## Cape Island Year in Review-

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the city will lease 33 vehicles for a term of up to 60 months at a total annual cost of \$393,240 with an estimated first year budget of \$395,740 inclusive of a onetime down payment with the city having an option to purchase the vehicles at the end of the lease for an estimated \$1 per vehicle through Enterprise's auction program.

— What began locally with an SUV abandoned on the beach at the Cove ended with a Horsham, Pa., woman charged with the murder of her 11-yearold son. Cape May police spotted the vehicle par-tially submerged at 3:30 a.m. April 11. The driver, Ruth DiRienzo-Whitehead, 50, allegedly killed her son after he went to sleep at about 9:30 p.m. April 10, then drove to the city and into the ocean just off Beach Avenue. According to authorities, after the vehicle was no longer operable, DiRienzo-Whitehead walked to the family's home in Wildwood Crest, where she was later taken into custody.

Cape May Point Borough Commission approved its 2023 municipal budget that featured a .4-cent increase in the local purpose tax rate. The tax levy was increasing by \$41,000 and the tax rate from 32.9 cents to 33.3 cents per \$100 of assessed value. A total of \$1.5 million of the \$2.1 million budget was to be raised by local purpose tax. The tax increase was being driven by lifeguard and beach tag personnel salaries increasing by \$17,000 due to the increase in the minimum wage. The tax increase amounts to \$40 on a property valued at \$1 million.

- Council approved its 2023 municipal budget, which featured no increase in the local purpose tax rate, as well as an amendment to fund the salary of two new police officers. The city anticipated col-lecting \$4.9 million but actually realized \$7.6 million from room tax, beach tags fees and parking meters last year. Mayor Zack Mullock said the city has not had a tax increase in four years.

City Council was moving forward with a plan to provide a 25-year lease to East Lynne Theatre Company (ELTC) for use of the Allen AME Church. The city bought the historic house of worship in 2021 following a fire in 2019 that damaged the steeple, and parts bell tower the interior. As part of the agreement, ELTC proposes a framework for financial support for the continued restoration and preservation of the church and continued recognition of its historical significance. ELTC will pay the city \$1 per year for the lease, which notes the property may be used for the limited purpose of performing arts programs. The church would remain available to the city as a public facility mostly during the off season of ELTC.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Fund for Cape May founder Curtis Bashaw, center, cuts a ceremonial ribbon July 5 to dedicate the new arches erected on the Promenade.

## - If construction is com-

plete and it passes state inspections, Shore House Canna would open around July 4, becoming West Cape May's and Cape May County's first adult use cannabis dispensary. Reconstruction of the former Ripple Root gift shop was under way at 124 Sunset Blvd.

- While spending is up, taxpayers will see a reduc-tion in the local purpose tax rate from Cape May City Elementary School due to an increase in ratables and equalized property values. Total ratables in Cape May are \$2.9 billion, up \$22 mil-lion from 2022. The local purpose tax rate dropped 5 cents from 5.3 cents per \$100 of assessed property value to 4.8 cents. The tax levy totals \$1.9 million, a percent increase. State 2 remained the same as aid 2022 for transportation, special education and security purposes while school choice aid increased from \$168,576 to \$194,004. Military impact aid totaled \$1.2 million

MAY

— The city's Historic
Preservation Commission
HPC) approved an update
of its design standards for
restoration and new con-
struction for the first time
n more than 20 years. On
May 15, Steven Smolyn,
of Architectural Heritage
Consultants, presented a
inal draft of the HPC's up-
lated historic design stan-
lards.

- The city received a \$400,000 check from the county to be used for infrastructure projects, part of \$6.4 million in grant awards to all county municipalities. The grants are to be used for priority drinking water, storm water and sanitary sewer infrastructure projects in each of the 16 municipalities in the county.

— At a May 15 meeting, City Council hired Paul Dietrich for three years as full-time city engineer. His duties will include supervising the performance of city projects, oversight of the Community Ratings System — which affects flood insurance rates for homeowners - and serv-

TIDES: Jan. 3-10, 2024					
DATE	HIGH		LOW		
	<b>A.M</b> .	P.M.	<b>A.M</b> .	<b>P.M</b> .	
3	12:47	12:41	6:30	7:00	
4	1:34	1:30	7:24	7:41	
5	2:27	2:27	8:26	8:29	
6	3:23	3:31	9:31	9:22	
7	4:14	4:29	10:29	10:14	
8	5:03	5:22	11:23	11:04	
9	5:52	6:15	12:14	11:55	
10	6:42	7:08	1:03		

MOON PHASES Last quarter, Jan. 4 • new moon, Jan. 11

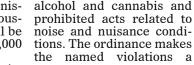


ing as flood plain administrator and municipal housing liaison. Dietrich will be paid a salary of \$130,000 per year.

— Borough Commis-sion decided not to expand sanitary sewer service to homes on Second Avenue and parts of Sunset Boulevard and Third Avenue in West Cape May. The project would have comprised about 68 properties with an estimated cost of \$1.6 million.

JUNE

City Council introduced an ordinance dealing with breach of peace to head off problems with groups of juveniles taking place in other towns in the county. The ordinance states prohibited acts are the public consumption of



noise and nuisance conditions. The ordinance makes the named violations a

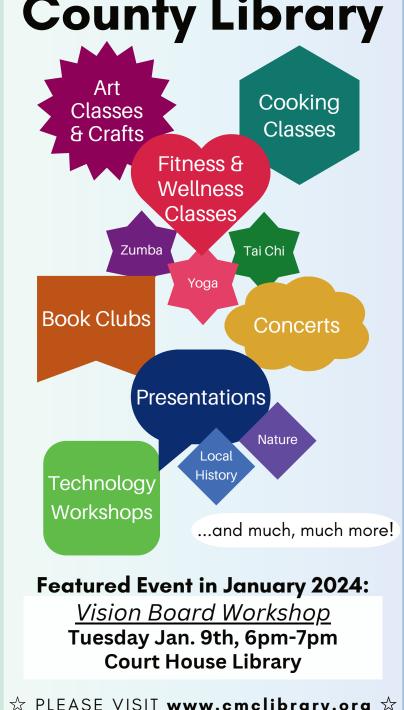
alcohol and cannabis and breach of the peace, which can result in a six-month driver's license suspension

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Cape May



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