



## LCMRHS volleyball, wrestling and swimming coverage

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## House of the week

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167th YEAR NO. 12 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 2021 \$1.00

# Public, businesses split on public drinking

Group, residents say practice has tainted city's image; owners say it saved them

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

'The open carry and consumption of alcoholic beverages, had and will continue to have a negative impact on our most valued asset, the quaint, family-friendly quality of life in our town.'

-Taxpayers Association of Cape May

CAPE MAY — City Council extended increased outdoor dining for restaurants and allowing open public consumption of alcohol, created to assist establishments that serve alcohol faced with diminished indoor table space, until its April 6 meeting.

During a council meeting March 16, Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan cast the lone vote against the resolutions.

In a news release, the Taxpayers Association of Cape May (TPA)

urged City Council to reject any proposed resolution or ordinance that alters or suspends, temporarily or permanently, the existing municipal code prohibiting the open carry and consumption of alcoholic beverages in public spaces.

"The TPA has found that one of these emergency measures, the open carry and consumption of alcoholic beverages, had and will continue to have a negative impact on our most valued asset, the quaint, family-friendly quality of life in our town," it stated. "It is quite extraordinary that even in the depth of the 2020

pandemic restrictions, no other seaside resort town in this county, including Wildwood, permitted this behavior."

The TPA commended the city administration in its efforts to get the city through the 2020 crisis but stated this particular measure was a mistake.

"The damage done by an unbudgeted drain on municipal public works and public safety resources, as well as inconsistent, sporadic and ineffective monitoring and enforce-

'The open-container bill was a blessing to us and to the other businesses who have been dealing with very limited seating and little bar revenue.'

-Mark Kulkowitz and Pam Huber, Mad Batter restaurant

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# City introduces '21 budget with no tax increase

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council introduced its 2021 municipal with no increase in the local purpose tax rate of 36.6 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

During a council meeting March 16, Chief Financial Officer Neil Young highlighted changes from the city manager's original municipal budget that had a 1-cent tax rate increase. The local purpose tax totals \$10.5 million, up \$84,000 from last year. The budget totals \$21.8 million, down \$1 million from 2020.

Young said the city had considered outsourcing landscaping of city parks to a vendor but that was cut from the budget, saving \$80,000.

"Then you see we just kind of nicked and dimed the rest of the accounts to get to where we needed to be," Young said.

He said the amount to be

raised by taxation was decreased by \$287,000 to keep the tax rate stable.

Auditor Leon Costello said Cape May would receive some of the \$1.9 trillion federal stimulus money. He said rules of how the funding can be spent are unknown at this time but would be known by the time council holds a public hearing on the budget.

Councilman Chris Bezaire said the city could receive as much as \$350,000.

Costello said the budget is \$1.5 million under the state mandated levy cap and \$500,000 under the state spending cap.

The 2020 city budget used \$3.3 million in surplus from \$7.3 million of available surplus funds, leaving \$4 million in the fund.

For 2021, the city had \$7.7 million in surplus and is using \$3.3 million leaving \$4.4 million in surplus, which

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Benita Battaglia/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

## Spring has sprung in Cape May

Daffodils have awakened on Cape May's Washington Street Mall, confirming along with the sound of birdsong that spring has finally arrived.

# LCMR wins state mock trial title

Defeats perennial powerhouse West Morris Mendham

By R.E. HEINLY  
Special to the Star and Wave

The Lower Cape May Regional High School mock trial team has won the championship of the New Jersey State Bar Foundation's Vincent J. Apruzzese Mock Trial Competition for 2020-2021.

On March 18, they bested West Morris Mendham High School of Morris County in suburban New York City. This year 180 teams participated in the competition. Due to the pandemic it was entirely virtual.

It was truly a victory of David over Goliath in the world of mock trial competition. West Morris Mendham was the top-ranked team in the state and has won the championship four of the past eight years.

In the semifinal round-robin, Lower had downed another recent state champion, Colts Neck. West Morris Mendham had beaten Lower in that same round robin.

Mendham is a much larger school. It serves one of the wealthiest communities in the state with all the educational advantages affluence affords students. It is ranked as one of the top academic



Provided/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The Lower Cape May Regional High School mock trial team consists of Anya Davids, left, Elise Heim, John Payne, Nick Frey, Chariclia (Holly) Karavanas, coach Barbara Bakley-Marino and Liv Longshore.

high schools in New Jersey.

Lower is a much smaller school from a community of largely modest means. Lower last won the state championship

in 1995. Lower's team of six was the minimum size qualified to compete.

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# Lower to hunt down unlicensed operators of short-term rentals

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council approved a \$26,136 contract with Granicus LLC to identify owners of short-term rental properties in the township who have not purchased mercantile licenses.

During a council meeting March 15, Township Manager Michael Laffey said there are rentals without mercantile licenses in North Cape May, Villas, Erma and Diamond Beach, particularly close to the bay and ocean.

"The amount of short-term rentals that we have here in Lower Township is significant and we want to make sure that the folks that are doing business here have the proper licensing to

do so and a lot of them do not," he said. "We are going to identify those to see if they are in compliance."

Laffey said Granicus would identify the owners and locations and provide a "snapshot" of how large a home was being offered for short-term rental, whether a two-bedroom cottage or a five-bedroom house on the beach. He said township mercantile fees are adjusted based on the size of occupancy of rentals.

The contract with Granicus includes \$19,620 for address identification and \$6,516 for monitoring.

James Sanford, president of the Diamond Beach Citizens Action Group, asked if a property owner would need a mercantile license if

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## Sensory-friendly Pediatric Emergency Care

**OPENING FRIDAY, APRIL 2ND, WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY**

Shore Medical Center, assisted by the Atlantic County Special Services School District, has gone to great lengths to create a sensory-friendly pediatric emergency space ideal for those on the spectrum. Shore's specially trained staff is dedicated to making the emergency room experience less overwhelming for patients and their families from door to discharge.

*Shore Medical Center is committed to making every step of treatment easier.*

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