

Oppose

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the educational impacts of the alternatives presented on behalf of the city. His report says Lower Cape May Regional is providing a quality education to its students and is designated as a "high performing school district" as a result of the Department of Education's Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) process.

"In a withdrawal scenario, there would be no guarantee that an equal or better education would be provided to students nor that the elementary school curricula would be aligned," Bumpus' report says. "There is no educational basis to interrupt or interfere with this positive learning process."

Cape May officials have repeatedly said they do not wish to take their students out of the regional district or impugn their education, but simply want to lower the city's financial responsibility to the district. Bumpus believes this could in fact hurt the education of students.

"The loss of significant revenue coupled with the increase in taxes to residents in the remaining school districts would create a negative financial situation, which would be detrimental to students. The impact on the education of students would be seen in a reduction of administrative and teaching staff, the elimination of courses, reduction of extra-curricular programs as well as supplemental services to students," Bumpus said in his report. "In essence, the total learning environment would be negatively impacted."

Beck said he felt the primary factor influencing the superintendent's decision was the detrimental effect Cape May's withdrawal would have had on the students' education. He said Cape May will likely continue to pursue changing the present funding formula, but hopes city will cease its efforts.

"I would like to see them declare victory and go home. I'd like them to just say, 'We fought the good fight.' My message to Cape May City

Council - stop, before we spend more money. Think of what you're doing. The way it was phrased by the acting superintendent is pretty damning as far as (Cape May Council) continuing what they're doing," Beck said. "You have to do what's right for the school system and the kids first."

Cape May Deputy Mayor Jack Wichterman has been spearheading Cape May City Council's fight to lower the city's current tax levy of around \$6.6 million, or 35 percent of the district's overall budget, for sending around 80 students. The current regional school funding formula is based primarily on property values, which are much higher in Cape May than in West Cape May and Lower Township. According to the 2010 Census, the median home price of an owner-occupied unit in Cape May was \$661,000. Two-thirds of private homes in Cape May are second homes owned by non-residents. The median home price in West Cape May is \$497,500 median price and

Lower Township's \$254,800. Cape May's median household income is \$51,458 (2010 Census) compared to Lower Township's \$62,128. West Cape May's median household income was \$49,425.

Wichterman said he was not surprised by the superintendent's final report and recommendation.

"It's a common occurrence (in these cases). It's something we knew was going to happen, so I'm not upset about it," he said. "We know what our path is."

Cape May initially proposed four alternatives to changing the formula and reduce the amount of funding it pays to the school district:

- Cape May withdraws from Lower Cape May Regional School District and enters into a sending-receiving relationship with the district for students in grades 7-12.
- Cape May withdraws from Lower Cape May Regional and enters into a sending-receiving relationship with another school district for its students in grades 7-12.
- The dissolution of Lower

Cape May Regional would result, by operation of law, in the expansion of Lower Township into a K-12 school district, with West Cape May and Cape May entering into a sending-receiving relationship with Lower Township.

The dissolution of Lower Cape May Regional and the expansion of Lower Township into a K-12 district, with Cape May and West Cape May entering into a sending-receiving agreement with another school district.

James Kirtland, a retired CPA who spent 18 years as a board of education member, explained the financial impact of each of the four scenarios on behalf of Cape May in its feasibility report. He said the figures were based on "2012 dollars" as he could not predict the future tax levy or state aid figures.

He said from the city's perspective, withdrawal from or dissolution of regional school district could save taxpayers as much as \$5 million annually; or around \$900 per year based on a residence assessed at \$500,000.

Wichterman said Cape May will continue to pursue changing the formula, but Lower Township officials, such as Beck, hope city officials' efforts will not force any additional financial burden on the district, the township and their own constituents.

"The whole system, the way its done right now, is the way it's intended to be," Beck said. "(Cape May) is going against what was legislated and if you read the comments from Mr. Bumpus, he says it was specifically designed that way to level the playing field. The money they would drain out of that school if they were to withdraw is unconscionable."

Wichterman said the city will have a closed session meeting with its attorney's assistant, Carrie Wright, on April 1 following the regular council meeting. He said Attorney Vito Gagliardi would not be able to attend the meeting, but Wright is very knowledgeable of what the city will need to do next in its ongoing battle.

Water

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Mullock said they estimated there were a million gallons of water lost this year. He said the borough paid \$5,000 for water in February 2012. In February 2013 the borough's water bill was over \$12,000.

Mullock said they have reconfigured the water utility budget to cover the additional costs, but it doesn't allow for a surplus.

For the future, Mullock would like the borough to reexamine its policy on water loss. He said this year there was a break in a 1-inch water line on Lincoln Avenue, at the site of new construction. He said heavy equipment

was put on the area of the water lines. He said the borough needs to have a policy in place in the event such breaks to water lines, rather than absorb the cost.

Mullock said in 2014 the utility would be fine, and they would take the utility into the black, but there would have to be an increase in flat fees for water and sewer use. He inferred the additional cost of water was not out of the ordinary saying his wife, Linda, told his just two gallons of water purchased at a store would cost \$7.

Brainer

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gram have ranged from \$20 to \$520 annually. de Falco said his own family has saved \$420 in just seven months of FinCredit's fiscal year, which runs from May 1 to April 30.

He said the company began developing the program in 2010 and launched it with Marlboro in 2012. Municipalities such as Orange, Highland Park and Bayonne in northern Jersey have since joined the PTRP. He expects to have 22 to 25 municipalities participating in the program by 2015.

He said participating business would pay a monthly fee of \$10. If the merchant chooses to process transactions with a terminal (similar to a credit card machine), the cost is \$160 for a dial-up terminal. Participants can also process transactions on line, which doesn't require the purchasing of any equipment.

He said a recent State Assembly bill regarding the program has been assigned to a committee. If the governor signs the bill into law, it could make PTRP a statewide program, making municipalities and merchants eligible for grants to pay for the operating costs. He said the state Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has no opposition to the program.

Residents who participate are issued property tax reward cards, which cost \$1, and create an account online to view their savings and spending. It can also be done over the phone. de Falco said this program will not affect the way in which a resident receives his or her tax bill.



Above, Carmine de Falco, president and CEO of FinCredit, Inc., a company that works with municipalities to provide tax credits from local sales.

ties involved, de Falco recommended the borough try to get the neighboring municipalities of Cape May and Lower Township involved as well. He said the program is now allowing certain towns to team up to make the PTRP more efficient.

"People who work in your town, but don't live here still shop here," he said. "So, obviously they're not (West Cape May) property owners, but they would get a rebate check instead of a tax bill reduction at the end of the year."

de Falco said he has not yet spoken with Cape May or Lower Township officials, but encouraged commissioners to do so. He said he has an upcoming meeting with Middle Township merchants to discuss implementing the program there.

According to de Falco, the program is virtually cost free to the township, but the municipality will need to purchase the PTR cards to distribute to residents. He recommends finding a sponsor to purchase the cards. In return, the sponsor will have its logo imprinted on the back of the card. The municipality must also provide the stores with window clings and stamps (for stamping receipts).

Commissioner Carol Sabo said the program seems to be a win-win and was shocked that no one from the business community was in attendance at the meeting.

West Cape May business owners interested in joining the program are encouraged to step forward. For more information, visit www.propertytaxcard.com.

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Enforce Electronic Waste Management Act

By CAIN CHAMBERLIN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COUNTY – The West Cape May Board

of Commissioners is supporting efforts by the Cape May County Municipal Utilities Authority (MUA) to force manufacturers of electronic equipment to be responsible for the recycling of these products.

Recently, the MUA informed residents that manufacturers of televisions and other electronic products have refused to adequately fund the recycling of their products, as is required by state law.

The MUA is now looking for a solution to the matter, as the cost to recycle these

electronic devices at the current rates is expected to be approximately \$100,000.

Manufacturers plan to cease funding the recycling of their electronic products beginning July 1. These products include television screens, laptops, desktop computers, computer monitors and environmentally hazardous components inside these visual display devices that qualify as "Class D Universal Waste."

MUA Recycling Coordinator Lyn Crumbock said because of the transition to flat screen televisions sets and the latest computers, the MUA's stockpile of outdated electronic devices is quite large.

The state's e-scrap law, which took effect in January 2011, says computers and electronic equipment are banned from landfills. It

says all disposed computer equipment (electronics) must be recycled. All computer recycling performed in New Jersey must be performed by a state Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) licensed "Class D Universal Waste- Consumer Electronics Processing Facility," of which there are currently 10 facilities. Finally, all organizations within the state must report the weight of recycled electronics on an annual basis to their local municipality's recycling coordinator and these weights must be provided by a Class D facility.

MUA Deputy Director John Baron said there are even fewer facilities that recycle particular hazardous components from these devices. He said this would make certain recycling costly, and more expensive for consumers if the manufacturers aren't willing to fund recycling.

"We've had several conversations with the NJDEP trying to put the responsibility back on the manufacturers," Baron said. "The longer we can hold off (from paying for the recycling), the better."

In a letter addressed to the Borough of Avalon from MUA Executive Director Charles Norkis, the MUA recommended a portion of the Annual Cape May County Intermediate Processing Facility (CMCIPF) Recycling Rebate from each town be used to fund the Electronics Recycling Program. Under this program, the cost of the actual quantity of electronics recycled by each municipality through the MUA would be deducted from their annual CMCIPF Recycling Rebate. Baron said the total CMCIPF Recycling Rebate for 2013 is expected to be around \$400,000.

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