

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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INTERVIEW WITH NEWARK MAYORAL CANDIDATE DEBRA SALTERS

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FORMER HOUSING AUTHORITY COMMISSIONER ALLEGES CORRUPTION, VIOLATION OF STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS BY NEWARK MAYOR RAS BARAKA AND HIS ALLIES

A screengrab of Alif Muhammad's
video with Amiri Baraka Jr. (right)



By Lev D. Zilbermints

NEWARK - Former Newark Housing Authority Commissioner Alif Muhammad has gone public with allegations of corruption, intimidation, violation of state and federal laws, attempted illegal removal from an appointed position and more.

The whole dirty affair has been captured on video. Mr. Muhammad turned over the flash drive with this video to state, federal authorities and the press.

As of this writing, the video, dated April 12 and 13, 2021 is making rounds on social media.

The parties who are alleged to be complicit in corruption are Newark Mayor Ras Baraka; his brother and Chief of Staff, Amiri Baraka, Jr.; Eddie Osborne, Newark Housing Authority (NHA) Board of Commissioners Chairman until January 2022, Municipal Council member until June 2022; Norma Gonzalez, NHA Board Member, NHA Chairperson, 2022 - April 2024; Brian Logan,

NHA Board member; Newark Central Ward Councilwoman LaMonica McIver, elected 2018, since Sept. 23, 2024 Congresswoman; Victor Cirilo, Executive Director, NHA 2018-2024, terminated; Elio Mena, General Counsel NHA, retired.

The current members of the Newark Housing Authority Board of Commissioners are Brian K. Logan, Chair; Imam Daud-Haqq, Vice Chair; Vivian E. Carter, Commissioner; Patrick Council,

(Continued on page 7)



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Editorial

Dhiren Shah
Editor-in-Chief

Hello Readers,

Iran has not agreed to negotiations or to open the Strait of Hormuz, which is the main corridor for oil tankers in the region. President Trump on social media threatened Iran by saying 'a whole civilization will die tonight.'

Trump tweeted on Easter Sunday "Tuesday will be Power Plant Day, and Bridge Day, all wrapped up in one, in Iran. There will be nothing like it!!!" "Open the F----n' Strait, you crazy b-----ds, or you'll be living in Hell - JUST WATCH!" at the end he added, "Praise be to Allah."

While Pakistan convinced him to suspend his deadline on the threats he made for two weeks, our president is con-

sidered the world leader, and it does not suit him well to use foul language. Another important thing is that he should not use another religion while using this foul language. Everyone may not follow the other religion, but we should respect each other's religion either way.

Two American F-15 members were stranded in Iran, and Trump ordered a rescue, which the American military bravely did with the risk of more Americans dying if there was a failure. Luckily, the military was successful.

As we cared about the two Americans, the Iranian civilization should have the same importance. All human beings should have the same value of life. Their blood is red, and they love their family the same way we love ours. When our economy is going down, do not find a horrible solution of killing and destroying another civilization.

The US successfully launched Artemis II on April 1 and it traveled successfully

around the moon. With that, the crew went the farthest distance that human beings have travelled from Earth. The four astronauts are Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch, and Jeremy Hansen.

Besides all the problems in the world right now, the prediction of US economy is not bad. They still predict the US GDP (Gross Domestic Product) will be 2.2% for 2026 and it may go little down to 1.9% for 2027 to 2029. Some economist predicts that the recession may come in later part of 2026. President Trump's slogan of MAGA (Make America Great Again) does not seem to be working so far.

Newark has a non-partition election. 12 candidates signed up for federal monitors to oversee the election. The major issue is that the elected officials visit the senior buildings and the government buildings without any problem, but other candidates are not allowed to visit those buildings easily. The law says that anyone must have a per-

mit to canvass, and residents can object to it as well. However, the residents are afraid of making a written objection against the elected officials. Canvassing is strictly prohibited at any property listed on the City of Newark's "No-Knock Registry."

Anyone visiting Ethiopia must know the new rules and any money over \$3,000 will be confiscated. According to repots, "When departing Ethiopia, nonresidents carrying more than the equivalent of \$3,000 USD in foreign currency and residents carrying any amount of foreign currency must produce a valid bank document or foreign currency customs declaration that is less than 30 days old." This is a better way for foreigners not to bring more money and control their economy according to the rules.

Have a wonderful week.

I'll talk to you next week.

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WEATHER FOR THE WEEK

<u>THURSDAY</u> Mostly Sunny	<u>FRIDAY</u> Partly Cloudy	<u>SATURDAY</u> Partly Cloudy	<u>SUNDAY</u> Mostly Sunny	<u>MONDAY</u> Mostly Cloudy	<u>TUESDAY</u> Partly Cloudy	<u>WEDNESDAY</u> Cloudy, rain possible
HI 55 LO 39	HI 68 LO 53	HI 67 LO 44	HI 59 LO 50	HI 76 LO 63	HI 84 LO 61	HI 75 LO 52

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INTERVIEW WITH NEWARK MAYORAL CANDIDATE DEBRA SALTERS

By Lev D. Zilbermints

NEWARK - Debra Salters, a resident of Newark, is one of seven candidates for Mayor in this year's elections. The large number of candidates for mayor is fueled by a need for change, say many residents.

Running under the slogan "Operation Clean House," Ms. Salters spoke to Local Talk about what motivated her to run for Mayor. Ms. Salters answered questions that were emailed to her by Local Talk. What follows is the interview.

Local Talk: What made you decide to run for Mayor of Newark?

Debra Salters: I am running for Mayor because the cries of my people are louder than the rhetoric that this current mayor and council has been telling the people! This is a call on my life! This Baraka administration has bullied, tormented, and destroyed lives. The multiple lawsuits for wrongful termination for failure to comply with his wishes, the lawsuits and settlements for sexual harassment, along with a host of other infractions are examples of this.

LT: How are you different from other mayoral candidates?

DS: I am different from other mayoral candidates because I am not in this race for my own personal gain. I have been fighting for my community on a daily basis for years, and the cries of my people have fallen on deaf ears.

LT: Why not run for City Council instead?

DS: The mayor makes the deals with the developers and those who want to bring their projects to the city. The Council approves them, which makes them binding contracts. I need to be Mayor to make

sure that the bad deals that have plagued our city and hurt our people do not continue. I am the one who will make developers pay their fair share and make deals that make sense for the residents of this city. Running for city council does not give me the authority, nor the position to implement change that is necessary for our city (who is the people) to thrive. I need to put those with the credentials, experience, and expertise in position to make this City run like a well-oiled machine, to make sure that the services that are for the people, and get to the people!

LT: What qualifications and background do you have to be Mayor?

DS: I have been handling my mom's business since I'm seven years old, taking care of my community, and building relationships. I have been engaged with the ins and outs of our city's finances, services, resources, and affiliations for years. I have been engaged and instrumental in changing lives in this City by bridging the gap of those in need with necessary resources, such as housing when the city was not able to do so, along with feeding, clothing, and providing blankets and accessories to our unhoused. I have also directed individuals to programs which cleaned them up, and made them productive assets to society. I have held this current administration accountable for their fiscal irresponsibility to our City. I have been a catalyst for better treatment and resources for our homeless, as well as those needing employment.

LT: You often criticize the Baraka administration. Could you tell us what makes you so upset at the current mayor?

DS: I am not upset. I am passionate about my people in



Courtesy Debra Salters

my City and their needs being met. The Baraka administration has been all about themselves, their family, and those who do their bidding. When it has come to jobs, grants, and buildings that would have benefited our youth, they were not given because the individuals who wanted them are not on their "LIKED LIST." I would never discriminate against a community servant who benefits our youth, nor anyone else simply because I do not like him / her.

LT: Was Newark better under previous mayors - Sharpe James, Cory Booker, Luis Quintana (temporarily) - than under Baraka?

DS: Newark was definitely better under Sharpe James! He took care of the residents! He provided jobs, and taught our young men about home ownership, and helped them become homeowners. He was the people's Mayor!

LT: What are the most important things that need to be changed in Newark?

DS: The most important things that need to be changed in Newark are:

A. Homeless Solutions, not shelters, not drop in cen-

ters.

B. Low to moderate income housing, which is truly affordable housing.

C. Livable wage jobs.

D. TRANSPARENCY of the City's finances and City business.

LT: If elected Mayor, what would be your first acts?

DS: My first act as Mayor is to:

A: Get an independent audit done on all books, down to the very last cent.

B: We would then Inspect, Correct, and Redirect with Transparency, Integrity, and Accountability.

LT: Could you tell voters about yourself?

DS: I am committed to making life better for people every day. I am an educator, a mentor, and a coach. I build relationships with developers, homeowners, and anyone who has the ability to help anyone who may be in need. I was born and raised in Newark, and have received my fight for the people from my mom and dad who were dedicated and fought tirelessly for anyone in need.

SPORTS WRAP



Photos By Felicia
Laguerre Owens

By William Hathaway, Jr.

This past week in the city of Newark, the Boylan Street Recreation Center and Rising Star Productions hosted an open media workout as fighters showcased their talent in preparation of this week's fights at the annual Brick City boxing event Friday night at the Prudential Center.

Local area boxers will be on the card, including Newark's own Yoell Copper, a West Side High senior who will be making his professional debut. Also, Piscataway's Gabriel Gerena and East Orange native Emmanuel Chance will be fighting on the undercard. Other Newark boxers featured are Keith Colon and Lisandra Contreras.

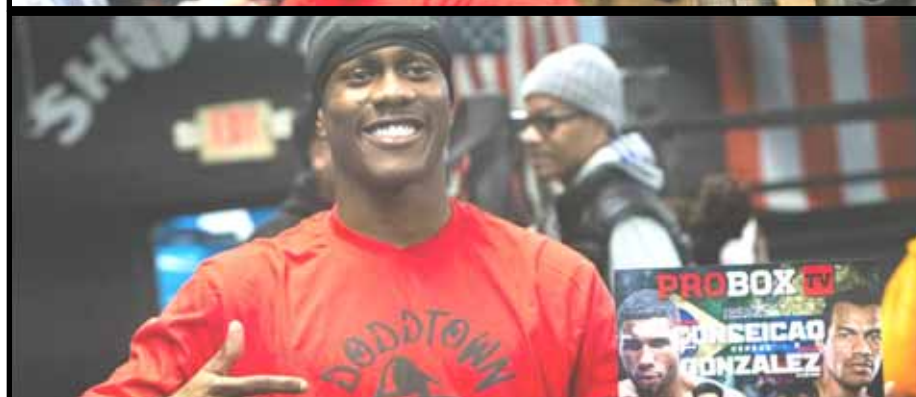
Attending the media workout was the director of the Dorca Boxing Academy, Nasir Graham, said he was excited to see this event. The main event will feature Hebert Conceicao and Johan Gonzalez going one on one.

In other sports, the NCAA tournaments are now done. First, the women determined its 2026 National Champion. South Carolina denied Connecticut back-to-back titles, beating the Lady Huskies in

one semifinal 62-48. Of course, the big story came after the game when UConn coach Geno Auriemma confronted Gamecocks' coach Dawn Staley in a heated exchange. The next day, Auriemma issued an apology to South Carolina's staff and players, but did not apologize to Staley by name.

In the other semifinal, UCLA beat Texas 51-44 to set up a title match with South Carolina. To everyone's surprise, the Bruins won their first title since the 1970s, handily beating the Gamecocks 79-51 to win the National Title on a team powered by seniors up and down the roster.

As for the men, the Final Four saw Michigan wreck Arizona 91-75 and Connecticut beat Illinois 71-62 to set up the Title game. Despite scoring 90 points in each of their previous games, Michigan was held to under 70. However, it was enough, as the Wolverines beat the Huskies 69-63 to win their first National Championship since 1989. That team, which featured future NBA star Glen Rice, defeated runner-up Seton Hall 80-79.



APRIL VOTING FOR CD-11, NEWARK, IRVINGTON SCHOOL BOARDS BEGINS

By Walter Elliott

NEWARK - This April has two separate but overlapping elections set for April 16 and 21.

Registered voters in Newark and Irvington, indeed, have their annual Third Tuesday in April boards of education ending at 8 p.m. April 21.

Registered voters in New Jersey's 11th Congressional District - including those in seven other Essex County "Local Talk" towns - have until 8 p.m., Thursday, April 16, to choose their next person to join the House of Representatives.

Mail-in voting is already taking place for the two separate election days separately in the nine towns.

"Local Talk," for example, noticed two Essex County Board of Elections workers checking for Vote-By-Mail Ballots at Maplewood's drop box March 19. The pair deposited what they found in the drip box before the Maplewood Public Library's Hilton Branch into a second, mobile box - which was wheeled into a county van.

Essex County Clerk Christopher Durkin's Election Division office has been receiving VBMB through physical "snail mail" or electronically.

The New Jersey State Legislature recently permitted the New Jersey Division of Elections to accept otherwise VBMBs via www.nj.gov/elections/vote. Details are found there and via Essex County's (973) 621-4922.

The Newark-Irvington April 21 school board and the April 16 CD-11 Special General Election, in this article, will henceforth be treated separately.

APRIL 16 CD-11 SPECIAL GENERAL ELECTION: SOUTH ORANGE, MAPLEWOOD, BLOOMFIELD, MONTCLAIR, GLEN RIDGE, NUTLEY and Montclair's UPPER MONTCLAIR:

Voters in the above said "Local Talk" towns have until 8 p.m. that Thursday to choose who among the three candidates on the special general election ballot to succeed now-Gov. Mikie Sherrill in

Congress. They will be joined by voters in eight "West Essex" towns plus four in Passaic County and 28 in Morris County whole or in part.

This special election chain of events when a majority of "Local Talk" and statewide voters chose Sherrill (D-Upper Montclair) Nov. 4 to succeed the term-limited Gov. Phil Murphy. Murphy, instead of appointing Sherrill's successor to The House, ordered on Nov. 21 for a special Feb. 5 party primary and an April 16 general election.

Center for Popular Democracy Co-Executive Director Analilia Mejia, of Glen Ridge, received Democratic Party voters' nomination Feb. 5 above 11 other candidates. Mejia's nomination has been seen as an upset over four candidates who had endorsements from their respective Essex, Morris and Passaic county Democratic committees. (Passaic County co-endorsed two runners.)

Randolph Councilman and former mayor Joseph Hathaway cruised unopposed to his Republican party nomination.

Small business owner

Alan B. Bond (I-Montclair), running under his "Hope for Tomorrow!" banner, is the third candidate on April 16's ballot.

Bond was not invited to April 1's candidates debate hosted by Rider University's Rebovich Institute for New Jersey Politics and the NewJerseyGlobe.com news website. "The Globe" did post his response to that Wednesday night debate between Mejia and Hathaway.

One may recall that Bond, 64, used to be a frequent guest on PBS' "Wall Street Week with Louis Rukeyser" in the 1990s. The Harvard MBA graduate, however, served a six-year prison sentence and paid \$7 million in restitution after being convicted in 2002 of skimming that amount from the \$600 million pension fund he had managed. He is currently coordinating St. Paul Baptist Church's food pantry outreach in Montclair.

Whoever a majority of participating CD-11 voters send to the House of Representatives will be seated there

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STATE OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE INCREASED ENFORCEMENT TO COMBAT DISTRACTED DRIVING

TRENTON - Attorney General Jennifer Davenport and the Division of Highway Traffic Safety (HTS) announced the launch of increased enforcement efforts around the state targeting distracted drivers.

The "Put the Phone Away or Pay" campaign runs from April 1 to April 30 during National Distracted Driving Awareness Month to raise awareness that cellphone use or any other non-driving task while driving is dangerous and unacceptable.

"Drivers should focus on the road and getting to their destination safely," said Attorney General Davenport. "It is dangerous to do other tasks while driving, especially using a cellphone. This campaign aims not just to enforce the laws and hold violators accountable, but also to change behaviors to prevent tragedies."

In 2024, 42 percent of crashes in New Jersey involved a distracted driver, resulting in 175 fatalities and 1,500 serious in-

juries.

"When you're driving, nothing is more important than your safety and the safety of others," said Michael J. Rizol, Jr., Director of the Division of Highway Traffic Safety. "Behaviors like texting take your mind, eyes, and hands away from the task of driving. Cellphone use while driving is especially dangerous. Other distractions eating, drinking, adjusting vehicle controls, and tending to passengers also can lead to a crash."

HTS is providing \$706,860 to 126 municipal and county law enforcement agencies for the 2026 "Put the Phone Away or Pay" enforcement campaign. Throughout April, motorists can expect to see increased patrols and awareness messaging targeting distracted driving with a focus on dangerous handheld cellphone use, like texting, phone calls, and scrolling. An additional \$211,820 was awarded to the New Jersey State Police for enforcement along the state's major roadways including the New Jersey Turn-

pike, the Garden State Parkway, and interstates.

New Jersey law prohibits using a handheld cellphone or device while operating a motor vehicle. Violating this law can result in fines of \$200 to \$400 for a first offense, \$400 to \$600 for a second offense, and up to \$800 for subsequent violations, along with the addition of three insurance points. All violations also require a mandatory court appearance.

Last year, New Jersey's distracted driving enforcement campaign resulted in 6,872 citations for cellphone use or texting and 4,337 for careless driving in April 2025.

The full list of agencies receiving grant funds from HTS can be found here: <https://www.njoag.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/DDC-2026-Final-Grantee-List-plus-NJSP.pdf>

For more information on traffic safety efforts undertaken by the Division of Highway Traffic Safety, visit njsaferoads.com.

CORRUPTION*(Continued from pg. 1)*

Commissioner; Asraf Latif, Commissioner; Linda Washington, Commissioner; Christopher Watson, Commissioner.

According to a statement distributed by Mr. Muhammad to the audience, Newark City Council members and the press at the March 18, 2026 City Council meeting, the whole mess started back in April 2021. At that point in time Alif Muhammad was Vice President of the Newark Housing Authority Board of Commissioners since January 2021.

The cause of the scandal was Resolution H-21-08-04-02, offered by Muhammad to bring the landscape contract back in-house for service by eleven new Newark employees at the 25+ sites to service Newark Housing Authority. This occurred, per documents given out by Mr. Muhammad, on April 8, 2021. At that time, the resolution passed.

Question is, what is so out of ordinary in the passage of a resolution? Apparently, judging by the reaction, Newark Mayor Ras Baraka and his allies had other plans.

Alif Muhammad's account of being pressured to change his vote

According to Alif Muhammad's account, "Ten minutes after the meeting, I received phone calls and texts (that I refused) from Newark's Chief of Staff Amiri Baraka, Jr. Also, I received phone calls from Chairman Eddie Osborne, NHA, Brian Logan, Board Member, then - Central Ward Councilwoman LaMonica McIver, all advising me that Amiri Baraka, Jr. is demanding that I change my vote for the above resolution H-21-08-04-02."

According to New Jersey Monitor.com of May 15, 2025 the former commissioner refused to change his vote on the resolution. "I don't want to do it," Muhammad alleged he told Baraka. "All I have is my integrity."

"Integrity is about us," he said Baraka told him. "This is politics and this is the world you're in. When someone else disrespects me it's going to be a problem."

New Jersey Monitor.com also reported that, "Muhammad also claims Amiri Baraka told him, 'At the end of the day I protect my brother,' 'that's all I do,' and that Amiri Baraka griped that pay-to-play laws made it so that we can't make no money in this town."

What the law says

Research done by Local Talk shows that in New Jersey, a housing authority is a "body corporate and politic" that functions as an independent agency of the municipality. While a mayor or governing body often has the power to appoint commissioners, their ability to influence a commissioner's specific vote is legally restricted by the following principles:

- Independent agency status: Housing authorities are separate legal entities from the municipal government. Commissioners are expected to act in the best interest of the authority and its residents, not the mayor.
- Removal for cause only: Under the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40A - 12A - 1 et sequence) a commissioner can typically be removed for specific reasons such as inefficiency, neglect of duty or misconduct in office. A mayor cannot legally re-

move a commissioner simply for voting against the mayor's preferences. If a mayor were to pressure a commissioner by threatening removal, it could be challenged as an unlawful use of executive power.

- Ethics and conflicts of interest: New Jersey law prohibits commissioners from having a direct or indirect interest in any housing project on contract related to the authority. If a mayor asks a commissioner to vote a certain way to benefit a specific interest, it could lead to violation of state ethics laws or lead to corruption investiga-

tions.

- Administrative oversight: The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) provides oversight for housing authorities. If there are concerns about "undue influence" being exerted over a board member's vote, the presiding officer or the DCA may investigate on the basis of these actions."

Mayor pressures Commissioner to reverse vote

According to a written account by Alif Muhammad and video saved on flash drive,

(Continued on page 12)

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APRIL VOTING FOR CD-11, NEWARK, IRVINGTON SCHOOL BOARDS BEGINS

(Continued from page 6)

until Jan. 3, 2026. That means district voters will be voting again "on the normal cycle" in the June 2 major party primaries and the Nov. 3 General Election.

In-person early voting polling stations joined the April 16 election process at 10 a.m. April 6. Essex County's stations will be open Monday-Saturday 10 a.m. - 8 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m.-6 p.m. until 8 p.m. April 14 at:

- West Orange - South Mountain Recreation Complex Berson Family Center, 560 Northfield Ave.
- Montclair - Municipal Building, 205 Claremont Ave.
- Bloomfield - Watsessing Community Center, Bloomfield Avenue and Conger Street
- Belleville - American Legion Hall, 621 Washington Ave.
- Fairfield - Fairfield Community Center, 221 Hollywood Ave.

April 16 is the last post-

mark for VBMB to be mailed. Two days' grace - into April 18 - is given for the Essex County Board of Elections to receive said ballots delivered by the post office WITHOUT a postmark of delivery. Timely postmarked VBMBs to the county election board also have an April 18th reception deadline.

Any recounts are to be requested on or before May 4. Clerk Durkin has until May 6 to send official results to the Secretary of State.

APRIL 21 NEWARK BOARD OF EDUCATION ELECTION

This year's election ballot features nine candidates squaring off for - this year - four Newark Board of Education seats.

There are six candidates - one slate versus three independents - vying for the usual three three-year board seats.

Mayor Ras Baraka's supported "Moving Newark Schools Forward" slate features one incumbent and three newcomers. A majority of voters here have swept "Moving School Forward" tickets into board seats since 2016.

Council President Hasani Council, who has been empaneled since 2020 is the sole

THE EAST ORANGE CITY COUNCIL 2026 SCHEDULED MEETING DATES

In accordance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, Public Notice is hereby given that the East Orange City Council has established the following 2026 Meeting Dates.

Formal action may take place at these Meetings and Executive Sessions may be held at Committee Meetings or at Regular Meetings. The Meetings will be held in City Council Chambers located at 44 City Hall Plaza, East Orange, New Jersey.

Thursday, January 1, 2026
Annual Reorganization Meeting

Committee Discussion & Agenda Meetings 5:30 PM

Monday, January 12th
Monday, January 26th

Monday, February 9th
Monday, February 23rd

Monday, March 9th
Monday, March 23rd

Monday, April 13th
Monday, April 27th

Monday, May 11th
Tuesday, May 26th

Monday, June 8th
Monday, June 22nd

*Monday, July 13th

*Monday, August 17th

Tuesday, September 8th
Monday, September 21st

Tuesday, October 13th
Monday, October 19th

Tuesday, November 9th
Monday, November 23rd

Monday, December 7th
Monday, December 14th

Regular Official Meetings 6:00PM

Monday, January 12th
Monday, January 26th

Monday, February 9th
Monday, February 23rd

Monday, March 9th
Monday, March 23rd

Monday, April 13th
Monday, April 27th

Monday, May 11th
Tuesday, May 26th

Monday, June 8th
Monday, June 22nd

*Monday, July 13th

*Monday, August 17th

Tuesday, September 8th
Monday, September 21st

Tuesday, October 13th
Monday, October 19th

Tuesday, November 9th
Monday, November 23rd

Monday, December 7th
Monday, December 14th

* = Denotes Summer Schedule

City Council Reorganization Meeting
Friday, January 1, 2027
@ Noon

re-election seeker. Newark North Ward Democratic Committee vice chairman Qumaid Childs and My Brother's Keeper Executive Director Mark Comesanas are his runningmates.

Challenging are Phillips' Academy Charter School social studies teacher John Farrell, NPS Office of Early Childhood social worker Lisa Gray and Rutgers-Newark alumni Tawheed Peters.

The remaining three candidates on the ballot are seeking to fill the remaining year of an unexpired term.

West Ward Democratic Committee District Leader Jordy Nivar, who ran last year, is on the "Moving Schools Forward" platform.

Challenging are returning candidate Latoya Jackson and newcomer Tammy Hollaway.

APRIL 21 IRVINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION ELECTION

Some participating township voters may be getting "deja vu all over again" when it comes to the 2026 Board of Education ballot.

There are three incumbents on one slate and an independent vying for the three Irvington Public Schools board seats - all of whom ran before.

Incumbents Shante Barr, Annette L. Beasley and John F. Brown are running on "The Children's Team" a new name for a slate endorsed by Mayor Anthony "Tony" Vauss.

Challenging is returning Conrad McPherson on his "Persistent, Passionate, Purposeful" platform.

In-person voting for Irvington and Newark are 2-8 p.m. April 21. Locations for the respective 100 Newark and 20 Irvington polling locations are found at essexboardofelections.com.

Visit the board of elections or essexclerk.com for details.



DISCLAIMER: The following items are primarily drawn from first responders. Responders' accounts may not be their full activity range. Grand juries hand down indictments when evidence presented them warrant a trial. Named suspects/defendants are innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

NEWARK - A 27-year-old Elizabeth man, said authorities, was charged April 1 in the March 29 collision here that led to former Assemblyman Alberto Coutinho's death.

John M. Arango-Taborda, said County Prosecutor Theodore N. "Ted" Stephens II, has been charged with first-degree aggravated manslaughter and second-degree vehicular homicide. Stephens said that Arango-Taborda was traveling "at a high rate of speed" when his car struck Coutinho's car in the intersection of N.J. Route 21/McCarter Highway and South Street.

A traffic camera's video footage, released onto Instagram, depicted Coutinho's car driving east on South Street into the intersection at 7:30 that Sunday. Although the traffic signals were not visible on the camera, it appeared that Coutinho had the right of way.

Coutinho's car was crossing McCarter's northbound lanes when the southbound Arango-Taborda's car ran into the former's front axle and engine bay without slowing down. The impact spun the Ironbound community fixture into the northbound lanes and caused an engine bay fire.

First responders found both drivers injured - with Coutinho suffering cardiac arrest. Coutinho, 56, was de-

clared dead at 8:02 a.m.

Coutinho's remains crossed Route 21 twice more on April 1. He crossed the state highway west on Bridge Street from the Buyus Funeral Home for his 10 a.m. Funeral mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart - and east for internment at North Arlington's Holy Cross Cemetery.

IRVINGTON - There was a funeral held here at the Transcend Worship Center March 12 that included a call to action.

The funeral that Wednesday here was for Justin Christian El Abiad, 2, after a police escort from Chapels of Eden's Union funeral parlor. El Abiad's memorial service was set for Feb. 22-23 but was postponed by that overnight's blizzard.

El Abiad's 70 mourners here had been waiting for his last rites since 7 a.m. Nov. 15, when the little boy fell to his death from a window on the 20th story of Newark's 455 Elizabeth Ave.

Mourners - including El Abiad's family, lawyers, County Prosecutor Stephens and other public officials - have been calling out for justice for just as long. Lawyer David Sirotkin, speaking for mother Elham El Abiad in the post-funeral press conference, said that he has not received a response from Elizabeth Towers' owners, 455 Elizabeth Ave., LLC, to their Dec. 23 complaint filed in State Superior Court-Newark.

Sirotkin and the family claim that management allowed their newly purchased and renovated Elizabeth Towers to have Plexiglass panels installed as window planes with putty. No window guards were installed.

State Sen. Britnee Timberlake (D-East Orange) introduced Senate Bill S-3633. "The Justin Christian El Abiad Act" would require landlords to automatically install window guards on windows where children up to 13 years

old and/or disabled reside.

EAST ORANGE - Mayor Theodore "Ted" Green and the City Council issued an "SOS" on the city's Accessory Dwelling Units April 7.

"SOS" Tuesday stands for the "Save Our Selves" initiative to have residents report illegal basement apartments and other "unsafe and illegal" housing conditions.

Green, Fire Chief Andre Williams and Code Enforcement Director Hassan Mateen plus officials from the Construction, Health, Police and Zoning departments, are developing coordinated inspections that will identify immediate hazardous properties. Homeowners will be given a framework to bring their properties into compliance with ADU standards. Repeat offenders will face strengthened enforcement.

Mateen said that his inspectors had closed over 24 illegal basement apartments on safety grounds. The criterion includes too narrow staircases, windows that are too small or too high for escape, inadequate ventilation or floodproofing and/or inadequate electrical wiring. The modifications are done without going through or in regard to the building permit process.

The initiative did not say what would happen to tenants or residents who are displaced when illegal ADUs are closed.

The public is urged to report unsafe conditions to the Code Enforcement Department at (973) 266-5320.

ORANGE - A domestic violence incident that Orange police officers responded to here March 1 left one of the four occupants injured, the second dead - and two of the survivors facing charges.

A call came from an address from the 500 block of Central Avenue from a man at 4:42 p.m. that Sunday to the Orange Police Department dispatcher. The dispatcher then sent at least one OPD unit to the address.

They arrived to find "the adult son" of a couple having a DV incident at the door. The son was holding a handgun that was not fired during or after the dispute.

Officers entered to find a pit bull shit dead, the husband with bite wounds on his hand and the wife "not physically injured."

A preliminary investigation found that the couple were having an argument when the dog - the wife's service animal, "went into protective mode and bit the husband twice." The husband left the room and returned with a .45 caliber handgun to kill the animal. A search found several spent shells, "one live round in a bedroom," high-capacity magazines and "additional ammunition."

The husband/father and son were taken to police headquarters where they were charged with at least weapons possession. Further details remain unavailable as of press time.

WEST ORANGE - It is one thing when a New Jersey agency fines a local elected official for failing to comply with a state regulation - but it is a rare occasion, like with a township councilman, who admits and apologizes for a mistake.

Councilman Joe Krakoviak, on his Facebook page March 27, more than admitted that he had been fined \$475 by the state Election Campaign Law Enforcement Commission. He also posted his affidavit and waiver of hearing before the ELEC.

Krakoviak, by signing the said forms, admitted to not complying with the commission's Campaign Contributions and Expenditure Reporting Act. The Commission said that the councilman had failed to file his 2024 council campaign reports in a timely manner.

The councilman said that he had paid the \$475 fine, "subject to final disposition to

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NASA'S ARTEMIS II CREW ECLIPSES RECORD FOR FARTHEST HUMAN SPACEFLIGHT



The SLS (Space Launch System) launches with the Artemis II crew aboard the Orion spacecraft on April 1, 2026, at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Credit: NASA/Bill Ingalls



On April 6, six days into their mission, NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Koch, and CSA (Canadian Space Agency) astronaut Jeremy Hansen surpassed the record for human spaceflight's farthest distance from Earth, which was previously set by the Apollo 13 mission in 1970. Credit: NASA

NASA - Four astronauts aboard NASA's Artemis II test flight around the Moon made history at 12:56 p.m. CDT on April 6, traveling 248,655 miles from Earth, surpassing the record for human spaceflight's farthest distance previously set by the Apollo 13 mission in 1970.

At its farthest point, crew inside the Orion spacecraft will have traveled about 252,756 miles, before looping back toward our home planet, setting the new record for human spaceflight.

Six days into the first crewed mission of NASA's Artemis program, NASA astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Koch, and CSA (Canadian Space Agency) astronaut Jeremy Hansen continued collecting pictures of the Moon on their voyage away from Earth.

"At NASA, we dare to reach higher, explore farther, and achieve the impossible. That's embodied perfectly by our Artemis II astronauts - Reid, Victor, Christina, and Jeremy. They are charting new frontiers for all humanity," said Dr. Lori Glaze, acting associate administrator for Exploration Systems Development Mission Directorate at NASA Headquarters in Washington. "Their dedication is about more than breaking records - it's fueling our hope for a bold future. Their mission is carrying our promise to return

to the Moon's surface, this time to stay as we establish a Moon Base."

NASA's Orion spacecraft began its journey to the Moon following a successful April 1 launch on an SLS (Space Launch System) rocket from the agency's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. After conducting a series of burns to break free of Earth orbit the following day, the spacecraft set its path toward the Moon.

Following their record achievement, crew provided brief, emotional remarks. The world heard from CSA (Canadian Space Agency) astronaut Jeremy Hansen aboard Orion:

"From the cabin of Integrity here, as we surpass the furthest distance humans have ever traveled from planet Earth, we do so in honoring the extraordinary efforts and feats of our predecessors in human space exploration. We will continue our journey even further into space before Mother Earth succeeds in pulling us back to everything that we hold dear. But we most importantly choose this moment to challenge this generation and the next to make sure this record is not long-lived."

In addition to their spaceflight record, crew suggested naming two craters on the Moon during their flight. The first is named in honor of their spacecraft, Integrity. The sec-

ond honors Wiseman's late wife, Carroll. After this mission is complete, the crater name proposals will be formally submitted to the International Astronomical Union, the organization that governs the naming of celestial bodies and their surface features.

When they fly past the Moon later, crew will come within about 4,067 miles from its surface at the closest approach. The astronauts will be the first to see some parts of the far side of the Moon with human eyes. Finally, they will witness a solar eclipse as the Moon passes in front of the Sun.

NASA is expecting to lose communication with the astronauts for about 40 minutes during a planned blackout period. The break will occur as the Moon blocks signals between the spacecraft and the Earth through the Deep Space Network. When Orion reemerges from behind the Moon, it is expected to quickly reacquire contact with flight controllers in the Mission Control Center at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston.

During their lunar flyby, a fleet of cameras will capture imagery of the Moon, including features humans have never directly seen. The astronauts will use a variety of digital handheld cameras to conduct high-resolution photography of the lunar surface. Ar-

temis II is providing astronauts an opportunity to gather data as one of the most powerful scientific tools for observation are the four pairs of eyes observing lunar features with varying illumination and texture.

Photos, videos, mission telemetry, and communication information are all sources of data from the test flight, which will be used to inform future Artemis missions as the agency embarks on development of its Moon Base.

The Artemis II astronauts are more than halfway through their mission. The crew is scheduled to splash down off the coast of San Diego at approximately 8:07 p.m. EDT (5:07 p.m. PDT) on Friday, April 10. Following splashdown, recovery teams will retrieve the crew members using helicopters and deliver them to the USS John P. Murtha. Once aboard, the astronauts will undergo post-flight medical evaluations in the ship's medical bay before traveling back to shore to meet with an aircraft bound for NASA Johnson.

Under the Artemis program, NASA will send Artemis astronauts on increasingly challenging missions to explore more of the Moon for scientific discovery, economic benefits, and to build on our foundation for the first crewed missions to Mars.

CORRUPTION

(Continued from page 7)

"April 12th and 13th, 2021 I received an unannounced visit at my office from Amiri Baraka Jr. demanding that I change the vote for the above resolution (H-21-08-08-02). I refused, and at that point, the Chief of Staff violated several federal and New Jersey statutes. On April 14th, there was a special meeting on a new resolution. It was passed, providing landscaping for NHA property. At that time, I advised the Board of Commissioners that I filed a complaint to the office of Investigation General - HUD- NJ Division.

Also on April 14, 2021 a letter was sent to the City of Newark Municipal Council to remove me as Commissioner."

Legal Analyses

As was noted earlier in this article, pressuring a commissioner to change his vote is illegal under state and federal law. Removing a commissioner for voting against the mayor's preferences is also illegal under state and federal laws. Among other things, it violates civil rights, right to due process; the First Amendment; and a slew of other state and federal laws, rules and regulations.

Forcing a public housing authority (PHA) commission member to change their vote through threats, coercion or intimidation constitutes a serious crime, punishable under both federal and state laws. Potential penalties include significant fines and imprisonment, with terms ranging from one year for voter coercion to up to 20 years for extortion or public corruption depending on the jurisdiction and method of force.

Removal of commissioners

A commissioner can only be removed after they have been given a copy of the

charges against them at least 10 days prior to a hearing and have had the opportunity to be heard in person or by counsel.

Generally, members serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority, usually the mayor or council, though their terms are typically for 5 years.

What New Jersey Recording Law says

According to legal research, New Jersey is a "one-party consent" state for recording, meaning that it is legal to record in-person or phone conversations if you are a participant or have one participant's permission. It is a third-degree crime to record conversations you are not involved in, or to record for criminal purposes.

Federal law

Federal intervention can happen. In extreme cases of default, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development can take over a local housing authority as was set for the Atlantic City Housing Authority in 2025.

Federal law provides stiff penalties for intimidation or coercion of a public official. Federal law 18 U.S.C. Section 594 prohibits intimidation or coercing a public official in the exercise of their duties, including voting, which is punishable by fines and up to one year in prison.

Local Talk wrote in its May 24, 2024 article that NJ Revised Statutes title 40A: 12A - 17 were the relevant state law here.

Research on the Internet shows that "Federal charges for quid pro quo - meaning "this for that" exchange - typically involve bribery, extortion or honest services fraud when a public official corruptly exchanges official acts for something of value. Key statutes include 18 U.S.C. Section 201 (bribery of officials), 18 U.S.C. Section 1951 (Hobbs



Act extortion) and 18 U.S.C. Section 1346 (honest service fraud). Penalties are severe, including up to 15-20 years in prison, heavy fines, and disqualification from holding office.

Restrictions on Accepting Gifts

Sections 3 and 23 of the Newark Housing Authority Handbook give restrictions on accepting gifts.

"It is illegal to request or accept anything of "substantial value" - in other words, anything with a value of over \$50 or more - from anyone. If you receive it "for or because of " a specific official act or an act within your official responsibility then you have performed or will perform as a housing authority member or employee. It is also illegal for a private party to offer or give anything of substantial value to you because of such acts that you performed or will perform. This is true even if there is no corrupt intent on the part of either the giver or receiver.

You also may not request or accept a gift of substantial value from anyone if you are receiving it because of the official position you hold as a housing authority or employee, even if the motivation for the gift is to express gratitude for a job well done or to foster goodwill."

What could happen?

The resulting controversy around the video may well lead to the unseating of certain Municipal Council members. Since Alif Muhammad filed a lawsuit in federal court, this means federal and state authorities will begin investigation. The video is very solid evidence in a court of law. At a minimum, the video may undermine incumbent Mayor Ras Baraka's chances for reelection to a fourth term.

The effect on Baraka - allied members of Newark Housing Authority members is less clear. Since commissioners are appointed, they would have to be investigated either by state or federal authorities.

As for Congresswoman LaMonica McIver, the most that could happen is a strong rival challenging her for reelection. How that will fly is anyone's guess.

Local Talk will keep its readers updated on the latest developments in this story.

Meanwhile, Local Talk contacted Mayor Baraka's office regarding the allegations. We were told that a response should come next week. We have also invited the mayor as well as other official mayoral candidates for an interview pertaining to the upcoming election.

WHO CALLS FOR ACTION: "TOGETHER FOR HEALTH. STAND WITH SCIENCE." TO MARK WORLD HEALTH DAY

WHO - The World Health Organization (WHO) called on people everywhere April 6 to renew their commitment to working together and supporting science as the twin engines driving better health, under the World Health Day 2026 theme: "Together for health. Stand with science."

The campaign marks the anniversary of WHO's founding on April 7, 1948, launching a year-long public health campaign.

Human health has been profoundly transformed over the past century, largely due to scientific progress and international collaboration. The global maternal mortality rate has fallen by more than 40% since 2000, and deaths among children under five have been reduced by over 50%.

Advances in technology, scientific knowledge and skills, and collaboration between different disciplines, sectors and countries continue to turn once-life-threatening health challenges - such as elevated blood pressure, cancer diagnoses or HIV infection - into manageable health issues, extending and improving lives worldwide.

Yet, health threats continue to grow, fueled by climate impacts, environmental degradation, geopolitical tensions and shifting demographics. These challenges include persistent diseases and strained health systems as well as emerging diseases with epidemic or pandemic potential. Across the globe, thousands of scientists - together with organizations such as WHO - are accelerating research and developing policies, tools and innovations needed to protect communities today and safeguard the health of future generations.

"Science is one of humanity's most

powerful tools for protecting and improving health," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization. "People in every country live longer and healthier lives on average today than their ancestors did, thanks to the power of science. Vaccines, penicillin, germ theory, MRI machines and the mapping of the human genome are just some of the achievements that science has delivered that have saved lives and transformed health for billions of people."

Scientific innovations are most powerful when they are widely adopted and used. Every success in improving human health reflects the collective work and collaboration of scientific organizations, policy-makers, health workers and the public. For example:

- Before modern anesthesia, surgery meant unimaginable pain. Today, safer medicines, affordable technologies and trained specialists allow life-saving operations to be performed while patients sleep comfortably. Scientific progress has helped democratize these advances, making safe surgical care accessible across the world, including in many resource-limited communities
- Over the past 50 years, global immunization efforts have saved over 154 million children from infectious diseases. Vaccines have contributed to a 40% reduction in infant mortality, with just one vaccine - the measles vaccine - saving over 90 million children
- Progress in early screening technologies is transforming health outcomes. From electronic blood pressure monitors to breast cancer screening

through mammography, these tools have become life-saving interventions for millions.

WHO, over its 78 years of convening of global scientific organizations, has stood at the forefront of global health and scientific transformation. For example:

- During the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak of 2003, WHO coordinated a global network of laboratories sharing real-time data. This collaboration enabled the rapid identification of the virus causing SARS within two weeks, setting a global model for outbreak detection and response that continues today
- In 2009, WHO developed alcohol-based hand-rub formulations and promoted its global adoption in health-care settings. This innovation, along with related infection-prevention strategies, helps protect millions of patients and health workers worldwide from infections and complications, including during the COVID-19 pandemic
- WHO continually identifies emerging challenges to human health, bringing together leading scientists and policy-makers to develop norms and standards that protect communities. For example, WHO's global air quality guidelines define air quality levels needed to safeguard health from risks such as respiratory infections, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and lung cancer. WHO's drinking water standards ensure that the water from our taps is safe, helping prevent diarrheal diseases, including deadly ones such as cholera.

TOWN WATCH

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the ELEC Board."

Krakoviak said that in his response, he had, "apologized to the Commission and West Orange residence for my non-compliance." That response also has a link on his FB page.

SOUTH ORANGE / MAPLEWOOD - The South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education more than opened its March 27 meeting with more than a moment of silence for a departed employee.

Board President William Meyer added that Friday's meeting that a tribute for

Chris Settle will be set up by his security desk at the Administration Building. A GoFundMe.com page was then established to help Cuttle's family with his funeral expenses.

"Not everyone who attended our Board meetings (here) knew Chris by name but everyone was greeted by him," said Meyer. "He had a kind word and an unfailing smile."

Christopher Settle, 55, of Newark, died suddenly March 13. "Big Gravy," who was born May 15, 1980, previously worked with SMS Fashions in Newark and Wisdom Security before his last stint with SOMSD. The Malcolm X. Shabazz High School attendee found kinship with

several motorcycle and social clubs, including being Sergeant at Arms with Knockouts.

The avid NFL Buffalo Bills and NCAA Division I University of Connecticut Men's Basketball team fan is survived by brothers Derrick and Jarrod and sister Courtney Wilson-Powell, among others. The New Born Prophets hip-hop group co-founder was serenaded by his New Born Baptist Church Inspirational Choir colleges during his April 2 visitation and home going celebration. His remains were rested at Fairmount Cemetery - also in Newark.

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The Observation Booth



OP-ED By Andrea Dialect

LIES THEY TELL

The Bible is my favorite book, hands down. If my world was at collapse, as it seemingly our world is right now, and I had to think fast, move quickly, and grab one thing to throw in my backpack to sustain me, it would be that book.

Today, it's safe to say most wouldn't opt in, considering cancel culture and how disconnected humanity is from God - needless to say, the Bible.

So, when mentioning Daddy God in such convo, I already know how it lands. Fairytale. Myth. "Just a story-book." Dismissible. Yet for me, this book has been tested, examined, cross-referenced, and challenged - and it is still here, standing. The naked truth shows up whether I'm ready or not. No filter. No buffer.

Hearing is execution. Not just listening, but moving on what you heard. Writing this article is motion. What better escort for the naked truth than proof? So I yanked a chapter or two from one of those so-called fairytales for research and truth's sake. I present the Second Epistle of Timothy. This world claims to vet the circle of life, and this book is often first on the stakes in support of living in real time. So we think. But let's do some fact-checking shall we?

READ THIS IF YA GROWN

(Second Epistle to Timothy 3:1-5 (KJV))

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall

come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Now let's add some cherries on top. In the Gospel of Matthew, it says love will grow cold, and in the Book of Isaiah, it speaks of calling evil good and good evil. Distortions of truth, are they not?

What do you mean the following is untruths Andrea? Do tell.... I see validation over values. Image over integrity. "Me first" dressed up as healing. Call it self-love. Covetous. Boasters. Proud. Flex culture. Fake rich energy. Loud confidence, quiet insecurity. Call it manifestation. Disobedient to parents. Wisdom outdated. Elders irrelevant. No one can tell you anything. Call it independence. Without natural affection. Family ties disposable. Love



PHOTO BY
ANDREA
DIALECT

conditional. People replaceable. Call it protecting your peace. False accusers. Loud lies win. Truth moves slow. Accountability flipped. Call it speaking your truth. Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. Chase the feeling. Avoid the discipline. Numb what is real. Call it living your best life...

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.

TOWN WATCH

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Theater Opening Update

It is one "SOMA" movie theater open and one about to open here as of March 25. Films at SOPAC, after a month's delay, reopened under its Box Office Cinemas era that Wednesday with a ribbon-cutting, free screenings and free popcorn. Maplewood Theatre, said Box Office chief James Kula, is projected to reopen on or before Jan. 1, 2027.

BLOOMFIELD - That James Norton's North Center-based Norton Travel Network continues, that his 69-year marriage to his beloved Dorothy lasted into Jan. 24 and that the annual Harvest Fest is in its third decade are testaments to the former mayor and his wife's long-lasting contributions to Bloomfield.

Jan. 24 was when Dorothy, 87, died in Morristown Memorial Hospital in Jim's presence. Jim, 91, who passed away

hours later at home here, is said to have died of a broken heart.

James, as a councilman and two-term mayor in the 1990s, started the Harvest Fest on the Bloomfield Green and preserved the Morris Canal towpath-turned-recreational greenway. The township, under his morality, accepted the former Schering pharmaceutical research center at 60 Orange Rd., and replaced it with the Home Depot.

It was good that James P. Norton returned from learning the insurance business from Hearthstone in Boston for he would not have met the former Dorothy Zelinski in 1956. The East Orange native and BHS Class of 1953 graduate met the Jersey City native and Little Falls' Passaic Valley HS Class of 1957 graduate at a Halloween party and married six months later.

The Nortons - between his insurance and real estate business and her employment at Bell Telephone of New Jersey-Montclair - raised sons William, Joseph and Jerry and daughter Alicia Murray here. They bought Theodore Todaro's

travel agency in 1985. Dorothy was part of the St. Joseph the Apostle choir and Jim was a co-founder of Montclair's Immaculate Conception High School Foundation.

Fifteen grandchildren and five great-grandchildren also survived them. Last rites included a Jan. 29 visitation at the O'Boyle Funeral Home, a Jan. 30 Funeral Mass at St. Thomas and interment at Mt. Olivet Cemetery. memorial donations may be made to the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

MONTCLAIR / GLEN RIDGE - That it took around 155 people - many of whom from Montclair and Glen Ridge but some as far away as Wayne - nine hours to walk 10 miles from here to the far east end of Newark's Ironbound section was not the only unusual aspect about it April 3.

Leaders and members from nine congregations, seven of whom from Montclair and Glen Ridge, stepped off

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TOWN WATCH

(Cont. from page 14)

from Montclair's First Congregational Church at 8 a.m. to start their "praying with their feet." Their walk to the ICE-contracted Delaney Hall detention center was in protest of the federal government's 16 months of heavy-handed arrest and deportation process.

"The pilgrimage aimed to bear witness to the suffering of those in ICE detention, including of those who died in state custody," stated the organizers. "Participants were united by a shared conviction that Good Friday calls us to confront state violence, unjust suffering and the persecution of the innocent. We are currently seeing that same pattern of persecution reflected in the treatment of immigrants in America."

First Congregational Church members left with colleagues from the Christ Episcopal Church of Bloomfield and Glen Ridge, First Lutheran Church of Montclair, Glen Ridge Congregational Church, Union Congregational Church of Montclair and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Montclair plus Wayne's Packanack Community Church and Pax Christi of New Jersey.

The "Eyes on ICE Coalition" walk made stops at Christ Episcopal Church here, Newark's Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark and St. Stephen's Grace Community-ELCA in the Ironbound. Cardinal Joseph Tobin greeted the walkers. St. Stephen's members joined the walker's last two miles.

Sacred Heart Basilica's Bishop Bismark Chou and Fr. Alex Gaitian was leaving Delaney Hall at 5 p.m., after a full Good Friday of services, when they met the walkers. Together they held a prayer service featuring the reading of the names who died in ICE detention - including Jean Wilson Brutus, who had a fatal medical emergency while in Delaney Hall Dec. 15.

Eyes on Ice Coalition volunteers make daily visits to the GEO Group-run Delaney Hall.

BELLEVILLE - Mayoral candidates Michael Melham and Frank Velez III seem to agree on holding the first municipal candidates night or debate here in recent memory - except on who would moderate that session.

The "Belleville Watch" Facebook page said that it had received emails between the respective incumbent

mayor and councilman about holding such an event originally in late February or early March. Belleville Superintendent of Schools Dr. Erick Alonso had offered the Belleville High School auditorium as the venue.

But who will be the moderator appears to be the missing keystone to a debate both sides want to hold before the May 12 non-partisan municipal election.

Fernando Uribe, who hosts a weekly "Real Talk with Fernando Uribe" podcast on Jersey 1st TV, was the one who approached Dr. Alonso about his schools hosting the prospective debate.

Questions on whether Uribe, of Union City, be the moderator arose when archived podcasts had Melham on as a guest as late as September. The counter argument that BHS, as a public school, would be neutral was made.

FB posters have suggested having BHS legal students ask the panelists questions had been floated. The students were moderators and question askers in the 2013 or 14 Belleville Board of Education Trustee candidates debate. That format, however, was limited to education and school district-related topics.

"The (Kearny) Observer" Editor and Broadcaster Kevin A. Canessa, Jr. was also proposed. Critics decried Canessa's possible selection, given his "Melham will easily win his third term" statement in the newspaper and website's New Years Prediction article.

The Essex County Clerk's Election Division Office is preparing to send out sample and Vote By Mail Ballots for May 12 elections here, Newark, Irvington and Orange.

NUTLEY - Robin DeLorenzo, the township native who became the third woman hired by the NFL as a full-time referee, is suing the sanctioning body to get her job back.

DeLorenzo and her lawyer filed a suit, also for unspecified compensatory and punitive damages, against the NFL and two individuals in U.S. Federal Court-Southern New York District March 31 on discrimination charges. (The NFL's headquarters is in Midtown Manhattan.)

The plaintiffs assert that she had been subjected to "gender-based scrutiny, humiliation and open hostility" from fellow referees and others from her Aug. 11, 2022 debut as a line judge to when the NFL fired her for what it said was "three seasons of documented underperformance" Feb. 19, 2025.

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DeLorenzo said that the pattern started when she was given male referee uniforms to wear for her first game, between the NJ Giants and New England Patriots at Foxborough, Mass. She was also told to put her hair out as a ponytail through her hat opening "to show there's a woman on the field."

At a Pittsburgh Steelers training camp, the then-NFL referees crew chief Walter Anderson asked then-head coach Mike Tomlin to have her sing before officials and players. Her hazing was recorded despite being told it was not filmed. Another crew chief that season, John Hussey, who was also accused of harassing another woman official, would give "profanity-laced trash talk" to her before not even talking with her at season's end.

DeLorenzo said she was forced to attend what she said was "an alleged training opportunity," over the NFL Referees Association's objection, that turned out to be for "lower-level college officials." The Nutley High School Class of 1997 graduate said she must have seen "100,000 snaps" in two decades of high school and college officiating, adding that "maybe it's a North Jersey thing, but I have a tough skin" along the way.

NFL Spokesman Brian McCarthy, who made the "documented underperformance" comment March 31, added that the charges were "baseless."



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