

Free

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during the recovery process are "astronomical."

Beach tag fees help municipalities hire lifeguards, beach tag inspectors and fund beach maintenance and cleaning operations.

In Cape May County, beach tags are made by special need workers who might not find other employment, Desiderio said. He added beach tags also protect local properties by funding the protective dune systems on beachfronts.

Desiderio said municipalities would likely turn to taxpayers to fund beach operations if the legislation passed. He said municipalities must comply with a state-mandated 2 percent cap on spending.

"How does the state expect us to raise those taxes with a 2 percent state cap law in place?" he asked.

Desiderio jokingly suggested if municipalities use federal or state funding for repairing and maintaining highways and roads, then maybe tolls should be lifted.

Cape May Mayor Dr. Edward Mahaney called the proposed bill a "direct attack" on local governments' ability to levy a user fee.

Mahaney said Cape May implemented beach tag sales in 1977. In 1995 Cape May generated \$500,000 in beach tag revenue, but was spending \$1 million to maintain the beaches. Cape May now raises over \$2 million in revenue from beach tag sales. He said a new beach tag system was developed to overcome the shortfall.

"We've had beach tags now for 35 years. It's only been within the last decade that we have broken even. For 25 years, our residents paid between \$300,000 and \$500,000 to subsidize this tourism-related activity," Mahaney said.

He said property owners will be "footing the bill" for entirely maintaining the beaches, which would equal a tax increase of \$400 on a house assessed at \$500,000.

"If we had to take the \$1.7 million that is left in this program and fit it under the tax levy cap, we couldn't do it. We would have to lay off our entire police department or lay off our entire fire department, which are major public safety issues," Mahaney said. "This is about public health, safety and welfare and making your town still be affordable so you can have a sustainable economy, not just during the summer, but year round."

Mahaney warned the bill is "undermining" the county's tourist-related economy.

"Cape May County's beaches and its 16 communities are an economic engine. We produce far more revenue that goes to Trenton than ever comes back to us," Mahaney said. "If you do what is proposed, you will no longer in South Jersey be able to keep your town up with the appearance, the safety and services people demand and expect."

Cape May Point Business Administrator Connie Mahon said Cape May Point operates on \$1.6 million annually, of which \$163,000 spent on the beaches.

Cape May Point is undergoing a substantial beach renourishment project with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as part of an ongoing 50-year beach replenishment project. Mahon said since 2004, Cape May Point taxpayers have paid over \$10,000 per household for beach renourishment. Upon completion of the 50-year project, Cape May Point taxpayers will have paid over \$7 million to fortify the beaches.

Mahaney said taxpayers also subsidize beach protection



Eric Avedissian/Cape May Star and Wave
Above, Sea Isle City Mayor Leonard Desiderio speaks to mayor and other officials at a press conference at the Sea Isle City Public School. The mayors are opposing legislation that would prohibit municipalities from requiring beach tags if they receive federal or state funding for beach replenishment.

and beach cleaning at a cost of \$50,000 per year.

"This proposed senate bill will force our town to make a significant choice. We would have to choose between providing safe, clean beaches for all of our beachgoers...or having beach renourishment and protecting the coastal communities that surround us as well as our own homes," Mahon said.

Cape May Point Beach Patrol Chief Bill Oat said there were 170 deaths on New Jersey beaches from 2008 to 2012. He said New Jersey beaches have more swimmers than other tourist destinations around the country.

"Without those services which the beach tags pay for, we're going to have more deaths, I guarantee," Oat said. "The beach is our lifeblood. We cannot do without the services that the beach fees provide."

Cape May Point Deputy Mayor Anita vanHeeswyk

said if the bill went through, her municipality would not be able to retain its lifeguards.

"Cape May Point has approximately 600 properties. We don't think Cape May Point would be able to provide the lifeguards. We would have to officially close our beaches," vanHeeswyk said. "If this were to happen in other towns, the tax base would plummet."

Stone Harbor Mayor Suzanne Walters said beach replenishment is funded 65 percent federal government and 35 percent shared in state and local match.

"Beach replenishment is the lifeblood of our beaches. If we don't have beach replenishment projects, we don't have tourists, and our towns have no way of producing any income," Walters said.

She said beach tags are a user fee, only imposed through the sale of beach tags. In Stone Harbor, beach tag revenue in 2012 is \$700,000,

and used for beach maintenance and lifeguard operations.

Walters said local mayors are joining with Atlantic, Monmouth and Ocean county officials in opposition to the proposed legislation.

"We have to get to our taxpayers and let them know that these senators are going to force us to raise our taxes," Walters said.

Ocean City Mayor Jay Gillian called the bill "unacceptable".

"If you go up to North Jersey, these elected officials keep putting things down on South Jersey. They have no idea what's going on down here," Gillian said. "To come with this kind of legislation is unbelievable and they should be ashamed of themselves."

Gillian said municipalities can't be expected to "do more with less" by providing lifeguards with additional taxpayer dollars.

"It really is time for our state senators and all of our politicians in New Jersey to use common sense," Gillian said. "Sandy was not a Democrat or Republican. She came in and she took us all out."

Avalon Public Relations Director Scott Wahl, who came to the press conference representing Avalon Mayor Martin Pagliughi, branded the legislation "irresponsible," "inconsistent" and "puzzling."

"I think every beach town in New Jersey learned during Hurricane Sandy that beaches and dunes are the first line of defense of any coastal storm, including a super storm like Sandy," Wahl said. "Renourishing beaches is not a cost. It's an investment in public safety and our economy."

Sea Isle City Council President William Kehner read a letter from First District Senator Jeff Van

Drew and Assemblymen Nelson Albano and Matt Milam and Ninth District Senator Christopher Connors and Assemblyman Brian Rumpf and Assemblywoman DiAnne Grove to Sweeney, opposing the bill.

"While it is generally understood that the cost of beach replenishment should be borne by the entire state given the tremendous revenues generated from tourism, S-2368 does not take into consideration the substantial operational costs associated with maintaining and protecting our state beaches. These responsibilities presently fall on shore municipalities," according to the letter. "It's critically important the public not be misled to believe that prohibiting beach fees would eliminate the cost of taxpayers for beach maintenance. It would only shift the cost burden, while at the same time ensuring the revenue raised from out of state tourists would be lost."

The letter said the bill would change beach operations during recovery efforts during Hurricane Sandy and demonstrate a "level of insensitivity."

"Withholding desperately needed replenishment funds clearly sends the wrong message and devalues how important beach replenishment is to preserving our state's coastline," according to the letter.

Desiderio pledged local elected officials are aggressively uniting and expressing their dissatisfaction with the bill.

"We are very serious about this. We will not be stopping. We are going to go full steam ahead on opposing this proposed legislation," Desiderio said.

HPC

Continued from page A1

ers, contractors, city council and the zoning and planning boards.

Mahaney said the city would strive to strengthen preservation requirements and develop an agenda to keep Cape May in good standing.

At the same meeting, council accepted a state grant of \$24,999 that would be dedicated to performing ongoing surveys of historic properties and structures. Mahaney said the city would match the grant.

Coupland said the HPC submitted its action plan to the

Secretary of the Interior in May 2008 in order to implement it as well as receive guidance for more improvements. Mahaney said a letter from the Secretary of the Interior commended the city and HPC for their high level of diligence in maintaining the National Historic Landmark standards.

Coupland said Cape May has been referred to as the "Queen of Seaside Resorts" and seen as a Victorian seashore resort town, however, there is much more to it than just Victorian history. He said the city has homes ranging

from the Federal period of the late 1700s to 1940s cottage style structures. He said Cape May's period of significance ranged from 1830 to 1940. He said Cape May was given the Historic Landmark Status because it had the largest collection of 19th century wooden frame buildings in the country. The Register of Historic Places recognized Cape May in 1976 as well, when the city created its historic district, which was part of the city's zoning regulations. The HPC was established in the same year.

"There's 67,000 histor-

ic places on the National Register of Historic Places," Coupland said. "Only 3 percent or less are considered National Historic Landmarks, which Cape May is."

He said the HPC has been conducting surveys of homes in the historic district since 2007. Other HPC duties include setting design standards for exterior alterations, recommending changes to improve the historic district and overseeing demolition and new construction projects to verify they comply with historic standards.

Coupland said owning a home in Cape May's historic district comes with certain responsibility and residents must respect the historical integrity. He said when design standards were implemented around 10 years ago,

they didn't consider modern improvements and energy conservation devices like solar panels and windmills that can affect the historic integrity of the home. He said the Secretary of the Interior said everything must remain the same or be restored to original specifications.

He said representatives from the Department of the Interior toured Cape May along with city officials last year, but before that no one from the state or federal level had been on the island in recent years to see the changes. Coupland said that was one reason why Cape May ended up on the watch list.

"Once they spent a whole day here, they had a different perspective," he said of the department's visit.

Councilman William Murray said he believes there has been a lot of inappropriate demolition through the years because homeowners can't afford to repair the older structures. When Coupland said heavy traffic was a primary cause for Cape May being put on the watch list, the mayor said this city was built with narrow streets and little parking in the center of town because it was designed before the introduction of automobiles.

Mahaney said the city should not lose sight of environmental improvements but preserving Cape May's historic status is also critical. Coupland said surveys of significant properties in the historic district would continue with the grant money received from the state and the city's matching funds.

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***PLAYING FOR KEEPS PG-13 11:35, 2:00, 4:30, 7:15, 9:40
TWILIGHT BREAKING DAWN PART 2 PG-13 11:40, 2:10, 4:40, 7:20, 9:50
SKYFALL PG-13 12:20, 3:20, 6:40, 9:40
RISE OF THE GUARDIANS 2D (FRI TO TUES) PG 11:50, 4:50, 9:30
RISE OF THE GUARDIANS 3D (FRI TO TUES) PG 2:20, 7:10
***MONSTERS INC 3D (WED & THURS) G 11:50, 2:20, 4:50, 7:10, 9:30
** No Passes

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	High	Low		
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
12	6:30	6:53	12:43	
13	7:22	7:48	12:42	1:37
14	8:14	8:42	1:36	2:30
15	9:06	9:37	2:30	3:22
16	9:59	10:32	3:25	4:14
17	10:52	11:30	4:22	5:07
18	11:47		5:21	6:01
19	12:29	12:43	6:23	6:54

Moon Phases
Last Quarter, Dec. 6
New Moon, Dec. 13
First Quarter, Dec. 20
Full Moon, Dec. 28
Perigee, Dec. 22
Apogee, Dec. 15