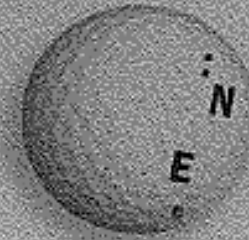


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ONE DOLLAR

## Chamber Setting Up Gift Card for Charging

By Tom Isler

A program to offer shoppers gift cards that will work like debit cards at select businesses, restaurants and hotels in Southampton could be up and running by the end of the summer, Millie Fellingham, executive director of the Southampton Chamber of Commerce said this week.

The chamber sent out a letter this week to each of its 450 member businesses inviting them to join the program. It would allow any shopper to purchase a gift card for any amount at the chamber office, online or at various local shops, and the card would be accepted at any of the participating businesses.

"We've gotten a really good response," Ms. Fellingham said, explaining that the gift card idea has been two years in the making.

The card will enable businesses to increase sales and support the Chamber of Commerce, President Bob Schepps wrote in a letter to member merchants. One percent of sales will go to the chamber, a nonprofit organization.

"The willingness of member businesses and service companies to accept this card will give customers more choices as to where they can use the card and will help the program grow," Mr. Schepps wrote.

After investigating various card companies and other shopping outlets that have created similar gift cards, the chamber selected the Electronic Payments company to create the system in Southampton. Many credit card terminals are already compatible with the proposed system for Southampton.

"My members are very supportive of what we do here," Ms. Fellingham said. "They trust our judgment."

The chamber hopes that the gift card will further "brand" Southampton as a desirable shopping destination and increase Chamber of Commerce membership, she said.

Membership to the Southampton Chamber of Commerce is based on annual fees, which range from \$200 for non-profits to \$325 for restaurants.