

LOCAL TALK

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25¢

“LET’S TALK FOR THE BETTERMENT OF OUR COMMUNITIES”

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER

ESSEX COUNTY • EAST ORANGE • ORANGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE “OPEN HOUSE” IN WEST CALDWELL

Essex County College is excited to invite prospective students to an Open House on Thursday, April 3, 2025, at the new West Essex Campus, located at 730 Bloomfield Avenue in West Caldwell. The event will run from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

“This Open House is an excellent chance to explore Essex County College and discover what we offer. Attendees can tour the campus, meet faculty and staff, and inquire about financial aid, campus activities, and clubs,” said Dr. Renee Ojo-Ohikuare, Executive Director of Enrollment Management & Services.

Prospective students attending the Open House will have their \$30 application fee waived. Qualified attendees can benefit from instant admission and express registration services. Transfer students will receive an evaluation of their earned credits. Information on financial aid, transfer options, and both credit and non-credit programs will be available.

Summer I classes begin on May 5th, and Summer II classes start on July 7th.

Essex County College provides over 50 Associate degree programs and more than two dozen Academic Certificates. Students can earn degrees in fields such as Nursing and Health Sciences, Business, Computer Science, Engineering Technologies, the Humanities, and the Social Sciences.

For more details about the West Caldwell Open House, email welcomcenter@essex.edu or call 973-877-3175.

EAST ORANGE SCHOOL DISTRICT GETS BUDGET BOOST

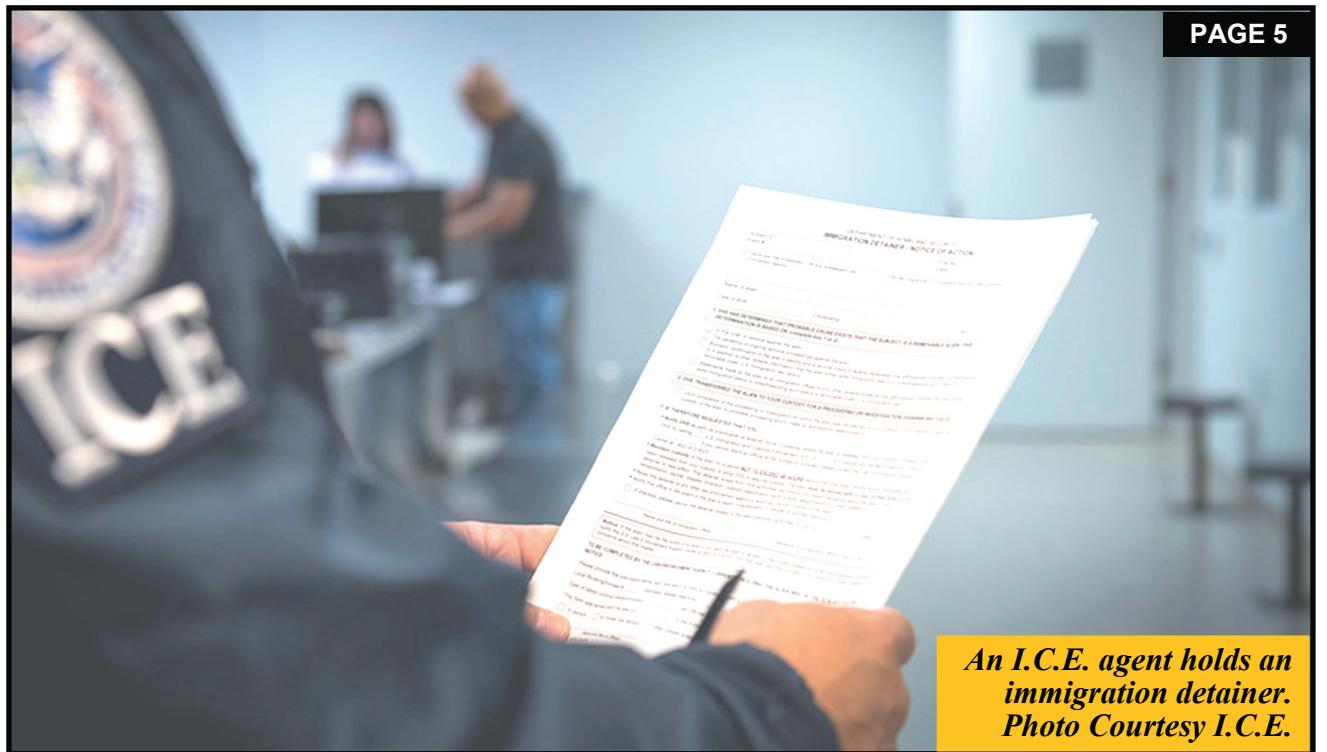
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*Cicely Tyson School
in East Orange*

NEWARK - A FUTURE STOP FOR I.C.E. DEPORTEES?

PAGE 5



*An I.C.E. agent holds an
immigration detainer.
Photo Courtesy I.C.E.*



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Turn
To
PAGE
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Editorial
Dhiren Shah
 Editor-In-Chief

Hello Readers,

Like Baseball, Cricket is my passion. The ICC (International Cricket Council) has organized a One Day Cricket International. The host country is Pakistan, but due to the conflict between India and Pakistan, India refused to play in Pakistan. So, all the Indian games are being played in Dubai. Four countries are in the semi-finals. India, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. All four teams are very strong teams. India is already in the finals after winning over Australia. By the time you read this, South Africa and New Zealand will have played for the second spot in the finals. A total of 108 countries participated in the ICC World Cup.

President Trump's tariffs received lot of protest from China, Canada and Mexico. Many media outlets have said that due to the tariffs, products will be costlier, and the burden would go to the consumer. If this is so, then why are China, Canada and Mexico so concerned. Tariffs may increase the cost of the products to some extent. However, more industries will move to the country and ultimately it will be a winning situation.

Right now, the steel industry is getting hurt. Many products we buy nowadays are coming from China. The cost of Chinese products is cheaper than American products and most of the time other products are also coming in from other parts of the world. To improve the economy, tariffs might help local manufacturers in my opinion. That said, there will be trade war. Trump had a speech scheduled at the Joint Session of Congress, so we might have gotten an answer from there.

Last week's clash between

President Trump, Vice President Vance and Ukrainian President Zelensky. Everyone knows that Zelensky cannot properly fight Russia without the full support of the U.S. He knows that as well. So, Zelensky said on X, "Our meeting in Washington, at the White House on Friday, did not go the way it was supposed to be. It is regrettable that it happened this way. It is time to make things right." As per the news, Zelensky will sign a mineral deal with the U.S.

Trump has promised to stop the war. He exaggerated and stated that he could stop the war in 24 hours. That statement came out wrong. However, he is trying to solve the problem with his way of handling things between Russia and Ukraine. There are two civil wars going on in the world as of today, which are with Yemen and Myanmar. Hopefully, both wars can be stopped as soon as possible.

Politics and politicians usually steer people's minds and start wars for whatever reason is con-

venient for them. Power and money are the ultimate goal for some leaders. I hope someone can change that. Some of the religions are also guilty of this. In the name of religion, they make sure that the war continues. Their power of speech or oratorship can change people's minds and they always look at one side of the incident or incidents.

Per CNN: "A plan for Gaza formulated by Egypt would exclude Hamas from governance of the enclave once the war ends, a draft of the plan obtained by CNN shows. The plan is being discussed by Arab leaders meeting in Cairo in an emergency summit on Tuesday, with Egypt's president proposing a Palestinian committee to temporarily govern Gaza - taking over from Hamas and eventually handing power to the Palestinian Authority (PA)."

Have a wonderful week.

I'll talk to you next week.

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WEATHER FOR THE WEEK

<u>THURSDAY</u>	<u>FRIDAY</u>	<u>SATURDAY</u>	<u>SUNDAY</u>	<u>MONDAY</u>	<u>TUESDAY</u>	<u>WEDNESDAY</u>
Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny / Windy	Partly Cloudy
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LO 32	LO 34	LO 31	LO 35	LO 31	LO 44	LO 50

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The Doctor Is In



OP-ED By Adil Manzoor

Preventive Health Strategies: A Holistic Approach to Wellness

Imagine you wake up one day and visit your doctor for a routine checkup on your body, and the entire discussion is about staying healthy as opposed to recounting symptoms or complaints. That is what preventive medicine is all about. In this branch of internal medicine, we labor more to keep people healthy than treat illnesses once they arrive.

For the past decades, we've built healthcare to be primarily reactive. You get sick, you make an appointment with the doctor, and you're treated. What if it were possible to prevent many of those diseases in the first place?

70% of global mortality is a result of chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and heart diseases. And the good news? All these diseases can be prevented with lifestyle changes and early medical interventions. It allows us to reduce the burden of disease, lower healthcare costs, and improve quality of life.

Many conditions develop silently. They tend to show symptoms only in advanced stages. So, is there any early-warning system in place? Yes - routine screenings. I know we doctors never fail to mention the importance of regular health screenings. It allows us to detect abnormalities before they escalate into life-threatening problems. Simple steps like regular blood pressure checks or cholesterol tests can go a long way. Specific screenings like mammograms for breast cancer or blood glucose tests for diabetes can dra-

matically improve survival rates when diseases are caught early.

What do you eat? How often do you move? How well do you manage stress? Your answer to these questions may determine your long-term health. A diet centered on whole foods, lean proteins, and healthy fats has been shown to prevent many chronic health conditions.

Physical activity is just as important. You should be getting at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week to reduce the risk of heart disease, metabolic disorders, stroke, and other related conditions. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Take a short walk after meals. Practice yoga and deep breathing exercises. These seemingly small steps can contribute to long-term well-being. Ensuring a consistent sleep schedule and creating a restful sleep environment can also significantly enhance overall health and immune function.

Vaccinations have been one of the most groundbreaking advancements in medicine, preventing millions of deaths each year. Childhood immunizations are well established, but we don't seem to take adult vaccinations as crucial. Flu shots, COVID-19 boosters, pneumonia vaccines, shingles immunizations, and others are not "money-making schemes" as some people may perceive them. They are critical for maintaining long-term health.

Beyond vaccines, preventive medications come into play in high-risk populations. Take, for example, people with high cholesterol. Medications like statins can help lower their risk of heart disease. Likewise, taking low-dose aspirin may prevent heart attacks or strokes for some people. But not everyone needs these medications. It all depends on your unique health risks. That's why personalized care matters. We assess your health and tailor prevention strategies to keep you safe and healthy.

There are two sides of a coin. In preventive medicine, one is physical health and the other is mental well-being. Chronic stress is a silent killer that is responsible for many diseases. The world today is so fast-paced. Constant connectivity and rising demands make us run from one task to another without any time to breathe. Hence, stress management is an integral part of preventive medi-



cine.

Now is the time to start incorporating mindfulness activities, cognitive behavioral therapy, and regular habits of relaxation into your lifestyle. It will blow your mind how simple it is to decrease stress and increase mental health through deep breathing techniques and spending time in nature. But you don't even need to do it by yourself. Social bonds are also involved. Start making close relationships and participating in shared activities. This can foster emotional strength and lower the risk of depression and anxiety.

Many deaths are preventable, and some of them are those caused by tobacco and excessive alcohol consumption. Smoking is directly linked to lung cancer, heart disease, and stroke. The good news is that quitting can drastically reduce health risks. There are various smoking cessation programs available now. Nicotine replacement therapy, counseling, and behavioral interventions have proven highly effective. Similarly, chronic alcohol use contributes to liver disease and cardiovascular problems. Moderation is key. For those struggling with alcohol dependence, you're not alone. Medical support, therapy, and peer support groups can offer pathways to recovery.

Preventive care is evolving, and you must keep up with this transition. There are devices that you wear on your wrist, which track your heart rate and how sleeping patterns. It will help you to be in control of your health in real-time. Machine learning and artificial intelligence are also helping healthcare providers detect diseases early. At the same time, genetic screening is allowing very personalized prevention tailored to an individual's suscep-

tibilities.

Healthcare is becoming more proactive than reactive. Internal medicine is taking the lead in putting prevention ahead of treatment. This transformation improves your health outcomes while lightening the economic and logistical burden on healthcare systems globally. So the next time you see your physician, don't wait for symptoms to occur. Begin the discussion on how you can be proactive about health conditions and take charge of your health.

Stay informed. Stay proactive. Stay healthy.

This article was written by Dr. Adil Manzoor, DO, a Board-Certified Internist; Board certified Pediatrician who works as a Hospitalist and Emergency Room Physician. He is also the current President of Garden State Street Medicine, a non-profit organization whose sole purpose is to provide free preventive and acute urgent care services for the homeless.

He is also the co-founder of his own unique medical practice, Mobile Medicine NJ; House Call Doctors. He is also currently pursuing an Executive MBA and a Master's of Science in Healthcare Leadership at Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management and the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences.

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NEWARK - A FUTURE STOP FOR I.C.E. DEPORTEES?

By Walter Elliott

NEWARK - The Immigration and Customs Enforcement's intention to reopen Delaney Hall at 451 Doremus Ave. as a detention facility for deportees Feb. 27 received a "Not if we have a say in it," reaction from Mayor Ras Baraka later that Thursday.

Baraka, in that afternoon's interview with a statewide media outlet, said that ICE and would-be operator GEO Group has not done the legal due processing in reopening the 1,000-bed facility.

"Delaney Hall cannot legally open at this time," said the Mayor. We're going over there in the next couple of days and will probably do a stop work order to shut the building down until they finish getting permits. You wouldn't be able to sign contracts or do any of these things without even knowing if you're going to get into this facility."

Baraka ran down a list of needed permits from fire suppression and for elevators to at least a temporary certificate of occupancy.

"First, you have to get change-of-use permitting from the (Newark Central) planning board; that hasn't been done," added the Mayor. "If you did work on a building, you have to get permits to do that. They did not get any city permits to start or finish work. And, once the work is done, it has to be inspected.

"Regardless of the process," concluded Baraka, "an immigrant detention center is not welcomed here."

The President Donald J. Trump Administration announced that morning that ICE and Delaney Hall's owner, GEO Group, signed a 15-year operations contract. Payments to GEO - a private prison owner and operator from Boca Raton, Fla. - would be paid \$60 million to house the to-be-deported the first year and about \$1 billion into 2040.

The contract, according to geogroup.com, would be providing security, maintenance and food service plus access to legal counsel, medical care and recreation activities. GEO will have exclusive use. The company intends to reopen the facility between April 1 and June 30.

GEO had run the hall adjacent to the Essex County Corrections Facility 2011-17 to house immigrant detainees. It is to be the first such facility to be reopened under the Second Trump Administration.

There had been rumblings that GEO wanted to reopen Delaney since April 2024. The company, at that time, took the State of New Jersey to court to strike down the latter's law that barred any future public or private entities from contracting with ICE to house detainees. The law came from another company, CoreCivic, owning and operating a detention facility in Elizabeth.

A federal judge partially struck down that law, allowing private detention facilities to continue operating in Elizabeth and elsewhere in New Jersey, in 2023.

Acting ICE Director Caleb Vitello said that Delaney's size and proximity to Newark Liberty International Airport will help it pursue the Trump Administration's order to "remove illegal aliens from our communities."

The President's administrators, indeed, had been looking for more jails across the country to house those ICE had detained for potential deportation to the detainees' "home" countries or third party countries, like El Salvador, who so accept.

The Administration, for example, had opened a 30,000-bed tent city in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for what they are calling "deportees with criminal convictions." The feds have been negotiating with New York City Mayor Eric Adams about reopening part

of the latter's Rikers Island Detention Facility for ICE use. Surplus and active military bases are also being examined.

ICE has made an average 750 daily arrests since Jan. 20, more than what the Biden and Obama administrations had done. Trump's administrators however, on Feb. 7, told ICE to make 1,200 to 1,400 daily arrests. This is despite ICE detaining up to 42,000 people by that day - some 2,000 over the agency's budgeting.

Those arrests were originally for undocumented adults who have been convicted of a felony. "Just felons," however, are not the only ones being deported.

Newarkers remember ICE entering an Ironbound fish wholesaler and leaving with its manager under its arrest in January. Its agents refused to honor the U.S. citizen's military identification card.

Trump had meanwhile signed the Laken Riley Act into law Jan. 29. The act requires the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's agents to detain undocumented immigrants who are accused of theft, burglary, assaulting a law enforcement officer and "any crime that causes serious bodily injury" like DWI.

HHS Secretary Kristi Noem, on Feb. 20, signed an order ending Temporary Protective Status on some 500,000 Haitians in August and Trump, on Feb. 2, revoking TPS on some 300,000 Venezuelans. Trump, in his first administration, sought to revoke TPS on people from Haiti, Sudan, and El Salvador.

Awarding the Delaney Hall contract appears to be in keeping with the Trump Administration's breakneck speed to dismantle federal agencies, fire employees, pause payments and contracts and erase DEI without considering the legal aspects. The attitude appears to be: "Let's do it and leave any questions or problems with the courts."

EAST ORANGE MAYOR TO PRESENT KEY TO THE CITY TO 2025 SUPER BOWL CHAMP JAHAN DOTSON

East Orange, NJ, March 3, 2025: Philadelphia Eagles Wide Receiver Jahan Dotson, #83, will receive the Key to the City from Mayor Ted R. Green in honor of his team's recent Super Bowl win against the Kansas City Chiefs.

The presentation will be held on Monday, March 10, at 4 pm at City Hall Plaza. All are welcome to attend.

Dotson, who formerly played for the East Orange Jr. Jaguar Pop Warner Football Team, hails from a large, longtime East Orange family, many of whom will be in attendance for the occasion. The last time Mayor Green awarded a Key to the City to an athlete was in 2018 when Buffalo Bills Cornerback Rasul Douglas won his first Super Bowl, also while playing with the Philadelphia Eagles.

"I am extremely proud to present this Key to the City to Jahan Dotson, a young man who has impressed us as he has grown and excelled both on and off the field," said Mayor Green. "This exceptional moment

marks just the beginning of what promises to be a phenomenal career, and we are excited to follow his journey."

Dotson, an accomplished wide receiver in the National Football League (NFL), is known for his speed, agility, and impressive hands. Born on March 22, 2000, to Robin and Al Dotson, Jahan developed a love for football early in life, leading him to play at the collegiate level before being drafted into the NFL. Jahan was a standout in both football and track during high school.

While he was known for his skills as a wide receiver, his athleticism and work ethic allowed him to excel at Nazareth Area High School. In his senior season, Dotson caught over 50 passes for more than 1,000 yards and scored 15 touchdowns. His ability to make plays at critical moments earned him recognition which helped set the stage for his transition to college football.

Dotson played college football at Penn State University, where he quickly made a name for himself as one of the top receivers

in the country. He racked up over 2,000 yards receiving and scored 25 touchdowns during his college career. In his final season, Dotson earned First-Team All-Big Ten honors.

His remarkable performance at Penn State earned him a spot in the first round of the 2022 NFL Draft, where he was selected by the Washington Commanders. Since entering the NFL, Jahan has continued to impress with his route-running, athleticism, and ability to make plays in crucial moments.

After two years with the Commanders, he was traded to the Philadelphia Eagles. After his trade, Jahan and the Philadelphia Eagles became Superbowl Champions at Super Bowl LIX. Beyond football, Jahan is committed to giving back to the community and inspiring the next generation of athletes. He's dedicated to using his platform to mentor young people by encouraging them to pursue their passions and stay focused on their goals, both on and off the field.



UNITED STATES



EPSTEIN FILES RELEASED

On Feb. 27, Attorney General Pamela Bondi, in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), declassified and publicly released files related to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein and his sexual exploitation of over 250 underage girls at his homes in New York and Florida, among other locations. The first phase of declassified files largely contains documents that have been previously leaked but never released in a formal capacity by the U.S. Government.

“This Department of Justice is following through on President Trump’s commitment to transparency and lifting the veil on the disgusting actions of Jeffrey Epstein and his co-conspirators,” said Attorney General Pamela Bondi. “The first phase of files released today sheds light on Epstein’s extensive network and begins to provide the public with long overdue accountability.”

“The FBI is entering a new era - one that will be defined by integrity, accountability, and the unwavering pursuit of justice,” said FBI Director Kash Patel. “There will be no cover-ups, no missing documents, and no stone left unturned - and anyone from the prior or current Bureau who undermines this will be swiftly pursued. If there are gaps, we will find them. If records have been hidden, we will uncover them. And we will bring everything we find to the DOJ to be fully assessed and transparently

disseminated to the American people as it should be. The oath we take is to the Constitution, and under my leadership, that promise will be upheld without compromise.”

Attorney General Bondi requested the full and complete files related to Jeffrey Epstein. In response, the Department received approximately 200 pages of documents, however, the Attorney General was later informed of thousands of pages of documents related to the investigation and indictment of Epstein that were not previously disclosed. The Attorney General has requested the FBI deliver the remaining documents to the Department by 8:00 AM on February 28 and has tasked FBI Director Kash Patel with investigating why the request for all documents was not followed.

The Department remains committed to transparency and intends to release the remaining documents upon review and redaction to protect the identities of Epstein’s victims

WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY IN ELVIS SCHEME

A Missouri woman pleaded guilty Feb. 25 in the Western District of Tennessee for her role in a scheme to defraud Elvis Presley’s family of millions of dollars and to steal the family’s ownership interest in Graceland, Elvis Presley’s former home in Memphis, Tennessee.

According to court documents, Lisa Jeanine Findley, 53, of Kimberling City, orchestrated a scheme to conduct a fraudulent sale of Graceland - using a fake company, forged documents, and false court filings - by falsely claiming that Elvis Presley’s daughter had pledged Graceland as collateral for a loan that she failed to repay before her death. Findley threatened to foreclose on Graceland and auction it to the highest bidder if Elvis Presley’s family did not pay or settle the claim against the estate.

Findley pleaded guilty to one count of mail fraud. She is scheduled to be sentenced on June 18 and faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Supervisory Official Antoinette T. Bacon of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division, Acting U.S. Attorney Reagan Taylor Fondren for the Western District of Tennessee, Inspector in Charge Eric Shen of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) Criminal Investigations Group, and Special Agent in Charge Joseph E. Carrico of the FBI Nashville Field Office made the announcement.

The USPIS and FBI Nashville Field Office are investigating the case.

Trial Attorney Aaron Henricks of the Criminal Division’s Fraud Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Carroll L. André III for the Western District of Tennessee are prosecuting the case. Fraud Section Assistant Chief Cory E. Jacobs and Trial Attorney Christopher Fenton provided substantial assistance with the investigation and prosecution.

MASS SHOOTING UPDATE

Information from 3-4-2025

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

- Total Mass Shootings: 57
- Total Dead: 79
- Total Wounded: 206
- Shootings Per Day: 0.90
- Days Reached in Year 2025 as of March 4: 63

WORLD



CONCERN GROWS FOR UKRAINE AFTER WHITE HOUSE DISASTER

Leaders around the world have renewed concerns for Ukraine after one nation pulled support in the aftermath of an argument.

On Feb. 28, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House. However, what was supposed to be a conversation before Zelenskyy signed off on a minerals deal, Trump and Vice President JD Vance took issue with how their guest reacted to their suggestions

on what he should do in handling the war with Russia.

Not long after, Trump announced that he was suspending financial support for Ukraine until Zelenskyy “wants peace.”

Now, some 640,000 women and girls in Ukraine will be affected by cuts to psychosocial support, gender-based violence services, safe spaces, and economic empowerment programs following the confirmation from US authorities to end practically all financial contributions to the UN reproductive and sexual health agency (UNFPA).

A young mother, five children in tow, steps off a train in the central Ukrainian city of Dnipro, holding a small bag. She is fleeing Russian attacks in the Zaporizhzhia region, she is also escaping a violent partner, a man who once beat her so severely she suffered a miscarriage.

She needs urgent medical attention, legal assistance and a safe place for her children. “We met her at the train station,” says Tetiana, a psychologist with a mobile team since 2022. “We also organized a medical escort and lawyers to help with her documents and referrals.”

Tetiana’s unit is one of 87 UNFPA psychosocial support teams, on call for emergency interventions. She can also refer survivors for longer-term assistance, job training and access to legal aid. These resources remain critical for survivors of abuse long after the initial danger has passed - especially in a country where three years of war have caused widespread trauma and deep psychological distress.

Since Russia’s full-scale invasion three years ago, reports of intimate partner violence, domestic abuse, sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence have surged more than threefold in Ukraine. An estimated 2.4 million people – mostly women and girls – are in urgent need of gender-based violence prevention and response services.

“Even after finding some physical safety in Dnipro, many struggle with lingering panic attacks, nightmares and depressive symptoms,” says Tetiana.

Since 2022, more than 50 of UNFPA’s mobile psychosocial teams have been funded by the US Government, and play an

(Continued on page 7)

WORLD NEWS (Cont. from page 6)

indispensable role in helping Ukraine's most vulnerable.

"The city services function, but they lack the same impact and reach. That's why the mobile teams are essential, especially in times of war, as we navigate the wave of displaced people," said Tetiana.

Women are fundamental to the resilience of Ukraine's families, workforce and larger community, but they have endured immense suffering over years of conflict. Ensuring they are supported throughout their personal recovery will be crucial to safeguarding Ukraine's long-term recovery.

With uncertainty now surrounding funding for humanitarian work around the world, the continuity of this vital work is under threat. 640,000 women and girls will be affected by cuts to psychosocial support, gender-based violence services, safe spaces, and economic empowerment programs. Protection for refugees and crisis-affected communities will be diminished.

Essential health services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, support to women-led organizations, and programs promoting women's economic empowerment are all at risk of closure - gravely endangering the safety and well-being of millions of people.

On March 1, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer met with Zelenskyy to reassure him that the rest of Ukraine's allies would do their best in helping them in their fight against Russia.

**MIDDLE EAST
ISRAEL BLOCKS
AID TO GAZA**

Israel's move to prevent all aid from entering the Gaza Strip after Hamas reportedly refused to accept a plan to continue with phase one of the fragile ceasefire has had an immediate impact, including a 100-fold increase in the price of flour and vegetables.

That's according to the UN aid coordination office, OCHA, which said on March 3 that the Kerem Shalom, Erez and Zikim crossing closures means that vital humanitarian assistance, including thousands of tents, can't be delivered to civilians in need.

Phase one of the ceasefire mediated by Egypt, Qatar and the US expired on Saturday, with Hamas calling on Israel to move on to the next agreed phase - but Israel is calling instead for a continuation of phase one through the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan in line with a proposal from the top US envoy to the region.

January's ceasefire deal has seen the release of 33 Israeli hostages who've been held captive since the October 7 terror attacks, with around 1,900 Palestinian pris-

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- ETC.....



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oners exchanged.

"The ceasefire has provided the opportunity to distribute food, to distribute water, as well as shelter assistance and medical aid, allowing nearly everyone in Gaza to receive food parcels," said UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric, briefing reporters in New York.

"Our humanitarian partners tell us that following the closure of the crossings into Gaza yesterday, flour and vegetable prices increased more than 100 percent. Partners are currently assessing the stocks that are current-

ly available," he added.

The UN children's agency, UNICEF, warned that the stoppage of aid deliveries into Gaza will quickly lead to devastating consequences for children and families who are simply struggling to survive.

"The aid restrictions announced yesterday will severely compromise lifesaving operations for civilians," said Edouard Beigbeder, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East. "It is imperative that the ceasefire - a critical lifeline for children - remains in place,

(Continued on page 13)

SPORTS WRAP



By William Hathaway, Jr.

It's March, do you know what that means? March Madness is in play for local area basketball junkies who follow their local area teams in college and high school.

The New Jersey high school basketball version of MM has hit the Essex County area. In boys' basketball, Payne Tech, who had their 14 game winning streak snapped after losing in the Essex County Tournament finals to Seton Hall Prep, took on Orange High School, who was coming off a big win over South Plainfield in the first round of the state tournament. Despite a good season and a 16-9 record, Orange lost to Payne 103-74.

Leading Payne Tech was Robert Foster with 28 points and 11 rebounds, while De-An Armstrong added 19 points for the 21-7 Lions. As of Monday, another area team that has qualified for state tournament action in Section 2 Group 1 would be Arts High, who defeated Ridgefield Park 83-31. Kareem Anthony had 15 points, Shelton Colwell added 14 points and Samaj Long

had 13 points to lead the Jaguars to victory.

In girls' state tournament action, the 15-10 University High basketball team defeated Beloved Charter 68-14. Paradise Fisher led the Lady Phoenix with 12 points and 6 rebounds and Brianna Holt had 15 points and 10 rebounds. Meanwhile, West Orange (22-7), who is coming off winning the Essex County Tournament championship, easily beat Memorial at home 87-13. Sophomore Rhyan Watt continued her great play for WOHS with 15 points and 3 rebounds while Anaya Karriem had 20 points and 5 rebounds.

A surprise team that reached postseason play was the Orange girls team. Head coach Kenia Luna led the Lady Tornadoes to some key wins this season, like beating Irvington at home in the Essex County Invitational Tournament 51-27.

Another big victory was against Newark Tech 57-49. Leading Orange in the Newark Tech game was sophomore Shamia Fryer with 27 points and Phoenix Fraser with 16 points and 4 rebounds.



Photos By William Hathaway, Jr.

The Lady Tornadoes celebrated Senior Night during the last home game of the season, in which all the senior members of the basketball team were honored at halftime with teammates, their family and friends, Orange Superintendent of Schools Gerald Fitzhugh and Anthony Frantantoni, the Assistant Principal of Athletics and Academics.

The seniors that were honored on Senior Night were Luvenia Morton, Makaya Horton, Aryssa Black, Chantel Brewster, Kalea Epitime and Vanessa Clement. That evening, the team took on Somerville and took a tough loss 65-31. Leading Orange was Morton with 17 points and 4 rebounds. Sophomore Shamia Fryer had 6 points and 3 rebounds. OHS then competed in the first round of the

state tournament, with a tough loss to Chatham.

In college basketball, the Seton Hall university women's team won their last home game of the season, beating DePaul 76-67. SHU got a great effort from Savannah Catalon with 23 points and 9 rebounds. They too celebrated a Senior Night where all the seniors honored before the game. This included Amari Wright, Faith Masonius, Kayden Lawson and Ya Ya Lops.

On the men's side, of the ball it was another tough loss on the road for Seton Hall against Big East regular season champion St. John's at Madison Square Garden 71-61. Leading The Hall was Isaiah Coleman with 15 points and 6 rebounds, while senior Dylan Addae-Wusu with 18 points.

Photos By Felicia Laguerre Owens



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GOVERNOR MURPHY PRESENTS FINAL BUDGET PROPOSAL

TRENTON - Governor Phil Murphy delivered his ninth and final budget address on Feb. 25, outlining spending priorities for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY2026) to deliver economic security and opportunity to every New Jerseyan and ensure the state continues to be well prepared for the future. The budget proposal builds upon the Administration's historic investments in expanding affordability, supporting the next generation, maintaining fiscal responsibility, and building a stronger and fairer future for all New Jerseyans.

The Governor's proposed budget expands direct property tax relief for New Jersey homeowners and renters, including funding the new Stay NJ program, and continues support for the popular ANCHOR and Senior Freeze programs. The proposal also provides record school funding, delivers a fifth consecutive full pension payment, and supports significant

investments in New Jersey's economy and communities.

"Our budget proposal for the next fiscal year reflects our ongoing - and unrelenting - commitment to building a New Jersey that is stronger, fairer, and more prepared for the future," Governor Murphy said. "Over the past seven plus years, we have made historic progress in advancing this mission, but we're not done yet. And over the next year, our absolute top priority - as it has been since day one - is delivering economic security and opportunity to every New Jerseyan."

"This budget builds upon this Administration's commitments to making New Jersey more affordable, prioritizing good fiscal stewardship, strengthening our economy, and building healthy communities," said State Treasurer Elizabeth Maher Muoio. "We look forward to working with our partners in the Legislature to deliver a final

budget that benefits New Jerseyans across our state."

The \$58.05 billion budget includes a proposed surplus of \$6.3 billion, while redirecting over 74 percent of the total budget back into our communities in the form of grants-in-aid for property tax relief, social services, and higher education, as well as State aid to schools, municipalities, and counties.

Affordability and Economic Security

The FY2026 budget delivers a record high amount of property tax relief to the people of New Jersey, with nearly \$4.3 billion for Direct Property Tax Relief.

The proposed budget would continue funding for Senior Freeze, New Jersey's property tax reimbursement program for seniors and disabled residents, with a \$239 million allocation to benefit more than 235,000 taxpayers. The Governor also pro-

poses additional funding for the forthcoming Stay NJ program, dedicating \$600 million in resources to significantly reduce property taxes for more than 432,000 senior homeowners.

The budget proposes \$2.4 billion for the continuation of the ANCHOR program to benefit over two million homeowners and tenants. This will be the fourth season of the ANCHOR program, which has provided more than \$6.4 billion in direct tax relief over the past three years.

Continuing the focus on providing relief for working and middle-class families, this budget maintains recent expansions of the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, and the Child Tax Credit. It also includes new sales tax exemptions for baby items, including cribs, car seats, nursing bottles, and strollers, as well

(Continued on page 12)



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.

EAST ORANGE SCHOOL DISTRICT GETS BUDGET BOOST

EAST ORANGE - The New Jersey Department of Education gave the East Orange School District some \$9.3 million worth of financial good news here Feb. 28. It is not clear, however, how much of that state aid will go towards plugging the district's \$25 million current budget Gap.

Schools Superintendent Dr. Christopher C. Irving, Mayor Theodore "Ted" Green and other city education and municipal officials welcomed the NJDOE letter they had received that Friday as the largest state aid increase - 5.3 percent - that the district had received in 17 years. They cheered the incoming funds as "outstanding" and "supportive of meeting its strategic goals."

City officials envision the increase as applicable to make infrastructural improvements on the 20 buildings serving some 9,000 Pre-Kindergarten-12th Grade students. The additional money would also help the district "settle several collective bargaining contracts" under negotiation.

The municipal officials thanked the State Legislative District No. 34's State Senator Britnee Timberlake and Assembly members Carmen Morales and Michael Venezia for their

help.

There is more to the now \$184.6 million in state aid coming to EOSD, however, that meets the eye. First, the allocation is for the 2025-26 School Budget. The figure will be plugged into the budget's final draft due in Trenton in May so that it can be dialed into the State Budget on or before June 30.

Second, EOSD is among some 344 of the state's 574 public school districts - 68 percent - who will receive an aid increase under Gov. Phil Murphy's \$12.1 billion education portion of his proposed Fiscal Year 2026 State Budget. That outlay is \$386 million more than the current 2024-25 outlay - and is subject to State Legislature approval.

The city school district resorted to laying off or transferring 93 of its employees Dec. 15 to help plug a \$25 million gap in the current budget. Dr. Irving, who sounded the alarm just after Labor Day, was hired on July 1. EOSD remains the last "Local Talk" area public school district with a mayor-appointed board of education.

NEWARK - Those Central Ward voters who intend to participate in the April 15 Board of Education Member and School Budget Election will not find a space for a proposed council vacancy election.

They may thank Superior Court Judge Robert Gardner's Feb. 19 ruling for denying the Newark Democratic Committee's request to add that election on the April 15 ballot and from holding any special election that would fill the now-Congresswoman LaMonica McIver's council seat. The Central Ward's representative will not be decided by voters until the regularly scheduled Nov. 10 General Election.

Gardner, in his ruling, cited state election law in keeping partisan elections off the nonpartisan boards of education ballot except for general elections.

"We live with the statute the way the statute was written by the (state) legislature," said Gardner. "They knew what they were saying when they did it.

Obviously, we have to assume that they did."

Gardner's ruling sided with the plaintiff - the New Jersey Attorney General's Office. Deputy State Attorney Craig Kaiser asserted that there would be confusion among 16- and 17-year-old voters over which part of the proposed April 15 ballot they could and could not vote on.

Newark's high school sophomores and juniors, for the first time in New Jersey, are being registered to vote in the April school board and budget election - but only that.

McIver resigned from her ward seat Jan. 9 after Congressional District-10 voters granted her a full two-year House of Representatives term in the Nov. 5, 2024 General Election. Voters first had her succeed the late Donald M. Payne, Jr.'s unexpired term in the Sept. 18 special election.

IRVINGTON - A demolition crew may be levelling what was left of 59 Washington Ave that remained from a Feb. 25 fire that had destroyed it.

The fire, which happened during the latter half of Wednesday morning's rush hour, caused southbound traffic from the Garden State Parkway into the Springfield Avenue Five Points business district detoured. 61 Washington, to the rubble's immediate north, suffered enough serious damage to have that family accept local American Red Cross temporary shelter.

The first Irvington firefighters responded to "multiple calls of a house fire between 8 and 8:30 a.m. They arrived to find the front of 59 Washington engulfed in flames. Occupants there and from adjacent houses had self-evacuated by then.

That avenue's southernmost block was blocked while a second alarm was pulled. It took firefighters about an hour to bring the blaze under control but not before 59 Washington had partially collapsed. No injuries were reported.

Neighbors told an on-scene reporter that 59 Washington was a vacant building but was occupied by squatters. Sometimes listed as 57 Washington, the 2.5

story wood frame house was built in 1897.

Residents of 61 Washington, a two story building constructed in 2000, were allowed back in to retrieve or salvage what belongings they could carry out.

ORANGE - Proponents and concerned residents made their cases regarding turning the former Orange Memorial Hospital and Ippolito Funeral Home tract into a \$350 million, 1,005-apartment redevelopment here at the city's community forum at First Shiloh Baptist Church Feb. 19.

Gateway Merchant Banking managing partner Terrance Murray told the audience at the former First Presbyterian Church of Orange that the redevelopment will bring more than 1,500 residents, 1,300 parking spaces, 40,000 square feet of storefront retail and 1.5 acres of public courtyard green space.

The former OMH Mary Austin Hall nurses dormitory on Henry Street will become the new Orange City Hall. The inner courtyard will be open to the public during daylight. There will be a year-round ice skating/roller rink. The Boiler Plant and Power House at South Essex Street and Central Avenue will become a restaurant.

"West Orange has a zoo, South Orange the Baird (Center), Maplewood Memorial Park next to the train station and (Jefferson) village; we started to think about what towns don't have," said Murray, of South Orange. "Fifteen hundred people living there - think about the commerce and opportunity that comes along with that. The open space will be designed so people can relax and hang out."

Gateway, as SYMREC Orange JV LLC, has received Orange Planning Board's approval on a 7-0 Nov. 22 vote. The plan calls for all the other five buildings to be demolished. on what is property mostly on the national and state historical records.

While Murray and Gateway see it as a new public square for Orange, others called for more community-driven input on the

(Continued on page 13)

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CRIME STOPPERS REWARD FOR INFORMATION ON 2022 FATAL SHOOTING IN NEWARK

Prosecutor Theodore N. Stephens II and Essex County Sheriff Amir Jones March 4 announced a Crime Stoppers Program reward of up to \$10,000 for information leading to the arrest of the persons responsible for the fatal shooting of a teenager in Newark in 2022.

On June 8, 2022, at approximately 11:14 pm, police officers responded to reports of gunfire near 146 Goodwin Avenue in Newark. Upon arrival they found the victim, 18-year-old Nyasia Peppers, suffering from a gunshot wound to the chest. Despite the efforts of medical staff, Peppers succumbed to her injuries at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center.

Investigators confirm that Peppers was not the intended target of the shooting and was struck by gunfire meant for another individual.

The suspects fled the scene in a stolen blue Toyota C-HR which was later found abandoned near Millington Avenue. Surveillance footage shows two individuals exiting the Toyota and jumping into what appears to be a black Honda Accord before fleeing the area.

Anyone with information is urged 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.



BUDGET (Cont. from page 9)

as for sunscreen. This proposal is modeled off of proposals by Senators Parker Space and Owen Henry and Assemblymembers Dawn Fantasia and Paul Kanitra.

The Murphy Administration, in partnership with the Legislature, has provided more than twice as much direct property tax relief than any prior administration.

Ensuring New Jersey residents have access to affordable health care remains a top priority in the upcoming fiscal year. The budget proposes \$165 million for the continuation of Cover All Kids; \$61.2 million for the Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD) and Senior Gold programs, helping nearly 150,000 seniors and residents with disabilities; \$52 million for family planning services and reproductive health programs; and \$35.8 million for Family Connects NJ, which has provided nearly 2,500 free in-home nurse visits to families with newborns and is now available in 11 counties. The proposal also includes \$10 million for a new initiative to provide State employees with full pay while they take family leave to care for a newborn, adopted, or fostered child.

Supporting the Next Generation of New Jerseyans

After becoming the first Governor to fully fund the K-12 school funding formula in the last fiscal year, Governor Murphy proposes to continue providing record-high school funding in FY2026. The budget includes a record-breaking \$12.1 billion for K-12 schools in FY2026, a greater than \$3.9 billion increase since FY2018.

This proposal also addresses district feedback about the formula by capping losses in major school aid categories and reducing input volatility, ensuring no district sees a steep reduction in aid from one year to the next. K-12 State aid will not decrease by an amount greater than 3% of the prior year State aid in four primary categories: equali-

zation, special education, security, and transportation.

The budget also includes legislation to require every school district to provide full-day kindergarten. It proposes \$7.5 million in new grant funding to support districts in providing high-impact tutoring to students in need of extra academic support, as well as \$3 million in incentive grants for schools that want to go entirely phone-free, giving students the best opportunity to learn without distraction.

Building on the Governor's commitment to forging the path towards free universal preschool in New Jersey, the FY2026 budget proposes \$1.27 billion for Preschool Education Aid. Since 2018, the Murphy Administration has expanded pre-K to 229 school districts and created nearly 20,000 new seats.

Fiscal Responsibility

The budget continues the Murphy Administration's record of fully funding the pension system, with the \$7.2 billion proposed payment marking the fifth consecutive full payment made by this Administration. Under Governor Murphy's leadership, total pension contributions are on track to exceed \$47 billion - nearly four times the \$12.2 billion in total contributions of the previous six governors combined.

The Governor continues his focus on fiscally responsible governance, proposing a budget surplus of \$6.3 billion dollars, nearly ten times larger than the average surplus under the previous administration. With this final budget, the Murphy Administration would leave the next Governor with a surplus that is more than 15 times greater than the one it inherited (\$409 million).

The proposed FY2026 budget largely caps discretionary spending and incorporates nearly \$2 billion in appropriation reductions. Total appropriations for the FY2026 budget proposal are \$70 million less than the FY2025 adjusted appropriation.

Additionally, the proposal includes \$815 million in funding from the Corporate Trans-

it Fee dedicated to support NJ TRANSIT; builds upon \$1.358 billion in interest saved by taxpayers over the last four years by paying down debt and minimizing new debt taken on; and anticipates reforming technical parole violations so that the State can close East Jersey State Prison, which would save taxpayers a projected \$30 million in FY2026 and an additional \$20 million in FY2027.

The Governor will also propose a range of tax policy changes. Those include tax increases for the highest tier of realty transfer fees, sports betting, alcohol, adult-use marijuana, and cigarettes, as well as a new exemption for small business investment. These changes, along with the cuts in appropriations help ensure that revenues are more closely in line with expenditures.

Building New Jersey's Future

As the most densely populated state in the nation, New Jersey's infrastructure remains the backbone of America's economy. The budget includes \$1.23 billion for critical investments in State and local highway and bridge projects, and another \$767 million for NJ TRANSIT capital projects.

The FY2026 budget proposes an additional \$20 million for Strategic Innovation Centers (SICs). The Murphy Administration has helped launch ten new SICs that have already drawn in over \$250 million in funding from the private sector, positioning New Jersey's entrepreneurs, workers, and students to lead the industries of tomorrow.

The proposal supports building upon the success of the Cannabis Regulatory Commission, which has overseen billions of dollars of legal cannabis sales, including more than \$1 billion in 2024 alone, with sales expected to produce \$90 million in tax and fee revenues this year.

Continuing the Administration's commitment to advancing clean energy, the budget includes \$50 million for the Charge Up NJ program from the Clean Energy Fund, moving closer to the State's nation-leading goal of 100 percent clean electricity by 2035.

NEWARK MAN CONVICTED OF DOUBLE VEHICULAR HOMICIDE

Prosecutor Theodore N. Stephens II announced Feb. 25 that Shaquan Wiley, 39, of Newark, was found guilty of eight counts including two counts of first-degree vehicular homicide, two counts of aggravated assault by auto, and related offenses, by an Essex County jury.

Assistant Prosecutors Adam B. Wells and William Chalmers tried the case before the Honorable Ronald D. Wigler, J.S.C. The jury returned its verdict late on Monday, February 24, 2025.

Assistant Prosecutor Wells stated that the charges stemmed from a single-vehicle crash that occurred on 15th Avenue near Hunterdon Street in Newark on January 25, 2020. The evidence indicated that Wiley was intoxi-

cated when he drove a 2007 Infiniti G35x. He was traveling at speeds exceeding 84 miles per hour down 15th Avenue before losing control while crossing Bergen Street and crashing into a tree.

Two of his passengers, 17-year-old Tahtiyannah Green and 21-year-old Imani Exum, were killed instantly in the crash. Two other passengers, Michael Kirk, 37, and Shikeyah Hamlin, 21, sustained life-threatening injuries. According to a witness, all the passengers of the car were yelling at Wiley to slow down as he sped down 15th Avenue. Wiley himself nearly died in the crash and had to be extricated from the driver's seat following the collision.

Assistant Prosecutor Wells said, "This case shows that when people drive drunk, or at excessive speeds, it is not an accident when they crash - it is criminal recklessness. There are very serious consequences for those reckless choices: loss of life, life-altering injuries, and long prison sentences for the guilty driver. The lives of two young people were tragically lost, and the lives of everyone else in the vehicle were forever changed."

The jury was also asked to determine whether the defendant was a "persistent offender" under New Jersey law. Mr. Wiley has six prior felony convictions, including a 2005 conviction for vehicular manslaughter, for which he served a prison sen-

tence after killing a teenage pedestrian in 2003. The jury concluded that he was, in fact, a "persistent offender" under the law, which allows the court to impose enhanced penalties for this conviction.

"While nothing can truly ease the pain of losing Ms. Green and Ms. Exum, it is hoped that this conviction will offer their families and friends some measure of closure and justice", said Assistant Prosecutor William Chalmers.

Wiley is scheduled for sentencing before Judge Wigler in April. He could face a sentence of up to life in prison.

TOWN WATCH (Cont. from pg. 10)

pending project. Some residents had hoped for more meetings other than two: one at Feb. 19 and the other at St. Matthew AME Church past press time March 6.

Some perceive that, with Nov. 22 planning board approval and two forums, that the project is "a done deal."

The project needs final approval from the State Historic Preservation Council in Trenton, who supervise state historic sites. There should also be consent from the Orange Historical Preservation Commission.

WEST ORANGE - It took more than three months but ECPO attorneys said they have brought charges against two men - a township man and one from an adjacent town - for allegedly assaulting a demonstrator in front of a synagogue here Nov. 13.

Moshe Glick, of West Or-

ange and David "Solomon" Silberberg, of Millburn, were scheduled to appear at State Superior Court-Newark Feb. 26. They were to each plead guilty or not guilty to aggravated assault, bias intimidation, unlawful possession of a weapon and possession thereof for an unlawful purpose.

Silberberg and Glick are accused of being a group, according to the investigation report, of "pro-Israeli counter-protestors (who) stormed toward the pro-Palestinian protestors and began ripping away at their materials" before Cong. Ohr Torah Nov. 13.

The protesting victim, an Indian Muslim from Cliffside Park, said someone had ripped a bullhorn from his hands when a man in a ski mask, later identified as Silberberg, pepper sprayed him in his right eye. The victim then tried to wrest the pepper spray from Silberberg's hand, starting a struggle. Glick was identified as the man

who struck the victim on the head with a black metal flashlight.

The investigation was first conducted by West Orange police before turning the probe over to ECPO. The victim had frequently met with the detectives. All three men involved have respective legal representation.

Those Palestinian demonstrators in attendance were protesting a presentation made by a real estate firm specializing in Israeli-area property. The protestors were claiming that some of the land are of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank - which is considered illegal by international law.

SOUTH ORANGE / MAPLEWOOD - The memory of the late Two Towns Community Coalition on Race cofounder Carol Barry-Austin, 71, continues in both municipalities some six weeks after her sudden Jan. 26 death.

Village Mayor Sheena Collum and CCOR separately an-

nounced Barry-Austin's passing on Jan. 28. Born Sept. 9, 1953, Barry-Austin and her attorney husband Clarence had been Tuxedo Park section residents for 46 years. She was a member of the Tuxedo Park Neighborhood Association and several South Orange-Maplewood School District PTA/HSAs - including the latter's Presidents' Council and as President.

Carol Barry-Austin was one of several concerned parents and residents who started the CCOR in 1977. She organized that group's forums, parent advocacy workshops, study groups and critical discussions on the district's achievement gap.

"For many of us, this is personal," said Collum at the Village Council meeting prior to holding a moment of silence. "We've known Carol for a long time and her husband served wonderfully as a judge for South Orange. She worked at a time where there was a lot of racial bias in real estate

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WORLD NEWS

(Continued from page 7)

and that aid is allowed to flow freely so we can continue to scale up the humanitarian response."

The agency said that between Jan. 19 and last Friday, almost 1,000 UNICEF trucks had crossed into the enclave carrying clean water, medical supplies, vaccines, therapeutic

food and other materials.

Since the start of the ceasefire on Jan. 19, UNICEF and partners have provided warm clothing to 150,000 children in Gaza and increased daily water distribution for nearly half a million people living in more remote areas, Mr. Dujarric said.

Nearly 250,000 children and thousands of pregnant and breast-feeding mothers have received nutritional supplements since the ceasefire took effect.

Over the past two weeks, in Rafah, Khan Younis and Deir al Balah, aid partners have distributed vegetable seed kits for gardening to try and encourage more diverse diets.

Around 1,500 water distribution points are now operating across Gaza - double the number operational at the start of the ceasefire. "However, partners tell us that pipes and spare parts for maintenance are urgently needed," said Mr. Dujarric.

NEWARK CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER ACCUSED OF SEEKING BRIBES FROM LOCAL BUSINESS

TRENTON - Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin and the Office of Public Integrity and Accountability (OPIA) announced that a Newark code enforcement officer has been arrested and charged after allegedly soliciting bribes from a Newark business in exchange for withholding fines and allowing the business to reopen after she had shut it down.

Sonia Rogers, 50, of Newark, was arrested on Feb. 28, 2025 by OPIA detectives with assistance from members of the Essex County Prosecutor's Office. Rogers was charged with the following second-degree offenses: official misconduct, bribery, theft by extortion, and soliciting or accepting any benefit to influence the performance of an official duty.

The charges arise from an investigation by the OPIA Corruption Bureau. Second-degree charges carry a sentence of five to 10 years in state prison and a fine of up to \$150,000.

According to the complaint, while working in her official capacity, Rogers ordered the closure of a retail establishment, threatened to fine the owners, and requested bribes of cash and free store merchandise in exchange for reopening the store and not levying the threatened

fines. Specifically, the investigation found that in September 2024, Rogers entered a store on Broad Street in Newark in uniform and, after conducting an inspection, she ordered the business to be closed.

It is alleged that the defendant told store management that the store's municipal business license had expired, and if she were to allow the store to reopen to the public, she should be compensated with a cash bribe for doing the business a favor. The evidence revealed that Rogers asked for a bribe of \$800, telling a store employee to take care of her since, under the city's code enforcement regulations, the store should remain closed until a fire inspection was completed and the business license was reinstated.

As alleged in the complaint, in exchange for re-opening the store and not imposing any fines, Rogers initially solicited the bribe in cash, but she settled for taking store merchandise without paying.

Additionally, Rogers allegedly indicated she would help facilitate a fire inspection of the premises in exchange for the store compensating her. According to the investigation, Rogers kept returning to the store on

sociations of partners in education and school administrators, the American Psychological Association.

Her funeral service at Orange's St. Matthew AME Church and repast at the Loft in South Orange were held Feb. 15. Her husband, who continues practicing from South Orange, and their children are among her survivors.

BLOOMFIELD - A township man and four other people from four counties have been facing narcotics and weapons possession charges since a Jan. 28 search warrant sweep done by multiple law enforcement agencies.

Jorge Jimenez, 35, said a joint Wayne Police-New Jersey



multiple subsequent occasions through November 2024, attempting to be further compensated, including unsuccessful attempts to take a television.

"My office will not take it lightly when public employees allegedly abuse the power of their positions for personal gain," said Attorney General Platkin. "The public must be able to trust that those who serve the public will not look the other way in exchange for bribes."

"The defendant's trying to line her own pockets, instead of ensuring public health and safety, as alleged here, damages the public's trust in government and could put lives at risk," said Drew Skinner, Executive Director of the Office of Public Integ-

State Police release Feb. 28, faces three counts of possession of controlled dangerous substances with intent to distribute within 1,000 ft. of a school, possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of "a large capacity magazine," a second-degree count of possessing marijuana with intent to distribute, third degree possession of marijuana, cocaine and MDMA and third-degree possession of cocaine and MDMA with intent to distribute.

Jimenez's address near Bloomfield High School was searched by WPD Special Operations Unit and the State Police TEAMS Unit Jan. 28. Similar raids were conducted that day in Elmwood Park, Saddle Brook, Paterson and, in Sussex County, Montague. They were assisted

ity and Accountability. "This case shows that corruption is not a victimless crime, and the dedicated, experienced prosecutors and investigators in my office will not back down in fighting it."

Deputy Attorney General Diana Bibb is prosecuting the case for OPIA, under the supervision of Corruption Bureau Deputy Chief Laura Croce, Bureau Co-Directors Jeff Manis and Eric Gibson, and OPIA Director Skinner.

These charges are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

by the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office and police from Clifton, Haledon and Pompton Lakes.

The raids yielded an overall six handguns and rifles, five 30-round ammunition magazines, a ballistic vest, 5,910 folds of heroin, 41.5 tablets of Ecstasy, 23 tablets of Xanax, five pounds of marijuana, five ounces of cocaine, a half-ounce of crack cocaine, a gram of methamphetamine, and \$23,923 in currency.

WPD Detective Capt. Dan Daly, in the release, said that the raids were results from a "months-long shared investigation" of an illegal regional drug distribution network.

Others arrested on similar charges were: Jaime Arango, 42, (Continued on page 15)

TOWN WATCH (Cont. from pg. 13)

and she served in numerous roles of CCOR."

Carol Barry-Austin was on several CCOR committees, including the Schools Committee and Nominating Committee, for many years. She was the group's president 2006-08. This was in addition to being a New York Telephone Company (now Verizon) designer of corporate communication networks for 15 years and on the Columbia High School Scholarship Selection Fund.

Carol Barry-Austin received various awards for CCOR and herself, including South Orange as Villager of the Month, the Maplewood Rotary Club Citizenship Award, New Jersey as-

TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 14)

of Bergenfield; Jason Guadagno, 46, of Montague and Michael Ortega, 42, of Elmwood Park.. Andre Hamilton, 42, of Saddle Brook, was arrested for failing to notify law enforcement of an address change and failing to verify that address with law enforcement.

MONTCLAIR - The Municipal Council, at its Feb. 25 meeting, has selected Stephen D. Marks, of Kearny, as its fifth Town Manager in the last three years. Marks, who will take the office keys from Michael Lapolla April 1, was the finalist after an applicant field of 34 and one of nine semifinalists.

Marks, who will receive a \$235,000 annual salary, comes directly from being Kearny's business administrator the last nine years. The Rutgers master of public administration degree holder has also been an administrator for Hoboken and Hudson County's planning director.

Mayor Dr. Renee Baskerville and the council will spend part of March thanking Lapolla, of Brielle, for his interim work. The former 1997-2002 Union County manager was hired Aug. 1, 2023 but was called to serve Aug. 7 on the late Thomas Hartnett's Aug. 6 death at his Normandy Beach home. Lapolla first served as a part-timer but the council later promoted him to full-time status.

Hartnett, who was town manager here 2003-10, was hired July 19, 2023 to return Brian Scantlebury to his deputy status. Montclair's elders called Scantlebury up after they had first suspended Timothy Stafford with pay Oct. 26, 2022 and eventually fired him April 20, 2023.

Hartnett, whose suspension came after an internal investigation, was accused of creating a hostile work environment plus harassment and retaliation of whistleblower. At least one current and a former township employee sued Stafford and the township after, in part, finding that several council members were receiving a state health care insurance benefits plan for which they were not qualified for. (The Township Council has since had a complete electoral turnover.)

UPDATE: Those ordering or getting takeout food from Montclair's eateries, since Saturday, will have to ask for condiments, utensils and napkins. The newly passed "Skip the Stuff" ban took effect March 1 to cut down on said free and disposable items and to help food vendors save on the waste and expense.

BELLEVILLE - The last 104 credit-

card-only curbside parking meters along Washington Avenue between Mill Street and Joralemon Avenue may well have been removed before the next edition of "Local Talk" comes out. Most of the meters have been covered by red hoods on Feb. 27.

Once those meters are gone, bring your smartphone and make sure that it has a ParkMobile app. It will be the only way to park along Washington and on the three municipal lots off the avenue. It is part of a "cashless" plan township elders announced in its Feb. 20 announcement.

Parking lots at "129" Washington between B.K. Laundromat and Topaz Thai and "160" Washington just north of Town Hall have long lost their meters. The lot that opened Jan. 1 at 219 Washington - north of the Belleville Public Library where the veterinarian's office stood - never had meters.

Motorists, from there on out, are asked to find the nearest pole-mounted ParkMobile sign and follow its instructions. One is to download ParkMobile from the Apple App Store or Google Play, scan the sign's QC code and Text "Park" to 77223." One will be asked to input the sign's serial code.

Those needing help are to call (833) or keyboard Support: ParkMobile.io.

Other ParkMobile contracted towns - including Newark, Irvington, East Orange and Orange - have variations of meters, kiosks and signs. Belleville, however, is the first in "Local Talk" territory to solely rely on the green signs.

NUTLEY - Township officials are contemplating their next legal option since a Feb. 4 court ruling over a proposed truck terminal or warehouse on the ON3/Roche Pharmaceutical tract ruling has gone in favor of the property's developer.

State Superior Court-Newark Judge Russell Passamano, in Nutley Zoning Board of Adjustment and Planning Board v. Prism Capital Partners, ruled that the former party had "arbitrarily and capriciously" labelled the latter's 2020 proposed 147,900-sq. ft. warehouse as a truck terminal.

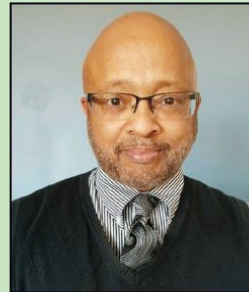
Prism, who was designated by Nutley and Clifton a redeveloper of the 114-acre Roche property, sought to build the warehouse on 11 acres by Nutley's Kingsland Street. The facility, which may be scheduled for Nutley Planning Board's March meeting, features 40 loading docks and parking for 136 cars.

NPB, in late 2020, applied the township's truck terminal ordinance in denying the warehouse application. The ordinance defines a truck terminal as a property

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where more than three 1.5-ton vehicles whose gross vehicle weight of between 6,001 and 10,000 pounds each are parked overnight.

Nutley's zoning officer, in February 2021, sided with the planning board's interpretation to deny Prism a zoning variance permit. Prism Principal Gene Diaz, saying that "a single family home with three Ford F-250s (pickup trucks) would be considered a truck terminal," filed suit against Nutley that August.



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