

# Cape May adjusts mercantile and development fees

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council approved an ordinance amending city code licensing fees, which had not been raised in 20 years. Mercantile fees on average will increase \$50 to \$75.

At a Sept. 3 meeting, City Manager Paul Dietrich said the city looked at recommendations for raising the fees from the Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee (MTRAC) and consolidated and removed eight to nine codes and added two to three activities that needed mercantile licenses.

An analysis of licensing fees was conducted based on five years of the cumulative Consumer Price Index to determine where the fees should be raised, he said.

For contractors, the license registration fee will be increasing from \$175 to \$250, and the annual renewal fee will increase from \$150 to \$250.

If a license is not renewed during the first three months of the year, prior to March 31, it will be treated as a new license, however, it shall not be considered a grace period for obtaining such license and any contractor who performs work as a commercial contractor without such license will be in violation of the ordinance.

During public comment, resident Jules Rauch suggested a compliance inspection of the number of seats in restaurants be required by July 1 annually. Dietrich said the ordinance only addressed fees and the city regularly conducted compliance inspections.

In other business, council approved raising development fees which had not been updated since 2020. A countywide survey of development fees was conducted for the Planning Board.

About 30% of applications submitted to boards require additional fees which requires the board administrator to track down the applicants and recoup the fees, according to Dietrich.

He said if an applicant did not receive an approval, they may hesitate to pay

the additional fees which means the “city is on the hook to pay the professionals out of the city coffers.” It also delays the professional receiving payment for their services 30 to 90 days, Dietrich said.

If an applicant submitted a set of plans which are reviewed by the professionals and the plans must be revised, there is an additional fee, but the city does not collect that fee upfront.

The ordinance raises informal review fees from \$100 to \$550 with the escrow fee increasing from \$150 to \$1,000.

The minor subdivision application fee, no more than three lots, will be

raised from \$125 to \$500 with the escrow fee increasing from \$500 per lot to \$1,000.

The preliminary site plan application fee will be raised from \$325 to \$600 with the escrow fee changing from \$500 plus 2% of the estimated cost of construction to \$1,500.

The final site plan application will be increased from \$325 to \$500 with the escrow fee the same as a preliminary site plan.

A full review from the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) will rise from \$300 to \$500 with the escrow fee from \$100 to \$2,500 at the discretion of the HPC.

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## Safe Streets initiatives

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was doing but Kuhn said the study was to identify where crashes were occurring and to look at on-road safety. The only fatality to a bicycle rider or pedestrian to his recollection was on Broadway which would make it the most dangerous road, Dick said.

“I’m very confused about the outcome of this project if it doesn’t include ways to improve the safety,” he said.

Cape May Point Commissioner Catherine Busch said the study would provide updated bicycle routes plan from a 2016 project.

“We don’t need a \$100,000 study to figure out the best way to get people off Broadway,” Dick said.

An alternative route from West Cape May is to take Pacific Avenue and cross Sunset Boulevard to get to the beach safely, he said.

Kuhn said if the federal money for projects is being

sought, all alternatives must be examined.

A written comment from a committee member was not to follow a suggestion of installing sidewalks along Seashore Road from the bridge to West Cape May since there were few walkers along the road.

Another suggestion was to eliminate all parking on Broadway and create continuous wide shoulders.

A third suggestion was for speed humps on Broadway to slow speeders, Kuhn said.

“We would recommend not precluding sidewalks under consideration because when you apply later on, you will be scoping out those projects and if you rule out sidewalks, you’re kind of eliminating your opportunity in the future,” he said.

Dick said the estimated cost of sidewalk along Seashore Road was about \$1.5 million.

Busch suggested a paved section along Seashore Road like the project the county is undertaking

along Sunset Boulevard for a bicycle-pedestrian path.

Kuhn said a comment from a committee member was to paint stripes on Stevens Street rather than constructing sidewalks.

Committee member Robert Morris said a bike lane from Stevens Street should continue onto Seagrove Avenue.

Busch said the task of the committee was to identify locations and routes that need more attention, not to find a solution for routes since the committee lacks the costs of solutions.

Dick said the committee felt a high priority safety issue was Broadway from Stimpson Lane to the firehouse because of the campground, Duckies Farm Market and a turn into Central Avenue.

Kuhn said a suggestion of committee secretary Terry DiUbaldi was to provide cell phone access to a map of safe bicycle routes.

“How do we get Google to actually put the map that we want?” Dick asked.

Committee Chairman Jeff Vecere said spending a lot of money for safety improvements on Washington Street was not sensible when there were other “hot

spots on Cape Island that deserve more attention.”

Kuhn said elected officials needed to adopt a resolution for a goal of zero fatalities, so when a municipality applies for an implementation grant, it shows there is municipal support.

GPI engineer Dale Foster said municipalities could seek federally funded implementation grants of which only two have been awarded in New Jersey. He said the grants would require a 25% local match.

“If you were to go after a grant that’s only worth about \$100,000, the professional services to get that grant would probably be \$300,000-\$400,000, so you have to look at these projects and try to combine things together to make it so that it’s worthwhile going forward with it using the federal funds,” Foster said.

He said there were other funding sources such as the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization. Foster said a project to upgrade three traffic signals on Washington Street would cost over \$1 million.

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