



Man complains of rusty, stinky water in North Cape

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House of the Week

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170th YEAR NO. 37 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2024 \$1.00

Digital beach tags popular as city boosts revenue

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city realized an increase of almost \$474,000 in beach tag revenue this summer over last season.

At a Sept. 3 City Council meeting, City Manager Paul Dietrich said 1,700 more tags were sold than in 2023. The number of seasonal tags sold decreased by 269 but 428 more commercial tags were sold.

Dietrich theorized that some seasonal beach tag buyers instead purchased commercial tags.

"We're down both in three-day

tags and weekly tags, so I think you would see that with an increase in commercial tags," he said.

The figures included digital beach tags, which were made available this summer for the first time. He said about 10,000 daily tags were sold digitally and of that number, 8,000 used a virtual tag.

More than 2,300 weekly tags were paid for on the digital app and 1,500 three-day tags and 2,200 daily tags were purchased online and picked up as actual tags.

Councilwoman Maureen McDade requested a report on the

percentages associated with digital tags versus physical tags and the revenue received.

Deputy City Manager Justin Riggs thanked beach tag personnel for their patience with the new digital tag process in what he called a "huge undertaking."

"Not only did they have to educate themselves, they had to educate the public at the same time," Dietrich said. "They were under fire for the first two or three weeks."

Dietrich reported the two city-owned electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, one at City Hall and the other at the Welcome

Center, generated almost \$7,000 in revenue in July and more than \$8,000 in August. He said EV charging stations cost the city just less than \$1,000 per month in electricity costs.

"We're definitely covering our costs and recouping some of our installation costs that we incurred," Dietrich said.

On July 12, City Hall and a radio tower were struck by lightning, which sheared off a VHF radio antenna on a mast and sent a surge through the building that damaged computers, network cards, servers, solar panels and the phone system.

Dietrich said the city has submitted almost \$300,000 in claims to the Joint Insurance Fund. He said since the lightning strike, the city has spent about \$50,000 on the installation of lightning protection equipment, noting both have been fully grounded.

"We feel as confident as we can that we've secured this building appropriately to protect against future electrical storms," Dietrich said.

He said four new ground wires extend from the roof of City Hall that are interconnected and all of the building's utilities are grounded properly.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Cape May County and municipal representatives gathered Sept. 6 at the Crest Haven Complex in a show of solidarity against new regulations proposed by the state Department of Environmental Protection to address climate change.

'A seriously misguided plan'

County, state officials oppose DEP climate change proposal

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — Members of the Cape May County Board of Commissioners along with mayors and representatives from the county's 16 municipalities held a news conference Sept. 6 to voice their opposition and solidarity against proposed regulations from the state Department of Environmental Protection.

The rules, which are based on an expected sea level rise in 2100, would require new homes to be built 5 feet higher and expand flood zones, forcing owners to purchase flood insurance.

Know as Resilient Environmental and Landscape Rules (REAL), the proposed regulations would increase construction costs for public and private projects countywide, putting distress on low- and moderate-income families and establishing unachievable compliance standards for historic structures and public infrastructure projects, according to speakers.

The rules also would expand flood hazard areas, decreasing the area of developable land and increasing construction costs of development and redevelopment opportunities including affordable housing, according to the county.

In addition, the regulations would

require new height standards for Americans with Disabilities regulations for new roads and construction, and revise state environmental regulations to allow for offshore wind developers to be able to trench utility infrastructure through shellfish habitats by making a monetary donation to the state's shellfish habitat mitigation fund.

Board of Commissioners Director Len Desiderio said the DEP was attempting an unprecedented transfer of power under the guise of climate change.

He said the proposed regulations,

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Recycling cans line the streets of historic city

Cape May considering limits in number, size

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Picking up recycling for businesses brings the city no revenue and may contribute to injuries of Public Works employees.

Eric Prusinski, superintendent of Public Works, said he and his staff examined recycling procedures and provided a spreadsheet of commercial properties to City Council at a Sept. 3 meeting, in particular noting commercial properties exceeding limits for recycling cans at curbside.

"We noticed there is an extreme amount of recycling being put out curbside throughout the town," he said.

Prusinski said he and his staff examined ordinances from other shore towns that place a limit on the number of recycling cans that can be placed at the curb. He suggested limiting residential homeowners to two 96-gallon recycling cans or up to a total of 192 gallons.

That limit can be comprised of four 48-gallon

cans or six 32-gallon cans, he said.

For commercial properties, he suggested a limit of four 96-gallon totes for a total of 384 gallons. It would be difficult to put a limit on the number of cardboard boxes put at curbside for recycling, Prusinski said, noting a city ordinance requires boxes to be collapsed and tied.

Councilwoman Maureen McDade said she has witnessed a half-block of cardboard at the curb. She said the Department of Public Works has some of the highest claims associated with worker's compensation.

Dietrich said the city could limit the cubic volume being recycled. He said other cities limit the number of recycling cans that can be placed curbside.

Public Works has five routes where recycling is picked up. On Mondays, it is picked up from the Cove to Ocean Street and Beach Avenue to Venice Avenue, Prusinski said.

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County clerks ensure security of voter ballots in all elections

By JULIA DIGERONIMO
For the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — The upcoming presidential election may cause anxiety for voters young and old, as people worry about the security of their votes and whether their voices will be heard.

For many, voting starts and ends with casting a ballot. However, the voting process is more complex for Cape May County Clerk Rita Rothberg.

The clerk's overall re-

sponsibility is to maintain records of public documents, while during election season it also involves ensuring that every vote in Cape May County is secure and counted.

"We are election officials," Rothberg said. "In that role, we process mail-in ballots to voters, file petitions and work on canvassing of the vote after the election."

The clerk oversees all municipal and county elections. Rothberg prepares ballots and certifies the re-

sults. "The Secretary of State certifies to the county clerks the names of federal and state candidates on the ballot," Rothberg said. "The municipal clerks certify those local positions, and the county clerk makes up the general election ballot."

Rothberg has worked in the office for the past 39 years and has been the county clerk, an elected position, for 19 years. Over that time, she has seen

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Removing abandoned boat: \$25,000

City pursuing reimbursement, penalties from owner

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council approved a \$25,000 expenditure to pay Sea Tow to remove a boat, the Jersey Tomatoes, abandoned in Cape May Harbor.

The enabling resolution states the city experienced a need for an emergency response to address breaches in the hull and to dewater and re-float a 40-foot sport fishing vessel hard aground.

An invoice from Sea Tow states the boat was dewatered with pumps and towed

30 nautical miles to Leesburg on the Maurice River for demolition and disposal, according to state and federal regulations.

At a Sept. 3 council meeting, Deputy Mayor Lorraine Baldwin said the cost was considerable and it was the first time the city incurred such an expense. She said City Manager Paul Dietrich stated the city was seeking reimbursement for the \$25,000.

Baldwin said she was glad volunteer harbor masters Tom Carroll and Jack Lord were watching the harbor.

Dietrich said the city has a towing ordinance for motor vehicles and it was considering creating one for boats so the city has a more streamlined process to handle vessels abandoned in the harbor.

"The boat owner was issued tickets for that," he said. "We're going to work through the municipal court process."

Securing the boat before it became an environmental hazard was the prime focus but removing a navigational

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