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## NEWARK COUNCILMAN McCALLUM PLEADS GUILTY



**NEWARK** - A member of the Newark Municipal Council and Board of Directors of the Newark Community Economic Development Corporation (NCEDC) admitted to scheming to obtain bribes and kickbacks and subscribing to a false personal tax return for 2018, U.S. Attorney Philip R. Sellinger announced on March 15.

Joseph A. McCallum Jr., 66, of Newark, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge William J. Martini to an information charging him with one count of wire fraud for devising a scheme, using interstate wire communications, to defraud Newark and the NCEDC of the right to McCallum's honest services and one count of subscribing to a false personal tax return

for calendar year 2018.

According to documents filed in these cases and statements made in court: As a member of the Newark City Council, representing the West Ward, and of the NCEDC (now known as Invest Newark!), from 2017 through February 2020, McCallum schemed to receive concealed bribes and kickbacks from an associate, funded by developers, contracting companies, and other businesses seeking contracts and approvals principally related to development, construction, and real estate projects and deals in Newark.

These developers and others were solicited by the associate to hire his consulting company for "access,"

*(Continued on page 5)*

## "PROPHETS WITHOUT HONOR..." ORANGE CORRUPTION - PART III

By Walter Elliott

*"A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown, among his relatives and his own family." Mark 6:4 NLT.*


**ORANGE** - There have been people who had tried to advise and caution the city's elders long before federal agents began serving search warrants on Orange's institutions Jan. 11, 2017.

Some were volunteer citizens on the Citizens Budget Advisory Committee who made annual recommendations in the context of the annual municipal outlay. Some were professional auditors who would add best practices suggestions in their report.

Then there are a few individuals who, at most every council meeting, point out where Orange's legislators and administrators

*(Continued on page 11)*





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 16**



**Editorial**

**Dhiren Shah**  
Editor-In-Chief

*Hello Readers,*

Russia and Ukraine are still at war. On March 16, Biden approved another \$800 million to Ukraine. Is this to calm the war or aggravate the war? The USA must act as a neutral party for a ceasefire. I do not have great knowledge of the situation like our representatives, but at the same time I am talking without any politics involved.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky addressed Congress earlier that day. He has spoken from the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv. His address was followed by way more than expected. He appealed for the Congress to help Ukraine with the weapons and peaceful process. He is a bold leader, as he has not left the battleground, but

every day is managing in the best possible way to protect Ukraine. With his dedication and appeal to Ukrainians, they are fighting and making it very difficult for the Russians to take over the country, especially Kyiv. US senators and representatives are in support of helping Ukraine.

At the end of 2020 the oil prices were \$48.52. Oil prices per barrel went as high as \$123.70 in March. Today, it tumbled down to \$94.72. Also, some of the Democratic governors, including Pennsylvania, are appealing for Biden to suspend gasoline taxes, which can reduce the price. When the wholesale prices of the barrels were going up, we all felt the increase of the price at the gas stations. However, when the price went down, you will not see the prices going down immediately at the pump. Our representatives, who get a lot of support for their elections, would not say anything.

Local elections are taking shape a little better. As usual, misinformation and negativity are becoming part of the election

campaign. Newark council elections in the West Ward, South Ward and East Ward are having tough contests. Orange will have a good contest for all four wards. Irvington will have lesser competition as I've heard. However, in April we will have a better understanding about how the elections may unfold.

Lately, almost every week, there is a murder in Newark. The politics and the police department have a way of classifying murders and violent crimes. Unsolved murders may not be classified as a murder for the classification. Do the police have any incentives for solving murders, or do they just play with the numbers in some manner to manipulate the results? This kind of policy give less incentives for the police department to work for the people and actually catch the bad guys.

Per USA Today: "Nine people, including six students and their golf coach, were killed when a van carrying members of a New Mexico university's golf teams collided with a pickup

truck Tuesday night, law enforcement and university officials confirmed." What a tragedy.

As far as the coronavirus is concerned, the US is number 26 in the world with a little over 26,000 cases daily, but leading in the death category, with 997 deaths on March 15. New Jersey is number 12 on the list of states with 12 deaths that day. As announced by Governor Murphy, New Jersey lifted the mask ban March 7, 2022. The schools are open, and the parents have to determine whether they want their child(ren) to have a mask or not.

Due to uncertainty of the economy and about 9% inflation projections, Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell announced a rate hike of 0.25%. However, this rate is not enough to control inflation, so in near future we will see another rate hike.

*Have a wonderful week.*

*I'll talk to you next week.*

**STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS FOR LOCAL TALK WEEKLY NEWSPAPER**

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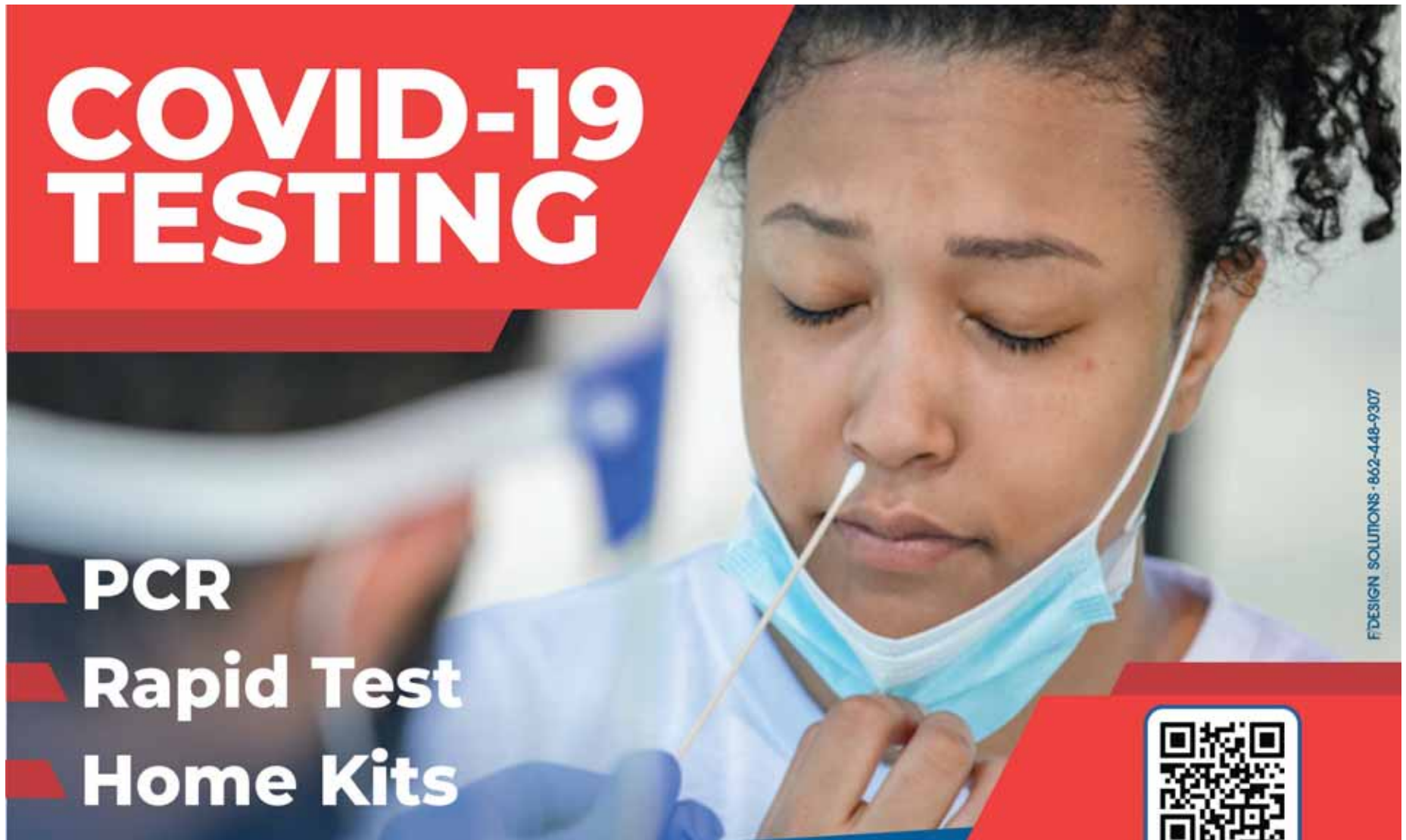
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**WEATHER FOR THE WEEK**

<u>THURSDAY</u>	<u>FRIDAY</u>	<u>SATURDAY</u>	<u>SUNDAY</u>	<u>MONDAY</u>	<u>TUESDAY</u>	<u>WEDNESDAY</u>
Rain	Mostly Sunny	Showers	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Rain possible
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# The Doctor Is In



**Dr. Adil Manzoor OP/ED**

## Is Artificial Intelligence about to Transform the Mammogram?

The dependence on technology is increasing by the day, and that's telling you something, considering how dependent we are already on technology. Let's get straight to the point - mammograms.

A mammogram is an X-ray examination of the breast, usually used to detect cancer and other breast problems. Now, to take a mammogram itself, you need an X-Ray machine - you need technology for that. But artificial intelligence is taking it a little further, or at least, that's the aim.

You are probably familiar with Artificial Intelligence (AI) already - I mean, your smartphone relies heavily on artificial intelligence. Over the last few years, AI has permeated every industry, including the medical industry.

Many people have argued against AI, whose primary argument is that human life is too delicate to leave to a computer. To be honest with you, that's not a bad argument at all. There are instances of mid-surgery where doctors have to make incredibly fast decisions on the spot; AI may not be too reliable in such situations.

However, that doesn't apply to mammograms. Right now, radiologists make mistakes when

reading mammograms with false positives (where the scan is incorrectly judged abnormal) and false negatives (where the scan is incorrectly judged as normal). AI can help radiologists make more accurate decisions when reading mammograms.

According to a Google-funded study on scans from the United States, the AI system produced a 9.4 percent reduction in false negatives and a lowering of 5.7 percent in false positives. This is also consistent with the results in Britain, where the system beat the radiologists, reducing false negatives by 2.7 percent and false positives by 1.2 percent.

This supports one of the chief arguments of AI use in mammograms: increased confidence in diagnosis and more accurate results. There are even times when radiologists are correct in their diagnosis but have to recheck several times before confidently breaking the news to the patient. AI gives that much-valued second opinion.

Then, there's the fact that radiologists are humans, and humans get tired. Physicians' burnout is a really serious issue. During the peak COVID times, I remember I had to push myself past limits, I didn't even know I had to cope with the patient overload. Of course, this was needed then, but it's not close to being ideal.

According to research, the performance of radiologists tends to decrease after 70 to 80 minutes of reading. After a few hours, these radiologists don't function at 100%, which is far from proper in the medical industry. AI, on the other hand, never gets tired. Computers can work for days, weeks, and even years without needing a break. With AI, radiologists can make more informed and reliable decisions during their shifts.

Furthermore, another perk is the ability to detect problems quite early. Humans are smart, but let's not deceive ourselves, we aren't in the same strato-

sphere as these computers. They process much larger information in far less time. They can detect the tiniest of issues in these readings. On some occasions, radiologists discover that there were problems in previous readings, but they were too hard to detect back then. Those small details don't get overlooked with AI, and early diagnosis of problems can be made.



While I don't know exactly where technology is going, I can assure you AI is going to be a major player, especially when reading test results, and I support its utilization along with medical professionals. By itself, I believe the harm it can cause is too great for us to ignore.

*This article was written by Dr. Adil Manzoor DO, a Board Certified Internist & Board Eligible Pediatrician, who works as a Hospitalist, and Emergency Room Physician. He is also the current President of Garden State Street Medicine, a non-profit organization whose sole purpose is to provide free preventive and acute urgent care services for the homeless. He is also the co-founder of his own unique medical practice Mobile Medicine NJ & COV Clinic NJ d/b/a SafelyOpen Health, and has worked with several organizations, including schools, to help get our communities tested all throughout the COVID pandemic and continues to do so*

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# SPORTS WRAP



By William Hathaway, Jr.

The Tournament of Champions is here, providing some local March Madness for high school basketball fans. Among those taking part are the University High School girls basketball team. UHS is having a great season, and will have played Rutgers Prep by the time you read this.

Whichever way the game turns, the Lady Phoenix have stormed through the postseason, beating Shore in the Group 1 final 66-31, North Warren in the semifinals 57-39, dropping Se-caucus 57-27, and scorching North Arlington 92-22.

In boys' basketball action, Camden exorcised the Central High School Blue Devils in the true Group 2 state championship 93-52. Leading Camden was DJ Wagner with 20 points, while Jakail Irby led Central with 16 points and 10 rebounds along with Aaron Bradshaw's 14 points and 11 rebounds. Despite the loss, Central had a great season with a 27-6 overall record and a record of 12-3 in the Super Essex Conference.

Of course, the big tournament is on everyone's mind, and

the NCAA field has been set, with Gonzaga being named the overall #1 seed. Meanwhile, Seton Hall, Rutgers, and St. Peter's all made the tournament, with RU being one of the final four to make it.

In NBA news, two New Jersey natives went off for 60 points, as Minnesota's Karl-Anthony Towns set a franchise record at home against the Spurs on March 14, while Kyrie Irving did the same for the Nets on the road at the Magic the very next night.

In other news, now that the players and owners of Major League Baseball have come to an agreement, free agency and roster moves have been coming left and right. Most notably, the Yankees traded Gary Sanchez and Gio Urshela to the Blue Jays for Josh Donaldson and others. The move would seem to indicate that firing former manager Joe Girardi to keep Sanchez happy was not a good one, and that GM Brian Cashman should now be on the hot seat.

Finally, in NFL news, Tom Brady has decided to un-retire and rejoin the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

## NEWARK COUNCILMAN

### McCALLUM PLEADS GUILTY

(Continued from page 1)

and were introduced to McCallum as the councilman behind the particular project or deal of interest to them. McCallum then received and planned to receive concealed bribes and kickbacks derived from the fees that the associate obtained from those who retained his company.

In exchange, McCallum used his official positions to assist those who retained the associate's company. For those who refused or hesitated to pay, McCallum and the associate intended to prevent them from obtaining contracts and work from the NCEDC and the City of Newark. McCallum and the associate used interstate emails and phone calls to further this scheme and took significant steps to conceal these bribes and

kickbacks.

The bribes and kickbacks received and sought by McCallum through the associate included the following:

- A \$16,000 bribe funded by a payment from a contracting company
- a \$25,000 bribe and kickback funded by a payment from a developer's company
- \$500 in cash to cover travel expenses for an out-of-country trip and an attempt to receive part of a \$50,000 payment from a second developer.

The honest services wire fraud charge in Count 1 of the information to which McCallum pleaded guilty carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000, or twice the pecuniary gain to the defendant or loss to the victims, whichever is greatest. The false tax return charge in Count 3 of

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the information to which McCallum pleaded guilty carries a maximum potential penalty of three years in prison and a maximum \$250,000 fine, or twice the pecuniary gain to the defendant or loss to the victim, whichever is greatest. Sentencing for is scheduled for July 21, 2022.

U.S. Attorney Sellinger credited special agents of the FBI's Newark Field Office, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge in Newark George M. Crouch Jr. in Newark; special agents of IRS-Criminal Investigation, under the direction of

Special Agent in Charge Michael Montanez, and special agents of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Inspector General, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Christina Scaringi, with the investigation leading to the guilty plea by McCallum.

The government is represented by Deputy Chief Jihee G. Suh and Assistant U.S. Attorney Elaine K. Lou of the U.S. Attorney's Office's Special Prosecutions Division.



## NO MORE FALLING BACK?

### UNITED STATES

If some people in Congress get there way, the next time you “spring ahead” will be the last time.

In our last edition, we told you to “spring ahead” for Daylight Savings Time, which is when clocks skip an hour ahead in March to extend the sunlight by one hour. It is something that is said to help farmers, and also encourages the conservation of energy, as utility bills are less due to the extra light.

In the fall, the clocks drop back to Daylight Standard Time, in which the 1:00 a.m. hour during the first Sunday in November occurs twice. (This used to be in October, but was adjusted during the George W. Bush administration.) This practice is known as “fall back” and the days get shorter. On one hand, there is less daylight during the day, but unlike with “spring ahead” there is an extra hour of rest.

Among those seeking to make the permanent change is none other than U.S. Senator Cory Booker.

“There is no good reason that every year we are springing forward, falling back. We need to spring forward - and stay there... It’s not trivial. It actually causes us harm. The studies are clear. When we do this jumping back and forth, heart attacks go up, strokes go up, traffic accidents go up,” Booker said on TikTok.

On March 15, the U.S. Senate passed a measure to keep Savings Time, and not to every go back to Standard Time. The legislation, which has support on both sides of the political aisle, now heads to the House of Representatives. If approved there, it would then head to President Biden’s desk for signature.

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT REAUTHORIZED

Attorney General Merrick B. Garland, Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco, and Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta applauded the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA was reauthorized as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, which President Joe Biden recently signed into law.

“Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking are serious violations of criminal law that demand our sustained attention and action,” said Attorney General Garland. “The Department of Justice welcomes the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and will continue to use the resources at our disposal to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and provide critical services for survivors.”

“One of the many achievements of this bipartisan reauthorization of VAWA is recognizing expanded jurisdiction for American Indian and Alaska Native tribes to protect their communities from domestic and sexual violence, which I highlighted as a priority in my testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee last October,” said Deputy Attorney General Monaco. “It is fitting that this important legislation was passed during Women’s History Month, as it will help combat the epidemic levels of gender-based violence that stand in the way of equality in our society. We have made substantial progress since I worked on the original VAWA in Congress in the 1990s, but VAWA’s programs, protections, and new initiatives remain critical to address unmet needs in our communities.”

“VAWA’s reauthorization helps ensure all survivors can live safe and healthy lives, free from domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, and stalking,” said Associate Attorney General Gupta. “Preventing and ending violence creates a more equal and equitable world

for women and girls, and people of all genders who experience harm. I look forward to working with the Office on Violence Against Women to implement and administer new programs and services that support underserved communities.”

In addition to recognizing expanded jurisdiction for American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, the VAWA reauthorization addresses numerous Department of Justice priorities, including:

- Reauthorizing until 2027 VAWA’s vitally important grant programs, which will allow communities to provide critical services to survivors, as well as the right tools and training to make sure that responses to these crimes are survivor-centered and trauma-informed.
- Increasing services and support for underserved populations, including culturally specific communities, LGBTQ survivors, individuals with disabilities, immigrant survivors, older adults, and victims in rural communities, among others.
- Closing gaps in federal sex crimes statutes and promoting accountability for law enforcement officers, by strengthening the ability to prosecute federal officers who sexually assault or abuse those in their custody, and by appropriately penalizing defendants who commit civil rights offenses involving sexual misconduct, which includes those who commit sexual assault while acting under color of law and those who commit sexual assault as part of a hate crime.
- Enhancing efforts to reduce homicides through enforcement of federal and state firearms laws, including by enacting the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Denial Notification Act to help state law enforcement investigate and

prosecute unlawful firearms purchasers and amending the Gun Control Act to make clear that the firearm prohibitions apply to domestic violence offenders convicted under municipal ordinances.

- Improving access to justice for survivors by expanding grant funding for legal services and authorizing post-conviction legal assistance to survivors in matters arising out of their domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or sex trafficking victimization.

## UKRAINE PRESIDENT ADDRESSES U.S. CONGRESS

### EUROPE

As he coordinates his country’s defense against a brutal dictator, the leader of the brave nation of Ukraine spoke with lawmakers in America to give much needed insight into a brutal war.

On March 16, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky addressed members of the United States Congress to ask for help in his nation’s fight against Russia. Through his translator, Zelensky asked the U.S. to install a no-fly zone to neutralize Russian air forces. While Zelensky made this the primary request, he gave additional options, knowing that the U.S. and other members of NATO are wary about engaging Russian aircraft, which could be interpreted as an act of war on their part. On item on the table was for the provision of warplanes and air defenses, rather than NATO getting involved directly.

During the address, Zelensky showed a video depicting the carnage that Russia has wreaked upon his country. Members of Congress were visibly moved by the painful to watch scenes on the film.

Before ending his address, Zelensky spoke in English, with a direct message to U.S. President Joe Biden.

“Today, the Ukrainian peo-

*(Continued on page 15)*

# BLACK LIVES, ANIMAL LIVES, ALL LIVES MATTER



By Michelle Lowe

EST. 1996

## Message For You

Well everyone, the weather's breaking and spring is here. Time to put the brakes on those coats and bring on the jackets. Remember to keep the masks for your protection until further notice. Otherwise, germs are still out and on the hunt. So, everyone if possible, make it happen to prevent germs.

Now first, which I not sure if you'll remember the man. Back in 2018 he was sentenced for hatcheting two teenage boys. He claimed it was burglary and he tried to use self-defense on his behalf. but at the same time the man who killed those two teenagers was a professional and license trained bounty hunter.



This murderer goes by the name of Kevin Watkins. This was a black man and it's very cruel and sad. Regardless of whatever those young men attempted those are someone's children and young black boys killed by a grown older black man is just pitiful. This man should have gotten the electric chair. There is no amount of time that will bring those boys back. Such a painful way for those two boys to have gone.

Next is Demarcus Brinkley, another one who should not be allowed by any means necessary back on the street. How he was out before with a rap sheet like that I couldn't believe it. What in the world was the judges thinking? SMH.



This man also has history of sexual assault with a child under the age of 9. How did he ever get to see the light the first time? Please be advised of this man's face and don't forget. This murderer here has no mercy with no exception. He kidnapped a young woman and killed her after holding her hostage for just only five hours, a very beautiful young woman.

The motive behind writing all this still remains to be careful of your surroundings. Some folks out here have cold hearts and no patience. As I say, believe what you're told, and don't underestimate another or overlook things. Take life seriously. Life only comes once.

Lastly before closing, this man is wanted and still on the loose. Antoine McClain. He changes his look. He is very dangerous. He's most likely to travel across states, so please everyone be aware. He may look average, but this is a very deadly man.



Thank you all. Stay tuned until next time. Peace and love.

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## ESSEX COUNTY WEEKLY COVID-19 CASE TALLY

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Belleville	10533	145	10602	147
Bloomfield	11537	155	11575	157
Caldwell	1458	17	1461	17
Cedar Grove	3575	132	3588	132
East Orange	16815	370	16843	373
Essex Fells	455	2	458	2
Fairfield	1857	35	1875	35
Glen Ridge	1090	18	1096	18
Irvington	11561	281	11588	280
Livingston	5672	100	5698	100
Maplewood	4457	46	4481	46
Millburn	2956	17	2976	17
Montclair	6023	84	6054	84
Newark	77172	1229	<b>77316</b>	<b>1233</b>
North Caldwell	1167	10	1176	10
Nutley	6204	80	6236	81
Orange	7983	165	7994	167
Roseland	1273	21	1275	21
South Orange	2917	21	2922	22
Verona	2986	22	2994	22
West Caldwell	2431	60	2452	60
West Orange	12263	263	12311	263
<b>Total</b>	<b>192385</b>	<b>3273</b>	<b>192971</b>	<b>3287</b>

OTHER COVID-19 TALLIES (As of March 16, 2022)

NJ: 1,886,499 cases / 30,153 deaths (Plus 2,983 probable)

United States (approx.): 79.629 Million / 967,800 deaths

Worldwide (approx.): 462.564 Million / 6.056 Million deaths

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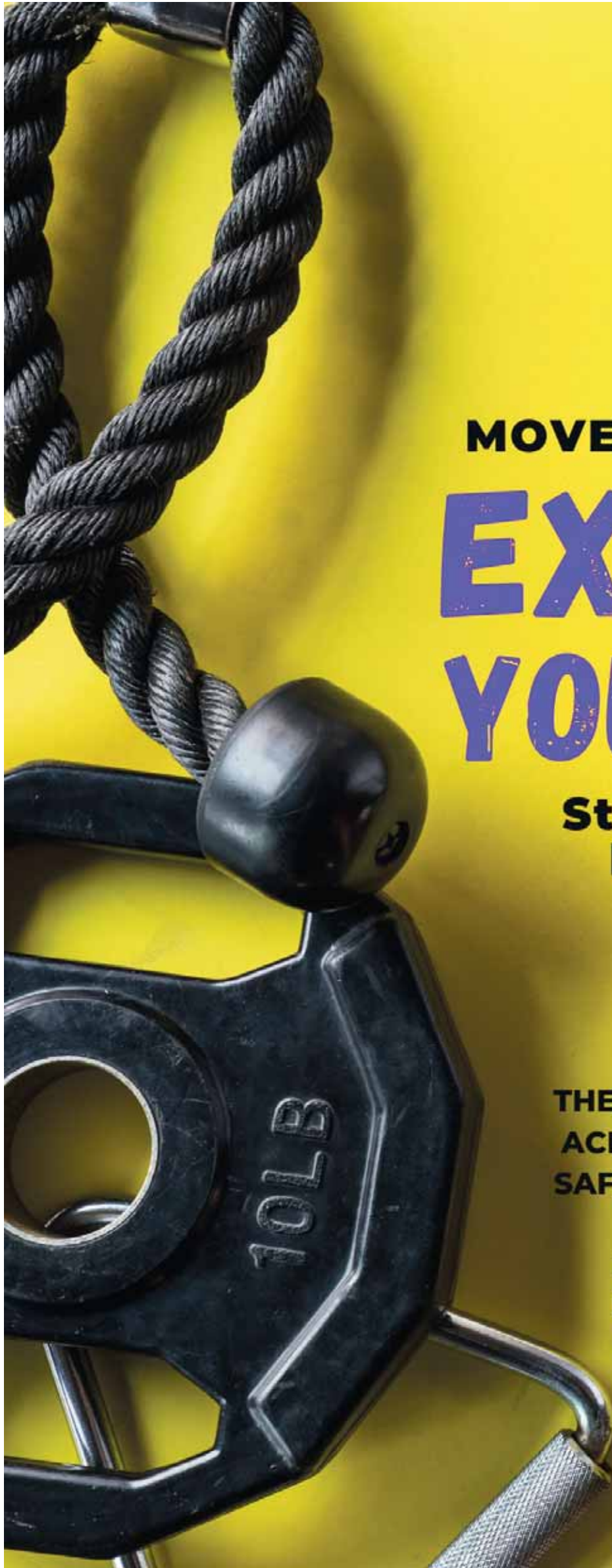


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# TOWN WATCH

**DISCLAIMER:** The following items are primarily drawn from first responders. Responders' accounts may not be their full activity range. Grand juries hand down indictments when evidence presented them warrant a trial. Named suspects/defendants are innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

**NEWARK** - Sharpe James' May 10 at-large council ballot bid - and, for at least this year, his public office holding career - ended in a courtroom here by 11:30 a.m. March 15.

New Jersey Superior Court Judge Thomas R. Vena denied James and attorney Thomas Ashley's request Tuesday morning to postpone Newark Municipal Clerk Kenneth Louis' March 16 ballot drawing. Vena also dismissed James and Ashley's suit, which claimed that the former mayor and state senator's 2008 federal bar from office did not apply.

"It's obvious to me, if you can't hold the office, you can't be a candidate," said Vena from his Historic Essex County Courthouse bench. "To have his name on the ballot for a position he cannot hold would mislead and confuse potential voters. The motion is denied in its entirety; the complaint, in this case, is dismissed."

Vena's ruling upheld Louis' March 3 refusal to certify James' petitions on the basis of Superior Court Judge Linda Fienberg's July 11, 2008 order that barred James from any future office holding.

James' bar was part of his serving an 18-month federal prison sentence plus a 27-month halfway house stay over his "dishonest public service," mail fraud and conspiracy conviction. He was particularly convicted for not telling city employees that he was arranging to sell nine vacant city properties for his mistress - would later flip those parcels at a profit.

James and Ashley had tried to assert that subsequent U.S. Supreme Court rulings on Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell and

Enron CEO Jeffrey Skilling made "dishonest public service" moot. They also attempted to make a difference between "office-holding" and "running for office."

Ashley will not appeal Vena's Tuesday ruling. He is working to overturn his client's four fraud and conspiracy convictions; a fifth had been overturned.

**IRVINGTON** - A South Ward welding company is carrying on the legacy of its late founder, Charles D. Curcio.

Curcio, 84, who owned and operated Apollo Welding here at 574 Lyons Ave., died at his Livingston home Jan. 23. Although Curcio was born in Newark Nov. 8, 1937, he was raised here and was among Irvington High School's Class of 1954.

Curcio returned here after a four-year tour with the U.S. Navy. He was a submarine technician based out of Norfolk, Va. He owned and operated Apollo Welding from 1972 until his 2002 retirement.

Son Charles, Jr., daughters Dawn, Hope and Cynthia; sisters Josephine, Rose Marie and Patricia and four grandchildren are among his survivors.

Burial was at East Hanover's Gate of Heaven Cemetery after a Jan. 27 Funeral Mass at Livingston's St. Philomena's Roman Catholic Church. Memorial donations may be made to the ASPCA or the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

**EAST ORANGE** - Those watching the transformation of the Brick Church Shopping Plaza into The Crossings at Brick Church Station should not be surprised when separate redevelopment happens at an across-the-street landmark.

The Second Presbyterian Church of Orange/Temple of Unified Christians Brick Church, here at 7 Prospect St., is to be renovated and expanded by The New Brick Church, LLC, of Brooklyn's Borough Park.

8,065 square feet of the 1850s-era church sanctuary will be renovated. There will be 75 residential units, some of whom in a new six-story wing, built plus 6,258 sq. ft. of commercial space.

The housing units are broken down into three three-bedroom

apartments, three studio apartments, 50 one-bedroom units and 19 two-bedroom units. There are to be 19 on-site parking spaces and another 75 at a satellite location.

552 Main St./Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd predates the City of East Orange. It started life as the Orange Second Presbyterian Church some five years before East Orange broke away from Orange. It is a block north of Brick Church Station, where the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad had all of its express and long-distance trains stop, helping the neighborhood's growth.

The edifice had been home for the Temple of United Christians Brick Church since 2007. Sr. Pastor Jean Maurice had opened the church for an Alcoholics Anonymous chapter and for the 2010 Haitian Earthquake relief drive.

Maurice and his congregation, however, had found making mortgage payments to TD Bank difficult. It sold the property to The New Brick Church Oct. 1, 2020 for \$462,000. The East Orange Planning Board approved the plan Oct. 6, 2021.

The edifice became "The Brick Church" in the early 1970s when the Brick Church Shopping Plaza was erected. "Local Talk" remembers a church with a yellow terra cotta spire on the shopping center site in the 1960s.

**ORANGE** - A \$10,500 settlement between the city and a retired police officer, which the City Council had recently approved, had more substance to it than at first blush.

The City Council, at its Nov. 16, 2021 consent agenda, approved Resolution 488-2021 in the matter of Trovato vs. Orange - ending a lawsuit the former party had filed in New Jersey Superior Court-Newark's law Division earlier that year.

What the council had authorized was the \$3,022 pension payment that retired OPD Lt. Brian Trovato said was withheld plus \$7,478 in damages - more than double the pension installment.

Trovato, 55, who had retired from OPD in July 2015 after 20 years and one month's service, noticed that a \$3,022 payment was missing in early 2020. He had asked several City Hall offi-

cial - including Business Administrator Brian Hartwyk and Aaron Mizrahi, Esq. of the Law Department - about the missing amount.

The Nutley resident, in court filings, said he had to file an OPRA request after what he said was a yearlong runaround. Trovato said that City Hall had "flat out refused to respond in any manner whatsoever" to his request - a violation of OPRA law. The now-Belleville Public Schools security officer named Hartwyk and Mizrahi, among others, in his now-settled suit.

## Revamped PSE&G Station Plan

Zoom viewers may want to reserve the Orange Planning Board's March 23 meeting for the likely resumption of its PSE&G "Orange Heights Switching Station" site plan application hearing. The utility's new renderings of its border wall, as posted on the Jersey Ology Facebook page March 14, has more of a two-story apartment building look. Its Forest Avenue and South Jefferson Street corner have been beveled for mural space.

**WEST ORANGE** - The man found shot dead here in Eagle Rock Reservation on March 4, as of March 10, has a name.

Acting Essex County Prosecutor Theodore "Ted" Stephens II has publicly identified the deceased as Kelsey Steels, 31, of the Bronx, N.Y. ECPO Homicide/Major Crimes Task Force detectives are still investigating the circumstances on why Steels was shot on a hiking trail off a Crest Drive parking area near the Montclair border.

Lunch hour hikers who had found Steels' body that Friday notified the Essex County Sheriff's Office - who then notified Stephens' office. Steels was declared dead there at 2:16 p.m.

Steels' obituary has not been posted as of press time.

**MAPLEWOOD / SOUTH ORANGE** - Morris and Essex commuter rail line customers have been seeing a gradual restoration of service since a March 8 overnight windstorm felled overhead power wires and their support pole.

A preliminary New Jersey  
(Continued on page 13)

# NEWARK MAN FOUND GUILTY IN MURDER OF EAST ORANGE STORE MANAGER



**NEWARK** - Acting Essex County Prosecutor Theodore N. Stephens, II, announced March 16 that Roberto Ubiera, 58, of Newark, was convicted on all counts in connection with the

murder of Tarlok Singh, 55, of East Orange.

In the early morning hours of Aug. 16, 2018, Singh was fatally stabbed by a former employee who came to the neighborhood grocery store located on North Park Street in East Orange and attacked Singh.

At trial the state presented evidence showing Ubiera handcuffed the victim behind his back and isolated him in an employee bathroom in the rear of the store, where he later stabbed Singh twice in the back non-fatally before cutting Mr. Singh's throat twice with a knife and leaving him to bleed to death on the floor of the small bathroom with his hands still cuffed behind his back.

Ubiera was seen in the store by customers who came in during the crime and he attempted to pretend to be working there, but the customers recognized that something was amiss. Ubiera fled the scene after a customer who had seen Singh there earlier returned and called out for Singh and discovered him in the bathroom as Ubiera fled.

Following a trial before the Honorable Christopher S. Romanynshyn, Judge of the Superior Court, Ubiera was found guilty of first-degree murder, first-degree kidnapping, robbery, felony murder, unlawful possession of a weapon and possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose. The weapon was a knife.

"This was an absolutely bru-

tal and senseless crime. Mr. Singh was a hard-working man very well-liked by the community he served. Through the hard work of the investigators from the Essex County Prosecutor's Office Homicide Task Force and the assistance and cooperation from members of the community, we were able to get some measure of justice for Mr. Singh. I thank the jury for their attention and service," said Assistant Prosecutor Adam B. Wells, who tried the case.

The victim worked at the store seven days a week and had been there for six years.

Sentencing is scheduled for May 2. Ubiera faces life in prison.

## ORANGE CORRUPTION, PT. 3

*(Continued from page 1)*

should dot Is and cross Ts when it comes to rules, regulations and due process.

It has been the decade-long experience of "Local Talk," among others that few, if any, of the recommendations, advice or cautions were adopted by City Hall. Some of the professional or volunteer offerings could have prevented the train of past or future bribes, kickbacks, no-show work and/or service theft 2012-16.

It should be noted that the U.S. Department of Justice, the IRS and the FBI - whose agents served search warrants on City Hall, the Orange Public Library and other institutions July 22, 2016, Jan. 11, 2017 and later - have not finished their investigation.

Seven people - from a high department head and OPL director to contractors, a tax preparer and a term paper writer - have been indicted or otherwise charged with fraud and related crimes. Four have pleaded guilty, one not guilty, a sixth has not entered a plea as of press time and a seventh arrested.

The City Council annually appoints city residents to the Citizens Budget Advisory Committee to examine the mayor's introduced municipal budget. They

are nine people who have a business, fiscal or financial background.

CBAC members, after holding regular budget reviews and fact-finding sessions, report their findings back to the council prior to the latter's final budget hearing. Some recommendations are economizing line items, others are how to better adhere to the law.

Former Orange Board of Education member Tyrone J. Tarver, for example, said he was recommended for an appointment in 2016 after working in East Ward Councilman Kerry Coley's mayoral campaign. The music producer has a business and financial background.

Tarver, once he and CBAC colleagues received Mayor Dwayne Warren's introduced calendar year budget in May 2016, noticed a \$25,142 payment to Willis Edwards III for a "work expense." Edwards' uproarious 41 months as Business Administrator / "Deputy Administrator" / Mayor's Chief of Staff had ended Dec. 31, 2015.

Tarver had learned that the city had retroactively paid Edwards' fall 2015 tuition. He also learned that 10 other employees in City Hall's executive branch were getting tuition reimbursement for classes held during the daytime - when they would otherwise be doing Orange's busi-

ness.

A US DOJ indictment said that Edwards had appeared at Orange's Finance Department with a fraudulent reimbursement letter Feb. 10, 2016. He asked an employee to email the said letter to a second employee to have it retroactively approved to Aug. 17, 2015.

The second employee, characterized in the indictment as "a senior official in the Office of the Mayor," returned a physical copy of the letter "on Orange letterhead" that "bore the stamp and initials of the Mayor," to the first employee.

The first employee sent a copy of the letter with an enclosed city check for \$25,125. It is not known whether Edwards then paid Seton Hall University graduate studies - or pocketed the cash.

The incident is one of 31 overall counts of fraud and related crimes federal prosecutors have levied in two indictments against Edwards. The former one-term N.J. General Assemblyman (D-East Orange) faces up to 113 years' federal imprisonment should he be found guilty on all counts and given maximum sentences.

"We came up with two recommendations," said Tarver. "One was that employees must be working for the city at least two years before qualifying for

tuition reimbursement. The other was that no employee shall take classes while on city time."

The City Council adopted the said recommendations - in 2017. Tarver, by then, had left the CBAC.

Note: Traver, a former Orange Democratic Committee ward district leader, is running for the East Ward council seat.

"Local Talk" has found Tarver's experience far from unique or recent. Bruce Meyer had been a CBAC member during parts of Mayors Eldridge Hawkins, Jr. and Warren's administrations.

The retired airline pilot had been regularly attending council meetings as far back as Mayor Mims Hackett's administration. He had worked for South Ward neighbor Ed Marable's council campaign. Marable, after his election, nominated Meyer to the CBAC.

"The first year I was on the committee, we got the budget documents a week before our presentation to the council," said Meyer. "The departmental budgets were pre-canned: the Recreation Department asked for the same things every year."

Meyer and committee colleagues became more hands-on the next couple of years. He and Marable would go over the introduced budget line-by-line.

*(Continued on page 14)*



## From The Pastor's Heart

OP-ED BY DR. ROBERT KENNEDY

### The Curse Of The Bond

I thought I heard correctly; the report of a Russian soldier in Kyiv whose phone message was intercepted. According to the news report, he was phoning home to tell his mother that he had just broken into a store and taken a mink coat and other treasures that he hoped to bring home. He also reported that his friend had secured some treasures that he would be taking home. While he was stealing from the Ukrainians, I was amazed that he used some "curse" words to describe them.

The above reminds me of a story that you must have heard of the Irish Crown Jewels stolen from Dublin Castle in 1907, along with the collars of five knights of the Order of Saint Patrick. The theft has never been solved, and the items have never been recovered. But here is a little piece of the history as I have read it from Wikipedia. The jewels were part of the original regalia of the Sovereign, which was more opulent than the insignia of an ordinary knight member of the Order of St Patrick.

The king's 1783 ordinance said the jewels were to be "of the same materials and fashion as those of the knights, except those alterations befitting the dignity of royalty. The regalia was replaced in 1831 by new ones presented by William IV as part of a revision of the Order's structure. They were delivered from London to Dublin on March 15, by the 18th Earl of Erroll, in a mahogany box together with a document titled "A Description of the Jewels of the Order of Saint Patrick, made by

command of His Majesty King William the Fourth, for the use of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and which are Crown Jewels."

They contained 394 precious stones taken from the English Crown Jewels of Queen Charlotte and the Order of the Bath star of her husband George III. They were assembled by Randell and Bridge. On the St Patrick Blue Saltier enamel badge, the green shamrock was of emeralds and the red St Patrick Blue Saltier enamel of rubies. The Order's motto was in pink diamonds, and the encrustation was of Brazilian diamonds of the first water. On realizing the theft, notices were issued that described the jewels, but they have never been found. Multiple books have been written since with rumors and speculations of who could have stolen the jewels, but the riddle has never been solved.

If you are not aware, you might think that the above theft by the Russian soldiers and the theft of the Crown Jewel are unique phenomena, but they fit the pattern of multiple wars that have been fought in historical times, not only with individual soldiers stealing treasures but with an entire governmental order raping the treasure of one country to prop up their own country. For example, you might recall how the former president Donald Trump of the United States, although he didn't do it, boasted at one of his rallies that the only interest that he would have in the Iraq war was "to bomb them up and take the oil."

After hearing the voice of the Russian soldier to his mother and thinking of the millions of Ukrainians running from their homes with their one suitcase or little canvass bag, I began to think of the biblical story in Joshua 7 in which God told Joshua that as he led the people of Israel into battle against the people of Ai, the people of Israel were not to take anything of the

town of Ai, for it was under "a bond" that is a pledge of a curse. However, one soldier named Achan stole what must have been the most beautiful piece of clothing he'd ever seen, "the Babylonish Garment."

He took the garment and buried it in a hole in his tent. And it brought a curse on Israel to the extent that they lost the war. Joshua was very upset and went to his tent to pray, asking God how he could lose the war against such a little nation. Then the Lord told him, there is an accursed thing in the midst of the camp. And he could not stand before his enemies until he took away the accursed thing from the midst of the camp. So, Joshua launched a search and found the culprit who had stolen the garment. And, according to the method of judgment allowed, the culprit was forced to make a public confession, and the just punishment of death was administered by stoning to Achan and his household.

The punishment might seem rather harsh to us, but there are some profound lessons that we might learn from the story. Here are three points from a sermon outline that I was reading some time ago on the accursed thing from Ai.

- I. Sin is an *accursed thing*.
- II. The accursed thing is too often *among a people when engaged in war*.
- III. There is a need to *remove this accursed thing from among them* if they hope to *stand before their enemies*.

Without comment on the three points, I add the following three points:

1. God frowns upon those who go into another country and steal the treasures and livelihood on which the people of that country have to live. If you think that I am being punitive, just reflect on "The Rape" of Africa, India, and

other places in the world from which the gold and diamond, bauxite, other precious metals, etc., have been taken by the colonialist occupying powers.

2. The bombing and destruction of the people's property in Ukraine
3. is no exception and must be called theft. Yes, it is stealing happening under the eyes of God, who is seeing even more transparently than we are seeing. But God will bring a just recompense to those who are stealing and destroying as they are.

A comment from the sermon that I have been reading on the cursed garment states:

Moreover, sin practically defies the power and anger of God, for his laws are guarded with awfully severe sanctions. He has declared he will arm himself with power and take vengeance on those who obey not the truth but unrighteousness. And therefore, to violate the laws of God, and to go on in the course of doing so, is a practical declaration that we disregard the anger of God and have no fear of what he has threatened to bring upon us. The language of sin is that we are stronger than the Almighty; at least, we are not afraid of his power or wrath. All this is included in sin, on which account it may, with the highest propriety, be called an *accursed thing*.

I do not know that I need to say more on the curse of the bond, in this short reflection, except I must emphasize that there is going to be a judgment of God against all of the evil that we are seeing in the land. My stomach is churning as I watch the theft and brutality in Ukraine and other places in the world and where the strong is moving against the weak. I am simply praying that God will set up the promised kingdom sooner than later.

# UPDATE ON POLICE INVOLVED SHOOTING IN NEWARK

**NEWARK** - Acting Essex County Prosecutor Theodore N. Stephens, II, has announced that a 15-year-old was shot in a police officer involved shooting. His name is not being released at this time.

The preliminary investigation indicates that on Tuesday, March 15 at approximately 7:31 am Newark Police Officers were dispatched to the 100 block of Lyons Avenue in Newark on a report of a suspicious car.

When the officers arrived, they discovered two males in a Dodge Charger behind a home on Lyons Av-

enue. It is alleged that the driver of the car drove toward the officers. One officer discharged his weapon, shooting one of the juveniles in the car.

A second juvenile, age 17, was also in the vehicle. He was uninjured. He is in custody. The injured juvenile underwent surgery today. At this time his condition is unknown.

A total of four Newark Police officers were at the scene.

The investigation, which is being handled by the Professional Standards Bureau of the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, is active and ongoing.

**TOWN WATCH** (Continued from page 10)

Transit finding said the mishap began with an old tree toppling by the southwestern corner of the Jefferson Street and Dunnell Road railroad overpass. The tree knocked town a support pole which pulled down the overhead catenary wires and bent a second pole. It is not clear whether the tree was on the railroad right-of-way or on an adjacent property.

The two poles and overhead support beam that make up the catenary truss were erected around 1930 as part of the then-Lackawanna Railroad's electrification project. That truss, like many others, was modified in the 1980-84 NJTransit re-electrification project and was regularly maintained.

The mishap knocked out the entire M&E Line service, including its Gladstone Branch, March 8-9. NJTransit crews have been since working to clear the trees at Jefferson Street and near South Orange's Meeker Street and getting the truss and wires back up.

NJTransit restored limited South Orange-New York/Hoboken service March 8 when a second noontime March 12 snow and wind storm toppled a tree, pulling down wires and blocking all three M&E tracks outside of the village's Mountain Station. The carrier ran substitute South Orange-Newark Broad Street buses until that was removed and wires restrung by 3 p.m. March 13.

As of press time, NJTransit is running separate and limited M&E and Gladstone Branch trains with both meeting at Summit. Commensurate rail tickets and passes are being cross-honored on applicable NJTransit Montclair-Boonton and Raritan Valley line trains, NJTransit buses and private bus carriers.

Maplewood's municipal rush hour jitneys are starting and ending their runs at South Orange station. South Orange's jitneys will run Lot 11-Maplewood shuttles, West Orange and Livingston's jitneys may experi-

ence changed dropoff / pickup locations or delays.

South Orange's police department and parking authority are relaxing enforcement of Lot 11 for the time being. Extra SOPD officers are in the Sloan Street area to direct pedestrian and vehicular traffic, inform drivers and enforce violations beyond Lot 11.

**BLOOMFIELD** - Gov. Phil Murphy has not taken a position on the controversy over having a Chick-fil-A here at the Garden State Parkway's Brookdale South Connie Chung Service Plaza.

"I only have tangentially heard of the Chick-fil-A contract," said Murphy (D-Rumson) Feb. 23. "I would put our record on the LGBTQ+ community up against any American state and we wear that as a badge of honor. I don't have any particular insight on the potential contract."

The NJ Highway Authority Board of Commissioners, on Feb. 22, awarded a \$10 million renovation contract to Applegreen, Ltd. and Sunoco for the GSP's Brookdale North and South plazas here plus Union's Vauxhall Whitney Houston Plaza.

Bloomfield and Montclair officials objected to Chick-fil-A's inclusion in replacing McDonald's after learning of the NJHA's initial Jan. 3 approval. They cited the Atlanta-based chain's support of charities that oppose same-sex marriage. Chick-fil-Am in a 2019 statement, said it had moved its philanthropy away from said groups.

The State of New Jersey has divested its pension funds away from Unilever after its Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream division stopped selling its product in Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories.

It is now known whether the NJHA has considered replacing Chick-fil-A.

Brookdale South will also include a Burger King. It is presumed that Chick-fil-A will follow its corporate policy of closing on Sundays.

**MONTCLAIR** - Township officials and registered voters are preparing for a May 10 public question referendum on rent control.

Township Clerk Angelese Bermudez-Nieves said she had certified the Montclair Property Owners Association petition signatures and question on March 9 - 61 days before the May 10 election day.

The MPOA question asks the voting public to repeal the Montclair Township Council's April 7, 2020 vote that established a rent control ordinance. The question includes a condition where the council can repeal the ordinance on its own or create an alternative "after a statutory period."

The council, on State Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Beacham's order, had kept the rent control ordinance from taking effect. MPOA and the Tenants Organization of Montclair had negotiated on an alternative plan until those talks broke down on Feb. 15.

**GLEN RIDGE** - Those who have long memories here at the Glen Ridge Public Library and other borough institutions may have paused March 16 to reflect on Ruth M. Shiels' contributions.

Shiels, 89 - whose remains were given a Funeral Mass at Mendham's St Joseph's Church and entombment at Basking Ridge's Holy Cross Cemetery Wednesday - was GRPL's reference librarian 1975-94. She was a member of the Bloomfield-Glen Ridge Fortnightly Club for at least 30 years.

Ruth and husband Jack Shiels lived in the borough 1961-94 to raise daughters Margaret, Ruth, Patricia and Catherine. The Glen Ridge High School Marching Band Parents Association members never missed their daughters' concerts, band competitions and football game halftime shows.

While Jack was elected to the Glen Ridge Board of Education and served as its president, Ruth was a Home and School Association member and a Girl Scout troop leader.

(Continued on page 15)

The Observation Booth



OP-ED By Andrea Dialect

Humor Me...

It was early morning, and I was rolling through my beloved Native Paterson the other day, coming down Broadway. Right there in front of the check-cashing place when I spotted him. He was wearing one of those PVC bright neon yellow rain suits with those reflective stripes. He was at the time, as they say, chopping it up with his boy, and the two were also engaged in a bit of chit-chat with a vendor as he unpacked his ware. The guy I come across often when I'm heading back to the workplace.

As observing the three, I soon noticed a pair of the most enchanting fairy wings strapped on his back. They look as if designed for a little one. They were small, but they lay perfectly on his shoulders. The swirls of purple, blues and pink with glittery gold etchings alongside the stark yellow rain gear made the sun's piercing rays magnify its shine, making for the perfect mix.

I rolled down my window and summoned him to a mini

shoot. My newfound friend much obliged posed as I lifted my camera for those close-ups. My favorite stance was fist clasp forced into sides, legs apart, and head up with the dead-on stature of a slightly king. I laughed and laughed deep belly. We laughed at him, his boy, the vendor, and me, as exchanging small talk all before the red that had halted traffic flow turned into green.

The highlight of the moment is the two crossing in front of the van; our rain man commences running with a pounce fist clasped, one going in and the other out, forwards, the other back.



At the switch, while he pounced, bouncing on his feet as if skipping on the tops of mushrooms, He scooted between cars. At passing, I laughed, and I laughed as calling him an idiot and confessing my love for them all in the same breath. He cheesed in agreement, and I beamed as gazing into the rear-view mirror until his presence faded away. At 9 am in the morning, he had made my day.

Thank God for the Hood & Those Hood Boyz. May God continue to bless us with such beautiful souls. There are so many of those unsung heroes I come across these types almost every day. Now That's Entertainment!

entertainment

- The action of providing or being provided with amusement or enjoyment.
- An event, performance, or activity designed to entertain others.
- The action of receiving a guest or guests and providing them with food and drink

I found it necessary to define the art of "Entertainment."

Seemingly we often misconstrue its meaning as being a bit one side when it comes to partaking in it and more so when we ain't gotta pay a dime for it! So the next time we do choose to give up that dime, we'll get more bang for our bucks!

Ironically, Michael Jackson's "Remember the Time" video came to mind as an excellent example of how limited our scope can be when Iman (The Queen) informed (Eddie Murphy) the King that she was "bored!" Be sure to roll your tongue during the 'bored' part, which is my fav if you're not familiar as Andrea Dialect says Google That!

Humor me? Not... This challenge is a win, win across the board that I'm confident will be pretty helpful. For those who are unaware, this is the Entertainment Section, and there are Zillions of ways to fill this space every week besides utilizing the norm. As so in our lives. Amusement, aka Entertainment, is all around us 24/7 if we can see what we see.

That is a quote that I coined many years ago. It is quite en vogue today and will remain timeless as it is fashionable. C'est très en vogue en ce moment. It's very fashionable at the moment.) I couldn't help myself with that one. I must hear its

pronunciation, is that fab or what? Let's just say that we can use it stylishly now!

For this week's challenge, let's seek out all that enjoyment that is out there vying for our attention as hiding in the open. Those experiences that we stumble upon may be similar to my meeting that rain man playing dress up as a rain man fairy or not, and I sought out the Go to Squad to lead the way...

"It is not about what someone else finds entertaining; it's all about you. It is about what you like. I have a bit of a drive to and from work. So during that time, Gospel music is that thing for me. The way they sing those songs is amusing. I am listening and taking it all in. I'm not just hearing music and singing; I am absorbing the words and everything else.

"Another thing that is very entertaining for me is that walk in the park. I also find sitting with my husband as he's watching the game to be quite fun. I like seeing his reaction and watching him enjoy the game. Being with my children and playing with my grandchildren can also be quite entertaining. I really enjoy the amusement of my family." (Pamela Mitchell - Minster) ...

*Remember, due to space this article can be read in its entirety on our website: [www.localtalk-weekly.com](http://www.localtalk-weekly.com). You can search Observation Booth Section on the search bar, or you can go directly to the Entertainment section which is found on the home page on the far right under Categories.*

*If you are interested in participating in one of the challenges or projects or if you have any questions or comments, send them to: [localtalkandrea@gmail.com](mailto:localtalkandrea@gmail.com).*

ORANGE CORRUPTION, PT. 3

(Continued from page 11)

CBAC panelists met department heads and held weekly sessions at the Freddie Polhill Law and Justice Complex.

The CBAC made oral and written presentations before the council prior to the latter's final public hearing. Meyer, however, remembered one year when a council member told him to "not bother with the printed report."

The council, at another part of the fiscal year, would hire auditors who would review

the enacted budget. The professionals would return to point out problems and make corrective "best practices" recommendations.

Neither Orange's legislative nor executive branches are legally bound to adopt CBAC and/or auditors' recommendations.

It is a rare pre-pandemic council meeting where no public speaker brings up his or her regulatorily or due process concerns.

William L. Lewis, for example, used to bring his experiences as a former councilman, USAF officer and Western Electric engineer to the public lectern to frame his questions or comments. Lewis, who used to cite

Robert's Rules of Order, died Feb. 18, 2017.

Retired hardware store owner Jeffry Feld, who was trained as a lawyer, regularly submits written advance questions with his in-person queries. Some of his questions have turned into several lawsuits against the city.

The Warren Administration, as of press time, has not introduced a CY2022 budget. The City Council, on March 15, adopted a "temporary emergency appropriation" resolution to the said budget. The council has not nominated this year's CBAC members.

**WORLD NEWS FLASH**

*(Continued from page 6)*

ple are defending not only Ukraine, we are fighting for the values of Europe and the world...That's why today the American people are helping not just Ukraine, but Europe and the world, to keep the planet alive, to keep justice in history. Now I'm almost 45 years old. Today, my age stopped when the heart of more than 100 children stopped beating.

"I see no sense in life if it cannot stop the deaths. And this is my main issue as the leader of my people, great Ukrainians, and as the leader of my nation, I am addressing the President Biden, you are the leader of the nation, of your great nation. I wish you to be the leader of the world. Being the leader of the world means to be the leader of peace."

While there is no word on any specific military involvement, Biden did announce another huge tranche of military aid to Ukraine, valued at around \$800 million.

**EARTHQUAKE TRIGGERS TSUMANI WARNING**

**ASIA**

A devastating act of Mother Nature has stoked fears of a deadly crisis from over a

decade ago.

On March 16, a 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Japan, shaking Tokyo while damaging structures and knocking out power. Because of the location of the tremor, a tsunami warning was issued, with authorities urging people to stay away from coastal areas around Miyagi and Fukushima.

The earthquake came almost 11 years after an earthquake and tsunami caused damage to the Fukushima nuclear power plant, causing a meltdown. While the meltdown was not on the level of Chernobyl, it was still destructive to the region.

Just last year, the area was hit by a separate power quake, with similar disastrous results as it relates to damage and loss of power.

**EXPERTS FEAR COVID-19 MISINFORMATION & VARIANT**

**WORLD**

A combination of factors, including misinformation that the pandemic is over, the lifting of mask mandates, ending physical distancing - and a more transmissible Omicron BA.2 variant - are causing an increase of COVID-19 cases globally, World Health Organization Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove explained on March 16..

"We still have Omicron which is transmitting at a very intense level around the world. We have sub-lineages of Omicron BA.1 and BA.2. BA.2 is more transmissible, and this is the most transmissible variant we have seen of the SARS-COV2 virus to date," she warned.

The expert also pointed out that there are 'huge amounts of misinformation' causing a lot of confusion among people.

"The misinformation that Omicron is mild, misinformation that the pandemic is over, misinformation that this is the last variant that we will have to deal with, she explained.

Meanwhile, Dr Mike Ryan, WHO's Executive Director of the Health Emergencies Program clarified that the virus has not 'settled down' into a purely seasonal or predictable pattern yet.

"So, the idea that 'we are through with it' in the northern hemisphere and now we have to wait until next winter, I think (for example) when we look at increasing rates in the UK, we need to be very vigilant and cautious with this," he said.

The expert added that the virus is still 'very fit' and it's moving around easily and in the context of waning immunity and vaccines not acting perfectly against infection, the virus will likely continue to echo around the world.

**TOWN WATCH** *(Continued from page 13)*

The former Ruth Besson was born in 1932 in Newark and was raised there. The St. Patrick's Grammar School and St. Michael's High School (Class of 1950) graduate put herself through the now-St. Elizabeth University for a degree in English literature.

Ruth met John "Jack" M. Shiels while both were St. Michael's students. Jack, who was born in Newark in 1933, rose from NJ Bell Telephone's coin box collector to sales vice president in the Glen Ridge office before both retired to Mendham in 1994.

Ruth died in Brightview Randolph March 10; Jack died there Feb. 16. Four grandchildren are also among their survivors. Memorial donations may be made to St. Elizabeth's University.

**BELLEVILLE** - Mayor Michael Melham and the Township Council may be considering two bills that the Belleville Planning Board had recommended here on March 10, as early as their March 22 meeting.

Belleville's planners approved PB-2022 which amends the township zoning code in 41 places. The changes range from automotive use and surface parking to site plans and land use procedures. A copy of the 35-page list of revisions is accessible from the Municipal Clerk's office.

The BPB also sent PB-2013 to Belleville's elders for their final consideration.

PB-2013 would make 705-757 Main St, also known as Block10001, Lot 3, as "A Condemnation Area in Need of Redevelopment." The "Belleville Industrial Center," in the Valley section, is owned by Lincoln Equities, LLC, of East Rutherford. The designation will grant the township with the power of eminent domain.

BIC, then of Elmwood Park, had objected on Sept. 9 to a topology study for the 15-acre lot and its 122-year-old building. Its site plan application process before the planning board goes back to April 2020.

Live March 22 Council Chamber and Zoom audiences may be looking to see if Melham, Deputy Mayor Naomi DePena and Third Ward Councilman Vincent Cozzareli will recuse themselves from the wholesale zoning revisions. Each has properties and/or interests that may be affected by the changes.

That the March 10 hearings went on with "business as usual" is remarkable in light of Planning Board Vice-Chairman Andre Conte's questioning of Melham's appointments to the board last month. The hearing proceeded after Planning Board Attorney Rose Tubito called the said appointments "a grey area" and consulted Township Attorney Steve Martino.

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