

WCM

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In 2012, property owners in West Cape May were assessed at a tax rate of 34.6 cents per \$100 assessed value, which is a nine-tenths of one-cent increase from 2011. Donato said in 2011, the average value of a residential property in the borough was approximately \$437,000 and after rebates, residents paid an average total tax bill of \$4,916.

Kaithern said West Cape May had the second highest ratable increase of all 16 municipalities in Cape May County heading into 2012.

She said the governing body does all it can to defray operating costs and the expenses of borough improvements. West Cape May currently has a \$200,000 grant from the

Department of Community Affairs Small Cities Program and a \$180,000 grant from the state Department of Transportation (NJDOT) for the construction of new bicycle paths. Kaithern said the borough also received a \$3.013 million low-interest loan and a \$708,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for water and sewer improvements.

Kaithern said the borough hosts events such as the Farmer's Market and Strawberry Festival, which supports the operating costs of the Shade Tree and Environmental Commissions. In 2013, residents will see a slight tax break due to the sale of the liquor distribution license, as the borough still tries to sell its consumption license.

For larger savings, Borough Hall is equipped with 36 solar panels to lower energy costs, as is the West Cape May Elementary School, which has over 70 panels. Kaithern said they have seen savings of roughly \$30,000 at Borough Hall since they were installed.

"It's not something that you see bringing the tax rate down, but it certainly helps to control the output of cost," she said. "It helps with the utility bills, for sure."

Kaithern said West Cape May also has around 10 shared service agreements with other municipalities, ultimately lowering the tax rate and cost of services.

West Cape May has a contract with the City of Cape May for police services, paying \$419,304 in 2012; the amount reflects a 3-percent

increase from 2011. Donato said that amount is offset by between \$30,000 and \$40,000 by renting space in Borough Hall for a CMPD substation.

"Let's be honest, West Cape May is a smaller town, so it doesn't really make sense for it to have its own police force," Donato said. "If you're going to have all these little governments, then make it as efficient as possible. That's the whole idea behind shared service agreements."

West Cape May also saves a large sum of money by having a volunteer fire company, which is assisted by fire departments in neighboring municipalities.

Kaithern said the borough has only 24 employees, 18 of whom are part-time. She said there are four employees in the Public Works Department,

two in the municipal court, one of whom is part-time, seven part-time employees in the finance office, one part-time and one full-time clerk, part-time zoning and code enforcement officials and a governing body of three.

Donato said in the larger municipalities he works in, there are full-time department heads and officials dedicated to a specific type of service, but when dealing with a small town like West Cape May, where there are very few employees, elected officials are forced to do a lot more.

"Elected officials have a different set of responsibilities in a town like (West Cape May). You almost have to become an expert in every department while in bigger towns, elected officials really

just have to worry about the legislative side," he said.

Donato said there are several expenses the borough has little control over. He said West Cape May saw an increase of approximately \$18,500 in insurance costs, consisting of liability insurance, workers compensation and group health insurance. However, the borough saved \$11,000 in shared court fees in 2012.

Kaithern said the borough is insured through the Joint Insurance Fund (JIF), which is much more cost efficient than obtaining insurance on the open market.

"By using that type of insurance, you are saving easily two-thirds of what it would cost on the open market," she said.

Drench

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tem was held up by a low pressure system located over the Carolinas, which had been moving to the northwest over the last couple of days.

"They were slow, with very little steering currents and a lot of moisture. It made for slow moving thunderstorms," Gaines said.

The storms dropped 2 to 4 inches of rain in the area. The same storm system had already dropped 5.25 inches of rain on Newville, Va., 7.61 inches in Newport News, Va., and 6.37 inches of rain in Wakefield, Va.

Local effects from Saturday's storm included

power being lost for brief periods of time, resulting in some home alarms going off. The Cape May Point Fire Company responded to a false alarm produced by the storm on Lincoln Ave.

Cape May City Manager Bruce MacLeod said Fire Chief Jerry Inderwies did not report a higher number of false alarms due to the storm, but there were storm related issues in Cape May.

"From the point of view of public safety our police and fire department personnel were called out for different issues throughout course of the storm," MacLeod said. "Some cars were getting stuck due to the rising level

of water in some streets."

MacLeod said the fire department investigated several areas where lightning struck, and that the city experienced some damage to its police dispatch and 911 systems.

"We did take some damage there and the communication equipment is being inspected," he said.

MacLeod said in all likelihood, some businesses experienced damage to their electronic systems.

The only confirmed strike was on a chimney above 656 Washington Street. Inderwies said lightning struck the chimney and destroyed it but there was no fire and

no further damage. He said there were a couple of ground strikes in the area, adding that the amount of lightning from Saturday's storms was unusual.

"It's been many years since I saw that much lightning for so long. Thankfully nothing serious happened," he said.

As far as road flooding, MacLeod said the rain was coming down at a pace where the storm water system couldn't handle it.

Inderwies said a vehicle was stuck on Kearney Avenue, where he estimated there was 2 to 2.5 feet of water in the street.

"At one point the water was up to the top of the fire

hydrant but once rain stopped the pumps caught up to it," he said. "That's what happens when you get 5 inches of rain in short amount of time."

Inderwies said at the height of the storm there was street flooding on Kearney, Benton, Jefferson, Columbia and Madison by the pond. He said he has a rain gauge at his home and it indicated there were 5 inches of rain from Saturday's storms.

In light of last year's Hurricane Irene, which called for evacuation of Cape May County, MacLeod said the city has begun preparations for the hurricane season.

"Everybody has a level of preparedness to reach to

make sure their equipment and readiness is up to speed," MacLeod said. "Public workers as well as public safety and water sewer have to keep their equipment up to certain levels of preparedness and make sure they are functional."

MacLeod said the fire department tests its equipment, including chain saws, on a regular basis to make sure they are functional.

On Aug. 24, 2011, at 2 p.m., Cape May County announced an evacuation order effective 8 a.m. the following morning. The storm did not affect the county as badly as expected.

Lot

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Mahaney said he was opposed to changing lot coverage in other sections of the R-1 zone because it would alter the character of the town, but agreed with the Planning Board's decision that Cape May Avenue was unique and an increase in lot coverage there was consistent with the master plan.

"This is not spot zoning," he said.

Swain and Fiocca said they also based their decisions on

the analysis by the Planning Board and Hurlless. Prior to the vote, council heard over one hour of public comment on the lot coverage increase.

Attorney Lou Dwyer, representing Cape May Avenue residents, rebutted arguments made by those opposed to the change who said residents could obtain variances for more construction. He said variances are extremely expensive and time consuming.

"It's outrageous to say get variances," Dwyer said.

"They cost \$5,000 or more."

Opposing residents also said the lot increase could also lead to the removal of trees to make room for property expansion. Jay Schatz, chairman of the Shade Tree Commission, which opposed the increase, said there are 29 trees that are eight inches or more in diameter on the south side of Cape May Avenue and 56 on the north side. He said existing trees include willows,

elms, swamp maples, maples and evergreens. According to Schatz, all of these trees soak up large amounts of water, decreasing storm water run off. He said they also provide a winter habitat for non-migrating birds.

"We are all aware that Cape May Avenue was built on harbor fill. The water table in this area is quite high as evidenced by wet lawns and frequent standing water in the streets," he said. "The extension of backyard decks, above and in-ground pools and surrounds may result in not only the loss of trees in the footprint but cause deteriorating of nearby trees by destroying the drip area and/or damage to support roots."

Cape May Avenue resident Perry Collier said when he purchased his home in

1976, there were no trees on the block but homeowners have planted hundreds of trees since that time. Collier believed if any trees were removed, they would be replaced.

Idaho Avenue residents Al Beale said he believed more construction on Cape May Avenue would send more water to his street. He disputed arguments that leaving Cape May Avenue coverage at 30 percent was a hardship.

"They purchased their property like the rest of us, knowing the lot size and the lot coverage," Beale said. "This is not a hardship."

Lydia Inderwies of Philadelphia Avenue said she did not agree with the lot increase because it was unfair to the rest of the R-1 zone, which remains at 30

percent coverage.

"If you allow Cape May Avenue to increase lot coverage to 40 percent, what happens to the rest of the R-1?" she asked council.

A study is being done on the rest of the R-1 to figure out what effect a lot coverage increase would have in the entire district.



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Trees

Continued from page A1

sound. Based on the witness's account, the officer issued summonses to Robert J. and KatherineBarbaro, who also own a home on Second Avenue in Cape May. The Barbaros were charged under the City Code, Chapter 482 "Trees and Shrubs." Section 482-1 "Permit required for certain acts," reads: "No person shall do or cause to be done any of the following acts affecting the trees, plants, shrubbery or other ornamental flora planted or growing naturally within the highways or public places under the jurisdiction of the City, except with a written permit first obtained from the Shade Tree Commission:

A. Cut, trim, break, disturb the roots of, or spray with chemicals any living tree or shrub; or injure, misuse or remove any structure or device placed to support or protect any tree or shrub."

According to Lt. Chuck Lear of the CMPD, the police ended up charging the couple with an ordinance violation rather than a criminal act.

"We might have had difficulty with that in court," Lear said.

The Barbaros, represented by an attorney, pleaded guilty in Cape May Municipal Court and were each fined \$100 plus \$33 court costs. Robert Barbaro was ordered to pay \$1,000 restitution to the City of Cape May.

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31	8:28	8:46	2:07 2:21
1	9:10	9:27	2:48 3:06
2	9:50	10:06	3:27 3:50
3	10:29	10:46	4:05 4:33
4	11:07	11:25	4:42 5:17
5	11:47	5:19	6:02
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