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Wildwood Commission Readopts Same Millage Rate in New Hearing

At its special meeting last night, Wildwood's city commission readopted the 2.8287 millage rate it approved on September 25, 2023, for the fiscal year that began October 1.

State law required a new hearing on the rate after an error was discovered in the calculation of the rolled-back millage rate. The rolled-back millage rate is generally the amount of property taxes the property owner would owe if there were no change to the taxing authority's budget.

When the 2.8287 millage rate was adopted by the city commission in September, it was erroneously presented as the rolled-back rate. The corrected rolled-back rate of 2.8051 amounts to a difference of \$0.0236 for each \$1,000 of property value assessment.

City officials requested approval from the state to adopt the corrected rolled-back rate but were denied. Instead, the city was required to hold a new hearing in which the 2.8287 rate it had already adopted was presented as a tax increase, despite being 0.1713 lower than the prior year's 3.000 rate, and the lowest rate in city history, according to available records.

In addressing commissioners, Chief Financial Officer and Assistant City Manager Cassandra Smith stated, "I am aware you had every intention of adopting the rolled-back rate and I deeply apologize for putting you in this position. I have examined how the error occurred, implemented new protocols, and assure you it will never happen again."

City Manager Jason McHugh quickly added, "Nobody is more attentive to detail and takes greater pride in their work than Cassandra. This falls on me as the city manager, but Cassandra insisted on taking ownership of this from the moment it was discovered. It's a testament to her integrity and leadership as a public servant, and I have the utmost confidence in her and our finance team moving forward."

"There isn't a person in this room who hasn't made a mistake at one time or another," responded Mayor Ed Wolf. "I'd also like to point out that for those residents whose property assessments have not increased, this is still a tax decrease."

While the special meeting was posted, noticed, and advertised according to state law, only one member of the public attended, and none spoke during the public hearing.

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