

Cape May Star and Wave



160TH YEAR NO. 12 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY WEDNESDAY, March 19, 2014 50¢



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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CAPER TIGERS BASEBALL IS OPTIMISTIC

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County school superintendent opposes district change

By CAIN CHAMBERLIN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COUNTY – In a memorandum to state and local officials, Interim Executive Regional Superintendent Robert Bumpus has recommended the rejection of Cape May's proposal to reconfigure or dissolve the Lower Cape May Regional School District.

In his memo addressed to Peter Shulman, New Jersey's Acting Commissioner of Education, other state education officials, and the may-

ors of Cape May and Lower Township, Bumpus said the alternative configurations of the regional school district proposed by Cape May should be rejected and not permitted to move forward.

According to Bumpus' report, released March 14, his decision was based upon the educational and financial impacts Cape May's withdrawal from the district or dissolution of the district, as well as the impact on administrative and operational efficiencies.

On Monday, Lower

'There is no educational basis to interrupt or interfere with this positive learning process.'

– Robert Bumpus, Interim Executive Regional Superintendent

Township Mayor Mike Beck commented on the report at the township council meeting.

"It was a decision we anticipated, we expected," Beck said. "(Bumpus') language

was very strong. It was succinct, it was to the point, and basically what he said is that Cape May city's entire lawsuit – the attempt to withdraw and dissolve (the school district) was without merit. The thing that most struck me was that in his argument, he pointed out to what extent our taxes would go up, which was 60 percent, if they got their way in Cape May city."

Both Cape May and Lower Township hired legal counsel to develop feasibility studies to submit to the county regarding Cape May's desire

to change the school funding formula. Based on these feasibility studies, Bumpus determined the alternatives presented by Cape May could result in a \$9 million increase in costs, including an additional \$5.5 million tax levy for Lower Township, an additional \$2.9 million in liquid assets for the Lower Cape May Regional School District and nearly \$600,000 more in debt service for Lower Township and West Cape May.

Bumpus also outlined

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Cape May Bird Observatory is, well, a place for birders

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT – Mike Crewe has a unique take on the Cape May Bird Observatory, located on East Lake Drive in Cape May Point.

"We're going backwards right now, but that's not a bad thing," he said.

Crewe has been filling in as director of the CMBO after Pete Dunne stepped down as director and has become what Crewe described as "an ambassador for the bird observatory."

Crewe said the CMBO has changed a lot over the years, and with a number of people having recently retired, there are a lot of possibilities for change and new direction. Crewe said, interestingly, the CMBO began because of the hawk migration in Cape May.

"Specifically, they were doing banding to get information about migration – distance flown, longevity..." Crewe said.

According to Crewe, hawk watching goes back to the 1940s, and some of the older local residents remember the days of hawk shooting.

"It was legal at the time,"



Sign on Lighthouse Avenue in Cape May Point pointing to the bird observatory.

Crewe said.

Cape May, Crewe said, is a natural gathering spot for migratory birds.

"Geography and weather patterns make this area (part of) a migratory path," Crewe said. "Birds fly south in fall and with the predominance of northwest winds they are funneled (down each coast) toward Cape

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Christopher South/Cape May Star and Wave

Lower cape hit with another winter storm

Above, Michael Slawek clears snow away with a snow blower near his Jackson Mountain Restaurant. The area received its single heaviest snowstorm of the winter on Sunday, March 16, going into St. Patrick's Day. Over 10 inches of snow were reported in some places. People still took time to celebrate. See **St. Patrick's Day** photos on page A8.

Point water rate increase needed 'No brainer' draws no interest

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT – Cape May Point Commissioner Bob Mullock said the Point's water utility is "basically broke," and announced water/sewer rate increases to keep the utility in the black.

"We are looking at what changes need to be made," he said.

Mullock said the amount the borough spends on water each year rises by Consumer Price Index (CPI) rates, but that cost isn't being passed on to ratepayers. He announced a \$7 per quarter increase on water and sewer rates (\$14 total) beginning in the second half of 2014. Rates would rise

from \$92 per quarter to \$99.

Mullock said they audited 200 accounts and highlighted excess use accounts. He said the accounts are being reviewed with borough staff, including public works, and former borough administrator Connie Mahon.

Mullock said water costs for the borough have been going up each year by the CPI, but the borough has not raised its rates to keep up with rising costs. He said the second problem is the Cape May County Municipal Utilities Authority levied a sewage rate increase on the borough effective Jan. 1. Based on these two factors, Mullock said the borough would do a complete analysis of the

water utility.

Mullock said based on a 10-year history they could see water conservation is taking place in the borough. He said a number of wells have been put in for irrigation purposes.

However, the borough is also experiencing a loss of water, which he said is being examined. He said over the winter there were 25 water line breaks on private property. He said the borough should to examine how it proceeds on the breaks.

"Some (breaks) go on for a long time before they are noticed," he said. "And some breaks are on the town's side of the meter."

Please see **Water**, page A2

By CAIN CHAMBERLIN
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY – West Cape May Mayor Pam Kaithern thought a property tax rewards program would be a "no brainer" for local businesses.

However, local businesses showed no interest in attending an informational session on the program.

Kaithern and the other West Cape May commissioners were stunned by the lack of attendance at the March 12 meeting, where local business owners could have learned about the new rewards program.

Carmine de Falco, president and CEO of FinCredit, Inc.,

was invited by the Board of Commissioners to speak at the meeting about his company's Property Tax Card Program (PTCP). The program allows homeowners and renters who shop at local, participating businesses to receive rebates on sales and services in the form of property tax credits. The idea of the program is that the more homeowners shop or use services in their town, the more property tax credits they are eligible to receive.

Commissioners and members of the Community Business Task Force have been spreading the word about the new program. They believe it could help stimulate the local economy and

benefit borough residents, but few business owners have shown interest.

de Falco said in order to implement the program in West Cape May, there must be 15 businesses willing to participate. He said the first New Jersey municipality to get involved with the PTRP was Marlboro in Monmouth County in 2012.

"We're projecting \$65,000 in savings for Marlboro this year," de Falco said.

He said of the approximately 3,500 families in Marlboro, roughly 50 percent use the program for property tax rebates. He said property tax rebates from the program

Please see **Brainer**, page A2



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CLASSIFIED.....B6 EDUCATION/YOUTH.....B5 HOME OF THE WEEK.....B1 LOCAL INTEREST.....A3 RELIGION.....A4 SPORTS.....B7
COMMENTARY.....A6 ENTERTAINMENT.....B2 COMMUNITY.....B4 OBITUARIES.....A4 SEA & DO.....B1 TIDES.....A3