

Car damaged, beer stolen, criminal mischief in Lower

LOWER TOWNSHIP - Lower Township Police responded to a call of a possible car burglary in Villas and found a fire had been set in the car.

On Feb. 14, police arrived on East New York Avenue around 11:15 p.m. where the owner reported seeing the exterior courtesy lights on in her car indicating her car door was opened. She also reported a tall male dressed in a tan jacket allegedly walking away from her property.

Upon arrival, police discovered the fire and put it out with a fire extinguisher from one of the patrol cars. The Villas Fire Company also responded to ensure the fire had been put out.

The car suffered interior damage but was operable. Police determined the car was locked at the time of the break-in, and no items appeared to be missing.

On Feb. 15 at around 10 a.m. the Acme in North Cape May reported a burglary to a secured storage shed. Police said the area showed signs of a forced entry that occurred between the time the store closed on Feb. 14 and 8 a.m. on Feb. 15.

Fourteen cases of beer were reported to have been taken, and additional items may be

included following a complete inventory of the area.

Anyone with information about either of the two above cases is urged to call the Lower Township Police Department's Tip Line at 609-886-1619 extension 156 or the Cape May County Crime Stoppers at 609-465-2800.

On Feb. 17 at around 12:30 a.m., police were called to the 300 block of Bryant Avenue, North Cape May, by a female who reported that a man allegedly punched out her window, kicked in her front door, entered her home and flipped over her entertainment center.

Police located a suspect identified as Robert Barney, 20, of Glenwood Avenue, West Wildwood.

Police said Barney was known to the homeowners and was allegedly involved in a heated dispute with them earlier in the evening. Barney was allegedly asked to leave the residence and the owners locked the front door. Police allege Barney returned and committed the above acts.

Police charged Barney with burglary and criminal mischief and he was lodged in the Cape May County Correctional Center in lieu of \$25,000 bail.

LCMR grad participated in inauguration

WASHINGTON DC - Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. David M. Heritage participated in the 56th Presidential Inauguration Jan. 20 as part of the largest ever contingent of National Guard members to serve in Washington D.C.

Heritage is a security forces craftsman with the 166th Security Forces Squadron in New Castle, Del. He is the son of Robert J. and Lynne J. Keresty-

Heritage of North Cape May and is a 1989 graduate of Lower Cape May Regional High School.

More than 7,000 Army and Air National Guard members from 31 states and territories provided the 2009 Presidential Inauguration with military working dogs, consequence management planning, and ceremonial, logistics, and medical support through the Armed Forces Inaugural Committee.

National Guard members also assisted local authorities with crowd management, traffic control, and emergency services operations.

The Armed Forces Inaugural Committee is established every four years by the Secretary of Defense as a joint service organization to coordinate military ceremonial participation and support inaugural events.

Five pick up petitions for commission seats in W. Cape May

WEST CAPE MAY - Five people have picked up petitions to run for three commission seats in the May municipal election in West Cape May.

Incumbents Mayor Pam

Kaithern and Commissioner Peter Burke have picked up petitions, while Commissioner Richard Rigby has not. Rigby is out of town at press time and unavailable for comment.

Additionally, Richard Hemenway of Grand Avenue, Michael Bean of Fow Avenue, and Ramsey Geyer of Pond Creek Lane have all picked up petitions.

The candidates only

become official by turning in the signed petitions, which they must do by 4 p.m. on March 19.

Man indicted for sex crime charges in Court House

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE A Coast Guard member stationed at the Cape May Training Center was indicted Feb. 10 in an alleged sexual assault from December 2008.

Johnathan M. Wyne, 34, a third class gunners mate who was assigned to duties at the base gymnasium, was arrested Dec. 11 and charged with sexual assault, child endangerment. The arrest came following a joint investigation with Cape May Police Department and the Coast Guard Investigative

Service (CGIS).

Wyne, a member of the Coast Guard for 12 years, has remained in the Cape May County Correctional Center in lieu of \$50,000 bail. He is yet to be scheduled for an indictment interview when he is expected to enter a plea and be advised of the charges against him.

Utility budget has no fluff

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neous revenues down \$140,000, and increased costs up by \$225,000 (including the MUA increase) the utility is looking at a \$555,000 gap that needs to be filled to balance the \$6.4 million budget.

MacLeod said state law does not allow the city to anticipate more revenue than it collected in the previous year unless a revenue stream is established to support the increase. In 2007 the Water/Sewer Utility anticipated \$5.418 million and collected \$5.085 million. MacLeod said the same number of bills was sent out in 2008 as in 2007 but there was less consumption, so lower revenue was billed for and

collected. As a result, the utility is anticipating \$5.05 million in 2009.

MacLeod said after water rates were adjusted in 2007 the utility ended up with a nearly \$850,000 surplus at the end of the year. About \$550,000 was applied toward the 2008 budget, but this year there is \$385,000 in the surplus account, of which \$365,000 would be applied to the budget.

MacLeod said by law the utility must show all its revenue as being spent. If anything is not spent it can be applied to the budget after two years. The end-of-year revenue applied to the 2009 budget is less than \$85,000.

"If there is any perception this budget is built with a lot

of fluff, this shows it's not true," MacLeod said. "We're spending 97 to 98 percent of our budget on a year-in, year-out basis."

MacLeod said besides the 18 million fewer gallons used by Cape May ratepayers, which includes 53 Lower Township homes south of the canal, bulk users used another 11 million gallons fewer in 2008. The utility supplies water to Cape May Point, West Cape May and the U.S. Coast Guard base. Only the Coast Guard showed little deviation in water use because it operates with a fairly constant number of users. City officials have blamed a lot of the decrease in water usage on a slump in tourism.

"Our system of billing is driven by consumption. Ninety percent is consumption and 10 percent is fixed. If consumption goes down it can have a major impact on the revenue stream," MacLeod said.

MacLeod said water conservation has played a small part in the reduced consumption, and conservation is still needed.

"In the end it will add to the longevity of our system and the water supply," MacLeod said.

MacLeod said more significant than conservation on the reduction in water use was

the decline in tourism and use of second homes. MacLeod said the suggestion is that people are using their second homes less and having fewer guests.

City council passed Ordinance 168-2009 after public comment doubling the water facilities charge and sewer facilities charge. Roughly 80 percent of Cape May homes have a three-quarter inch meter size, meaning their annual water facilities charge would go from \$11 quarterly, or \$44 per year to \$88. The sewer rate for a three-quarter-inch meter increases from \$60 to \$120

per year. The charges are billed quarterly.

The ordinance increased sewer rates from \$3.50 per 1,000 gallons to \$3.90 for regular sewer rates, and peak demand rates increased from \$8.25 to \$9.85 per 1,000 gallons.

MacLeod said the increases would make the utility just about break even. He said it was important for the utility to remain self-liquidating in order to be able to apply surplus amounts to the budget and to be free of the requirement for a 5 percent down payment on capital improvement bonds.

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