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Cape May Star and Wave

159TH YEAR NO. 5 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY WEDNESDAY, January 30, 2013 50¢

Christie announces state will adopt FEMA base flood elevation maps

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

SEASIDE HEIGHTS – Gov. Chris Christie announced Jan. 24 the state would adopt the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) advisory base flood elevation maps to expedite redevelopment three months after Hurricane Sandy damaged communities along the New Jersey coast.

Released in December, and based on scientific analysis of various storms, the maps estimate the degree of flooding certain zones receive during

a 100-year storm. The higher structures are raised, the less flood insurance costs homeowners pay.

Homes built in the A-Zone (Advisory Zone), a high-hazard area, are 4 feet below the new standards. Those homeowners could expect to pay \$31,000 in flood insurance annually. Homes built to new standards only pay \$7,000 a year for flood insurance. If the structures are raised two feet higher than the new standards, flood insurance costs shrink to \$3,500 a year.

Christie said FEMA won't finalize the maps for another

18 to 24 months. He said the state could wait for FEMA's

maps until FEMA finalizes the maps is an "unacceptable

He said building to the new standards on the advisory maps will lessen flood insurance costs but will increase the cost of rebuilding.

"There is no perfect solution to this problem, and if we wait, all we're doing is delaying New Jersey's recovery and leading ourselves to indecision and higher costs one way or the other in the future," Christie said.

If homeowners choose not to elevate their homes to the new standards, they'll be expected to pay flood insurance "which could be seven or eight times higher" than

current costs, Christie said. Christie said property owners who rebuild to FEMA's standards to do so via permit by rule, cutting through additional costs and red tape.

"This eliminates the need for thousands of property owners to apply for DEP's (Department of Environmental Protection) flood hazard area permits, saving them \$500 in permit fees, plus the design and engineering costs associated with an application, allowing them to begin reconstruction with

'I can't wait another 18 to 24 months to rebuild the Jersey shore. That is an unacceptable alternative to me.' – Gov. Chris Christie

final decisions, build to the old standard or work with the current maps.

The governor said wait-

alternative" and building to old standards exposes homeowners to high insurance premiums.

Please see FEMA, page A2

Cape May County, city budgets introduced, increases over a cent

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE – Cape May County Freeholders today introduced the county's 2013 budget calling for a tax rate increase slightly over one cent, making the new rate 20 cents for \$100.

Although it will vary depending on the ratio of assessed value to true value in each of the county's 16 municipalities, an average taxpayer will pay \$204 for \$100,000 of property assessment. Cape May County's tax rate remains the lowest of any county in the State of New Jersey.

"Despite these continued financial setbacks, I believe we are introducing a solid budget that will continue to protect the services that residents need and expect from county government – while staying affordable to the taxpayers of Cape May County," said Freeholder Director Gerald Thornton.

For the second year in a row, revenues from transfer fees at the County Clerk's office increased – this year they were up 18 percent and interest on investments went up slightly. For the fourth straight year, there was a staggering loss in the county's ratable base. In 2012 there was a loss of over \$2.1 billion for a total loss of more than \$7.9 billion dollars in four years – approximately a 15 percent reduction in the county's ratable base.

The introduced county budget for 2013 is \$138.3 million compared to the adopted 2012 budget of \$139.1 million. The county tax levy rose from \$94.6 million to \$96.4 million.

Balancing the budget uses \$10 million of the county's \$18.9 million surplus.

Total operating expenses are \$70.6 million, reflecting an increase of approximately \$775,000. Total salaries and wages increased slightly to \$44.9 million.

Public comment and adoption of the budget is scheduled for 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 26, in the Freeholders' Meeting Room at the County Administration building.

1.5-cent increase in Cape May

CAPE MAY – Cape May property owners should expect some kind of a tax increase in 2013.

City Manager Bruce MacLeod presented a proposed 2013 municipal budget with a 1.5-cent tax rate to fund a \$16 million budget. Based on a tax rate of 30.9 cents per \$100 of assessed value, the owner of a \$500,000 home would pay another \$75 per year, or \$6.25 per month.

The owner of a \$100,000 home, for example would see the annual tax rise from \$294 to \$309. However, the average cost of a home in Cape May is \$628,863, making the local purpose tax \$1,940, a 4.6 percent increase from 2012.

The increase is needed due to a 2.5 percent rise in the municipal budget, from \$15.6 million in 2012 to \$16 million this year.

Please see Cent, page A2



Christopher South/Cape May Star and Wave

Piping out the haggis

Above, Ronnie Tedesco of the Ugly Mug leads the Irish Pipe Brigade carrying a platter of haggis, a traditional Scottish dish, which was served at the annual Robert Burns Supper, Jan. 24. Haggis is normally prepared in a sheep's stomach. The recipe was modified a bit to suit American tastes. See more photos on page A10.

Resolution on school funding change dies for lack of a second

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

LOWER TOWNSHIP – Cape May Councilman Jack Wichterman said he can't understand why a resolution asking for a change in the school funding formula couldn't be discussed.

Wichterman attended last week's Lower Cape May Regional School District Board of Education meeting, where Cape May member Gary Gilbert introduced a

resolution requesting a referendum on the school funding formula.

"It did not get a second," Wichterman said.

A lack of a second meant the resolution would not be discussed by the board.

"I can't understand it, but it was not up to me to second it, it was up to West Cape May," he said.

The West Cape May representative to the school board, Kathy Elwell, did not second the motion for the resolution

'I say everything is up for negotiation.'

– Councilman Jack Wichterman

as Wichterman had hoped.

"She said an election would have been expensive," he said.

Wichterman said a special

election would have been expensive, but he believes an election was a remote possibility.

"I didn't foresee it passing

as a resolution," he said.

Wichterman said had the board members passed the resolution calling for a change in the funding formula they would have done so at the cost of not being reelected. A change in the funding formula would likely mean increased taxes in Lower Township, as Cape May voters seek to reduce their school tax burden.

Wichterman said this year it will cost Cape May taxpayers nearly \$80,000 to

send a student to the regional school district, which includes Lower Cape May Regional High School and the Teitelman Middle School. At the same time, the cost per student for Lower Township residents is less than \$8,000 per student. The Lower Cape May Regional School District is funded with taxes based on property value. Because of Cape May's higher property values, it pays more per stu-

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LT council urges county to keep Cold Spring Village funding in place

By BETTY WUND
For the Star and Wave

VILLAS – Anne Salvatore, co-founder and executive director of Historic Cold Spring Village (HCSV) asked Lower Township Council to urge the Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders to continue the \$150,000 annual funding to HCSV.

Deputy Mayor Norris Clark said, "The Salvatores have been historical advocates.

HCSV is a significant part of Cape May County and the Bayshore Historic Byway. It is its Williamsburg. It brings in more than 30,000 visitors to the area."

It is an important part of tourism in the county, he added.

Salvatore founded the village along with her husband Dr. Joe Salvatore. Salvatore said the village is a living museum. She said 26 antique buildings from all over the

county were moved onto the grounds to form a traditional 19th century colonial village. The HCSV sponsors educational programs that go into local schools. They reach all over the country by distance learning via Skype and teleconferencing.

As a tourist attraction, she said people from all over hear about the village and come to see and learn. It is the largest open-air history museum in New Jersey, Salvatore said.

"In 1973 we requested the township to start a history museum. The county took over running it in the 1980s. It represented a donation to the county of \$1.5 million. We are a non-profit museum," Salvatore said.

For 10 years the county funded the museum at \$300,000 a year. Salvatore said when the county decided it didn't want to be in the museum business the county tried to return the property to the Salvatores,

but there was no money to do buy it back. The county said it would fund the museum if it were turned into a non-profit corporation, which it became. In 1995 the County Board of Chosen Freeholders reduced their funding to \$150,000. Salvatore said the freeholders now plan to reduce the funding by \$50,000.

She said the museum puts more than \$500,000 back into the county annually for its \$150,000 investment.

Salvatore said the museum provides jobs, buys goods and services from local vendors, supports resident cottage industries in the village and has a privately run restaurant, the Old Grange. The county supports places like the Cape May County Museum and the Zoo, which according to Salvatore are not county-owned.

"We are asking for parity,"

Please see Urge, page A2



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