

Budget

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ties Authority.

Public Works Commissioner Robert Mullock said increased costs had not previously been passed onto residents.

"The utility was going to the point if it continued that way for several more months, it would be broke," he said.

Mullock said expenses were reduced. Borough Commission approved a \$7-per-quarter increase for both water and sewer bills. He said water customers would not see an increase in their bills until the second quarter of the year.

Cold weather caused as many as 30 water pipes to break throughout the borough, he said.

"Much of that water was going to be on the borough's side of the meter, so that we would not be charging the resident for that water usage, and therefore we would have to pay those costs," he said.

Some of Cape May Point's users of excess water switched to their own wells for irrigation, resulting in less water use from the borough, Mullock said.

All of the borough's water meters are being checked, a job that includes photographing each one. Mullock said the meters have not been replaced in 25 to 30 years. He said a number of meters are sitting in water due to the amount of precipitation received during the winter.

In 2016, the water/sewer utility will retire \$20,000 in debt, opening an opportunity to replace water meters, Mullock said. He said replacing the borough's 600 meters at a cost of \$150 each would total \$90,000. Using electronic meters that send readings via a radio signal would total \$180,000, he said.

When a leak develops, the borough is unaware of the problem until water is visible in the street or in a yard, he said. Electronic meters would report the leak, he added.

Mullock said fewer residents are having their water turned off before winter and are instead keeping their heat set at 50 degrees, which may not prevent water leaks in all parts of the house.

In the borough's 2014 budget, salaries and wages total \$43,800, up \$500 from 2013. Ortman said the reserve for uncollected taxes was increased \$3,684 due to a slight decrease in the percentage of tax collection in 2013.

Debt service is down \$26,250, he said, for total of \$347,050. The borough's surplus account as of Dec. 31, 2013, was \$506,885. A total of \$105,000 is being applied to the 2014 budget.

He said the borough's general fund outstanding debt in bond anticipation notes totaled about \$860,000. Ortman said the borough's debt would be substantially paid down this year.

"You should be almost debt free by the end of 2015," he said.

Ortman said the borough generated \$126,000 in surplus last year.

"You regenerated more than you used," he said. "That's the goal."

Mayor Anita van Heeswyk said a healthy surplus could aid future beach replenishment.

Public Safety and Public Affairs Commissioner Robert Moffatt said the cost of police services from Cape May increased by \$7,830 to \$268,825 as part of a contractual agreement.

Mullock said there was a \$7,570 reduction in trash-collection expenses due to a new five-year contract. Recycling expenses decreased by \$1,500.

He said the parks and public property budget was increased from \$8,500 to \$12,750 for items such as landscaping and benches, and to assist an environmental resource project. Mullock said even with some increases, the department saved \$9,900 in the 2014 budget.

Dog-friendly

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She said many who travel with their dogs treat them as their children.

Cape May does not allow dogs on the beach, Promenade or the Washington Street Mall.

"They can walk pretty much any other place in town," Steenrod said.

She said a couple with three small dogs put their pets in their bicycle baskets as they cycle around town. Steenrod said beaches in Lower Township along the bay allow dogs as long as they are leashed and their owners clean up after them.

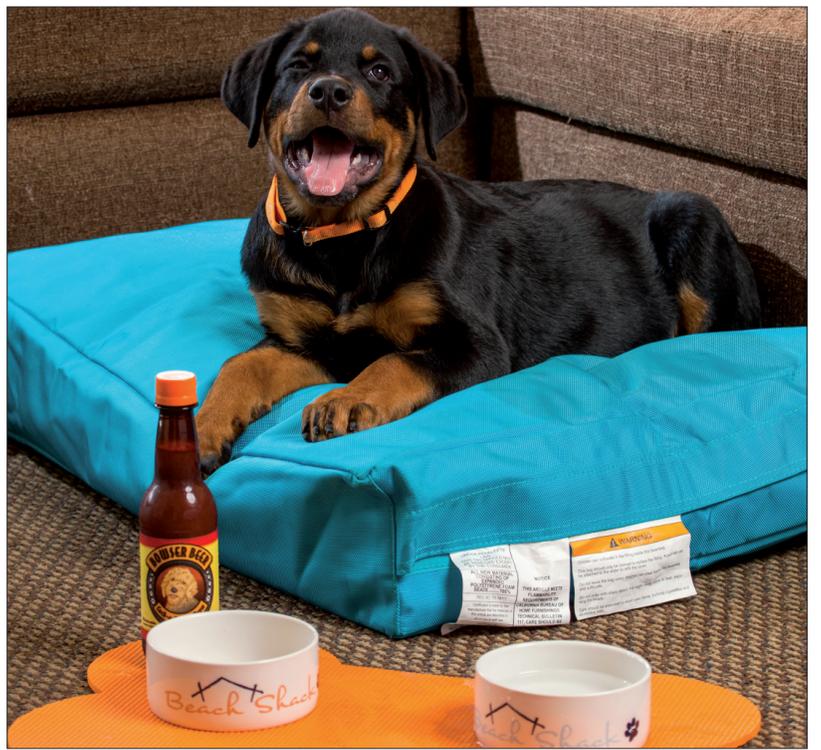
Currently, 100 percent of the Billmae guests bring their dogs. A majority of guests are repeat customers, she said.

Steenrod said she loves meeting the dogs that check in with their owners.

"If they've been here before, a lot of the dogs will jump right out of the car and come over to say hello to me and Bob, and our dogs and run right to the door of the suite they usually stay in," she said.

The Billmae Cottage has four suites similar to a small apartment, featuring a living room, kitchen and one or two bedrooms with a private deck or patio. Dogs do not have to cross paths with other dogs to come and go from their suite, to minimize barking, Steenrod said.

The Billmae has a "Yappy Hour" at least once a week so the dogs can meet others, which also cuts down on bark-



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Guests visiting the Beach Shack in Cape May with their dog will be charged an additional \$35 per night, but the price includes a welcome kit that includes use of a dog bed and food and water bowls, as well as other treats.

ing, she said. The Steenrods do not exclude any breeds or size of

dogs from their inns. They allow two dogs per suite. "We take a security deposit

and I tell people it's not because of the dogs, it's because of the people," Steenrod said.

Tank

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construction was projected to begin in October 2013 and conclude in May 2014.

Mayor Edward Mahaney told the Star and Wave the tentative remediation schedule was subject to be adjusted for delays in the permitting or other unforeseen circumstances.

"We are still within the overall timeframe that JCP&L outlined for us," he said. "We're pleased with the progress. We're still getting total cooperation from JCP&L."

Mahaney said the DEP is always available to advise the city on the remediation. He said that from the start, the city realized the cleanup was a multiyear project and could extend to 2017.

According to Morano, no major remediation is scheduled for next year.

"We're going to be doing some very limited soil removal there this year. We're waiting for permits to get that started," he said.

The soil removal will take place on the former Elsie Wise property on the corner of La-

fayette and St. Johns streets. The house was recently demolished.

Morano said the earlier proposed work schedule was dependent on a number of actions involving outside parties, including negotiations with off-site property owners and submitting a Remedial Action Work Plan (RAWP) to the state DEP for approval. Morano said that was further complicated by changes in the state remediation law.

According to a fact sheet prepared by JCP&L, the utility is working in cooperation with and under the direction of the state DEP and under the oversight of a licensed site-remediation professional. The site-remediation professional is conducting environmental investigative and remedial activities at the site and at adjacent off-site properties to address soil and groundwater

affected by the former gas plant. Implementation of the RAWP and remediation work is the next step in the process.

Morano said the site-remediation professional, not the DEP, has the responsibility for oversight of the environmental investigation and remediation, as well as the day-to-day operation. The site-remediation professional can proceed without prior approval of the DEP, he said.

Since 1985, JCP&L has been conducting environmental investigations at the site in cooperation with the DEP. In addition, JCP&L has implemented several remedial actions consisting of the removal of MGP-impacted soils from the site and off-site properties, and their replacement with certified clean fill. To date, about 10,000 tons of MGP-impacted soil has been removed. Numerous reports and studies documenting these activities have been submitted to and approved by the DEP, according to JCP&L.

In 2009, after review and approval of JCP&L's report detailing the installation and sampling of deep monitoring wells in the immediate vicinity of the site, which demonstrated there are no impacts from MGP materials in the deep aquifer, JCP&L and the DEP need approval to proceed with the development of a Remedial Action Work Plan for the site.

JCP&L and its consultant are currently working to finalize the design of the remedial action for the site and offsite properties, and to prepare the specifications and construction drawings. Later this year, pending approval of the Remedial Action Work Plan by the site-remediation professional, the utility anticipates issuing bid specifications to find a remediation contractor to implement the remedial action, according to JCP&L.

Construction activities are anticipated to begin in 2015. Morano said JCP&L would hold a community information session before work begins to enable the public to view maps, photos, graphics and details of the upcoming activity and work schedule.

In its information sheet, JCP&L addressed the safety of the site in its current state.

"The potential concern associated with the presence of manufactured-gas plant materials would involve eating of the affected soil or drinking of the affected groundwater. The surface soil at the site and at off-site properties in the vicinity of the site was previously removed and replaced with a cover of certified clean fill. MGP materials remain on and off-site, but only in the deeper subsurface soils and groundwater."

The report states contamination is not affecting air quality at the site.

When major remediation work begins, plans call for installation of a vertical barrier around the perimeter of the gas plant site extending 55-feet underground. Groundwater would be pumped and filtered until it meets DEP standards.

The city will go into the development stage of a proposed park/open space area on the site upon completion of the remediation, he said.

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