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

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER

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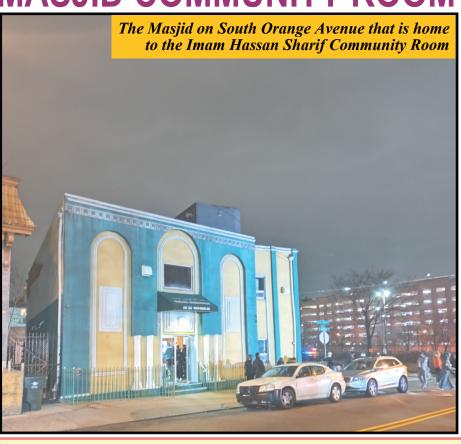
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SCHOOLS CLOSED





NAMED AFTER SLAIN



By Walter Elliott

NEWARK - When one enters Masjid Muhammad's Imam Hassan Sharif Community Room, it mostly looks like any other assembly or conference room found in any other house of worship - except, when "Local Talk" paid a visit Jan. 14, there was an arch of white and blue balloons where a speaker would address an audience.

Its import, however, is found on to the left of the room's door. There is a plaque dedicating the room in Imam Sharif's memory and, just below, his biography in a picture frame.

The dedication was made here before 300 people on Jan. 3 - one year to the day from when he was shot dead outside.

Some readers may remember that Sharif, 52, was approached by a man in the parking lot just when he was opening 253-55 South Orange Ave. for Fajr prayers. He was found and rushed to University Hospital where he died that Wednesday afternoon.

The Essex County Prosecutor's Office detectives arrested three men - 36-46- and 49-yearsold - were arrested and charged

(Continued on page 13)

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Turn To **PAGE** 16





Hello Readers,

The fires around Los Angeles are still going on. Now, it is spreading due to high winds from Los Angeles County to Ventura County. The fires are covering about 26,000 acres. For comparison, Manhattan is under 15,000 acres. A 6 pm to 6 am curfew has been announced for Los Angeles for the safety of the residents. This is the worst fire around Los Angeles in decades. About 30 people are still missing and 24 are confirmed dead.

According to reports, the Bunny Museum, Will Rogers' Ranch, a large motel owned by William Randolph Hearst, Palisades Charter High School, and other many popular structures have burnt to the ground or were damaged heavily. We hope that this fire can be contained as fast as possible. So far, it is only 17% is contained as per the reports by press time.

Florida judge Aileen Cannon. a Trump Appointee in his first term, actually gave a judgment against him. In Trump's Jan. 6 case, special counsel Jack Smith wanted to release his report, but it was initially stopped in court. Then, Cannon permitted Attorney General Merrick Garland to release the report, but only one part. With less than a week before Trump takes the oath of office for the highest office in the United States and most powerful position in the world, it will be interesting to see the reaction from Trump and his supporters.

We all were hearing the

economy going stronger and stronger in India. However, for a few weeks, the Rupee is getting weaker against the Dollar. Last year, on January 14, 2024, it was 1 dollar equal to Rs. 82.87, but this year it is Rs. 86.57. The stock market in India crashed, and all 3 stock markets are more than 10% down. People lost a lot of money. Many might go out of business in the stock market industry. Being from India, I sometimes look at the future of the Indian Rupee's value against the U.S. Dollar. I have been told that the price will go beyond Rs. 90 and some had predicted over Rs. 102 per U.S. Dollars. This will impact the growth of India, and a lot of pressure will be on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In last year's election, he did not win by as much as people had expected. The Congress Party in India is getting more and more support

from the people, especially the Muslim community. I hope Modi can bring some new ideas to control the slippery slope of India's economy.

Port Authority received a critical loan from the Federal Build America program. Under this program, NY/NJ will receive \$4.1 billion for building a new bus terminal between New York and New Jersey. This project will bring employment and money to the local area.

McDonald's has reopened on Central Avenue in East Orange. The famous restaurant is a key component of the fast food chains in the local area. Best of luck to McDonald's and its owners to sustain their community business in our area.

Have a wonderful week.

I'll talk to you next week.

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WEATHER FOR THE WEEK

THURSDAY

Mostly Cloudy

HI 33 LO 25

FRIDAY Mostly Sunny

HI 41 LO 30

SATURDAY PM Rain

HI 44 PM

SUNDAY Wintry Mix HI 41 LO 20

MONDAY Partly Cloudy HI 29

Pa	artiy (Jouay
HI	29	**
LO	11	

TUESDAY Sunny, But Cold

HI 22 LO 9

Partly Cloudy

HI 24 LO 15







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PORT AUTHORITY PROJECT TO REPLACE MIDTOWN BUS TERMINAL RECEIVES CRITICAL LOAN



Artist renderings of the reimagined Port Authority Bus Terminal courtesy of PortAuthorityNYNJ / Foster + Partners & Epstein

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey announced on Jan. 14 federal approval of a \$1.9 billion loan through the U.S. Department of Transportation toward construction of the first phase of the Midtown Bus Terminal replacement project. The Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan, to be issued through the Build America Bureau, will support the funding of the first phase of the \$10 billion bus terminal replacement project, with construction to begin this year.

"The Midtown Bus Terminal is a fixture in many New Jerseyans' daily lives and our residents deserve a best-in-class facility," said New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy. "Securing this critical funding brings us a step closer to a new and modernized bus terminal that will serve as the world-class gateway to our region while bolstering our regional economy."

"After years of planning and advocacy, the Midtown Bus Terminal replacement project will now become a reality," said U.S. Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey. "This project will support the millions of people commuting through the Port Authority Bus Terminal every year - and the hundreds of thousands of New Jerseyans who rely on it every day. With this approval, secured through the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, the Port Authority can begin transforming the decades-old Port Authority Bus Terminal into the efficient, stateof-the-art transit hub our region deserves."

Port Authority will borrow from the 25-year-old TIFIA fed-

eral loan program for the first time, taking advantage of subsidized loan costs and advantageous repayment terms that allow for principal and interest payments to begin up to five years following the project's substantial completion. In addition to the TIFIA loan, financing for the first phase of the project will include Port Authority capital funding. Future phases will also use Port Authority capital for a significant portion of the funding from development rights for potential new commercial towers above the new bus terminal and New York City's contribution of PI-LOTs generated by the Port Authority's development efforts.

The \$10 billion world-class facility will be completed in phases. When complete, the project will include a new 2 million square-foot main terminal, a separate storage and staging building and new ramps leading directly into and out of the Lincoln Tunnel. The project's first phase - the temporary terminal, new ramps and Dyer Avenue deckovers - is expected to be fully completed in 2029, and the new main terminal is expected to be completed in 2032. The project plan - including the permanent closure of a portion of 41st Street between Eighth and Ninth avenues, a central main entrance, more street-facing retail, a soaring multi-story indoor atrium and new public open space - will enhance both the commuter experience at the world's busiest bus terminal and the community surrounding the facility. The project is expected to create approximately 6,000 good-paying union construction jobs.

Port Authority's plan for the replacement of the Midtown Bus Terminal reflects public feedback from extensive community outreach, including input from New York City, commuters, local community boards and elected officials in both states. The federal record of decision permits construction of a full threepart building plan and deckovers that will be converted to publicly accessible open space once the new main terminal is completed. The Port Authority Board of Commissioners approved construction contracts for the deck-overs in July, which were the first contracts associated with the bus terminal replacement project. The project also includes a wide array of community benefits, including:

- Added capacity to allow curbside inter-city buses that currently pick up and drop off on city streets surrounding the bus terminal to move their operations inside the bus terminal and off the streets.
- The new staging and storage facility will consolidate storage and staging functions in a single facility, minimizing bus idling and circulation around local city streets and reducing congestion in and out of the Lincoln Tunnel.
- publicly accessible green spaces on Port Authority property by building platforms spanning the currently below-grade Dyer Avenue "cut" and turning the open space on top of the new deck -overs into public green spaces at the end of construction.

- New concessions and retail amenities that will be accessible from the streets in the community as well as from inside the bus terminal.
- The plan eliminates the taking of private property as it would be built on existing Port Authority property stretching as far west as 11th Avenue.

The new bus terminal will be built for the future and designed to be net-zero emissions, accommodating all-electric bus fleets and implementing 21st century technology at every turn. The building will also include visionary sustainability and resiliency measures, from LEED certification and clean construction to onsite renewable energy, zoned heating and cooling systems, and heat recovery and reuse technology. The new ramp structure will provide a direct connection to the Lincoln Tunnel, with added queue space and bypass capability, thereby reducing bus circulation on local city streets. Community-friendly outwardfacing local retail will benefit commuters and the community

Port Authority's construction plan for the new bus terminal is being developed with input from bus carriers, customers, the local world-renowned community, engineering and construction experts, and innovative architectural and design firms. Current plans provide for a phased construction approach with the staging and bus storage facility to be built first, so that it can serve as a temporary terminal while the existing terminal is demolished and rebuilt.

EAST ORANGE McDONALD'S HOLDS GRAND RE-OPENING

By Lev D. Zilbermints

EAST ORANGE - McDonald's, located at 375 Central Avenue, held a Grand Re-Opening on Saturday, January 11, between 12 noon - 3 p.m. Inside the spacious building, celebrations went underway. In the center of a vast room, a large table with chess boards and pieces was set up. At one board, two kids were busy playing chess. A third child was watching the game.

Nearby, an artist was twisting balloons into colorful shapes. An entertainer, dressed in black, with red hearts on black suspenders, amazed visitors with magic tricks. "Nicky", the family entertainer, also did card

tricks. A 360 spin camera booth was available.

Face painting and balloon twisting were available. Magic by Mickey Magic was done. \$2.99 Happy Meals (4 piece Cheeseburger of Hamburger) were available all day. Free raffle tickets were available with any purchase. The prizes were a large and small version of a video game.

As loud music played, customers signed up to order food and drink. A mailman, dressed in his postal blue uniform with red and gray stripes, held his baby daughter in his arms. Close by, a boy held his long green balloon, with a grey balloon wrapped around it. At a nearby table, a make-up artist applied make-up

and paint to children's faces. Two little kids had white half-skulls painted on their faces. A little girl had the shape of a butterfly painted over her eyes, nose and cheeks.

Yellow cupcakes were set up on a separate table. No one seemed to be interested in them other than kids.

Chess attracted a lot of interest. Most of the chess-players were little kids. They had no idea how the pieces moved. To get around this, kids moved pieces every which way except for the proper way. In a scene from the seventeenth century, the King jumped over other pieces. Pawns moved diagonally; the Rook jumped over other pieces. None of these moves were cor-

rect. But this was kids having fun.

"Local Talk" interviewed Jessica Brody, the owner of the McDonald's, via text messages. According to Ms. Brody, the customers "loved the opening. Said they wish we could do it every Saturday."

Asked about how long the McDonald's has had its current owner, Ms. Brody wrote, "My mother and I have been the owners for 20 years. The McDonald's has been there probably over 50 years. 40 years maybe they been there."

The ribbon-cutting ceremony, scheduled for 2 p.m., was held almost an hour later.





UNITED STATES



CALIFORNIA BATTLING BRUTAL FIRES

On Jan. 12, Governor Gavin Newsom announced he has increased California National Guard personnel activated to support the response efforts to a total of about 2,500 service members - up 1,000 personnel from Jan. 11. CalGuard service members are fighting fires and ensuring the public safety of communities, joining the thousands of personnel deployed to combat the hurricane-force firestorm in Los Angeles.

Deployed CalGuard service members include Military Police Forces, the law enforcement branch of the CalGuard, stationed at traffic control points to ensure the safety of the surrounding community. Additional service members are supporting wildfire suppression operations, through the CalGuard's Task Force Rattlesnake, additional handcrews training at Camp Roberts, and aviation resources.

Since the start of the hurricane-force wind event in Southern California, state resources were prepositioned to provide rapid-attack capabilities. In the days following the firestorm, the state has continued to work with local, state, out-of-state and international partners to augment response efforts.

That same day, Newsom today signed an executive order to suspend permitting and review requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the California Coastal Act to allow victims of the recent fires to restore their homes and businesses faster.

"When the fires are extinguished, victims who have lost their homes and businesses must be able to rebuild quickly and without roadblocks. The executive order I signed today will help cut permitting delays, an important first step in allowing our communities to recover faster and stronger. I've also ordered our state agencies to identify additional ways to streamline the rebuilding and recovery process," Newsom said.

The executive order issued by Governor Newsom will:

- Suspend CEQA review and California Coastal Act permitting for reconstruction of properties substantially damaged or destroyed in recent Southern California wildfires
- Direct state agencies to identify additional permitting requirements, including provisions of the Building Code, that can safely be suspended or streamlined to accelerate rebuilding and make it more affordable.
- Extend protections against price gouging on building materials, storage services, construction, and other essential goods and services to January 7, 2026, in Los Angeles County.
- Commit to working with the Legislature to identify statutory changes that can help expedite rebuilding while enhancing wildfire resilience and safety.

Governor Newsom will continue to work administratively and with the Legislature to help those affected by the recent fires rebuild what they have lost.

MASS SHOOTING UPDATE

Information from 1-14-2025

2025 Mass Shooting Stats: (Source: Mass Shooting Tracker,

https://www.massshootingtracker.site/data/?year=2025)

- Total Mass Shootings: 15
- Total Dead: 19
- Total Wounded: 56
- Shootings Per Day: 1.07
- Days Reached in Year 2025 as of January 14: 14

HAITI



DISPLACEMENTS ABOUND AMID VIOLENCE

Surging gang violence in Haiti has caused a threefold rise in the number of people uprooted from their homes in a year, the UN migration agency, IOM, said on Jan. 14, in a call for "sustained humanitarian assistance right now to save and protect lives."

Latest data from the International Organization for Migration indicates that more than one million people have been displaced across Haiti so far, up from the 315,000 recorded on Dec. 20, 2023.

"The most concrete data we have is that around 1,041,000 people are currently living in displacement in Haiti. Most of these people have been displaced multiple times," said IOM spokesperson Kennedy Okoth Omondi.

The majority of those forced to flee their homes left the capital Port-au-Prince, where heavily armed gang violence is "relentless" while essential sercollapsed vices have "particularly healthcare and worsening food insecurity," Mr. Omondi continued.

Neighboring provinces have also been impacted by gang violence and an influx of Haitians fleeing spiraling insecurity. "Many are seeking refuge in Haiti's provinces, overwhelming host communities and straining limited resources," the IOM spokesperson said. "In the Artibonite department, displacement tripled in 2024, reaching over 84,000 people, highlighting the spread of violence beyond the Haitian capital."

Last week the UN human rights office, OHCHR, reported that shocking gang violence left more than 5,600 people dead last year.

In recent weeks, gangs have been held responsible for killing hundreds of people in separate massacres over the course of several days.

In the first incident, OHCHR said that some victims were dismembered, after being accused of using alleged voodoo practices to cause the death of the leader of the Wharf Jérémie gang in the capital's Cité Soleil, before their body parts were tossed into the sea.

The UN rights office also documented 315 lynchings of gang members and people allegedly associated with gangs, which on some occasions were reportedly facilitated by Haitian police officers.

On Dec. 24, armed men reportedly opened fire on journalists at a press conference being held to announce the reopening of the Caribbean island nation's largest public hospital, killing three.

IOM noted that the deportation of some 200,000 Haitians principally from the Dominican Republic has placed an even greater strain on the country's overwhelmed social services. "Communities are already struggling to basically survive," Mr. Omondi said.

As the violence continues, the UN agency explained that it has become more difficult to safely reach the most vulnerable people in a growing number of displacement sites.

These are mainly concentrated in the capital and have mush-roomed from 73 to 108 within a year, IOM said, highlighting severe overcrowding and a lack of adequate access to food, clean water, sanitation and education.

"Reports from these sites

(Continued on page 7)

WORLD NEWS (Cont. from page 6)

reveal deteriorating conditions, with families struggling to survive in makeshift shelters while facing mounting health and protection risks," Mr. Omondi said.



At the start of January, heavy rainfall and snowmelt saw significant river and surface water across large parts of England. The highest river levels on record were reached on the Mersey in Stockport and South Manchester.

As of 1 pm on Monday, there are 25 flood alerts live across the country, with minor river flooding impacts possible, but not expected, on Monday and Tuesday in parts of the North of England. Local residents should continue to follow local advice.

However, the current forecast for the next five days shows the overall flood risk for England is very low.

Environment Agency teams will remain on the ground supporting the public as they recover from the recent flooding and are still operating flood defenses and basins to manage possible impacts.

More than 78,000 properties have been protected by the Environment Agency and their teams in the past week. Sadly, the total number of properties reported to have been flooded stands at 1,600.

We continue to monitor the forecast and impacts on river and surface water levels. Our message to the public remains to check their flood risk, sign up for free flood warnings and keep up to date with the latest situation.

Dane Broomfield, Flood Duty Manager at the Environment Agency, said, "The work of our dedicated Environment Agency teams has helped to protect more than 78,000 properties during the recent flooding. The total number of properties sadly reported to have flooded is 1,600 and our thoughts are with all those who have been affected.

"The current forecast shows the overall flood risk for England over the next five days is now very low, with some minor river flooding impacts possible, but not expected, on Monday and Tuesday.

"Environment Agency teams will con-



201-234-7765

tinue to be out on the ground, operating flood defenses, taking action to reduce the impact of flooding, issuing flood warnings and supporting those communities affected.

"Our advice remains the same - people should check their flood risk, sign up for free flood warnings and keep up to date with the latest situation as well as following @EnvAgency on X for the latest flood updates."

Lessons learned from these floods will be fed directly into the new Floods Resilience Taskforce to speed up the development of flood defenses and bolster the nation's resilience to extreme weather.

The Taskforce brings together the Secretary of State and Minister Hardy with representatives from Defra, MHCLG, Home Office, Cabinet Office, the Environment Agency, the Met Office, Local Resilience Forums, Mayoral Offices, emergency responders and the National Farmers Union, among others.

SPORTS WRAP





By William Hathaway, Jr.

This past weekend, the Seton Hall women's basketball team was in a battle of Big East unbeatens. While the squad had been hot for a while, they fell short at Walsh Gym to Creighton 74-64. The Pirates got 18 points and 8 rebounds from Faith Masonius, 11 points and 5 rebounds from Jada Eads, and 10 points and 6 rebounds from Ya Ya Lops. Seton Hall had 12 turno-

East Honor Roll Player of the Week.

In New Jersey high school basketball news, North Star senior Johnny Mayers became the second player in school history to score 1,000 points in his career. Mayers scored 35 points in a win over University High. Meanwhile, Jamir Westry's 22 points and 7 steals boosted Payne Tech to a 79-53 win over Columbia. Robert Foster added 16 points and 10 rebounds.



vers in the game. Seton Hall now sits at 12-4 on the season.

Leading the Blue Jays to the win was Morgan Maly with 23 points and 7 rebounds, while Molly Mogenson had 18 points and 8 rebounds.

As for the struggling men's team, they got their first win in Big East play this season, slipping by DePaul in overtime 85-80 at the Prudential Center. Dylan Addae-Wusuhe and Isaiah Coleman led the Pirates to victory with 24 points each. The Blue Demons were led by Troy D'Amico's 18 points and 6 rebounds. With more good news, Isaiah Coleman was named Big

The NFL Playoffs saw expected wins from the Texans, Ravens, Bills, Eagles, and some upsets from the Commanders and Rams. The Divisional Round will see the Texans head to Kansas City and play the Chiefs, with the Bills hosting the Ravens in the AFC. The NFC will have the Commanders head to Detroit to take on the Lions, and the Rams head east to play at the Eagles.

Finally, the College Football National Championship will see Ohio State take on Notre Dame. If OSU wins, then head coach Ryan Day will likely keep his job despite losing to Michigan again.

G'Day Down Under By Felicia Laguerre Owens

The Aussie fortnight known as The Australian Open began last Sunday as the first grand slam of the year is in the throws of summer bliss this January.

The #1 Men's and Women's seeds, Italy's Jannik Sinner and Belarus's Aryna Sabalenka are the favorites to successfully defend their respective titles.

My dark horses to reach the 3rd round are women's qualifiers Aussie Kimberly Birrell and Switzerland's Viktorija Golubic. And for the Men's dark horse, American qualifier Learner Tien.

My favorite popcorn matches are fellow Frenchmen Gael Monfils vs. Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard for the men's match. As for the women, a showdown between defending champion Aryna Sabalenka and African American Coco Gauff in the Semifinals.

Catch all the action of the 2025 Australian Open on ESPN, your cable network, or online at ESPN.com.





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



MAYOR FORFEITS OFFICE AFTER PLEADING GUILTY

TRENTON - Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin and the Office of Public Integrity and Accountability (OPIA) announced that Salvatore Bonaccorso, the longtime mayor of Clark Township, pleaded guilty Jan. 10 in connection with his use of Clark employees for his private business, a landscaping and underground oil storage tank removal company.

As part of his agreement with OPIA to plead guilty, Bonaccorso, at the time of his guilty plea, entered a consent order immediately forfeiting his office as mayor of Clark and agreeing to be permanently barred from holding any future public office or employment.

Bonaccorso, 64, of Clark, who has been the township's mayor since 2001, pleaded guilty to a two-count accusation charging him with conspiring to commit official misconduct (3rd degree) and forgery (3rd degree).

The second count stems from his submission of false and fraudulent permit applications to municipalities, which enabled his landscaping company to improperly and unlawfully obtain permits to remove hundreds of underground tanks.

Bonaccorso entered the plea during a hearing on January 10, 2025, before New Jersey Superior Court Judge Lisa Miralles Walsh, presiding in Union County.

"Today's guilty plea secured by OPIA ends a long and sad betrayal of the community by someone who had been in a position of power and trust for a long time," said Attorney General Platkin. "Anyone who betrays the public's trust by placing their own interests ahead of their duty as a public servant to New Jersey residents will be held accountable. Let me be clear: I will never stop rooting out corruption in New Jersey, no matter how powerful the offenders may be."

"Bonaccorso used taxpayerfunded workers for personal gain. He abused his power over municipal personnel, finances, and operations, and he submitted false documents to keep the scheme going," said Drew Skinner, Executive Director of OPIA. "My office will investigate and prosecute anyone who illegally abuses the public's trust."

The mayor and his company, Bonaccorso & Son LLC, also agreed to be ineligible from bidding for any public contracts, entering into any public contracts, or conducting any business with the State or its political subdivisions for five years. Furthermore, they are barred for three years from conducting, or contracting to conduct, any storage tank removals for any private commercial or residential property owners.

Under the terms of the plea

agreement, the State will recommend that the court sentence the defendant to three years of probation and impose a fine of \$15,000, the maximum allowable fine for conviction of a third-degree crime.

OPIA charged Bonaccorso by complaint on November 20, 2023 after an investigation by the Corruption Bureau found that, while acting in his official capacity as the mayor, Bonaccorso operated his oil tankremoval business out of his township office utilizing municipal resources. He stored and maintained the records for the business at the mayor's office, using township equipment including computers and fax machines, and directing or using township employees to perform duties while those employees were working for and being paid by the township, solely for the purpose of running his business.

(Continued on page 13)



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.

Montclair Schools Closed Over Threat from Sidelined Teacher

MONTCLAIR - While the Montclair Public Schools resumed normal instruction here Jan. 14, a day after a district-wide shutdown, one of its teachers remains in a Philadelphia jail cell, awaiting extradition.

When Renaissance Middle School teacher Amir Doctry returns here after a psychological exam, said Montclair Police Lt. Terence Turner, he will be charged with making terroristic threats against another employee. It is not clear as of press time whether Doctry will face federal terroristic threat charges across state lines; that may hinge on where he was Jan. 12 when he allegedly made the threats.

MPS Interim Superintendent of Schools Damen Cooper said his district became aware of a potential threat towards Northeast Elementary School late Sunday night. Cooper said he immediately called the township police and, in an abundance of caution, announced that the schools would be closed Jan. 13 at 5 a.m. that Monday.

Montclair police, ECPO and the FBI-Newark field office traced the threat to Doctry. Lt. Turner told a reporter that they found one of Doctry's video clips that stated that he "would become superintendent" and that "Racist Joe," - Northeast Principal Dr. Joseph Putrino - "dies tonight."

Philadelphia police were

called to a residence where Doctry was found and arrested him without incident at about 8 a.m. Cooper sent a "threat neutralized" email by 9:30 a.m. - but the schools remained closed for the day.

Doctry, 45, on one hand, had been a 2018-19 award-winning teacher at RMS for a global learning connection curriculum where Sixth graders met peers from around the world in real time. The former Newark Public Schools teacher, on the other hand, was put on administrative leave for "erratic behavior."

MPD has meanwhile increased its patrols around the schools as a precaution.

NEWARK - Whether former Newark Public Schools Board President Dawn Haynes can keep her board of education got a boost from a New Jersey Administrative Law Judge's decision that was made public Jan. 6 - but may not know for sure until Feb. 4.

Administrative Law Judge William J. Courtney dismissed NPS' petition to remove six-year member Haynes on conflict of interest charges since her daughter had filed a discrimination claim against the district, among related parties. Courtney, in his late December ruling, said that NPS did not prove "irreparable harm" in Akela Haynes's November suit against the district and administrators of the Institute for Global Studies magnet high school.

"I find no harm to the board as the result of receiving notice of a potential tort claim from the respondent's daughter," said Courtney in his ruling.

A. Haynes had filed suit on grounds of racial, religious and gender discrimination and harassment while she was at Global Studies high school from the start of the 2020-21 school year until she transferred out in December 2022. She had to wait until she had turned 18 before filing her tort claim.

There had been several accounts comparable to A. Haynes' experience from students in a November 2022 meeting with the Newark Board of Education and Superintendent Roger Leon. Two former teachers had filed separate suits.

Leon had signed the petition to remove D. Haynes after the

NBOE had, in a split December vote, approved filing the document with the New Jersey Department of Education Board of Ethics Commission.

That petition now lies on Acting Education Commissioner Kenin Dehmer's Trenton desk. Dehmer has until Feb. 4 - 45 days after Judge Courtney's ruling - to make a final decision on the district's petition.

IRVINGTON - Relatives and friends of Saheed Wheeler are making his funeral arrangements here while ECPO detectives are investigating his Jan. 6 death in Newark's Upper Clinton Hill neighborhood.

Responding Newark Police Division officers told prosecutor's Homicide and Major Crimes Task Force detectives that they responded to shots fired from the 100 block of Seymour Avenue at about 9:17 p.m. that Monday.

NPD officers found a man felled by multiple gunshot wounds and who was declared dead at the scene. Relatives had identified Wheeler Jan. 9.

Wheeler, 45, had recently moved to Seymour Street. His funeral arrangements have not been announced as of Jan. 14. The investigation continues.

EAST ORANGE - No one should be enduring this winter without heat - but that is what residents of 218 North Walnut St. said they had had to do since Dec. 30.

Four of the two-story, 20 unit garden apartment building's residents told a television reporter that Monday that they have gone without natural gas heat for a week. Two had complained that the washers and dryers were not working.

They said that they were told by their landlord, Atlantis Industries, of Oldwick, that the heat was shut off to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. The Atlantis general manager assigned to the building, they said, told them that the chimney needed to be cleaned.

One resident said, however, that the chimney cleaning was not done. The general manager, who was seen on the property that Monday, refused to talk with the reporter then or afterward.

Atlantis had bought the .42-acre property for \$1.45 million

Aug. 17, 2012. Although real estate sources vary, the 20 units were built in the mid-20th Century.

A city spokesperson said that Atlantis is being fined \$1,000 daily until the repairs are made. Public Service Electric and Gas, on Dec. 30, had not commented on when natural gas will be restored.

ORANGE - The legacy of a long-time auto body shop is uncertain since its owner Artie Rinaldi, 82, has passed away on Dec. 12.

Rinaldi was the youngest of four siblings when he bought the former Earl Scheib and Mallon Pontiac auto body shop at 43-47 Central Ave. in 1978 and renamed it Du-Rite. The garage used to be a Durr or Forest Ford dealership going back to the 1940s before it became a Schieb franchise in 1961.

Du-Rite has outlasted its Orange-East Orange block neighbors. The Suburban Diner, Hollywood Theater and Doop's on the Harrison Street corner are long gone. A Maaco auto body franchise across the avenues has also come and gone from the Rinaldi-run business.

Arthur Joseph Rinaldi, as portrayed by the Codey Funeral Home obituary, called Du-Rite "The Shop," where it became "a gathering place for everyone --friends, family, customers and many in the Orange community. Brothers Anthony, and Sal and sister Marie also stopped by on occasion.

When "Local Talk" visited Du-Rite Jan. 14 for more biographical detail, however, only four cats were present in the former showroom lobby. No other activity was seen, no lights were on, and its phone number was not accepting calls.

Artie Rinaldi died in the presence of his wife of 63 years Nancy, daughters Maria and Catherine and grandchildren Nicholas and Gabriella. His visitation was held Jan. 3 at Codey's Caldwell parlor, followed by a Jan. 4 Funeral Maas here at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church. Condolences may be left at CodeyFuneralHome.com.

WEST ORANGE - Joe Krakoviak was more than sworn back onto the Township Council (Continued on page 14)





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JANUARY 16, 2025 - JANUARY 22, 2025

January 2025								
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ESSEX COUNTY EXECUTIVE PRESENTS BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR 2025

NEWARK - On Tuesday, January 14th, Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. presented a balanced and responsible 2025 budget of \$874.1 million that includes a 1.99 percent property increase and addresses the challenges due to the ongoing national economic conditions and rising costs due to inflation.

DiVincenzo has limited tax increases to an average of just 1.15 percent over the last five years and layoffs have been avoided since 2004. The County Executive has presented the County Budget before the State's statutory deadline of January 15th for 22 consecutive years.

"Our 2025 budget that we are presenting today increases Essex County property taxes by just 1.99 percent, which is lower than the state cap of 2.0 percent. This recognizes the financial hardships our residents have faced because of the rising costs we all are experiencing because of inflation," DiVincenzo said.

"Developing our annual budget is a serious matter and creates the financial plan that the county will follow for the upcoming year. Presenting it by January 15th enables us to identify the complex challenges facing government and address them early. It also gives our municipal partners and constituents a clear snapshot of what to expect from the county," he added.

"We are off to a great start with the budget. It is quite amazing the number of projects we are able to compete each year while also addressing immediate and long term needs," Commissioner President Carlos Pomares said. "Thank you, Joe, for another dynamic budget. With all the challenges we face, your leadership is keeping us heading in the right direction," Commissioner Vice President **Tyshammie** Cooper said.

"I look forward to continue working with the County Executive on future projects and appreciate that, once again, the budget is presented so early," Commissioner Len Luciano said. "It is an honor to be part of a government with the County Executive and I appreciate the hard work he does every day to bring stability to Essex. It allows us to accomplish

so much for the public," Commissioner Brendan Gill said.

The County Executive pointed out that his administration monitors the budget throughout the year and started preparing the 2025 budget in July 2024. Getting an early start enabled Department and Division Directors, Constitutional Officers and County agencies to identify and address issues, investigate ways to reduce expenses and generate new revenue, and have a plan in place by the statutory January 15th deadline.

"This rigorous planning and constant vigilance have helped us to respond proactively when we are faced with challenges brought on by the national economy, unexpected events or new laws," DiVincenzo said.

This constant attention to detail in preparing the budget has enabled Essex County to do the following:

- The 2025 budget includes a 1.99 percent property tax increase. The State cap allows operating governmental budgets to increase property taxes up to 2.0 percent annually.
 - Essex County gives its taxpayers the best bang for their buck, funding its annual operating budget with the lowest percentage of property tax dollars in comparison to the state's other 20 counties. DiVincenzo pointed out that the proposed budget for 2025 relies on property taxes for just 52.6 percent of the total revenue and that the other 47.4 percent is funded with grants or other sources. Other counties rely on property taxes for an average of 72 percent of their revenue. DiVincenzo noted that projects such as bridge replacements, intersection modernizations, the construction of community centers in the parks and other recreation upgrades all have been funded with grants and have no impact on the budget.
- Over the last five years, property tax increases have been limited to an average of 1.15 percent and, over the last 10 years, Essex County has held the average increase



JANUARY 16, 2025 - JANUARY 22, 2025

in property taxes to about 1.09 percent, which is significantly below the state cap of 2.0 percent.

- Over the last 22 years, Essex County has held the average increase in property taxes to about 2.03 percent, which is the third lowest percentage rate of increase of all New Jersey counties behind Hunterdon and Monmouth counties.
- Starting in 2007, DiVincenzo implemented a "debt diet" initiative to stabilize the County's debt service by refinancing existing debt without extending its maturity date and limiting the amount of new debt to a maximum of \$20 million annually. In 2025, the debt service payment is \$101.2 million, which will be reduced to just \$75.8 million in 2031.
- DiVincenzo has downsized the County workforce by not filling open positions unless they are essential to public safety and public health operations. This includes positions such as nurses at the Hospital Center or Corrections Officers at the Correctional Facility. Under DiVincenzo's leadership, over the last 22 years, Essex County's workforce has been reduced from a high of more than 4,000 employees in 2003 to 3,593 in the 2025 budget proposal.
- Over the years, Essex County has built a strong fund balance by realizing savings in previous years' budgets. The fund balance projected for 2024 is about \$82.2 million.

This reserve helps the County respond to emergencies, displays fiscal stability to bond rating agencies and has helped improve the County's cash flow and avoid taking out Tax Anticipation Notes. (When DiVincenzo took office in 2003, the previous administration left a budget deficit of \$64 million.)

- \$36 million in fund balance is being used as revenue in the 2025 budget.
- Under DiVincenzo's direction, the county continually looks for new opportunities for recurring revenue, which includes shared service agreements with other governments and government agencies and new fees. The 2025 budget is projected to have about \$135.7 million of recurring revenue, new, which lessens the County's reliance on raising property taxes.

The DiVincenzo administration has worked hard since 2003 to eliminate the structural budget deficit and ensure that Essex does not spend more than the revenue it collects. Austere budgeting, downsizing the workforce, eliminating unnecessary contracts and conservative spending practices have strengthened Essex County's financial position and restored the County's fiscal health.

The 2025 budget proposal has been forwarded to the Essex County Board of County Commissioners for review.

By Lev D. Zilbermints

NEWARK - When walking down Mount Vernon Place opposite Ivy Hill Park, a passerby sees a space where NJ Transit buses usually layover. However, there is a big problem: cars usually take over much of the layover space assigned for buses.

The layover bus zone extends from the intersection of Manor Drive and Mount Vernon Place to just off the sidewalk by Ivy Hill Park. Signs on lampposts reading "Bus Layover Zone. No Parking," informed motorists to park their cars elsewhere. This did not help, as people still parked their cars in the bus layover zone.

"Local Talk" was able to

briefly talk to a New Jersey Transit bus driver and his supervisor on December 29, 2024. When asked whether NJ Transit did anything to cut down on the illegal parking in the bus layover zone, the bus driver said that NJ Transit fined the owners of the cars. The supervisor pointed out a white car that was parked in the bus layover zone. According to the supervisor, the owner of that car was fined twice. This did not seem to work, as they still illegally park in the bus layover zone.

A key reason for the illegal parking is that there is not enough parking space on the street in the Ivy Hill Park Apartment area. There are parking lots available, but these are only for

ly taking place at the job sites. Neither Bonaccorso nor his company have the necessary underground-storage-tank-removal license required to do such work.

A review of permit applications submitted by Bonaccorso and his company revealed that Bonaccorso misrepresented to municipalities that the engineer was the on-site supervisor of the removal work, as required by New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) regulations, for all of the tank removals done by Bonaccorso &

New Jersey law prohibits any individual from doing work on unregulated heating-oil tank



Ivy Hill Park apartments residents.

It is not clear why these cars were not towed. Both sources told "Local Talk that NJ Transit takes down the license plate

numbers of the illegally parked

JANUARY 16, 2025 - JANUARY 22, 2025

"Local Talk" will keep its readers updated on new developments.

systems unless the individual is certified or working under the immediate, on-site supervision of a person who is certified. NJDEP rules state that whether a tank is removed or abandoned-in -place, the job must be conducted by a contractor certified for underground storage tank clo-

sure, who is working for a clo-

sure-certified firm.

The investigation revealed Bonaccorso arranged to have the engineer obtain a storage-tank license and insurance, and Bonaccorso directly paid to maintain both. The value of the removal jobs associated with the fraudulent permits submitted by Bonaccorso between 2017 and 2023 amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The plea was handled by OPIA Corruption Bureau Co-Director Jeffrey J. Manis and Corruption Bureau Deputy Chief Frank L. Valdinoto, under the supervision of OPIA Executive Director Skinner. Attorney General Platkin also thanked the New Jersey Department of the Treasury, Division of Taxation, Office of Criminal Investigation, and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for their assistance and valuable contributions to the investiga-

MAYOR FORFEITS OFFICE

(Cont. from pg. 9)

During the course of the investigation, OPIA also discovered that the defendant and his landscaping and underground storage tank company, Bonaccorso & Son, fraudulently used an engineer's name, license number, as well as, in many cases, forging the engineer's signature on permit applications submitted to municipalities for tank removals - knowing the engineer was neither supervising nor in any way involved in those projects, and without any legally required tank inspections actual-

COMMUNITY ROOM (Cont. from pg. 1)

for weapons possession. ECPO said that the investigation continues. Hundreds of people came to his Jan. 6 funeral at the NIA Masjid and Community Center, also known as "The Roseville Mosque."

There are still handbills on Masjid Muhammad's lobby table and bulletin boards with "\$10,000 Reward" posted by the Council for American-Islamic Relations New Jersey Chapter, "\$25,000 Reward" from the Esse County CrimeStoppers and for an overall "\$35,000 Reward."

But Sharif's framed in glass biography chronicles his life, starting with being born into a Muslim family and being taught in Newark and East Orange public schools. He attained a degree in criminal justice from the University of Connecticut and became a longtime Newark Housing Authority Security sergeant.

The married father of four kept studying and following Al-Islam to where he became Masjid Muhammad's imam.

Masjid Muhammad, according to its website, started its worship life as Nation of Isam's Muhammad's Mosque No. 25 and Clara Mohammad School. in 1957 NOI cofounder Elijah Muhammad became the face of Islam to many mainstream Americans from the 1940s until his 1975 death.

Son W.D. Muhammad decided to take part of the nation towards Sunni Islam, which Masjid Muhammad is based on. Mosque No. 25 still exists in another part of Newark. The has since been several upgrades to the two three-story building, which goes back to 1913 as the Victoria or Congress Theater. until 1955.

The Masjid is currently guided by two Imams: Antar Mateen and Yasin Shabazz. There is a rotation of imams to lead Friday's Jumu'ah prayers. It is holding a weekly instruction of salat prayers Thursdays through Feb. 23, "Just in time for Ramadan." The K-12 Clara Mohammad School continues on Sundays, followed by weekly Quran studies.

The Observation Booth



OP-ED By Andrea Dialect

FLIPSIDED EMOJIS

Check out the draft below and visit Localtalkweekly.com to read the full story in the Entertainment section. While you're at it, check out the archives. This is grow out loud, baby! Get familiar with all things Andrea Dialect.

You'll want to come along on my Andrea Dialect Facebook Lab page and join me as I develop my daily "PORTAL" sessions. You'll find those buried treasures that keep turning up every morning. See you around 5 or 6 a.m., perhaps, for the live session.

Remember, everything I do on social is homegrown and experimental. Follow my msdialect Instagram, and let's grow

..... **TOWN WATCH** (Cont. from pg. 10)

dais here Jan. 6. The man who had adhered to his self-imposed term limit in 2020 was selected by his peers later that Monday night as its 2025 Council President.

Krakoviak, who was on the council 2010-20 and was its president for a year, declined councilman-at-large re-election in 2020. He did make a run for mayor in 2023 but lost in a fourway race of then-current or former council members to Councilwoman Susan McCartney.

Krakoviak was first sworn in along with incumbent Michele Casalino and freshman Joyce Rudin for their 2025-27 council terms. A majority of township voters Nov. 5 chose Rudin, Krakoviak and Casalino over an on-

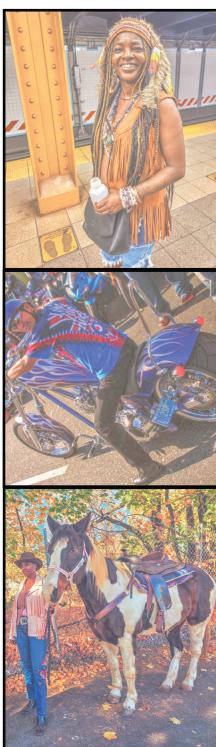
together! Like, follow, and share. Also, do support my Clay and Muse subjects, the Change Agents who grace my FINE ART photography!

The photos included here feature subjects I've stumbled upon or those dear to me who've made the archives because of their beautiful spirits and amazing smiles. Each has willingly participated in my Lend Your Image to Change initiative.

Start your own movement by smiling daily at five people and don't forget to participate in my Hello Project by saying hello to five others. Now that's what ya call being proactive. We must talk about it, but more importantly, we must be about it. We got to be the change we yearn to see in this world!



PROJECT SMILE





JANUARY 16, 2025 - JANUARY 22, 2025





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 have any questions, send them to localtalkandrea@gmail.com.

ballot field of six.

Councilwoman Tammy Williams was denied re-election Nov. 5. Then-Council President Rev. H. William "Bill" Rutherford was reduced to a write-in campaign after a judge's ruling barred his filing extra petitions past the deadline.

Krakoviak had earlier founded West Orange Grassroots, a watchdog group focused on reducing municipal spending while increasing accountability. The career communications consultant also revived the Friends of the West Orange Library prior to that institution moving next to the Essex Green Shopping Center last year.

SOUTH ORANGE - A federal judge in Newark has dismissed a parents' wrongful death by neglect lawsuit against Seton Hall University on Jan. 7 - although the said plaintiffs have 30 days to file an amended suit.

U.S. New Jersey District Judge Susan D, Wigerton, in her ruling, dismissed The Estate of Kristin McCartney vs. SHU without prejudice on three grounds, starting with the late Kristin McCartney's parents and attorney having filed suit past a posted deadline.

Parents Donna Dockery and Sean McCartney and their lawyer had filed their suit against the university May 24, 2024 about 3.5 years after their Nov. 12, 2021 notice of gross negligence claim against the school.

The parents and lawyer claimed that the respondents -SHU - were dragging their feet in providing discovery material.

Wigerton, in her ruling, said that she could not discount the long filing time.

The judge also dismissed the suit in that the plaintiffs had failed to show that the school had acted in bad faith in the handling of Kristin McCartney's isolation for COVID and Sept. 20, 2021 death. McCartney, an SHU School of Diplomacy and International Relations sophomore and another student were put in an isolated dorm room; while the other student was released on Sept. 19, McCartney was found unresponsive and face down and declared dead - the next day.

Wigerton has given the plaintiffs 30 days to file an amended suit. Failing to make the amendment will prompt the judge to dismiss with prejudice.

(Continued on page 15)

TOWN WATCH (Continued from page 14)

MAPLEWOOD - Hair cutting and styling continues at Anthony Garrubbo Salon here in Jefferson Village even though his namesake, Anthony Garrubbo, 82, had died on Dec. 30.

Garrubbo and a business partner bought 174 Maplewood Ave. from Hair World in 1974 and named their business after themselves. "Andre and Anthony for Hair" fully became "Anthony Garubo Hair Salon" in 2005, presumably after Andre's departure.

Anthony Garrubbo meanwhile raised Janine, Ashley, Rebecca and the late Christin Paig with his wife of 63 years, Renee. The William A. Bradley and Son Funeral Home-Chatham posted obituary has him portrayed as a curious and humorous nurturer and mentor of clients, family, customers and friends.

Grandchildren Ella, Reid Anthony, Samantha and Zachary are also among his survivors. Garrubbo's Funeral Mass was held at Madison's St. Vincent the Martyr Church Jan 7. His body was then committed to St. Gertrude Cemetery in the Colonia section of Woodbridge.

Condolences may be left at 174 Maplewood Ave.'s check in desk by Garrubbo's portrait and death notice.

BLOOMFIELD - One of Mayor Jenny Mundell and the Township Council's key reappointments turned some heads at their Jan. 6 reorganization meeting.

The council voted Mundell's resolution to rehire Michael J. Parlavecchio as Township Attorney, after a nine-month absence, for Calendar Year 2025 on a maximum \$195,000 salary. Parlavecchio doubles as Chief Counsel to the Essex County Board of Commissioners.

The Basking Ridge lawyer is no stranger to the Municipal Building office. He was first appointed Feb. 1, 2016 by a previous mayor and board but resigned Feb. 28 on what Mayor Michael Venezia said were on "procedural grounds." The council, in a 4-2-1 split vote, reappointed him on March 7.

Parlavecchio was reappointed in 2019 until Gamble dismissed him early last year. Gamble, who was an interim mayor this time last year, was defeated by Mundell in June's primary. A "Bloomfield Chronicle" report, however, said that the Millburn resident and Seton Hall Law School resident had contributed to then-Councilwoman Mundell's successful mayoral campaign.

The council removed "Acting" from Anthony DeZenzo's Township Administrator title after being here four years. The title change came after a 4-1-1 council vote. Thomas Icolari was appointed OEM Coordinator for a three-year term.

Adult Library Reopens

The Bloomfield Public Library's main 1967 building reopened to the public Jan. 10 after being closed for repairs since Dec. 16. What BPL calls the Children's Library next door, the former 1927 Jarvie Memorial Library, offered temporary and limited adult services Dec. 16-Jan. 10. What repairs were made and at what cost were not available as of press time.

BELLEVILLE -- A township man now awaits how long he will be in the Morris County Jail since his Jan. 6 guilty plea in the May 31 collision that killed an 18 year old Mount Olive college student.

Gerald J. Veneziano, 41, accepted a plea bargain with the Morris County Prosecutor's Office to second-degree death by auto and DWI before Superior Court-Morriston Judge Tobert Hanna that Monday. MCPO attorneys then recommended a six-year prison sentence for Veneziano-which amounts to at least five years and a month in prison under the 86 percent No Early Release Act.

Veneziano, before Judge Hanna, said that he has no recollection of the 10:30 p.m., May 31 collision, where his northbound 2021 Chevrolet Silverado struck Jacob Davis and his 2019 Mazda 3 on Howard Boulevard in Roxbury. Both vehicles erupted in flames.

Veneziano was taken to Morristown Medical Center for his serious injuries. Davis, 18, of Mt. Olive's Flanders section and a student at Boston's Northwestern University, was declared dead at the scene.

Although Veneziano said he does not recall the crash, he had pleaded guilty based on the discovery evidence given. That includes data from his Silverado pickup truck going up to 93 mph in a 50 mph zone and his recorded above .10 percent blood alcohol level.

Exactly how long Veneziano will be imprisoned will be up to Judge Hanna and his sentencing next month. Once released, Veneziano, as a first time DWI convict is subject to between six and 12 months' loss of his driving license, an interlock device installed on his next car, between 12 and 48 hours in a state Intoxicated Drivers Resource Center and pay Davis's family \$8,961.23 restitution to Davis's family.

Court records found that Veneziano also has a Flanders address.

NUTLEY - There have been nearand long-term changes to the Nutley Board of Education and its school district made by township leaders here Jan. 6-7.

The reorganized NBOE on Jan. 6 selected Salvatore Ferraro and Thomas D'Elia as the body's board president and vice president for 2025. The Township Committee, on Jan. 7, approved buying 777-89 Bloomfield Ave. for conversion to

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Pre-Kindergarten classrooms and new NBOE offices on or by Sept. 1.

Ferraro and D'Elia were unanimously selected by the just-reorganized board that Monday night. Voters elected Ferraro in 2020 and also re-elected him in 2023. D'Elia, who was elected in 2022, is in his first term.

Incumbents Nicholas Scotti and Daniel Fraginals plus newcomer Stephen Gilberti were sworn onto the board as the night's first order of business. Scotti, Fraginals and Gilberti were the top three candidates elected by a majority of participating Nutley voters Nov. 5 from a ballot field of four.

Ferraro was present at the Township Commissioners' Tuesday night meeting where they approved buying 777-89 Bloomfield Ave. for Nutley Public Schools. The agreement with the outgoing owner, Nicols Park Condominium, will have the latter renovate the building into 10 Pre-K classrooms and, on the top floor, NPS BOE offices. Once the renovations are done, the three-story building with a single story studio will be turned over to NPS.

The move aims to consolidate the district's Pre-K classrooms in September 2025 and free up John Walker Middle School space to amass NPS Sixth Graders for the 2026-27 school year. The action is being done on the "One Nutley" township-district shared service pact that had made in 2022. The Township Commission had hired a consulting architect to study 777 and 800 Bloomfield Ave. and 243 and 407 Kingsland St. Nov. 4, 2021.



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