

## **NOTICE TO OUR CAPE MAY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS:**

**We feel this issue has a real impact on**

**The Quality of Life for all of us in our Community,**

**not just the TPA - All OF US.**



**The Taxpayer Association of Cape May urges the Cape May City Council to reject any proposed resolution or ordinance that alters or suspends, temporarily or permanently, the existing municipal code prohibiting the open carry and consumption of alcohol beverages in public spaces. (Municipal Code Article II, Sec 134-8)**

On Tuesday March 16 Cape May City Council will consider the adoption of resolutions to continue permitting open consumption of alcohol in public spaces and the use of public spaces by bars and restaurants.

These measures were adopted by the city for last year's tourism season in an effort to assist our hospitality industry in coping with the impact of pandemic restrictions.

At the request of several members of the Association, the Board of Directors of the TPA has reviewed this issue and has determined that these measures fall within the purpose of the TPA to protect the interests of Cape May's Property Taxpayers.

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**PUBLIC DRINKING**

TPA has found that one of these emergency measures, the open carry and consumption of alcoholic beverage had and will continue to have a negative impact on our most valued asset, the quaint, family-friendly quality of life in our town.

**It is quite extraordinary that even in the depth of the 2020 pandemic restrictions, no other seaside resort town in this county, including Wildwood, permitted this behavior.** There was no public value for our residents and taxpayers in morphing our public spaces into extensions of taverns and bars. In the interest of bolstering alcohol sales in our licensed hospitality venues, we rebranded Cape May into "Bourbon Street".

We commend the City Administration in their earnest efforts to get the City through the 2020 crisis, however, this particular measure was a mistake. The damage done by an unbudgeted drain on municipal public works and public safety resources, as well as inconsistent, sporadic, and ineffective monitoring and enforcements measures, and the tarnishing of our image far outweighed what revenues may or not been realized by our alcoholic beverage licensees.

Further, as State mandated seating capacities continue to rise and the Covid Curve moves downward, it is increasingly likely that the coming tourist season will steadily return to normal.

The health and safety of our residents and visitors may or may not have partially justified such a temporary policy for the Covid Summer of 2020. That urgency no longer exists.

The question before Council now is "Do we terminate the onetime emergency measure, or do we make it the way Cape May does business from now on?" Further on a fiscal concern, do we take such a step with no regard for a calculation of the fire, ambulance, police, public works additional service demands and costs thereof. Nor do we care about the unknown impact on our Historical Designation by such a clear change in the culture and ambience of our city?

To reinstitute for 2021 this error made in the haste of the 2020 crisis sends three noticeably clear messages:

1. Cape May does not view itself as a family friendly Victorian seaside village but more as a daily Mardi Gras experience,
2. Tourist, vacationers and party-goers in all of the other towns that prohibit open carry and consumptions in their public spaces, are welcome to use the public spaces of Cape May, and
3. The image of Cape May and the interests of its residents and taxpayers is less important to our policymakers than the revenue needs of the tourist industry.

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### **PRIVATE SEATING ON PUBLIC SPACES**

With regard to the matter of permitting private hospitality establishments to use public spaces such as sidewalks, parking spaces, curb encroachments and streets to accommodate their patrons while coping with pandemic restrictions regarding indoor seating, the TPA urges caution for several reasons.

This measure proved to be both helpful to our hospitality industry and a welcomed distraction to the public. It was, however, an emergency measure in a crisis situation. Moreover, it was a sustained and extraordinary use of public property by private interests.

By State Edict indoor seating is now permitted up to 50%. This restriction will further dissipate as the Covid Curve declines, so again it is increasingly likely that the coming tourist season will steadily return to normal and hospitality establishments would resume operation under the existing ordinances governing seating and occupancy, thus obviating the need for emergency measures such as those of 2020.

We remind Council that any initiative for the continued use of these public spaces by private concerns must concern itself primarily with the impact on public convenience, and accurate compensation to the public treasury for the use of its property.