

Taxes

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trict along the New Jersey coast, where they would apply a 7 percent tax. Of that, 5 percent would go to the state as sales tax and 2 percent would go to the municipality as a lodging and rental tax. But instead of taxing traditional transient lodging – hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts – the tax would be applied to short term rentals of condos and whole house rentals

The bill stipulates that 33 percent of the amount collected in the municipality would have to be dedicated to tourism marketing.

Muentz said Cape May

County derives \$1.6 billion from weekly rentals. The municipal portion of the tax on that amount would be \$32 million. Cape May's share, he said, would be \$3,064,987 or about 20 percent of the 2010 Cape May municipal budget. One-third, or a little over \$1 million would be dedicated to tourism promotion. Currently, the city funds the Tourism Commission with about \$65,000 from a special assessment added to the mercantile license fee. Muentz said city gives another \$10,000 to Chamber of Commerce, which dedicates about \$300,000 to tourism promotion.

According to Muentz, \$2

million would go into the city's general fund. The amount of the budget supported by property taxes, he said, would drop from 51 percent to 38 percent, or a 26 percent reduction in tax. The group's report describes that as a reduction in property taxes of \$540 for a homeowner with a property assessed at \$750,000.

According to the subcommittee report, the 14 percent tax situation that was created under the McGreevey administration created a government imposed competitive disadvantage for hotel, motel and B&B owners. The report says there are 11,668 paying rooms in Cape May, but only

1,958 (17 percent) are taxed at 14 percent. Whole house, condo and apartment weekly rentals make up the other 83 percent but are not subject to the tax.

Muentz pointed out the Stockton Row Cottages on Gurney Street, where six of eight nearly identical structures, are not taxed on rentals because the buildings were converted to condos. The remaining two are run as guesthouses, and guests are taxed 14 percent.

Muentz said the same is true of the Sandpiper on Beach Avenue, which operates as a motel, and the Regents Beach Condominiums on Beach and

Congress.

"They are similar accommodations, but the Sandpiper pays 14 percent and the Regent's Beach nothing," he said.

Muentz said the Sandpiper was once a 75-room motel, but it was converted to 40 condo units, which are individually owned and rented weekly. He said this pattern has occurred numerous times in Cape May, resulting in the loss of hotel/motel rooms. He said a 75-room hotel lodging two people each with two rentals per week would be about 300 people in town patronizing restaurants, stores and other businesses. Muentz said by reducing the

number of rooms in Cape May it made it hard for businesses to stay in operation, such as the former Pelican Club.

"The Pelican Club had 300 seats and the best view in Cape May – and they couldn't make it," Muentz said.

While the Seaside Lodging and Rental District Act would not increase the number of lodging units, the subcommittee believes it would level the playing field for hotel, motels and B&Bs competing with whole house, condo and weekly apartment rentals in Cape May.

Lists

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The high school scored an 86.2, close to the state average of 87.1. The economically disadvantaged students scored a very high 76.9, compared to the state average of

73, he said.

Biology scores were high as well. The high school scored five points above the state average while the economically disadvantaged students scored nearly 22 points above.

"Last year was tough," Superintendent Jack Pfizenmayer said. "We had \$1.8 million less in the budget than the year before, which made things hard for everyone, but we are working together and doing everything we can."

"We are going to keep on moving forward," he said.

Pfizenmayer said the recent application for LCMR to become a choice school could really help the district. The district has applied to the state board of education to become a choice school, meaning parents from outside the district could opt to send their children to Lower Cape May Regional High School or the Teitelman Middle School. He said the school should receive word of whether approved or not in January.

Smarro

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ed the new chair and hopes to make only one change within the Washington Street Mall Management Company.

"I would like to get more merchants involved," he said. "We would like to reach out to them and get more ideas."

He said the poor attendance at the meetings has always bothered him and he would like to see more merchants come and participate.

In other business, Christmas decorations were approved by the BID as well

as the advertising plan for the holiday season.

The decorations for Christmas have been chosen and will be set up after the Thanksgiving holiday.

"There was a lot of discussion about each of them but they were approved by everyone," Smarro said.

The city's Christmas tree lighting will be held Dec. 3 at 7 p.m. in Rotary Park on Lyle Lane behind the Mall.

At the Oct. 1 meeting, the BID voted to increase the Christmas décor budget to \$12,000 by taking \$6,000 from

other line items, where some money was expendable. Some merchants said they weren't sure if they wanted the increased budget for Christmas decorations because many shops don't stay open year-round, so they don't profit from it.

BID members all agreed that a good holiday display that brings so many guests in the off-season will certainly bring them back in the summer months, where everyone benefits, especially the merchants.

Elections

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that the public should decide on the ballot whether they wanted to change the Cape May municipal elections.

"That's the way government should operate," he said.

Mahaney actually opposed the change because political

parties would become involved in the nonpartisan municipal election and price out average citizens, keeping them from running for office. He said he was also concerned that people would overlook the municipal section of the ballot in future

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Cape May Star&Wave

(ISSN 519-020),

volume 156 number 44. Published weekly by

Sample Media Inc., 112 E. 8th St., Ocean City,

N.J., 08226. Subscription price in Cape May

County \$22; East of the Mississippi \$25; West

of the Mississippi \$29. Periodicals postage at

Pleasantville, N.J., and additional mailing

offices.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes

to the Cape May Star and Wave, 600 Park

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Methodist Men's roast beef dinner

CAPE MAY – The Cape May United Methodist Men will be holding a Roast Beef Dinner, Salad Bar and Dessert Table at Lyle Hall, 635 Washington St., on Saturday, Nov. 13, 4:30 – 7:00 p.m. Adults \$12 donation, children \$6.

Fall skywatch

BELLEPLAIN – The South Jersey Astronomy Club will host the annual Fall Public Skywatch on the athletic field at Belleplain State Forest on Friday, Nov. 12. Telescopes will be set up to view planets, galaxies and other fascinating objects. Admission is free; and the Skywatch begins about 7:30 p.m.

Rain or cloudy conditions will move the Skywatch to the following evening, Saturday, Nov. 13. Updates can be found on the SJAC web site at

http://www.sjac.us. Belleplain State Forest is right outside Woodbine, N.J. In northern Cape May County.

Bring a flashlight with a red filter (cellophane) to preserve your night vision. Dress appropriately. Good shoes, and a chair and snacks help.

WEATHER ALMANAC BY WAYNE ROOP

OCTOBER			
(Normals: 67°/50°, 3.59")			
	High	Low	Precip.
21	69°	51°	.02"
22	59°	42°	
23	68°	40°	
24	75°	58°	
25	72°	60°	
26	72°	63°	
27	73°	65°	1.15"

