

LOCAL TALK

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ESSEX COUNTY • EAST ORANGE • ORANGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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NEW AND FAMILIAR PATTERNS IN JUNE 4 PARTY PRIMARIES

By Walter Elliott

NEWARK - Registered Essex County Democratic and Republican party voters got to see both changes and sameness when they received their June 4 primary election ballot.

The Essex County Democratic Committee faithful got to see their first ballots in the block ballot design. This was the result of a federal judge's March 29 ruling that eliminated the traditional party line ballot format for at least this election.

The judge had ruled that the party line format, in use in New Jersey for practically forever, gave prominence to the heavily endorsed party candidates. This was the claim made by current U.S. House of Representative Andrew "Andy" Kim (D-Bordentown) and labor activist Dr. Patricia Campos Medina (D-Califon) over the winter.

Members of the Essex County Republican Party Organization (ECRPO) may be looking for their counterparts' shoulders or viewing sample ballots posted on essxclerk.com. While the Democratic Party primary ballot block ballot is only for the June 6 election, a ruling from the same U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals is pending from the same judge's Philadelphia bench later this year may expand and make permanent the block ballot format.

Some countywide and maybe statewide ballot receivers, however, may be asking themselves,



11th Cong. Dist. Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill (D-Montclair) is among several officials running for reelection this year.

"What was all the court fuss about? Most of the same establishment candidates are on top of their ballot blocks here."

Essex County Clerk Christopher Durkin (D-Roseland) had held blind his blind ballot place drawing like he and his 21 other county colleagues have had. The procedure is similar to picking numbers from a drum at a bingo game.

An observer rated the block ballot place drawing to match the previous party line drawing as at 4.3 percent - a very rare occurrence.

No one is questioning the integrity of longtime clerk Durkin's drawing procedure. There are some "good government" groups who want to go to a computerized drawing system.

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Editorial
Dhiren Shah
 Editor-in-Chief

Hello Readers,

Happy Memorial Day to all the readers. Enjoy your weekend with your family and friends. Drive safely and do not read or write text messages or just avoid using your cellular phone altogether. AAA has forecasted the highest travel since 2000, the second most in history. So far, the weather is favorable, about 75 Fahrenheit locally during the daytime on a clear day. About 44 million Americans will travel this Memorial Day weekend.

Of course, while people use the extended weekend to vacation and hold cookouts, we cannot forget the original purpose of the day, which is to honor fallen veterans.

Knicks fans were hoping for a win over the Indiana Pacers, including myself. It was a horrible loss by 21 points, and from the first quarter, Indiana had control of the game. Hopefully, next year will be a better year with draft picks and supporting players with

trade-ins.

In the case of Michael Chase vs. Township of Irvington, the case is now settled between both parties. Michael Chase joined the police force in 1975 and as Chief of Police, he sent two police officers to drop off his wife's car to the garage and pick it up the next day while on duty. Two officers filed a complaint to the Internal Affairs division. The Essex County Prosecutor's Office started an investigation. ECPO videotaped police officers taking the car to the repair shop and picking it up the next day. He was fired on the grounds of taking undue advantage of his position. However, the township owed money to Chase for some period, which has been settled after a few years. Chase was fired by present mayor Tony Vauss. Finally, the case has been settled with a payment of a little over \$37,600 according to the New Jersey State Civil Service Commission.

As per the Yahoo News: "President Biden appeared to claim he was vice president during the coronavirus pandemic and that former President Barack Obama had dispatched him to Detroit to help with the response...." When I was vice president, things were kind of bad during the pandemic,' Biden said near the beginning of his remarks. 'And, what happened

was Barack said to me: 'Go to Detroit - help fix it.'" This happened in the NAACP campaign event in Michigan Sunday night, where he repeatedly railed against his presumptive Republican opponent former President Trump."

I hope Biden is okay. Biden was Vice President from 2009 to 2016. Covid started in late 2019 and through 2020 and now. Obama could not have told him anything about Covid, since both were out of the White House at the time by three years.

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi, 63, and his nation's foreign minister were declared dead in the aftermath of a helicopter crash on May 20. While some people mourned the leader, other celebrated his demise over harsh conditions in the country. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has a say in dictating the direction of the country in the near future.

International Criminal Court Chief Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan KC has taken a bold step by seeking arrests warrants on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the leader of Hamas. President Biden criticized the ICC for going after Netanyahu, yet he has constantly begged Israel to change their tactics in the war in Gaza.

LaMonica McIver will stay on

the candidates list of those running for the late Donald Payne Jr.'s vacant congressional seat. There are 10 Democrats and one republican running to fill the unexpired term through January 2025. Whoever wins in the special primary will then compete in the November general election for the next term.

In Trump's hush money case, Michael Cohen stated that he stole the money from the Trump Organization. He lied under oath in a Congressional hearing. He talked to a middleman to convey info to then-President Trump and the tape says he talked about a 14 year old girl giving harassing him with calls. If the jury believes all he does is lie, the jury will not convict Trump for the 34 felony counts, because the judgment should be beyond a reasonable doubt. The only up for grabs now that the sides have rested their cases is how Judge Merchan instructs the jury on how to deliberate.

If there is a hung jury (meaning that not all jurors agree) the judge can call a mistrial. That means Alvin Bragg has the right to retry the case against Trump. The only way Trump can be done with the matter is if all 12 jurors acquit Trump and find him not guilty.

*Have a wonderful week.
 I'll talk to you next week.*

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WEATHER FOR THE WEEK

| <u>THURSDAY</u> | <u>FRIDAY</u> | <u>SATURDAY</u> | <u>SUNDAY</u> | <u>MONDAY</u> | <u>TUESDAY</u> | <u>WEDNESDAY</u> |
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REPORT EXPOSES DEEP PROBLEMS IN NEWARK HOUSING AUTHORITY - Part 2

By Lev D. Zilbermintz

NEWARK - In the May 16 issue of Local Talk, this newspaper blasted the lid off numerous problems that beset the Newark Housing Authority (NHA). We cited the Executive Summary of the report, which demonstrated deep-seated financial, administrative, oversight, and management problems at the Newark Housing Authority. In the second part, "Local Talk" examines the problems with governance of Newark Housing Authority.

According to the Newark Housing Authority Independent Assessment, governance of NHA is vested in a seven - commissioner board. Of these, one position, the appointee from the Governor's Office, has been vacant for the past three years.

The current list of commissioners are: Norma Gonzalez, Chairperson; Brian Logan, Vice Chairperson; Patrick Council, Commissioner; Linda Washington, Tenant Commissioner; Alif Muhammad, Commissioner; Daud Haqq, Commissioner.

What the law says. How the

Board of Commissioners was created.

"The Newark Housing Authority was created and established through New Jersey State Legislation for the accomplishment of any and all purposes specified in New Jersey Revised Statutes Title 40A: 12A-17 (2013). The state law governing the Board of Commissioners is NJRST 40A:12A-17, which states that the Board should have seven (7) Board Commissioners appointed as follows:

"A housing authority shall be created pursuant to the procedures of the 'Local Authorities Fiscal Control Law,' P.L.1983, c.313 (C.40A:5A-1 et seq.). The authority shall consist of seven members. In a county that operates under the 'county executive plan' set forth in the 'Optional County Charter Law,' P.L.1972, c.154 (C.40:41A-1 et seq.), six members shall be appointed by the county executive with the advice and consent of the board of chosen freeholders, and one member shall be appointed by the Commissioner of Community Affairs.

"In all other counties and mu-

nicipalities, five members shall be appointed by the governing body of the county or municipality, as the case may be, one by the mayor or other chief executive officer of the municipality, or in the case of a county by the director of the board of chosen freeholders or by the chief executive officer of the county if the county's charter provides for such an officer, and one by the Commissioner of Community Affairs."

Board members receive no training

According to the report, "NHA Board members receive no orientation from their appointing official or the NHA as to the expectations, their role, functions of the Board or HUD programs. Many of the Board members interviewed stated that they needed additional training in specific areas as these areas are not specifically covered under (New Jersey Statutes Annotated) N.J.S.A. 40A:12A -45."

"Additionally, many members discussed communication issues amongst Board Members and a lack of clarity on their roles and responsibilities. Without specific training on HUD programs and the role and functions of the Board, it is unclear how the Board is providing appropriate monitoring and oversight of the NHA."

Conflicts of Interest

Two members of the Board of Commissioners hold positions with the City of Newark, which is a conflict of interest. According to the report, Chairperson Norma Gonzalez is a current employee of Invest Newark. According to the City's website, Invest Newark is listed as "the primary economic development catalyst for the State of New Jersey's largest city, Newark. It is organized to retain, attract and grow businesses, enhance small and minority capacity, and spur real estate development throughout the City's 20 diverse neighborhoods."

Patrick Council is both a member of the City Council and Board of Commissioners.

The question of why there was no vetting for any conflict of interest remains unanswered.

Plausibly, the answer would be, politics as usual. In other words, those appointed to the Board of Commissioners have powerful political friends with connections.

According to the report, "The Newark Field Office and the NHA need to inform the appointing officials of these conflicts of interest and ask them to take appropriate steps to either replace these Board Members or provide a written legal opinion as to why they feel these appointments do not present any conflict of interest."

"Another concern, raised both by both Board Members and staff members of NHA, is that Board Members are inappropriately interfering with the day-to-day operations of the NHA. Issues raised include Board Members interfering with hiring actions, disciplinary actions and engaging and making direct referrals of contractors and developers for business with NHA. Any such actions by the Board constitute a violation of the NHA's Personnel Policy, the NHA's Procurement Policy, and federal and state regulations and statutes."

Victor Cirilo's Role

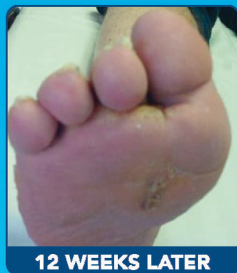
According to the Newark Housing Authority Independent Assessment report, "Board Members state that they received limited information and reports at Board meetings on the financial condition, occupancy, legal action, HCV utilization, tenants accounts receivables, accounts payables physical condition, hiring, contracting and budget to actuals from the former Executive Director. They also state that they had no discussions with the former Executive Director about Strategic Plans or Priority Goals for the NHA (Newark Housing Authority).

"Additionally, they stated that their contract with their former Executive Director did not set any benchmarks or goals or timeframes or mechanism to regularly review the Executive Director's performance. They note that they are starting to receive more information from their new Executive Director and that his contract does include goals or a regular schedule for performance reviews."

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SPORTS WRAP



Photo By Felicia Laguerre Owens

By William Hathaway, Jr.

This past weekend in the city of East Orange the Department of Recreation and the Department of Cultural Affairs hosted National Tennis Day at Elmwood Park. This was their 2nd annual event in the city, which has a yearlong tennis program.

Cities across America honor the day with tennis activities, and East Orange showcased two dedicated tennis champions in residents Jean Gibson Szpara and her twin Joyce Gibson. They were invited by the city of East Orange to coach the adult / senior teams. On hand for the occasion were public officials from the city officials from the United States Tennis Association.

One hundred participants took part in National Tennis Day in East Orange - 60 youth and 40 adult residents. Among those attending the event were school students from the Edward T. Bowser School, ages 6-12. Also on hand were the EO Fire Department and East Or-

ange Police Chief Phyllis L. Bindi, and representing the Althea Gibson Foundation was Donald Folders, the tennis coordinator.

The New York Police Department tennis team took part in a friendly tennis match with the East Orange Police Department. Attendee Howell Johnson said the event was an amazing event for the youth of the city of East Orange.

Finally, the Conference Finals in the NBA are set. The Dallas Mavericks, who eliminated the #1 seed Oklahoma City Thunder, will take on the Minnesota Timberwolves, who finished off the defending champion Denver Nuggets in seven games, in the Western Conference Finals.

On the other side, the Eastern Conference Finals will see the #1 seed Boston Celtics, who took care of the Cleveland Cavaliers, take on the Indiana Pacers, who shot a record 67% in Game 7 against the New York Knicks to win the series in an upset.



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PRIMARY

(Continued from page 1)

Many of the familiar names, indeed, are found on the Democratic and Republican ballots - but not all.

Democratic voters in the 10th Congressional District will be giving Donald M. Payne, Jr. a posthumous victory lap June 4.

Payne, 65, of Newark, was running for what would have been his eighth two-year term before he died April 24. The younger Payne's death, three weeks after being admitted with a complicated cardiac condition, came too late to change the ballot.

June 4 party voters - and likely Nov. 5 General Election voters - will be electing Payne's successor to Capitol Hill for a full two-year term. Some of those candidates' names, however, may be partially determined by a pair of special elections on July 17 and Sept. 18.

Gov. Phil Murphy (D-Rumson) called for the special July 17 primary and Sept. 18 General Election so that some-

one would be in Payne's House of Representatives seat to finish his current term through Jan. 6.

The July 17 primary and Sept. 18 elections are being handled elsewhere and separately in "Local Talk."

Herewith are the major party candidates - from President of the United States to township mayor, council or committee - in the "Local Talk" area. All three CDs overlap into parts of neighboring counties and or "West Essex" towns. The candidates' names are in order of ballot appearance.

The June 6 primary is a chance for party voters to decide on whether to stay or change their political course. Some primaries, given party strength is some municipalities, are tantamount to a Nov. 5 General Election result.

PRESIDENT of the UNITED STATES

Democratic incumbent Joseph R. Biden Jr., of Delaware, is being challenged by "Democrats for Life" runner Ter-

(Continued on page 7)

MEMORIAL BRONZE BUST OF LT. GOVERNOR SHEILA Y. OLIVER DEDICATED

NEWARK - Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. dedicated a memorial bronze bust of the late Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver on Wednesday, May 15th. The Essex County Division of Family Assistance and Benefits building at 320-321 University Avenue in Newark also was dedicated as the Essex County Sheila Y. Oliver Division of Family Assistance and Benefits Headquarters. Ms. Oliver was the first African American elected to a statewide office when she was elected as Lieutenant Governor with Governor Murphy in 2017 and was the first female African American to serve as Assembly Speaker when she was elected in 2010.

"We have named buildings and fields and created statues and markers to highlight our history and remember the people who shaped the development of Essex County and our nation. This will keep the legacies of those who came before us alive and remind future generations about the people who impacted us," DiVincenzo said.

"Sheila had an extraordinary knowledge of government having served on the East Orange Board of Education, Essex County Board of Freeholders, NJ State Assembly and as Lieutenant Governor. She broke barriers in Trenton to become our first

African American Assembly Speaker and our first African American elected to a statewide position as Lieutenant Governor. More importantly, Sheila pursued a career in government and politics because she cared about helping people and making the lives of those in need better," he added.

"Sheila was a trailblazer and pioneer who broke racial and gender boundaries in politics and government. Naming our DFAB building in her honor will keep Sheila's legacy alive, give hope to those who come to our offices seeking assistance and inspire future generations to help others," the County Executive said.

"The Oliver Family is filled with an immense amount of pride and emotion to see the legacy of Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver, our beloved daughter, sister, aunt, cousin, and friend live on in Essex County, the place she called home. The dedication of a memorial bronze bust, the Essex County Sheila Y. Oliver Family Assistance and Benefits Headquarters and Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver Conference Room further cements the legacy of one of the greatest public servants not only Essex County, but New Jersey has ever had," said Renee Oliver, Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver's niece and President of the



Newark, NJ - Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. (third from left) dedicated a memorial bronze bust of the late Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver on Wednesday, May 15th. Unveiling the statue are Oliver's niece Renee Oliver and brother Charles Oliver, Sr. In addition, the County Executive announced the Essex County Division of Family Assistance and Benefits building at 320-321 University Avenue in Newark has been named as the Essex County Sheila Y. Oliver Division of Family Assistance and Benefits Headquarters. (Photo by Glen Frieson)

Sheila Y. Oliver Civic Association. "My aunt dedicated her life to helping those in need and being a voice for the voiceless. May these dedications serve as a constant reminder for those that come across them, to lead with excellence and serve with grace," she added.

"Sheila broke barriers and forever impacted our lives in ways we can't fathom," said Senate Majority Leader and Deputy Chief of Staff Teresa

Ruiz, adding that it is appropriate to have the Lt. Governor's likeness in the County Justice Center.

"Lieutenant Governor Oliver was the embodiment of a true public servant: kind, passionate, and thoughtful. She cared deeply about social justice, racial equity, and looking out for the underserved, and showed up every day to work as an authentic and pas-

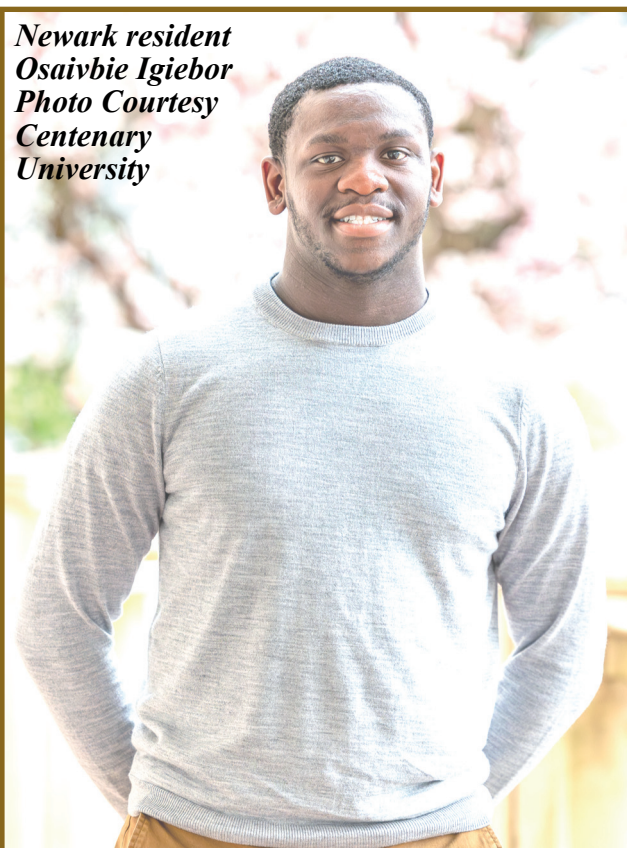
(Continued on page 12)

CENTENARY UNIVERSITY STUDENT NAMED TO NATIONAL 2024 ALL IN STUDENT VOTING HONOR ROLL

HACKETTSTOWN, N.J., May 13, 2024 - Centenary University student Osaivbie "Oso" Igiebor has been named to the 2024 ALL IN Student Voting Honor Roll, which recognizes college students across the nation for their efforts to register their peers to vote and empowers colleges and universities to encourage nonpartisan student democratic engagement. Each fall, the national program runs jointly with the New Jersey Department of State's Jersey Civic Engage initiative, the Ballot Bowl.

For the past two academic years, Centenary University has placed first in both the national and state titles, which are measured by the percentage of registered student voters who pledge to cast their ballot on Election Day. Kathleen Greco, the University's director of community engagement, pointed to the efforts of Igiebor and other students as key drivers for Centenary's consecutive wins. "Centenary students recognized that their vote matters on the local, state, and national levels," said Greco, who nominated Igiebor for the honor roll. "I am extremely proud of

Newark resident Osaivbie Igiebor
Photo Courtesy
Centenary University



Oso and all of our students who are dedicated to educating their peers about the importance of engaging in our democratic process."

Leading up to the 2023 general election, Igiebor's constant companion was a clipboard with information on registering to vote - including a QR code students could scan to instantly connect with a voter registration site. "With my generation, it doesn't work to put up flyers or send emails," the Newark, NJ, resident explained. "Sometimes, you've got to really put things in our faces. It's the only true way to get people to take action."

Growing up, Igiebor wasn't interested in politics, despite his parents, who immigrated from Nigeria, regularly following election coverage on television. That changed after the 2016 election: "I was in eighth grade, and I saw the impact the 2016 election had on people. Some were happy, and some were really sad. That election was close. I decided that I never want to be the reason a candidate

(Continued on page 12)

BLACK LIVES, ANIMAL LIVES, ALL LIVES MATTER



By Michele Lowe

Greetings to everyone. I hope all is well, I've been out for a few weeks, but am gladly back. Well, a little update from the last time we spoke. The kittens have all found loving and caring homes thanks to the help of a South Orange Rescue / fosterer. Thanks, Allison.

Very much more with another one of my personal updates and my handy work.



Oreo is finally back home safe and sound, I came across the little fella one day. He was so sweet and got along with my home pets as well. It was a lot of fun we had. I returned the little doggie back to its owners. They were so happy to have him back, and I even got a reward. How amazing is it that the littlest things bring so much joy. The East Orange Police, even though the arrival was late, I thank you as well for your attendance.

Now people, as I always say, I'm not perfect, nor am I better than anyone else. I have my days, some good and bad. Come to me correct or don't come at all. We all go through tough times, but let's keep our heads up and path clear. Focus folks.

It's so much going on in this world right now. I'm just trying to keep myself together too. We think we have it bad over here, but take a trip outside of the U.S, and see how things really are.

Europe may be a nice place to see and visit but as far as animal care goes, it's horrible... See, what I do folks, as a great humanitarian and much more, I bring information to the plate for the people.

The rules and laws on the slaughtering of animals are totally different. I feel like animals can't even be an animal. We eat them, we use them for clothes and even jewelry and decorations.

These little godly furballs and others don't deserve to go out like that. Would you want to be slaughtered like an animal, thrown into a dungeon with no returning, no say so, or even hunted. Because it's a wild human party celebration, which myself I'm totally against. I disagree with a lot in America, and I will do what I need to.



Okay everyone. Time for me to go, but before I do, if there is anyone that is looking to surrender their big dogs, puppies or kittens call this number please. Business only; keep it professional or deal with the law #862-255-7064 Alexis.

I don't like knowing how people can be so cruel, putting puppies and kittens in boxes, and leaving them out like trash. How cruel can folks be. I don't like that.

One more thing people, we must not forget the lost, missing, vanished humans. People like us. We are here one day and can be gone the next. So don't forget.

Until next time, peace and love...

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PRIMARY

(Continued from page 5)

risa Bukovinac, of Arlington, Va. There is also "Uncommitted" for those who object to certain of the Biden Administration's policies.

Former President Donald J. Trump, of Florida, is running unopposed for New Jersey's Republican nod.

U.S. CONGRESS

SENATOR

Incumbent Cong. Andy Kim, of Bordentown is looking to succeed the incumbent Bob Menendez, Sr. and, in the last month, received Essex County Democratic Committee endorsement.

People's Organization for Progress President Lawrence "Larry" Hamm, of Montclair, intends to put "Peoples' Needs First" Patricia Campos-Medina is running under the "Pro-Democracy Democrats" flag.

Kim, Hamm and Campos-Medina have debated with each

other. Menendez said he will run an independent re-election campaign, pending the outcome of his current federal bribery and corruption trial.

Cape May entrepreneur Curtis Bashaw is running with Regular Republican Party support. Albert Harshaw, of Browns Mills, says he is "For the People."

Christine Serrano Glassner, of Mendham, is among a slate fielded by "America First Republicans." Justin Murphy, of Tabernacle, bills himself as an "American Conservative Republican."

HOUSE

EIGHTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Including Newark's East and North Wards

Kyle Fort Jasey, of Jersey City, is first on this ballot. The former South Orange ward district leader is hawking "A Fresh Start for New Jersey."

Ravinder "Ravi" S. Bhalla, Hoboken is running as a "Pro- (Continued on page 13)

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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.

Judge Keeps McIver on Payne Filler Ballot

NEWARK - Newark Council President LaMonica McIver, after a week of petition submissions and a court challenge, will appear on the July 17 Democratic special primary ballot. Former East Orange Second Ward Councilwoman Brittany Claybrooks is anticipated to be on the same party ballot -- as well as Nutley Republican Carmen Bucco on his party primary ballot.

McIver, Claybrooks, Bucco and their supporters had to scramble to get petitions signed and submitted to the Essex County Clerk Elections Division office by 4 p.m. May 10. McIver, a two-term Central Ward Councilwoman with Essex County Democratic Party support, was challenged in State Superior Court-Newark by Claybrooks.

Claybrooks brought forward to Administrative Law Judge Kim Berlin McIver's petitions on May 17, with the claim that mother Robin McIver could not have acquired all 1,081 signatures on her petitions over a 72-hour period. Councilwoman McIver's aide, Hassan Abdus-Sabur, said that he had helped get some signatures himself.

Claybrooks, who was a campaign director for Cong. Andy Kim (D-Bordentown), asked Berlin to bar McIver's signatures. The State Democratic Committee countered that Claybrooks should be banned for

"illegible signatures."

Judge Berlin, in her late Friday ruling, said that Claybrooks did not prove her case against the McIver campaign. Berlin also let Claybrooks stay on the ballot, after 153 of her 505 signatures were disqualified.

Berlin then told Susana Espasa Guererro that her 65 signatures failed to make the ballot cut. Bucco sailed through the process with 200 signatures.

McIver or Claybrooks and Bucco will have to renew campaigning towards the Sept. 18 special election to fill out the late Donald M. Payne, Jr.'s current term.

Irvington Settles Police Chief Chase Lawsuit

IRVINGTON - The Township Council ended an eight-year legal battle with its former police chief by approving a \$480,000 settlement between Irvington and Michael Chase at their April 22 council meeting.

Council First and Second Vice Presidents Dr. October Hudley and Charnette Frederic and Council Members Orlander Glen Vick, John Brown and Sean Evans carried Resolution TA-24-0422-15. Hudley presented the measure, which Brown seconded. Council President Jammill Z. Beasley and Councilman Vernon Cox were absent that night.

The resolution is in response to Chase's lawsuit, filed in Superior Court-Newark Docket No. ESX-L-L-780-16, to resolve his remaining disciplinary charges against him. Chase was suspended with pay since 2016 on charges made by the then-Police Director Joseph Santiago during Mayor Wayne Smith's administration. The settlement allows Chase to receive his police pension; he was months away from retirement when he was suspended.

Although his suspension was during the prior administration, Chase also named current Mayor Anthony "Tony" Vauss and Public Safety Director Tracy Bowers in his suit. Bowers is currently performing police chief. The \$480,000 settlement includes \$350,000 drawn from a Self-Insured Retainer and the RUSI insurance fund.

State Comptroller: Irvington Needs Financial Monitoring

State Comptroller Kevin Walsh, while standing by his March 7 report that Irvington Township's finances needs state oversight, has not said when a monitor from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs will be appointed.

The deficiencies, which date back to 2009, including an almost \$800,000 in "improperly documented expenses," without approval from the Township Council. In 2021, there was a \$3.8 million discrepancy between a budget status report to the state and that year's general ledger.

The latest report includes a 2017 audit and annual records from 2017 to 2022.

Irvington would not be the first "Local Talk" town to receive a state monitor to ride herd over its finances. The Nutley Board of Education, on May 6, was assigned a monitor after it had racked up a \$7.3 million deficit in its 2023-24 budget.

Belleville Public Schools had had a monitor since it made a \$4.3 million deficit in 2014. That monitor, which has veto power over key expenditures, has been in the district less frequently.

Newark had a monitor from 2010-12 in exchange for receiving some extraordinary aid from the state to help balance its books.

Mayor Vauss has said that the comptroller's sports ignores the financial progress his administration has taken since his July 1, 2018 inauguration. Some of the reported deficiencies, he adds, were left over from the Smith Administration.

EAST ORANGE - CareWell Health publicly responded to a New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services the day after it had received a pointed letter from Trenton May 6.

The DOH Office of Program Compliance's May 6 letter is more than a follow-up to its March 6 report on the East Orange hospital's finances and staffing levels.

The state reminded CareWell CEO Paige Dworak it's required disaster response plan was due on or by May 7. NHDOHSS

claims that the hospital has no disaster plan, is running on narrow or negative margins, "high numbers of days accounts in Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable," began withholding Medicaid reimbursements.

CareWell, in its May 7 response, said they are disputing projections of low cash on hand, mounting obligations and financial need. While the hospital has a disaster plan is found within its emergency response manual and that updating it will take time.

CareWell, which bought the hospital in 2022 and returned the 102-bed institution to non-profit status, touted its \$5 million investment in renovating emergency and patient rooms. The former East Orange General Hospital is the city's largest single employer and the last independent hospital in the county.

ORANGE - The New Jersey Court of Appeals, as of press time, has not yet scheduled a hearing of Orange Board of Education Member Jeffrey Wingfield's challenge of an ethics charge made earlier this year by the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Wingfield filed with the appellate court after Acting New Jersey Education Commissioner Kevin Dehmer, on April 9, let stand the state education department's School Ethics Commission Decision 98-21.

The SEC had found that Wingfield had transmitted confidential OBOE email to Mayor Dwayne D. Warren, Councilwoman Adrienne Wooten and Avram White of the City of Orange Law Department. The state commission said that Wingfield had sent "confidential board and attorney-client privileged emails" to the said three respondents "multiple times."

Wingfield, should the appellate court uphold the SEC's ruling, will be more than reprimanded. The former OBOE president could lose his status as a Certified or Master Board Member.

Orange Public Schools could also be penalized by the education department's QSAC evaluation and monitoring. QSAC, which all public school districts are subject to, was used as per-

(Continued on page 13)



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Essex County College Offers Summer Program for Future College Students

Essex County College is the lead partner in a state funded Fiber Optics Technicians Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education (PACE) program. This partnership will create a pathway into the burgeoning telecommunications sector.

Rising high school juniors and seniors can earn college credits at Essex County College's Early College Summer Program 2024. The program runs from July 8 to August 15.

"The program is for those students interested in college after graduating high school," said Dr. Elvy Vieira, Dean of ECC's Office of Community, Continuing Education & Workforce Development. The program is offered free through funding from the State Office of Higher Education and the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, she said.

"Summer Program 2024 is an excellent opportunity for high school students to receive academ-

ic enrichment, experience college life and learn more about what Essex County College has to offer," Dr. Vieira said of the popular program.

"Our Early College Summer Program provides future college students with a foundation to better succeed at the next level of their education," said ECC's President, Dr. Augustine A. Boakye.

Students will have a great opportunity to take college courses in College Composition I and College Success Seminar, earn college credits, participate in college and career exploration, as well as professional and social skills workshops.

High school students interested in the Early College Summer Program should contact their high school guidance counselor or Essex County College's Pre-College Readiness Program Coordinator Yelena Pirtskhalava at 973-877-1899, pcrpt1@essex.edu

Cynthia D. Martinez is New Essex County College Trustee

An educator from Bloomfield has been appointed to the Board of Trustees at Essex County College.

Cynthia D. Martinez, a school social worker at Essex County Vocational Technical Schools Donald M. Payne Sr. Tech, was sworn-in as an ECC trustee on May 13. Filling the unexpired term of Trustee Carmen Morales, her term runs through October 31, 2024. She was nominated to the trustee post by Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. and confirmed by the Essex County Board of Commissioners.

"It's an honor to serve the students of Essex County College. I strongly believe education is the Number 1 priority for individuals to build upon. It's also important for students to learn about the full range of opportunities availa-



ble to them," stated Ms. Martinez.

She is a former member of the Essex County Board of Freeholders (now Commissioners).

Ms. Martinez received Bachelor's degrees in Sociology and Justice Studies from Montclair State University. She earned a Master's of Social Work from Rutgers University-New Brunswick.

CENTENARY (Continued from page 6)

was or wasn't elected because I didn't use my vote."

Igiebor attended Newark Collegiate Academy, but his junior and senior years were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. With in-person classes halted, he conducted his college search largely online and applied to a number of colleges - including Centenary University - because a search platform recommended by his school allowed him to submit free applications. After receiving his Centenary acceptance letter, Igiebor was surprised to learn that his high school wrestling coach had attended the University. Together, they toured the campus. "It was beautiful," Igiebor recalled. "There were trees and mountains, and everyone was so friendly. I just fell in love with Centenary that day."

Once on campus, the first-generation col-

lege student set out to become involved right away and applied to the University's Educational Opportunity Program, which provides academic, social, and financial support to underserved students. However, Igiebor's transcripts had some glitches, and the program waitlisted him. Instead of giving up, Igiebor was determined to work harder. "At first, I was a little upset," he said. "Then, I thought, 'Ok, let's fix this.' I spent the entire first semester focusing on academics and getting my grades up. I pushed myself to be the very best person I can be."

Igiebor's efforts worked and he was accepted to the EOP as a sophomore. Through the EOP, he has benefited from the guidance of staff members and student mentors: "There have been really good people who are always there for me. They let me know about opportunities that I didn't even know existed. I always wanted to do great things, but my inspiration grew when I saw people of

color just like me doing so many great things. It's like a chain reaction."

Currently a junior, Igiebor is now a student leader at Centenary. In addition to his Ballot Bowl activities, he is president of the Omega Rho fraternity and participates in volunteer activities on campus and in the Hackettstown community. A theater major, Igiebor has also scored roles in Centenary productions of *The Adams Family*, *Macbeth*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

With a presidential election this November, Igiebor has no plans to hang up his get-out-the-vote clipboard. He and Centenary University President Dale Caldwell, Ed.D., have also spoken about establishing a new League of Student Voters on campus. "Elections can be stressful and they can be heartbreaking," Igiebor said. "You have the power to change things if you use your vote."

OLIVER

(Continued from page 6)

sionate advocate for the great people of New Jersey, especially those in most need," said Lt. Governor Tahesha Way. "This memorial bust is another great dedication to the life and legacy of my dear friend and mentor. I hope its presence will inspire the public servants of Essex County who can look to Sheila, literally, as they serve our communities," she added.

"Sheila understood the people she represented and was astute about how to work with people. Having her image in this building will remind others to live like the Lieutenant Governor and to serve others," Department of Community Affairs Director Jacqueline Suarez.

"I applaud the County Executive for bestowing this well-deserved honor. Sheila deserves all the accolades," Commissioner President Carlos Pomares said.

"It's been difficult over the last nine months to not see her smile. She was like family to all of us," Sheriff Armando Fontoura said.

"Having her bust in this building will enable her memory to live on," Prosecutor Ted Stephens said.

"This will make sure we don't forget the path Sheila laid for us. It's appropriate to have her likeness in this justice building, alongside people like John Lewis," Newark Mayor Ras Baraka said.

"I want to thank her family for sharing Sheila with us. She really set the tone for woman and so many others in politics because of her leadership," East Orange Mayor Ted Green said.

"Today we are honoring a hero. I am proud to have been part of Sheila's long journey and it's a journey that is just beginning because we have an obligation to caring on Sheila's work," NJ State and Essex County Democratic Committee Chairman LeRoy Jones said.

The bronze bust is located on the first floor of the Essex County Martin Luther King, Jr. Justice Building and rests on a granite pedestal that is inscribed with a quote by Ms. Oliver: "I never set out to get involved in politics, but I knew that politics could transform lives."

It continues: "A pioneer in State politics, Sheila Oliver overcame racial and gender barriers to become the first African American elected to a statewide office when she became Lieutenant Governor and the first African American female to serve as Speaker of the NJ Assembly. Our beloved and respected public servant worked at every level of government and advocated for the issues that mattered the most - education, affordable housing, health care and senior citizens. Her life's work was to improve the quality of life for others, promote access and equity, and give a voice so that everyone could be heard."

After her passing last year, the County Executive presented a proposal and the Board of

Commissioners approved the ordinance to name the headquarters of the Essex County Division of Family Assistance and Benefits as the Essex County Sheila Y. Oliver Division of Family Assistance and Benefits Headquarters in honor of Ms. Oliver. Her name was installed on the buildings at 320-321 University Avenue in Newark. Her photograph and a plaque bearing the same inscription as the granite base are located in the lobby of both buildings.

Lt. Governor Oliver's public service career is long and varied, and she has served on every level of government in New Jersey. Lt. Governor Oliver became the first African American elected to statewide office when she was elected as Lieutenant Governor with Governor Phil Murphy in 2017. Lt. Governor Oliver was elected to the NJ General Assembly in 2004 representing the 34th Legislative District and served there until 2017.

While in the Assembly, she was the first African American woman to be NJ Assembly Speaker when she served from 2010 to 2014. Previously, Lt. Governor Oliver was the Essex County Director of the Department of Citizen Services and Department of Economic Development, Training and Employment, the Assistant Essex County Administrator, a member of the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the President, Vice President and member of the East Orange Board of Education.

She was one of the founders

of the Newark Coalition for Low Income Housing, which sued the Newark Housing Authority and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in federal court to block the demolition of publicly subsidized housing in Newark when there was no plan to replace units for low-income families. In addition, Oliver was the first woman in East Orange to launch a competitive campaign for mayor when she unsuccessfully ran for that office in 1997.

Lt. Governor Oliver campaigned to fill the remainder of the late Senator Frank Lautenberg's term after his death in June 2013. The only female in the special election, she used her state-wide platform to raise awareness and start a conversation about important issues affecting New Jersey residents.

Lt. Governor Oliver was born in Newark, resided in East Orange and graduated from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania with a bachelor's degree in Sociology and from Columbia University with a Master's Degree in Planning and Administration.

DiVincenzo previously recognized Ms. Oliver's accomplishments by naming the 14th floor conference room in the Essex County LeRoy F. Smith, Jr. Public Safety Building as Assembly Speaker Sheila Y. Oliver Room. The name of the room was rededicated as the Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver Conference Room after she became Lt. Governor.

The bronze bust was created by Jay Warren from Oregon.

PRIMARY (Continued from page 7)

Democracy Democrat."

ECDC is meanwhile backing Rob Menendez, of Jersey City. The younger incumbent Menendez is seeking re-election for a second term.

Anthony Valdes, of West New York, has ECRPO support.

10TH CD: Including Irvington, East Orange, Orange, West Orange, Montclair's Fourth Ward, Newark's Central, South and West Wards.

The late ECDC incumbent Democrat Donald M. Payne, Jr. Newark is running unopposed. The ECRPO is backing Carmen Bucco, of Nutley.

11TH CD Including South Orange, Maplewood, Glen Ridge, Belleville, Nutley, Rest of Montclair

ECDC incumbent Mikie Sherrill, of Montclair, is being challenged by Totowa's Mark De Lotto and his "New Leadership,

Better Ideas, Meaningful Change" platform. Joseph Belnome, of Belleville, has ECRPO endorsement.

Challenging are John F. Sauers, Rockaway, "Common Man for Common Solutions" and Dr. Raafat Barsoom, of Belleville, "Time for Change/You Choose."

ESSEX COUNTY

Sheriff

Incumbent Armando Fontoura is not running for reelection. Current Essex County Sheriff's Office member Amir Jones, of East Orange, has ECDC endorsement. Challenging is retired sheriff's officer Gary Nash, Bloomfield, under "Democrats United for Change and Integrity."

Republicans are to choose between ECRPO's Nicholas Pasini, of Montclair Robert Bianco, Montclair, of "America First Republicans."

Registrar

ECDC supported Juan M. Rivera, Jr., of Newark. is running unopposed in the Democratic primary.

Republicans are to choose between ECRPO's Nutley Sgt. Jeffrey M. Polewka, and Scott D. Pollack, Montclair, of "America First Republicans."

MUNICIPAL RACES

BLOOMFIELD Democrats are to choose between "Democrats United for Change and Integrity" incumbent Ted Gamble and ECDC's outgoing Councilwoman Jenny Mundell, for mayor.

The At Large Council Unexpired Term being sought for by ECDC's Monica Charris-Tabares, and Gamble "Democrats United for Change and Integrity" running mate Rodney P. Cauthen.

Bloomfield's Republican committee did not field any candidates.

MAPLEWOOD Township Committee (Pick Two)

Sitting Mayor Nancy J. Adams and newcomer Jermaine L. Cripe are running with Dem. Committee support. Challenging is Malia Herman, "Democrat for Maplewood."

Unexpired Two-Year Term (Pick One.)

Sean P. Ruffin is running unopposed for the Democratic nomination. The Maplewood Republican Committee fielded no candidates.

Although voting machine polling stations will be open 6 a.m. - 8 p.m. June 4, those who have received Vote By Mail Ballots may take them now to a USPS mailbox or deposit in a designated county drop box. The important thing is that BVMBs get postmarked or dropped off before 8 p.m. June 4.

Check essexclerk.com for polling station locations, any early hours and other details and questions.

TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 10)

formance benchmarks by the NJDOE to gradually grant Newark Public Schools autonomy in 2016-20.

Candidate Hilbert Says, "Thank You."

Current West Ward Councilwoman and recent mayoral candidate Quantavia L. Hilbert posted her "Thank You" on Facebook May 19: "We weren't the winners though we remain champions to the people. I'll continue to perform my duties as councilwoman and act on the initiatives that we shared during our talks for the future.

"Thank you to my team and supporters who had the courage and commitment to fuel this campaign. Let's pray that real solutions arise from this season and that we become a progressive and inclusive community. Stay vocal on the issues, become visible at the events and remember we are one community."

WEST ORANGE - State Sen. John McKeon was among the New Jersey legislators who pushed back on a NJTransit's ticketing change while the agency's July 1 price increase policy still had the consistency of wet cement.

NJTransit, on April 10, included a change in its honoring unused paper com-

muter rail tickets along with its 15 percent across the board fare increase.

The statewide transportation agency intended to stop honoring unused paper tickets on July 1. Paper tickets bought and printed from July 1 onwards would have a 30-day life span. There would be no refunds when any of those unused tickets expire. NJTransit had estimated that the then-new policy would save the \$25 million annually.

McKeon and his colleagues got NJTransit to modify that policy on May 15. Riders with unused paper commuter rail tickets can request refunds Aug. 1-Dec. 31. Tickets bought July 1 and onwards, however, will have 30-day expiration dates.

"It's great news that NJTransit heard riders' concerns and will grant refunds to customers who purchased tickets without an expiration date in advance of its shift to enforcing a 30-day use window on July 1," said McKeon. "Voiding unused tickets on July 1 would've been an additional financial burden on commuters who rely on NJTransit to get to work or school, especially in light of upcoming fare increases."

It is to the understanding of "Local Talk" that the refund and expiration policies apply only to commuter rail tickets. It has asked NJTransit whether the policies also apply to paper tickets on its light rail and bus divisions.

SOUTH ORANGE - Although a First Baptist Church homegoing service and pri-

vate burial for Thomas J. Gates were held at his boyhood Hoosick Falls, NY May 20, "Local Talk" area mourners will be welcome to a to-be-announced celebration of his life in New York City.

Gates, 51, an 18-year village resident, was killed by a NJTransit train here at South Orange Station May. 8. He was commuting to Manhattan's St. James theater, where he was stage managing a limited run of "Illinoise."

Born in Bennington, Vt., Thomas Jeffrey Gates graduated from Hoosick Falls Central High School in 1991 and from Niagara University, with a bachelor's degree in fine arts, in 1995. Broadway and off-Broadway. The Actors Equity Association member worked on "Hairspray," "Brooklyn," "High Fidelity," "Newsies," "The Visit" and "Waitress" plus revivals of "Noises Off," "Finian's Rainbow" and "Pippin."

"Thom" was known in the theater community as being a reliable, soft-spoken, compassionate and professional stage manager. On- and off- stage, he was known for his well-timed sense of humor and gardening work.

Although Gates' burial was private, he may have been buried alongside father Floyd E. Gates and mother Irene Gates in Hoosick Falls' Maple Grove Cemetery. Husband Rick Steiger, who also worked on "Illinoise," and sisters Claudia Gates, Sylvia Carpenter and Renie George are among his survivors.

(Continued on page 14)

The Observation Booth



THE HOOD PROJECT

Beauty is all around us if you can see what you see. - Andrea Dialect Said That!

Check out my move to exhibitions. If you've been captured here, tag yourself and those you can identify as supporting the development of this project and other developments by following, liking, and sharing (Instagram: msdialect / Andrea Dialect on Facebook)

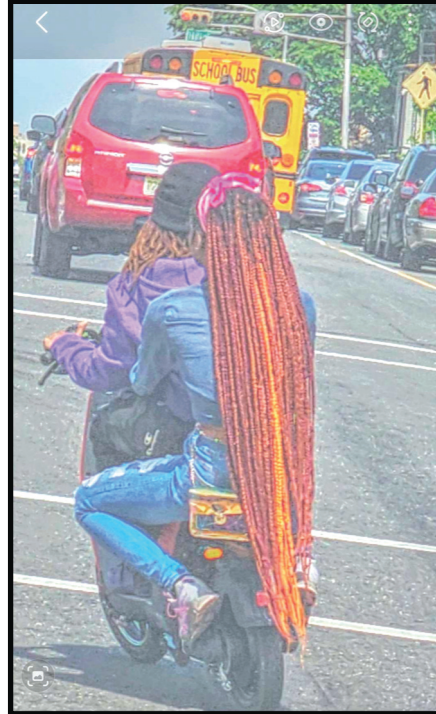
HOOD

Most often, when someone inquires about my always wearing caps or hats on my head, they usually find my response to be both humorous and shocking. They are worn to block the overload of stimuli that is constantly

vying for my attention, among other things, which at this time I choose not to share.

When auditioning, they pop up as if saying, "Look at me!" and another, "No, look at me!" and then the others, and so on and so on. It can be likened to being surrounded by a bunch of preschoolers begging for their teacher's attention at the same time. Just like the teacher, I've found an easily digestible and comforting way to quiet them down as saying, "Shut up," and that's where the headgear comes in.

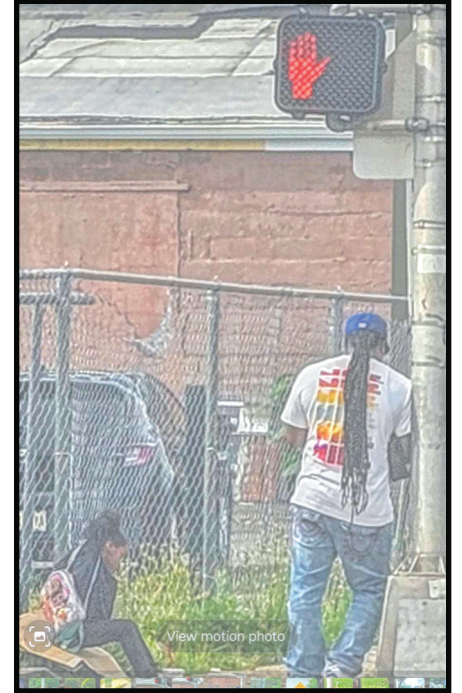
But on the flip side, I have an appreciation for the beauty of such sensory overload. Daily, when I'm out and about, whether I am driving or walking, my camera phone is always ready to capture the imagery that has made the cut when in hyper mode, which has pleasantly introduced me to my own hyper-media of sorts. I can't even begin to dabble upon the numbers that compile my stockpiles. I often consider the photos that are tak-



en on the fly or intentionally as dumps to free up headspace. But quite recently, I realized that they are best utilized when shared, as opposed to stored and dumped. When I look out there, I see that people need to also see the overflow of such beauty.

For the most part I find my neighborhood, the HOOD, and its people to be absolutely fascinating. I zoom into Mocha most often because of our movement and the blatant showings of variables in the artistry of that DNA, which is breathtakingly beautiful. I am rapidly becoming the ultimate observer even more so, and I want to share that with you. When you're out there in those HOODSCAPES, really look at our HOOD and its inhabitants.

It's mind blowing, because



"BEAUTY IS ALL AROUND US IF WE CAN SEE, WHAT WE SEE!" ...

Read this piece in its entirety at www.localtalkweekly.com and type *The Observation Booth, Andrea Dialect and/or Entertainment Section* in the search bar. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, send them to localtalkandrea@gmail.com.



TOWN WATCH (Continued from page 13)

Memorial donations may be made to Broadway Cares (donate.broadwaycares.org) and/or the Michael J. Fox Foundation (give.michaeljfox.org). A GoFundMe.Com page has been established for Steiger.

The "Illinoise" production company has since dedicated its limited run in Gates' memory. The musical has been nominated for several Tony awards.

MAPLEWOOD - The South Orange-Maplewood School District's Board of Education, in what could be considered as post-budget damage control, effectively pink slipped two key district administrators at their May 9 meeting.

The board first voted not to renew School Business Administrator Eric Burnside's contract, which means that he will be leaving the two-town district June 30. It was Burnside who told the board that its current 2023-24 budget is facing a \$10 million defi-

cit.

The previous board, on April 25, passed a 2024-25 budget that plugged the \$10 million gap. The plan resulted in firing 18 employees, not filling 18 job openings and making cuts in the music, performing arts, STEM and Effective School Solutions departments. May 9 was also the BOE's annual reorganization meeting.

Board Member William "Bill" Gifford sided with several public speakers in calling for a forensic audit of the 2023-24 budget, saying that it would give "valuable insights on the health of our district," and "set up our future Business Administrator for success."

The board also voted not to renew Columbia High School Principal Frank Sanchez's contract. Sanchez will remain on administrative leave until his current contract expires on June 30.

The BOE move negates some April 25 and May 9 public speakers' calls to have Sanchez reinstated pending the outcome of an internal SOMSD inquest and State Super-

rior Court-Newark trial. Sanchez was accused of assaulting a CHS student in a hallway and was suspended with pay since Jan. 2. He had also been arrested and arraigned that same week.

BLOOMFIELD - The township's top lawyer said that a sitting councilwoman does not have to choose between that job and her day job as an assemblyman's aide in Trenton.

Third Ward Councilwoman Sarah Cruz, said Township Attorney Joseph Wentzel May 10, does not have a conflict of interest by being both an elected Bloomfield official and being an aide to the newly elected Assy. Michael Venezia.

Wentzel considers one employment as outside of the township and the other is an elected Bloomfield official. There may be specific instances, said the attorney, where Cruz should consult him or Bloomfield's legal department to decide whether she should recuse herself as a councilwoman.

(Continued on page 15)

TOWN WATCH (Continued from page 14)

"She (Cruz) is not serving in a high enough capacity where she's doing any policymaking (in Trenton)," said Wentzel. "For all those reasons, I don't see any conflict."

A public speaker brought up the conflict of interest claim at the council's April 15 meeting, which led to a heated exchange with Cruz.

Venezia (D-Bloomfield) offered Cruz the aide's job after he was elected to the 34th Legislative District in November and had resigned as Bloomfield's mayor Jan. 6. Venezia retains residency here and remains Bloomfield Democratic Committee Chairman. Cruz was first elected as councilwoman on Venezia's ticket in 2017 and again in 2023.

MONTCLAIR - The Township Council announced at its May 13 meeting that the township administration, its insurance carrier and CFO Padmaja Rao had settled the whistleblower suit she had filed in October 2022.

Montclair is to pay Rao and her two attorneys \$1.25 million in exchange for her dropping her suit, said Interim Township Attorney Paul Burr that Monday night.

Rao is to be paid \$250,000 for emotional stress and will keep her job; the rest will go to attorneys Nancy Erika Smith and Roosevelt Nesmith. Insurer Garden State Join Municipal Fund is to cover 20 percent, or \$250,000, of the settlement.

"There's no admission of any wrongdoing by the township or (former Town Manager) Mr. (Timothy) Stafford," said Barr.

Rao accused Stafford of retaliation and creating a hostile work environment after she had brought an illegality with allocating the township's health insurance benefits policy among Township Council members. The CFO said that several council members were receiving benefits although they had not qualified for the 35 hours per week minimum.

Rao's account has been collaborated by other town manager office employees. The council at the time had put Stafford on administrative leave and then fired him by May 25, 2023. The current outgoing council approved the settlement, 5-0, May 13.

The settlement was approved after At-Large Councilman Robert J. "Bob" Russo left for the night. Russo, a former mayor and deputy mayor, said that he could not tolerate his colleagues' verbal abuse. Russo - who never accepted the health benefits offer - was the only incumbent who ran for re-election - and lost on May 14.

Mayor Sean Spiller and the other six council members, some of whom had tak-

en the illegal benefits offer, had declined re-election. They, on May 13, either said that Rao's suit had no bearing on their leaving the council or refrained from comment altogether.

NOTE: The Montclair Board of Education is accepting prospective board member applications until May 31 towards June 5 interviews. The appointed finalist will complete Cheryl Hopkins' term until Jan. 6 and will have the option to run for a full three-year term Nov. 5. Hopkins, citing work commitments, resigned May 13.

BELLEVILLE - A campaign handbill which residents of a contested ward seat here May 7-8 may land its producers in court.

The large, professionally made handbill accused Tracy Juanita Williams that she had helped pass the 2024-25 public schools budget that carried a \$413 property tax increase on the average voter for that year.

"Before you vote," said the handbill, "did you know, Tracy Juanita Williams, a renter, council candidate and current Board of Education Trustee just voted for a huge tax increase."

There are several problems with that statement. First, Williams, citing "a conflict," abstained from the May 7 budget vote.

Second, the budget failed to pass due to the 3-3-1 tie vote. Third, that \$413 average property tax increase on the average Belleville homeowner may be lower, pending on what the district finally sent to the NJ Department of Education on or by May 15.

Williams, who was elected to the Belleville Public Schools Board of Education Trustees in 2022, was also running against "A Better Belleville" - backed runner Patricia Inaugurato to succeed the late Marie Strumolo-Burke in May 14's First Ward nonpartisan municipal election.

"The independent "Believe in Belleville" candidate, with Strumolo-Burke's endorsement, thanks to a majority of ward voters, won that seat over Mayor Michael Melham's ABB candidate.

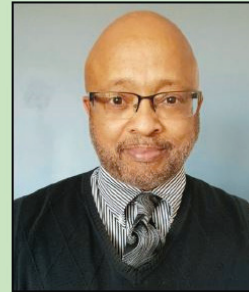
Williams, on May 8, said she was considering legal action against her opponent, the ABB team and the producers of the said palm card.

"I'm very disappointed but not surprised by the recent slanderous statement made by my opponent in her latest mailer," said Williams. "Clearly, everyone could see that a mailer was sent out before the Board of Education vote was even made. The only conclusion I can make from this outright lie by my opponent and my team is that it was done to inflict malice on myself and my reputation.

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CHAPTER 13 BANKRUPTCY

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Notice of Claims of Adverse Interest

The undersigned Markies Wells, of Majority age and fully competent to give testimony, give notice as follows:

1. I am in actual possession of the premises legally described as follows: Subdivision: Window replacement, porch fixed, Lawn maintenance, Gardening. Property use Legal: Lot #71:01 Block # 11 Township Holmdel, Property Location: c/o 105 Middletown Rd., Holmdel, New Jersey Republic, 07733
2. Adverse entry was made on this land by Law Estate Trust on 03/19/2024 and I have been in actual possession of this land continuously since 03/19/2024.
3. This possession is, and for all such period of time has been, adverse to any claim of any other person, including FIGLIOLIA ALEXANDER J: JANET M.
4. I am the only living man who has claimed any part of the above-mentioned land/premises and have the legal and lawful right to remain the owner for the full statutory period prescribed by New Jersey Law.
5. I am now the owner of the above mentioned land / premises and have the legal and lawful right to remain the owner for the full statutory period prescribed by New Jersey Law.
6. This Affidavit of Adverse Possession does not and isn't intended to Slander Title to the above mentioned land/premises. It is solely intended to establish my Adverse Possession claim.

Further Affiant Sayeth not.

I state under the penalty of perjury under the laws of New Jersey that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on Day 19 of March 2024.

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