

Mayor's Report, July 2011

1. Tax Rate 2011 – 2012: Staff has received many inquiries and concerns regarding the new property tax rate. The following is a summary of events and changes that explain the current tax bills.
 - a. Numerous meetings were held, starting with a public workshop on August 9, 2010 to give the 65 residents who attended with an opportunity to provide input regarding the deficit. The August 9 meeting was followed by 5 other public meetings where the budget was discussed by council.
 - b. The primary concern expressed by the residents was to keep our police on a 24 / 7 schedule.
 - c. With this concern in mind the council carefully considered various options to keep our police on the requested schedule while reducing expenses in other areas to achieve a balanced budget.
 - d. The final plan approved by Council resulted in staff reductions in the town office and public works and administrative police positions. Further cost savings were realized by elimination of the early pay discount.
 - e. Once all cost saving measures were identified it was determined that a tax increase would be necessary to achieve the balanced budget and build a small but critical reserve fund to pay for unexpected occurrences.
 - f. A tax increase of 18% on both residential and commercial rates was passed to bring the 2011 -2012 budget into balance. The senior rate remains in place and was increased by 14%. All tax payers are given a 90 day period to pay the taxes due.
 - i. Residents experiencing a financial hardship are urged to contact Ms. Driggins who will work out a payment schedule for them.
2. Camden Wyoming Sewer and Water rates: A joint Town of Camden and Town of Wyoming committee have been seeking information to understand the reason for the sewer and water rates charged by CWSWA. Their rates, according to a study done by the University of Delaware are the fourth highest in Delaware. Two of the three providers with higher rates are stockholder owned for profit companies.
 - a. A member of the committee submitted a request for information about CWSWA employee salaries and benefits. The first request was denied and that denial was upheld by the Attorney General's office.
 - b. Senator Brian Bushweller and Representatives Donald Blakey and Darryl Scott sponsored legislation to correct FOIA regarding Authorities formed by a group of municipalities. This legislation was passed and signed by the Governor and the committee member resubmitted the request which

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was again denied. On July 1, 2011 the Attorney General's office issued an opinion that per the amended FOIA law the CWSWA was obligated to answer the request submitted.

- c. The Joint Committee will continue to work on this issue to obtain the transparency needed to understand the Authorities rate structure