

Lower Twp. MUA budgets for future improvements

By **BETTY WUND**
Special to the Star and Wave

VILLAS — Chief Financial Officer Steve Testa presented the \$10.7 million Lower Township Municipal Utilities Authority budget Nov. 2, which commissioners then approved.

Infrastructure items for improvement were presented at the October meeting with the understanding that improvements will come from a surplus and not require an increase in sewer or water rates.

As reported by the auditor's representative, Carol A. McAllister, at the last meeting, a \$2.6 million increase in net position from

2015-2016 has allowed for the planned improvements for 2016-17. An increase in revenues and decrease in operating appropriations reported for the 2015-16 budget year has also allowed for the expenditure of funds for improvements.

Executive Director Mike Chapman reported that pump station #20 is running well after refurbishing by the crew.

The crew has been successful in doing the job and will add two more in the next year.

The remaining 23 pump stations will be done in future years with two or three budgeted in 2017, according to Chapman.

He estimated the cost as \$97,000 doing the work in house. With an outside contractor, the cost he estimated would have been \$225,000 for this first pump station.

The total cost estimated for all pump station refurbishments was originally estimated at \$2.8 million.

Water mains are currently being installed on Bayshore Road as part of the East Villas Water Main Improvement Project Phase 1.

Potential ratepayers are not complaining about the inconvenience of construction, according to Chapman. He said they are happy to have water service coming to that area

of Lower Township. He also reported that there is a cost savings in that the township is planning on paving Bayshore Road so that the contractor does not have to do a final paving at this time.

Chapman reported that once final figures are in on the costs of Phase 1, it can be determined if there are funds for the Roseann Avenue water main replacement project. The MUA has been negotiating with the township to work this project when they are doing a flood control project on Roseann Avenue.

Engineer Marc DeBlasio of Remington Vernick and Walberg, reported that the East Villas Water Main Im-

provement Project Phase 1 is moving along well. The Wissahickon sewer improvement project is finished and engineering plans for the East Villas Water Main Improvement Project Phase II project are being completed. Approvals are expected in the spring of 2017 and work should begin at the end of next year. This phase will add another 500 potential ratepayers, said DeBlasio.

The discussion of placing cellphone equipment on the MUA water towers was brought up. There have been new inquiries according to the commission. Solicitor William Kaufmann reported that in reviewing the municip-

pal contracts law he finds that it is not necessary to put offers of water tower access to mobile phone services out for bid.

The meeting ended with a closed session with no action taken.

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Monarchs make annual visit

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largest number of monarchs this season on Nov. 2-3. Brendel said she tagged more than 100 butterflies each of the two days. Tagging involves placing a tiny sticker on the butterfly's wing. She noted October was a warm month this year.

While the year had a low overall count, Brendel said she tagged more butterflies than in her previous two years, a total of 1,200.

Brendel said there is still so much unknown about monarch butterflies. If monarchs are in a decline, then all pollinators are in trouble, she said.

On Monday afternoon, she released the last of the monarchs, a male and a female, hatched in an educational display at the Cape May Bird Observatory. The caterpillars and eggs are from local gardens, Brendel said.

"Once you watch these guys, it's hard not to be their advocate because they are so awesome," she said of the butterflies.

She measured the monarchs and checked their fat reserve for their 2,000-mile trip to Mexico. The biggest concern for monarchs traveling late in the season is finding nectar sources along the way, Brendel said. She placed the two monarchs born earlier in the day on a butterfly bush after they seemed reluctant to fly from her hand.

Before her first season of counting monarchs here in 2014, Brendel raised more than 500 monarchs from the egg stage on her family's beef cattle farm in Michigan. She said she rescued the eggs before her father cut their hay fields.

"We don't use any kind of herbicide on our hay fields, they have a lot of milkweed patches that just grow naturally," Brendel said.

She calls raising the monarchs her "first unofficial



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Monarch butterfly numbers have fallen nearly 90 percent since scientists began counting and tagging them with tiny stickers 26 years ago.

adventure into science." Brendel said she kept records of where females were laying eggs on the plants and in what areas of their fields more caterpillars were found.

Brendel also worked with New Jersey Fish and Wildlife with endangered beach nesting birds and as an interpretive guide in Vail, Colo. She said she enjoys taking scientific information and making it appealing and understandable to everyone.

Surveys indicate more males than female monarchs may have been tagged over the years, so Brendel is working on a gender ratio study.

On Sept. 18, Brendel captured a monarch in her net in Cape May Point's Triangle Park tagged on its right wing, which is the opposite of how the butterflies are tagged in Cape May. She said she reported the tag information to Monarch Watch and placed a photo of the butterfly on Facebook.

It turned out the monarch

was from New Brunswick, Canada and it had emerged there Aug. 15, taking a little over a month to fly to Cape May Point, about 600 miles, Brendel said.

A monarch tagged in Cape May Point several years ago was found three days later in central Georgia, covering about 600 hundred miles in just a few days, she said.

"These are like birds, they are really trying to depend on thermals, they're really trying to sail to Mexico more than flap," Brendel said.

"I hope people get behind them and feel this is something worth protecting," she said.

Brendel encourages property owners to plant

milkweed and provide nectar sources.

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Boo! Madea Halloween PG-13 11:50, 2:20, (5:00, 7:40, 10:00)
**Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them (Thurs Premiere) PG-13 [6:00, 9:00]
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non-union employee contracts. The awards are still in blue-collar workers' contracts, upper management and communications contracts, he said. All of those contracts will be open to collective bargaining at the end of the current year, he said.

Review

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answer 'yes' to them in the present fashion, you would have the opportunity to take action to clean that up for the future," he said.

MacLeod said while the state took the position a city could take action before the deadline, the city did not want to push a resolution through the day before the deadline.

Young said the city answered "no" to a question of whether the city had instituted a policy to not compensate employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement for sick leave accumulated after a certain date.

"As we responded last year, nor was the city required to," he said. "This question stemmed from proposed legislation that never actually became law."

This year the question was in two parts, asking if sick leave accumulated after a certain date was eliminated for non-union or union employees. Young said the city answered "no" for each group.

The city answered "no" to whether the city eliminated longevity awards, bonuses or payments for any employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement hired on or after a specified date or refrained from increasing longevity awards, bonuses or payments for employees hired before a specified date.

Young said the awards have been eliminated from fire department IFF contracts, police PBA contracts and white collar and

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