

Cape May Star and Wave



160TH YEAR NO. 8 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY WEDNESDAY, February 19, 2014 50¢



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

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LADY TIGERS KNOCK OFF OCEAN CITY

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No shortage of consumer scams in the new year

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY - There appears to be no shortage of scams in the new year as new ones continue to pop up in an effort to steal your hard earned money.

A Cape May resident provided the Star and Wave with a postcard she received informing her she had just won a \$100 gift card to either Wal-Mart or Target. The resident said she immediately Googled Walmart \$100 gift card, and a large number of links showed up from all over the nation. A number of the links were followed by comments from individuals who had either received a postcard themselves or a family member had.

"There are unfortunately people who take advantage of Walmart's name to perpetrate these types of scams," said Betsy Harden with Walmart's Media Relations office.

Harden provided a link with information to help protect their customers from the postcard scam - <http://corporate.walmart.com/privacy-security/fraud-alerts/survey-email-scam>.

Antoine Fromboise, a public relations spokesman with

Target, directed customers to a similar site - <http://www.abullseyeview.com/2012/07/target-helps-you-outsmart-the-smishing-scammers/>.

(Some information from those sites is being reprinted here for the readers' convenience).

The postcard provided to the Star and Wave was very nondescript. It is a simple white card with plain black lettering informing the recipient they have an unclaimed \$100 gift card to either "Wal-Mart" or Target. The "Wal-Mart" spelling or the use of all capital letters is one indication it did not come from the real Walmart.

The postcard gives no indication as to where it originated, containing no company name, logo, or address - only a toll free number to call.

"We are holding a reward of \$100.00 in gift savings good at Wal-Mart or Target in your name," the card reads. "Please contact us Toll-Free immediately for details and to claim your reward."

According to Snopes.com, a website that attempts to verify or disprove rumors, said this scam has been around since November 2011 in one form or another. Sometimes they involved using Internet links and emails, but the

postcard solicitations appear to be an attempt to reach those who are not tech-savvy. Callers are asked to provide personal information, including a credit card

number to pay a processing fee, which reportedly has been as little as 95 cents to \$9.95. Once the party has your credit card number there is little that can be done to stop them from adding more charges to your account, short of canceling your credit card.

According to one individual who posted a comment

online, she told the person who answered the phone that she didn't have a credit card, or even a bank account, and the person hung up on her.

According to John Rechner, director of the Cape May

County Department of Consumer Affairs, the scam artists who send these postcards are counting on people buying-into the idea of getting something for

nothing. "We are getting a lot of stuff...you won \$1 million, submit your personal information...anytime you hear this it's a scam," Rechner said.

Rechner said the scammers usually target older people, who they believe are more likely to fall for their appeal. "They will get calls

from out of the country," Rechner said, making it impossible to prosecute the scammers. Rechner said recently Atlantic City Electric advised customers to be aware of a third party demanding an elec-

tronic payment that was not the official ACE website. Rechner said if people suspect something out of the ordinary they can call the Department of Consumer Affairs and they will try to trace the phone number, email account or postal address; however the point of origin often is outside the United States.

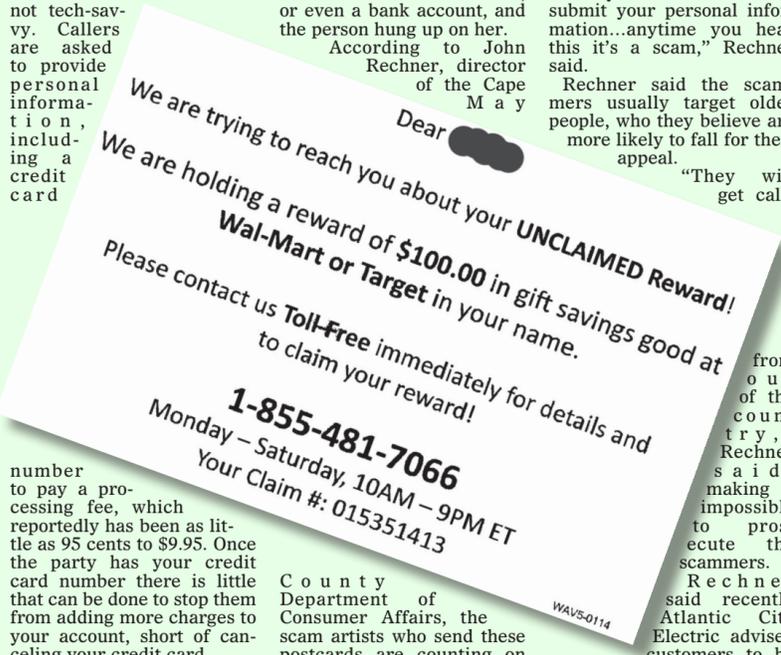
Rechner said there are some simple rules that will help people avoid being scammed. "We advise people, don't give out your credit card number online or over the phone. If they ask for personal information it's a scam 99 percent of the time," he said.

"If they tell you that you are going to get \$1 million for a \$49 processing fee, it just doesn't happen."

Rechner said people probably fall for this kind of scam simply due to greed.

These are not the only kinds of scams being circulated. Rechner said he was not even aware of the so-called "One-Ring" scam. Callers, some from an unknown number in Bermuda, will call a mobile phone number in the United States. After one ring the call is disconnected. If the indi-

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Cape May, school district disagree on school's borrowing status

By CAIN CHAMBERLIN
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA -Cape May Deputy Mayor Jack Wichterman said when he read the Lower Cape May Regional School District would not be allowed to incur any more debt until the school funding dispute is resolved, he immediately called attorney Vito Gagliardi to confirm it was true.

Gagliardi was hired by the City of Cape May to represent the city in its attempt to change the regional school funding formula or dissolve the district.

At the Feb. 4 city council meeting, Wichterman said he had read of the district's financial hardship in several local newspapers.

"Chris Kobik, the Superintendent of Lower Cape May Regional, was quoted as saying that because of the lawsuit we're involved in regarding the school funding formula, they would not be able to do any long term bonding until it was resolved," Wichterman said. "This didn't seem right to me, because I know these things can go on for several years until they're resolved in the courts."

He said Gagliardi sent him back an email, which Wichterman provided to council. Wichterman said according to Gagliardi's email, once the Cape May County Executive Superintendent, Dr. Richard Stepura, has read both feasibility stud-

ies from Cape May City and

can, at that point, go into long

'In any event, this financial setback created by Cape May's efforts does hurt the district and our students.'
- LCMR Superintendent Chris Kobik

Lower Township, he will make his decision as to what he believes should happen.

"At that point, that problem does not exist anymore for the regional school and they

term bonding," Wichterman said.

Wichterman said he was aware the school district was hoping to put on a new roof, along with other proj-

ects, and wanted to be certain the dispute between Lower Township and the city would not have any adverse, long term financial affects. Kobik told the Star and Wave the high school roof still has an entire wing in need of repair. He said a quote from the district's architect estimated the project to cost \$1 million. The school's plumbing is also aging and has numerous issues.

Kobik said as long as the City of Cape May continues its efforts to alter the current funding formula, the district is not able to renew any debt service on its bonds. He said once a municipality tries to leave or dissolve a school district, state statute requires any new borrowing

to cease. Wichterman said he called Kobik after receiving the response from Gagliardi, which Kobik confirmed.

"He wanted to reassure me that Cape May does not want to get out of Lower Cape May Regional School District. I asked him why was it stated to the contrary in the study and in Mayor (Ed) Mahaney's letter," Kobik told the Star and Wave. "He said the only reason that was stated was because Vito Gagliardi told them they had to do that if they wanted to get any relief."

Wichterman told Kobik that Gagliardi said the district can renew debt service after the executive county superintendent makes his decision.

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West Cape May budget presented with one-tenth of a cent decrease

By CAIN CHAMBERLIN
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY - The West Cape May Board of Commissioners plans to introduce the 2014 municipal budget on Feb. 26 with a one-tenth of a cent tax rate decrease.

At the Feb. 12 meeting, Borough Auditor Leon Costello said the preliminary 2014 West Cape May budget is \$2.17 million, with a local purpose tax rate of 33 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

The tax rate was 33.1 cents in 2013.

The small decrease is due in part due to the sale of a liquor distribution license in late 2011 for \$615,000.

Residents decided in a 2008 referendum the funding be used for tax relief over the years. Costello said the borough is using \$45,000 of the funding in 2014. Chief Financial Officer Frank Donato said West Cape May could continue using this funding for another 10 to 11 years.

The borough could also see even more tax relief if a liquor consumption license is sold. The commissioners

agreed on a \$525,000 minimum bid for the license during the same work session. The license, intended for sale to a restaurant operation, will be put out for bid pending the passage of a resolution on Feb. 26. Mayor Pam Kaithern has said this supplementary revenue could ensure tax relief for borough residents well into the future.

The \$2.17 million budget includes \$1.5 million coming from tax levies, Costello said. If adopted following the public hearing scheduled for March 26, borough workers would see a 2 percent salary

increase. The budget does not include any layoffs and would allow for the hiring of a deputy code enforcement officer.

Costello said he increased the borough's capital improvement fund from \$5,000 to \$10,000 to allow the borough the capacity to do more capital improvement projects. He said the budget also includes \$270,000 in debt that will be retired within three years. However, new debt will be incurred following the purchase of two new vehicles - a \$550,000 fire truck and \$55,000 Public Works vehicle, which com-

missioners have already approved.

According to Costello, the 2013 budget left \$273,000 in the fund balance last year, while there is \$339,000 in the 2104 fund balance.

Costello said the tax collection rate from 2012 to 2013 went from 96.37 percent to 97.08. Costello said the borough is well within the 2-percent levy cap set by the state and remains in sound financial shape.

"I have nothing but good things to say about this (budget)," Costello said. "It's ready to go."

He said the average assessment in West Cape May is \$450,000, so the average tax bill for a home would be around \$1,485. Costello noted the budget contains only \$89,000 in state aid, but there was an increase in the ratable base of \$1.47 million. He said there was \$209,000 unspent from the 2013 budget and the borough would likely use between \$40,000 and \$50,000 of that amount.

Donato said he believed there were no problems with the budget and was pleased

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