



## Barnegat Lightship discovered in East Camden shipyard

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## House of the week

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169th YEAR NO. 13 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 2023 \$1.00

# Fire station won't be completed until summer

## Supply, labor shortages contributing to delay

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Completion of the city's fire station has been delayed until summer due to supply chain issues and a labor shortage, according to City Manager Mike Voll.

"We've increased the labor," he said. "We've had problems getting enough laborers there getting this job completed."

At a March 22 City Council meeting, Mayor Zack Mullock said the city hoped to have the fire station finished by mid-June. He said he was unable to give an exact date.

Franklin Street resident Trish Ternove, the only residential property owner on the city-dominated 700 block of

'We're talking about a church that's not complete, we're talking about a fire company that's not complete and now let's talk about the building that's next to me that's actually falling down.'

—Trish Ternove, owner of the only home on the 700 block of Franklin Street

Franklin Street, said she was aware of proposed upgrades to the streetscape only after reading about it in the Star and Wave. She said she was under

the impression the fire station was opening in April and the city-owned AME Church was to have been completed last September.

Mullock said the city still needs to rebuild the church's bell tower, which was destroyed in a fire.

Ternove said she rents out her house and last summer, she had to do some "fast talking to my renters," due to construction taking place at the fire station. She said she did not expect construction to extend into a second summer.

"We're talking about a church that's not complete; we're talking about a fire company that's not complete and now let's

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The Cape May Fire Station under construction on Franklin Street is not expected to be completed until at least June.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

## Spring in bloom

Daffodils were taller than usual March 24 at Pavilion Circle in Cape May Point, perhaps due to a mild winter, announcing that spring has finally arrived.

## Emergency sewer project will tear up Lafayette St.

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Lafayette Street will be torn up in sections for an emergency repair to the sewer system extending into the summer tourist season.

The city discovered a deteriorating sewer main, forcing it to undertake the project that is expected to cost no more than \$1.9 million.

At a March 21 meeting, City Council approved a \$170,000 contract with DeBlasio and Associates for engineering, surveying and construction oversight.

The county is scheduled to begin repaving the main part of Lafayette Street on Nov. 1.

City solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said the project was not put out to bid since it is deemed as emergency work, a provision al-

lowed under the Local Public Contracts Law.

"The city manager's office went ahead, despite the non-bidding part of that, they went and sought emergent proposals to try and get a competitive price," he said. "We were able to get two competitive price quotations."

Mayor Zack Mullock said the city discovered the crumbling sewer main after council approved an inflow and infiltration study of the city's storm sewers with video cameras. He said Cape May has been trying to push the county to repave Lafayette Street for seven years.

"We know working with the county that we have to get the sewer pipe in the ground, so that we don't effect their work schedules,"

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## Township changes hours of its curfew for juveniles

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township Council approved modifying the hours of its established curfew ordinance and enforcement procedures to stem juvenile delinquency problems in some neighborhoods.

At a March 20 meeting, Deputy Mayor David Perry said he believed the ordinance would be a very important tool for the police department to enforce the curfew to keep the community safe and take care of a juvenile problem.

At a Feb. 6 meeting, Mayor Frank Sippel said a curfew ordinance in a northern New Jersey municipality was declared unconstitutional because some provisions of a state statute were left out.

At that time, Police Chief Kevin Lewis said the curfew ordinance was still on the books for the township and such a curfew is legal statewide. He said the legalization of marijuana and the state Juvenile Justice Reform Act "took a lot of tools out of our toolbox."

Lower Township's ordinance applies to anyone under the age of 18. It states it is unlawful for juveniles to be on any public street or public place within the township from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. between the dates of Sept. 15 and May 14 and between midnight and 6 a.m.

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# Cape May keeps city tax rate flat in 2023's budget

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council introduced the 2023 municipal budget calling for no increase in the local purpose tax rate. The budget totals \$23.7 million, up \$497,000 in appropriations from last year.

The budget uses \$3.9 million of surplus funds, up from \$3.4 million last year, leaving a balance of \$8.7 million in surplus.

The local purpose tax totals \$10.7 million, up \$99,000 from last year with the local purpose tax rate remaining at 36 cents per \$100 of assessed property value.

At a March 21 meeting, City Manager Mike Voll said city officials and staff were very aware of economic and fiscal inflation challenges that face residents and businesses.

Total ratables in Cape May are \$2.9 billion, up \$22 million from 2022.

Salaries and wages total \$8.2 million, up \$385,691 from last year.

City auditor Leon Costello, of Ford Scott, said the budget was well under state spending and levy caps. He said the city could have levied an additional \$2.6 million in taxes.

"Your budgets in the past have always been very frugal, always taxpayer conscious and you have a whopping \$2.6 million more, if you ever wanted to levy that on taxpayers and I'm sure you don't," he said.

Costello said many municipalities were looking at 3 and 4 cent local purpose tax increases this year with Cape May bucking the trend. He said the city imposed the expanded room tax on transient rentals at the right time which produced a significant amount of fund balance which will be used for debt service.

Cape May has a tax col-

lection rate of 99.16 percent. Costello said the city saw a slight increase in state aid from \$337,000 to \$339,000.

"We really get a lot of things done in this budget while maintaining a flat tax, it's the fourth year in a row to have a zero-tax increase," Mayor Zack Mullock said.

The city is anticipating \$450,000 from leases of city-owned property and \$340,000 from emergency medical service fees. The city's construction office anticipates \$700,000 in revenue.

Interlocal agreements for police services will bring in \$535,000 from West Cape May and \$324,000 from Cape May Point.

At total of \$1.8 million in revenue is anticipated from parking meters and \$2.6 million from room tax. Anticipated beach tag revenue totals \$2.7 million.

The tourism utility anticipates \$300,000 in revenue from events and fees and \$650,000 from room tax.

Under appropriations, the mayor and council will receive a total of \$42,000 in salaries. The city has budgeted \$500,000 for legal services.

Salary and wages for the police and fire departments are each budgeted at \$1.8 million. Cape May is paying the county \$195,000 for emergency dispatch services.

Public works salaries and wages total \$801,000 with public buildings and grounds salaries and wages totaling \$726,000.

Tourism utility salary and wages total \$550,000 with \$700,000 in other expenses.

Construction office salaries and wages total \$391,500. The city is appropriating \$1 million for the police and fire department retirement system.

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