

One adult, 19 juveniles arrested in 'sexting' investigation

ERMA — County Prosecutor Robert L. Taylor and Lower Township Police Chief William Mastriana announced that 19 juveniles and one adult were charged in a cellphone "sexting" investigation centered in the Lower Cape May Regional High School and the Richard M. Teitelman Middle School.

On April 23, school officials were alerted by a juvenile female student that naked photographs of a friend were being texted to male students around the school. School officials immediately notified the Lower Township School Resource Officer, which resulted in detectives from the county prosecutor's office and the Lower Township Police Department

initiating an investigation. During the course of this investigation, 27 cellphones were seized and analyzed. It was learned that numerous nude and partially nude photographs of female students were being exchanged between male students via text message and social media.

As a result of this investigation, 19 juveniles and one adult were charged with invasion of privacy, a crime of the third degree. Third-degree crimes carry the possibility of three to five years in state prison for adult offenders and two years in the training school for juvenile offenders.

Taylor commended Lower Cape May Regional High School

for its assistance and cooperation in this matter.

The prevalence of sexting among high school and middle school children is concerning, he said. The county prosecutor's office offers a free seminar to every school in the county on the dangers and consequences of cyberbullying and sexting.

"It is imperative that these students understand the severity of their actions and the impact that their actions have on themselves, their victims and the community," stated a news release from Taylor.

He stated that students in other Cape May County schools should be aware these actions are criminal and can lead to

prosecution.

Lower Cape May Regional School District Superintendent Christopher Kobik said he became aware of the sexting incident when the assistant principal reported it to law enforcement. He said the investigation remains in the hands of law enforcement.

News of the sexting incident was picked up by the Associated Press and distributed nationwide. Kobik said media "was somehow painting our kids in a way I don't like them painted."

"I care about our kids deeply. I care about our families deeply," he said. "Some of our kids made a mistake. I think these kinds of mistakes are being made. I'm glad the word is out

about the hazards of the behavior and we're going to continue to work with our families and

law enforcement and do everything we can to keep our kids safe and out of trouble."

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Beach rules

Continued from Page A1

think that's the way to have a good discussion about it."

He said the public was largely unaware the special meeting had been scheduled. Clark said the township had a lot of rules on the books pertaining to its beaches that need to be enforced.

"I'm not sure we're doing the right thing here," Mayor Michael Beck said.

He said that at the conclusion of council's May 18 meeting, he was under the impression council was going to take time to study the proposed beach ordinance and "move in a deliberative fashion, probably at the end of the season." Beck said he had never seen a special meeting scheduled to pass an ordinance.

Resident Helen Thompson said most people were at work at 4 p.m. on a Monday. She asked if the Republican members of council wanted to "slip an ordinance through without public input."

Councilman Erik Simonsen said council did not vote to hold a special meeting. He said he received a phone call from the Township Clerk asking if he could attend a special meeting at 4 p.m. June 8.

Councilman David Perry said he requested the meeting. He said after the May 18 council meeting, he received

text messages, phone calls and emails from his constituents in Ward Two who were upset that council did not move forward with the beach ordinance.

Thompson complained notice of the meeting was not on the township's website.

Township Clerk Julie Picard said the original ordinance was available on the township website on the May 18 agenda. Council offered two amendments: one would ban open fires on the beach and the other would prohibit motor-powered watercraft within 50 feet of swimmers but allow small boats such as kayaks and sailboats.

Picard said the agenda for the special meeting including the amended ordinance will be available online June 5.

Resident Janet Pitts said the township's Recreation Board, which was the creator of the proposed ordinance, is an advisory board to council but "doesn't seem to be quite operating in that capacity." She said she objected to the beach ordinance being enacted before July 4, noting second-home owners may not be aware of the new ordinance when they arrive.

Councilman Tom Conrad said the beach ordinance concept was brought to council in March.

Recreation Board Chair-

man Steve Morey said he was a "little tired of everyone saying they didn't have time to read something, they didn't have time to talk about it." He said recreation board meetings were advertised.

Morey said the beach ordinance that was presented to council for their review was "thorough and thoughtful."

Beck said his problem was with the process. He said council decided to table the ordinance but within a week, he received a call telling him a special meeting to move forward with the ordinance was scheduled.

Beck said the plan was to spend the summer investigating problems on the beach and at the end of summer,

take into consideration the voices of the public. He said the ordinance could have been put on the agenda of the meeting in progress.

Morey said the beach ordinance was a public safety issue.

"We can't wait a whole summer again to pass an ordinance that was discussed back in 2009," he said.

Resident Bill Greenfield asked how soon the beach ordinance would take effect if approved by council during the June 8 meeting. Beck said it would take effect in 20 days.

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Date	High		Low	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
3	9:11	9:30	3:01	2:51
4	9:54	10:12	3:45	3:36
5	10:40	10:58	4:30	4:23
6	11:30	11:47	5:17	5:16
7		12:24	6:08	6:13
8	12:41	1:24	7:01	7:17
9	1:40	2:28	7:58	8:25
10	2:44	3:33	8:56	9:33

MOON PHASES
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Cape May Star & Wave

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