

# Cape May approves parking hours at City Hall lot

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — In a town where it can be difficult to find a parking space, City Council approved an ordinance to allow weekend and evening parking in the City Hall lot and establish metered parking hours with a grace period for those conducting official business with the city.

After hours and during the weekend, City Hall is generally closed other than the police station and adjacent fire station.

Only city authorized personnel may park in the lot between 7:30 a.m. and 10:30 p.m. except in areas designated by signs.

The ordinance provides public parking for those conducting official business at City Hall, which includes attendance at

public meetings or pick up and delivery to City Hall offices.

Overnight parking is not permitted.

A three-hour limit on metered parking would be in effect from 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. April 1 to Dec. 1. The fee would be 25 cents per 10 minutes for the first 30 minutes.

The lot will open at 5 p.m. Friday for public parking, closing at

10 p.m. Sunday.

During public comment at a Sept. 17 council meeting, former councilwoman Stacy Sheehan suggested Sunday hours for parking begin after noon to accommodate those attending nearby churches.

Mayor Zack Mullock concurred.

Councilwoman Maureen McDade said she saw no reason

ParkMobile could not program the app to start paid parking at noon Sunday.

Deputy City Manager Justin Riggs said the city could work with ParkMobile on the issue.

Council amended the ordinance to change parking in the City Hall lot from noon to 10 p.m. on Sundays. Saturday parking hours in the lot are 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

## MTRAC

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tions the city cannot afford right now and could afford if they assessed the parking impact from a lack of on-premises parking," he said.

In other discussion, Crowley questioned why a proposed ordinance reduced mercantile license fees for residential rentals. He said the ordinance would reduce the license fee for "mansion rentals" by \$200.

Dietrich said fees were evaluated based on what it costs the city clerk's office to process the licenses. He said next year the fees would be changed to reflect the number of bedrooms in a residential rental property.

Councilwoman Maureen McDade said adjustments to the fee schedule were based on the input of City Clerk Erin Burke and one of her staff members.

Dietrich said the owner of a rental property requiring more city services would find that reflected in their tax bill, with larger buildings paying more in taxes.

MTRAC member Martin Van Walsum said the area of least compliance for obtaining mercantile licenses is the large rental homes. He said it sends the wrong message by reducing the fees for the larger rentals.

"We know that many people with the larger homes, their listings are not accurate and truthful, and we are almost kind of rewarding them," Van Walsum said.

McDade said the city found about one-third of rental homes had mercantile licenses with one-third that had filed but were not completed due to a deficiency. She said one-third needed follow up by the city manager and code enforcement.

The city will take a more proactive approach to enforcing the purchase of mercantile licenses by hiring a firm to locate

'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. ... There are lots of solutions the city cannot afford right now and could afford if they assessed the parking impact from a lack of on-premises parking.'

—Dennis Crowley, chairman, Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee

noncompliant property owners, Dietrich said.

McDade said Burke is hopeful the city could convert to electronic mercantile license renewals next year.

MTRAC also discussed a proposed ordinance to raise development fees. He said Dietrich and his staff did a very good job of examining development fees in other towns.

The city wants to ensure there are adequate funds in escrow accounts to cover the expense of the board engineer, McDade said.

Crowley called the current development fees "extremely stale."

He said the process costs much more than the fees cover. He said he was satisfied with council's pending ordinance to raise the city's development fees.

McDade suggested council visit the fees every two years to ensure it covers its expenses.

Crowley said he studied how the city's surplus account has risen. He said in 2016, the city's surplus account totaled \$4 million and in 2023 the surplus account had risen to \$14 million.

Typically, the annual allocation from the surplus into the city's budget covers what the city is paying for debt service, Crowley said. In 2016, the surplus was \$2.1 million and debt service was \$2.5 million.

"Over time that relationship has clearly changed and we're look-

ing at a scenario in our budget in 2024, we're going to appropriate \$5.9 million out of surplus into the general fund," he said. "And our debt service is \$4.4 million."

Crowley said the use of surplus has been increasing slightly while property taxes were flat. He said the miscellaneous revenue category has gone from \$6.3 million to \$12 million.

Debt service since 2019 has expanded from \$2.8 million to \$4.4 million, a 47% increase, Crowley said. The city's current debt load is \$35 million

with the city paying \$7.1 million in interest when all the bonds become fully realized, he said.

The Government Finance Officers Association recommends an appropriate surplus be 60 days of revenue for operating expenses, Crowley said.

He said the amount of surplus Cape May was carrying as opposed to the annual appropriation the city makes has escalated from 21% of the total revenue in 2016 to currently 60%.

Van Walsum said the city had upcoming projects to expand the seawall on Beach Avenue and refurbish the desalination plant and without a healthy surplus, the city's debt load could be strained.

Crowley said it may be a good idea to use surplus money for some projects rather than use bonding. Van Walsum suggested an appropriate floor for surplus would be 30%.

"I don't want to do the city's job, and what we found here is that the is-

sue of the relationship between surplus and debt and the way we handle both of those things needs

to be examined by the city's fiscal specialist because we're not fiscal specialists," Crowley said.

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### TIDES: Sept. 25-Oct. 2, 2024

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
25	2:40	3:06	8:17	9:40
26	3:53	4:17	9:26	10:44
27	5:00	5:17	10:32	11:37
28	5:52	6:06	11:37	
29	6:36	6:49	12:21	12:18
30	7:17	7:28	1:01	1:03
1	7:54	8:06	1:36	1:44
2	8:29	8:41	2:08	2:23

### MOON PHASES

New moon, Oct. 2 • first quarter, Oct. 10

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