



Girls lacrosse tops Holy Spirit, ties for division lead

Page A10



House of the week

B1



168th YEAR NO. 15 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 2022 \$1.00

Lower OKs \$30.6M. budget with no tax hike

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Lower Township has approved its \$30.6 million municipal budget with no tax increase. The local purpose tax totals \$22 million, up from \$21.8 million last year, an increase of \$193,000. Rates in the township increased by \$26.2 million, allowing the increase in the budget without increased taxation. The township completed 2021 with a surplus of \$8.6 million, the highest year-end balance to date. Of that balance, \$4.5 million is being applied to this year's budget, leaving a balance of \$4 million.

The tax collection rate for 2021 was 99.38 percent compared with 98.99 percent in 2020. This collection rate added more than \$1.9 million to the surplus and represents the highest collection rate ever. All revenue collections exceeded the projections for 2021, bringing in an additional \$1 million. The total assessed value of real property upon which the tax rate is based is \$3.7 billion, so every \$370,060 of the amount to be raised by taxation equals 1 cent

on the tax rate. The budget uses a 97.54 percent rate to compute the reserve for uncollected taxes in 2022. Salaries and wages total \$11.5 million, which includes \$4.9 million for the Department of Public Safety and \$2.8 million for the Department of Public Works. Salary and wages are up \$131,000 from last year. Other expenses total \$9.5 million, up from \$9.1 million in 2021. Debt service totals \$3.1 million. Municipal employee group insurance totals \$3.8 million. The township is paying the

county \$600,000 for 911 dispatch services. Salary and wages for Township Council total \$90,500. The township solicitor holds a contract for \$261,000, up \$5,204 from last year. The tax rate remains at 59.5 cents per \$100 of property value. In other business at an April 4 council meeting, an ordinance was introduced that would allow alcoholic beverages to be served earlier at Sunday brunches in restaurants. The ordinance would allow alcohol to be served at 9:30 a.m., a half-hour earlier than the current regulation of 10 a.m.

Council also adopted a redevelopment plan for the section of the township off Fulling Mill Road and amending the zoning map as an "area in need of redevelopment." Parcels of land have sat empty for decades off Fulling Mill Road between the runways of the county airport and the Middle Township border, but a zoning change would allow homes to be built on the lots. The zoning change allows construction of age-restricted single-

See Lower, Page A5

Visibility concerns delay solar project on City Hall's roof

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council tabled a resolution to approve a \$168,000 contract for a solar energy system for City Hall, stating it's unclear whether the panels would be visible from the street. The project has not been reviewed by the city's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The sole bidder was KRN Contractors, d/b/a TAF Solar. Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan said during a meeting April 4 that the contractor provided only an overhead image that did not show whether the panels would be seen from below and asked the resolution be tabled until a street view rendering was provided by the contractor. "My other concern is the fact it's a flat roof," Sheehan

said. "Are we going to be having a lot of issues with leaking because of it being an older building with this flat roof?" Mayor Zack Mullock, who cast the lone vote against tabling the resolution, said the roof was recently upgraded but leakage is a concern with any solar array installed on a roof. "You cannot see what's on this roof from the ground," Mullock said. Mullock said the HPC, which will review the project, does not permit visible solar panels so the contractor is obligated to receive its approval. City solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said the condition of the bid specifications was the solar panels would be "minimally visible." He said

See Visibility, Page A5



Frank Scott/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Easter Fashion Stroll

Young ladies participating in Cape May's annual Easter Fashion Stroll pose with the Easter Bunny on April 17 in Rotary Park.

West Cape ready to extend historic district to North Broadway

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Borough Commission is set to approve an extension of the historic district to a section of North Broadway. Borough solicitor Frank Corrado is preparing an ordinance for the change. For several years, the borough's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has been recommending extensions to the historic district. At an April 13 Borough Commission meeting, HPC Commissioner

Elan Zingman-Leith said some of the HPC commissioners thought it made more sense to put two sides of the same street in the district and is now recommending both sides of Fourth Avenue be included. He said Corrado asked them to include a statement of significance. "It's true that most designation reports in most HPCs around the country include a statement of significance, a history of the site and an architectural description," Zingman-Leith said. He said the introduction to the

West Cape May History Committee's survey of the borough is "spectacular." He said he used that for a statement of significance. Chairman Jim Barnes said the HPC submitted locations that are more contiguous with the historic district but there have been suggestions of adding singular properties of historical significance. The borough can add more properties into the historic district at any time, Zingman-Leith said. Deputy Mayor Peter Burke said when the borough set up the original

historic district, some houses were not included in the district, but historic surveys had been undertaken of those structures. The historic district does not cross Landis Avenue, he said. "I'm not sure it's good idea to expand the district where there are no surveys for individual homes, but there are plenty of individual homes that were surveyed that are not being included in the new district, including some that are directly across the street from the old district off of Pacific (Avenue),"

he said. Zingman-Leith said he thought there was a misunderstanding between a survey and a designation. He said a survey is almost always bigger than the eventual historic district and a survey is undertaken to determine where the borders of the historic district should be set. "You try to make the district borders easily comprehensible," he said. Wonderful, historic buildings

See West Cape, Page A5

City hires firm to oversee construction of firehouse

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council authorized a professional services contract for construction oversight of the new fire station with Skip Holzapfel Builders in an amount not to exceed \$30,000. The firm was the only one to submit a bid. At an April 5 council meeting, Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan asked if Holzapfel was insured in case construction issues were en-

countered. City solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said Holzapfel is a licensed contractor but would not be performing general contracting services. "We are sort of calling on his knowledge and experience, the fact that he is licensed, to be a third set of eyes on this project," he said. Gillin-Schwartz said if there were issues with the construction, the onus is on the general contractor. He said having a clerk of the

See Firehouse, Page A4

Point votes to oppose new DEP coastal regulations

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — Borough Commission in a 2-1 vote passed a resolution opposing coastal regulations proposed by the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) that would require new construction in flood zones be elevated 5 feet above base flood elevation. The borough's resolution noted elevating new and substantially improved homes an additional 5 feet would be prohibitively expensive for residents and may not be feasible on many sites. The resolution notes there is no state legislation authorizing the DEP to require more stringent requirements than federal regulations in place. The

prospective 5-foot freeboard requirement is based on sea level rise projections for the year 2100 that have a probability of only 17 percent, it states. Municipalities are required by Municipal Land Use Law to prepare master plans only 20 to 30 years into the future. The borough's resolution notes the sea level projections are 80 years in the future. At an April 14 meeting, Commissioner Catherine Busch opposed the resolution while Mayor Bob Moffatt and Deputy Mayor Anita van Heeswyk voted in favor of the resolution. "According to the New Jersey Climate Change Resource Center at Rutgers University, sea level rise is likely to be as much as a foot by 2030 and 2 feet by 2050," Busch said.

She said a recent report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports a consensus among scientists who expect more severe and more frequent storms with much greater rainfalls. Busch said the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimates a tenfold increase in the frequency of moderate flooding along the East Coast. "The supporting material for this resolution is at best misleading and likely purposely misrepresents the available scientific evidence," Busch said. The county, Lower Township and Cape May passed similar resolutions. Raising first floor elevations 5 feet at this time makes no sense, van Heeswyk

See Point, Page A4



FROM OUR FARM TO YOUR KITCHEN

Shop fresh farm-to-table flavor all winter long at the Beach Plum Farm Market

BeachPlumFarmCapeMay.com • 140 Stevens Street, West Cape May NJ 08204
(609) 459-0121 • @BeachPlumFarm

