



## HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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## COAST GUARD COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

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# LCMR budget raises taxes in Lower, WCM Cape May's tax rate drops this year under equalization formula

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — The Lower Cape May Regional Board of Education approved its 2016-17 budget at an April 28 meeting. The budget will bring a tax increase to property owners in Lower Township and West Cape May but a decrease to Cape May homeowners.

The state determines the share Lower Township, Cape May and West Cape May will contribute to funding the regional school

district through an equalized valuation based on property values and resident students, according to Business Manager Mark Mallett.

In 2016-17, Lower Township will contribute 67 percent of the funding to the regional school district, with Cape May contributing 24 percent and West Cape May 8 percent of the \$19.9 million local purpose tax, he said. Mallett said it fluctuates year to year. Cape May will pay about \$5 million in 2016-17, down from \$6

million last year, he said. Lower Township's share will increase from last year's 62 percent to 67 percent.

The tax rate decreases for Cape May property owners from 21.6 cents per \$100 of assessed property value to 17.8 cents. Lower Township's rate will increase from 35.3 cents per \$100 of assessed value to 38.9 cents. West Cape May property owners will see an increase from 35.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value to 39.8 cents.

The owner of a home assessed at \$250,000 in Cape May will see their tax bill decrease by about \$100 to \$445. The tax bill for the owner of a \$250,000 home in Lower Township will see about a \$100 increase to \$973. The owner of a \$250,000 home in West Cape May will see about a \$100 increase to \$995, Mallett said.

He said the amount of money the district is raising through local taxes is \$1.2 million below the maximum permitted by the state under its District Adequacy for-

mula. The school district's total operating budget is \$31.3 million.

Mallett said enrollment is anticipated to increase slightly as a result of Choice School students attending from other districts. A total of 49 Choice School students are attending in the regional school district this year, he said, with 64 Choice School students anticipated for next year bringing the district's total enrollment to 1,420 students.

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Gretchen Whitman/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

## Lightning sparks townhouse fire in Cape May

Lightning struck a townhouse in the 900 block of St. James Place about 12:55 a.m. May 3. According to Cape May Fire Chief Alex Coulter, heavy fire was through the roof when firefighters arrived. Crews backed out of the interior when the roof collapsed, he said. Two units were heavily damaged. An earlier fire in Lower Township tied up mutual aid resources but fire companies responded from the Wildwoods and from as far north as Marmora and Tuckahoe to the Cape May fire. An adjacent unit suffered only smoke damage.

## Lower Elementary school tax rate up 2 cents for 2016-17

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

COLD SPRING — The Lower Township Elementary School District Board of Education approved its 2016-17 budget April 26 that calls for a 2-cent increase for property owners, raising the local purpose tax rate from 44.2 cents per \$100 of assessed value to 46.2 cents.

The district will increase appropriations for bilingual instruction and after-school programs but spend less on instruction staff training. The budget contains \$129,114 for interest payments on debt service related to a bond issue.

In January, voters approved a referendum bonding \$2.5 million for repairs at three elementary schools in the district. Since the administration office has been moved to the Mitnick School, funds are needed to renovate that area.

The bond allows replacement of roofs at the Mitnick and Maud Abrams schools

where severe leaks were experienced. Parking lots at the Sandman Consolidated School and Maud Abrams School are in need of drainage improvements.

Business Administrator Frank Onorato said the district has not had debt service since 2009. The local purpose tax levy totals \$16,643,631 million, up from \$16,317,632 last year, a 2 percent increase not including debt service, said Onorato. Including debt service, the amount to be raised by taxes is up \$455,459.

The owner of a \$228,000 home will see a tax increase of \$28.50.

The budget uses \$200,000 from a maintenance reserve to stay within the 2 percent cap, he said. Onorato said local taxes fund 58.4 percent of the budget with state aid funding 36.6 percent of the budget. Federal aid amounts to 3.4 percent. The budget uses \$403,052 in surplus/reserve

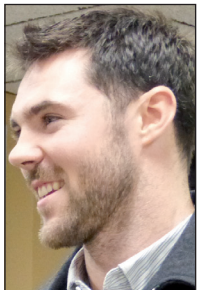
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## Szczur's grand slam seals Chicago's win

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — During his one at-bat for the Chicago Cubs on April 29, Lower Cape May Regional High School graduate Matt Szczur hit his first career grand slam in a five-run eighth inning, giving the Cubs a 6-1 victory over the Atlanta Braves.

In a press conference following the game, Szczur said he appreciated Cubs Manager Joe Maddon giving him an opportunity to succeed. Concerning the grand slam, Szczur said he just wanted



SZCZUR

to put the ball in the air and get a player across the plate. He put the ball in the air and over the left field fence. It was his second homerun of the season.

Szczur said he was "super excited" his grand slam sealed the deal for the win. His run around the bases showed his joy in what had just happened.

Maddon told UPI that Szczur was kind of a dream player who was versatile, knew his role and

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## USCG rescues three after scalloper sinks

CAPE MAY — The U.S. Coast Guard rescued three men Thursday from their life raft about six miles east of Cape May.

The Coast Guard received a request for assistance from the captain aboard the 42-foot Last Stand, reporting they were sinking following a collision with the 78-foot tug Dean Reinauer.

A 45-foot Response Boat-Medium crew from Coast Guard Station Cape May launched to assist. The RB-M crew arrived on scene and took the three boaters aboard from their life

raft.

"The crew of the fishing vessel Last Stand was extremely prepared and knowledgeable on their safety equipment and procedures," said Petty Officer 2nd Class James Pappas, Station Cape May officer of the day. "Their readiness allowed them to abandon ship within 10 minutes of the collision, including scrambling into their survival suits and ultimately into their life raft. They saved their own lives."

The Last Stand sank; no injuries were reported.

## Maritime museum plans include monarch habitat

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — A food stop for migrating monarch butterflies is in the plans for a section of the former magnesite factory site at Sunset Beach.

Kevin Maloney, president of Cape May Maritime Museum and Education Center, updated Lower Township Council on Monday on a project to offer a feeding habitat to migrating monarchs, which feed here before making a 10-mile journey across Delaware Bay on their southward trek.


He said the museum's projects include the restoration of a portion of the former magnesite factory site and constructing a replica of an 1876 lifesaving station.

Part of the mandate for open space projects is to enhance public access and to protect natural habitat for wildlife and vegetation, Maloney said, adding that he received an email from David Golden, head of the Division of Fish and Wildlife for the state Department of Environmental Protection, proposing the creation of a migratory monarch butterfly habitat at the site.

The population of monarchs has been decreasing due to loss of food sources along their 3,000-mile migratory route to Mexico, Maloney said.

He said he approached Larry Hume, an owner of the adjacent Sunset Beach

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