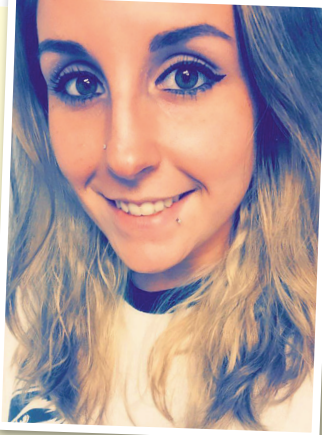




House of the week

Page B1



Documentarian shows struggle of addiction

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165th YEAR NO. 6 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2019 \$1.00

Shipboard vets may get Agent Orange benefits

U.S. Court of Appeals rules Blue Water Veterans deserve compensation

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

COLD SPRING — During the Vietnam War, the U.S. military sprayed more than 20 million gallons of Agent Orange in a 10-year period over Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to deforest jungles and kill crops.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has recognized certain cancers and other health problems as presumptive diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange,

which contained a dioxin, or other herbicides during military service. Veterans and their survivors may be eligible for benefits for diseases including chronic B-cell leukemia, Type 2 diabetes, Hodgkin's disease, ischemic heart disease, multiple myeloma, cancer of the plasma cells, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, Parkinson's disease, prostate and respiratory cancers including lung cancer and soft tissue sarcomas.

Although Vietnam veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange on land or on a river may be eligible

for benefits, those who served offshore on vessels such as aircraft carriers have not been eligible.

The U.S. Court of Appeals ruled last week that the VA cannot deny benefits to what are known as Blue Water Veterans. The VA does have the ability to seek an appeal of the decision with the Supreme Court.

According to Military Times, VA spokesman Curt Cashour said in a statement the department is reviewing the decision and "will determine an appropriate response." Lower Township resident Ed

Neel, 76, served as an E-3 in the Navy on the USS Constellation, an aircraft carrier stationed in the Gulf of Tonkin, located off the coast of northern Vietnam and southern China. Aircraft were sent from the carrier 24 hours a day, seven days a week to bomb the mainland, he said.

"The ship was designed to take the water out of the ocean and bring it in and desalt it and get it clean for bathing, cooking, brushing your teeth and drinking," Neel said. "Now that water was cleaned,

but Agent Orange wasn't taken out of it."

He said he believes the Agent Orange in the ship's water affected him and 100,000 other sailors who were exposed to the defoliant aboard ships. "Brown Water Sailors," those who sailed the creeks and rivers inland, received benefits from Agent Orange exposure, Neel said.

Agent Orange flowed into the gulf from the mainland as run off,

See **Blue Water Vets**, Page A5

Taylor keeps busy running special events

Marketing director has hands full even amid long offseason

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Laurie Taylor has to know about parades, rock bands, swim teams, preschool children and roller-skating as Cape May's director of marketing. Her work takes in the city's Office of Tourism, Recreation and Civic Affairs.

Taylor arrived in Cape May with decades of experience in marketing and communications from the public sector in Ocean City to a public relations agency that specialized in the hospitality and tourism with clients in 26 states.

"It's really been rewarding for me to use all the experiences that I've had," she said.

Her department has eight full-time employees and a seasonal and part-time staff that includes fitness instructors, swim team coaches, Pelican Place Preschool teachers aids and roller-skating and box office staff for Convention Hall. In the summer, the staff swells to more than 40 employees.

Taylor and her staff are housed in Convention Hall, which is busy 12 months of the year. She said the hall is not always open to the public because it hosts a number of private events.

Taylor said Cape May does not have a typical customer of a certain age and income since it is marketing everything from weddings for millennials to concerts of performers primarily from the 1960s and 1970s.



TAYLOR

"Part of the appeal when I decided to take this job was the challenge and excitement of having such a diverse demographic group," Taylor said.

She said she has profiles of visitors by season and type of event offered, which is shared with the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Cape May, the county Division of Tourism and Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts and Humanities.

Taylor said she works closely with Doreen Talley, marketing and events director for the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Cape May.

"We bill ourselves as 'T and T,' we are a marketing force to be reckoned with, Talley and Taylor," she said.

Any calls to the city from media, whether print, video shoots, travel writers or bloggers, go to Taylor and Talley, she said. Taylor said they make sure what is being produced is in a positive light for Cape May. The city and chamber partner for participation in a dozen travel shows up and down the East Coast and Canada.

Taylor recalls representing the city at the Philadelphia Flower Show.

"It's amazing how many people know, have memories and want to know more about Cape May," she said.

The city and chamber merged their separate guidebooks into one publication that will be available in mid to late February. Taylor said her department

See **Marketing**, Page A4



Edward O'Neill/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Fire and ice

Icicles hang from an outfall pipe structure at sunset on Delaware Bay in Lower Township last week. It's all but a memory now with temperatures almost springlike, but don't get out the gardening tools just yet as winter has a long way to go. See more photos on A10.

Lower budget seeks .9-cent rate hike

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council introduced its 2019 budget Monday, calling for a .9-cent tax rate increase.

The owner of a \$230,000 home would see a tax increase of \$20, or \$5 per quarter.

The proposed local purpose tax rate is 58.3 cents, or \$583 for every \$100,000 of assessed property value, up from 57.4 cents last year.

The proposed tax levy is \$21.2 million, up from \$20.8 million last year, an increase of \$388,997. The budget is below the state spending cap by \$1.7 million and below the 2 percent levy cap by \$355,701, Township Manager Jim Ridgway said.

He said the township com-

pleted 2018 with a surplus of \$6.7 million, down \$385,810 from 2018. The proposed township budget uses \$2.5 million of surplus, leaving a balance of \$4.2 million.

"Projections anticipate fully restoring the fund balance used in this budget," Ridgway said. "We feel confident using the amount of surplus and our bond rating is very solid at this time."

The tax collection rate for 2018 was 98.6 percent. Ridgway said revenue from the township's construction office exceeded projections.

He said the proposed tax increase is due in part to increasing the township's police department to 50 officers. A school resource officer was added in partnership with the Richard M. Teitelman School.

"This administration is

strongly committed to public safety as by providing more officers on our streets and in our schools," Ridgway said. "We can proactively address any and all safety concerns that arise."

He attributed another increase in the budget to increasing fees for solid waste disposal. Ridgway said that budget line remained level for many years but this year was increased by \$50,000 to address the growing amount of fees generated by the township for waste disposal.

The budget adds a new employee to the Recreation Department.

Salaries and wages total \$10.9 million, up \$324,094 from \$10.5 million in 2018. The "other expenses" line item totals \$9.1 million, down \$416,010 from 2018.

Debt service totals \$2.5

million, down \$355,000 from last year. Total revenue is projected to be \$28.6 million, up \$57,228 from last year. State aid is projected to total \$1.5 million, the same as last year. State and federal grants are projected to total \$622,675, up 25 percent, or \$125,912, from last year.

The total assessed value of real property in Lower Township, upon which the tax rate is based, is \$3.6 billion, up \$7.2 million from last year. Ridgway said \$364,166 equals 1 cent on the tax rate. He said the budget uses a 97.15 percent rate to calculate the reserve for uncollected taxes in 2019.

The township is optimistic about its shared service agreement with the county regarding police and

See **Budget**, Page A3



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