

Year in Review

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tensified hurricanes, severe rainstorms, and high tides. The ordinance stated the city with advice from the Historic Preservation Commission has concluded the best policy for long term preservation of historic structures is to support property owners who wish to elevate their properties to mitigate flood exposure.

— Cape May City Council extended the use of temporary tents in anticipation of a continuing impact of COVID-19 on the upcoming tourist season and extended lessened outdoor dining and open consumption of alcohol into March. The ordinance stated temporary tents may remain in use until Dec. 31, 2021, or at the time of the expiration of the state of emergency and public health emergency declaration by the governor.

MARCH

— Cape May Point residents asked why the water level in Lake Lily was so low. The Yale Avenue water main replacement was under way and the borough had to lower the lake significantly to replace the water main. A pump was running 24 hours per day. Groundwater needed to be lowered to aid the project.

— West Cape May purchases its water from Cape May. Their January bill was \$10,000 higher than a five-year average of past January bills. Water/Sewer Superintendent David Carick determined the borough was billed inappropriately. Cape May was inserting a liner in the main pipe under Cape Island Creek that transports water from the city's desalination plant to Lafayette Street. Cape May normally had water entering the city from two directions but during the

repair, it was receiving water only from one direction, down Broadway, causing the borough to be charged for all of that water.

— Cape May City Council approved the purchase of the Allen AME Church on Franklin Street for \$350,000, which included an adjacent single-family dwelling that currently is the home of the Center for Community Arts. The church was purchased in "as-is" condition. Council also approved appropriating \$450,000 for the project with \$428,571 in bonds or notes and a down payment of \$21,429.

— Cape May City Council met on a virtual basis through much of the COVID-19 pandemic resumed meeting in person at City Hall starting on March 16. On March 2, Mayor Zack Mullock said members of the public could phone in their comments as they had when the meetings were convened using Zoom. A limited number of the public was able to attend the council meeting in person.

— The city's elementary school returned to a full school day beginning March 15. It has been operating on a half-day schedule due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

— Cape May Point Borough Commission adopted its 2021 municipal budget that included a 1.7-cent increase per \$100 of assessed value. During a virtual meeting March 11, auditor Michael Garcia said the budget totaled \$2 million, up \$45,000 from 2020. The local purpose tax was increasing by \$95,000, from \$1.3 million to \$1.4 million, he said.

— Cape May City Council introduced its 2021 municipal budget with no increase in the local purpose tax of 36.6 cents per \$100 of assessed value. The local



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

City officials and members of Cape May's cultural organizations gathered on the sidewalk in front of the historic Allen AME Church on April 12 to celebrate its purchase by the city, which had approved the agreement in March.

purpose tax totaled \$10.5 million, up \$84,000 from 2020. The budget totaled \$21.8 million, down \$1 million from 2020.

— A \$105,000 contract was approved by Cape My City Council with Axon Enterprises of Scottsdale, Ariz. to purchase body cameras and software for the police department. Police Chief Dekon Fashaw said a state grant would reimburse the city for part of the purchase. The state required all police officers to wear body cameras by June 1.

— Cape May Point Borough Commission approved an application for use of borough right of way for seven 5G cell phone equipment poles for Verizon Wireless. The enabling

resolution stated Verizon was required to obtain all necessary local, state, and federal permits and notify adjacent homeowners seven days before installation begin.

— An ordinance prohibiting the smoking of marijuana in public areas including the Promenade and Washington Street Mall was introduced by Cape May City Council on March 16. The ordinance does not ban the smoking of marijuana on private property including homes, businesses and hotels.

— Cape City Council extended temporary outdoor dining for restaurants at a March 30 meeting, matching largely what was permitted in 2020. Establishments were not given additional seating above what was listed on their mercantile license. In a 4-1 vote, council approved a plan reducing the area where open public consumption of alcohol is permitted establishing a 50-foot zone from establishments rather than allowing consumption in specific business zones. Alcohol consumption was prohibited on the city's sidewalks, streets, beaches, Rotary Park and vehicles.

— Michael Voll was appointed City Manager by City Council on a one year, \$110,000 contract at a special meeting March 30.

APRIL

— A surge of water caused numerous leaks in West Cape May after Cape May calibrated its master meters following the replacement of a major water transmission line. As many as 34 pipes burst. The city of Cape May took responsibility for the damage.

— City Council voted against a resolution that earmarked a zone on the Promenade where open consumption of alcohol would be permitted if it were within 50 feet of a licensed premise.

— Council realized that in most cases, the establishments are farther than 50 feet from the Promenade. An earlier resolution temporarily suspended prohibition of public alcohol consumption on the sidewalk and other public spaces

in the city within 50 feet of a licensed premises but indicated that in no event would the city permit open public consumption on any portion of Rotary Park, the beach or the Promenade, with the exception of those areas that fell within 50 feet of a licensed premises. The resolution that failed April 21 stated council recognized that due to practical limitations, only limited areas of the Promenade would fall within 50 feet of a licensed premises. The resolution clarified that open public consumption could take place on the Promenade between Jackson and Decatur streets when purchased from a licensed establishment or in a BYOB dining situation.

— Conceptual plans presented for Cape May's new fire station showed a 16,105-square-foot masonry building with seven bays and a price tag of about \$5.7 million. Architect Rob Conley presented conceptual designs to City Council on April 20. He said the building would have an estimated construction cost of \$325 per square foot totaling \$5.2 million. Adding in the 10 percent contingency raises the total building budget to \$5.7 million, Conley said.

— City Council took the first step to expand the size of Cape May's desalination plant, a project expected to cost in the millions. During a meeting April 20, council awarded a \$39,241 contract to CME Associates for professional engineering services to provide an implementation plan for expansion of the desalination plant and related water infrastructure improvements.

— Additional work was approved by Cape May City Council including lead and asbestos abatement as part of the restoration and conversion of the Franklin Street School into a county library branch. The city entered into an agreement with the county and county Library Commission for the project. The county contracted with architect Michael Calafati, who has proposed additional design and abatement services for the school building.

MAY

— West Cape May Borough Commission continued to explore allowing cultivation and sale of marijuana within its borders and its revenue producing potential for the municipality. Borough solicitor Frank Corrado circulated to commissioners a template for a future ordinance covering licenses under consideration for marijuana cultivation, distribution, wholesale, and retail sales.

He said he made a couple of assumptions in the template such as cultivation of marijuana being a permitted use where farming is permitted and made other uses conditional. Corrado said a variance was not required for a conditional use so long as the applicant satisfies the conditions that are attached to that use.

— A fee schedule was approved in Cape May for restaurants using the city's right of way such as sidewalks, streets and parking areas for temporary outdoor dining. For use of sidewalk, the fee is the square footage of the sidewalk area at \$1 per square foot times the number of months of operation. For use of a parking area, the fee is the square footage of the parking area at \$2.50 per square foot times the number of months of operation. For closure of a street, the fee is the square footage at \$3.50 per square foot times the number of months of operation.

— When Cape May's 1928 LaFrance firetruck returns to the fire museum following an expensive restoration process, it will be returning to a building without climate control, a security system or smoke and fire detectors. Jim Matthews, president of the Cape May Fire Department, told City Council on May 4 that the fire museum must be upgraded to protect the truck. He said the fire department was putting approximately \$100,000 of money it raised into that truck to restore it.

— Cape May Elementary School approved its 2021-22 budget with no increase in the local purpose tax rate. The school's tax levy totals \$1.8 million. The 2020 local tax rate was 6.1 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

— The Municipal Revenue and Taxation Advisory Committee (MTRAC) Chairman Dennis Crowley told City Council on May 5, the city was a commercial enterprise with many homes using as weekly rentals. He said the city issued 464 rental mercantile licenses with an unknown number of 2,379 residential ratables. Crowley said 75 percent of the owners of residential properties in Cape May live somewhere else.

— Cape May City Council voted to terminate continued professional services by the engineering firm of Mott MacDonald for projects such as Lafayette Street Park. Council approved Engineering Design Associates as the city's contracted engineering firm on Jan. 1.

— An ordinance was introduced by Cape May City Council on May 18 to amend the zoning code to prohibit the operation of marijuana businesses in all zones of Cape May.

— Cape May Point made the state's 2021 list of the

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