:55	9:56
18	3:56	4:46	9:57	11:01
19	5:06	5:48	11:00	
20	6:11	6:46	12:03	12:01
21	7:12	7:41	1:00	1:00
22	8:09	8:34	1:54	1:57
23	9:03	9:25	2:46	2:52
24	9:55	10:16	3:36	3:46
25	10:47	11:05	4:25	4:40

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Full Moon, July 22
Last Quarter, July 29
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