

Lower MUA revenue paying for capital projects

By RACHEL SHUBIN
Special to the Star and Wave

VILLAS — The Lower Township Municipal Utilities Authority passed its budget for the 2018-19 fiscal year and does not anticipate raising rates this year.

"We are in the middle of the capital program with a lot of upgrades and will continually be evaluating rates," said Tim Kiel, of Romano, Hearing, Testa and Knorr CPAs. "It doesn't mean we won't have a rate change this year but we aren't contemplating them for this year's budget."

"There are some differences from last year like the capital budget program," Kiel said. "There is a \$9,000 increase in sewer and a \$200 increase in water, strictly a result of usage."

The MUA looks at previous years of water usage for comparison.

Changes to expenses and administration were results of inflation. There are no major changes to the operating budget, according to Kiel.

"We are still able to support operations with the revenue we have," Kiel said. "The drop off from our debt service is allowing us to finance things out of pocket. What we are going to be funding out of pocket, we do so without issuing debt and are saving at least \$4 million in interest and cost of issuance."

The renewal and replacement for sewer is \$8.4 million and water it is \$3.3 million.

"The state has no more funds left for the current fiscal year," Kiel said. "We are operating in a way that we are

generating revenue for the capital programs and saving millions of dollars compared to municipalities funding capital programs out of debt and getting stuck with interest. We hope to continue to do so for the next few years."

The MUA approved the budget and passed a resolution ratifying late introduction and submission of the 2018 budget to the state.

"The state wants 60 days to review the budget before we adopt it," Kiel said. "With it being a fiscal year, they should get to our budget quickly. We are three days late in 60 days; it's more of a formality with the way the board meeting fell."

In other business, the MUA awarded a roofing contract last month.

"We have received unsuccess-

ful contractor request for documents on review of the public records act," solicitor William Kaufmann said. "I've spent a fair amount of time assisting Mike (Chapman) and Sharon (Otto) in gathering material. Some information the requester was entitled to and some was not. Redactions must be made before they get the documents."

It was discovered that the MUA does not own the ground under the Millman water tower.

"Twelve years ago when the water tower was constructed, it was supposed to have a restriction granted in favor of the NJDEP on that property," Kaufmann said. "Meant for conservation restriction for reforestation for some portions of that. The NJDEP finally caught

up that it was never done and contacted Mike about that."

The ground is owned by Lower Township.

"In my opinion, the MUA does not have authority to restrict someone else's property," Kaufmann said. "We have to get it straightened out and determine if there is a lease between the township and MUA."

The long-term lease can be the functional equivalent of a property owner and might be able to create restrictions, he said.

Engineer Dennis Yoder reported that East Villas Phase II project is 70 percent complete.

"The water main will be done by the end of the year and everything is going well," Yoder said. "One minor issue was the one trench for pave-

ment is lower elevation-wise and the groundwater table is higher. They have to do open-cut excavation."

The clarifier project at the wastewater treatment plant is progressing.

"We are hoping to get better settlement for the contract for equipment and the actual installation," Yoder said. "The goal is to have the first clarifier completed by Dec. 15. For the electric mechanical upgrade project, we hope to advertise for bids this month."

A resident inquired about the proposed sewer project going up Route 9.

"Fralinger Engineering is doing it," Yoder said. "I know they're planning on five phases and have a concept plan. You can call Mike with your questions."

TIDES : Oct. 10-17, 2018

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
10	9:28	9:47	3:02	3:31
11	10:12	10:32	3:44	4:18
12	10:56	11:18	4:27	5:06
13	11:41		5:11	5:56
14	12:06	12:29	5:56	6:49
15	12:59	1:22	6:46	7:46
16	1:58	2:20	7:43	8:45
17	3:02	3:20	8:43	9:42

MOON PHASES

Full moon, Oct. 23 • last quarter, Oct. 30

Dive into maritime history at Museum of Cape May County

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — A fascinating look at the world beneath the sea will take place at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 17, at The Museum of Cape May County when Gene Peterson of Atlantic Divers presents "To New Jersey and Beyond: Four Decades of Diving Adventures."

Peterson, a member of the prestigious National Association of Underwater Instructors, has been teaching scuba diving since 1976. An avid wreck diver, he has logged more than 4,800 wreck dives off the North Atlantic from Florida to Nova Scotia.

"The past four decades of wreck searching has given me the opportunity to solve many mysteries," Peterson said. "I have had the good fortune to have been able to

reunite families with their forefathers' history and help them pay tribute to these great heroes that lost their lives at sea ensuring our freedom."

This lecture is part of the museum's current exhibition, "Shipwreck! Wrecks of the North Atlantic." Curated by Peterson, this exhibition includes artifacts from wrecks off the North Atlantic coast. Many pieces shown in the collection were found on wrecks off the coast of Cape May and Atlantic counties.

This event will take place inside the museum's historic barn at 504 Route 9 North in Cape May Court House. The cost is \$10 per person and seating is limited. To reserve your space, call (609) 465-3535 or visit cmchgs-museum@gmail.com.



Provided

Gene Peterson of Atlantic Divers will present 'To New Jersey and Beyond: Four Decades of Diving Adventures' at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 17, at The Museum of Cape May County.

Inn crowd seeks city's help

Continued from Page A1

tax of 6.625 percent, New Jersey state occupancy tax of 5 percent and municipal

occupancy tax of 2 percent, the last of which is paid to the city of Cape May."

"This is a total of 13.625 percent added on to the price of each room," she continued.

Pontin said B&B owners

were mindful of the invasion of Vacation Rentals By Owners (VRBO) and Airbnb in Cape May.

"These endeavors are adding to the increasingly rapid deterioration of the licensed, tax-paying, state-

and city-revenue-producing B&B in Cape May," she said. "The Historic Accommodations B&B Association wishes to remind City Council of the aforementioned items in the hopes that leveling of the playing field, so to speak, will become a priority for the city of Cape May."

The dramatic decline in the number of B&Bs in Cape May, a tourist destination known for its high concentration of B&Bs, should be an area of great concern to the city, Pontin said. She said the loss of taxable revenue from the many rooms now gone, along with the missed lunches and dinners not eaten at local restaurants, are all worthy of mention when considering a financial master plan as the future of B&Bs in Cape May is considered.

Shirley Phinney, an owner of Elaine's Cape May, said the Historical Accommodations group would like the city to form a committee or to find a solution to the problem.

"When Victorian Cape May started, the idea was to do anything they could to help the historic buildings survive and be able to maintain themselves and enhance Cape May," she said.

Phinney said that feeling has gone by the wayside. She said the B&B industry needs assistance "if the city of Cape May decides they want to keep the historic bed and breakfasts in operation."

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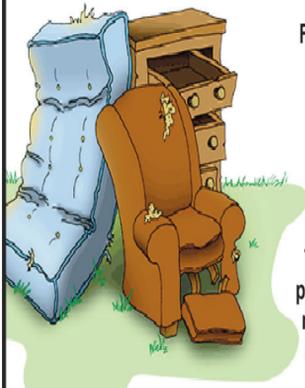
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