



DRBA awarded \$20 million grant for greener ferry

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House of the Week

Real Estate Resource



170th YEAR NO. 39 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2024 \$1.00

City occupancy tax projected to top \$4 million

Parking meter, room fee, water/sewer all up this season over 2023

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — The city is projecting it will collect more than \$4 million this year in occupancy tax.

At a Sept. 17 City Council meeting, Chief Financial Officer Kevin Hanie presented an end-of-summer finance report focusing on cash balances, revenues and expenditures compared with the budget and the prior year as of Aug. 31.

He said the city collected \$1.3 million in occupancy tax through

June, a \$112,000 increase, or 9%, over 2023. Hanie said remittances from the state have yet to be paid for July and August, the busiest months.

"If this trend continues, we're projecting to top \$4 million for the first time this year in occupancy tax," Hanie said.

Parking meter revenue totals \$1.4 million, an increase of \$65,000, or 5%, above last year. He said he was projecting about \$2.4 million in parking revenue for the year compared with the \$2 million that was budgeted. The city has received \$850,000

in interest, \$185,000, or 28%, over 2023.

"Mercantile licenses and construction, we do see a slight downturn in these areas in the amount of 1% and 2.5%, respectively, so I don't think it's anything to be necessarily concerned about, plus with construction, we typically see an upswing in the last quarter of the year as the summer comes to an end and construction activity picks back up, so we should end up in line with the prior year in that area," Hanie said.

The city collected \$3.5 mil-

lion in beach tag revenue as of the end of August, a \$740,000 increase over last year attributable to a price increase. The city predicted a \$600,000 to \$700,000 increase in revenue this year, which it has surpassed, he said.

Beach tag sales overall were down 2.7% from 2023 but the city saw increases in daily and commercial tag sales.

Digital sales accounted for only 8.4% of beach tags. Councilwoman Maureen McDade noted digital tags were not available until July.

Event revenue in the tourism

utility saw a 1% increase, according to Hanie. He said it showed stability in the fund.

The city collected \$4.2 million in water/sewer revenues, up \$140,000 or 4% over 2023, attributable to higher usage within Cape May as well as some rate increases to neighboring municipalities, Hanie said.

As of Aug. 31, the city had \$39.7 million as cash on hand which fluctuates throughout the year, he said.

The current fund has seen an

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MTRAC: Count restaurant seats for compliance

Chairman suggests merchants report parking space numbers

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Do restaurants with outdoor seating follow their original approvals with the city or do they slip in a few extra tables?

At a Sept. 12 meeting of the city's Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee (MTRAC), Chairman Dennis Crowley asked if the city would institute a study of the state of restaurant seating in terms of site plan versus actual operation.

City Manager Paul Dietrich said code enforcement routinely does reconciliations of the amount of seating.

Site plans and mercantile license applications could be cross-referenced for seating compliance on an annual basis, Crowley suggested.

Resident Jules Rauch said the value of outdoor restaurant seating on the Washington Street Mall has become "exceptionally high" on city-owned property and he did not believe the city was being properly compensated for mall patio permits.

He suggested mercantile license applications include the number of off-street parking spaces being provided.

"We don't know how many spaces are available in the city," Rauch said.

Crowley said MTRAC recommended applicants report the number of parking spaces to be compared with their site plan.

"If you get waivers, then you don't have to provide that and then those parking demands become a floating problem for all of the city," he said. "One of the recommendations we made is any parking solution has to begin with adequate funding, and the adequate funding has to come from identifying the impact that mercantile licenses have on the city's inability to provide adequate parking and fund solutions to fix that."

Solving Cape May's parking problem requires identifying funding sources and then going into the market of solutions, Crowley said.

"There are lots of solu-

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New terminal at county airport

DRBA holds open house for 5,400-square-foot facility

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — The Delaware River and Bay Authority (DRBA) held an open house last week of a new 5,400-square-foot terminal building at Cape May County Airport.

The \$7.4 million building houses meeting rooms, a public lobby, a pilots lounge with workspaces and internet access, a patio and a quiet room for flyers who may want to take a nap.

"This is the culmination of a lot of hard work," DRBA Executive Director Thomas J. Cook said Sept. 18. "This is the gateway to Cape May; this is the first thing you're going to see if you fly in, and I think it just represents what the county is all about."

The building has exposed wood and shows its ductwork.

Peter Eichleay, owner and chief operating officer of Flight Level Aviation, the fixed base operator (FBO) at the airport since 2012, described the previous facility as an old hangar with a lean-to, built more



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Peter Eichleay is owner and chief operating officer of Flight Level Aviation, the fixed base operator at the Cape May County Airport since 2012.

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Cape May to DEP: Climate change regulations too extreme

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

TRENTON — Cape May City Manager Paul Dietrich told the Department of Environmental Protection that proposed climate change regulations are too strict too soon.

"Our towns have understood the need to build higher and be more resilient for years, but these proposed regulations just go a little bit too far at one time," he said during the DEP's third and final online public hearing Sept. 19 regarding the proposals.

Known as Protection Against Climate Threat (PACT) and Re-

silient Environmental and Landscapes (REAL), the regulations would raise the required height of first floors in new construction and create new flood inundation zones.

Jennifer Moriarity, assistant commissioner for DEP's watershed and land management program, said key components to the regulations are adjusting coastal flood hazard areas to account for rising sea levels and storm surge that would extend jurisdictional area farther inland and require higher first floor elevations or flood-proofing for buildings and elevated roadways.

Dietrich, who also is engineer

'Considering a planning horizon of 75 years and a freeboard of 5 feet is too much, to quickly, and is not needed for residential construction. A more phased-in approach would be more practical and economical. This would allow towns to properly plan for sea level rise in their communities.'

—Paul Dietrich, Cape May City Manager

and floodplain manager, said as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Community Ratings System, he organized the largest multi-jurisdictional program for public information in the nation. It included 15 com-

munities in Cape May and Atlantic counties and six in Ocean and Monmouth counties.

Dietrich said most towns he worked with already had a freeboard (extra height added to a building's lowest floor to protect

it from flooding) of 2 to 3 feet, which is more than the current state standard of 1 foot.

He said most homes at the shore are rebuilt much more frequently than inland locations in the state.

"Considering a planning horizon of 75 years and a freeboard of 5 feet is too much, too quickly, and is not needed for residential construction," Dietrich said. "A more phased-in approach would be more practical and economical. This would allow towns to properly plan for sea level rise in their communities."

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HIGH TIDE HAPPY HOUR

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