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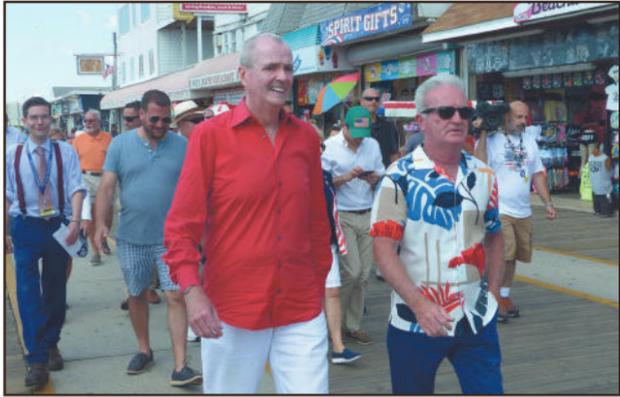
CAPE MAY COUNTY HERALD

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Murphy Pledges \$4M for Wildwood Boardwalk Repairs



Eric Conklin

Gov. Phil Murphy takes a Fourth of July stroll on the Wildwoods Boardwalk with Wildwood Mayor Peter Byron.

By ERIC CONKLIN

WILDWOOD - Before his Independence Day stroll on the Wildwoods Boardwalk with Wildwood Mayor Peter Byron, Gov. Phil Murphy told of how he was going to repair it.

The governor, after participating in North Wildwood's Fourth of July parade earlier that morning, met with a pool of reporters and local officials around 10:15 a.m., announcing a \$4 million commitment from New Jersey's fiscal year 2022 budget to help repair the Boardwalk. The budget was approved by the governor June 29.

During the meeting held amid a bustling crowd outside the Wildwoods Convention Center, Murphy accentuated the Boardwalk's importance to the businesses it houses, being at the forefront for driving the local economy for both Wildwood and the county. His remarks reflect those he made during an April 21, 2020, visit to the Boardwalk, when a nearby section was

dismantled by a storm around that time (<https://bit.ly/35mDIky>). "I can't thank you enough, honestly," Byron told Murphy.

The damages stretch beyond the section destroyed by the storm. Most of the Boardwalk faces significant age-related damage, and a project to fully repair it would cost \$60 million. However, Byron said local officials are developing a plan to drop that price tag to \$35 million. The project should take about five to six years, and plans are to begin in October.

"We're re-working it on a daily basis," Byron said, regarding the plan and making it cost-effective.

The announcement is the latest in what has been a tug of war between Trenton and local officials regarding tax dollars the Wildwoods send to the state government.

In 2019, Murphy, a Democrat, vetoed a bill that would have allotted \$56 million for the Boardwalk's restoration over 14 years, in addition to \$4 million in that timeframe going to the Greater Wildwoods Tourism Improvement and Development Authority

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Analysis

Municipalities Performed Better Than Expected in '20

By VINCE CONTI

COURT HOUSE - 2020 began with hopes for another stellar tourist season after Cape May County's record-breaking 2019, with over 10 million visitors and nearly \$7 billion in direct tourism spending. However, an invisible threat changed everything.

The World Health Organization (WHO) Jan. 9, 2020, announced the presence of a novel coronavirus and two weeks later, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed the first U.S. case. By Jan. 31, the WHO declared a global health emergency.

Still, the virus's presence hadn't triggered public alarm. Plans for an even busier summer drove preparations, private sector spending, and public sector budget development.

The WHO March 11 declared Covid a full-fledged pandemic. Gov. Phil Murphy declared a public health emergency, issuing a stay-at-home order March 21 and halting all but essential services. The bottom fell out of the county's economy.

Municipalities were faced with a need to adopt budgets that were largely formulated before the first confirmed county case of Covid March 18 and the first fatality April 4.

Uncertainty was king. What new services would the municipalities have to provide? How would the municipal

workforce function within the parameters of the cascade of restrictions that seemed to follow daily? Would anticipated revenues from beach tags, parking meters and local occupancy taxes materialize?

By the time many municipalities adopted budgets, county unemployment was peaking. In March, it stood at 12% and plummeted to 26% in April. Pundits warned of a potential tsunami in property tax losses.

It is almost impossible to recall the level of uncertainty, both in terms of health and economics, and the often-uninformed predictions flooding the media in all its political flavors.

What happened was, in its own way, devastating, but it in no way lived up to the billing that fear had given to predictions in early 2020.

How to Measure Performance

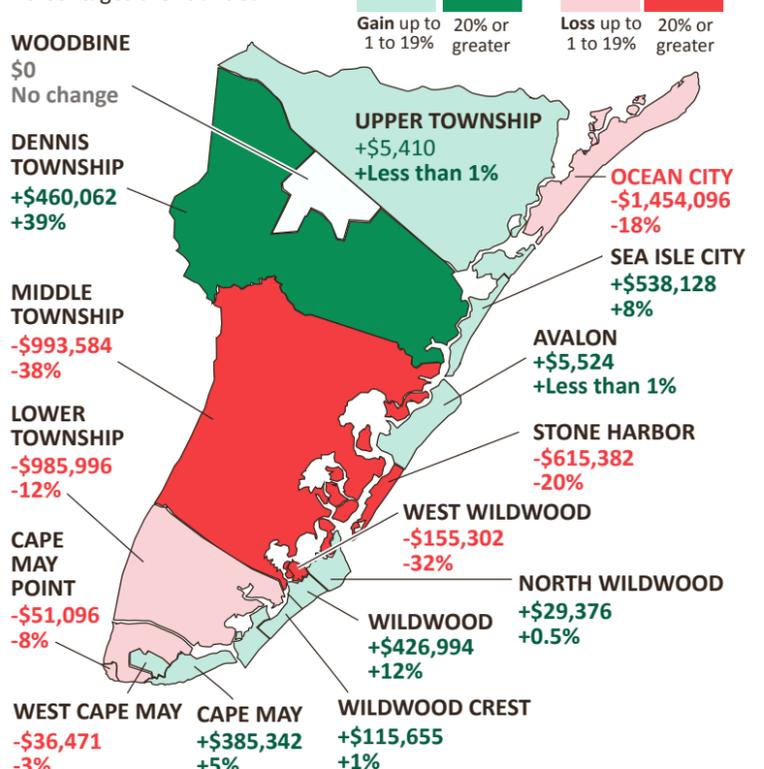
One of the principal ways local municipalities can offset potential tax increases is using surplus revenues accumulated from the positive balances in previous budget years. Every town uses surplus each year as a revenue source in the budget. The goal is to have sufficient savings during the year to replenish the surplus account, returning what was used and, hopefully, adding to it.

There are generally three ways in which surplus used

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CAPE MAY COUNTY SURPLUS DIFFERENCE

Municipalities budget surplus change from Jan. 1, 2020 to Dec. 31, 2020. Percentages are rounded.



Herald graphic/ Krishna Mathias

Use-of-Force Policies, Training Provide Tools for Officers

By KAREN KNIGHT

COURT HOUSE - Describing several principles, training, policies and monitoring options, members of the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office shared the "tools in the toolbox" that law enforcement officers can use as part of new use-of-force policing policies implemented across the state.

Cape May County Prosecutor Jeffery Sutherland, Detective Sgt. Aaron Sykes and Cheryl Spaulding, community justice coordinator/public information officer, during a June 30 Zoom meeting, shared the background of the state attorney general's "Excellence in Policing" initiative, 2021 policy, training and detailed tracking via the Use of Force Reporting Portal, as well as the attorney general's directive 2020-14, which establishes countywide working groups to address mental health and special needs populations.

"There has been a sea change in New Jersey, in terms of when force should be used by law enforcement," Sutherland said. "We want the public to understand these new programs that are designed to make our communities safe. Their goal is to strengthen relationships between law enforcement officers and the community."

Sykes said that in December 2020, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) announced new use-of-force policies for all 38,000 law enforcement

officers statewide that would cover policy, training and monitoring. The goal is to have it implemented and all officers trained by December 2021.

The program includes three components:

* Professionalism - improving law enforcement training, overhauling the state's Police Training Commission, promoting officer resiliency and identifying early warning signs for at-risk officers;

* Accountability - ensuring independent investigations of officer-involved shootings, creating a more robust police disciplinary process, developing a proposal for police licensure and setting minimum standards for civilian review boards and;

* Transparency - creating systems for timely disclosure of impeachment material, ensuring public release of police use-of-force footage, and collecting and publishing data on police use-of-force incidents.

The use-of-force policy is built on seven core principles, which Sykes explained as:

- * Sanctity of human life
- * De-escalation and use of force as a last resort
- * Reasonable, necessary and proportional use of force
- * Deadly force as a last resort
- * Duty of (other police officers) to intervene

* Duty to render medical assistance (by police officers, instead of waiting for emergency medical services)

* Duty to report and review uses of force (before, it was reported and a supervisor would sign off. Now, a mini-investigation occurs by command staff).

Each officer also must undergo eight hours of training for Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE), and 12 hours of Integrating Communications, Assessment and Tactics (ICAT), according to Sykes, among other "transformational" training.

"These are tools in the toolkit that an officer can call upon when they are in a situation," he explained. "All officers in the state are being trained on the same tactics, so when we are called in for mutual aid, we know what is supposed to be

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