Boosted by mail-in ballots, county voter turnout rises 25%

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN Sentinel staff

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — Voter turnout in the Nov. 6 general election was 57.85 percent in Cape May County, with mail-in ballots contributing to the swell in numbers, according to Cape May County Clerk Rita Marie Fulginiti.

"It seemed big. I remember in 2008 when (Barack) Obama ran that our voter turnout was almost 79 per-cent," Fulginiti said. "It was

much greater than the 2014 according to Fulginiti. The next highest mail-in ballot In 2014, turnout in Cape

May County was 45.65 percent

"The ballots cast in this election were 10,000 more than in 2014. The ballots cast in this election so far, and there's going to be a few more, 41,548. In 2014 the ballots cast were 31,03," Fulginiti said.

The Cape May County Clerk's Office issued 8,291 mail-in ballots this election, more than any other year,

total was 6,980 in the 2016 general election.

In August, Gov. Phil Murphy signed a change in the mail-in ballot law, giving voters an option to apply for a mail-in ballot for a single election or to receive a mail-in ballot for all future elections.

Previously voters had the option of requesting a ballot for a single election, all elections in a calendar year or all future elections.

The new law mandated just two choices; only a single at voters who received a election or for all future that voters who received a mail-in ballot for the 2016 general election be sent one for the 2018 general election.

Fulginiti said this increased the number of mailin ballots issued.

What changed in this election was a change in the law which prior to this we had folks who were on the rolls and they could just elect a single election or be every election for the calendar year or every general year. Now it's changed so that there's

Committee

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City purchasing agent Dan Shustack provided a list of parking fees in neighboring towns. His list stated the average perhour parking fee is \$1.40, while Cape May charges \$1. The average daily revenue from a meter in other towns is \$19.35, while Cape May's total is \$12. Cassells said even

though signs around the Washington Street Mall state parking is restricted to three hours, it is not enforced.

"Our goal is to make cars move so there is

parking," she said. The committee requested the red parking zone be extended to Jefferson Street, which would encompass Convention Hall and shops on Beach Avenue, Cassells said. Another recommendation is meters on Beach Avenue and associated side streets allow free parking after 5 p.m.

Committee member Bob Elwell said when drivers cannot find a parking space in the central core of Cape May, they drive in circles, which only adds to

In the evening, after 5:30, when the lifeguards go off, from Philadelphia Avenue to the east, there's

He said he does not believe Cape May needs

lot of younger people voting by mail. Some of it is due to political action committees reaching out to them and sending them a pre-filled mail-in ballot application. All they needed to do was sign it and put it in a prepared postage-paid envelope and send it in and they got a ballot."

elections," Fulginiti said.

"Prior to this the folks that

were on these lists seemed

to be seniors in a pretty big

number. This year I saw a

Voter turnout on election night in Atlantic County was 44 percent, or 82,713 out of 184,752 voters, according to the Atlantic County Clerk's Office website.

Some mail-in ballots in Atlantic County had the wrong ZIP code in the return address. Earlier reports stated the ballots had a ZIP code 08830 for Iselin in Middlesex County instead of 08330 for Mays Landing. Officials in October said all of the mail-in ballots would be delivered to the correct address.

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Township salutes those who served

The color guard from U.S. Coast Guard Training Center Cape May leads the Lower Township Veterans Day Parade down Bayshore Road in Villas on Nov. 10. The parade featured local veterans, the Lower Cape May Regional High School marching band, below left, and local community groups. Below right, sisters Donna Webb, right, and Diane Shinn wave at the passing parade while holding pictures of Shinn's son, U.S. Navy veteran James Keith, who recently passed away.







a parking garage. By turning meters off after 5:30 on the beachfront, the city would not lose any money, Elwell said, because no vehicles are parked in that area.

The open parking spots could be served by two six-passenger golf carts to transport people to Convention Hall and the mall area, he suggested. Elwell said the area of Philadelphia Avenue to Reading Avenue has about 125 parking spaces.

The trolley that currently serves the elementary school parking lot and mall is not dependable and does not operate on a schedule, he said.

Cassells said the committee talked with the owner of Cape May Free Ride and Cape May Golf Carts. Elwell said the city could operate the transportation or contract it with an outside firm.

"I think it's a matter of education. You have to have a sign coming into town with arrows, 'free evening park and lock," he said. "People like the word 'free."

Committee member Jim Testa said the committee's school of thought is to try parking alternatives before considering a parking garage with a cost of up to \$30,000 per space. Elwell said the committee believes many of its suggestions could be put into place by next summer with council approval.

Testa said the commit-tee suggested replacing meters program along the entire length of Beach Avenue. He said newer meter kiosks are more efficient.

The current meters on Beach Avenue are inflexible and require individual maintenance, Testa said.

"It is practically impossible to make them do what you want them to do," he said.

city's arrangement with the trolley operator.

"He basically sends notes to the city, tells them what he wants to do," Testa said. "We tell him a few things back and he sends us a bill.'

"That is not the way we think transportation services should operate in the city," he continued. "We don't think it serves any real good purpose except to have people mad at the trolley because it's never there on time.'

Testa said the trolley company is paid \$15,000 per season to operate two trolleys. The committee recommended the city consider a comprehensive services agreement and seek bids from operators.

He said the agreement would be in lieu of operating a municipal bus service. The committee examined the city-owned Bank Street parking lot, which has parking by permit. Testa noted the Bank Street lot operates only part of the year. He noted the parking lot floods and occasionally construction equipment is parked on the lot, taking up excessive space.

Better use of the lot and a remedy to flooding from the creek were recommended, Testa said.

Cassells said the committee discussed traffic obstructions in the mall area caused by delivery trucks, valet parking and trash and recycling removal. The committee suggested a traffic expert be hired to assess the situation.

She said parking spaces along streets such as Columbia Avenue are not marked and the city could gain more spaces by mak-ing the spots uniform.

The committee recommended the city's website include parking information in real time. She said residents and visitors may not be aware that meters are still active around the mall. Councilman Roger Furlin suggested including West Cape May and Cape May Point in any transportation system. Elwell said if the city wants to solve its parking problem, it would need to spend a little money.



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The price of kiosk meters has decreased, flexibility in programming has increased and they require less maintenance, Testa said. He said the kiosk meters accept coins, bills, credit cards and work with parking apps.

He said the committee was shocked to learn the

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City of Cape May · 2018 Leaf Collection Schedule

Loose leaves raked to the curb will be collected on the day/week of your scheduled street maintenance route.

LEAVES CONTAINING DEBRIS, TRASH OR BRANCHES WILL NOT BE COLLECTED

ZONE 1

Beach Avenue to

West Perry Street

3rd to Ocean Street

Oct. 29th to Nov. 2nd

and

Nov. 19th to 23rd

All streets running North, South, East & West

All streets running North, South, East & West

ZONE 2

Ocean Street to Madison Avenue

Beach Avenue to Lafayette Street

Nov. 5th to 9th and

Nov. 26th to 30th

All streets running North, South, East & West

> Madison Avenue to Wilmington Avenue

ZONE 3

Beach Avenue to Lafavette Street includes Clay Street & St. James Place

Nov. 12th to 16th and Dec. 3rd to 7th

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