

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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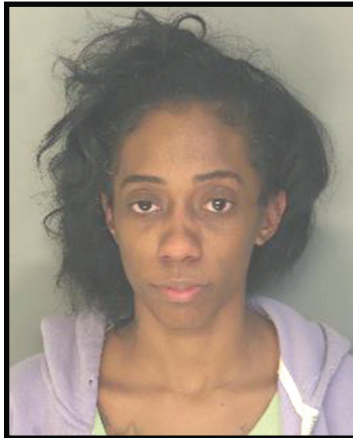
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WOMAN ARRESTED IN HIT & RUN OF NEWARK CHEERLEADER



Essex County Prosecutor Theodore N. Stephens, II, has announced the arrest of Mia'Jah Burton, age 33, of Newark, NJ for the February 4, 2024, hit and run of an Arts High School student, who was returning from a cheerleading competition.

The victim, an 18-year-old Newark resident was struck by a motor vehicle, just after getting off a bus in front of Arts High School on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, Newark. The driver of the car, a Kia Forte did not stop and fled from the area. The victim was rushed to University Hospital, where she remains in critical condition.

An investigation by

detectives from the Prosecutor's Crime Scene Investigations Bureau led to the arrest of Burton on March 1, 2024. Burton has been charged with Third Degree Leaving the Scene of a Crash resulting in Serious Bodily Injury; Third Degree Endangering and Injured Victim, Fourth Degree Assault by Auto; Third Degree Hindering and Fourth Degree False Report to Law Enforcement. Burton has been lodged in the Essex County Correctional Facility pending a detention hearing.

The charges against burton are merely accusations. She is presumed innocent at this time.

"A CM PUNK-LEVEL PIPE BOMB"

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LADY PHOENIX FLY AWAY WITH ANOTHER STATE TITLE

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Photo Courtesy Newark Public Schools

IRVINGTON ADMINISTRATORS AND STATE COMPTROLLER DIFFER ON FINANCE REPORT

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Turn To PAGE 9



Editorial
Kristopher Seals
Content Editor

Hello Readers,

Hi. I'm Kristopher Seals, and I have some things I need to get off my chest. (Brace yourselves; I'm about to drop a CM Punk-level pipe bomb here.)

It's hard to believe that four years ago, COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. Fear, confusion, unrest, sickness, and death led to a historic presidential election that saw former Vice President Joseph R. Biden defeat then-President Donald J. Trump by around seven million votes. A lot of people thought that the Trump era was over. Yeah, about that...

Despite a majority of the country firing POTUS 45, the Biden Administration has not performed to the level that would make a Trump remix seem silly. For example, when Bill Clinton was in his first term, no one was begging for George

H.W. Bush to step back into the fold. Sure, Republicans wanted someone besides Clinton in 1996, but they weren't clamoring for "the good ol' days of Bush." However, Biden has underwhelmed so severely that by comparison, he makes Trump look like a viable alternative to some people.

This time, there is no pandemic to elicit the specter of fear that dominated 2020. People needed to blame someone for their state of distress. When things go wrong, who usually gets the blame? Answer: the one in charge, and back then, it was Trump. Ironically enough, while Trump was to blame for a lot of things, the pandemic wasn't one of them, as that threat originated from overseas.

On one hand, as a leader he did not handle it that well, but on the other hand, NO ONE handled it well! Trump, Gov. Murphy, Gov. Cuomo, Gov. DeSantis, leaders in Canada, Mexico, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and all over the world screwed up in one way or another. Why? Because no one was prepared for a pandemic in a globalized world. The last one came in 1918, and the world was

not so connected back then. In fact, the only leader who remotely had a handle on it was Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand, and guess what she had going for her? Her country is literally an island - with a small population! That's the absolute best defense for a global pandemic you could possibly have in 2020.

Before I continue, I just want to say, I am NOT a Trump guy, but I am a guy who is SICK of Democrats trying to gaslight me every two minutes into thinking he's Hitler. That's like a guy who tells the mother of his kids, "I just took a dump, and it was worse than giving birth!" New flash: It isn't. I'm not a Democrat in Congress, so therefore I'm not a robot.

Oh, and while I have this platform, Bernie Sanders: Stop calling yourself an Independent. Your voting record says otherwise. I don't hate you; I just want you to be honest about it. When the Senate was 50-50, you could have really made a difference. Instead, you would complain about things - but vote YES on them anyway! How is that "Independent?"

Plus, the only two Democrats who weren't V.I.C.I. (Vicki

from "Small Wonder" on Capitol Hill were Manchin and Sinema, and the Democratic Party pushed them out harder than Nia Gill got pushed out of the NJ Senate. (We know what y'all did.)

Now, in 2024, the fear that existed four years ago has been replaced by anger and apathy, and I'm afraid it's going to get worse. The thing about our nation is this: America is built on Democracy... but Capitalism keeps the lights on. People have started getting their refund checks, and something is missing - the money they thought they would have. Or perhaps they're on the other end, having to pay out money.

In 2023, some people had less money taken out, but didn't notice the effects because of the dreaded "I" word: inflation. Guess who is getting the blame for that one? Like Trump in 2020, the guy in charge: Biden. Trump, for all his shortcomings, represents one thing above all: MONEY.

Additionally, this is an election where people cannot vote on the person. You can't go, "I don't like Trump because as a person, he is a bad dude." The

(Continued on page 13)

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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>
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PHYSICIAN AGREES TO CEASE CLINICAL PRACTICE OF MEDICINE

TRENTON - Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin and the Division of Consumer Affairs announced that an Essex County vascular surgeon has agreed to permanently cease engaging in the clinical practice of medicine and surgery in New Jersey to resolve allegations he indiscriminately prescribed high volumes of controlled dangerous substances (“CDS”) to patients he treated for addiction.

Marc Watson, MD, who practiced in Cedar Grove, agreed to permanently forfeit his authority to diagnose, treat, or render medical care in New Jersey to resolve allegations stemming from an investigation conducted by the Division’s Enforcement Bureau.

The State alleges that Watson, who has been practicing addiction medicine since 2005, engaged in gross negligence and professional misconduct by prescribing high volumes of CDS to his patients without sufficient medical justification - including highly addictive benzodiazepines, stimulants and, in some cases, narcotics. He also engaged in inadequate physi-

cal examinations, patient monitoring, and record keeping, the State alleges.

An inspection of Watson’s medical office and review of his patient records revealed that in some cases, he prescribed CDS for years without fully assessing the patient’s underlying medical conditions or referring the patient to alternate treatment providers, like psychiatrists.

In August 2023, Watson appeared before a Preliminary Evaluation Committee (“PEC”) of the Board and admitted that he has no formal training in addiction medicine and did not see any patients in person or conduct any urine drug screens between March 2020 and August 2021. Additionally, Watson testified that he often fails to obtain a patient’s prior medical records; diagnoses conditions - including psychiatric and neurological conditions—without adequate testing; and has prescribed CDS upon a patient’s initial presentation before first prescribing safer alternative medications, as required.

“Physicians prescribing con-

trolled dangerous substances must follow the laws and regulations in place to protect patients and reduce the risk of drug misuse and diversion. This is especially critical when treating patients for substance use disorders,” said Cari Fais, Acting Director of the Division of Consumer Affairs. “The alleged conduct of this doctor demonstrates a serious breach of professional standards and an alarming lack of good judgment. The action we’re announcing ensures he will never again be in a position to endanger his patients or the public at large through indiscriminate prescribing.”

Under a final consent order filed by the Board on February 22, 2024, Watson must close his office and permanently cease engaging in the clinical practice of medicine and surgery in New Jersey, following a 30-day wind-down period to allow him to transfer the care of his patients. Additionally, after the wind-down period, Watson’s New Jersey CDS Registration, which allowed him to prescribe controlled dangerous substances in this state, will be permanently retired with prejudice and he is prohibited from reapplying for one in the future.

Watson is permitted to retain his medical license only for the limited purpose of conducting mandated on-site testing of construction workers in connection with his ownership and operation of a mobile Occupational Safety and Health Administration (“OSHA”) testing company. He is prohibited from practicing medicine in any other capacity - or seeking to expand the scope of his medical practice - beyond what is permitted in the final consent order.

Investigators with the Enforcement Bureau within the Division of Consumer Affairs conducted the investigation.

Patients who believe that they have been treated by a licensed health care professional in an inappropriate manner can file an online complaint with the State Division of Consumer Affairs by visiting its website or by calling 1-800-242-5846 (toll free within New Jersey) or 973-504-6200.

ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP GALA SET FOR APRIL 11

March 8, 2024 - Essex County College is celebrating 55 years of Student Success with its 55th Anniversary Scholarship Gala to be held Thursday, April 11 at the Crystal Plaza in Livingston at 6:00 p.m.

“The Gala is first and foremost an opportunity for the College to raise valuable scholarship dollars. We have so many outstanding students whose only obstacle to success is their lack of adequate financial resources. Our continued goal is to help our most deserving students earn a valuable college education and take the next step toward achieving their dreams,” said ECC’s President, Dr. Augustine A. Boakye.

This year’s event will recognize three faculty members who have dedicated themselves to ECC’s students since the institution opened its doors on Newark’s Clinton Avenue in 1968. These “Pioneers” are:

- Professor Patricia Bartinique (Humanities)
- Professor Gerald Freedman (Social Sciences)
- Dr. Robert Spellman (Humanities)

Two outstanding alumnae, who have shown what ECC’s graduates can accomplish, will also be honored at the Gala. They are:

- New Jersey State Senator Renee Burgess of the 28th Legislative District (Class of 1999)
- Vivian Carter, retired Newark Public Schools teacher and current volunteer “extraordinaire” (Class of 1973)

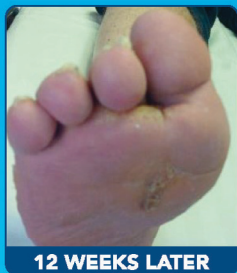
“It’s our honor to recognize these extraordinary faculty members and outstanding alumnae. The Gala is one of our featured events as we look back on the past 55 years of service and look forward to the future,” stated Dr. Boakye.

Tickets to the Gala are priced at \$225 each and can be reserved at: <https://secure.actblue.com/donate/ecc55thanniversarygala>

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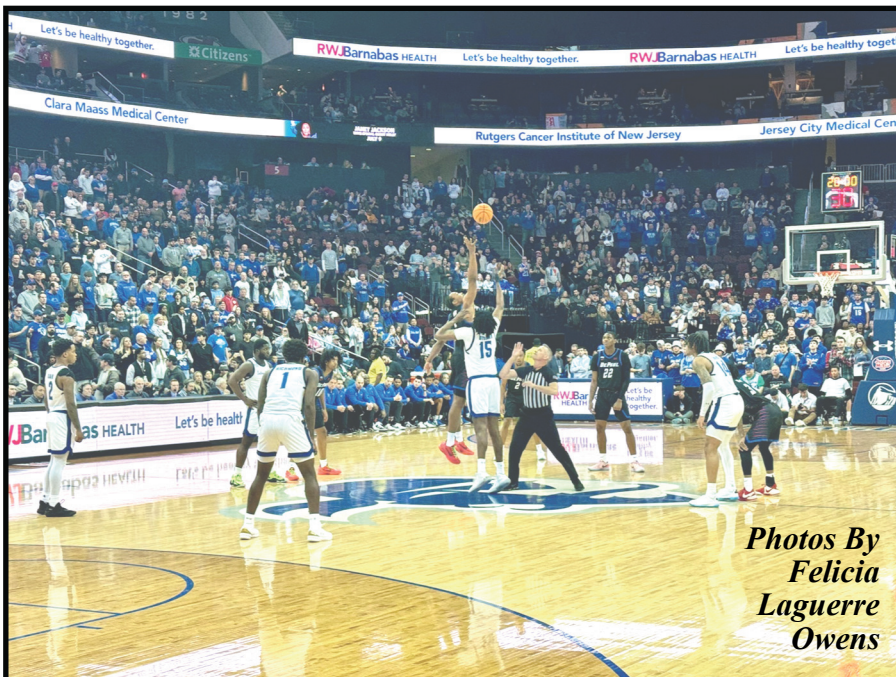
Photo Courtesy Newark Public Schools

By William Hathaway, Jr.

The New Jersey high school state championship games took place this weekend. First, in Toms River at North High School, the Lady Phoenix of University High School won their eighth state title, fifth in the last seven years, and third in a row for Group 1. UHS dropped the flame on Shore High School 85-55.

17 points and 3 rebounds and Zakiyyah Lindsley had 11 points and 11 rebounds.

Of course, the biggest game in high school title competition was Arts High taking on Camden at Rutgers University, with the Newark team losing 69-50. The reason why this game stood out was because Arts should have played Manasquan, but that team was screwed by an awful call confirmed by replay,



Photos By Felicia Laguerre Owens

The Clinton Place club jumped out to a 22-5 lead in the first quarter, and held Shore to just 4 points in the 2nd quarter. University got big contributions all around. First, Briana Holt posted a double double with 20 points and 24 rebounds, Morgan Marshall had 20 points and 4 rebounds, Paradise Fisher added

allowing Camden to advance 46-45. Neither the officials on the court nor those higher up the chain had the courage to do the right thing and just let the bad call stand as is.

Meanwhile, Newark Tech's dream title run came to an end against College Achieve in a 85-59 loss for the Group 1 crown.



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In college basketball, the Seton Hall men's basketball team exorcised the DePaul Blue Demons 86-62. Leading the Pirates was Dre Davis with 28 points, Al Amir Dawes had 7 points and 9 rebounds, Kadary Richmond posted 11 points and Dylan Addae-Wusu had 19 points including his 1,000th point.

The Hall finished the regular season with a 20-11 overall rec-

ord and 13-7 in the Big East Conference. Still, they must put on a good showing in the Big East Tournament or risk getting left out of the big dance.

Finally, Saquon Barkley is now an ex-New York Giants running back, as he signed a 3-year deal with the Philadelphia Eagles worth \$37.75 million, \$26 million guaranteed.



UNITED STATES



“BLING PASTOR” PLEADS GUILTY

The so-called “Bling Pastor” who was infamously robbed by crooks during a service is once again saying his prayers - that his cell isn’t next to theirs.

Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that a jury returned a guilty verdict against Lamor Whitehead on two counts of wire fraud, one count of attempted wire fraud, one count of attempted extortion, and one count of making false statements to federal law enforcement agents. U.S. District Judge Lorna G. Schofield presided over the two-week trial.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: “As a unanimous jury found, Lamor Whitehead abused the trust placed in him by a parishioner, tried to obtain a fraudulent loan using fake bank records, bullied a businessman for \$5,000, tried to defraud him out of far more than that, and lied to federal agents. Whitehead’s reprehensible lies and criminal conduct have caught up with him, as he now stands convicted of five federal crimes and faces time in prison.”

According to the allegations in the Indictment and the evidence at trial: Lamor Whitehead, who leads a church in Brooklyn, New York, stole from his own parishioners, sought to defraud and extort a businessman, and committed loan fraud.

First, Whitehead induced one of his parishioners to invest ap-

proximately \$90,000 of her retirement savings with him by promising to use the money to help her buy a home. He then spent the money on luxury goods and other personal expenses and, when she demanded to be paid back, he continued to lie to avoid returning the money.

Second, Whitehead extorted a businessman for \$5,000, then attempted to convince the same businessman to lend him \$500,000 and give him a stake in certain real estate transactions in return for favorable actions from the Mayor of New York City, even though Whitehead knew he could not obtain the favors he promised.

Third, Whitehead submitted a fraudulent application for a \$250,000 business loan, including doctored bank statements that falsely claimed Whitehead had millions of dollars in the bank and hundreds of thousands of dollars in monthly revenue.

Finally, when speaking with Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”) agents who were executing a search warrant outside Whitehead’s mansion in New Jersey, Whitehead falsely claimed that he had no cellphones other than the phone he was carrying when, in fact, Whitehead had and regularly used a second cellphone, which was inside his house at the time.

Whitehead, 45, of Paramus, New Jersey, was convicted of two counts of wire fraud, one count of attempted wire fraud, and one count of attempted extortion, each of which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, and one count of making false statements, which carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

The statutory maximum sentences are prescribed by Congress and are provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendant will be determined by the judge.

Mr. Williams praised the outstanding investigative work of the FBI.

This case is being handled by the Office’s Public Corruption Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jessica Greenwood, Jane Kim, and Derek Wikstrom, with the assistance of Paralegal Specialist Christopher De Grandpre, are in charge of the prosecution.

MENENDEZ FACING MORE CHARGES

After co-defendant Jose Uribe pled guilty to charges with sentencing consideration contingent upon cooperation, New Jersey’s senior Senator is now in more hot water.

Sen. Bob Menendez, his wife Nadine, and two more co-defendants pled not guilty to new charges in a superseding indictment handed up by the Southern District of New York.

The quartet now face new obstruction charges and trying to make bribes look like loan payments. Thanks to the new indictment, the Senator now faces 18 counts overall.

MASS SHOOTING UPDATE

Information recent as of 3-12-2024 at 12 p.m.

2024 Mass Shooting Stats: (Source: Mass Shooting Tracker, <https://www.massshootingtracker.site/data/?year=2024>)

- Total Mass Shootings: 93
- Total Dead: 156
- Total Wounded: 323
- Shootings Per Day: 1.29
- Days Reached in Year 2024 as of March 12: 72

AFRICA



A COMMITMENT TO ENDING MALARIA

On March 6, Ministers of Health from African countries with the highest burden of malaria committed to accelerated action to end deaths from the disease. They pledged to sustainably and equitably address the threat of malaria in the African region, which accounts for 95% of malaria deaths globally.

The Ministers, gathering in Yaoundé, Cameroon, signed a

declaration committing to provide stronger leadership and increased domestic funding for malaria control programs; to ensure further investment in data technology; to apply the latest technical guidance in malaria control and elimination; and to enhance malaria control efforts at the national and sub-national levels.

They further pledged to increase health sector investments to bolster infrastructure, personnel and program implementation; to enhance multi-sectoral collaboration; and to build partnerships for funding, research and innovation. In signing the declaration, they expressed their “unwavering commitment to the accelerated reduction of malaria mortality” and “to hold each other and our countries accountable for the commitments outlined in this declaration.”

The Yaoundé conference, co-hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Government of Cameroon, gathered Ministers of Health, global malaria partners, funding agencies, scientists, civil society organizations and other principal malaria stakeholders.

The ministerial conference has four key aims: review progress and challenges in achieving the targets of the WHO global malaria strategy; discuss mitigation strategies and funding for malaria; agree on effective strategies and responses for accelerated malaria mortality reduction in Africa; and establish a roadmap for increased political commitment and societal engagement in malaria control, with a clear accountability mechanism.

“This declaration reflects our shared commitment as nations and partners to protect our people from the devastating consequences of malaria. We will work together to ensure that this commitment is translated into action and impact,” said Hon Manaouda Malachie, Minister for Health of Cameroon.

The African region is home to 11 countries that carry approximately 70% of the global burden of malaria: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania.

(Continued on page 12)

IRVINGTON ADMINISTRATORS AND STATE COMPTROLLER DIFFER ON FINANCE REPORT

By Walter Elliott

IRVINGTON - Several township officials responded to a State Comptroller's report on Irvington's financial procedures some 72 hours after its March 5 release.

Business Administrator Musa A. Malik, on March 8, in particular countered Acting State Comptroller Kevin D. Walsh's "Irvington: A Performance Audit of Financial Management Practices" follow-up report. The report was based on a review state auditors had conducted August 2021 and July 2023 for its 2023 review.

The state's 2023 review and March 5 report is an assessment update of its Nov. 30, 2011 review and the March 4, 2009 audit that started the chain of events to begin with. What started in 2011 with a finding that only eight of the 21 recommendations made in 2009 had been fully implemented is now down to six needing to be fully carried out:

- Maintaining accounting records.
- Implementing adequate financial reporting internal control policies.
- Conduct timely and effective employee evaluations.
- Produce timely and effective required financial information.
- Ensure that its Chief Financial Officer has an unexpired Municipal Finance Officer Certificate.
- Identify and prevent contractual relationships that create conflicts of interest between the Township and its officers and employees.

There is also a seventh recommendation in Walsh's eight-

page report: That the N.J. Department of Community Affairs Division of Local Government Affairs "install a state fiscal monitor to ensure that Township officials come into compliance with corrective actions."

Irvington, should it receive a state fiscal monitor, will share that experience with the City of Newark and the Belleville Public Schools.

Newark received a monitor during Mayor Cory Booker Administration as a condition of getting state transitional aid. That monitor, after several years, has left Newark City Hall.

The Belleville Public Schools and its Board of Education still has a Monitor Thomas Egan in its administration building and at its BOE Trustees meeting. Egan was called in when the district budget had a \$4 million deficit in 2014. His presence has been less frequent in the last year, however, and the district had not provided him a Zoom link for meetings.

The 2023 review applied the U.S. General Accountability Office's Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government, also called "The Green Book," to four areas: accounting records preparation, maintenance and reconciliation; financial reporting internal control weaknesses and timely filing by law of filing financial document compliance.

State auditors had reviewed statutes and regulations against supporting documents. Those documents included the township's financial and debt statements, budgets and auditors' reports for Calendar Years 2017-2021. Township personnel were interviewed.

Auditors had found a continuing weakness in maintaining and reconciling municipal accounting records from 2009.



Family Support Organization of Essex County offers events and support groups for caregivers of children with special needs. We invite you to join us throughout the month.

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MARCH 12: 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.

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MARCH 21: Better Together Dads meets 6:30 p.m. every 2 weeks on Thursdays to give fathers a safe place for connection with other passionate dads. We invite fathers and surrogate fathers to join our *8 Dimensions of Wellness Workshop* series with Dr. Henry Clay. This week's topic is Emotional Wellness.

MARCH 5: Nurtured Heart Approach meets 6:30 p.m. monthly on 1st Tuesdays. This bilingual group teaches parents and caregivers the Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA), to help them raise children with emotional, behavioral, and mental challenges. Per the Founder, Howard Glasser, NHA is a therapeutic method and "behavior inspiration, not management".

If you have questions, contact us at (973) 395-1441 or visit our website for the details: <https://bit.ly/fsoeevents>

When you contact us, use reference # FSOEC_FB01.



The Township reported, for example, \$789,210 in "unidentified expenditures" in its 2019 audit. The Finance Department had moved that amount from that year's budget to its grant fund from federal and state grants.

The department had not, however, charged \$661,350 in salaries and wages and \$127,860 in other expenses to the same grant fund. None of these expenditures were put before the Township Council.

DGLS directs that municipalities keep a general ledger for accounting - a responsibility of the CFO.

Auditors found that the internal controls, found weak in 2009 and 2011, were still deemed insufficient. There were several accounts that were not reconciled with corresponding bank statements. All but two, as of January 2023, had been reconciled through Dec. 31, 2022.

The 2023 review found that two employees received "highly

effective" ratings despite frequently missing work deadlines and questionable attendance and unauthorized overtime. Township management has developed job descriptions, partially implemented annual evaluations and taken appropriate corrective action on employees.

The Township was found to file its financial statements to the DLGS consistency late 2017-2021. Its annual financial statements, budget and audit reports exceeded Irvington's average 145 days late filing 10 times. One 2017 audit report was 300 days late.

Auditors had found that Irvington's CFO, who has been employed since 2009, had his certificate expire on Dec. 31, 2022 and invalid on July 1, 2023. It was the third time since 2020 that the certificate became inactive. The latest certificate was reinstated Sept. 20, 2023.

Municipal CFOs are to have a current two-year MFO Certificate
(Continued on page 14)

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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 - Rite Aid Pharmacy, which once had stores in almost every "Local Talk" town, has closed its last Essex County location here at 104 12th Ave. by March 1.

Contractors for the Philadelphia-based company had closed the University Heights section store Feb. 29 and more than cleared out its inventory. They had removed all signage, leaving a vacant commercial space, as they had earlier done at 35 Mill Rd., Irvington and 545 Central Ave., East Orange.

They were executing the latest directive from Rite Aid and new partner Gabelli Funds, of Rye, N.Y., through U.S. Bankruptcy Court-Camden Jan. 30. It and five other New Jersey stores are among 77 nationwide to close by March 17 as part of its Chapter 11 reorganization.

Rite Aid had entered Chapter 11 protection Oct. 15 to close 2,000 of its stores. Gabelli plugged a \$7.6 billion loss with a \$3.45 billion injection, but wants low performing stores to close.

There had been no big banners or large scale "Store Closing" announcement at 104 12th Ave. leading up to its Feb. 29 closure. This seems to fit a trend towards corporations quietly but quickly closing unwanted stores.

7-Eleven's parent company, for example, closed its 728-736 Broadway store Feb. 22-28. They first took down all interior sales signage and quietly held a half-off sale; all items, with exceptions like tobacco products

and Red Bull energy drinks, were discreetly discounted at the register.

Corporate's cutting off of products and supplies were immediately felt; coffee cups and coffee ran out the first day and there were no pizza boxes to carry out cooked pies the fourth day. Contractors removed all contents and outside signage, down to its address, on March 1.

IRVINGTON - First responders Irvington and the New Jersey State Police-Bloomfield Barracks rescued a man who was dangling over the Garden State Parkway from the Chancellor Avenue overpass Feb. 23 - but not without halting northbound evening traffic.

Irvington police and fire units responded to 10:45 p.m. reports that Friday of a man who had gone over the overpass' northside fencing by Milepost 143.7. The man was indeed found standing on a ledge over the highway's center lanes, which prompted a call to the state police.

State troopers, on arrival, closed all northbound lanes at Exit 143. The closure, while diverting traffic onto Clermont Avenue and other township streets, allowed the Irvington Fire Department to place a ladder truck and raise its ladder bucket under the man.

The man, after some 25 minutes' negotiations with the IPD, walked off the bridge to responders' custody. It is presumed that an ambulance had taken him to a local hospital for observation. There were no reported injuries.

Parkway and local traffic, both ways, had been snarled by then. Northbound traffic spilled back through the Union Toll Plaza in Hillside. Southbound rubbernecking traffic was spilled back up from Exit 143 South up to Exit 147 - Springdale Avenue, East Orange.

EAST ORANGE - A city man, wanted for a 2022 aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, was arrested by Boonton police in what started out as a Feb. 16 traffic stop.

Officers in that Morris County town were conducting a surveillance search along Powerville Road when they noticed a passing car with "heavily

tinted windows." A computer records check of its license plate found that the car's registered owner's license and registration were suspended.

BPD stopped the vehicle, which was pulled over and approached its driver - later identified as Bernard F. James, 29. His identification check discovered an outstanding arrest warrant from a 2022 East Orange shooting.

James was arrested and eventually turned over to East Orange Violent Crimes Task Force detectives via extradition. Boonton officers added citations for driving on a suspended license and registration and his inability to show proof of insurance.

ORANGE - Morris County Prosecutor's Office detectives, with the assistance of the Orange Police Department, arrested a resident at his home here Feb. 15 in connection to the Oct. 18 shooting of a man in a Roxbury motel's parking lot.

Jean Omar Rockson, 33, said Morris County Prosecutor Richard J. Carroll March 7, was scheduled to be arraigned before a State Superior Court-Morristown judge March 11 simultaneously with the earlier-arrested Auraceli A. Maldonado, 24, of Irvington. Rockson is to be particularly charged for providing the AR-style rifle Maldonado used to hold up and shoot one of the victim's legs.

MCPO and Roxbury police detectives had first identified Maldonado and, later Rockson, as the two people on video recordings who got out of a New York-registered Honda Accord at Route 46's Roxbury Motel Oct. 18.

They had a planned meeting with the 36-year-old man on the lot - but they robbed him at gunpoint. A struggle ensued which ended with the woman shooting him in the leg and fled.

Authorities had traced the Honda to its registered owner - Maldonado - and arrested her in Middleburg, Fla. Nov. 2. They have not elaborated on how they identified Roxon.

Rockson and Maldonado were scheduled to be arraigned on the following charges that a Morris County grand jury had indicted them on: first-degree robbery; second-degree weapons possession for an unlawful pur-

pose, conspiracy to commit robbery and aggravated assault and third-degree unlawful weapons possession.

WEST ORANGE - A charitable ice hockey game held at the Richard J. Codey South Mountain Arena Feb. 24 both honored the late DPW Director Joe Pelose and were honored in the DPW director's name.

The annual match between the West Orange All Stars and the New Jersey Warriors held a remembrance ceremony for Pelose, who suddenly died Feb. 11, before dropping the puck. The game between a combination of West Orange police and fire officers and the Warriors - an NHL New Jersey Devils-affiliate team of disabled military veterans - ran normally until the first intermission.

During that 20-minute break, the Warriors received donations from the township's PBA Local 25, FMBA locals 28 and 228 and the AFSCME Local 3469 unions in Pelose's name.

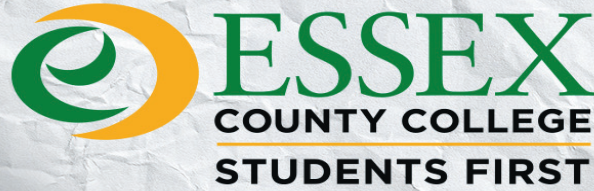
The tribute was fitting for Pelose, 61, who died here Feb. 11, was an NHL NY Rangers fan. The lifelong township resident capped his 40-year public works career by being appointed DPW Director this January - 40 years to the month after being hired as a department truck driver.

Born Nov. 2, 1962, Joseph A. Pelose was among the West Orange High School Class of 1980 and had studied at the now-Kean University through 1982. He worked his way up the civil service until his directorship employment.

"Uncle Joe" was survived by sisters Margaret Delallave and Teresa Catania and several nieces and nephews, among other relatives. His funeral was held Feb. 17 at Caldwell's Paul Ippolito-Dancy Memorial. Memorial donations may be made to the Disabled Veterans of America: www.dav.org.

SOUTH ORANGE / MAPLEWOOD - The South Orange-Maplewood Board of School Estimate hopes that "third time's the charm" in getting its controversial \$29 million construction bonding vote taken here now on March 18.

The two-town board had
(Continued on page 12)



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ST. VALENTINE CHURCH IN BLOOMFIELD CELEBRATES 125TH ANNIVERSARY MASS



Photos Courtesy St. Valentine Church

BLOOMFIELD - St. Valentine Church in Bloomfield celebrated its 125th anniversary with a March 3 Mass led by Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Archbishop of Newark, who urged the nearly 300 gathered parishioners to reflect on the role their parish should play in their lives.

After beginning his homily in Polish - the native language of the immigrants who founded St. Valentine's in 1899 - Cardinal

Tobin recalled how Jesus drove the merchants out of the temple because he did not want his Father's house to be a marketplace. A parish also should not be a marketplace, the cardinal said, because a marketplace is a venue in which people only look out for themselves. He said a parish instead should be a home where everyone comes together in peace. And as St. Valentine Church turns 125, its parishion-

ers must consider what they are doing to create such a community, Cardinal Tobin said.

"The invitation today, at this stage of our journey of Lent, is to make in us and around us

more home and less market," said Cardinal Tobin, who explained people can do that by praying more and spreading

(Continued on page 13)

WORLD NEWS

(Continued from page 6)

Progress against malaria has stalled in these high-burden African countries since 2017 due to factors including humanitarian crises, low access to and insufficient quality of health services, climate change, gender-related barriers, biological threats such as insecticide and drug resistance and global economic crises. Fragile health systems and critical gaps in data and surveillance have compounded the challenge.

Funding for malaria control globally is also inadequate. In 2022, US\$ 4.1 billion - just over half of the needed budget - was available for malaria response.

Globally the number of cases in 2022 was significantly higher than before the COVID-19 pandemic, rising to 249 million from 233 million in 2019. In the same period, the African region saw an increase in cases from 218 million to 233 million. The region continues to shoulder the heaviest malaria burden, representing 94% of global malaria cases and 95% of global deaths, an estimated 580 000 deaths in

2022.

To help accelerate efforts to reduce the malaria burden, WHO and the RBM Partnership to End Malaria launched the "High burden to high impact" approach in 2018, a targeted effort to accelerate progress in countries hardest hit by malaria.

The declaration signed at the March 6 conference is aligned with the "High burden to high impact" approach, which is founded on four pillars: political will to reduce malaria deaths; strategic information to drive impact; better guidance, policies and strategies; and a coordinated national malaria response.

To put malaria progress back on track, WHO recommends robust commitment to malaria responses at all levels, particularly in high-burden countries; greater domestic and international funding; science and data-driven malaria responses; urgent action on the health impacts of climate change; harnessing research and innovation; as well as strong partnerships for coordinated responses. WHO is also calling attention to the need to address delays in malaria program implementation.



New figures on the UK's support to end Gender-Based Violence (GBV) show how this funding has transformed the lives of over 4 million of the world's most vulnerable people.

Gender-based violence is a systematic, pervasive, human rights abuse. It threatens the lives and wellbeing of women and girls, and prevents them from accessing opportunities for education, employment and healthcare. However, it is preventable.

Between April 2021 and March 2023, the UK has provided 4.2 million people across the globe with gender-based violence prevention or response services.

Foreign Secretary Lord Cameron said: "The UK is determined to work with our partners

to resist the rollback of rights we are seeing around the world.

"Gender-based violence is holding back women and girls, but things can and must change. The UK's approaches have shown reductions in violence of up to 50% in some countries.

"By investing in sexual and reproductive health services, and reaching millions of girls with services to end devastating practices like Female Genital Mutilation and child marriage, we are proud to help women and girls to reach their full potential."

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for MENA, AfPak, India, the UN, Commonwealth and the PM's Special Representative for PSVI said: "I'm honored to be at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, joining the global conversation on reforming the humanitarian system to protect women and girls against gender-based violence. This is a critical issue that affects millions - a violation of human rights that demands a united front.

TOWN WATCH *(Continued from page 10)*

twice scheduled reviewing of the South Orange-Maplewood School District's ongoing \$160 million Long Range Facilities Plan presentation and voting to approve or deny the 10-year \$29 million bond to fund its next phase. A Feb. 13 snowstorm pushed that meeting to Feb. 28 - before that was also scratched.

BOSE, on its bond counsel's advice, pushed the meeting to March 18 on Feb. 27. The attorney noted that the second meeting would exceed the 30-day expiration date of the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education's Jan. 27 bond authorization.

The school board passed a new 30-day bond authorization at their Feb. 29 meeting, giving their green light for the BOSE's March 18 meeting and final vote. The Long Range Facilities Plan and the bond includes renovations for South Orange Middle School and Columbia High School - and the \$4.3 million debated reworking of its adjacent Ritzer Field.

The three-acre grass field itself is to be replaced by artificial turf. Turf advocates point to flooding that postpones or cancels school and recreational use and that three times as many games can be played in a week over a grass field. The field, which was

built with CHS in the 1920s, used to have a stream running through it.

Save Ritzer Field and other grass advocates say that plastic turf would negatively affect water runoff and leach its chemicals into the water.

SOMSD Business Administrator Eric Burnside, on March 4, said that the Ritzer Field work could not be severed from the \$29 million bond issue projects list. Spinning Ritzer off would mean that "we'd have to reapply with the (NJ) Department of Education, which would take three months" and delay SOMS' renovations. The Ritzer work will also remedy US DOE Title IX issues.

BREAKING NEWS

Columbia High School principal Frank Sanchez was scheduled to be arraigned before a Superior Court judge March 12 to answer to second-degree endangering the welfare of a child and disorderly persons simple assault. Sanchez, whom SOMSD had suspended since January, surrendered himself after learning that an arrest warrant was out for him since March 8.

BLOOMFIELD - A township man has been detained in Hackensack's Bergen County Jail without bail since his Feb. 23 arrest

here by Lyndhurst police for supplying narcotics that killed another man in one of their township's hotels. Nov. 11.

Alberto Delgado, 43, said Bergen County Prosecutor Mark Musella Feb. 23, has been charged for first-degree cocaine possession with intent to distribute and strict liability in a drug-induced death, second-degree controlled dangerous substance possession with intent to distribute within 1,000 feet of a school zone and within 500 feet of a park and third-degree distribution of cocaine and fentanyl and fentanyl possession with intent to distribute.

Musella and Lyndhurst Police Chief Richard Jarvis said that the latter's officers arrived at the Winslow Motor Hotel 11:52 a.m. Nov. 11 on reports of an unresponsive man in one of their rooms. The man - identified as Luke Revellm 54, of Jersey City - was declared dead at the scene.

Lyndhurst police noticed "indications of a possible drug overdose" and called BCPO's Narcotics Task Force. Both agencies - with assistance from ECPO and Garfield and Saddle Brook police - launched a joint investigation of Revell's death and related drug activity.

Their probe found Delgado distributing a fatal narcotics dose to Revell. The evidence

(Continued on page 15)

EDITORIAL

(Continued from page 2)

flipside is, “I don’t like Biden because as a person, his power level is -9,000 (RIP Akira Toriyama).” They cancel each other out. This time, you have to vote on what the candidate will do for you as President.

Right now, there are more things that say vote for Trump instead of Biden. Trump has the border, foreign affairs, crime, and the economy, while Biden has abortion and climate change. There are other things as well, but those are the main ones that aren’t cancelled out by something else. Like this: Biden and the Democrats’ rants about the “threat to Democracy” is cancelled out by their own suppression of freedom of speech. If want the real news on Gaza, you won’t see it on legacy media, Facebook and Instagram, but you have to go to X (formerly Twitter) which isn’t owned by obedient Democrats, but by Elon Musk. Basically, when they talk about Trump being a “threat to Democracy” they’re pretty much the pot calling the kettle black, and the American people have noticed this, and are frustrated and disgusted.

Now, about those Trump court cases. Three of the prosecutors, Alvin Bragg with his hush money case, Letitia James with her fraud case, and Fani Willis with her election interference case, have been deemed “thirsty” by the streets. Therefore, people are wary about their true intentions with the cases. Meanwhile, Jack Smith’s Capitol Riot case has a problem. You see, I called it the Capitol Riot case, and not the Insurrection

case, because if was an Insurrection, then why didn’t they charge Trump with an Insurrection?! They charged him with stuff that included infringement of rights and yada yada yada, but not with an Insurrection itself. Calling it an Insurrection now seems like misinformation at this point. Again, the American people have noticed this.

As for the classified documents case, it seems like they’re only charging him because it’s Trump, and not someone they don’t hate. I’m pretty sure that EVERY former president and plenty of Cabinet officials have some classified things in their possession to this day, but they weren’t charged because, you know, they’re not the most hated guy in politics. Case in point, Biden and Pence had them too.

People all over the country feel that the case was over the moment they raided Mar-a-Lago and TOOK THEM BACK. Okay, now that you got them, bill him for the expenses of having to barge in and get them, and that’s the end of it. If we charged everyone who had classified documents in an equal manner to Trump, you might dozens of people in court over the next two years!

Finally, with ALL these cases, why didn’t they charge him in 2021?! They accuse Trump of election interference, and in order to get “justice” they’re committing election interference! It’s like they wanted to keep Trump around for the 2022 midterms, so that they could use him as a tool to make people vote against the GOP and get seats in Congress. Good news: It worked. Bad news: It’s probably going to backfire on them.

In conclusion, while there is a plethora of issues on the ballot, money is at the top, above all else, including abortion. As important as a woman’s right to choose is, what good is it if you can’t even afford to have one? Not to mention, a lot of the voting populace (men) have no stake in abortion - unless they’re trying to duck responsibility, whether by immaturity or there’s a “mistress” situation - and would prefer a president who would generate money in a struggling economy instead.

Also, it’s now a state issue, meaning that if you already live in a liberal state, the Supreme Court decision doesn’t affect you, as the reversal of Roe v. Wade didn’t actually ban abortion, but took the federal government out of it. It was really just a win for conservative states. Fun fact: After the SCOTUS ruling, states that wanted to ban abortion put it on the ballot, and nearly all of them voted to KEEP abortion legal.

While it did not go their way, I actually COMMEND leaders in those GOP states for letting the voters have a say. That is the REAL application of democracy, not when politicians try to dictate what democracy is based on whatever agenda they have going on that day. (Sorry about all the textural shouting, but this stuff is important.)

Sorry to make this so political, but my fellow New Jersey citizens, is it me, or have our leaders QUIT on us? When is the last time you felt that they - especially Phil Murphy - did something that helped us for the sake of helping us, and not some political friends in which we get the crumbs so that they can say they fed us? Also, like those

GOP states, why don’t they put things on the ballot for us to vote on? Sure, we get to vote on some things, but how about something truly cool, like allowing us to pump our own gas? I literally asked Murphy this on his News12 call in show, and instead of being a quarterback on the issue, he punted on it. He started going on about Putin’s war in Ukraine. What the heck does that have to do with ME at a gas station in NEW JERSEY?!

One more thing. If you think I’m out of my mind when it comes to politics, remember, I’m the guy who CORRECTLY predicted that Jack Ciattarelli would get close to Murphy in the last gubernatorial election, whereas everyone else had Murphy winning by double-digits.

Let’s end on something that is not depressing. The 96th Academy Awards was dominated by “Oppenheimer” and its many wins including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, and Best Supporting Actor, with Robert Downey, Jr. finally winning his first Academy Award. This put the perfect bow on one of the greatest comeback stories in history. He went from a rising star, to going to prison, to returning in supporting roles, to “Iron Man” and becoming one of the most beloved stars in Hollywood, to winning an Academy Award.

I’ll never forget “Avengers: Endgame” where the end credits came on, and when his name appeared, he got the loudest standing ovation I ever heard in a movie theater. The only question now is who plays him in his biopic? (Probably Timothée Chalamet.)

Have a nice week. See you next time.

BLOOMFIELD MASS

(Continued from page 11)

brotherhood and sisterhood to all they encounter. “Brotherhood and sisterhood is needed today in a world that counts divisions more important than unity.”

A trustee concluded the Mass by presenting Cardinal Tobin with a St. Valentine’s medal in gratitude for his visit. About 250 people then gathered for a luncheon in the parish’s reception hall, where they were joined by Auxiliary Bishop Manuel A. Cruz and numerous priests and deacons from nearby parishes. Many former

parishioners also returned for the celebration, reminiscing with old friends while enjoying a slideshow of photos from St. Valentine’s history.

“Everyone had a very good time,” said Father Andrew Onyemaobi, pastor of St. Valentine Church. “I give thanks to God for giving us 125 years and letting us come together to celebrate. And we’re not finished because we have more anniversary events planned this year, like a new book club and a dinner-dance in February 2025. We hope people will visit us so they can see we’re a vibrant, thriving parish that welcomes everyone.”



The Observation Booth



OP-ED By Andrea Dialect

CROWNS & TIARAS

MISS BLACK AMERICA

True beauty is not only about wearing a crown. Wearing that crown is about your being. Sitting on that throne is all about the people. - Elizabeth "Liz" Dicker Larkin, Miss Senior Black America

BEAUTY SPEAKS

Initially, I wasn't going to do the pageant. Truthfully, God told me, "You're going to do this pageant." He kept saying, "You can do this." I thought, "Who is Me? Why Me?" He's been doing this a lot with me. Saying, "Why not you?" If I choose you to do

something and be something, you can do it. Because I am in control, that was in my spirit, and I've been receiving that and trying to obey. Usually, we don't obey. As people, we ask ourselves, is God trying to tell us something, or is it in our heads? Lately, however, He has been transforming my whole being and movement.



The Founder of Miss Black America: J. Morris Anderson
Senior Miss Black America Elizabeth "Liz" Dicker Larkin aka "LizzPetite"
Founder and CEO of Angelic Halo Foundation
Manager: Tyrone Chablis
FB: LizDicker
IG: #lizzpetite1

So God was talking to me, and Dr. Esq. Diane Eubanks,

Director of the Miss Black America Senior Division, continued calling me. As did Joanne Jefferson, Founder of the Jefferson Foundation. She is the Director of Local Montclair Miss Black America. Whose pageant I won, the Queen Diva Pageant, and with the Queen Diva title, you can go on to Nationals under her platform for Miss Black America or Senior Miss America. It was last minute when I decided to join, but things worked out thanks to sponsorship and my supporters. God worked it out.

One of the driving forces was also the girls that I mentored. You have to show them also. If I'm not doing it myself, I can't just tell them the possibilities and give them advice and direction. Raya, one of the young ladies I mentor, was going for Miss America. So I decided that I would go with her. True beauty is not only about wearing a crown. Wearing that crown is about your being. Sitting on that throne is all about the people. I want to be that to her, my mentees, my family, and our people. That's what representing this crown and being Miss Senior Black America is all about!

DIAMONDS, BEAUTY & PAGENTS



For 3 decades, MISS SENIOR BLACK AMERICA has been a regularly featured runway and print model, runway coach, choreographer, and creative coordinator of fashion and talent showcases. Ignoring the fashion industry's tendency to utilize models of a particular height, Liz continues to pioneer the way for greater utilization of petite models. ...

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.

FINANCE REPORT

(Continued from page 7)

cate from the DLGS Director contingent on filling out an application, paying a \$50 fee and meeting continuing education requirements. Applicants' renewal may be made within six months of its expiration - which the director may extend up to a year.

Regarding conflict of interest, auditors found that the Township had leased space for its Office of Community Development and Planning 2017-23. The CFO's company had submitted lease bids May 2022 - which the CFO signed for July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023. The company was the only bidder.

The initial July 2017 lease started at \$207,900, which increased by \$39,900 through July 30, 2018, by \$45,000 July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022 and by \$46,000 since July 1, 2022. The township website directory

lists the office as being on 660 Stuyvesant Ave.'s first floor.

"Good governance requires commitment and vigilance," said Walsh to a reporter March 5. "What we found in Irvington was the opposite; leaders and staff who disregarded recommendations, laws, ethics and their obligation to safeguard public funds."

Copies of Walsh's report went to Gov. Phil Murphy, Senate President Nicholas Scutari, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin - and Irvington Mayor Anthony "Tony" Vauss.

Malik, in his March 8 response, questioned why the state had taken 10 to 12 years to follow up on the 2009-11 report and audit. The faults found in 2009 predated the Vauss Administration, which was elected and took office by July 1, 2014.

Citing pre-2014 conditions, said the BA, undercuts progress made by the current administration. There has since been an over-

haul of several departments and change of key personnel.

The Walsh report noted that the 2020-21 COVID pandemic had delayed the now-2023 audit.

Malik and Irvington's Law Department presented to a reporter March 8 correspondence showing that the Township and the Comptroller's Office have been working on correcting "legacy" compliance issues.

Malik contested the report's statements on employee evaluations, the CFO's certification and the leasing of 660 Stuyvesant Ave. The BA said that state officials had approved of the changes, resolving some matters and prompting the Township to contest others.

Irvington's annual municipal budget, said Malik, had been passed by the Township Council and blessed by the state the last 10 straight years.

TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 12)

included his and Revell's earlier cell phone call on Nov. 11 and finding 1.5 lbs. of drugs within a nearby storage unit in his name. Revell's visitation was held at Lyndhurst's Ippolito-Stellato Funeral Home Nov.16, followed by a Nov. Funeral Mass and Nov. 17 burial at North Arlington's Queen of Peace Church and Holy Cross Cemetery. Five sisters and a brother are among his survivors.

MONTCLAIR - Coaches and student-athletes will have one eye on a March 19 Superior Court Newark conference between Montclair Township and Montclair Public Schools and the other eye on the calendar's April 1 scheduled first games on Woodman Field.

That Tuesday conference is where Superior Court Judge Stephen Petrillo hopes to bring both sides of the Woodman Field renovation work to an agreement so that the diamond, pitch and oval could be ready for Montclair High Schools' baseball, softball, track and field and lacrosse seasons. The Mounties first games are to be held there April 1.

Petrillo called for the conference after he had dismissed MPS' call to lift Montclair Township's stop work orders from earlier this winter. The judge had stayed construction and legal injunctions until at least March 19. The district started its Woodman renovation from Nov. 1 until zoning officers stopped the work.

At issue is whether school district property is exempt from township zoning laws. Although the school district's plans were first presented to the municipality in October 2022, it was not until a year later when township officials realized that what the work required needed zoning approval.

The Montclair Board of Education approved a Woodman work contract Nov. 1. The township sent the district their zoning requirement notice Nov. 6. The district has since commenced construction.

The March 19 conference may or may not include an attorney from The Champlain Essex Conservancy. CEC, made of Woodman Field neighbors. filed an injunction to intervene Feb. 21.

BELLEVILLE - The mourning bunting that was put up and flags that were lowered to half-staff on municipal buildings since Feb. 29 for the late Mayor William Escott will remain up to honor First Ward Councilwoman Marie Strumolo-Burke.

Burke, 82, a 20-year councilwoman and Silver Lake fixture, died March 8 at the Heckel Street address that she and husband Charlie moved into from Newark 45 years ago. First elected councilwoman in 2004, the Belleville Democratic Committee Chairwoman founded the Silver Lake

Civic Association in 1993 and was a Belleville Planning Board clerk. She was later a member of the Belleville Kiwanis, Tuesday and Friday Seniors clubs.

Born Marie Strumolo in Newark Sept. 6, 1941, the 1959 Central High School valedictorian and Charlie ran (Arthur M.) Pico's Tavern on Heckel Street for over 20 years. She promoted the Belleville panhandle neighborhood with a weekly "Live in Silver Lake" newspaper column, with "We Love Silver Lake" as her tagline.

Renovating and reopening Silver Lake's Friendly House and Firehouse and creating the Belleville SoHo City Park were among Burke's accomplishments. She had received honors from the New Jersey General Assembly, Belleville Police Department, Belleville High School baseball team and the Belleville Public Library Richard Shafter Branch. (The branch, in School 4, has since closed.) She started and ran "Just a Party" along Franklin Avenue while councilwoman and recently had Lake Street honorarily renamed after the late councilman Angelo Risoli.

Son Anthony, grandchildren Alicia and Anthony and great-grandchildren Giovanna Lynn, Adrianna Wolf, Grace Marie and Lucy Mae Gammara are among her survivors; Charlie and brother Peter Strumolo had predeceased her.

Burke's visitation was at Bloomfield's O'Boyle Funeral Home March 12 and her Funeral Mass at St. Anthony of Padua Church and subsequent burial at Glendale Cemetery March 12. Memorial donations may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and/or the American Humane Society.

NUTLEY - An affidavit released to a New Jersey radio station Feb. 29 revealed some details on the driver involved in the Feb. 14 fatal hit-and-run of a Paterson man and his township companion.

The document stated that a Newark Police Division patrol had stopped the Toyota Camry implicated in the incident at Halsted Street and Norwood Place in the West Ward's Vailsburg section. MPD officers had noticed the Camry without its front bumper and its front end damage.

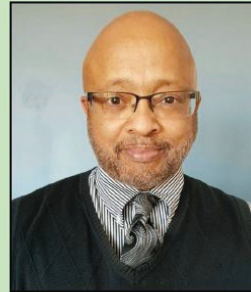
Police officers ordered its driver - Gabriella A. McQueen - and her passenger, Dhkir Robinson, 43, of Lumberton. McQueen said that she owns the Camry and that Robinson had picked her up from work. She added that she had noticed the front end damage.

Witnesses told Nutley police at Milton Avenue and Linn Road that Robinson was behind the Toyota's steering wheel when he struck Winston Perlaza and Jocelyn Pietri while they were walking on the avenue's pavement. (Ice and snow had not been cleared on the Garden State Parkway overpass.) Perlaza, 22, of Paterson, was

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later declared dead at the scene and Pietri was left severely injured.

The witnesses added that Robinson got out of the Camry, walked over to Perlaza, paused and got back into the Toyota - and drove away without helping either victim.

Newark Police officers said that Robinson "appeared to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol." They said that he threw away two packages of crack cocaine from his rear pockets while they frisked him. Officers also found four pills of suspected Ecstasy in his right front coin pocket.

Robinson, said police, tried to free himself from their custody and refused to walk. He was dragged into the rear of a just-arrived Essex County Sheriff's Office squad car and said he had trouble breathing. Robinson has been charged for leaving the scene of a fatal accident, drug possession and related motor vehicle charges.

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