

Cape May Point budget calls for .4-cent tax rate hike

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

year and the tax rate from 32.9 cents to 33.3 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

A total of \$1.5 million is to be raised by local purpose tax. The budget totals \$2.1 million.

The tax increase is being driven by lifeguard and beach tag personnel salaries increasing by \$17,000

CAPE MAY POINT — Borough Commission approved its 2023 municipal budget that features a .4-cent increase in the local purpose tax rate.

The tax levy is increasing by \$41,000 over last

due to the increase in the minimum wage, which is affecting all shore towns, according to auditor Mike Garcia.

Combined health insurance, worker's compensation and general liability coverage is increasing \$9,000, or 22%. The borough's contract for police protection from the city of Cape May is increasing by \$6,000, part of a contractual agreement. Electricity costs are increasing by \$10,000.

The tax increase amounts to \$40 on a property valued at \$1 million, according to Garcia.

At an April 13 meeting, Garcia said the municipal budget used 39 percent of its surplus fund in 2021, 33 percent in 2022 and 41 percent this year. He said the surplus fund has \$585,000, of which \$238,000 is being used in the 2023 budget, about \$55,000 more than last year.

The surplus account increased by \$35,000 in 2022,

Garcia said. He said the borough had a tax collection rate of 98.97 percent, down from 99.19 percent last year.

Garcia said the majority of the budget, 74 percent, is funded by local purpose tax with 11 percent coming from the surplus fund.

The municipal budget is subject to a state 2 percent tax levy cap and this year it is \$200,000 below the cap due to previous years' caps that were not utilized, he said.

The budget is also subject to a 3.5 percent spending cap and falls \$5,200 below the cap.

Under spending, 36 percent is comprised of salaries, wages and pensions. Police protection totals 15 percent of total spending, with capital projects using 18 percent of the municipal budget.

The borough's Department of Public Affairs and Public Safety budget shows 49 percent being used for police protection, 2 percent

for the fire department, 15 percent for the beach tag program and 24 percent for lifeguards.

The borough's Department of Revenue and Finance budget shows 11 percent for general administration, clerk's office salaries and expense at 25 percent, tax collection and assessor's office at 9 percent, legal costs at 6 percent and insurance at 13 percent.

Last year, insurance costs totaled 11 percent of the Revenue and Finance budget, Garcia said.

"Insurance rates for general liability, worker's comp. and health insurance all increased pretty significantly this year and it's not just for the borough, it's statewide we are seeing those insurance increases," he said.

The borough's Department of Public Works, Parks and Property budget shows 42 percent for Public Works and roads, 5 percent for engineering ex-

penses, 14 percent for public buildings and grounds, 4 percent for beach maintenance, 14 percent for trash removal and 7 percent for recycling.

In last year's water and sewer budget, 97 percent of surplus was used. That is decreasing to 41 percent in the 2023 budget, Garcia said. The water/sewer surplus fund has \$159,000 compared to \$23,000 last year, he said.

The water/sewer budget is balanced using 7 percent of surplus funds with 53 percent of revenue coming from water customer fees and sewer charges representing 43 percent of revenue.

Debt service represents 15 percent of the water/sewer budget spending with salary and wages at 11 percent, capital outlay at 5 percent and 68 percent for purchasing water from Cape May and sewage disposal costs from the Cape May County Municipal Utilities Authority.

West Cape to hold off on pesticide ban

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — With a new state law taking effect in the fall banning the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, the borough is going to hold off passing a local ordinance that would do the same thing.

At an April 12 Borough Commission meeting, Deputy Mayor Alan Crawford said the borough's Environmental Commis-

sion want to have additional work sessions with the commissioners. He said the state law, which becomes effective Oct. 1, would primarily affect neonicotinoid use, and the borough should first see the reach of the state law before passing its own.

Mayor Carol Sabo concurred the borough should first examine the new state statute before acting on its own.

The Environmental

Commission was proposing a ban on pesticide use within 500 feet of any active wetlands, wells and streams. The commission was calling for a ban on all synthetic pesticides for turf, landscape and outdoor pest management on both public and private property.

A memorandum from the Environmental Commission noted suspected human birth defects from pesticide exposure and

glyphosate levels found in the blood and urine of agricultural workers.

"Another study found neonicotinoids, also known as neonics, have been demonstrated to harm pollinators at levels found in the environment and are linked to bee population declines," stated the memo. "Neonics can kill bees or impair their ability to fend off disease, forage for food or survive the winter."

Special meeting scheduled on sewer expansion

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY —

The borough has scheduled a special meeting for 6 p.m. April 24 on a proposed sanitary sewer

expansion project for Second Avenue, McCullough Alley, Goldbeaten Alley, Morrison Avenue and Third Avenue.

Mayor Carol Sabo said all of the implications of the project would be discussed at the meeting. She said the borough's financial professionals, solicitor and engineer Tony Chadwell would attend the meeting.

"Any and all concerns can be aired at that time," Sabo said.

Chadwell said his firm was completing survey work and a feasibility study that would be presented at the meeting. It remains to be determined

whether gravity drainage is sufficient from one end of the project to the other, he said.

Pump station capacity is also being studied, he said.

In February, borough auditor Leon Costello said a project to bring service to as many as 68 residents could carry a price tag of at least \$1.6 million. Affected homeowners would share the cost of the project and have 10 years to pay it back, interest free.

Chadwell said the project would cross wetlands, which would require the approval of the state Department of Environmental Protection.

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