

Cape May Star and Wave

154th YEAR NO. 4 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 2008 50¢

INSIDE



SPORTS

Lady Tigers win over rival Mainland, **B1**

Boys take on a handful in game with Mustangs, **B2**

AREA

Before you know it, it will be time for fishing, **B5**

CAPE MAY

Last Convention Hall 'a bargain', **A4**

ARTS

Film Festival will celebrate Oscar night at Beach Theatre, **A12**

JANUARY TIDE TABLE

	HIGH	LOW		
	am	pm	am	pm
1/24	9:03	9:33	2:31	3:18
1/25	9:46	10:18	3:19	4:00
1/26	10:27	11:02	4:06	4:41
1/27	11:09	11:47	4:54	5:21
1/28	11:52		5:44	6:02
1/29	12:34	12:39	6:38	6:45
1/30	1:26	1:34	7:37	7:33
1/31	2:23	2:36	8:40	8:26

Corzine presents 'Save Our State' plan at PAC

Governor calls the toll hikes the "tough love" part of the plan

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE – Gov. Jon Corzine's plan for paying down the \$32 million state debt will involve sweeping governmental cuts, a massive increase in tolls on highways and the creation of a new authority that will manage the major roads.

Corzine outlined his financial restructuring plan via

Powerpoint presentation "Save Our State" to a crowd of about 500 at the Middle Township Performing Arts Center Saturday afternoon, Jan. 19.

Corzine's Cape May Court House meeting was the fourth such town hall style meeting he's had out of a proposed 21 meetings where he's touting a plan for a state saddled by debt and a reduced ability to borrow for capital projects.

The event drew people from well beyond Cape May County as citizens who got up to ask questions identified themselves as living in Atlantic, Cumberland and Camden counties as well.

Corzine said over the last 20 years, New Jersey has grown spending at 7 percent a year

and revenues at 3 percent a year.

As a result of the state issuing bonded debt to invest in capital and fund operating expenses and not encouraging raising revenues to pay down the debt, New Jersey faces a \$32 billion debt, Corzine said.

The plan Corzine's government is proposing is anticipated to raise capital and enable the state to pay off 50 percent of the state's debt, about \$16 billion.

The plan is also expected to fund toll road and Transportation Trust Fund capital programs for 75 years and enables citizens to vote on state debt issuance.

"I hope people get a sense that it's not just magic that

we're talking about how we're going to resolve these issues because the choices are going to be very difficult," Corzine said.

Corzine's plan freezes spending in the next budget and limits future spending to revenue growth. He said a spending freeze equivocates to up to \$2.5 billion in cuts throughout the state budget.

"It's very inappropriate to spend beyond your means year after year. We have to certify that the revenue growth has to match future spending," Corzine said.

The plan creates a non-profit entity called a Public Benefit Corporation (PBC) that will manage the roads. The PBC will have a professional board of directors that will be responsible for maintaining the operation of the toll roads.

Corzine will appoint a citizen's oversight board of 25 people that will represent the state's various regions and interest groups including environmentalists, senior citizens and transportation. The citizen board will oversee the board of directors and review the PBC's operations. The PBC will operate under its own debt funding and no taxpayer money, Corzine said.

Corzine said the PBC could raise between \$32 billion and \$38 billion.

The most controversial proposal is an increase in tolls in 2010, 2014, 2018 and 2022 a maximum of 50 percent each of those years plus annual increases based on the Consumer Price Index. The

toll raises will target the following highways: the Atlantic City Expressway, the New Jersey Turnpike, the Garden State Parkway and the Route 440 in Middlesex County.

Corzine said 45 percent of toll roads are used by non-New Jersey residents.

On the New Jersey Turnpike the average trip of 22.9 miles currently costs \$1.20.

Tolls will increase to \$2.05 in 2010; \$3.45 in 2014, \$5.85 in 2018 and \$9.85 in 2022.

For the Garden State Parkway, the average trip of 15 miles costs 35 cents. That number will increase to 60 cents in 2010, 95 cents in 2014, \$1.60 in 2018 and \$2.70 in 2022.

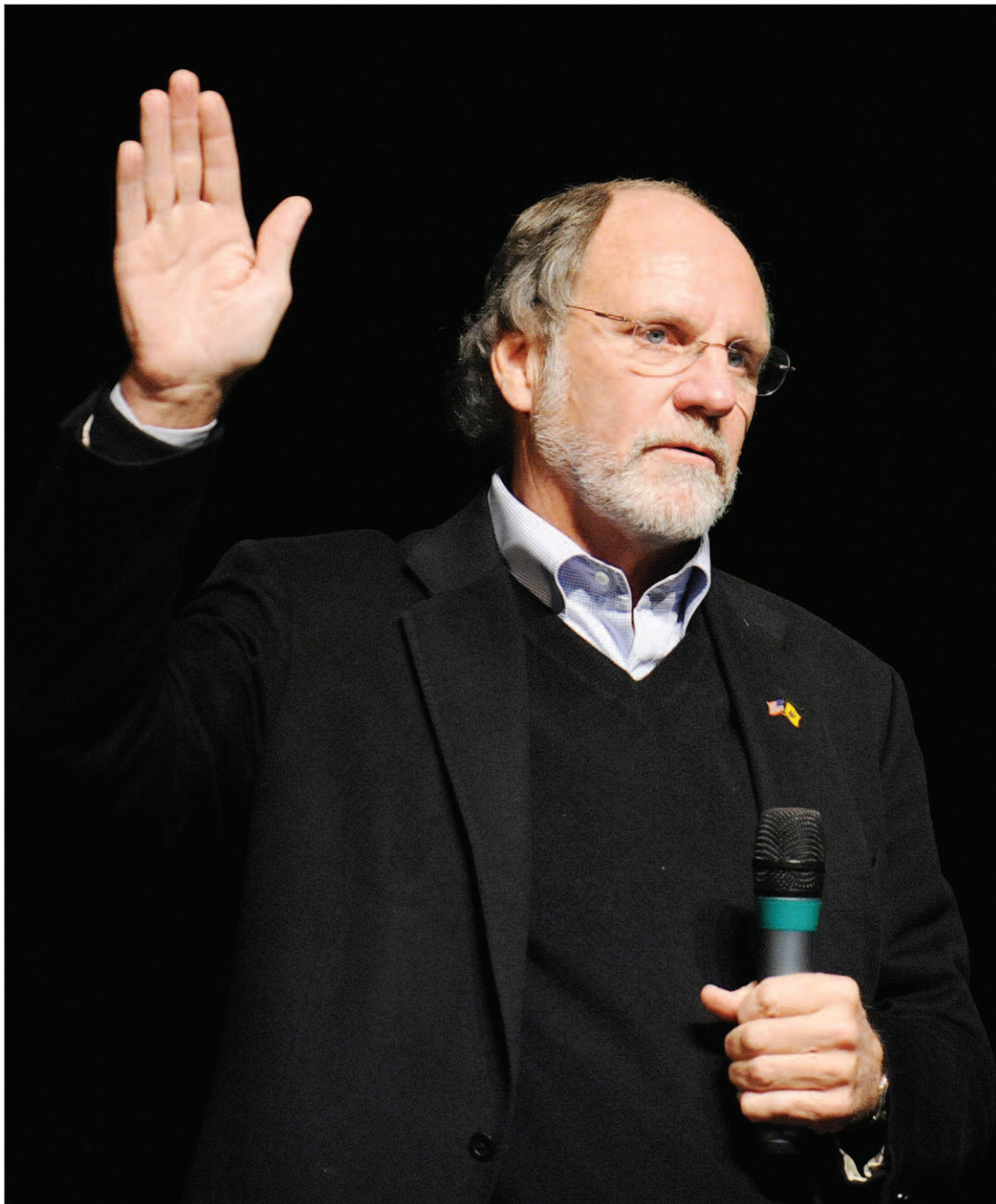
On the Atlantic City Expressway, the current 50 cent ramp tolls will increase to 85 cents in 2010, \$1.45 in 2014, \$2.40 in 2018, and \$4.05 in 2022.

Corzine called the toll hikes the "tough love" part of the plan.

The public harshly criticized the plan, particularly the toll hikes and the creation of the PBC.

"Our finances are not fixable without taking dramatic steps," Corzine replied to one critic.

Outside of the meeting, two men – one of them former Bogota mayor Steven Lonegan – were arrested and charged with defiant trespassing. Lonegan was arrested by police when he refused to move a sign reading "No Toll Hikes."



David Nahan/Cape May Star and Wave
Governor Jon Corzine, left, visited the Middle Township Performing Arts Center Jan. 19 promoting a plan for paying down the state's \$32 million debt. Approximately 500 people attended the town hall meeting.

\$10 million reappropriated for new Convention Hall

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – Cape May City Council last week reappropriated \$10 million for the construction of a new Convention Hall.

By passing Ordinance 138-2008, city council authorized moving \$10 million from a 2002 ordinance appropriating \$16 million for capital improvements. The money

was originally designated for the acquisition of Sewell's Point. Six million dollars is being left in the original appropriation.

City manager Lou Corea said the reappropriation would allow the city to move forward on the Convention Hall project but would not jeopardize the acquisition of Sewell's Point.

City solicitor Anthony Monzo said the 2002 ordinance was passed when the

city was the lead agency in the acquisition of Sewell's Point. At the time the city needed to have a bond ordinance in place for that purpose. He said the acquisition issue has bow been in court-ordered mediation for over a number of years.

"Is there any chance we would have to reauthorize the \$10 million we are taking?" Councilman David Kurkowski said.

"I don't believe so," Corea said, adding that it was never the city's intention to fund the \$16 million in the original bond ordinance.

Deputy mayor Niels Favre said if the city needed the money reappropriated to keep the Convention Hall project moving forward city council should approve the authorization, saying if not the city would have to bond for the money anyway.

"I just think this is a prudent use of our financial strength," he said. Favre said the new ordinance simply moved money, and did not actually spend any money.

Mayor Jerry Inderwies he

did not want the public to get the idea that because the city was reappropriating the \$10 million the city was walking away from the Sewell Point issue.

"I'm confident we are closer than ever to a settlement," he said.

The city has been in mediation over a lawsuit filed by the owners of proper known as Sewell Point (or Brodesser Tract) owned by Tom Brodesser and Phillip Robinson, who developed Village Green. Sewell Point consists of 75-plus acres on which the developers wanted to construct 366 single family homes. Approval was given

by the city, but state approval was denied under the Coastal Area Facility Review Act (CAFRA). The developers then filed a lawsuit claiming "regulatory taking," because they would be denied any monetary gain if they were unable to develop the land.

According to the city solicitor, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection made an offer to allow development of 64 units under provisions of the Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act. Monzo said the offer was an attempt by the state to elimi

Please see Hall, Page A2



Christopher South/Cape May Star and Wave

Two "Polar Bear Plungers" make their way back from the icy water as dozens of other brave souls head out. The Jan. 19 event was held in Wildwood benefiting Special Olympics.

Free speech in Cape May?

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – Cape May resident Jeanne Powick used part of her three minutes of public comment time to read the First Amendment to the mayor and city council.

Powick told city council they should take notice of the statements contained in the First Amendment, which protects free speech in America, in light of the new public comment policy enacted at the end of December 2007.

The new policy limits members of the public to three minutes of comment on municipal affairs, and prohibits council members from engaging in public dialogue with citizens during the meeting. Powick said item Number Six in the new policy, saying questions for council members should be direct-

ed to them on a one-on-one basis, before or after a council meeting, means the public will never hear their answers.

The new Cape May City Council public comment policy is as follows:

1. The public comment period will be limited to three minutes (per speaker).

2. The city clerk will monitor the three-minute time limit and it will be strictly enforced for all individuals seeking to speak at this time.

3. An individual will be allowed to address the council only once during the public portion of the meeting.

4. The mayor will indicate to the public what the policies are concerning public comment, prior to the comments being initiated.

5. Council members will refrain from making any comments or respond to any statements made by the public until after the person has

finished his or her comments.

6. A statement will be made indicating that, should anyone from the public wish to ask questions of the council or seek an opinion, they should contact the individual council member(s) before or after a council meeting to get that member's opinion or comments on certain issues.

Another resident, Virginia Hesel told Cape May City Council the new policy has "... limited my freedom of speech."

Hesel said the members of council were elected to represent the residents of Cape May, but added that the new policy made the oath they took seem questionable. She said the new public comment policy was an attempt to silence people who have spoken out in opposition of city projects.

Please see Free, Page A2