

Cape May expected to adopt its flat-tax budget

By JACK FICHTER

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council is expected to hold a public hearing and vote on the 2021 municipal budget — which features no tax increase — during its meeting April 20.

At an April 6 council meeting, Councilman Chris Bezaire suggested the meeting be moved to a larger venue, Convention Hall, to allow more members of the public to attend under current COVID restrictions. He noted Convention Hall was scheduled to reopen April 19.

City Manager Michael

Voll said it was the call of council to move the meeting to Convention Hall. He said with no increase in the tax rate, he did not anticipate a large audience for the meeting.

Bezaire questioned if council wanted to continue to wear masks at meetings. He said several council members have been vaccinated.

City solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said council should continue to wear masks.

Deputy Mayor Stacy Sheehan questioned new hires for the city in 2021, which included a part-time assistant for the plan-

ning and zoning boards and Historic Preservation Commission, a full-time mechanic, a full-time laborer for streets and roads, a full-time police officer and a part-time accounts payable clerk for the finance office.

Voll said it was at the discretion of council to remove any new positions.

"I believe we need each and every one of them. The mayor swore in a police officer this morning as a replacement and we are also looking to hire another police officer — it's in the budget to make it safe for the four squads to balance it out to have enough patrol

officers," he said.

Sheehan said a number of city employees' salaries are increasing. Mayor Zack Mullock said if council members have any questions on salaries or stipends, they should forward them to the city manager before April 20.

Gillin-Schwartz said the city's annual salary ordinance would be introduced the same night as the budget hearing.

In other business, Voll said the city has too little space to store records and public works equipment. He said the city-owned building next to Convention Hall is filled with re-

ords and could be put to better use.

The city issued a request for proposals to construct a steel building at the public works yard. Mullock said such as building has been requested for many years by city departments. He said equipment is being stored outside that should be under cover.

Council approved a resolution for stained glass restoration at the city-owned Allen AME Church from J&R Lamb Studios. Roof repairs are under way on the church.

Mullock said the city has an \$80,000 grant that must be spent by June.

Sheehan questioned if Cape May MAC would be providing trolley service to the city this summer that was previously a service of the Atlantic City Jitney Association. Bezaire said a request for proposals would need to be offered by the city.

"Obviously any time we can help out a local organization like MAC, if we are going to be spending the money as a city, we'd like to help out our local organizations rather than someone from out of town," he said.

Bezaire said it is unlikely trolley service would start before late June or early July.

Prohibit

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passing any marijuana legislation for five years.

"The suggestion of the League of Municipalities and what we see most other towns at least locally doing is the enactment of an ordinance early on to completely opt out of retail sales of marijuana

because you can always make the ordinance less restrictive over the next five years, you can't make it more restrictive," he said.

Deputy Mayor Anita vanHeeswyk said she concurred with Amenhauser. She noted the borough had two businesses grandfathered in under the zon-

ing law.

Mayor Robert Moffat and Commissioner Catherine Busch said they were in favor of passing an ordinance to ban marijuana sales in the borough. Amenhauser said he would draft an ordinance.

Resident Sandy Allison asked if the ordinance would prevent persons

from smoking marijuana in public areas such as the beach, Lake Lily, and the circle park. Busch said a separate ordinance would be needed to address smoking marijuana in public places.

Amenhauser said he would check current borough ordinances for restrictions on smoking tobacco products in the public places.

"We could amend them to include marijuana as well," he said. "If they are not yet in place, we can certainly address en-

acting an ordinance to do just that."

In other business, Busch said a clean-up of the borough's beaches is scheduled for April 24. Volunteers are asked to report behind Borough Hall at 8:30 a.m. The clean-up will be organized and lead by former commissioner Robert Mullock and his family.

Busch said the Yale Avenue water main replacement project is progressing. She said due to the Point's high-water table, much dewatering is taking place on the project.

Some sediment is going into Lake Lily from the street and when the contractor installs well points to pump out water, Busch said.

"It is being monitored daily by the borough engineer's office staff and the public works manager," she said.

Moffatt said beach tags are for sale on the borough's website. A kiosk

will be set up in the driveway behind Borough Hall in May for the sale of seasonal tags, he said.

Borough Administrator Ed Grant said traffic calming measures to slow down vehicles on the borough's streets using items such as speed bumps and islands would not be installed this summer.

Grant said he attended a Zoom meeting last week with West Cape May and Cape May discussing its shared services agreement for municipal court. He said Cape May was seeking to streamline the process for the two boroughs.

Borough Commission approved a resolution requesting permission for the dedication by rider to accept donations, bequests, and gifts for Lake Lily stewardship. The borough is required to obtain permission from the director of the Division of Local Government Services.

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