

City Tax Collector's Office processed \$44M. in 2023

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Municipal Taxation and Revenue Advisory Committee (MTRAC) Chairman Dennis Crowley calls Cape May a multimillion-dollar business. According to MTRAC, the city's budget has increased 87 percent since 2010.

The city takes in revenue from selling water to neighboring towns and the U.S. Coast Guard, via beach tags sales, parking meters and interlocal agreements with adjacent municipalities.

The city's tax collector, Deborah Lindholm, issued a report for 2023 for City Council.

The report noted the Tax Collector's Office took on the additional tasks of managing water/sewer billing and posting to its already assigned duties. The city had a tax collection rate of 99.36 percent.

The office collectively processed \$44.4 million of money received on behalf of the city of Cape May. According to the report, the remaining portion of \$5.2 million collected by other departments was transferred to

the Tax Office for verification, updating and included deposits delivered to the bank.

On behalf of the Water/Sewer Utility Fund, the Tax Office collected \$6.9 million in quarterly billing. The Coast Guard purchased \$501,991 worth of water from Cape May while Cape May Point purchased \$258,839 of water and West Cape May purchased \$353,719.

The Tax Office sells, audits, and manages beach tags. The city sold 2,872 commercial beach tags totaling \$288,275, a total of 17,255 seasonal beach

tags totaling \$468,280 and 146,255 tags from beachfront sales totaling \$1.9 million. All told, the Tax Office recorded 179,072 tags sold for a grand total of \$3 million including mail order sales of \$155,410.

For the current fund, the office received 18,750 payments totaling \$32 million. Parking meter revenue totaled just over \$2 million. Court fees collected totaled \$289,586.

Collections for emergency medical services for Cape May totaled \$258,499, \$38,832 for Cape May Point and \$127,271

for West Cape May.

Pilot (payment in lieu of taxes) such as Victorian Towers, totaled \$216,480.

The city's contracts to provide police services to West Cape May collected \$492,960 while the interlocal agreement with Cape May Point totaled \$324,419.

The current fund total for 2023 collected by the tax office was \$36.3 million. Collections by other offices turned over to the Tax Office totaled \$3.3 million for a grand total of \$39.6 million.

Cannabis

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tion that the board needs to take, it would be on our agendas."

As it stands now, the principles of Shorehouse Canna and Rea's Farm are discussing options to keep their proposal within the boundaries of the current zoning or a proposal to amend zon-

ing rules, she said.

"The ball is kind of in their court now," the mayor said.

Resident Laura LaManna asked if there was a deadline or timeline for Borough Commission to receive a proposal for the cannabis farming operation. Sabo said no timeline was presented.

"I've been a member of

this community for over 40-some years, and I really think that you need to proceed very carefully with what you are possibly considering with Rea's Farm," resident Nancy Tompkins said. "I understand that farms have difficult times in producing income, but I totally object to what they are proposing."

West Cape expected to detail housing plan

By JACK FICHTER
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WEST CAPE MAY — At Borough Commission's meeting March 13, the borough's affordable housing

counsel Eric Nolan and affordable housing planner Susan Gruel are expected to present West Cape May's Fair Share Housing Plan.

Nolan and Gruel were scheduled to present the

borough's Fair Share Housing plan Tuesday night to West Cape May's Planning and Zoning Board for its approval.

If approved, the plans would be presented to the court as a solution to the borough's Fair Share Housing obligation.

The borough continues to make slow progress in fulfilling its obligation to produce two affordable housing units through Habitat for Humanity.

A subdivision of a borough-owned lot on Willow Avenue was approved by the Planning Board, which would allow for construction of two affordable homes.

Last August, Borough Commission approved entering into an agreement with Habitat for Humanity to build the two affordable housing units. The borough is under a court order to construct two housing units.

4-H member excels at science fair

ERMA — The Cape May County 4-H Youth Development Program congratulates Max Rose, a member of the Lower Cape May Regional (LCMR) High School 4-H Club, for taking first place/Best in Show in the General Science Division at the school's science fair Feb. 27.

Rose's experiment compared the speeds that her pet snails can move over different surfaces, such as cardboard and plastic.

"I am so proud of Max and all our 4-H members who entered the science fair. They did an excellent job presenting their experiments and showing their knowledge of the subject matter," 4-H Program Coordinator Linda Horner said. "Their experiments and findings were so interesting."

The 4-H'ers are members of the LCMRHS After School Science 4-H Club under the direction of Club Leader Karren Barr, a science teacher at LCMR.

Call (609) 465-5115, ext. 3605, or visit capemay.njaes.rutgers.edu/4h for more information about the Cape May County 4-H Youth Development Program.



4-H Club Leader Karren Barr with Max Rose, a member of the Lower Cape May Regional High School 4-H Club, and a young fan.

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ordinance from Hopewell Township, something he described as "complicated and difficult to enforce."

He said it may take some time to develop an appropriate ordinance for Cape May but noted an educational program for residents could start right away.

City Manager Paul Dietrich said he worked on dark sky lighting for more than two years as an engineer for Upper Township.

"To be effective, I think we need to start with an education program to bring a lot more ground support for it, because otherwise it's going to die," he said.

A dark skies ordinance was ready for introduction in Upper Township but died following negative public comments, Dietrich said.

He said the new Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) standards contain

guidelines that address shielded light fixtures and lumens for new development. Dietrich said the city's ordinance handled nuisance problems of lights from adjacent yards shining in neighboring windows, but light pollution also comes from commercial properties and streetlights.

Dark sky ordinances are wrought with enforcement problems, he said. Such an ordinance would only address new lighting and not address existing lighting such as that on beachfront hotels, which would not change unless the city has an education program and do an encouragement from a grass roots standpoint, Dietrich said.

To enforce light regulations, code enforcement would have to work at night, he said.

"It's no different than the years of trying to preach using native plants in the landscape in the town,"

Environmental Commission member Gretchen Whitman said. "We've been doing this work for years, we've had native plant sales, we're probably close to 15 years and still people are not doing it."

She said educational programs are often "preaching to the choir," at the Nature Center of Cape May.

Dark sky methods conserve energy and save wildlife, Yeager said. He said it was easy to change a lightbulb, shield lights or change their angle.

Dietrich said on small lots with close neighbors with a 5-foot or 10-foot setback from the property line, many homeowner's lights are probably in violation of a dark skies ordinance.

"If you have a porch light, either put it on a motion sensor or when you go to bed, turn off your lights," he said.

The Environmental Commission created flyers to educate the public on water conservation and invasive species and could develop a dark skies brochure, Whitman said. She said she could create a PowerPoint Presentation to cover those three points to be presented to community groups.

Environmental Commission Chairman Mike Jones said the city needed to reach architects and landscape architects, so they design their projects to be eco-friendly.

"I think if you design to the HPC standards, you're going to comply with dark sky because they kind of built it in their standards," Dietrich said.

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