

LOCAL TALK

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25¢

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

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER

ESSEX COUNTY • EAST ORANGE • ORANGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

1576 Springfield Avenue • Maplewood, NJ 07040

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

E-mail - Newspaper: localtalk@aol.com * Printing: localtalkprinting@gmail.com

LOCAL TOWNS APPROVE NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING QUOTAS

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SUSPECT ARRESTED IN DEATH OF NEWARK CHILD

Essex County Prosecutor Theodore N. Stephens II and Newark Public Safety Director Emanuel Miranda announced on Feb. 5 the arrest of a suspect in connection with the fatal shooting of a 9-year-old boy in Newark on Friday January 31, 2025.

36-year-old Jesse J. Dunbar II of Newark is charged with 1st degree murder, 1st degree attempted murder, 2nd degree aggravated assault, 2nd degree unlawful possession of a weapon, and 2nd degree possession of a weapon for unlawful purpose. He is also charged with shooting an adult male.

"The killing of any persons is a tragic occurrence, but it is particularly heinous when an innocent 9-year-old child loses their life to all too common senseless violence", said Essex County Prosecutor Theodore N. Stephens, II.

These allegations are merely accusations. All defendants



are presumed innocent unless and until they enter a guilty plea or are found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Anyone with information regarding this case is asked to contact the Essex County Prosecutor's Office tips line at 1-877-TIPS-4EC or 1-877-847-7432. All calls will be kept confidential.

EAGLES CRUSH CHIEFS TO WIN SUPER BOWL LIX

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Photo Courtesy Dotson family

DECAMP APPROACHES THE END



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SETON HALL KEEPS WINNING

PAGE 5



Photo By Felicia Laguerre Owens



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Editorial
Dhiren Shah
 Editor-In-Chief

Hello Readers,

We were all waiting for two weeks to see the Super Bowl. Most of the experts were stating that the Kansas City Chiefs would win their third Super Bowl in a row. However, from the beginning to the end, the Philadelphia Eagles dominated the game. The Eagles scored the first 31 points of the game. At the end of the third quarter, they were winning 34-6. The game was over in everyone's mind. In the 4th quarter, the Chiefs came to life a little, scoring 16 points, but it was not enough. The Eagles won by a landslide 40-22. Former Giants running back

Saquon Barkley and former Jets offensive lineman Mekhi Becton got the last laugh. Their former teams are struggling, while they get to call themselves champions.

Also, we had a little easter egg from our Content Editor Kristopher Seals in our Weather section last week, who predicted that the Eagles (PHI) would beat the Chiefs (KC) 44-26. While the score ended up being 40-22, remarkably he had the margin of victory (18) and the winner. Well done.

Israel has withdrawn from key roads dividing the Gaza Strip as part of the ceasefire deal. President Donald Trump has proposed negotiating with Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu to rebuild the Gaza Strip, with the U.S. taking control. Trump wants to make it a new and modern community. However, he said

that the Palestinians would have to move. Obviously, Hamas will not be included.

Yes, the proposal is a little better to rebuild the Gaza strip, but the intention is wrong in my opinion. In 1948, Israel's Jewish community took over and moved the Palestinians to two parts of Palestine, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Bethlehem, a holy place, is located in the West Bank of Palestine. The West Bank side is always nicer and has a quiet population, predominantly Sunni Muslims, with small Shia and Ahmadi communities. The Gaza Strip was controlled by Hamas.

I did not like Trump's proposal to exclude the Palestinians. The U.S. must be neutral. If this goes through, the U.S. should help the Palestinians, and not blindly take the side of Israel and Netanyahu.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams' charges of bribery have been dropped. This comes as Adams has worked with Trump administration and helped ICE to get undocumented immigrants with criminal records for the deportation process.

President Trump announced 25% tariffs on steel and aluminum. Until now, from his first term as president, Canada, Mexico and our partners in European countries were excluded from tariffs. This time, all countries must pay a tariff with no exception. We are importing over 50% aluminum from Canada. Trump's belief is that the steel industry in the U.S. will expand due to the tariffs, and we will have U.S. made steel and aluminum products.

Have a wonderful week.

I'll talk to you next week.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS FOR LOCAL TALK WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

Publisher & Editor-in-chief: Dhiren Shah
Editors: Kristopher Seals • Anuj Shah
Journalists / Writers: Kristopher Seals • Walter Elliott • Dhiren Shah • Anuj Shah • Akshat Shah • Asha Shah • Kinjal Shah • Thomas Ellis II • William Hathaway, Jr. • Lev D. Zilbermints • Dr. Robert Kennedy • Dr. Adil Manzoor • Fred Simpson • Andrea Dialect • Ahmed Screven, Esq.
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WEATHER FOR THE WEEK

<u>THURSDAY</u>	<u>FRIDAY</u>	<u>SATURDAY</u>	<u>SUNDAY</u>	<u>MONDAY</u>	<u>TUESDAY</u>	<u>WEDNESDAY</u>
AM Rain	Mostly Sunny	Snow / Rain possible	Rain	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy
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LO 28	LO 25	LO 34	LO 23	LO 16	LO 18	LO 21

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Huge Canned Tuna Recall

EL SEGUNDO, CA, February 7, 2025 - Tri-Union Seafoods has made the decision to voluntarily recall select lots of canned tuna products sold under the Genova®, Van Camp’s®, H-E-B and Trader Joe’s brand names.

This voluntary recall is out of an abundance of caution following the notification from our supplier that the “easy open” pull tab can lid on limited products encountered a manufacturing defect that may compromise the integrity of the product seal (especially over time), causing it to leak, or worse, be contaminated with clostridium botulinum, a potentially fatal form of food poisoning.

Consumers are warned not to use the product even if it does not look or smell spoiled. Consumers feeling unwell should seek immediate medical attention. No illnesses associated with the recalled products have been reported and the recall is being conducted to ensure consumer safety.

The impacted products were distributed to retail stores as follows:

- H-E-B label - Texas
- Trader Joe’s label - Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington D.C., and Wisconsin
- Genova 7 oz. - Costco in Florida and Georgia
- Genova 5 oz. - Harris Teeter, Publix, H-E-B, Kroger, Safeway, Walmart, and independ-

ent retailers in Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, New Jersey, Tennessee, and Texas

- Van Camp’s label - Walmart and independent retailers in Pennsylvania, Florida and New Jersey

If you have a recalled tuna can, please return it to the retailer for a full refund, throw it away, or contact Tri-Union Seafoods directly for a retrieval kit and a coupon for a replacement product. Consumers can contact Tri-Union Seafoods at support@thaiunionhelp.zendesk.com or 833-374-0171, if they have any questions or to request replacement product. The toll-free number hours are Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST.

This recall does not impact any other Tri-Union Seafoods products, as no other product packaging was impacted by this potential defect. Tri-Union Seafoods is committed to upholding the highest safety and quality standards.

For media inquiries, contact Media.Inquiries@thaiunion.com.

New Jersey Attorney General Sues Trump Administration For Defunding Medical and Public Health Innovation Research

TRENTON - On Feb. 10, New Jersey Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin and 21 other attorneys general sued the Trump Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for unlawfully cutting funds that support cutting-edge medical and public health research at universities and research institutions across the country.

The coalition is challenging the Trump Administration’s attempt to unilaterally cut “indirect cost” reimbursements at every

research institution throughout the country. These reimbursements cover expenses to facilitate biomedical research, such as lab, faculty, infrastructure, and utility costs. Without them, the lifesaving and life-changing medical research in which the United States has long been a leader could be compromised.

Indirect cost reimbursements are based on each institution’s unique needs, negotiated with the federal government through a carefully regulated process, and then memorialized in an executed agreement. The Trump Administration purports to toss those agreements aside, putting public health and medical advancements at risk. The coalition’s lawsuit seeks to prevent that reckless and illegal conduct.

“The Trump Administration’s attack on public health research funding is a direct attack on our State, which has long led the nation in medical and health innovations that have saved countless lives across our country,” said Attorney General Platkin. “Our universities, labs, and research institutions have fought COVID-19, cancer, and many more issues of public interest, but now they have to fight the cruelty and shortsightedness of President Trump and his political appointees. We will fight this reckless and illegal action in court until this critical funding is restored.”

On Friday, February 7, the NIH announced it would abruptly slash indirect cost rates to an across-the-board 15% rate, which is significantly less than the cost required to perform cutting edge medical research. The NIH purported to make this cut effective the very next business day, Monday, February 10, giving universities and institutions no time to plan for the enormous budget gaps they are now facing. Without immediate relief, this action could result in the suspension of lifesaving and life-extending clinical trials, disrupt-

tion of research programs, layoffs, and laboratory closures.

The coalition argues that this action violates the Administrative Procedure Act, including a directive Congress passed during President Trump’s first term to fend off his earlier proposal to drastically cut research reimbursements. That statutory language, still in effect, prohibits the NIH from requiring categorical and indiscriminate changes to indirect cost reimbursements. The coalition is seeking a court order barring the Trump Administration and NIH from implementing the action.

The NIH is the primary source of federal funding for medical research in the United States. Medical research funding by NIH grants has led to innumerable scientific breakthroughs, including the discovery of treatment for cancers of all types, the first sequencing of DNA, and the development of the MRI. Additionally, dozens of NIH-supported scientists have earned Nobel Prizes for their groundbreaking scientific work.

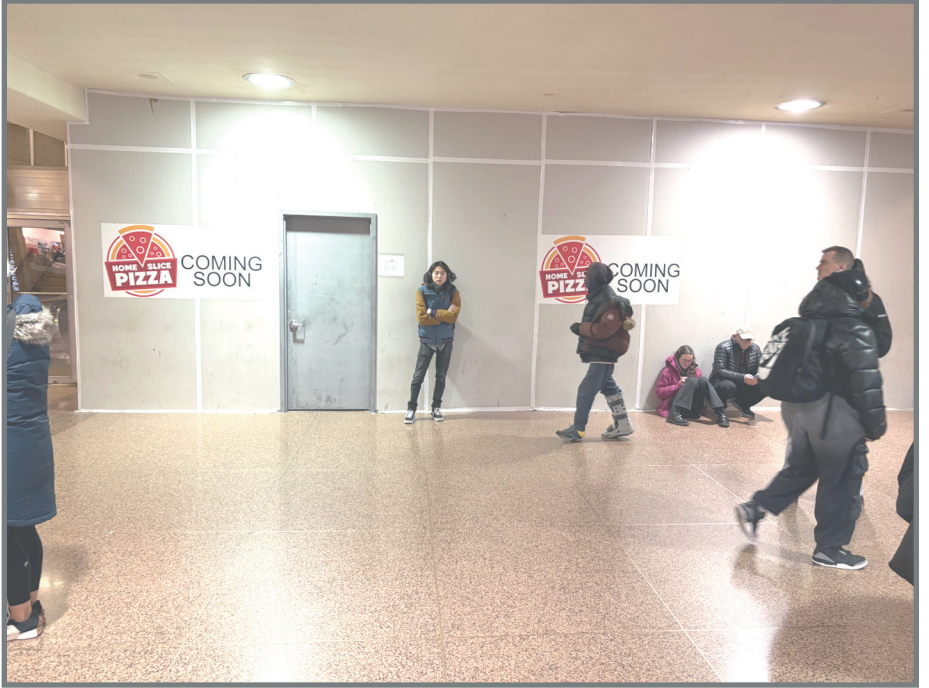
Most NIH-funded research occurs outside of federal government institutions at places such as both public and private universities and colleges. In New Jersey, this includes Rutgers University, Rowan University, The College of New Jersey, Kean University, Montclair State University, the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Ramapo College, Stockton University, Princeton University, The Stevens Institute of Technology, Seton Hall University, and Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Joining New Jersey in this lawsuit are the states of Arizona, California, Connecticut, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

NEW STORES OPENING AT NEWARK PENN STATION



Photos By Lev D. Zilbermints



By Lev D. Zilbermints

NEWARK - Two more new stores are set to open at Newark Penn Station. One is a renovated Gateway Market store, the other, a new pizzeria.

Asked about a new Gateway Market store, a salesman told “Local Talk” that it would take about two months to renovate and open the Gateway Market store. Previously, Hudson News owned all three Gateway Market store locations.

The renovated Gateway Mar-

ket store will be located between NJ Customer Service office and Track 4. It is expected that, like in the past, Gateway Market will sell snacks, magazines, drinks, cell phone chargers, and other products.

The pizzeria has been supposed to reopen for a while, but nothing has taken place yet. According to New Jersey Transit police, the new pizzeria will open at the same location where the old one used to be, next to PATH train Track 1.



ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS ANNOUNCED IN 20 CASES INVOLVING HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

TRENTON - Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin and the Division on Civil Rights (DCR) today announced that DCR has taken enforcement action in 20 cases alleging violations of the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination’s (LAD) prohibition against denying the opportunity to obtain housing because of a prospective tenant’s source of lawful income, such as government rental assistance.

In 15 of these cases, DCR issued Findings of Probable Cause alleging discrimination based on source of lawful income. In another five cases, DCR announced that they have finalized consent decrees with property owners, property managers, and real estate brokers, obtaining over \$105,000 in relief from those respondents for al-

leged violations of the LAD.

In the 15 Findings issued today, DCR found probable cause to conclude that 35 respondents across New Jersey - including property owners and property managers, as well as real estate agents and real estate brokerages - violated the LAD by denying individuals seeking rental housing the opportunity to rent based on their receipt of government rental assistance.

Twelve of the Findings of Probable Cause issued by DCR were the result of complaints filed with DCR by Housing Rights Initiative (HRI), a non-profit housing watchdog group that conducts tests to detect housing discrimination. In these 12 cases, HRI employed testers to reach out to representatives for the properties, disclosing that

they would use Section 8 housing vouchers to pay rent.

In each case, a real estate agent, property manager, or property owner rejected these testers, telling them that they would not accept prospective tenants with vouchers. HRI’s communications with the representatives of the properties, which were recorded, provide direct evidence of discrimination.

In five additional matters involving claims of discrimination based on source of lawful income brought by HRI, DCR has finalized consent decrees with 14 property owners, property managers, real estate brokerages, and real estate brokers. In each case, respondents agreed to make a payment to the complainant and to pay a penalty to

the State. Respondents also agreed to adopt a fair housing policy, to train employees on the requirements of the LAD, and to ongoing monitoring by DCR of their compliance with the LAD.

“Every resident of our state deserves to have a safe, affordable place to live. We will always work to safeguard the right, enshrined in our civil rights laws, to obtain housing using government rental assistance. And with the federal government halting the work of key federal civil rights agencies, it’s more important than ever that we stand up against discrimination targeting our state’s residents,” said Attorney General Platkin. “We made a commitment to hold accountable anyone who discrimi-

(Continued on page 12)



UNITED STATES



TARIFFS ANNOUNCED ON STEEL & ALUMINUM

On Feb. 9, President Donald J. Trump signed proclamations to place a 25% tariff on steel and elevate the tariff to 25% on aluminum.

In a statement from the White House press office, "President Trump is taking action to protect America's critical steel and aluminum industries, which have been harmed by unfair trade practices and global excess capacity.

- President Trump is reinstating the full 25% tariff on steel imports and increasing tariffs on aluminum imports to 25%.
- Key reforms include eliminating all alternative agreements, applying strict "melted and poured" standards, expanding tariffs to include key downstream products, terminating all general approved exclusions, and cracking down on tariff misclassification and duty evasion schemes.
- The countries of Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, the European Union, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom had received exemptions, which prevented the tariffs from being effective.
- By granting exemptions to certain countries, the United States inadvertently created loopholes that were exploited by China and others with excess steel and aluminum ca-

- capacity, undermining the purpose of these exemptions.
- The President is exercising his authority under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 to adjust imports of steel and aluminum to protect our national security.
- This statute provides the President with authority to adjust imports being brought into the United States in quantities or under circumstances that threaten to impair national security.
- In March 2018, President Trump invoked authority under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 (19 U.S.C. § 1862) to impose 25% tariffs on steel imports and 10% tariffs on aluminum. These measures were remarkably effective in supporting recovery and reinvestment in the American steel industry and saved the domestic primary aluminum industry from total collapse. But exemptions and loopholes have permitted evasion of the tariffs and weakened the effectiveness of the program.
- The reinvigorated Section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminum will support the program's original objective of revitalizing the domestic steel and aluminum industries and achieving sustainable capacity utilization of at least 80%.

Restoring Fairness To Steel And Aluminum Markets:

President Trump is taking action to end unfair trade practices and the global dumping of steel and aluminum.

- Foreign nations have been flooding the United States market with cheap steel and aluminum, often subsidized by their governments.
- A report from the first Trump Administration found that steel import levels and global excess were weakening our domestic economy and threatening to impair national security.
- The report found that excess production and capacity, particularly in China, has been a major factor in the decline of domestic aluminum production.

- While the domestic steel industry briefly achieved 80% utilization in 2021, subsequent trade pressure following the COVID-19 pandemic has depressed domestic production. In 2022 and 2023, capacity utilization fell to 77.3% and 75.3%, respectively. High import volumes from sources exempt from Section 232 tariffs are a major factor in depressing domestic production volumes.
- For aluminum, there was an increase in the capacity utilization rate between 2017 and 2019, from 40% to 61% during that period. But since 2019, the aluminum capacity utilization has once again seen a steady decline, falling from 61% to 55% between 2019 and 2023.
- The United States does not want to be in a position where it would be unable to meet demand for national defense and critical infrastructure in a national emergency.

Additionally, Trump announced that he would end the use of paper straws, going back to plastic.

MASS SHOOTING UPDATE

Information from 2-11-2025

2025 Mass Shooting Stats: (Source: Mass Shooting Tracker, <https://www.massshootingtracker.site/data/?year=2025>)

- Total Mass Shootings: 41
- Total Dead: 59
- Total Wounded: 150
- Shootings Per Day: 0.98
- Days Reached in Year 2025 as of February 11: 42

WORLD ICC vs. USA

The International Criminal Court (ICC) on Feb. 7 condemned an executive order signed by United States President Donald Trump imposing punitive sanctions, countering that the order sought to "harm its independent and impartial judicial work."

The court was established by the Rome Statute, negotiated within the UN - but it is a fully independent court set up to try the gravest crimes, including

crimes against humanity. Trump's Feb. 6 executive order said the US government would "impose tangible and significant consequences" on ICC officials who work on investigations that threaten national security of the US and allies - including Israel.

The directive follows the decision by ICC judges to issue arrest warrants in November for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defense minister Yoav Gallant, which accuses them of alleged war crimes in relation to the conduct of the war with Hamas on Gaza.

Neither the US nor Israel recognize the ICC's jurisdiction; there are 125 states parties to the Rome Statute, which came into effect in 2002.

The US executive order says that the ICC actions against Israel and preliminary investigations against the US "set a dangerous precedent, directly endangering current and former" personnel.

The order details possible sanctions including the blocking of property and assets of ICC officials and barring them and their families from entering the US.

A bid to impose sanctions on the ICC by the US Congress in January prior to the change in administration, failed to garner enough support in the Senate.

"The ICC condemns the issuance by the US of an Executive Order seeking to impose sanctions on its officials and harm its independent and impartial judicial work," said the court in a press release.

"The Court stands firmly by its personnel and pledges to continue providing justice and hope to millions of innocent victims of atrocities across the world, in all Situations before it."

MIDDLE EAST RESPONSE TO PALESTINE RELOCATION THREAT

The head of UN Palestine refugee agency UNRWA underscored its commitment to assist a population whose rights "continue to be violated."

In a social media post on Friday, Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said that "people in Gaza have undergone

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WORLD NEWS (Cont. from page 6)

systematic dehumanization” since the war there began.

He emphasized that “Palestinians do matter, including those in Gaza. Their rights, lives and futures matter,” noting that “human rights cannot be applied selectively.”

His comments come in the wake of United States President Donald Trump’s proposal made earlier this week that the US should seize control of Gaza and permanently displace the entire Palestinian population - a move which the UN Secretary-General said would be an act of “ethnic cleansing.”

In his statement, Mr. Lazzarini quoted UN chief António Guterres who has stressed that “peace requires ending the occupation, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with Gaza as an integral part; a viable and sovereign Palestinian State side-by-side with Israel.”

The UNRWA chief said his agency’s teams “are committed to continue providing critical assistance to Palestine refugees who need us most until empowered Palestinian institutions become a lasting and viable alternative.”

UNRWA continues to face huge challenges in carrying out its work. Last month, two Israeli laws came into effect which ban UNRWA operations within its borders and forbid Israeli authorities from having any contact with the agency.

UNRWA was ordered to vacate its premises in East Jerusalem in the occupied West Bank, and visas for international staff were not renewed.

Teams are still providing aid to communities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as in Gaza, where a ceasefire continues to hold following 15 months of war.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said on social media that its team has supported the medical evacuation of 178 patients this month, including 115 children, to Egypt. However, between 12,000 and 14,000 more still need to be evacuated.

For its part, the World Food Program (WFP) has sent more than 15,000 tons of food into Gaza since the start of the ceasefire, reaching more than 525,000 people with food parcels, hot meals and cash.

UN child rights agency UNICEF added that since the ceasefire took effect, it has reached more than 10,000 infants across Gaza with ready to use complementary foods.

Meanwhile, nearly half of all Palestinian child fatalities in the West Bank over the past two decades occurred within the last two years, UN aid coordination office OCHA said in a humanitarian update published on Feb. 7.

Since January 2023, 224 children (218 boys and six girls) have been killed by Is-

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raeli forces or settlers, representing nearly half of the 468 child fatalities the agency has documented since the beginning of 2005.

They include 11 children killed since January of this year, all by Israeli forces, including six killed in airstrikes, and 10 killed in the northern governorates of the West Bank.

“This is generally consistent with trends observed over the past two years,” OCHA said.

The agency noted that in 2023 and 2024, 64 per cent of Palestinian child fatalities in the West Bank were in the northern gover-

norates. Most, 82 percent, were shot by live ammunition, and 18 percent were killed by airstrikes.

Furthermore, more than 2,500 Palestinian children were injured during the same period, 28 percent of them by live ammunition.

So far this year, 89 Palestinian children were reported injured by Israeli forces or settlers, 48 percent by live ammunition.

“The significant number of children killed and injured with live ammunition fired by Israeli forces or in airstrikes raises concerns

(Continued on page 13)

SPORTS WRAP



Photos By Felicia Laguerre Owens



By William Hathaway, Jr.

The National Football League held its 59th Super Bowl at the Superdome in New Orleans, featuring the Philadelphia Eagles and back to back defending champion Kansas City Chiefs. Despite losing to KC two years, Philly was ready this time, and delivered a shocking 40-22 defeat to the champs, thwarting their attempt at an unprecedented third straight Super Bowl win.

Leading the Eagles to their second ever Big Game win was MVP Jalen Hurts, who went 17-22 for 291 yards and 3 TDs in the air and 50 yards on the ground. Hurts scored the first touchdown on a “Brotherly Shove” sneak. Then, after a Jake Elliott a 48 yard field goal to make it 10-0, Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes threw an interception that rookie and birthday Copper DeJean ran back for a 38 yard TD, making it 17-0. Mahomes, who many consider as the best in the game, threw another interception, which led to a Hurts TD pass to AJ Brown, making it 24-0 right before the half.

After a polarizing halftime show by Pulitzer Prize and 22 time grammy winner Kendrick Lamar, the 2nd half began. After Mahomes and the Chiefs failed on 4th down, Hurts tossed a dagger to Devonta Smith, running the score up to 31-0. Eventually, Kansas City would get on the board, but it too late to stop Philadelphia from lifting the Lombardi Trophy.

While Hurts was the MVP, that honor could have gone to the Eagles defensive line, which sacked Mahomes several times, and forced him into two interceptions and a lost fumble. For-

mer NY Giants running back Saquon Barkley was relatively quiet, but made key blitz pickups that ruined the plans of Chiefs defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo and DE Chris Jones, who had no impact on the game. Giants fans may remember Spagnuolo from his time as coordinator of Big Blue Super Bowl winning defense that took down the Patriots.

Not only was Taylor Swift denied the chance to see her boyfriend Travis Kelce win another ring, but she was booed loudly at the game. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump became the first sitting president to attend a Super Bowl.

Finally, a local favorite player and Essex County native made a difference for the winners, as former East Orange junior jaguar Jahan Dotson showed up big for the Eagles.

In other sports, the seton hall women’s squad continue their incredible winning streak this past Saturday against Xavier 72-47. Faith Masonius put up 16 points and 4 rebounds, while teammates Jada Eads had 13 points and 5 rebounds and Savannah Catalon had 17 points for The Hall. Catalon was named to the Big East weekly honor roll.

SHU shot 49 percent from the floor, and scored 13 points off of turnovers. The Pirates are in 3rd place in the Big East standings with a 9-3 conference record and 17-6 overall, with a decent looking Tournament resume.

In this year’s Essex County Tournament quarterfinals, the Payne Tech boys basketball team won their 11th straight game, beating East Orange 86-68. Leading Payne Tech was Gerald



Edwells with 29 points and 21 rebounds. East Orange was led by Robert Foster with 17 points and nine rebounds. Payne Tech will play Arts High School in the semifinals. Arts previously defeated Montclair 72-42. Meanwhile, top seeded Seton Hall Prep will play St. Bene-

dict’s Prep in the other semifinal game.

As for the girls bracket, University High will play top seeded Montclair Immaculate this Saturday. University beat Caldwell 77-41. In the other game, West Orange will battle Glen Ridge.

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LOCAL TOWNS APPROVE NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING QUOTAS

By *Walter Elliott*

WEST ORANGE - Township elders here and in Belleville Jan. 28 accepted the New Jersey Council of Affordable Housing's 2025 -35 quotas by passing respective resolutions - five days ahead of the state's Feb. 3 deadline.

The West Orange Council voted, 4-1, with Councilwoman Michele Casalino dissenting, to accept COAH's Fourth Round municipal fair share obligations. The township is accepting an overall affordable housing requirement of 1,069 dwelling units.

Belleville's Township Council, that same Tuesday night, voted 7-0 to accept the state's fair share quota of 324 affordable housing units.

Both townships' approval means that all 12 "Local Talk" towns are now on board with COAH's Fourth Round quotas - although West Orange expressed some uncertainty as late as their Jan. 6 meeting.

All 12 municipalities are obliged to the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs to build 11,098 affordable housing units between now and 2035. Up to half of those quotas, as in the past three rounds, can get credit for rehabilitating existing units, ap-

prove "carriage houses" and other accessory units and/or swap unit quota numbers with other towns.

This is all to meet a statewide affordable housing shortage of 146,000 units DCA and COAH have forecasted for over the next 10 years. The Fourth Round, whose calculated figures were presented to 563 municipalities Oct. 21.

What makes the Fourth Round unique is that the quotas are in "Present" and "Prospective" need categories. Present is what the municipality needs to do now. Prospective is what COAH bases on demographic trends.

All 12 "Local Talk" towns are all on board - along with 404 other municipalities across the state. Another 120 towns, however, have asked the DCA about working with them in adjusting those quota figures. Some of those locals said that the state overestimated the land they have to build the new units. (There has been no unincorporated land in New Jersey for at least the last century.)

There are 27 towns - including "Local Talk" neighbors Millburn and Cedar Grove - who are crying, "No Way!" and are challenging the state in court. West Orange could

have thrown a yellow caution flag or a red flag halt until their Jan. 28 green lighting.

Casalino, on Jan. 6, said that "West Orange was quoted a high number," and asked Assistant Business Administrator Peter Smeraldo, "Are we challenging this number?" Smeraldo's response was that he was looking into it.

West Orange Mayor Joe Krakoviak said their Jan. 28 approval resolution included a provision for "a vacant land adjustment, a unit credit because of limits on available vacant land that could be developed in the municipality."

Herewith are the "Local Talk" towns' Present and Prospective need quotas:

- NEWARK: 4,630, 0
- IRVINGTON: 1,404, 0
- EAST ORANGE: 1,850, 0
- ORANGE: 678, 0
- WEST ORANGE: 409, 660
- SOUTH ORANGE: 20, 163
- MAPLEWOOD: 20, 216
- BLOOMFIELD: 329, 0
- MONTCLAIR: 132, 0
- GLEN RIDGE: 0, 178
- BELLEVILLE: 324, 0
- NUTLEY: 85, 0



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.

DECAMP APPROACHES THE END

MONTCLAIR - Decamp Bus Lines, after 155 years' service by a family's six generations, will park their remaining buses here at 101 Glenwood Ave. and cease operations on Feb. 28.

Company President Robert Decamp announced on Feb. 4 that a combination of rising bus purchase and insurance costs plus difficulties in hiring bus drivers have led them to garage their buses for good. Decamp had been relying on charter and casino bus runs since getting out of the commuter fixed route business on April 7, 2023.

Decamp's casino bus runs and its phone number will be transferred to Panorama Tours of Wallington. It is presumed that their remaining green, orange and white rolling stock will be parted out to other companies and the former Public Service garage will be sold off.

Decamp tried to bring back six of its eight interstate bus routes to New York Port Authority Bus Terminal in the wake of the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic. They found that their ridership was down 20 percent from 2019 levels in part because riders were reporting to physical work two or three days a week.

Feb. 28 would end the state's oldest bus company, which started with horse-drawn wagons between Newark and Roseland in 1870. Decamp switched to motor

coaches in the 1920s. It enjoyed the early 20th century growth of Hudson River crossings and highways to where it had 250 employees running or maintaining 175 buses in the 1950s.

New Jersey's highway building boom into the 1980s had placed those roads about six miles apart from the commuter rail lines. The state, through NJDOT and NJTransit, started finishing railroad projects abandoned by the private railroads in the 1960s. Improvements like the re-electrification of the Morris & Essex Line and the Montclair and Secaucus/Kearny connections began to put dents in Decamp and other private bus lines' ridership.

"The state can go to the taxpayer for more funds," said then-Decamp Vice President Gary Pard while watching from his office the Montclair Connection being built in 1999-2002. "We have to watch every penny."

NEWARK - Newark police and ECPO detectives are looking into the circumstances of how and why a municipal worker had entered Newark City Hall before 8:25 a.m. Feb. 6 - but never left the building alive.

Newark Public Safety Director Eugene Miranda said that police officers were told "of a sick or injured man" inside 920 Kenneth A. Gibson Blvd./Broad St at 8:28 a.m. that Thursday. Responding officers found the municipal employee there "unresponsive."

The otherwise unidentified man was declared dead there at 8:50 a.m. His body went across town to the Regional Medical Examiner's Office for an autopsy and medical tests.

The director would not confirm or deny that the deceased was a Corey McGill as one news provider had carried. Miranda only added that the death is not being considered as suspicious.

"Local Talk" will forward any details when they are made available.

IRVINGTON - An investigation by the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office continues on the circumstances of an Irvingtonian's fatal car collision there Feb. 4 while his family conducts a GoFundMe.com fundraising page.

Relatives and friends of

Makiano Francois, 36, have started the fundraiser for his funeral expenses. That service, as of press time, only has a Feb. 20 date.

Middlesex County Prosecutor Yolanda Ciccone said that Francois had died at New Brunswick's Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital from injuries he had suffered from a crash at 12:07 a.m. that Tuesday at US Rt. 1 North and Grandview Avenue.

A preliminary investigation has found that Francois' black Mitsubishi had been rear ended by a Ford Explorer driven by a 48-year-old Brooklyn man. A video crew from the nearby News12NJ headquarters recorded both vehicles being towed by a pair of George Logan Towing flatbed trucks. Logan, of North Brunswick is MCPO's contracted tower.

The Ford driver had been treated for minor injuries and was released from RWJ University Hospital. Rt. 1 North had been closed between the exit ramp from Interstate 287 to Amboy Road until 5 a.m. for the accident investigation and debris clearing. There are no further details as of press time.

EAST ORANGE - Mayor Theodore "Ted" Green saluted a longtime resident on the federal Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. birthday observance for her 108th birthday - even though the honoree now lives outside city limits.

Inez "Rose" Rosalie Alick Elliot (no known relation) turned 108 on Jan. 20 while resting at Madison's Pine Acres Healthcare and Rehabilitation center. The longtime Calvary Baptist Church member and East Orange Police School Crossing Guard lived with husband William "Bill" Elliot here for 23 years. Green and Madison Mayor Robert H. Conley personally delivered their birthday greetings that Monday in the company of Elliot's relatives and friends.

"As a mayor, it fills my heart with pride to celebrate this incredible milestone of living 108 years on Earth," said Green. "Ms. Inez is truly a remarkable woman and it's so fitting that we're able to honor her on the same day that we recognize the powerful work of Dr. King."

Elliot was born in nearby

Summit's Overlook Hospital Jan. 20, 1917 as the only child of Bermudian parents. Rose went on to marry Bill Elliot, a disabled veteran, in 1957 and moved to East Orange. Although Rose and Bill did not have children of their own, they raised goddaughter Rosalind Johnson and sister-in-law Pearline Elliot Whitney's two sets of twins since the 1950s.

Rose moved to Madison when Bill died here in 1980. She kept on reading, making arts and crafts, playing cards and taking occasional trips to family in Bermuda and Montclair. She had been celebrated on her 100th birthday, in 2017, by Green the city's Park Avenue St. John's United Methodist Church and the late Lt. Gov. Sheila Y. Oliver (D-East Orange).

"It (the birthday) reminds us all of the importance of living with purpose, cherishing each day and valuing the legacy we leave for future generations," said Green. "This achievement is a testament to the strength, resilience and wisdom that comes with a long life."

Elliot is New Jersey's oldest living woman; a 117-year-old woman in Georgia holds the national record. Rose has invited her celebrants for her 109th birthday next year.

ORANGE - Those who were looking to celebrate Mardi Gras 2025 March 4 here at the Hat City Kitchen may want to book elsewhere at least for this year. HCK had closed by Jan. 1, apparently ending a 15-year run here at 459 Valley St. The restaurant, bar and music venue had succeeded Ricci's in the Valley Italian Restaurant and Lounge in 2010.

HANDS, Inc.'s property management still has the restaurant among its Orange and Orange Valley holdings. One real estate website has the 4,000 square foot eatery listed as an investment opportunity and Wikipedia.org has it as "permanently closed."

HANDS bought the Valley and Forest streets southwestern corner property in 2010. It had "Creosoul" cuisine - a combination of American Standard, Southern, Cajun and Creole cuisine. (It had lately held "Tacos

(Continued on page 14)

LOCAL TALK

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EX-MAYOR SENTENCED FOR ABUSING TOWN RESOURCES AND FORGING DOCUMENTS

TRENTON - Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin and the Office of Public Integrity and Accountability (OPIA) announced the sentencing of the ex-mayor of Clark Township, Salvatore Bonaccorso, after he pleaded guilty to two crimes for using township employees to operate his private oil tank removal business and submitting fraudulent applications to various municipalities to unlawfully obtain permits for the tank removals.

Bonaccorso, 64, of Clark, was sentenced on February 7, 2025 to three years of probation and fined \$15,000 by New Jersey Superior Court Assignment Judge Lisa Miralles Walsh, presiding in Union County. The court's sentence was consistent with the terms of a plea agreement Bonaccorso reached with the State.

The former mayor previously pleaded guilty on January 10, 2025, to a two-count accusation charging him with conspiring to commit official misconduct (3rd degree) and forgery (4th degree).

As part of the plea agreement resolving the case, the mayor as well as his landscaping and underground storage tank company, Bonaccorso & Son LLC, also agreed to a five-year ban on bidding for public contracts, entering into any public contracts, or conducting business with the State or its political subdivisions. Additionally, they are barred for three years from conducting, or contracting to conduct, any storage tank removals for any private commercial or residential property owners.

"The former mayor misused taxpayer-funded resources in Clark to benefit and enrich himself at residents' expense," said At-

HOUSING (Cont. from page 5)

nates against potential renters seeking a quality, safe place to live. We're backing up that commitment with the enforcement actions announced today."

"Housing discrimination continues to harm far too many of our residents," said Sundeep Iyer, Director of the Division on Civil Rights. "The enforcement actions announced today demonstrate our ongoing commitment to holding accountable property managers, property owners, real estate agents, and their brokerages for housing discrimination, and to ensuring that recipients of government rental assistance are able to access safe, stable housing in New Jersey."

The 15 Findings of Probable Cause announced today involved housing in Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Monmouth, and Passaic counties. The enforcement actions included findings of probable cause against six different real estate brokerages: Opirhory Realtors, Howard Hanna Rand Realty, KP Edgestone Realty LLC, Property Advisers LLC d/b/a/Better Home Realty, New and Modern Group LLC, and United Real Estate.

In several of the cases in which DCR issued Findings of Probable Cause, DCR's

torney General Platkin. "This successful prosecution by OPIA's Corruption Bureau ensures he will be unable to ever again abuse his authority. We will continue to hold accountable anyone who abuses the public trust no matter how powerful they may be."

"Today's sentence comes after former mayor Bonaccorso pleaded guilty to two serious crimes related to his abuse of office," said Drew Skinner, Executive Director of OPIA.

OPIA charged Bonaccorso on November 20, 2023 after a Corruption Bureau investigation found that, while acting in his official capacity as the mayor, Bonaccorso operated his oil tank-removal business out of his township office utilizing municipal resources. He stored and maintained the records for the business at the mayor's office, used township computers, fax machines and other equipment, and directed or used 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.

During the investigation, OPIA also discovered that the defendant and his company, Bonaccorso & Son, fraudulently used an engineer's name, license number, as well as, in many cases, forged 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 actually taking place at the job sites. Neither Bonaccorso nor his company had the necessary underground-storage-tank-removal license re-

quired to do such work. investigation found that the housing provider's discriminatory conduct resulted in multiple prospective tenants being turned away based on their receipt of government rental assistance. For example, DCR's investigation of one property in Newark found at least three individuals who had reached out to the property owners and were told that the property owner does not accept Section 8 vouchers. Similarly, for one property in Jersey City, DCR's investigation found that the property owner had never rented to a Section 8 voucher holder in their eight years of owning the property even though the owner had received multiple inquiries from Section 8 voucher holders.

In another case, a real estate broker representing a property in Elmwood Park violated the LAD by verbally stating that a unit was "not equipped for Section 8." Internal text messages obtained during DCR's investigation showed that, in response to other inquiries from prospective tenants with vouchers, the real estate agent had made derogatory statements about Section 8 voucher-holders and suggested that she does not generally show apartments to individuals with housing vouchers.

Meanwhile, in one case involving another

quired 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.

New Jersey law prohibits any individual from doing work on unregulated heating-oil tank 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 closure, who is working for a closure-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 investigation.

er property in Jersey City, DCR found probable cause that a real estate broker violated the LAD not only by indicating that the landlord "doesn't accept Section 8," but also for stating that the applicant would not qualify because the landlord was looking for a minimum monthly income of three times the monthly rent without accounting for the portion of the rent paid by a voucher.

A finding of probable cause is not a final adjudication on the merits of a case; it means DCR has concluded its preliminary investigation and determined there is sufficient evidence to support a reasonable suspicion the LAD has been violated.

The five consent decrees announced today involved a total of 14 housing providers, real estate agents, and real estate brokers. They involved properties in Newark and Jersey City. The consent decrees - which include resolution agreements with three different real estate brokerages: Keller Williams City Life Realty, Weichert Realtors Jersey City Downtown, and Realty Mark LLC - require the respondents in all five of these cases to make a payment to complainants, as well as a payment to DCR.

COALITION SUES TO STOP ELON MUSK AND DOGE'S ATTACKS ON AMERICANS

On Feb. 7, New Jersey Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin today joined a coalition of 19 attorneys general in filing a lawsuit against the Trump administration to stop the unauthorized disclosure of Americans' private information and sensitive data.

The lawsuit asserts that the Trump Administration illegally provided Elon Musk and the so-called "Department of Government Efficiency" ("DOGE") unauthorized access to the Treasury Department's central payment system, and therefore to Americans' most sensitive personal information, including bank account details and Social Security numbers.

This expanded access could allow Musk and his team to block federal funds to states and programs providing health care, child care, and other critical services. With this lawsuit, the coalition of attorneys general is seeking to stop the Trump Administration's new policy that illegally grants DOGE, Musk,

and others access to Americans' confidential information and the U.S. Treasury's payment systems.

"President Trump has allowed an unelected billionaire to infiltrate key federal agencies and systems that store Social Security numbers, banking information, and other extremely sensitive data for millions of people," said Attorney General Platkin.

"These unlawful actions have put at risk the financial and information security of our State and residents and Americans across the country, and they are completely unacceptable. Americans never elected Elon Musk, and our lawsuit seeks to protect New Jerseyans from this unprecedented breach of privacy, and of the laws of our nation. I will never back down from a fight to protect our residents from harm - even if it is against the richest man in the world."

Beginning February 2, 2025, the Trump administration's

Treasury Department adopted a new policy that grants "special government employees," including Elon Musk and members of DOGE, access to its central payment system operated by the Bureau of Fiscal Services ("BFS"). This central payment system controls vital funding that millions of Americans depend on, including Social Security payments, veterans benefits, Medicare and Medicaid payments, and more. The payment system also controls billions of dollars that states rely on to support essential services like law enforcement, public education, and infrastructure repairs.

Access to BFS is limited by federal law to a select group of career civil servants with the appropriate security clearances. Attorney General Platkin and the coalition assert the Treasury Department's new policy, which expands access to BFS's payment system, violates the law, jeopardizes Americans' most sensitive personal information,

and would allow Elon Musk and other unauthorized political appointees to access a system that could permit them to freeze federal funds with the click of a button in violation of the Constitution.

With this lawsuit, Attorney General Platkin and the coalition of attorneys general are seeking an injunction preventing the Trump administration from continuing its new policy of expanded access to BFS's payment system, as well as a declaration that the Treasury Department's policy change is unlawful and unconstitutional.

Joining Attorney General Platkin in filing the lawsuit are the attorneys general of Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

WORLD NEWS (Cont. from pg. 7)

over unnecessary and excessive uses of force against children by Israeli forces during operations in the West Bank," said OCHA.



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.

Fresh sanctions are targeting ZSERVERS, a key component of the Russian cybercrime supply chain, and 6 of its members, as well as its UK front company, XHOST Internet Solutions LP. ZSERVERS provide vital infrastructure for cybercriminals as they plan and execute attacks against the UK.

The illicit supply chain protects, supports and conceals the operations of some of the world's most ruthless ransomware gangs. Ransomware actors rely on these services to launch attacks, extort victims and store stolen data.

In the modern digital-first economy,

cyber security is a non-negotiable cornerstone of business success. A secure digital economy is a less attractive target for cybercriminals and a more attractive home for investment, generating jobs and putting more money into hardworking people's pockets, delivering on this government's Plan for Change.

Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, said: "Putin has built a corrupt mafia state driven by greed and ruthlessness. It is no surprise that the most unscrupulous extortionists and cyber-criminals run rampant from within his borders.

"This government will continue to work with partners to constrain the Kremlin and the impact of Russia's lawless cyber underworld. We must counter their actions at every opportunity to safeguard the UK's national security and deliver on our Plan for Change.

Predatory ransomware groups pose a clear and persistent threat to national security, public services and privacy. These attacks threaten critical national infrastructure, disrupt essential services, compromise sensitive data and generated \$1 billion from their victims globally in 2023 alone.

Minister of State for Security, Dan Jarvis, said: "Ransomware attacks by Russian affiliated cybercrime gangs are some of the most harmful cyber threats we face today and the government is tackling them head on. Denying cybercriminals the tools of their trade weakens their capacity to do serious harm to the UK.

"We have already announced new world-

first proposals to deter ransomware attacks and destroy their business model. With these targeted sanctions and the full weight of our law enforcement, we are countering the threats we face to protect our national security, a foundation of our Plan for Change, and our economy.

ZSERVERS explicitly advertise themselves to illicit actors as a Bulletproof Hosting (BPH) Provider. Some BPH are known to host hackers, misinformation, child exploitation material, spam and hate speech. BPH providers like ZSERVERS, protect and enable cybercriminals, offering a range of purchasable tools which mask their locations, identities, and activities. Targeting these providers can disrupt hundreds or thousands of criminals simultaneously.

The Feb. 11 action is the latest in a series of coordinated steps alongside US and Australian partners, and comes off the back of recent sanctions against notorious ransomware groups LockBit and Evil Corp.

LockBit affiliates are known to have used ZSERVERS as a launch pad for targeting the UK, enabling ransomware attacks against various targets, including the non-profit sector.

Protecting the nation from threats both physical and digital sits at the foundation of the government's Plan for Change. That is why we are moving through the entire ransomware pipeline step by step, cracking down on Russian cybercriminals that threaten the UK's security, integrity, and prosperity.

The Observation Booth



OP-ED By Andrea Dialect

PUNK

The definition of punk was quite clear to me. I was bent on the title weeks ago. Ironically, its true origin never crossed my mind. Punk, to me, meant punk. You know, that someone that allows anyone to do anything to them - no pushback, no fight.

Coming across a lot of that lately. But Google gave me a reminder. Ironically, my punk definition was even harder to find. And when I asked ChatGPT, although I begged it to differ, that copycat came to the same end - until I disclosed what I meant. Then - voila - it kinda knew what it meant.

I find that I stammer more than my daddy did when chit-chattin' while crossing paths

with many of those so-called non-punks around the way. "I ain't no punk" is usually the intro into that verbal exchange, the bridge that extends to a roadway of driven caution, making for a smoother ride. My response in that convo - clean version - is usually one size fits all.

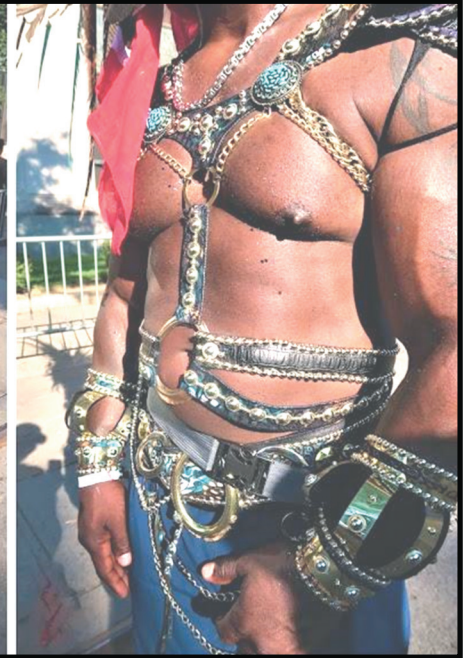
When weighing self-control and gagging and hog-tying the ego - while ignoring the peanut gallery, who gladly coax ya on by telling you to redeem yourself as they pave the way, plotting your demise - I tell 'em, "Now you got all those years in the big house trying to convince yourself you ain't, which will be triggered even more so when one of those Cos likely female is barking them commands.

Now that you seeing red all the time, your ol' boy ego is snug as a bug 'cause he got playmates for days - and now he's the man; And for the peanut gallery that you had to impress? Sorry, they probably can't make no visits, but your story will live on. 'Cause they gonna tell what had happened every chance they get - now that you've been punked." Now, weigh that against all the years you'll spend pumping that iron, Iron Man!

I am literally in shock at the state of the world - by how much we've lost ourselves, wanting to be accepted by other folk, listening to all those self proclaimed hierarchy and our own ego driving destruction. My daddy, aka Mr. Brown - I can truly say he



Photo Credit Andrea Dialect



wasn't one. His not being a punk was voicefully stated, mainly by his actions....In loving memory of Mr. Brown!

Check out the draft below for the head game by example. Visit Localtalkweekly.com to read the full story in the Entertainment section. While you're at it, check out the archives and get familiar with all things Andrea Dialect. You'll also want to come along on my Andrea Dialect Facebook Lab live session - buried treasures turn up every morning. Come join me live as I develop my daily PORTAL sessions. I'll see you between 5-6 a.m. Set those notifications.

Remember, everything I do on social is raw, homegrown, and experimental mockups. Follow my @msdialect Instagram, and let's grow out loud together! Like, follow, and share.

STUTTER

Google Donny Hathaway's "A Change Is Gonna Come" and let it play as you read this short...

First off, I heard the ins and cries quite often throughout my life. I was quite young when he stumbled into the church house at my mama's surprise - falling on his knees at my mama's feet, then at the feet of Jesus. ...

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

TOWN WATCH (Cont. from pg. 10)

and Tequila Tuesdays.") The live weekend bands usually played jazz, rhythm and blues and Southern rock. Yelp.com has 25 pages of mostly favorable reviews of the Valley Arts District landmark going back most of the last 15 years.

HCK - named in tribute of the hat industry here - had closed in 2019 for a renovation and a management change. Although food and beverage hospitality, like most retail, has had a challenging post-pandemic boom, no indication has been given on the place's future.

Contemporary real estate directory listings have the 2.5 story corner building constructed after 1952. Ernest A. DiRocco, who lived nearby at 286 Forest, owned and operated DiRocco's

Park View Inn from at least 1961 to 1980. "Local Talk," while attending Forest Street School in 1964, remembered the inn, the barber shop next door at 461 Valley, the triangular city park with a World War One artillery gun in place, the school crossing guard and the family dog waiting to take him home.

DiRocco's inn became the Jailhouse Pub and Pizzeria by 1985 and Ricci's Restaurant/Ricci's in the Valley by 1995.

WEST ORANGE - Mayor Joe Krakoviak and the Township Council may have given their final say on their eight-month-old in the works ordinance to ban fundraising "pop-up" house parties at their Feb. 11 meeting.

Krakoviak, at their Jan. 28 meeting, passed an introduction that would revise fines on home-

owners who host such popup parties. It also spells out what a residential pop up party is:

"A party for profit including any event/gathering" at a residence "whereby the owner, occupant and/or operator solicits or advertises the use of the residence where the guests pay for tickets, wristbands or other form of entry or for food or alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages."

Neighbors of those holding the pop up fundraising parties told West Orange elders that they were subjected to late night noise and/or loss of parking space.

"The purpose of the (added) sections is to provide recourse for the township if such pop-up parties occur in the future," said Councilwoman Michele Casalino Jan. 28, "and to put the public on notice that the same is pro-

hibited as a health and safety concern for the public's general welfare."

SOUTH ORANGE - Memories of longtime village firefighter Thomas C. Mercadante, 100, linger after his last rites were held in Middletown Jan.16 and after the South Essex Fire Department had put away its mourning bunting.

SOFD Capt. Thomas Charles Mercadante, who was born Aug 25, 1924, died in Belmar, surrounded by his family, Jan. 8. He was a Post-World War Two village firefighter and fire inspector until his 1995 retirement.

Mercadante came to the village after his 1945 honorable discharge. He enlisted with the U.S. Army and was deployed in the European Theater. The M-1
(Continued on page 15)

TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 14)

Rifles and 37th Motor Vehicle Assembly member received "Good Conduct" and other honorary medals.

Mercadante married childhood sweetheart Rose in 1947 and moved here to raise daughter Geralyn and sons Thomas Craig, Joseph and Stephen. He also became a local Knights of Columbus St. Vincent de Paul Society member.

Mercadante moved to Belmar after his beloved Rose's death in 2017. Son Thomas Craig predeceased him in 2015. Granddaughter Ariana and grandson Garrett also survive him.

His Funeral Mass was held at Middletown's St. Mary Mother of God Church. Memorial donations may go to St. Vincent de Paul Society: ssvpusa.org.

MAPLEWOOD - A defamation lawsuit filed by a former South Orange-Maplewood School District Board of Education member against a fellow former colleague and at least two other "Friends of Frank" officers is circulating in New Jersey Superior Court-Newark since its December filing.

Township resident Elissa Malespina and her attorney, James H. Davis III, in their 57-page filing, are accusing former board member Courtney Winkfield, "Friends of Frank" officers Rachel Fisher and Stephanie Nasteff plus unnamed "Friends" members of making "false statements about me (that) have caused damage to my reputation, career and personal well-being."

Malespina said that "Friends of Frank" - created to support Columbia High School Principal Frank Sanchez during his January-June 2024 suspension by SOMSD administrators - had circulated what she said were mistruths over a draft internal Sanchez report that she had brought to the Maplewood Police Department's attention that January.

Sanchez was being internally investigated by a school-district consultant over the veracity of a report of his 2023 altercation of a then-15-year-old girl in a CHS hallway. Malespina had admitted forwarding the draft report to MPD, saying that she was required by law to do so.

MPD forwarded that report to ECPO, which became part of the basis of their Jan. 3 arrest of Sanchez on felony child endangerment. That count was dismissed in Superior Court, allowing SOMSD to reinstate him in June. There is a misdemeanor simple assault charge against him to be heard in Maplewood-South Orange Municipal Court.

"Friends of Frank" has raised funds in 2024 for Sanchez's legal defense bills. Malespina lawyer Davis has represented SOMA Black Parents Workshop on sev-

eral cases; SOMA BPW has supported the 15-year-old student's account.

Winkfield, Fisher and Nasteff are meanwhile represented by Morristown attorney Zachery Wellbrook, who called Malespina and Davis' claims were "demonstrably false." Malespina said that she and Davis had offered the named defendants an opportunity to apologize before filing last December.

BLOOMFIELD - To say that things were "popping" before 224 Broad St. here Feb. 6, which brought Bloomfield Fire Department and Public Service Electric & Gas trucks there, would be accurate.

Units from Bloomfield Fire Headquarters, according to that Thursday's blotter, were summoned to the North Center address at about 10 a.m. The caller said that there was an underground electrical vault fire with "multiple minor explosions." BFD, in turn, called on PSE&G.

Fire and utility trucks descended on 224 Broad and promptly detoured traffic. Buses on NJTransit's No. 72 and 709 routes were affected.

Public Service, once firefighters extinguished the blaze, determined that no safety concerns existed. While one utility truck made repairs, the crew of another truck surveyed neighboring addresses.

Several buildings, whose evacuated occupants said they had smelled a burning odor, were found to have some elevated carbon monoxide levels. Those levels were brought down after BFD personnel used their ventilation fans.

224 Broad is a newly-built four-story 17 unit apartment building. The new structure was approved by the Bloomfield Planning Board in early 2022.

GLEN RIDGE - The 1974 Ralston Purina Meow Mix commercial jingle will live on after its borough resident creator has passed on. Ronald Donato Travisano, 86, died Jan. 21 after a short illness in Cedar Grove. Travisano, wife Frances and their four children lived at 276 Ridge-wood Ave, 1971-85 while he was partner with Jerry Della Femina at their ad agency.

It was at Femina, Travisano & Partners where he came up with the "Meow Mix" commercial, where a filmed house cat is dubbed to sing "Meow-Meow-Meow-Meow/Meow-Meow-Meow-Meow/Meow-MEOW-Meow/Meow-Meow-Meow-Meow." Its end tag line is "The cat food cats ask for by name."


The either amusing or annoying jingle earned a 1974 Clio Award for Travisano and his agency. What "The New York Times" called "one of the best known and readily sung commercial jingles" is still used by Ralston Purina.

Born in Newark in 1938, Travisano was raised in Kearny, where he met and married Frances Bogiovanni. The couple

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first moved to 111 Raab Ave., Bloomfield in 1969 before calling the borough home. He and Della Femina formed their agency in 1967.

Travisano left Della Femina in 1985 to pursue television commercial production through 2001. He personally directed hundreds of commercials from all six populated continents under the Travisano, DiGiacomo Films banner. He and the outfit earned several Cannes Film Festival Silver and Gold Lions awards.

Travisano moved to Cedar Grove after his beloved Frances' death in 2017. Sister Laura Sammarco also predeceased him. Sons Vincent, Philip, Ronald, daughter Laura Hurley, six grandchildren and a great-grandchild are among his survivors.

A Jan. 24 visitation at Kearny's Armitage & Wiggins Funeral Home was followed by the Jan. 25 prayer service at North Arlington's Holy Cross Cemetery Mausoleum Chapel No. Three. Memorial donations may go to Good Grief Family Support Center, 38 Elm St., Morristown 07960.



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