

LOCAL TALK

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25¢

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OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER

ESSEX COUNTY • EAST ORANGE • ORANGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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NEW JERSEY STATE BUDGET APPROVED BEFORE DEADLINE



TRENTON - Governor Phil Murphy signed the Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations Act into Law on June 30, building on progress made over the last five years with new investments centered around increasing affordability, promoting fiscal responsibility, and creating world-class opportunities for everyone to succeed.

The budget approved by the Legislature earlier in the day provides record levels of direct property tax relief with additional aid for seniors and renters while once again providing the highest level of school funding in history; making a third consecutive full pension payment; and supporting significant investments in the economy, workforce development, and af-

fordable housing.

Murphy signed the budget in the rotunda of the newly renovated New Jersey State House where he was joined by Senate President Nicholas Scutari, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz, Assembly Majority Leader Louis D. Greenwald, Senate Budget Chair Paul Sarlo, Assembly Budget Chair Eliana Pintor Marin, and State Treasurer Elizabeth Maher Muoio.

“When I first proposed this budget, I said it was a budget designed with a singular purpose - to continue building an economy where every family can afford to make their American Dream

(Continued on page 7)

ALLIANCE MEMBERS PUSHING FOR AMPERE STATION REOPENING



By Walter Elliott

EAST ORANGE - A group of tri-town residents had been pressing municipal level officials and New Jersey Transit on reopening Ampere Station on what is now the Montclair-Boonton Commuter Rail Line.

Representatives of the Ampere Alliance had been making each of Bloomfield's three ward meetings, especially in the Third Ward, to drum up support to bring service back to East Orange's part of Ampere last spring. They have also talked with Bloomfield's mayor, Michael Venezia.

Ampere Alliance members-who represent residents and com-

muters within East Orange's Fifth Ward plus Bloomfield's Ampere section and Newark's Roseville neighborhood - have come with an endorsement from the Lackawanna Coalition. The Millburn-based advocacy group, who has been the MBL and Morris & Essex Line watchdog since 1979, endorsed the alliance's cause at their February monthly meeting.

Its members had pressed to make Ampere Station's reopening case during May 17's Essex2045 virtual open house. Essex2045 set various transportation goals for state, county and local officials to meet in the next 23 years.

The alliance has thanked East

(Continued on page 4)



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Turn
To
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Dhiren Shah
Editor-in-Chief

Hello Readers,

Happy Fourth of July to all our readers and everyone else as well. The 4th of July is a celebration for us all. However, a 43 year old Michigan woman is dead, and nine others were injured in a firework explosion. Now even Costco is selling fireworks. Fireworks are good for entertainment, but some can be dangerous. For many years, there were restrictions in selling fireworks. In the 1980s, people from New York and New Jersey used to get fireworks from the Carolinas. In South Carolina (the Palmetto State) people are allowed to buy fireworks year round. However, the person must be 16 years of age.

In New Jersey, we have more restrictions on fireworks. Explosive fireworks like firecrackers, torpedoes, skyrockets,

bottle rockets and more are illegal to sell or purchase. However, the exception is made for sparklers and novelty items like snappers and poppers which are allowed for ages 16 and older. It is good that there are restrictions in New Jersey. Even New York state has almost the same restrictions. However, not too many follow those restrictions. Also, the fireworks businesses are allowed to buy and display their art in firework shows. They are experts and have knowledge on how to use fireworks with safety precautions.

This weekend, we had more mass shootings. A Fort Worth, Texas saw three killed and eight injured. This was one of several shootings in the city. Meanwhile, a Philadelphia mass shooting saw five dead and two injured. This doesn't even include the Baltimore incident.

There have been about 405 mass shootings as of July 4, 2023 this year. That means in 185 days there are about 2.19 mass shootings every single day of this year. If we go back to short history, there were 272 mass shootings in 2015, 336 in 2016, 383 in 2017, 348 in 2018, 336 in 2019, 415 in 2020, 610 in 2021,

690 in 2022, and for the first six months of 2023, we have 405. Why has there been this spike in mass shootings since 2020? Does the pandemic have anything to do with this? We must find out the reasons and possibly stop the gun violence all together with gun control.

After the July 3rd attack on Gaza Strip by Israel, 8 persons are dead and about 50 were injured. A Palestinian attack on Tel Aviv by way of a car ramming injured at least five persons. The Palestinians are not allowed to use the Tel Aviv airport, so indirectly they are not allowed to roam around Tel Aviv.

A substance was found in the White House, which turned out to be cocaine. The area they found the substance is in the West Wing where tour groups are allowed to visit.

The new wave is AI. That is artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. Specific applications of AI include expert systems, natural language processing, speech recognition and machine vision. The future of AI (artificial intelligence) will disrupt the lives of

human beings. It will help to modernize industries, but take away jobs from humans. The father of AI is John McCarthy (September 4, 1927 - October 24, 2011), a Boston scientist, who presented his definition of AI at a conference on the campus of Dartmouth College in 1956. He was the leader of AI for decades. There are four main types of artificial intelligence: Reactive Machines, Limited Memory, Theory of Mind and Self Awareness.

U.S. District Court Judge Terry Doughty in Louisiana has restricted the Biden Administration from meeting with social media companies on the heels of Attorneys General in Louisiana and Missouri alleging that the Administration was violating First Amendment rights by censoring material that may not be politically advantageous to them concerning COVID information. Whether you like the current leadership or not, it is not good when a political party can control what you hear and see.

Have a wonderful week.

I'll talk to you next week.

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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>
Partly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Scattered T-storms	Scattered T-storms	AM T-storms	Partly Cloudy
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AMPERE STATION

(Continued from page 1)

Orange Fifth Ward City Council candidate Royston Allman for including the station's reopening on his campaign platform.

Allman, who also advocated reopening the East Orange Public Library's Ampere Branch, finished second to Team Green and Essex County Democratic Committee-endorsed Naiima Fauntleroy in June 6's party primary. Reopening Ampere Station has periodically come up in Fifth Ward council campaigns the last 31 years.

NJTransit has all but erased Ampere Station.

Citing only 51 daily riders among 28 daily trains, NJT ended service here April 7, 1991 - the same day they stopped serving East Orange's Grove Street Station on the M&E. Its contractors demolished the 1920-built station, leaving behind its raised embankment and empty stairwells.

The then-Montclair Branch service had dwindled since the 1960s to weekday rush-hour ser-

vice. But that was before the statewide transit carrier joined the branch onto the former Boonton Line to make the MBL Sept. 20-22, 2002.

The renamed MBL has since enjoyed an average 11 percent daily ridership increase on its remaining stations.

Weekday off peak service between New York Penn Station/Hoboken Terminal and Montclair State University and weekend runs out to Montclair's Bay Street Station soon returned. Bloomfield Station's eastbound waiting room was restored with a \$1 million federal grant.

Real estate property values - thanks to NJTransit's 2002 Montclair Connection and 1993 Midtown Direct service to N.Y. Penn Station- also enjoyed 11 percent average increases. While East Orange saw those increases around its M&E Brick Church and East Orange stations, Ampere remains closed.

The city presented a restoration study to NJTransit and NJDOT in 2005. A more modest station - but with high-level train platforms and more Americans

with Disabilities Act-based amenities - was envisioned.

Station and neighborhood history also serve as its positives.

The Crocker-Wheeler/Worthington electric device plant, the Ward Bakery Company and apartment building construction helped Ampere receive 60 daily stops by Lackawanna Railroad trains in 1912. The four-mile Montclair Branch, with its six stops from Newark's Roseville Junction to Montclair Terminal, was the nation's busiest commuter rail line into the 1940s.

That Ward bread plant, some 15 years ago, was made into the Bakery Village apartment building and day care center.

The 2005 City of East Orange restoration study, however, would add 80 seconds to an MBL train's trip time, based on 30 seconds dwell time to pick up or discharge passengers here. The extended trip time may play into NJTransit's argument against Ampere restoration.

NJTransit has been told by Amtrak - which owns the Northeast Corridor and N.Y. Penn Station - that there is not enough time allowance for train arrivals and departures at NYPS. This was the rationale made by an NJT representative at a 2018 Orange public meeting why more service for that city's M&E Highland Avenue station will not immediately happen.

The city may also be facing a chicken-or-egg question: Should it pursue reopening the station before seeking a prospective Ampere Transit Village Zone designation before NJTransit and NJDOT - or ask for both at once?

East Orange has had a TVZ designation that covers half-mile radiuses of both its East Orange and Brick Church M&E stations.

The designations allow the municipalities to set special zoning regulations to make the areas more transit rider and walker friendly. NJDOT and NJTransit also offer funding incentives and tax credits for developers who build "transit-friendly" residential, commercial and/or mixed-use structures.

The Shop-Rite anchored

Crossings at Brick Church, now under construction, is one example of transit-oriented redevelopment. A commercial-residential building that is replacing the former Central Diner, at 424 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard in the Brick Church-East Orange TVZ overlap area, is also underway. The city has been finishing a "Lower Main Street" streetscape remodeling from the King Boulevard/Burnet Street intersection east into East Orange Station and City Hall Plaza.

Orange has a single TVZ that includes its Orange and Highland Avenue M&E stations. The city has eight under-construction or proposed mixed-use buildings within a half-mile of either station or both stations.

Highland Avenue's radius enters West Orange - whose township officials have been supporting transit oriented development and otherwise support Orange's zone.

East Orange, should it consider getting an Ampere TVZ, may likewise call on Newark and Bloomfield for support. Parts of Newark's Roseville and Bloomfield's Ampere sections fall within the half-mile radius of Ampere Plaza and the station site.

Bloomfield Mayor Venezia, returning to the NYPS time slot access question, told "Local Talk" at a June 3 "Meet the Candidates" event in the Orange Valley that he hopes more slots will open up once Amtrak's Gateway Project is completed. (Venezia is running for 34th District State Assembly in Nov. 8's General Election.)

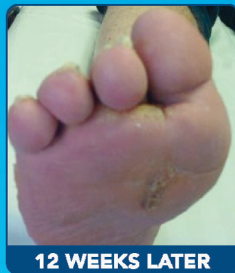
Northeast Corridor and NYPS-bound M&E and MBL riders, on one hand, are seeing foundations being set for a new West Portal Bridge over the Hackensack River as part of the Gateway Project.

The main part of the project, however, involves building two new Hudson River tunnels and then repairing the current pair of 123-year-old tunnels. That work, barring any disaster to the Pennsylvania Railroad-built tunnels, is to be done during most of the 2020s.

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SPORTS WRAP

Photos By Felicia Laguerre Owens



By William Hathaway, Jr.

This past week, the city of Orange along with the Jill E. Harrington Hanzalik (JEHH) Memorial Fund held an unveiling ceremony was held at Metcalf Park for the dedication of their partnered new basketball courts. Orange Public Works Director Marty Mayes opened the ceremony where he thanked everyone involved.

The project had two donors, one of which was gran funds the city used, and the other source was the Hanzalik Memorial

Fund. Adam Harrington, a former NBA player with the Mavericks and Nuggets (not to be confused with Al Harrington, who is from Orange and also played for the Nuggets) was a major donor for this project along with his organization.

Harrington, who is an Orange business owner, said, "We are thankful and so happy to do this in a partnership." Orange South Ward Councilwoman Jamie Summers Johnson said, "It's a great feeling. I'm excited in being here at this event."



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In addition to the ceremony, the courts were properly christened with a basketball game. In a contest that featured some elementary league players, the Orange All-Stars beat the East Orange Elite 27-21.

The annual Nathan's Famous Hot Dog Eating Contest took place on Coney Island. It looked like some bad weather affected the competition. Miki Sudo won her ninth consecutive women's division crown by downing 39.5 hot dogs and buns, while Joey

Chestnut added a 16th Mustard Belt to his collection. The men's draw was delayed by stormy weather, which might have had an effect on the eaters, especially Chestnut, as he only handled 62 hot dogs and buns compared to 76 last year.

Finally, several on-air employees were let go from ESPN in a cost cutting move. Those leaving the network include Jalen Rose, Jeff Van Gundy, Max Kellerman, Suzy Kolber, and Hall of Fame quarterback Steve Young.





UNITED STATES

THE MASS SHOOTING EPIDEMIC CONTINUES

The epidemic of mass shootings in America continues, this time with a bevy of high school aged victims.

On July 2, 2023, at approximately 12:35 a.m., officers with the Baltimore Police Department responded to multiple calls at the 800 block of Gretna Court of a reported shooting. The incident occurred at a block party.

Upon arrival, officers located multiple shooting victims. Preliminarily, there are 30 total shooting victims. Nine victims were transported from the scene to local hospitals, while 20 victims walked into area hospitals across the region. So far, three victims have been listed in critical condition.

Sadly, there were two fatalities. The deceased victims have been identified as 18-year-old Aaliyah Gonzalez and 20-year-old Kylis Fagbemi.

The non-fatal female victims injured were one 13-year-old, one 14-year-old, two 15-year-olds, three 16-year-olds, two 17-year-olds, two 18-year-olds, three 19-year-olds, one 20-year-old, one 23-year-old and one 32-year-old.

The non-fatal male victims injured were one 13-year-old, one 15-year-old, two 16-year-old, two 17-year-olds, three 18-year-olds, one 22-year-old and one 31-year-old.

As of press time, no suspects are in custody, and no motive has been established. Homicide detectives have assumed control over the investigation. Anyone with information is urged to contact Homicide detectives at 410-396-2100.

Those who wish to remain anonymous may utilize the Metro Crime Stoppers tip line, at 1-866-7LOCKUP. You may also

text tips through the Metro Crime Stoppers of Maryland website.

Additional information will be provided as it becomes available.

"We will not stop until we find you, and we will find you," said Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott.

The incident elicited reaction as far as New Jersey. In a statement, NJ Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin said:

"Families and neighbors gathering together at block parties, beaches, and cookouts in celebration of this incredible nation's independence should be able to do so without the threat of gun violence. Our hearts ache for those impacted by the mass shooting in Baltimore. We pray for the recovery of those injured and traumatized by what occurred. We grieve for those lost to this senseless act of violence and extend our sympathy to all those who loved them. And we support the first responders and medical professionals rendering aid and the many officers working to bring those responsible to justice.

"Enough is enough. We need to do better. We must end gun violence in this country."

In addition to this incident, there were also high profile shootings in Philadelphia, PA and Fort Worth, TX.

In the PA shooting, five people were killed by a gunman armed with a handgun, AR-15 and bulletproof vest. The unnamed suspect was apprehended after a foot chase.

In Texas, 17 people were shot across four separate incidents, with three fatalities. The suspect or suspects are still at large.

MASS SHOOTING UPDATE

Information recent as of 7-4-2023 at 12 p.m.

2023 Mass Shooting Stats: (Source: Mass Shooting Tracker, <https://www.massshootingtracker.site/data/?year=2023>)

- Total Mass Shootings: 405

- Total Dead: 530
- Total Wounded: 1600
- Shootings Per Day: 2.19
- Days Reached in Year 2023 as of June 27: 185

Latest High Profile Incident (See above entry)

AFRICA

"BLUE HELMETS" LEAVING MALI

The Security Council on June 30 unanimously approved the complete withdrawal of UN peacekeeping forces in Mali, although it will take six months for the final "blue helmets" to depart.

Security Council members reiterated strong support for the full withdrawal of the decade-old UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and the transfer of security responsibilities to the country's transitional Government, which has been in power since a coup in 2021.

Commending the peacekeeping operation and its staff, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for the "full cooperation of the transitional Government for an orderly and safe withdrawal of the mission's personnel and assets in the coming months," said Farhan Haq, his deputy spokesperson.

The UN chief also urged all the signatory parties to the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali "to continue honoring the ceasefire as MINUSMA withdraws," Mr. Haq said.

However, the UN chief remains concerned by the fact that the level and duration of the financial commitment authority required to facilitate the draw-down process have been significantly reduced during budget negotiations in the General Assembly's Fifth Committee, the deputy spokesperson said, adding that "this increases the complexities and risks of the draw-down operation."

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General will continue to engage with the transitional Government

on how best to serve the interests of the people of Mali in cooperation with the UN Country Team in Mali, the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and other partners.

By the terms of the adopted resolution, MINUSMA will begin drawing down its presence on Saturday and will completely withdraw from Mali by Jan. 1, 2024.

The Council also authorized the mission to respond with force to imminent threats of violence to civilians and contribute to the safe civilian-led delivery of humanitarian assistance, up to Sept. 30.

Established by the Council in 2013 following a coup the previous year, the mission's presence, as of February 2023, stands at more than 15,000 personnel, according to MINUSMA.

Media reports have depicted a grim security landscape. Over the past decade, Mali and the Sahel region have seen a surge in clashes and attacks by armed groups and terrorist affiliates, with 303 peacekeepers killed, according to MINUSMA.

Conditions have also worsened due to climate shocks, and rising intercommunal tensions over scarce resources that have become the main drivers of continued violence, mass displacement, instability, and cross-border trafficking.

While MINUSMA did not achieve all of its goals, Mali's Ambassador Issa Konfourou said the mission has made gains in such areas as human rights.

Ahead of the withdrawal, he said the Malian Government will ensure compliance with the terms of the mission's disengagement within the established timeframe.

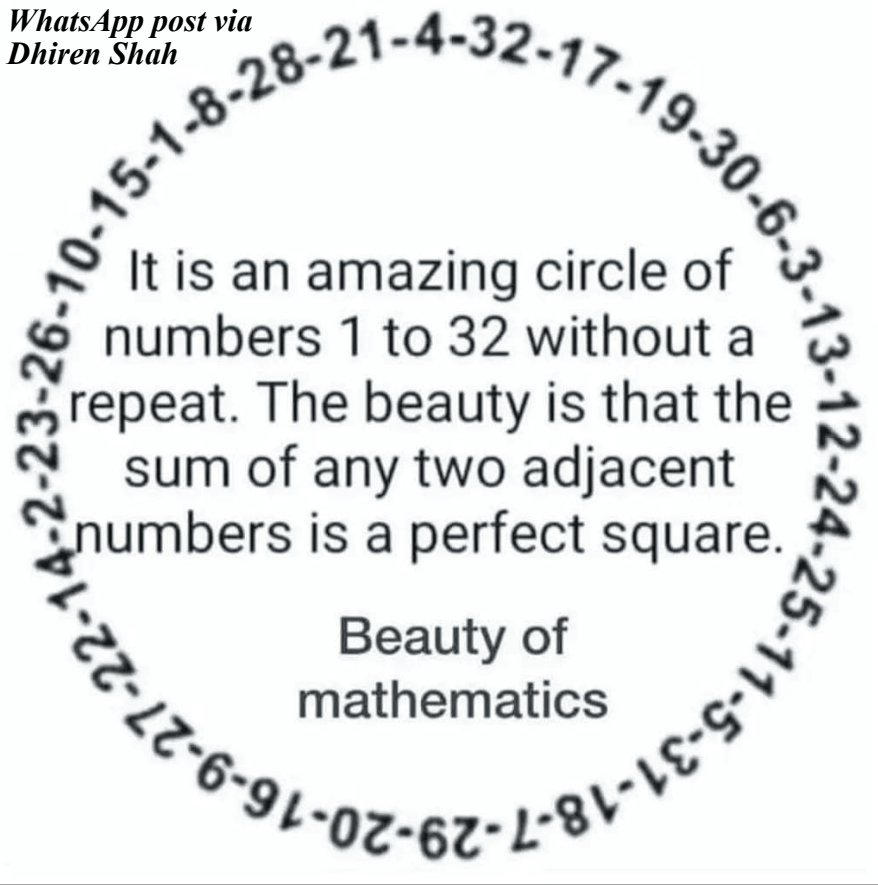
In addition, Mali will continue to work tirelessly to protect civilians over all its territory, he said, paying tribute to peacekeepers' contributions.

However, he regretted that the Council continues to consider the current situation in Mali as a "threat to international security," pointing to such gains made as a resumption of constitutional

(Continued on page 11)

THE BEAUTY OF NUMBERS

WhatsApp post via
Dhiren Shah



NJ STATE BUDGET

(Continued from page 1)

come true. Today we are delivering on that promise,” said Governor Murphy.

“Over the last two years we have committed over \$6 billion in direct property tax relief, tackling one of the single greatest and longest standing affordability challenges our state faces. This budget will also lower prescription-drug costs for seniors, help hardworking families by expanding free pre-K for kids, create good-paying jobs and fight climate change by building a green economy, expand mental health services for our kids, build and preserve affordable housing so everyone has a place they can call home, help first-generation homebuyers achieve the safety and security of owning a home, and so much more. We are accomplishing all of this in a fiscally responsible way. This budget continues to fully deliver on our commitments to our pension payments and school funding, while also maintaining a healthy surplus.”

“The budget signed into law today will help make New Jersey more affordable for hardworking residents and families by boosting tax relief and invest-

ing in affordable housing, social services, and education,” said Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs. “This budget demonstrates that we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing New Jerseyans of all walks of life the opportunity and resources to thrive.”

“This is a great budget for the people of New Jersey. It will help make their lives more affordable with an historic amount of property tax relief, including increased rebates, an expansion of Senior Freeze and a down payment on StayNJ, which will provide additional tax relief for senior citizens,” said Senate President Nicholas Scutari. “We are also distributing \$150 million in energy tax receipts to municipalities to further hold down property taxes. This is a fiscally-responsible spending plan that includes a record level of school funding, a full pension payment and a surplus of more than \$10 billion. This budget will help improve the lives and livelihoods of New Jersey’s residents in meaningful ways.”

“This budget ensures our state will be more affordable for everyone,” said Assembly

(Continued on page 13)

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CHAPTER 7 BANKRUPTCY CHAPTER 13 BANKRUPTCY

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- **JULY 15: Community Conversation** is a chance for the community of Essex County to openly discuss the growth opportunities and needs of families and youths. We’re gathering parents and caregivers, city and county officials, educators and school leaders, plus community partners at 12:30p.m.
- **JULY 20: All About The Spectrum** meets 6:30 p.m. monthly on 3rd Thursdays *in-person*. It is for parents of children on the autism spectrum between the ages of 2 and 8 years old.
- **JULY 27: Better Together Dads** meets 6:30 p.m. monthly on 4th Thursdays to give fathers a safe place for connection with other passionate dads.

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GOVERNOR MURPHY SIGNS BILL ELIMINATING PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICE FEES

TRENTON - In another monumental step for one of the most progressive criminal justice systems in the nation, Governor Phil Murphy signed A5587 / S3771 on June 30, which eliminates fees, liens, and warrants issued for public defender services in New Jersey.

The bill signing not only eliminates public defender fees going forward but applies retroactively to all unpaid outstanding costs previously assessed or imposed upon a defendant, as well as any unsatisfied civil judgements, liens on property, and warrants issued based on the unpaid balances, for services rendered by the Office of the Public Defender.

“The right to an attorney should be a universal right for those who are navigating our criminal justice system. For too long, we have witnessed many residents suffer from the steep prices of a public defender, many times causing them to go into debt just to cover their legal fees, and disproportionately affecting people of color. The elimination of these fees gives them the chance to defend themselves against charges without worry of their finances,” said Governor Murphy. “I

am grateful to our legislative partners who recognize the significant toll public defender fees have on those awaiting a verdict and share this Administration’s goal to create a fairer criminal justice system in our state.”

In his proposed Fiscal Year 2024 budget, Governor Murphy proposed eliminating public defender fees assessed on indigent clients regardless of whether they are ultimately found guilty or not. Previously, public defender clients were assessed fees starting at \$150 and escalating based on a number of factors. A total of \$4 million has been allocated in the signed Fiscal Year 2024 budget for to implement this bill.

Additionally, the budget provides funding for the Parole Revocation Defense Unit and to increase the rates paid to attorneys assisting the Office of the Public Defender to help ensure that residents of limited means have access to an effective legal defense.

The effort to eliminate public defender fees was spearheaded by the Wealth Disparity Task Force. The issue was discussed during several of the Task Force’s listening sessions raising awareness to the challenges to reentry and wealth building affecting Black

and Hispanic or Latino New Jerseyans.

“The right to counsel is meaningless if it depends on the size of one’s wallet,” said Sarah Fajardo, Policy Director, ACLU-NJ. “We applaud the Governor and Legislature for recognizing that and relieving the most vulnerable New Jerseyans of unjust and unnecessary financial and legal burdens as a result of exercising a constitutional right. Low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately harmed by justice system fees and fines, and removing some of these punitive mechanisms is a racial and economic justice win for New Jersey. We urge our elected leaders to further eliminate fines and fees and continue the necessary work of creating a more just criminal legal system.”

“The Constitution guarantees any criminal defendant the right to an attorney. This guarantee is one of the bedrocks of our justice system, and is emblematic of the values set forth in our founding document,” said Senator Nellie Pou. “This bill serves to ensure that all defendants, including those of limited means, have access to legal services without having to pay burdensome fees.”

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 - Estimates on how much it would take to repair some of the Newark Public Schools' older buildings, and opinion on how to pay for them, may become a hot topic issue within and outside of 465 Broad St. this summer.

What had started out as a \$1 billion estimate at the start of 2023, has grown to \$2.5 billion by May 30. NPS Business Administrator Valerie Wilson, that month, said that a "facilities condition assessment" is being conducted on the older of the district's 65 school buildings. The average school building's age is 98 year old.

"We have asbestos, lead paint, lead in our pipes," said Wilson May 23. "All of those things have to be addressed before you can do some of the other kinds of the things you want to do. Construction materials pricing is very volatile, so we'd say that the estimate is around \$2.5 billion just to being the buildings up to be where they need to be in terms of code."

What has raised eyebrows outside of the NPS Central Office is that Schools Superintendent Roger Leon is considering the proposal to launch a \$1 billion construction bond issue. The NPS Board of Education, on May 23, had approved a \$1.3 billion budget for the 2023-24 school year.

Leon, as of press time, is thinking it over but has not asked anyone in the Central Office to draft a proposal. Some outside officials are countering that NOS should rather be approaching the

NJ School Development Authority and the State Legislature for the repair money.

State Education Law Center senior attorney Theresa Luhm, on June 13, said approaching state legislators in Trenton would be preferable to "shifting the burden to local taxpayers."

"The SDA owes us more schools," added Mayor Ras Baraka. "(They) fell woefully short on what was anticipated and no real explanation was given to voters across our state."

Baraka, who was Central High School principal when it moved from its 1912 building to its new one, was referring to the drafting slowdown put on the SDA early in Gov. Chris Christie's administration. NPS, prior to Christie's 2007 "go slow" order, would need 70 years to replace their older schools.

NPS, should it go to a bond issue, would be the first time as a newly autonomous school district. The district, while under state control, had issued a \$305 million construction bond in 2017.

IRVINGTON - A township man, said Union County officials, went from being an "armed and dangerous" suspect in an early June 24 shooting to being arrested in Plainfield later that Saturday.

Union County Prosecutor William Daniel said his detectives plus New Jersey State Troopers and Summit Police Department members arrested Jaime Tapia-Lobos, 33, of Irvington, at Plainfield's Front and Grant streets.

While Daniel did not say how Tapia-Lobos was identified and located, he did fit the description of a man accused of shooting another in the area of Summit's 103 Park Ave. at 8:35 a.m. Saturday.

Witnesses said that the suspect and two unidentified men were in front of that apartment house that morning when a fourth person pulled up in his car, got out and began arguing with the trio.

They said the suspect, in a black hooded sweatshirt, pulled out a handgun from his black

backpack, fired three shots into the victim at close range and ran into the vicinity of Ashwood and Roosevelt avenues. Responding SPD officers were told that the victim and the suspect have had an argument going for several days.

The victim got back in his car and drove the three blocks to Overlook Hospital. Overlook transferred the 35-year-old Union man to the Morristown Medical Center. He is expected to recover.

Tapia-Lobos had a June 26 arraignment hearing in Superior Court-Elizabeth. He is being held in Elizabeth's Union County Jail on: first-degree attempted murder, second-degree aggravated assault, third-degree aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, second-degree possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose and second-degree unlawful possession.

EAST ORANGE / ORANGE - An East Orange man, according to the Union County Prosecutor's Office July 3, was part of a trio who were indicted by a grand jury June 28 for a December-January string of carjackings and armed robberies - including a Jan. 4 holdup in Orange.

The N.J. Superior Court-Elizabeth grand jury handed down four bills of indictment that Wednesday on Daron Thomas, 32, of East Orange, Isaiah Barrett, 33, of Elizabeth, and Alfred Pierre, 37, of Roselle.

Thomas, Barrett and Pierre are accused of committing a robbery and carjacking in Linden Jan. 8. The grand jury found enough evidence to have the trio tried in court for robberies in Roselle Dec. 15, in Linden Dec. 26, in Elizabeth Jan. 2 and in Orange Jan. 4. Details of the Orange incident were not immediately available.

Their alleged crimes came out to 56 counts before the grand jury, including those for weapons offenses. The charges include one each on Barrett for reporting a false crime to law enforcement and using a juvenile to corroborate.

The trio were arrested April 17 and remain held in Newark's

Essex County Correctional Facility Their trial is being scheduled for late July in Elizabeth.

Union County Prosecutor and Linden Police Chief thanked the Orange, Elizabeth and Roselle police detectives for their assistance in their four-month investigation.

WEST ORANGE - Township elders, since granting final approval to their annual Independence Day fireworks celebration here 12:30 p.m. June 30, have been crossing their fingers that, as of 4 p.m. July 3, the event will go off as intended.

The Township Council held a special hybrid meeting that Friday to pass a resolution authorizing the July 4 event and its vendors. The extra meeting was immediately set after they had tabled the same resolution at their scheduled June 27 meeting.

"Your Town Council did NOT vote to cancel the July 4 Fireworks," explained Council President Tammy Williams June 28. "We needed additional information that wasn't available last night. We want to make sure our West Orange traditions remain safe."

Williams was responding to an overnight social media post that had claimed that the fireworks were canceled. Whatever additional information township elders had wanted sufficiently satisfied them to grant Friday approval.

The celebration is to start around 6 p.m., with fireworks at dusk, July 4 on the West Orange High School field. The event includes a July 8 rain date.

That rain date may be used if the National Weather Service's prediction of scattered rain and thunder showers July 4 is realized. That rain threat, however, is above marginal for western, central and southern New Jersey plus Delaware, eastern Pennsylvania and the Elkton, Md area.

Anticipated thunderstorms and poor Air Quality Index readings had prompted some "Local Talk" towns to postpone. Essex County, for example, cited air quality to bring their June 30 NJ Symphony Orchestra concert

(Continued on page 12)



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WORLD NEWS FLASH

(Continued from page 6)

order and the advance of the Algiers Process towards achieving lasting peace.

EUROPE

MORE STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FLU VACCINE

All secondary school pupils in England will be offered a free flu vaccine from September for the 2023-24 season, the government has confirmed on July 4.

An initial list of groups eligible for this year's vaccine was first announced in May, with a note that a decision on secondary school pupils would follow at a later date.

Now, the government has confirmed it is expanding the program to over three million pupils in secondary school years 7 to 11, who will be offered the vaccine as a nasal spray through their school's vaccination pro-

gram from September 1.

The expansion gives direct protection to pupils receiving the vaccine and provides indirect protection to more vulnerable groups by reducing the spread of the virus.

Health Minister Maria Caulfield said: "Expanding the offer of flu vaccination to all secondary school pupils this winter will provide millions of young people with extra protection.

"Importantly, this will also reduce the risk of transmission to more vulnerable groups, including the elderly, reducing hospitalizations and freeing up bed capacity across the NHS.

"Last winter we saw the devastating impact this illness can have, so it is important all pupils take up the offer of the flu vaccine to protect themselves and their loved ones from falling unwell."

The decision to expand the program is in line with a long-standing recommendation from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunization (JCVI),

which highlights the benefits of directly protecting school-aged children from flu, and the indirect benefits to the wider population.

NHS school aged immunization services will be undertaking the vaccinations from September during the autumn term.

All primary school children and infants aged 2 and 3 will also be offered the flu vaccine, as previously announced in May.

Eligible groups are urged to take up the offer from September before the flu season begins, to give themselves the best possible protection in winter.

"NHS Director of Vaccinations and Screening Steve Russell said: "Last winter we saw how quickly flu can spread within communities, so I'm pleased to see the flu vaccination offer being extended to secondary school children in the autumn term.

"The vaccine offers vital protection against flu which can cause nasty symptoms, and I would urge all young people and

parents to make sure they join millions of others who get vaccinated each year to take up the offer when they can - it's quick, easy and offered in schools, so there's really no reason to delay when you receive the offer."

"Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunization, UKHSA, said: "Getting the flu vaccine offers the best protection against the virus. It is important everyone eligible takes up the offer, including secondary school pupils as they can fall very sick. Last year we saw some teenagers hospitalized with flu.

Schools Minister Nick Gibb said: "Following the disruption caused by the pandemic, it's important that children are able to attend school as much as possible.

"We know that school attendance levels drop over the winter months due to illness, which is why today's announcement will not only protect children's health but also their education."



*From
The
Pastor's
Heart*

OP-ED BY DR. ROBERT KENNEDY

Bear One Another's Burden

As a pastor, I have seen all kinds of scammers over the years. I was pastoring at a large church in the mid-1980s in the South Bronx. One morning a young man, I will call John Green, showed up at the end of our worship service, moaning and groaning.

After a few deacons listened to his story concerning what was happening to his wife, they called me. I, too, listened as he told of how he and his wife were hungry, that his wife needed supplies for feminine care, and that he had throat cancer. He even opened his mouth and showed us how his throat was red. Then he said he was asking for financial help.

Although I doubted his story, I wanted to ensure that as we went into worship, we would not be like the priest and Levite in the parable Jesus told in Luke 10:33-37. As the story goes, these two religious men were on their way to Jerusalem to worship when they encountered a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. Thieves attacked the man, beat him, stripped him of all he had, and left him by the wayside

half dead. So, with this parable of Jesus on my mind, I decided, along with the deacons, to give some money.

About four weeks later, the man returned with another sad story, and again, although I had reservations, we gave him a little more money. About a month later, a pastor from a church some distance away called just before our worship service began and asked if I knew a young man named John Green. He said John told him he was on crutches because of a broken leg. He also told the pastor that he knew me; therefore, the pastor was calling me for authentication. When I heard the name of the young man, I freaked out. I screamed because I knew I (and my church) had been swindled.

I have seen the play of the young man's story again and again. It seems like scammers prey upon pastors and church people. I have been so cautious about those who have come to the churches I have pastored that I hope I have not turned away some who needed genuine help. Scammers can cause the softest hearts to become calcified.

Having said the above, one can understand why the apostle Paul makes two statements in Galatians that might seem contradictory. In Galatians 6:2, he says, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ." In Galatians 6:5, he says, "Each one should bear his load."

I will not make too much of

the difference between the words "burden" and "load." In the Greek, they are different. The word for "burden" is baros which means "weight." The word "load" comes from phortion, which means "cargo," like that carried on a soldier's shoulder. Of course, some weights or cargos are so heavy that there is a need for help in either case.

So, while I take with seriousness the apostle's appeal that we are to "bear one another's burden," I am not going to make a big deal of what seems like a contradiction in his instruction that "each one should bear his load."

The point is that we need to help but also be wise in offering help to one another. We do not need to be so susceptible that we become suckers for scammers. But we need to have generous hearts that are open to helping those around us. Especially those among whom we live and move in our communities - our families, churches, schools, neighborhoods, jobs, and larger communities.

Here are at least eight points about which we are ever to be reminded as we seek to share the burdens and cares of one another.

1. We are called to be other-focused instead of self-focused.
2. We are called to look for others with a burden/load and help them bear that burden.
3. We are not called to wait upon some extensive infrastruc-

ture or superstructure to bear the burdens/load of others; we are called to do what we can - one-on-one.

4. We cannot shift our responsibilities of caring for one another.
5. We cannot blame another for what we fail to do for others.
6. When the lives of others are under threat, we cannot afford to behave as if those lives do not matter.
7. When a burden or a load gets too heavy for another person, there is a need to stand in place with a willingness to help.
8. Whatever strength or encouragement we give others makes a difference in their lives when the burdens or loads get too heavy.

As we bear one another's burdens and help with their loads, we are fulfilling the simple law of Christ as recorded in the Gospel of John, where Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

And as we live, let us ponder these questions with seriousness. Will we allow coldness and suspicion to lead us? Or will we allow appreciation and love to guide us so that we can bear the burdens of one another?

TOWN WATCH (Continued from page 10)

and fireworks at Newark's Branch Brook Park respectively indoors thar Friday and "to be announced. Its July 2 Infernos concert at Bloomfield/Montclair's Brookdale Park was rendered "TBA" and its Fireworks added to a July 7 concert there.

SOUTH ORANGE - A former private school teacher and coach from the village, said the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office June 22, will still pay a price for not alerting authorities of a colleague's seduction of a student even if she will not get jail time.

Ranait Griff, 30, in Superior Court-Somerville that Thursday, pleaded guilty for a disorderly person's charge for not reporting fellow teacher-coach Matthew Rennie's "grooming" of a 17-year-old student in 2021. The plea bargain puts her on one year's probation and ends the family of the victim's six-month-old claim that she had actively al-

lowed Rennie's actions going back to 2018.

Griff, however, has lost her license to coach or teach anyone under 18 years old. She, Rennie and the victim were all at Franklin's Rutgers Preparatory School in 2021.

Rennie's victim first reported her abuse to Franklin Police in late September 2021. Their September 2018 relationship had developed into a sexual one - where acts were performed in his car, house, in local parks and in his RPS classroom - July-September 2021.

Rennie, 35, of East Amwell, was arrested Oct. 6, 2021. He is currently serving a four-year sentence after pleading guilty March 17 to second-degree sexual assault and third-degree endangering the welfare of a minor.

Griff may not be completely clear of related legal troubles. The victim's family has claimed that she had sexually assaulted another student in 2021. No charges, as of press time, have been filed against her.

MAPLEWOOD - County and state officials continue to hunt for the coyote who attacked a girl, a dog and, reportedly, a man here June 30 after they had closed South Mountain Reservation south of West South Orange Avenue through July 2.

Essex County Executive Donald DiVincenzo had the reservation's Bear Lane, Crest Drive and the South Mountain Dog Park closed soon after the first attack was reported after 3 p.m. Friday. The closure, which includes parts of Maplewood and Millburn, was closed throughout Saturday while N.J. State, Game and Wildlife officials and the Essex County Sheriff's Office combed the area for at least one coyote.

Sheriff's and Maplewood Police officers first arrived at the Cedar Drive parking area after a 13-year-old girl called, saying that and her Maltese Shih Tzu were bitten by a coyote at around 3 p.m.

(Continued on page 14)

EAST ORANGE HONORS LGBTQIA+ ALLIES DURING ITS SIXTH ANNUAL PRIDE FLAG RAISING

EAST ORANGE - June 30, 2023: June is Pride Month and the City of East Orange hosted its 6th Annual Pride Flag Raising Ceremony last Friday in a show of solidarity with the LGBTQ community. The event was sponsored by Mayor Ted R. Green, the East Orange City Council and the Department of Recreation & Cultural Affairs.

Rain moved the ceremony indoors, but it didn't stop the celebration, which featured special performances by Tiger James and Samuel Lewis.

The event fêted the following honorees and LGBTQIA+ advocates:

- Alison C. Myers (Legacy Award) is the Governor-appointed Acting Chair and Chief Executive Officer of the state's Civil Service Commission who is also New Jersey's first openly

- transgender Cabinet member
- Reginald Bledsoe (Humanitarian Award) is the Director of Essex County Office of LGBTQ Affairs
- Diahne Evans (Ally Advocate Award) is a School Counselor with the East Orange Board of Education

Former honoree Christian Fuscarino, Executive Director at Garden State Equality, served as guest speaker. Fuscarino has been a longtime activist and organizer in the LGBTQ community for more than a decade.

The city's first Pride Flag Raising was held under the administration of Mayor Ted R. Green in 2018 and has been held every year since. Commonly called the "People's Mayor," Mayor Green has fully supported the city's efforts to advance inclusivity, diversity and acceptance among all residents and

employees in the City of East Orange.

"Our Pride Flag Raising is not just about celebrating our LGBTQ community, but also paying tribute to those who have dedicated their lives to advocating for equality and social justice for all people," said Mayor Green. "Members of the LGBTQ community have made significant contributions to our society as a whole and we welcome their continued participation in making our city a safe place for people to live their lives in peace."

This year, the East Orange Police Department launched its LGBTQ+ Safe Place Initiative (modeled after the Seattle Police Department) which places a recognizable rainbow-colored decal sticker in the windows of all businesses that identify as "safe spaces" for LGBTQ teens in distress. To sign up for the program, business owners must



Photo By City of East Orange

agree to train and continue to train new staff that if a victim of a crime comes in that they permit the victim to stay in a safe public space of the business, and that the employee call 911 as soon as possible.

NJ STATE BUDGET

(Continued from page 7)

Speaker Craig Coughlin. "It also meets our obligations with yet another full pension payment, increases in school aid, support for our most vulnerable neighbors, and a healthy surplus for any future economic uncertainty. I am especially proud of what we've done for New Jersey seniors, with the StayNJ program set to deliver historic property tax relief. I proposed StayNJ because seniors deserve the dignity of remaining in their homes, enjoying their later years near their families. Thanks to Governor Murphy, Senate President Scutari, and all our partners in the legislature for their work on this. We have demonstrated that we can do big, bold things for New Jersey while being fiscally responsible."

"The budget signed today represents the culmination of months of long meetings and thoughtful deliberations and includes significant investments in our communities, our families and our future," said Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz. "We are doubling the child tax credit, continuing on the pathway towards universal Pre-K and once again increasing school funding. We are continuing to fund the postpartum home visitation program and lifesaving mental health initiatives. This budget represents our continued effort to make New Jersey more affordable

for all of our residents while making lasting investments in our children and the institutions and programs which will nourish their growth and success."

"The FY24 State Budget reflects our shared priorities, spending on programs that will make a difference in the lives of New Jersey residents while maintaining a healthy surplus," said Assembly Majority Leader Louis D. Greenwald. "New Jersey residents will benefit from new and expanded property tax relief programs and an expanded child tax credit. We are funding programs to support education, affordable housing and healthcare, which will have a meaningful impact."

"This is a responsive and responsible budget that meets the economic challenges of our time," said Senate Budget Committee Chairman Paul Sarlo. "It will provide significant tax relief, install economic safeguards and help fuel economic growth. It addresses our top priority of making the lives of New Jersey's residents more affordable. It includes a full pension payment, a record amount of school aid, a robust surplus to protect against economic uncertainty and a debt defeasance fund to drive down debt. We need to continue to be fiscally responsible with the use of our resources at the same time we expand economic opportunities that build a better future for New Jersey and our residents."

"This budget highlights the priorities of a New Jersey that values its residents, promotes inclusivity, and invests in our future," said Assembly Budget Committee Chairwoman Eliana Pintor Marin. "Together, we are ensuring that hardworking families receive the retirement security they deserve, access to safe and affordable homes, relief from property taxes, and quality education that empowers our children to thrive."

"I would like to thank my staff at the Department of the Treasury, particularly the hardworking folks at the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Revenue and Economic Analysis for their tireless dedication and professionalism. The budget signed by the governor today continues our commitment to making the state a more affordable place to live, work, raise a family, and retire," said State Treasurer Elizabeth Maher Muoio. "With unprecedented tax relief for our seniors and middle-class families, a third full pension payment in as many years, record funding of our best-in-the-nation schools and a budget surplus of approximately 15 percent, this budget maintains sound fiscal management that helps prepare for the Next New Jersey."

The \$54.5 billion budget for Fiscal Year (FY2024) includes a historic surplus of \$8.3 billion, which is more than 15 percent of budgeted appropriations, dwarfing the surplus inherited five years ago.

The Observation Booth



OP-ED By Andrea Dialect

HOODSCAPES

Calling someone a "rat" usually means calling them an informant; it also signifies a drunkard, a cheating husband, or a pirate by Google's definition of the word. My intent has nothing to do with that.

In contrast, I like the little fella, and in my opinion, the so called nuisance isn't all that bad. When living outside of my home of course. So today we won't be looking for any dirty rats we're looking on the good side. It's a rat's tenacity and agility that we adore. We meaning my permanent muse (L.I.T Models) or ongoing features and myself who take the name Hood Rat on willingly when were enjoyably stumbling around those Hoodscapes looking for the perfect scene.

HOOD RAT

When I walk around my hood or some other, no matter what town, state, or country in view, I see beauty everywhere. Every mere inch of it can be utilized at my discretion; creativity is so lucrative in this place that I can stretch out my hand and grab my fill at any moment. It is so much of it that I become drunk and must turn it off. In this time & space, I need for nothing! - Mz. Dialect

(Take the challenge. Check out this life puzzle. Can you decrypt this script?)

Sometimes they scream, laugh, and holler; others run & some look away. Then you got the bold ones who stop and stare, but it's a short stay. Others never notice I'm there. Then some do, that drop me a crumb or two. Yet, despite those reactions, I keep scurrying about, checking



things out. You'll likely be on your own when you're on the prowl for the unknown. There are things to know, places to go, and people to see. Who knows where I'll end up finding me?

Risk is a factor when you don't venture out because nests are like traps when you stay. For me, getting dirty means burrowing below, reaching shelter at depths hidden so deep that the time zone changes within feet; climbing the highest scraper as far as the sky goes to find a piece of me that only an upward scope shows. By highways or byways, who knows?

I'll even trek suburbia's manicured fronts laden with trees, now those I enter with ease. Yet, most have become such a bore as oftentimes homes that are

pretty inside and out would intrigue me much more. Many evade projects, buildings and rats detesting groupings at sight, a clever trick by the same mode. Perhaps choosing to ignore existence and all else as living alone; mine or even that of their own from the confines of that mind in that humble abode...

Read this article in its entirety at www.localtalkweekly.com and type The Observation Booth, Andrea Dialect and/or Entertainment Section in the search bar. If you are interested in participating in a challenge, project sharing a topic, news or if you have any questions, comments or concerns, send them to localtalkandrea@gmail.com.

TOWN WATCH (Continued from page 12)

The girl said she was walking her dog along Bear Lane when the coyote seized on the canine by its jaws and tried to drag it into the woods. She managed to open the coyote's jaws and free the dog - but not without biting her leg before leaving.

The human victim was taken to Livingston's RWJBarnabas Health Cooperman-Barnabas Medical Center; she is expected to fully recover.

Maplewood police soon found the dog and sent it to the Fairfield Animal Hospital. The canine is said to be suffering severe injuries; one report said it had lost an eye. The sheriff's office, as of 5 p.m. June 30, had not confirmed or denied a report of a man who had also suffered puncture wounds to his leg here at around 4:30 p.m.

Officials consider the coyote in the first

attack as "aggressive." They advise not to leave out food - including bird feeders, make a lot of noise without running when encountering one and call NJF&W, (908) 735-8793 and/or the DEP (877) WARN-DEP Hotline.

BLOOMFIELD - A spray park in the East Orange part of Essex County's Watsessing Park is the nearest thing that Bloomfield residents have to a community pool this summer.

Bloomfielders, like their counterparts in Belleville and Nutley, have had to get memberships either with other nearby municipal pools, if allowed, or become members of the local YM/YWCA or private pools to cool off in the summertime.

The township, as recalled by former Mayor Ralph G. Conte, came within one vote of having a municipal pool of its own in March 1965. Conte, who was mayor 1963-

66, said that a fifth and decisive council member's vote was needed to pass an \$800,000 bond ordinance - worth \$7,723,860.32 in today's dollars - but it did not happen.

Conte, in an Oct. 28, 2014 recollection at the Bloomfield Historical Society, said that the Bloomfield Municipal Pool drive started with a 1963 poll of 20,000 residents. (Bloomfield had a population of from the 1960 Census.) Two-thirds of the 5,000 responding residents favored having a municipal pool.

Positive support was then bolstered by a 250-person charter membership subscription drive. That drive secured \$11,000 worth (or an inflation-adjusted \$109,335.61) of memberships.

Mayor Conte and the Township Council found a pool site at Millbank Park in the

(Continued on page 15)

TOWN WATCH (Continued from page 14)

Ampere section and, in January 1965, held an introductory bond ordinance and subsequent public hearing. There were 42 people testifying at the public hearing - with the Bloomfield Recreation Commission, the N.J. Recreation Department, the Bloomfield Planning Board and local sports hero Frank Tripucka voicing their support.

The bond ordinance was introduced 4-3 - but failed to get a five-vote majority at the March meeting. The .38-acre Millbank Park now includes a children's playground and a community garden.

MONTCLAIR - Councilman-at-Large Peter Yacobellis ended three months of lawsuit-and-countersuit by withdrawing his defamation suit June 12 against current resident Matthew Schwartz and former resident David Herron.

Yacobellis had filed his suit against Schwartz and Herron March 13 for what he said were the two public speakers' "self-interested defamation campaign" against him. Herron and Schwartz, at Feb. 23's Township Council meeting public comment segment, asked Yacobellis to refrain from any decision-making on the latest Lackawanna Plaza redevelopment plan.

The two speakers said that Yacobellis, as Out Montclair's co-founder, had a conflict of interest since that group had a fundraiser at redeveloper Steve Plotkin's house. Herron then added that he had notified the New Jersey Attorney General's office.

"This was a decision I had made out of a desire to try and put the need for some inner peace and community healing in front of the need to be right," said Yacobellis in his June 12 email to his supporters. "I had a very strong case that I was ready to fully litigate. But, as a mayoral candidate now, this' a distraction and I need my focus to be on solving some of our larger challenges as a town."

Herron, at the council's June 13 meeting, sounded skeptical of Yacobellis' suit withdrawal. He first said that the councilman was dropping his own suit on a day before the June 13 deadline.

Herron added that Yacobellis' lawyer had offered a settlement where he and the councilman would read a joint statement. That statement, said Herron, would have included saying he "didn't have all the facts" before making his conflict-of-interest claim.

Schwartz, in response to a reporter's June 14 query, said that his lawyer received a May 5 offer from the council-

man's attorney to pay \$20,000 in attorney's fees for dropping his and Herron's "frivolous" countersuit. Schwartz, through his lawyer, called the offer "a strategic lawsuit against public participation."

GLEN RIDGE - The remains of 20-year Glen Ridge Democratic Committee Chairwoman Ann P. McNeill were laid to rest alongside her husband's at Wrightstown's Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery June 16.

McNeill, 89, died June 14 at her North Beach home on Long Beach Island. She and Richard P. McNeill, after living in Glen Ridge for 35 years, retired on LBI in 1985.

The former Ann Orlando and high school sweetheart Richard had married and moved to the borough in 1950. Ann was an assistant administrator for the Essex County Guidance Center for 17 years while Richard was a Western Electric electrician.

McNeill was GRDC Chairwoman 1965-85. The municipal party's latest chair, former councilwoman Jacqueline Yutsein, was appointed in April to temporarily succeed the retired Ralph Caputo (D-Nutley) in the N.J. 28th General Assembly District.

Ann and Richard raised children Janice Jimmy, Michael Ricky and Susan here while, in later years, summering on LBI. Richard, a USMC sergeant 1952-55, died in Barnegat April 1, 2016.

Brother Rocco, sisters Cam, Josephine and Mary and five grandchildren are among Ann's survivors. Her Funeral Liturgy was held at Brant Beach's St. Francis of Assisi Church, where she and Richard were parishioners, June 16.

BELLEVILLE - The curious case of 335 Union Ave. which the Belleville Public Schools had been making rent payments on since July 1, 2021, got more curious on June 20.

BPS Superintendent of Schools Richard Tomko confirmed to a reporter that Tuesday that the district had moved out of that address. There was no anticipated \$3,075.50 monthly rent payment, however, listed on the Tuesday night Board of Education Trustees' agenda.

\$3,075.50 would be the monthly rent with a two percent increase kicking in on the five-year lease July 1. That increase would start with BPS-335 Union's year three of its lease.

The Board of Trustees had authorized the five year lease, effective July 1, 2021, at their Jan. 26, 2021 meeting. The lease included an annual two percent increase

on the \$2,950 monthly base rent.

The seven-page lease includes a 90-day advance notice from either the tenant or the landlord to renew, extend or sever the contract. The contract does not have language on when or whether the rent payments stop.

335 Union Ave., which is across the street from Belleville School No. 3, is a 102-year-old commercial-residential mixed-use house. It is owned by Mayor Michael Melham.

Melham has used 335 Union's address to file A Better Belleville's NJ Election Law Enforcement Commission campaign financing reports. He was manager of two 2021 BOT members who ran on the ABB ticket.

NUTLEY - JD Vick has ended his 23 years of coaching Nutley High School's football team and moved back to his native Alabama.

Vick, who had been the Maroon Raiders head varsity football coach since 2021, put in his resignation effective June 30. He said he had taken a similar coaching position that is closer to his family's home.

Vick came here from Tuscaloosa Christian School, where his teams had won 94 games and three state championships. He worked with the legendary NHS head coach Steven DiGeorgio while teaching history and special education here.

He first took the head coach position while DiGergorio went on medical leave. DiGregorio, 60, who returned for his final season in 2020, then retired March 4, 2021 and died Oct. 12, 2021.

Vick, in his 23 years here, was also an assistant baseball and basketball coach. He had also founded the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and the Patriot Club.

The Maroon Raiders, under Vick's 2019, 21 and 22 leadership, amassed an overall 16-12 win-loss record and qualified for the NJSIAA playoffs each year.

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