

LOCAL TALK

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25¢

"LET'S TALK FOR THE BETTERMENT OF OUR COMMUNITIES"

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER

ESSEX COUNTY • EAST ORANGE • ORANGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Phone: 973-622-1111 • www.localtalkweekly.com

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INDEX

Editorial & Weather: 02

Sports Wrap: 05

Fall Special: 08

From the Pastor's Heart: 12

Health Corner: 04

World News Flash: 06

Town Watch: 10

The Observation Booth: 14

RITE AID FILES FOR BANKRUPTCY ISRAEL STRIKES BACK AMID HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN GAZA

PAGE 6



PAGE 6



Damage in Gaza Strip during the Israeli response to Hamas. Photo via Al Araby

GENERAL & SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS 2023 PREVIEW

By Walter Elliott

NEWARK - Those have begun to get their Vote By Mail Ballots and/or Sample Ballots for the Nov. 7 General and Board of Education Elections may want to carefully review their hardcopies before voting.

The Essex Regular Republican Organization, for the first time in 18 years, had drawn Line A on the ballot - and that is just for openers.

Some familiar incumbent faces are not on this year's ballot. A lot of it has to do with the 2020-22 redistricting. Some incumbents on the state level had decided to retire and a few lost in the June 6 primary.

Some faces on the school board, municipal and county levels have consequently moved up to run for "higher offices."

There are very few inde-

pendent or "minor party" candidates on the ballot but there are some challenges from either the Democratic or Republican parties.

There are several special races to fill unexpired terms - including those in nonpartisan municipal and board of education elections. There are two candidates who are conducting a write-in campaign.

How much of "a changing of the guard" is up to a majority of registered voters who participate by casting their vote at polling station machines or by filling out and delivering their VBMBs.

STATE LEGISLATURE

Legislative District 27 (West Orange, Montclair, "West Essex's" Livingston. Millburn and Roseland and Passaic County's Clifton)

State Senate: Former LD34 General Assemblyman John McKeon, of West Orange is running with Essex County Democratic Committee endorsement.

Michael D. Byrne, of West Orange, got the Essex Republican Party Organization endorsement by getting sufficient write-in vote in the June 6 primary.

General Assembly (Select Two): Alixon Collazos-Gill, of Montclair, and outgoing Livingston Councilwoman Dr. Rossura Bagolie have ECDC support.

Irene De Vita and Michael G. Mecca, both of Clifton also took the primary election write-in route to get their names on the ballot and receive Essex and Passaic County Republican endorsement.

LD 28 (Irvington, South Orange, Maplewood, Newark's "southwest" and Vailsburg-West

Wards plus Union County's Hillside)

Senate: Incumbent appointee and former Irvington Council President Renee C. Burgess is looking for her first general election victory. She is running unopposed.

Assembly: Incumbent Cleopatra Tucker, of Newark, and first-timer Garnet Hall, of Maplewood, are running as Democrats. Joy Freeman and Willie S. Jetti, both of Newark, of are challenging as Republicans.

LD 29 (Newark's North, East, Central "West Side" and "southeast" wards)

Senate A three-way race has appeared on the ballot. Demo-

(Continued on page 7)



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9



Editorial
Dhiren Shah
 Editor-In-Chief

Hello Readers,

Did Hamas commit an unhumanitarian act? YES. What Israel's administrations did over the years has nothing to do with Hamas killing over 700 innocent Israelis in a surprise attack on October 7th. Why Hamas did this no one knows. However, there are some links gathered that give an indication of Iran, Lebanon and some other Muslim countries supporting Hamas.

Upon their heinous attack, they have not thought about the innocent Palestinians who live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They know the capacity of Israel and the backing of the United States and other countries. They knew that Israel will not sit quietly. In response to the deaths and kidnappings, Israel has cut off the most valuable

commodities of water, fuel and electricity. They also closed their two entrances to Gaza for food, and ordered all civilians in Gaza to evacuate in lieu of a massive Israeli ground response. The only other border outside of Gaza is Egypt, but Egypt has closed the border and cut off imports to Gaza. Only some partial food and medicine is coming in from Egypt right now. The worst part is that Hamas did this during Yom Kippur.

People all over are begging Israeli not to indiscriminately strike innocent Palestinians as they hunt down the guilty Hamas. There is huge confusion over who was responsible for a hospital getting destroyed. Palestine said Israel did, and vice versa. Hopefully, a ceasefire will come soon.

Biden is asking for more money for Israel and Ukraine. If Biden can do it, he will give everyone's savings to Ukraine. The Israel-Hamas war has taken attention from Ukraine and Russia. Is it the play of politics by Russia? China is going to Israel for investigating the real truth. China and Russia may be up to something.

There is news that Alec Baldwin will be recharged for involuntary manslaughter in the misfortunate shooting that killed Halyna Hutchins. It is very difficult to prove that Baldwin shot her intentionally, but he fired the shot that killed Ms. Hutchins. Someone must be held responsible for the shooting! It is very difficult in this situation to make a judgement about who is responsible. I don't know if Alec Baldwin must check his gun for the purpose of film shooting. I don't know, but it is very difficult to check for the film shooting all the equipment they use. Every action movie actor has a team of workers who prepares guns for them. The armorer, Hannah Gutierrez-Reid, was considered the most at-fault. As prosecutors built their case against her, all of a sudden, they want to recharge Baldwin. What did they find? I don't think he should be responsible for criminal offense for the shooting, but he should pay some kind of monetary settlement, which he can afford easily.

The cricket world cup is going on now. The Netherlands a newcomer in the cricket world, as they passed through qualifying

rounds and entered into the big league of the 10 best teams in the world. On Tuesday October 17th, The Netherlands got its first victory after two losses, against a strong South African team. Everyone was talking about the India-Pakistan game on October 14th, but it turned out to be a one sided game and India won against Pakistan easily. Every team has to play against another 9 teams to enter into the semifinals. Cricket lovers will watch these matches until the final on November 19th, 2023. The game is so popular that in 2028, it will be one of the sports featured in the Summer Olympics.

Is the healthcare industry doing good in our neighborhood? Do you think our hospitals are comparable to New Jersey's top hospitals? Do you think they are within the best 200 hospitals in the world? I think you should know about the healthcare you are getting around here. Soon, I will write an article about the ratings of the hospitals in our area.

Have a wonderful week.

I'll talk to you next time.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS FOR LOCAL TALK WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

Publisher & Editor-in-chief: Dhiren Shah
 Editors: Kristopher Seals • Anuj Shah
 Journalists / Writers: Kristopher Seals • Walter Elliott • Dhiren Shah • Anuj Shah • Akshat Shah • Asha Shah • Kinjal Shah
 Thomas Ellis II • William Hathaway, Jr. • Lev D. Zilbermints • Dr. Robert Kennedy • Dr. Adil Manzoor
 Fred Simpson • Andrea Dialect • Ahmed Screven, Esq.
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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>
Mostly Sunny	Rain	Rain	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Sunny	Mostly Sunny
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LO 55	LO 58	LO 52	LO 44	LO 40	LO 41	LO 51

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FDA Takes Steps to Advance the Development of Novel Therapies for Stimulant Use Disorders

FDA - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration published a new draft guidance to assist sponsors in developing treatments for stimulant use disorders. The guidance, Stimulant Use Disorders: Developing Drugs for Treatment, when finalized, will be the first to provide the FDA's current thinking on the overall development program and clinical trial design to develop drugs and biologics to support treatment of moderate to severe cocaine use disorder, methamphetamine use disorder and prescription stimulant use disorder.

"Currently there is no FDA-approved medication for stimulant use disorder. When finalized, we hope that the guidance will support the development of novel therapies that are critically needed to address treatment gaps," said Marta Sokolowska, Ph.D., deputy center director for Substance Use and Behavioral Health in FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. "The guidance is one of the actions within the agency's Overdose Prevention Framework, which includes appropriate prescribing of prescription stimulants as well as development of evidence-based treatments for stimulant use disorder."

Among other things, the draft guidance contains recommendations regarding clinical trial design related to evaluating stimulant use disorder treatments. Designing clinical studies to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of stimulant use disorder treatments presents a number of unique challenges - from selecting appropriate populations for studies to determining the most

appropriate clinical endpoints - that require careful review. However, there are opportunities to improve clinical trial design and develop trials that are more person-centered, which may result in increased sensitivity to detect a treatment effect, with the potential for treatment effects to be linked to meaningful long-term outcomes.

The draft guidance also describes basic considerations throughout the drug development process including trial conduct, data collection, methods to assess treatment response, subject safety and new drug application requirements. For example, the guidance incorporates lessons learned about approaches that are unlikely to be successful and reflects current recommendations about approaches for treating stimulant use disorders and evaluating response to treatment.

Stimulant use disorder describes a range of symptoms associated with the use of stimulant drugs, including methamphetamine, cocaine, and amphetamines, but not including caffeine or nicotine. A diagnosis of stimulant use disorder is made when a clinician identifies a pattern of use of an amphetamine-type substance, cocaine, or other stimulant that leads to clinically significant impairment or distress, including an inability to reduce or control consumption, cravings to use a stimulant, continued use of a stimulant despite it causing negative consequences, and the need to use increased amounts of a stimulant to achieve the desired effect.

The agency has taken action to promote safe use and appropriate prescribing of prescription stimulants by requiring sponsors to update and standardize prescribing information for medications used to treat attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other disorders where stimulants are prescribed.

Additionally, the FDA awarded the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine a grant to convene a workshop on the diagnosis and treatment of ADHD in adults. It

has also funded several research projects to inform prevention of prescription stimulant misuse, addiction and overdose.

The FDA continues to encourage the development of treatments for stimulant use disorder and novel trial designs. Over the last several years, the agency has held workshops and public meetings with patients and patient advocates, researchers, industry and other stakeholder groups to better understand the stimulant use disorder landscape and inform the FDA's understanding of the clinical context for drug review and regulatory decision making.

Comments on the draft guidance are requested within 60 days to ensure the agency considers them.

USDA Highlights Progress in Partnering with Farmers to Increase Innovative Domestic Fertilizer Production

USDA - U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack today highlighted progress made in partnering with farmers and American businesses to increase innovative domestic fertilizer production and in making it easier for U.S. farmers to grow food through the practice of double cropping.

USDA also announced \$52.6 million in awards under the Fertilizer Production Expansion Program, which will fund 17 new projects to boost domestic fertilizer manufacturing, support innovative fertilizer technologies, and help lower costs for farmers.

As part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda, Secretary Vilsack announced these during a visit to Pernault Farms in Kankakee, Ill., where the double cropping practice is being utilized. Support for double cropping and domestic fertilizer production expansion are part of a broader set of commitments made in September 2022 by President Biden and Secretary Vilsack, at a nearby Kankakee Farm, to help producers boost production and address

(Continued on page 5)

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SPORTS WRAP

Thanks to a chaotic week in the NFL, there are no more undefeated teams, and one local team played a part in that.

First, a missed field goal led to the San Francisco 49ers taking their first loss, a 19-17 defeat at the Cleveland Browns. The Browns were able to get the two point lead after a controversial call that helped to keep their late drive going.

As for the other unbeaten, the Philadelphia Eagles rolled into MetLife Stadium, and ran into the New York Jets and their first loss of the 2023 season. Gang Green forced Philly into 5 turnovers, and a 20-14 defeat. The Jets formula of defense, field goals, a Breece Hall TD, and no mistakes from Zach Wilson got them their second win in a row.

While the Jets have been playing quite well without their starter in Aaron Rodgers, the Giants were not so fortunate. Tyrod Taylor had a no so good game stepping in for the injured

Daniel Jones on the road against the Buffalo Bills. A late timing blunder in the first half cost Big Blue at least three points, and the team could not pull off any game changing plays.

Despite that, thanks to two missed Buffalo field goals, the Giants had a chance to win late. Unfortunately, Taylor was unable to connect with Darren Waller on the last play of the game in the end zone, leading to a 14-9 loss.

At the end of Week 6, the Jets are 3-3, while the Giants are 1-5.

Finally, the final four of the MLB playoffs are underway. In the National League, the defending NL champion Philadelphia Phillies, who dismissed the Atlanta Braves, are taking on the surprising Arizona Diamondbacks, who destroyed the Los Angeles Dodgers in the previous round. In the American League, the defending world champion Houston Astros are taking on the Texas Rangers.



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HEALTH CORNER

(Continued from page 4)

global food security. The Fertilizer Production Expansion Program (FPEP) is funded by USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation and is part of a government-wide effort to spur domestic competition and combat an increase in fertilizer costs caused by the war in Ukraine.

"With President Biden's leadership, USDA is creating a resilient, sustainable and competitive agricultural economy, which allows farmers to continue doing what they do best by growing food for the rest of the world," said Agriculture Secretary Vilsack.

"Through a farmer-focused commitment, we will continue to build on our efforts to lower costs, bring made-in-America jobs to rural communities, and strengthen the agricultural supply chain and market opportunities to the benefit of producers."

Fertilizer Production Expansion Program

In 2022, USDA made \$500 million available under the Fertilizer Production Expansion Program, to increase innovative domestic fertilizer production, creating jobs in rural communities and providing more options to U.S. farmers. Due to strong demand for funding, in June of 2023, USDA increased the funding available for FPEP to up to \$900 million.

The Department received requests for \$3 billion in applications from more than 350 businesses for the first two rounds of the program. Including today's announcement, since the program was announced roughly 18 months ago USDA has awarded 33 projects for a total of over \$121 million invested. USDA expects to announce additional project selections in the coming months and is inviting public comments on four projects through November 15, 2023.

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MIDDLE EAST

ISRAEL STRIKES BACK AMID HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN GAZA

Every effort continues to be made by the United Nations and partners to get aid supplies into Gaza following the Israeli order to evacuate the north of the enclave, the UN's emergency relief chief said on Oct. 16.

"History is watching," Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths told UN News in Geneva, highlighting the desperate situation facing around one million Gazans uprooted in the last week, after the Israeli military warned of an imminent offensive following the deadly Oct. 7 attacks on Israel by militant group Hamas, which has controlled the Gaza strip since 2006.

"Aid access is our overwhelming priority. And we are in deep discussions hourly with the Israelis, with the Egyptians, with the Gazans about how to do that," Mr. Griffiths said, adding that he was optimistic about hearing "some good news" soon that a solution could be found to the political impasse which has prevented aid convoys crossing from Egypt's Rafah into southern Gaza.

The top UN aid official was speaking before heading to the Middle East, "trying to help, working with diplomats from all countries" to secure aid access and de-escalate the tinderbox situation, which UN Secretary-General described on Sunday as being on the "verge of the abyss."

"It's all Member States who have obligations...not just those in the region" to defuse the worst Israeli-Palestinian conflagration in decades, Mr. Griffiths continued. "The United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union and the Arab world all have obligations" to ensure that the lives of civilians are protected and the rules of war ob-

served.

"Don't attack civilian infrastructure, protect civilians when they move," the UN official insisted. "Make sure they get the aid they need and make sure that there are corridors which allow them some respite from the relentless attacks that are happening upon them."

Among the key issues facing diplomats is securing the release of a reported 199 Israeli hostages, seized during the Hamas raid, the UN emergency relief chief continued. (Hamas is claiming to have 250 hostages.)

"This war was started by taking those hostages. Of course, there's a history between Palestinian people and the Israeli people, and I'm not denying any of that. But that act alone lit a fire, which can only be put out with the release of those hostages."

Amid ongoing airstrikes in Gaza and concerns over a regional escalation of the conflict - especially on the northern border with Lebanon - Mr. Griffiths reiterated the need for humanity to prevail.

"History is watching to see if the consequences of this war are going to be generationally bad or if there are going to be ways in which swiftly that can be rebuilt, some kind of comity or neighborliness between those two tragic peoples. ... (Those are) the messages I'll be taking to the region about biased in favor of one or the other, that biased in favor of humanity."

Since the start of the war, which has claimed the lives of some 1,300 Israeli citizens and injured 3,200 more, a reported 2,750 people have been killed in Gaza and more than 7,500 wounded.

Fourteen staff from the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNWRA, have also been killed. "They were teachers, engineers, guards and psychologists, an engineer and a gynecologist," Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini told journalists on Oct. 15.

In an exclusive interview with UN News on Sunday, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Lynn Hastings, told us that despite Israel's stated war aim of destroying the infrastruc-

ture of the Hamas extremist group, "their current trajectory is going to destroy Gaza."

U.S. President Joe Biden set up a meeting in Israel with leadership there on Oct. 18 to show American solidarity with that nation. While Biden was set to sit with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, the latter cancelled a meeting scheduled there that same day.

UNITED STATES

RITE AID FILES FOR BANKRUPTCY

Rite Aid Corporation (NYSE: RAD) ("Rite Aid" or the "Company") announced Oct. 15 it has reached an agreement in principle with certain of its senior secured noteholders on the terms of a financial restructuring plan that will allow the Company to accelerate its ongoing business transformation.

Implementing the contemplated restructuring plan will reduce the Company's debt, increase its financial flexibility and enable it to execute on key initiatives. In connection with this, Rite Aid has initiated a voluntary court-supervised process under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code.

Rite Aid is continuing to deliver healthcare products and services across its retail and online platforms for the nearly one million customers it serves daily.

The court-supervised process provides an orderly and efficient forum for Rite Aid to:

- Finalize and build consensus for the agreement in principle the Company has reached with certain of its senior secured noteholders
- Accelerate the Company's store footprint optimization plan
- Implement a proposed transaction under which MedImpact would acquire Elixir Solutions, subject to the outcome of a court-approved marketing process
- Access additional liquidity
- Resolve litigation claims in an equitable manner.

In connection with this pro-

cess, Rite Aid has received a commitment for \$3.45 billion in new financing from certain of its lenders. This financing is expected to provide sufficient liquidity to support the Company throughout this process.

Also, Rite Aid announced the appointment of Jeffrey S. Stein as Chief Executive Officer, Chief Restructuring Officer and a member of the Company's Board of Directors, effective immediately. He succeeds Elizabeth ("Busy") Burr, who has served as Interim CEO since January 2023. Ms. Burr will continue in her role as a Director on the Company's Board.

Stein said, "Rite Aid has served customers and communities across our country for more than 60 years, and the important actions we are taking today will enable us to move ahead as a stronger company. With the support of our lenders, we look forward to strengthening our financial foundation, advancing our transformation initiatives and accelerating the execution of our turnaround strategy. In doing so, we will be even better able to deliver the healthcare products and services our customers and their families rely on - now and into the future."

Stein continued, "We remain focused on serving our customers and communities, and we are grateful that they continue to choose our stores and pharmacies for their healthcare needs. We thank our associates for their ongoing hard work and dedication, and we extend our gratitude to our partners, suppliers and vendors for their continued support."

MASS SHOOTING UPDATE

Information recent as of 10-17-2023 at 12 p.m.

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

- Total Mass Shootings: 624
- Total Dead: 737
- Total Wounded: 2488
- Shootings Per Day: 2.15
- Days Reached in Year 2023 as of Oct. 17: 290

(Continued on page 12)

ELECTION (Cont. from page 1)

cratic incumbent M. Teresa Ruiz is being pitted against Republican Maritza Matthews and Pablo Oliveria of the Labor Party.

Assembly Democratic incumbents Shanique Speight and Elaina Pintor-Marín are pitted against Republicans Orlando Mende and, Noble Milton.

LD 34 (East Orange, Orange, Bloomfield, Glen Ridge, Belleville, Nutley)

Senate: Outgoing Assemblywoman Britnee Timberlake (D-East Orange) and Joseph Belnone (R-Belleville) are vying for the senate seat.

Assembly: First time state office runners and Democrats Carmen Morales (D-Belleville) and Bloomfield Mayor Michael Venezia are going up against Republicans James McGuire (Nutley) and Rev. Clenard H. Childress, Jr., (East Orange).

ESSEX COUNTY (Note: All offices are countywide except for Commissioners Ward Districts)

County Surrogate

Incumbent Alturric Kenney (D-Newark) and challenger Peter Russo (R-Bloomfield.) are jousting for County Surrogate.

County Commissioners

At-Large (Select Four):

Incumbent Democrats Brendan Gill, Montclair; Wayne Richardson, of Newark; Romaine Graham, of Irvington; and Patricia Seabold, of Livingston, are running for re-election.

The challenging Republicans are Joseph Cifelli, of Fairfield; Alexander Campisi, of West Caldwell; Aristotle Popolizio, of Roseland and Michael Pocolinko, of Caldwell.

District One (Newark's North and East Wards plus parts of Central, South and West wards)

Incumbent Democrat Robert Mercado is running unopposed.

District Two (Irvington, Maplewood and parts of Newark's Central and South wards)

Outgoing Newark Public School Board of Education Member A'Dorian Murray-Thomas is running as a Democrat. Also vying for the post is "Working Together for Essex County" independent Khalil Kettles, of Newark.

District Three (East Orange, Orange, South Orange and part of Newark's West Ward)

Incumbent Democrat Tyshammie L. Cooper is running unopposed.

District Four: (West Orange and "West Essex")

Incumbent Democrat Leonard M. Luciano and Republican Adam Kraemer, both of West Orange, are jousting.

District Five: (Bloomfield, Montclair, Glen Ridge, Belleville, Nutley)

Incumbent Carlos Pomares (D- Bloomfield.) and challenger Kristen M. Blochak (R-Belleville) are on the ballot

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Irvington Township Council

Darlene Brown is looking to fill an unexpired term on the Township Council in this special election. She is running on the "Team Irvington Strong" ticket which has also fielded nonpartisan candidates for council, mayor and board of education member.

East Orange Ward Council

The following Democrats are running unopposed: First Ward Amy Lewis (incumbent), Second Ward Sammed Monk (newcomer), Third Ward Vernon Pullins, Jr. (incumbent), Fourth Ward Casim L. Gomez, Jr. (incumbent) and Fifth Ward Naima Fauntleroy (newcomer).

Maplewood Township Committee

Current and former mayors Dean Dafis and Victor de Luca are running as unopposed Democrats for both committee seats. All five committee members will select a mayor from among



Family Support Organization of Essex County (FSOEC) offers support groups and workshops for parents and caregivers of children with special needs. You're not on this journey alone!

OCTOBER 17: Let's Talk — Parent Support Group meets 6:30 p.m. monthly on 2nd Tuesdays to help parents and caregivers learn new strategies that effect positive change.

OCTOBER 18: New Family Welcome Group meets 6:30 p.m. monthly on 1st and 3rd Wednesdays is for caregivers to learn their guided journey. We introduce our organization, team, and services.

OCTOBER 19: All About the Spectrum Support Group meets 6:30 p.m. monthly on 3rd Thursdays This group is for parents of children 2 to 8 years old who are on the autism spectrum.

OCTOBER 26: Better Together Dads meets 6:30 p.m. monthly on 4th Thursdays to give fathers a safe place for connection with other passionate dads.

Our activities occur on Zoom and in person, visit our website for the details: <https://bit.ly/fsoeevents>

ATTENTION! FSOEC is Hiring Family Partners.
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them at their Jan. 1 reorganization meeting.

Bloomfield Ward Council

Incumbent Democrats Jenny Mundell (First Ward), Nicholas Joanow (Second Ward) and Sarah Cruz (Third Ward) are running unopposed.

Glen Ridge Council

Incumbents Deborah Mans and David Lefkowitz and first-time runner Lori Jeane Moody are running unopposed and with Glen Ridge Civic Conference Committee endorsement. The CCC is a group of partisan and nonpartisan parties who endorse otherwise nonpartisan borough and school board candidates.

BOARDS of EDUCATION: (Select three seats unless otherwise indicated)

South Orange / Maplewood: Voters in the respective village and township are learning that there is more to this year's election than filling the three South Orange-Maplewood

School District Board of Education seats on the ballot.

Maplewoodian Elizabeth Callahan and South Orangeites Shanya Sackett-Gable and William Meyer are running under their "Together We Thrive" ticket on the printed ballot.

Former two-town BOE members Jeff Bennett and Anthony Mazzocchi, both of Maplewood, announced their write-in campaign Oct. 6. Besides announcing too late to make the ballot, they were allowed only seats among the audience for the respective Oct. 26 Hilton Neighborhood Association and Oct. 9 South Orange-Maplewood Community Coalition on Race's candidates' nights.

A SOMA CCR spokeswoman said that Bennett and Mazzocchi announced too late to be included but were welcome to sit with the audience. An NHA spokesperson said that they would only showcase "official" candidates.

Bennett, Callahan, Sackett-Gable, Mazzocchi and Meyer are looking to succeed incumbents Johanna Wright, Elisa
(Continued on page 13)



NJ TRANSIT INFORMATIONAL PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with Section 5 of P.L. 1984 c.578 of SCDRTAP, NJ TRANSIT is conducting a public hearing in order to gather information and receive comments from interested parties concerning programs developed pursuant to the Senior Citizen & Disabled Residents Transportation Assistance Program (SCDRTAP) Act. We will offer three (3) virtual informational hearing sessions covering the southern, central, and northern regions of New Jersey.

The Senior Citizen & Disabled Residents Transportation Assistance Program funds capital, operating, and/or administrative expenses for locally coordinated community transportation services for senior citizens and people with disabilities. The program also funds accessibility improvements to NJ TRANSIT's fixed route bus and rail system, the provision of technical assistance to the counties, and the administration of the statewide program.

All materials to be reviewed at this hearing are available in accessible formats upon request. Closed captioning is available for hearing-impaired individuals. Individuals requesting language support should contact Customer Service at 973-275-5555 at least ten (10) business days prior to the hearing date. **If you plan to speak at one of these virtual hearings, please contact Isabel Rojas at irojas@njtransit.com or leave your contact information via voicemail at 973-491-7456 by Wednesday, November 22, 2023.**

The public is invited to the **December 6, 2023**, hearings below at which time they will have a full opportunity to express their views regarding the Senior Citizen & Disabled Residents Transportation Assistance Program. In order to ensure that all members of the public are given an opportunity to be heard, comments will be limited to three (3) minutes. **Written comments for the record may be sent to**

Public Hearing Comments 2023,
NJ TRANSIT, Local Programs & Community Transportation, One Penn Plaza East, 4th Floor, Newark, New Jersey 07105-2246, or via email at publichearings@njtransit.com by Tuesday, November 28, 2023.

SENIOR CITIZENS & DISABLED RESIDENTS TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM INFORMATIONAL PUBLIC HEARING

DATE: Wednesday, December 6, 2023

Session 1: 5:00 pm – Southern Region
Session 2: 6:00 pm – Central Region
Session 3: 7:00 pm – Northern Region

Join on your computer or mobile app - [Click here to join the meeting](#) or <https://bit.ly/3RLptyT>
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For those who **have** access to E-mail, please contact Isabel Rojas at irojas@njtransit.com by **Wednesday, November 22, 2023**, and you will be emailed the link to join the meeting via video teleconference. For those who do **not** have access to a PC, Laptop, iPad, Tablet, or Smart Phone with E-mail, please use the telephone number and conference ID access code listed above to call in via telephone.

With this annual notice, we also invite the public to review and comment on the State Management Plans (SMPs) for the following Federal grant programs administered by NJ TRANSIT.

- FTA Section 5310 The Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program
- FTA Section 5311 Non-urbanized Area Formula Program for Rural Areas

These are available for review and comment on the S-Rides website at <https://s-rides.njtransit.com>. (Click on the *Additional Documents* link). Copies of the state management plans are also available upon request by calling 973-491-7456 or writing to NJ TRANSIT, Local Programs & Minibus Support Department, 4th floor, One Penn Plaza East, Newark, NJ 07105-2246. All comments can be submitted via the address above or by sending an email to SRIDES@njtransit.com.

An Access Link paratransit update will NOT be provided at this hearing. Access Link holds separate Customer Forums. If you have any questions regarding Access Link forums or service, please email adaservices@njtransit.com or call Access Link at 973-491-4224, choose option #5 for Customer Service, or call TT 1- 800-955-6765.

To obtain a translated copy of this notice, contact Customer Service at 973-275-5555.

Title VI: NJ TRANSIT's Notice to Beneficiaries: NJ TRANSIT operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, or national origin, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. Any person who believes she or he has been subjected to discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin, or wishing to obtain additional information regarding NJ TRANSIT's Title VI obligations, may contact NJ TRANSIT Customer Service at 973-275-5555. A complaint or inquiry may also be filed by writing to NJ TRANSIT Customer Service – Title VI, One Penn Plaza East, Newark, NJ 07105. A complaint must be filed within 180 days of the alleged discrimination.



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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 - Relatives of fallen Newark firefighters Augusto "Augie" Acabou and Wayne "Bear" Brooks, Jr. gathered before Fire Station Engine Company 16 at 469 Ferry St. Oct. 6 to publicly demand answers from the city and the U.S. Coast Guard regarding the fatal Port Newark Grande Costa d'Avorio fire July 5.

They and New York City attorney Mark Apostolos, Esq. that Friday, saying that Acabou and Brooks' deaths were "tragic and preventable," said that they intend to sue the Grimaldi cargo ship company, the stevedoring company handling the unloading of some 1,000 cars from the ship, the Port Newark marine terminal where the ship was berthed and the City of Newark for negligence.

They also want the Coast Guard, as lead investigator, to expedite their probe to what led to the July 5-10 fire and fire-fighting conditions.

Apostolos added that he intends to challenge Grimaldi's claim that the liability was limited to the value of the ship's cargo in federal court. Grimaldi said that the liability is limited to \$15.9 million - the value of some 1,000 cars on board.

The attorney and the relative said that they have found evidence that a Jeep that had been malfunctioning during the transatlantic sparked the blaze. It is not known whether, it, other or all vehicles had their fuel tanks drained and electrical systems disconnected as per procedure. They also said that the ship's crew and stevedores had left doors open within the ship, leading to the fire's spread.

"The city wants the same

thing," said Mayor Ras Baraka. "We trust that the investigators are completing their process as quickly as possible while maintaining the integrity of their examination and analysis. It's my deep hope that this investigation will yield the information the families need for healing, and the answers will benefit firefighters in Newark and elsewhere."

IRVINGTON - An off-duty Essex County Sheriff's Officer and resident here had been arraigned in South Kearny's Correctional and Rehabilitation Center Sept. 27 regarding a three-car collision along Harrison Avenue and I-280 June 4, 2022, where he had appeared to be under the influence.

Michael Johnson, 36, said Hudson County Prosecutor Esther Suarez Sept. 27, was off-duty when he was arrested by HCPO detectives in Secaucus Sept. 26 and was remanded to the county jail.

Johnson has been charged with three counts of aggravated assault, three third-degree counts of assault by auto and five counts of fourth-degree assault by auto.

Kearny Police Sgt. Michal Gontalczak said that his officers responded to a three car collision at Harrison Avenue by the I-280 West entrance ramp at 11:20 p.m. June 4, 2022. They found Johnson and his Jeep Cherokee and occupants in a Chevrolet Traverse and a Nissan Rogue damaged and on the avenue's eastbound lane.

KPD officers promptly called for a local ambulance service since eight people had been injured. It is not clear whether Johnson was among the injured.

Officers at the scene had determined that the off-duty Johnson was driving east on the avenue when he entered the westbound lane. KPD had initially charged Johnson with filing to submit to a sobriety test at the scene.

It is not known why it took 16 months for KPD-HCPO investigators to arrest Johnson for DWI. Nor are the conditions of the eight injured people known.

EAST ORANGE - The Boston Market restaurant here at 471 Central Ave., after being closed

for 53 days, may be fully open by when you read this - as will be most others throughout New Jersey.

A "Local Talk" delivery crew noticed two "We're Open" banners in front of the store and 16 cars parked - four of them in employee spaces - on its lot. Four employees were found inside, two of whom were managers who explained that "We've been open since Friday (Oct. 6)."

The eatery on the southeast corner of Central and South Clinton streets had been closed by N.J. Department of Labor's Division of Wages, Hour and Contract Compliance officers here and at 27 of the 32 Boston Chicken of NJ LLC across the state on Aug. 15.

The state DOL - after a November 2022 complaint from Hamilton Township and investigation - found that Boston Chicken of NJ had shortchanged 317 of its employees \$607,571 in back wages. That cost to Boston Chicken became \$2.554 million when \$1.214 million were added as penalties.

That \$2.554 million had to be restituted before any of the 27 BMs could reopen. (Two others, one each in Howell and, Toms River were earlier evicted for failing to pay rent.)

"Local Talk," on Oct. 12, found City of East Orange plastic sawhorse barricades blocking 271 Central's drive through lane and window. These same barricades were put up around Sept 1 to keep motorists to park here and at the closed Rite-Aid pharmacy at 543 Central Ave. - both private lots.

It is not known whether the sawhorses will be removed once Boston Market has all of its staff back for drive-through. Rite-Aid, of Philadelphia, had closed 543 Central before filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy reorganization in a New Jersey federal court Oct. 15.

ORANGE - Members of the public who log onto the Orange City Council's Oct. 17 meeting may well be asking what is going on with the Orange Public Library in the wake of Library Director Stephanie Flood's Oct. 10 resignation.

Flood, after two years at the OPL helm, turned in her resignation letter with her company cell

phone and keys that Tuesday - two days before the OPL Board of trustees' scheduled Oct. 12 meeting.

A designated trustee or council liaison may tell the City Council and public of whether they have designated an employee to be an officer in charge and how they will go about finding Flood's successor.

Flood, who was the former Lincoln Park Library Director in Morris County, spent much of her time setting OPL right after years of closure, neglect and corruption. That activity included working around records that were made absent by the ongoing U.S. Department of Justice / FBI investigation of bribery and fiscal misuse among OPL, City Hall and the Orange YWCA/ Orange Recreational, Educational and Cultural Center.

Flood had reconciled relationships with neighboring libraries and vendors, remodeled the Watson Alcome into a computer learning center, returned Saturday hours and, in July, had a new HVAC roof unit installed. (A prior director had conspired to write invoices for a \$40,000 HVAC chiller unit that was never ordered, let alone installed.)

Flood, in a letter that "Local Talk" had received, laid a deteriorating relationship with the OPL BOT at the trustees' feet. It had started from her first day, when she did not receive duty and responsibility, new employee orientation or health and pension benefits documents. She was told to get the health and pension benefits papers from Human Resources in City Hall.

There was a question over vacation days going by New Jersey Civil Service regulation. She never got the 24 days off as per Civil Service. The Trustees, last summer, sent a letter saying that she had 12 days - and that she had used that allotment.

What Flood said was the Trustees' noncompliance with Civil Service was supported by then Trustee President Janet Mateo and CWA Union Representative Rene Garzon. Mateo, at the Trustees' Sept. 21 special meeting, was succeeded by then-Vice President Jonathon A. Beckford. At the July 13, BOT meeting Flood, after learning that a motion to fire her was

(Continued on page 14)



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*From
The
Pastor's
Heart*

OP-ED BY DR. ROBERT KENNEDY

Pray For One Another

My list is long. It is headed by a call to pray for peace for Israel and the innocent Palestinians caught up in the crossfires of the declared war following the most brutal event ever to take place in the land of Israel since its establishment 75 years ago.

Except you are in the Land of Never, Never, you must have heard by now that more than 1000 Israelis, including Americans, have been killed in the attack from Hamas, and more than 100 have been taken as captives/refugees. In response to the attack, nearly 1,000 Palestinians have been killed thus far. The fallout from the attack is sending tremors worldwide as efforts are being made to ensure security around Jewish places of assembly, etc.

In his speech to the American nation, President Biden made it clear that Americans stand with Israel and will do all that is necessary for Aid to ensure the protection of Israel. The attack has brought to the minds of people in Israel and Jews worldwide the shadows of the Holocaust and, to Americans,

the shade of 9/11. If the provocation of Israel continues and Israel is forced to fight for self-preservation, things could get out of hand. The Middle East could become embroiled in a conflict that leads the world into Armageddon.

A clear understanding of the above should call us to pray for peace between Israelis and the Palestinians. Such prayer must ask the Lord God to take notice of the dire situation and stop Hamas and its collaborators from the atrocities they are engaged in, paralleling the havoc ISIL/ISIS wreaked in Syria and Iraq, bringing destruction to thousands of lives. Yes, a prayer needs to be prayed that the hand of wickedness might turn back against itself. As someone said, **“Now is a time when we must respond in prayer.** Because prayer is stronger than hate and louder than missiles.”

I am thinking about how the Jews fasted and prayed in the days of Queen Esther and Mordecai when Haman had set a trap to kill all Jews. Haman had gotten King Ahasuerus to issue a decree that on a specific date, all Jews should be killed. But by God's miraculous power, the decree was stopped by another decree from the king.

Instead of the Persians killing the Jews, the Jews were given the authority to kill all who came out to attack them. According to the record, 75,000 Persians were killed by the Jews.

Following the event, a letter was sent out to all the provinces of Persia by Esther and Mordecai, instituting the annual commemoration of the Jewish people's redemption. This is the holiday we know as Purim (lots) (See Esther 9 for the full story).

My referencing the story above is not to laud the killing that resulted from the response to any provocation from Hamas or any other terroristic group that goes after Jews or any other individual, people or nation faced with the threat of extermination. But it is to invite us to pray for peace and the other connected issues that are faced due to war.

When I think of the connected issues that must be included on a prayer list, I think of the following:

1. Those who are suffering grief because of the loss of their loved ones
2. The parents and children that have been taken as hostages
3. Those persons who have to live without necessary resources as a result of the war
4. Those persons in war areas who are living without food and water
5. Those who have to live in the neighborhoods where they are not sure who is their enemy
6. Those who are very anxious because they do not know where their family members are
7. Those civic and national

leaders here in America and the Middle East who are being called upon to make critical decisions at this time

8. The many youths who are caught up in this tragic situation
9. All who are seeking safety and protection.

Yes, we need to pray for them, like the apostle Paul says, “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16). Or like Jesus Christ instructed, “Men (people) are always to pray and not to faint” (Luke 18:1).

While we need to pray personally and within our families (assuming we still have family prayers), I think this call needs to extend to the multiple groups within our church communities and synagogues. And we need to see it as a national issue. When we engage in prayer, we should think outside the confines of our personal, family, or community needs and lift those around the world that we'll never meet this side of Heaven.

We must pray with passion, persistence, and perseverance for the issues we bring before God. And we must walk away from the altar of God with the assurance that He hears us and will answer. Sometimes, the answers will not come as quickly as we would like, but God never turns his back on a sincere heart. So let us "pray for one another." (James 5:15)

WORLD NEWS FLASH

(Continued from page 6)

WORLD

EARTHQUAKES CRIPPLING AFGHANISTAN

A powerful earthquake struck western Afghanistan again on Oct. 15, making it the fourth to hit the impoverished region since Oct. 7, causing more suffering for families left with little to survive on as the hard winter approaches, UN agencies have reported.

The latest, 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck areas northeast of Herat city Sunday morning local time.

According to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as of Monday evening local time, two people

were reported to have been killed and over 150 injured in the latest quake.

In total, about 1,500 people have died, and a further 2,000 injured.

Daniel Peter Endres, acting UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan, described the situation there as “a race against time” for aid organizations to deliver assistance before the onset of winter.

“These earthquakes have struck some of the most vulnerable communities in Afghanistan, they have already been grappling with decades of conflicts and under development,” he told journalists in New York, via video link.

“The affected communities have little resilience to cope with the multiple and simultaneous shocks, and especially with the cold winter coming, when households have limited food resources and are most constrained in capacity.”

Nightly temperatures have dipped considerably, he said, noting that many whose homes were damaged are sleeping outside, afraid their dwellings might collapse completely.

He mentioned that local communities and aid organizations are helping those in need by providing food and non-food relief items, including tents, blankets and heating supplies. However, more help is needed.

The humanitarian community in Afghanistan has created an initial response plan for recovery, focusing on 114,000 people whose homes were destroyed or badly damaged. The plan may be revised as necessary.

Mr. Endres said the crisis response will be absorbed within the 2023 Afghanistan Response Plan, which is itself severely underfunded.



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Watch the Essex County College *Community Education Forum* TV Series, hosted by Alfred Bundy on and

ELECTION (Cont. from page 7)

Malespina and Courtney Winkfield - who have decided not to run again. Those voting for Bennett and/or Mazzocchi will have to keyboard their names on physical voting machines or write the names onto their Vote by Mail Ballots.

Orange: Three incumbents have banded together on "The Marathon Continues" platform Former Board President Jeffrey Wingfield, and members Dr. Fatimah Turner and Samantha Crockett are its candidates.

"Local Talk" is watching for campaign material from the "Marathon" ticket and/or its individual candidates for party affiliation. Turner and Wingfield and a third candidate ran in 2020 as "The Orange BOE Democratic Team" on their banners and palm cards.

School board candidates' direct identification with a partisan

political party is a violation of the board of education elections nonpartisan spirit - if not violating the New Jersey State School Boards Association's rule.

India Williams is running a solo "Equity in Education" campaign.

West Orange (Select One): Incumbent "Empowered by Wisdom" Melinda Huertas is seeking re-election. Challenging is "Strong in Education" Maria Vera.

Bloomfield: Two incumbents and four challengers are running on two distinct slates.

Incumbents Casey Dudley and Nadiesha Greene and first-time runner Stephanie Perry are running under "Students Parents Community. Jefferson Ramos, Sandra Tufaro-Saraplous and Pedro Antoonia Gongora are campaigning as "Putting Children First."

Montclair: Three incumbents are vying against six chal-

lengers on at least two platform slates.

Incumbents Phaedra Dunn, Melanie Deysher and Alison Silverstein are running together under their "Progress, Integrity, Dedication" flag.

Jessica Glass, Theodore Graham and Will Novak are the "A Brighter Tomorrow" team. Alex Binkley, Stewart Ball and Kimberly Robinson Santos are running solo campaigns.

Glen Ridge: All three candidates - Darius Kevin Dehnad, Joycelyn Gottlieb and Duval Hopkins Graham - are running unopposed and with CCC endorsement.

Belleville: There are two incumbents - Nelson Berra, and Erika V. Jacho going up against five challengers for Belleville Board of Education Trustee seats.

Berra and "Building Belleville's Future"s Jacho are running independently of each

other. Esteban M. Lyon and Benda Pacheo are running under "A Better Belleville BOE " banner - an organization which has fielded candidates in previous school board and nonpartisan mayoral and council elections here.

The remaining challengers are also running solo campaigns: Keria Nicole Arroyabe ("Bridging the Gaps"), Lissa Missaggia ("Teachers for Belleville ") and former Trustee Michael Sheldon ("Taxpayer Lives Matter!").

Nutley: Incumbent President Salvatore Ferraro, Vice President Salvatore Balsamo and Member Lisa Danchak-Martin. have a challenge from Stephen J. Gilberti.

Prospective voters have until the end of business Oct. 31 to apply for VBMB by mail.

The Observation Booth



OP-ED By Andrea Dialect

FAMILY DYNAMICS

Tell Big Mama & Pop Pop... "Age ain't nothin' but a number" may be a bit farfetched these days, especially when those numbers really do equate age. Thus, thank the Good Lord for those who stand fast as keepers of standard, those rams in bushes.

Both done had a makeover sure-nuff. Yet, there are a plenty of them Godly, ethical, and classy traditional older folk out there, but if you don't know what to look for, you won't know who you're looking at.

It's those little thangs and those now nontraditional things that seem so trivial that are often overlooked that are really big

things, and many times, we don't realize that until they're gone. To spot them, you'll need to have an out-of-body experience - act in spirit, not in mind. But no need to fret; for our sake, you might even find a Pop Pop or Big Mama's chillin' in spirit in the body of someone two, twelve, or twenty-five when living or life as lessons opts not to discriminate.

I guess in this new age, we, too, must lose the hang-ups about where. How and whom our lessons and guidance come. Such is life. Yet being an excellent example as such indeed has an even bigger impact when Pop Pop and Big Mama' said it and does it, Andrea says!

THE COLOR OF GRAY

Nothing Makes My Brown Eyes Blue Like...

It was a dead giveaway when noticed on someone else. When seen, it could send me running off into immediate time travel, wearing a Kool-aid smile on my face. The color gray defined everything I wanted to be; it was my aspiration in the flesh!

But lately, when seen, I'm less hasty to run off, and the smile on my face is as typical as cordial gets. There is usually a look of intensity in my eyes as I'm seeking out roots, which are noticeably iffy sometimes. Still,



Photo Credit Andrea Dialect

I'm in hopes that the person is naturally refined.

One day, when an address didn't make locating my destination any easier, I'd come to realize even more so that some are naturally refined and others not. This place was like a maze with darkness hovering above; hastily, those who were non-participants in the less-than-kosher had abandoned me. Which made me leery, soon becoming panicked, and then I saw her.

In a place known to be notorious, her presence was comforting while trailing behind. I felt I could trust her direction. Her hair, which had been finger-raked to the back and loosely held by a child's hair barrette, earned my highest regard as it shimmered like silver Christmas tinsel beneath the dimly lit streetlights. She wore a pair of pink ballerina flats and blue jeans with large kitty cats printed

all over them and held a long-length black wool coat against her frail frame. Her stride was even-paced, and her face looked stern.

When an approaching person would soon startle me, she seemed unmoved. My hastening judgments made me feel bad, until at passing shoulder to shoulder, the two made the ole slip in hand. The loss of respect was as swift as that transaction and their departure.

The color of gray doesn't necessarily equate to wisdom when the tags of a yellow cab had possibly been of a negative influence. Upon arrival, the attendant was hopeful of my generosity when the person up ahead refused to move; sad indeed.

Can color equate when contradiction is worn boldly upon the face of a wide-hipped woman wearing a blue oversized down jacket in a crammed supermarket? . . .

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 10)

made by them May 11, followed by "an investigation," asked for a copy of the charges levied against her; she never received that document.

WEST ORANGE - Business owners and rental unit landlords have until Oct. 31 to get their mercantile licenses with the Township of West Orange and be part of that municipality's registry.

West Orange became the first municipality in "Local Talk" Land to require mercantile licenses within township limits and to create such a registry.

The frequently asked questions responses on the West Orange website said this in response to a State Legislature requirement for businesses and property owners to have proof of liability insurance in case of on

premises "property damage, bodily injury or death resulting from accidents or occurrences." Municipalities are charged with monitoring businesses and rental properties with compliance.

Owners of businesses and/or rental properties are to submit a certificate of insurance along with an application for the registry. Applicants are to pay at least \$100 for the business or the first unit and \$20 for each additional unit.

They will receive a certificate that must be posted in a conspicuous place on the property. The certificate is in effect Oct. 1 through Sept. 30. Those who do not register or renew are facing a \$2,000 fine.

The proof of liability insurance must have a policy carrying at least \$300,000 for a rental building or at least \$500,000 for a business.

SOUTH ORANGE / MAPLEWOOD - What Halloween celebrations that take place

this year at South Orange-Maplewood School District buildings will be limited.

What Halloween celebrations that will take place, said SOMSD Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ronald Taylor Oct. 6, will have to be held after school. The events will also have to " be in partnership with affiliated organizations like a parent-teacher group."

Taylor decided to greatly restrict Halloween celebrations after polling with all school principals and consulting with Assistant Superintendent of Access and Equity Dr. Kevin Gilbert. The polling asked whether Halloween should be substituted with the likes of "a Fall Festival."

"Each year, questions arise from families, students and staff about what SOMSD schools will be doing regarding Halloween," said Taylor. "Is promoting school-sanctioned Halloween activities create indirect and unintentional hardships for students and families? Do the activities violate the dignity of

(Continued on page 15)

TOWN WATCH (Continued from page 14)

some of our students culturally or religiously? Does the promotion create tensions of access and equity values among SOMSD schools?"

"All of us realize that this breaks with what the District has usually done and that can be a difficult thing to do sometimes," said Dr. Gilbert. "Often, working to instill greater equity begins with recognizing that we cannot do what we have always done. With this decision, we're taking a step closer to upholding our community's access and equity values."

BLOOMFIELD - A State Superior Court jury convicted a township man in Newark Oct 10 of the murder of a Newark man at the latter's Irvington filling station May 12, 2022 - even though he never pulled the trigger.

The jury, after an eight-day trial and five hours' deliberation, told Judge Michael J. Raven that Tuesday that they found Lamar Sommers, 36, guilty of first-degree murder, conspiracy to commit murder, unlawful possession of a weapon and possession thereof for an unlawful purpose, among other charges.

Sommers was accused of driving two accomplices a block short of the Grove Street, Irvington service station where Jah-Que Tyrese Benbow, 23, of Newark, was working 10 p.m. May 11, 2022. He remained in the car while the other two men fired five shots into Benbow - and drove them away.

Benbow was rushed to Newark's University Hospital, where he died 40 minutes later. Visitation and memorial service for Benbow, who was born April 8, 1999, was held at Irvington's Transcend Worship Center.

Sommers promptly fled to North Carolina, where he was arrested June 16, 2022. He awaits sentencing Dec. 4, when Judge Ravin may give him up to 30 years in a state prison.

MONTCLAIR - Township elders may have appointed a successor for Councilman-at-Large Peter Yacobellis during their Sept. 18 public meeting. "A resolution to fill a vacancy of Counselor-at-Large," is listed on that 11 a.m. Wednesday's agenda.

Yacobellis, 43, who was elected in 2020, announced Oct. 12 that he is resigning immediately and had tendered his notice to Municipal Clerk Angelese Bermudez Nieves. He had announced his not pursuing re-election and his election campaign for mayor Aug. 23.

"Back in August, I talked about the reasons why I'm not pursuing re-election or election to higher office," stated Yacobellis. "I've decided to kickstart that journey sooner, move out to Washington state next year, give myself a reset and to pursue oth-

er passions."

Any elected office with nearly 12 months left in its term, according to state statute, must be filled with an appointee. Yacobellis is leaving with 10 months, through July 1, 2024, left on his term.

Former mayor and deputy mayor-turned at-large Councilman Robert Russo had suggested on Oct. 13 to consider returning Dr. Renee Baskerville. Baskerville was Fourth Ward Councilwoman until her bid for mayor failed in 2020.

Yacobellis said he had forwarded an individual's name to Mayor Sean Spiller and Second and Third ward council women Robin Schlager and Lori Price Abrams, "but ultimately that decision is left to my colleagues."

Leaf Blower Ban Update

"Local Talk" has learned that the injunction sought by Gaia Gardens and other landscapers in U.S. Federal Court-Newark Oct. 12 was denied by Judge Julien X. Neals. Montclair Township's ban on gas powered, internal combustion engine leaf blowers took effect Oct. 15.

BELLEVILLE - Authorities are investigating the how and the why of a Belleville Middle School student's possession of a gun that led to that building being locked down here on Oct. 5.

Responding Belleville police officers said that they got a call from a Belleville Public Schools security officer at about 11:20 a.m. that Monday.

Police officers and BPS security located and interviewed the student in question. They retrieved " a BB gun from his backpack."

279 Washington Ave. was locked down - with no civilian going in or out - while BPD was present.

Belleville Middle School, noted for its 1936 Art Deco gymnasium out front of its older core building, was the township's high school until the latter moved into its current structure in the 1960s. Faculty and staff had been using the demolished King Windows building space at 269 Washington and the former Eastern International College / Elks Lodge/DAV Post at 249-51 Washington for parking.

NUTLEY - It took eight days for the Lincoln Elementary School community to recover from an Oct. 9 fire here, but Superintendent of Schools Kent Bania and Principal Brooke Benavides said, on Oct. 13, that a full schedule of classes, including morning and afternoon extended hours, were set to start on Oct. 16.

The school will have a 10 a.m. delayed opening on Oct. 16 - but that is a far cry from when the fire caused some 448 Kindergarten-Sixth Grade students to take remote learning instruction on 126

Chromebooks Oct. 10-13.

The 1915 two-story building and 1929 addition were meanwhile recovered and cleaned by 90 contracted ServPro people. They removed smoke-damaged materials, including most of the building's ceiling tiles. Its fire alarm system was also repaired and its interior tested negative for asbestos.

The school was inspected and given occupational clearance by Nutley's construction code and fire officials. There is at least one report on the school's Facebook page that the WPA-era murals in the auditorium had survived.


The damage, since Oct. 9, is still limited to the school's auditorium.

Nutley firefighters got an alarm call from 301 Harrison St at 10:45 a.m. that Monday. They arrived within three minutes and began attacking the blaze from the roof. Mutual aid came from Belleville and Bloomfield departments.

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