

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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UFC & NEW JERSEY DEVILS CHECK OUT NEW WELLNESS CENTER

PAGE 5

UPSETS, SWEEPS IN FOUR TOWNS' ELECTION RESULTS

By Walter Elliott

NEWARK - Those who were looking for team sweeps or upsets in May 12's municipal mayor council elections here, in Irvington, Orange or Belleville will find their glasses either part-empty or part full.

Mayor Ras J. Baraka here, unofficially as of 9:40 p.m. May 12, led most of his "Continue Moving Newark Forward" council team back to City Hall. Voters, however, voted in an independent for the last at-large council seat over a Team baraka backed candidate.

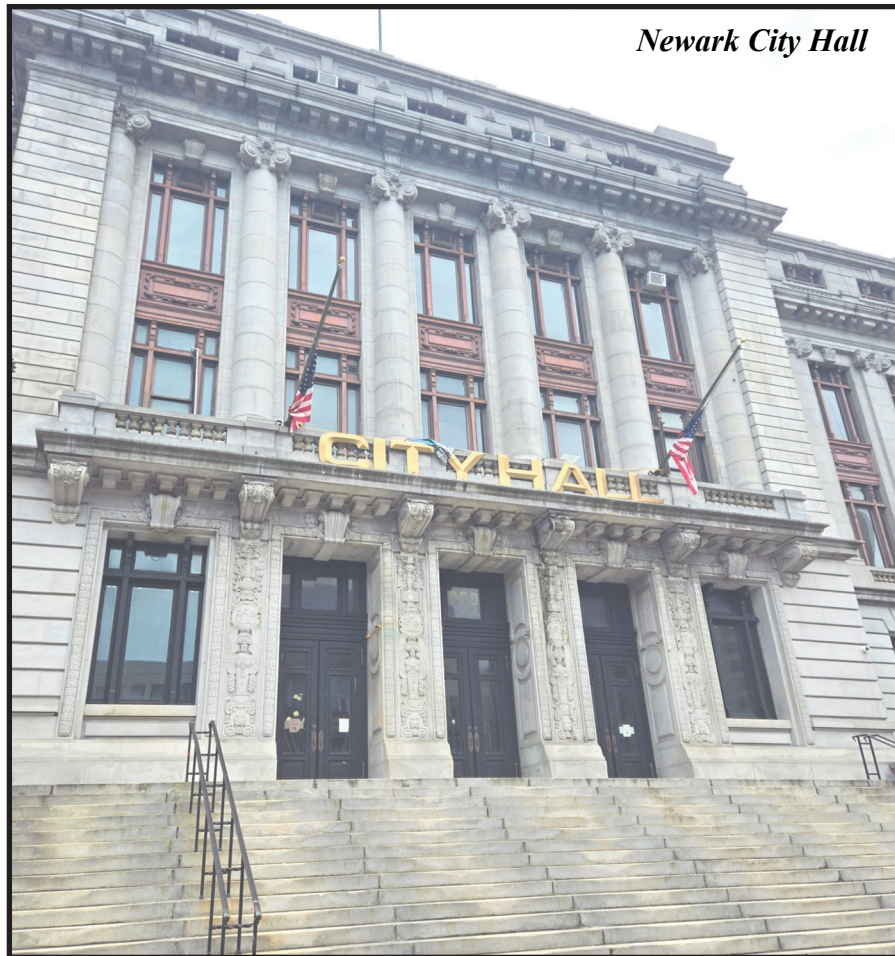
Belleville voters swept out one incumbent mayor-council team with a challenging ticket.

Orange voters changed two of the four City Ward Council Members. Irvington voters kept the incumbent status quo.

Both the County Clerk Elections Division and the County Board of Elections have recorded a 14.33 percent voter turnout. There were so far 11,320 ballots cast from a four-town registered voter pool of 70,912.

By "unofficial," County Clerk Christopher Durkin is holding off certifying the results until on or before May 28. This is the 14-day voting machine impoundment period to allow any challenges or recounts.

Essex County Superinten-



Newark City Hall

dent of Elections Patty Spango is meanwhile holding the Vote By Mail Ballot reception window open until May 20 for those ballots who have been postmarked on or before May 12.

In NEWARK, Mayor Ras J. Baraka was elected to his fourth term by a seven-to-one ratio over his nearest of seven opponents.

Baraka tallied 13,057 votes for 70.34 percent of the vote. Jhamar D. Youngblood finished second with 3,100 votes or 16.70 percent.

Former Newark Public

Schools Board of Education Student Representative Debra L. Salters placed third at 873 or 4.70. Sheila H. Montague finished fourth 612 or 3.30. Tanisha H. Gardner edged Nobile D. Milton for fifth - 294 or 1.58 versus 289 or 1.56.

Douglas R. Davis was next at 244 or 1.41. Nasheedah S. Singleton completed the balloted field at 94 or .51 percent.

At Large (Vote for four.)

Newark's upset is found

within the At Large Council races where community activist Donna Jackson got the fourth and final seat over a Team Baraka-backed candidate.

Perennial Councilman Luis Quintana led a "Continue Moving Newark Forward" team of returning incumbents. "The Dean of the Municipal Council" and once interim mayor carried 8,378 or 14.28.

Council Members C. Lawrence Crump and Louise Scott-Rountree were returned for their second full terms. Crump carried 7,630 or 13; Rountree received 7,188 or 12.25.

Jackson, however, will get to succeed the outgoing Carlos Gonzalez on the Municipal Council over Josephine Garcia. Garcia had been a Gonzalez office staffer and former Newark Public Schools Board of Education President.

Jackson received 6,735 or 11.48. Garcia, who was backed by Team Baraka, became "Best of the Rest" with 5,061 or 8.63.

Rasheen Peppers pulled 4,129 or 7.04 for sixth place. Altarik B. White, Sr. was next at 2,667 or 4.56 Lynda A. Lloyd was eighth at 2,548 or 4.34.

Alonzo Herran, Jr., placed ninth after hauling 1,890 or 3.22. Yusuf H. Shabazz cracked "The Top 10" by edging Maria E. Lebron 1,836 or

(Continued on page 7)



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To
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16



Hello Readers,

The Newark, NJ election drew the most attention from the public. However, Mayor Ras Baraka won easily with over 13,057 votes. The existing Ward council members were reelected. As for At Large council members, Luis A. Quintana - 8,378, C. Lawrence Crump - 7,630, and Louise Scott-Rountree - 7,188, were reelected. However, there was a surprise. After Carlos Gonzalez decided against running again, Donna Jackson - 6,735 took the last At Large spot.

Donna Jackson, who is a longtime activist, won against the Baraka team's candidate

Jacqueline Garcia. Hopefully, Donna will look out for the people and be their voice, like she has always done.

In Orange two incumbent council members lost the election. Tency Eason lost against Lynn Ogbourne, while Jamie B. Summers-Johnson lost to James H. Ward, III.

In Irvington, Mayor Tony Vauss won easily against Paul Inman. However, in Belleville, Frank Vélez won easily over incumbent Michael Melham. The incumbent council members who ran for reelection were also ousted.

Overseas, the United Kingdom labor party had a disastrous election result. U.K. Prime-minister Sir Keir Starmer is facing calls from his own party to resign. He stated that he will go back to governing rather than leave.

Memphis Grizzlies star forward and seven-year veteran Brandon Clarke died at the

age of 29. He was arrested in 2024 for speeding and possession of controlled substances. On Monday May 11, the fire department of Los Angeles responded to a 911 call. They found Clarke dead at home. It seems like his death was because of an overdose of substances. Police sent his body for an autopsy to find out the reason of his death.

It's been over two months since the war between USA and Iran began. The USA was not the original country involved in the war, but joined to support Israel. Trump's daily or even hourly different statements make the war seem like it's between Iran and USA. No one is taking about Israel as a party in the war now.

China was the largest buyer of Iranian oil, and might be supporting Iran behind the scenes, so Trump flew to China to have a talk with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The two superpowers will talk about how to settle Iran war or at least open the Strait of Hormuz. China will bring a discussion about Taiwan to Trump, while he might ask about Chinese spies and COVID.

Trump wants to impress Xi and make a good business relationship with China. So, he brought along a few CEOs of large corporations including Elon Musk, Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, Apple's Tim Cook, Boeing's Kelly Ortberg and a few more. Maybe by making a good business deal, Trump will convince China to convince Iran to settle down and stop the war or at least open the Strait of Hormuz.

Have a wonderful week.

I'll talk to you next week.

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WEATHER FOR THE WEEK						
THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Rain	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	PM Rain
HI 65	HI 67	HI 81	HI 83	HI 82	HI 88	HI 81
LO 52	LO 53	LO 62	LO 63	LO 67	LO 68	LO 61



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NJ AG DAVENPORT AND DCR ANNOUNCE ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS ALLEGING PREGNANCY DISCRIMINATION

TRENTON - Attorney General Jennifer Davenport and the Division on Civil Rights (DCR) announced May 12 that DCR issued Findings of Probable Cause in four cases alleging that employers discriminated against pregnant employees by denying them reasonable accommodations - and, in one case, by wrongfully terminating the employee - in violation of the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD).

The enforcement actions announced today are part of Attorney General Davenport's commitment to tackling the affordability crisis by ensuring that every worker in our state has an equal opportunity to earn a living.

"As we confront an affordability crisis in New Jersey, it's more important than ever that pregnant workers have a fair shot at earning a living. Far too often, however, employers deny pregnant workers reasonable accommodations - and when they do, they violate the law and effectively lock a key part of our workforce out of an equal opportunity to earn a living," said Attorney General Davenport.

port.

"Our message is simple: We're going to stand up for pregnant workers and hold accountable employers who contribute to our affordability crisis by discriminating against pregnant employees. Today's enforcement actions underscore our commitment to enforcing our strong civil rights laws and ensuring economic opportunity for everyone in our state."

The findings of probable cause announced today all involve discrimination based on pregnancy in violation of the LAD. The LAD, as amended in 2014 by the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to pregnant employees and employees experiencing pregnancy-related conditions, so long as doing so does not create an undue hardship for the business.

Under the LAD, employers are also required to engage in an interactive process with employees to determine how to reasonably accommodate them so they can continue to work and maintain their health during their pregnancy or while

experiencing pregnancy-related conditions.

In two separate matters, workers accused Lisbon Cleaning Inc. of failing to offer reasonable accommodations while they were pregnant. DCR's investigations found reasonable suspicion that Lisbon Cleaning failed to engage in the required interactive process or provide reasonable accommodations, such as a temporary change of assignment to reduce physically demanding lifting requirements for the two pregnant employees.

A third complainant alleged that Cooper Health System violated the LAD when it denied her request for accommodations related to lifting, a reduction in hours, and closer parking due to a high-risk pregnancy. DCR found sufficient evidence that Cooper Health failed to adequately engage in an interactive process to identify reasonable accommodations, as the LAD requires, and instead required the employee to choose between a leave of absence or losing her position.

(Continued on page 11)

NJ HOMELAND SECURITY TASK FORCE SCORES LARGEST METHAMPHETAMINE SEIZURE IN STATE HISTORY

CAMDEN - Two men were charged under the New Jersey Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF) with conspiring to distribute over 260 pounds of methamphetamine into New Jersey, which represents the largest seizure of methamphetamine in the state's history, U.S. Attorney Robert Frazer announced.

"By preventing hundreds of pounds of methamphetamine from hitting the streets, this historic seizure has made New Jersey a safer place," said U.S. Attorney Frazer. "And it has also sent an unmistakable message to drug traffickers who plan to enter the Garden State: stay out. We will find you and you will answer for any attempt to bring poison into our communities. I want to thank our law enforcement partners for their tireless work in this case and for putting themselves at risk for the benefit of public safety every day."

"Seizing 260 pounds of methamphetamine, the largest seizure in New Jersey, is a critical step in preventing these deadly drugs from reaching our neighborhoods," stated DEA New Jersey Special Agent in Charge Towanda R. Thorne-James. "This success highlights the power of collaboration between DEA and our law-enforcement partners at every level. By working together, we are making our

community safer and holding drug traffickers accountable."

"This seizure and the resulting charges are a tremendous demonstration of partnerships at work, with members of the Homeland Security Task Force bringing these drug traffickers to justice. Over six million dollars of methamphetamine was seized, but what is priceless is the number of lives potentially saved by the extraordinary efforts of law enforcement in New Jersey," said FBI Special Agent in Charge Stefanie Roddy.

"This seizure represents a decisive blow against a large-scale drug trafficking organization that sought to move an extraordinary volume of methamphetamine into our state," stated Special Agent in Charge Jenifer L. Piovesan, IRS Criminal Investigation, Newark Field Office. "This case reflects the dedication and cooperation of every agency involved, and together we will continue to safeguard the residents of New Jersey by pursuing those who finance and facilitate the distribution of dangerous narcotics."

"Our communities are safer today as a result of the unwavering partnership between Homeland Security Investigations, the DEA, and our federal counterparts," said HSI Newark Special Agent in Charge Michael S. McCarthy. "This op-

eration underscores our collective dedication to disrupting transnational criminal organizations and safeguarding the public from the threats posed by illicit drugs."

Marcos Cesar Acosta, 47, most recently of Chicago, Illinois, and Carlos H. Cordero-Guiterrez, 53, a citizen and national of Mexico, were charged by criminal complaint with one count of conspiracy to distribute controlled substances. Acosta and Cordero-Guiterrez made their initial appearances before U.S. Magistrate Judge Elizabeth A. Pascal on April 29, 2026 and were detained.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court: On April 28, 2026, Acosta traveled to New Jersey to supervise the delivery of hundreds of pounds of methamphetamine by a truck driven by Cordero-Guiterrez. That evening, after the truck arrived in New Jersey loaded with the methamphetamine, law enforcement officers arrested Acosta and Cordero-Guiterrez. Law enforcement seized three black storage boxes, one duffel bag, and a garbage bag from the truck cab, all of which contained methamphetamine. Collectively, the seized methamphetamine weighed over 260 pounds.

(Continued on page 6)

SPORTS WRAP



By William Hathaway, Jr.

This past week the UFC returned to Newark for the fourth straight year for MMA action at the Prudential Center.

Before then, the UFC teamed up with the Newark Boys and Girls Club to unveil a new UFC Wellness Center inside the Club. After the ribbon was cut, UFC athletes and players with the New Jersey Devils got a brief tour of the new facility. Representing UFC was Khalil Roundtree and AlJamain Sterling, while

the Devils were repped by defenseman Johnny Kovacevic and goaltender Jake Allen.

Ameer Washington, who is the CFO of the Boys and Girls Club in Newark said he was excited to have two good partnerships in getting the new Wellness Center at the boys and girls Club with the New Jersey Devils Foundation along with the UFC Foundation.

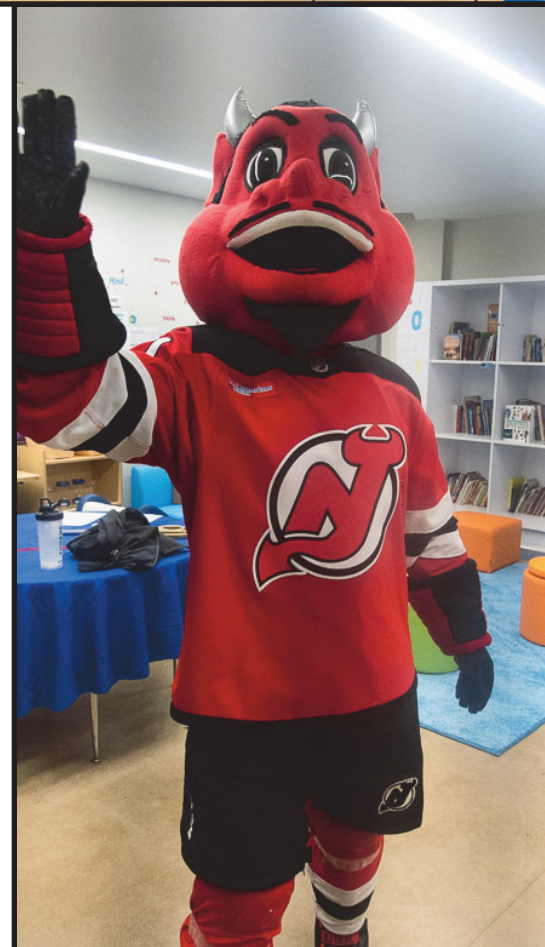
After the good time at the Boys and Girls Club was done, it was time for the fights. There was a total of 14 fights on the card,

headlined Khamzat Chimaev versus Sean Strickland for the middleweight crown. In a split decision, Strickland came out the victor.

Other notable fights included Joshua Van scoring a TKO over Tatsuro Taira, Alexander Volkov beating Waldo Cortes by decision in a heavyweight bout, and King Green defeating Jeremy Stevens in the first round via submission.

In a late-night presser, UFC President Dana White expressed his thanks for the partnership with the Prudential Center in hosting the fights.

Photos By Felicia Laguerre Owens



ESSEX COUNTY COMPLETES UPGRADES TO PLAYGROUND, SPRAY PARK AND FIELD

BLOOMFIELD / EAST ORANGE - Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. reopened the playground, spray park and soccer/lacrosse field in Essex County Watsessing Park on May 12.

The playground was modernized with new equipment, a rubberized safety surface and shade structures; the spray park was repaired and repainted; and the soccer lacrosse field received a new synthetic grass playing surface and scoreboard. The improvements are part of the County Executive's ongoing initiative to update recreation facilities to ensure they meet the needs of the community.

"The improvements to the conventional playground, repairs to the spray park, and replacement of the synthetic grass surface at Watsessing Park exemplify our ongoing commitment to provide the most modern recreation facilities that meet the needs of our residents," DiVincenzo said. "It feels good to revisit these incredible additions to our parks system to ensure that open spaces like our parks are well-maintained for all of our residents," he added.

"It is great to have a County Executive who understands how important open space and recreation facilities are for the community. Joe D understands what this means to families," said East Orange Mayor Ted Green, who was joined by Council members Sammed Monk and Naiima

Fauntleroy.

"We see the huge volume of projects done by the County Executive every year, and it's something you don't see anywhere else. This is a great place for families to gather and children to play," Commissioner President Carlos Pomares said.

"Obviously, the Watsessing Park Conservancy is in love with this park. It is such a busy place with so much activity. We appreciate the partnership with the County and the continued investment they make to improve the park and its features," said Rich Moseson, President of the Watsessing Park Conservancy.

"The diversity of the people who come and use this park is phenomenal, and the new equipment will be welcomed by children and their parents," Deputy Chief of Staff and Human Resources Director Jacqueline Jones said.

The playground received new climbing and swing apparatus and a rubberized safety surface that are designed with an aquatic theme to match the theme of the adjacent spray park. New additions to the playground are shade structures over the playground equipment and seating areas for parents/guardians. The installation of park benches, trash receptacles and landscaping, improvements to the walking paths and tree pruning were included in the project. In addition, equipment at



Photo By Priscilla Mikulewicz

the spray park was repaired and repainted.

A professional services contract for \$147,000 was awarded to Remington and Vernick Engineers from Secaucus to design the improvements. A publicly bid contract for \$1,589,900 was awarded to Picerno-Giordano Construction from Kenilworth to perform the construction work. The Essex County Department of Public Works monitored the project to ensure delays were avoided. The improvements were funded with a grant from the NJ Green Acres Program. The project started in October and took seven months to complete.

The existing synthetic grass surface was replaced

due to regular wear and tear. The improvements to the soccer and lacrosse fields were designed in-house by the Essex County Department of Public Works, which also monitored the project to ensure delays were avoided. A publicly bid contract for \$1,125,000 was awarded to Zenith Construction Services from Orange to perform the construction work. The field improvements are with a grant from the NJ Green Acres program.

These upgrades are the latest improvements made in Watsessing Park since DiVincenzo took office in 2003. A majority of the projects were funded with grants received

(Continued on page 13)

MAJOR METH BUST

(Continued from page 4)

The conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine charge carries a mandatory minimum penalty of 10 years in prison, a maximum potential penalty of life in prison, and a fine of up to \$10 million.

U.S. Attorney Frazer credited special agents with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) MOPOD Enforcement Group 11 and the

DEA Camden Resident Office under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Towanda R. Thorne-James, for the investigation leading to the charges. He also thanked the Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael S. McCarthy, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Stefanie Roddy in Newark, and IRS-

Criminal Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Jenifer L. Piovesan, for their assistance in the investigation.

This operation is part of the Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF) initiative. The HSTF is a United States government partnership dedicated to eliminating criminal cartels, transnational gangs, and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) worldwide. This initiative identifies TCOs en-

gaged in a wide range of criminal schemes that violate federal law, while dismantling cross-border human smuggling and trafficking networks that fuel violence and instability that threatens the safety and security of the United States and its global partners.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan S. Garelick of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Trenton.



UPSETS, SWEEPS IN FOUR TOWNS' ELECTION RESULTS

(Continued from page 1)

3.13 over 1,805 or 3.08. Nardirah H. Brown bagged 1,692 or 2.88 for 12th.

Pablo H. Olivera was next at 1,423 or 2.43, followed by Jeanette Hinnant at 1,216 or 207 and Khalil T. Kettles' 1,126 or 1.92. Malik H. Cooper carried 1,041 or 1.77 for 16th.

Christina G. Cherry copped 957 or 1.63 for 17th, ahead of Edden O. Rivera's 680 or 1.16. Lamont T. Vaughn completed the balloted field at 662 or 1.13.

Ward Council (Vote for one each.)

Central Ward voters, in a rematch, re-selected Amina Bey for her first full elected term over former councilwoman Gayle Chaneyfield-Jenkins.

Bey, whom voters picked over Chaneyfield-Jenkins in a special election to fill now-Cong. LaMonica McIver's unexpired term, bagged

2,338 or 55.18. Chaneyfield-Jenkins garnered 1,899 or 44.82.

Tuesday night's results also means that, for the first time in recent memory, there will not be a Central Ward Council runoff election.

East Ward voters, unless they wrote in a candidate, literally faced a "One Man, One Vote" situation.

Incumbent Councilman Michael J. Silva ran unopposed for his first full elected term. Silva was first elected to succeed the retiring Augusto Amador.

North Ward voters rallied behind incumbent Anibal Ramos, Jr. over Marcos M. Sanchez by a four-to-two ratio. Ramos received 2,965 or 81.12. Sanchez scored 690 or 18.88.

South Ward voters carried Rev. Patrick O. Council over six challengers. Council carried the night with 2,165 or 46.12 percent. Former Newark Public Schools Board of Education President Asia J. Norton was the nearest contender with 1,093 or 23.29.

Donald J. Jackson - a former BOE member and

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- * HEALTH PROBLEMS
- * NEGATIVE ENERGY
- ETC....



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Donna Jackson's son - placed third at 601 or 12.80. Trenton E. Jones was next at 485 or 10.33. Lonnie T. Baker finished fifth with 129 or 2.79.

Abdushahid Ah'Mad was sixth at 115 or 2.45. Willi S. Jetty completed the balloted field at 106 or 2.26.

Nearly 60 percent of West Ward returned Councilman Dupre L. Kelly over three challengers. Kelly tallied 2,365 or 59.13. Malcolm X. Outlaw, Sr. was second at 706 or 17.65.

Jimmy L. McCoy finished third at 476 or 11.90. Muta N. El-Amin completed the field at 453 or 11.33.

In IRVINGTON, the incum-

bent "Team Irvington Strong" slate was returned over the "Time for a Change!" balloted platform and a third, write-in ticket.

Mayor Anthony "Tony" Vauss, Sr., for the third campaign, was returned over former East Ward Councilman Paul Inman, Jr.

Vauss, who also organizes "Team Irvington" and "Irvington Schools Strong," tallied 2,649 or 67.01. Inman came in at 1,304 or 32.99.

The essexclerk.com postings did not include write-in votes as of press time. It is therefore not known how well "Team Inspire

(Continued on page 12)

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BILL SHIELDING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE ACCESS CLEARS COMMITTEE

TRENTON - The Senate Health Committee advanced a bill May 11, sponsored by Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz and Senate President Nick Scutari, that strengthens protections for patients and providers of reproductive health care services in New Jersey.

“I never imagined we would need a law to protect doctors from arrest for doing their job or shield parents from harassment for getting their child medical care. But at a time when this country is going against the grain in ways we could not have foreseen, we must go the extra mile to protect every person’s freedom to make decisions about their own body, health, and future,” said Majority Leader Ruiz (Essex/Hudson). “This bill sends a clear mes-

sage that in New Jersey, patients deserve access to the care they need, and no provider should face punishment for offering lawful services.”

“New Jerseyans receiving or providing reproductive care should feel confident that when they enter an exam room in our state, they are fully protected under the law,” said Senate President Scutari (D-Union/Somerset). “By shielding patients and doctors from efforts to undermine their bodily autonomy and medical expertise, we are strengthening New Jersey’s commitment to accessible, safe, and evidence-based reproductive health care services.”

The Committee received moving testimony from members of the LGBTQ+ community, parents, religious leaders,



healthcare providers, and advocacy organizations in support of the bill, including:

- Assemblywoman Luanne Peterpaul, LD-11
- Planned Parenthood
- Lawyers for Good Government
- Cherry Hill Women’s Center
- OutFront Metuchen
- Garden State Equality
- TRC-NJ
- Trans Equity Coalition



- National Council of Jewish Women - Essex

“I thank the parents, advocates, and members of the LGBTQ+ community who have waited patiently for this bill to be heard, often in the face of fear and uncertainty. Because of your unwavering bravery and commitment to ensuring every person can not only live openly, but feel empowered in their own skin, we

(Continued on page 13)

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

NEWARK - Law enforcers in Union County said that they need not have gone far in finding a suspect in a city man in the 8:40 p.m. April 11 shooting up of a Route 22 Center Island Chick-fil-A fast food restaurant in Union Township. That gunfire resulted in the death of a NYC man and the wounding of an East Orange woman and three other patrons.

Union County Prosecutor William A. Daniel and Union Police Director Christopher Donnelly, that they apprehended Jaheed Fields, 20, here along Hayes Avenue in the Central ward's Belmont-Runyon section May 1. They did not say how Fields is connected to the shooting at 2319 US Rt. 22, Union.

Fields is being held here in the Essex County Correctional Center on a count of first-degree murder and six counts of attempted murder plus second-degree counts of unlawful possession of a handgun and possession thereof for an unlawful purpose.

Union police officers said that they found Malek Shepherd, 23, of NYC, dead at the scene. East Orange Mayor Theodore "Ted" Green added that one of his city's residents was injured. While the five injured were admitted with non-life-threatening injuries,

Shepherd's last rites have not been posted as of press time.

UCPO is looking for other masked individuals who witnesses said burst into the eatery, jumped onto the counter and began shooting. Authorities have not elaborated on initial reports that speculated that the shooting was gang and/or drug transaction related.

Daniel and Donnelly thanked ECPO, the Essex County Sheriff's Office and the Newark Police Division among the 18 federal, state, county and local agencies whose investigation yielded in Fields' arrest.

IRVINGTON - "The Children's Team" candidates who a majority of participating voters here returned to their Irvington Public Schools Board of Education were more than re-sworn back into their seats here at the May 6 reorganization meeting.

Seysha Benbow, who was April 23 and April 25, 2023's top BOE vote-getter, was first sworn into her third three-year term. Her peers on the nine-member panel then named her their 2026-27 Board President.

The board's unofficial dean, Audrey M. Lyon, was sworn during the virtual meeting into her fifth consecutive term. Lyon was first elected in the April 23, 2014 election and has been re-elected four more times.

Board member Jordan Geffrard was sworn into his third term. He, Lyon and Benbow ran unopposed on the ballot April 21 and in 2023 as part of "The Children's Team" - a ticket organized by Mayor Anthony "Tony" Vauss.

Sitting member Janelle Lowery was appointed by her peers that Wednesday night as 2026-27 Board Vice President. The reconstituted board is set for their May 20 regular meeting.

EAST ORANGE - The fourth and latest ShopRite supermarket to serve city resi-

dents and neighbors is to open here at Embark's The Crossing at Brick Church May 27. It will be the penultimate step in transforming the former Brick Church Shopping Plaza into the Crossings in the last three years.

Mayor Theodore "Ted" Green, joined by Village Super Market officials Perry Blatt and Amanda Fischer, announced the "New Store, Same Heart" ShopRite at the former's April 29 "Town Talk" program. More food delivery tractor trailer trucks began appearing at the new supermarket's loading docks, as seen from Brick Church Station, the last week.

East Orange's fourth ShopRite, by "Local Talk" count, is to occupy Embark's first or ground-level floor. There will not be a food court but have take-home meals and a range of new food offerings. The 187 current employees will be joined by 63 local new hires to resume 24-7 operation like the current 1974-era store has had.

Once the new ShopRite at 535 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. is opened, all that is left to complete the Embark-Crossings transformation is to demolish the current supermarket - turning that and the rest of Brick Church Shopping Plaza from a memory into history.

The 1946 Wakefern cooperative that started ShopRite included Village, formerly of South Orange, Lo Curcio, of Nutley, Inserra, of Lyndhurst, and other partners. The first SR here opened at 563 Central Ave. in 1961; it became an Extra Supermarket after the current Brick Church supermarket opened.

Although the 1969-85 Doddtown ShopRite had a 120 Thomas Blvd., Orange address, the East Orange border crossed the property. Doddtown served customers in both cities - like the Valley SR at 321 Scotland Rd. served Orange and West Orange shoppers. (120 Thomas is now Shauger contractors headquar-

ters; 321 Scotland a Bravo supermarket.)

Shoppers sampling the new Brick Church ShopRite from Brick Church Station's westbound platform will need to allow 10 minutes extra walking time. NJTransit, in the midst of renovating the railroad station, has temporarily closed the regular ticket office and interior access to the westbound platform since March 31. Platform access is by either end a quarter-mile apart.

ORANGE - A city man who was injured in a fatal July 2, 2025 collision with a Morris County tow truck operator has resulted in his being charged in Morristown May 7 for violating Eileen's Law.

Pierre Innocent, 54 - said Morris County Prosecutor Robert J. Carroll, County Chief of Detectives Robert McNally and Harding Township Chief of Police Robert Gromek - has been charged with second-degree reckless vehicular homicide. The charge specifically is of failing to maintain a travel lane that resulted in a homicide.

Responding State Police troopers to the southbound right shoulder of Interstate 287 in Harding July 2 found Innocent and tow truck driver Daniel Jacob "DJ" Ortiz, 24, of Hopatcong, injured at Milepost 31.4, near Exit 34-Route 124. Ortiz was lying next to the Ron & Sons, of Kenil, flatbed tow truck; Innocent was found in the driver's seat of his 2019 Jeep Cherokee upside down.

Both Innocent and Ortiz were rushed to a local hospital. Innocent was treated and released. Ortiz was declared dead there.

The SPNJ investigation found that Ortiz was about to load a disabled Honda he was called to when Innocent left the travel lane onto the shoulder, striking Ortiz and the tow truck. The impact overturned Innocent's Jeep.

Innocent was released
(Continued on page 11)

NJ AG DAVENPORT AND DC ANNOUNCE ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS ALLEGING PREGNANCY DISCRIMINATION *(Cont. from page 4)*

The fourth complainant, a former employee of Bio-Reference Laboratories Inc., accused the company of discrimination when it denied her request for an accommodation and then terminated her employment. Following pregnancy-related emergency surgery, the employee's doctor recommended a six-week leave of absence to allow the complainant to recover. Bio-Reference denied the request, claiming that a leave of absence would cause it an "undue hardship." But DCR's investigation found evidence that the denial was unnecessary and that com-

plainant's request would not have imposed an "undue hardship."

"Far too many employers refuse to offer reasonable accommodations to their pregnant workers even when doing so wouldn't cause undue hardship," said Yolanda N. Melville, Director of the Division on Civil Rights.

"No one should lose their livelihood because company policies violate our laws. Today's enforcement actions underscore our commitment to protecting the rights of New Jersey's workers."

Findings of Probable Cause mean DCR has concluded its preliminary investigations and determined sufficient evidence exists to support reasonable suspicion the LAD has been violated. They do not represent final adjudication on the merits of cases or proof of guilt. Once

DCR issues Findings of Probable Cause, these cases move to conciliation, where the parties will have the opportunity to negotiate a voluntary resolution. If no voluntary resolution is reached, DCR will appoint a Deputy Attorney General to prosecute the case.

The enforcement actions announced today are the result of the work of DCR's Investigations Unit, led by Deputy Director Michael Campion, Chief of Legal Affairs James Michael, and Deputy Chief Legal Specialist Chiqueena Lee, with the assistance of Legal Specialist Alicia Ivory, Legal Specialist Thomas LaMaina, Supervising Investigator Susan Huccamayta, Supervising Investigator Ronald White, Investigator Keisha Coleman-Adkins, Investigator Jessica Bowers, and Investigator Jessica Peoples.

TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 10)

from state Superior Court-Morristown on Level Two pre-trial intervention. The conditions include his not driving a motor vehicle during PTI, surrendering his passport, signing a waiver of extradition and having no contact with the victim's family.

About 200 tow truck drivers formed a funeral procession July 8, 2025 for Ortiz's remains from his life celebration at Leber-Lakeside Funeral Home in Landing to East Hanover's Gate of Heaven Cemetery. Born June 3, 2001, the 2019 Hopatcong High School's survivors included his parents, brothers Luis and Richard Boralsky, sister Diana Boralsky Fleming and three grandparents.

WEST ORANGE - The West Orange Public Schools Board of Education, after a pair of six-hour public meetings April 20 and May 3, passed a balanced but painful 2026-27 school year budget.

The school board, after listening to pleas from district parents and protests from the West Orange Education Association, passed a \$206,821,351 spending plan that fills a \$13.5 million deficit. Filling that gap meant a 2.5 percent property tax increase and making 77 job cuts.

The \$208.8 million budget includes a \$168,740,972 school property tax levy. That charge with the 2.5 percent hike translates to a \$294 increase for 2026-27 on an average house assessed at \$614,976. That increase will be included in the next four quarterly property tax bills.

Sept. 1, 2026 is to start with 77 less employees, including the loss of its entire

special education paraprofessional staff. The paraprofessionals, in district language will be outsourced - or, as WOEPA President Josh Goldfarb calls, privatizing. Classroom sizes will be increased, the middle schools' class schedule adjusted and a modified busing schedule.

Elementary school sports - but not middle school sports - will be saved in the budget. Superintendent Dr. Hayden Moore said that he is talking with West Orange Recreation about taking over middle schools' sports programs.

WOPS administrators said that the \$13.5 million gap largely came from a 17.8 percent increase in health insurance benefit plans. Other increases were felt in district insurance (eight percent), special education tuition (six percent) and transportation (3.58 percent). WOPS did get a six percent state education aid increase to \$34.5 million.

SOUTH ORANGE - The Village Planning Board, by memorializing its approval of converting The Lowy Building's second floor offices or suites into apartments May 4 meeting, has shown its last two existing businesses the exit door.

The board, on April 14, had approved granting Kedaar, LLC's application of turning 2 South Orange Ave./4 Sloan St's top floor into three apartments with variances for lot size, parking and bicycle storage.

Cutz Barber Shop and Imperial Acquisitions tax preparers are the last two of that floor's occupants. Dunkin' who will get a vestibule addition, and the UPS Store will remain at street level.

The two-story building had been named in jeweler and former Village Trustee Theodore J. "Ted" Lowy's

memory. Lowy (1919-2013), before becoming founder of the South Orange Parking Authority and trustee 1960-85, moved into the longstanding Taft Pharmacy space.

The building on the southeast corner of South Orange Avenue and Sloan in Village Center first housed a Sickley Coal office in 1908.

MAPLEWOOD - Local authorities are left wanting more information of federal ICE agents stopping a work van in the Hilton section during May 5's morning rush hour and arresting four of that vehicle's occupants.

The Maplewood Police Department said that Tuesday afternoon that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security told them of the stop and 8:36 a.m. arrest along the 1800 block of Springfield Avenue.

A resident had filmed the detainment and arrest in progress in front of Wine Barrel Maplewood, 1896 Springfield Ave., and its parking lot. Its footage showed three agents, one wearing a t-shirt with "POLICE" on its back and two showing badges, putting one of the arrested being put into a silver Nissan Sentra with flashing police lights in its grill.

The recording then shows three agents - all three wearing masks - returning to an unmarked white commercial van parked along westbound Springfield Avenue. Three people were seeing being removed and arrested.

One agent told the recorder that at least one of the men arrested was on a 1326 violation warrant. 1326 refers to USC statute, making it illegal for a previously deported non-citizen to return to,

(Continued on page 14)

GOVERNOR SHERRILL NOMINATES PAUL THOMAS URBISH TO LEAD THE DIVISION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL

TRENTON - Governor Mikie Sherrill and Attorney General Jennifer Davenport announced May 11 the Governor's nomination of Paul Thomas Urbish, a director at the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission (CRC), to lead the New Jersey Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC), as ABC prepares for events associated with upcoming World Cup matches.

An attorney who now heads the CRC's Office of Compliance and Investigations, Urbish has worked in public service for approximately a decade, playing different roles in state government including at the Department of Community Affairs and ABC. He served as a deputy attorney general for ABC from 2018 to 2021, before taking a position with the CRC and rising to his present leadership role. If confirmed by the State Senate, Urbish would oversee the agency that regulates the production and sale of alcoholic beverages and enforces liquor laws.

Kirstin Krueger has been serving as Interim ABC Director since April 1, 2024. Kirstin has been in State service for seven years, first as Counsel to the Attorney General before joining ABC as Deputy Director.

"With his background in licensing, investigations, and regulating the products of New Jersey's burgeoning legal cannabis industry, and his experience with alcoholic beverage permitting and

appeals, Paul understands the important balance between enabling businesses to thrive and ensuring compliance with guardrails and consumer safety," said Governor Sherrill. "His history of regulating and fostering a fledgling industry will be an asset to the ABC, which similarly oversees a sector that is constantly undergoing transformation and forms a vital part of New Jersey's economy."

"As ABC continues to streamline processes and build an alcohol regulation system based in integrity, safety, and economic opportunity, we welcome Paul Urbish's exceptional leadership to balance the needs of industry while protecting residents. I look forward to him joining our leadership team at the Department of Law and Public Safety," said Attorney General Davenport. "I also want to express my deep gratitude to Kirstin Krueger for her service as Interim ABC Director. Kirstin came into the role after major legislative changes were enacted and, among other accomplishments, has ensured an effective framework for the variety of events associated with the World Cup."

"I'm grateful to Governor Sherrill for the opportunity to rejoin ABC and I'm excited to work with Attorney General Davenport and the ABC team," said Paul Urbish. "I look forward to working diligently to protect residents, ensure that local businesses are operated lawfully

and responsibly, and that our businesses have the necessary flexibility to accommodate an unprecedented wave of tourism this summer."

As the director of the CRC's Office of Compliance and Investigations, Urbish oversees the regulation and investigation of cultivators, manufacturers, distributors, testing labs, and dispensaries.

Prior to joining the CRC, he was a Deputy Attorney General at ABC, where he provided legal interpretations regarding matters including appeals from municipal action, applications for permits, and municipal ordinance review.

Urbish received his bachelor of arts in history from the College of New Jersey and his juris doctor from Temple University's James E. Beasley School of Law.

ABC regulates the manufacture, distribution, sale, and transportation of all alcoholic beverages in New Jersey. ABC's statutory mission is to regulate and control the alcoholic beverage industry in order to foster moderation and responsibility in consumption of alcoholic beverages, to protect the citizens of New Jersey by assuring lawful, proper, and fair trade practices to maintain the stability of the industry, and protect the collection of state taxes imposed on alcoholic beverages.

UPSETS, SWEEPS IN FOUR TOWNS' ELECTION RESULTS

(Continued from page 7)

Change" leader Danichuka Desir fared.

A majority of voters also returned the three incumbent "TIS" candidates for at-large council.

Darlene Brown received her second four-year term by becoming the night's top vote-getter, garnering 2,490 or 24.19. Anthony Vauss, Jr., also got his first full term with 2,403 or 23.35. Former Township Council President Dr. Charnette Frederic completed the sweep with 2,363 or 22.96.

"Time for a Change" runner Ruth Baptiste finished fourth with 1,136 or 11.04. Inman running mate Durrell Watford was next at 1,072 or 10.41. Jude N. Ogu completed the balloted field at 829 or 8.05.

There is no write-in return data posted as of press time for "Team Inspire Change" candidates Jennifer Quizhpl, Roberson Nancasse or Napphelita Spen-

cer.

Half of ORANGE's four wards will either have new or returning council members as of July 1, depending on the ward.

A majority of 437 East Ward voters re-elected Councilman Kerry J. Coley. Coley carried the vote at 288 or 65.90. Challenger Antionett A. Hall hauled 149 or 34.10.

Almost nine percent of North Ward voters replaced their City Council representative Tuesday night. Challenger Lynn Ogbourne is to succeed longtime incumbent Tency Eason July 1 thanks to 235 or 59.64. Eason drew 159 or 40.36.

Over eight percent of South Ward voters decided to change their council member. James H. Ward III won the seat with 368 or 48.23. Councilwoman Jamie B. Summers-Johnson's bid for a third term ended at 310 or 40.63. Lynval James placed third at 85 or 11.14.

West Ward Councilwoman Quantavia L. Hilbert, who ran unopposed on the ballot, received all 210 votes for her second term.

In BELLEVILLE, a majority of township voters replaced this year's "A Better Belleville" with "We Are Belleville."

A majority of voters made Councilman Frank Velez II the township's youngest Mayor, unseating Michael A. Melham. The "We Are Belleville" team leader received 3,255 votes or 58.47 percent. "A Better Belleville" organizer Melham's quest for a third term ended at 2,218 or 40.53.

Township voters also swept in "We Are Belleville" candidates over "A Better Belleville." for both At-Large Council seats. Michelle Rodriguez edged running mate Danyale Wells as the night's top vote-getter. Rodriguez received 3,095 or 29.93. Wells completed the sweep with 2,948 or 28.51.

"ABB" first-time candidate Yolanda Luna's bid ended at 2,196 or 21.23 Deputy Mayor Naomi DePena's re-election effort yielded 2,103 or 20.33.

Vote By Mail balloting has meanwhile started for the June 2 major party primary elections.

BILL SHIELDING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE ACCESS CLEARS COMMITTEE

(Continued from page 9)

are one step closer to passing this legislation,” added Majority Leader Ruiz.

The bill, S-2260, responds to efforts by other states to criminalize or take legal action against patients and providers who seek or administer reproductive health care in New Jersey. Reproductive health care encompasses a myriad of services, such as pregnancy, assisted reproductive technology, contraception, miscarriage management, abortion, and services that support a person’s alignment with their gender identity or expression, delivered in accordance with accepted standards of care.

The bill strengthens criminal and civil protections for individuals seeking care and the providers who offer these services in New Jersey. Under current law, reproductive health care information may not be disclosed without expressed written consent. The bill expands and updates the definition of reproductive health care

services to more accurately reflect the full spectrum of care.

It also updates current law to prohibit state agencies from sharing information with interstate investigations seeking to prosecute individuals for receiving or providing reproductive health care, and prevents coordination with extradition requests related to lawful reproductive health care services.

State or local law enforcement could not arrest or participate in the arrest of a person based solely on their involvement in reproductive health care services, and state court employees would be prohibited from issuing a subpoena, search warrant, or ex parte order for wiretapping based only on reproductive health care activity. This bill would prohibit other state actors, including bounty hunters and private detectives, from apprehending someone solely for engaging in reproductive health care activities within the state.

The bill adds several protections for healthcare providers. Medical licensing boards would be prohibited from imposing any penalties on a physician solely for engaging in reproductive health care.

Adverse actions, such as the loss or denial of coverage or the imposition of sanctions, fines, penalties, or rate increases, against a physician for providing reproductive health care services would be prohibited.

The bill also establishes the crime of interference with reproductive health care services, making it illegal to injure, physically obstruct, intimidate, threaten, or damage the property of patients, providers, volunteers, or facilities involved in lawful reproductive care. Penalties would increase based on the severity of harm caused, ranging from fourth-degree charges to second-degree crimes for significant bodily injury, and would authorize civil actions in certain cases.

By strengthening protections, improving accessibility, safeguarding patient privacy, and supporting providers and clinics, New Jersey will continue to have equitable, secure, and meaningful access to reproductive health care services that support every person's right to bodily autonomy.

ESSEX COUNTY COMPLETES UPGRADES TO PLAYGROUND, SPRAY PARK AND FIELD

(Continued from page 6)

by Essex County and the Watsessing Park Conservancy from the New Jersey Green Acres program and the Essex County Recreation and Open Space Trust Fund Advisory Board, and in-kind services from other governmental agencies.

In 2019, the county’s first all access playground, along with a new community center building and on-site parking lot were opened off of Bloomfield Avenue and Conger Street. It was expanded with additional equipment in 2021. The soccer/lacrosse field and the Lawn Bowling Green were modernized with new surfaces in 2020.

In 2017, a 3,000-square-foot water spray park was developed near Dodd Street and the additional climbing apparatus was added to the playground on Glenwood Avenue. In 2016, the sidewalks along Glenfield Avenue, Dodd Street and Cleveland Terrace were modernized, the basketball court and walking track near Dodd Street were resurfaced, and the pedestrian bridge over the Second River, damaged during a spring storm, was repaired.

Also, in 2016 the walking track was named in honor of Glen Ridge resident Horace Ashenfelter, the 1952 Olympic Gold Medal winner in the steeplechase who trained in the park. In 2014, ornamental historic lighting was installed along the walking paths throughout the park. In 2010, a synthetic grass surface soccer/lacrosse field in Essex County Watsessing Park off of Bloomfield Avenue was developed, new wrought iron fencing was installed along the perimeter of the park along Bloomfield Avenue and a synthetic grass surface inside the walking track was installed.

The walking track, basketball court and lawn bowling building were upgraded, park entranceways were enhanced, and landscaping was improved in the southern section of the park in 2006. In 2005, Essex County opened a 19,500-square-foot Off-Leash Dog Facility, the first of its kind in the Essex County Park System. The same year, the pedestrian bridge in the eastern section of the park was upgraded.

In 2004, Essex County rehabilitated the historic bandstand and the Lawn Bowling with a new synthetic grass surface and fencing. Basketball courts located off of Glenwood Avenue in East Orange were renovated and the Essex County seal was painted at the center of each

court. Water fountains were repaired, and additional trash receptacles and decorative benches were placed throughout the park.

In 2003, Essex County completed a beautification project at the Bloomfield Avenue entrance to Watsessing Park. New sidewalks, decorative park pathways and landscaping improved the entrance, making it more inviting. In addition, upgrades were made to the drainage system, park trees were trimmed, and the restrooms and senior room were painted. Essex County also installed rubberized safety surfaces in the three playgrounds in the park.

The Essex County Park System was created in 1895 and is the first county park system established in the United States. The Park System consists of more than 6,000 acres and has 23 parks, five reservations, an environmental center, a zoo, ice skating rink, roller skating rink, three public golf courses, golf driving range, five off-leash dog facilities, a castle and the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens. At 69.67 acres, Watsessing Park is the fourth largest park in the Essex System. It was designed in 1899 by the Olmstead Brothers firm and land acquisition was started in 1901.

The Observation Booth



OP-ED By Andrea Dialect

THIS IS A TEST

This week in the Observation Booth, I found myself thinking about an old promo jingle that once made healing sound easy, clean, and catchy. You know the one. The tune was light, the message was simple, and the promise was comforting. Slap something on it and keep it moving. But life has a way of exposing what slogans hide.

Some wounds are too deep for a quick fix, too infected for a cover-up, and too dangerous to keep sealed beneath something that only looks like help. This piece takes a childhood jingle and turns it over in the light, asking what happens when we confuse covering with curing, comfort with healing, and temporary relief with real repair. Now while you're at it read this and give it to me straight: yay or naw and why? Enjoy!

STUCK

DO YOU REMEMBER THIS PROMO JINGLE?

I am stuck on band-aid brand 'cause band-aid's stuck on me.

I am stuck on band-aid's brand 'cause germs don't stick on me!

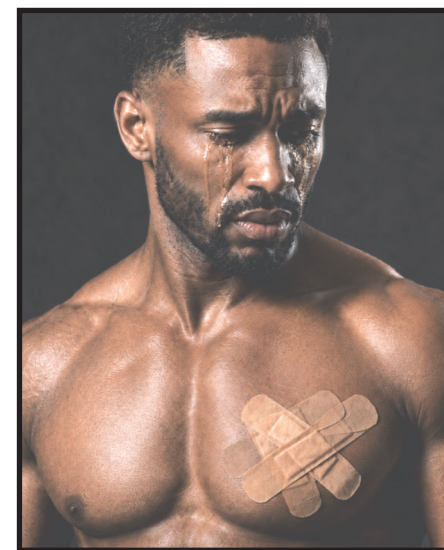
'Cause they hold on tight no matter what, on fingers, toes, and knees. I am stuck on

the band-aid brand 'cause band-aid helps heal me!

I love that jingle. A sticky situation, to say the least. Still I find myself singing it often to my youngest grands as I'm patching up knees, fingers, and toes, and as a delightful tune, it turns little hurts into moments of comfort. A perfect fit. It works, and it feels good. But here's the truth.

When we keep slapping Band-Aids on those oozing cancer wounds, dysfunction doesn't leave. It settles in and lives comfortably amongst us. Because adhesive over infection doesn't heal, it hides, and hidden wounds become breeding grounds for festering sores.

Band-Aid solutions add insult to injury, 'cause the lack of exposure means no air, and no air won't allow healing. When those Band-Aids are stuck on too tight, logically, germs will stick and stay. What the jingle denies.



FROM THE MIND OF ANDREA DIALECT AI GENERATED

Sure. A quick fix, perhaps, for now. But when those Band-Aid patches finally lose their grip, extremities will be lost. What's left won't be a small problem.

And that catchy little jingle will echo in our heads as the soundtrack to our own undoing. A perfect promo. A deadly ploy. The ultimate end.

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

(Continued from page 11)

attempt a return to or has been found, on U.S. territory. The same agent told the recorder to call "our Newark Field Office PIO for information."

The stop and arrest was before the former Crestmont Savings Bank building. Maplewood - along with Newark. East Orange, South Orange, Bloomfield and Montclair - had declared themselves sanctuary cities 2024-25. The President Donald Trump Administration has listed those six towns in May 2025 for "defying federal immigration law."

7-Eleven Closing

"Local Talk" has learned that the 7-Eleven at 1712 Springfield Ave. will be ending its 13-year-run here May 21. The former Mr. Good Lube/Sunoco station is directly owned by the parent Southland Corp., of Dallas, and is among the 635 being closed nationwide.

BLOOMFIELD - Those who want to have a public hearing comment on the proposed replacement of the meter-based sewer charge with a two-stage base and use charges will now have to wait until at least June 8's Township Council meeting.

Mayor Jenny Mundell, during her May 7 Zoom information presentation on the floated sewer charge changes, announced that she and the council have postponed the hearing, second reading and final vote from the May 18 meeting. Agendas for the May 18 session and the next, June 8, have not been posed on the township website as of press time.

"As part of the community input process for the proposed sewer fee collection transition, my Township Council colleagues and I have been directly speaking with residents to garner your feedback," said Mundell. "During our conversations, some have requested additional time to learn more about the proposal - and we heard you."

Municipal sewer use fees, some of which are sent to the managing Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission, are cur-

rently paid from the township property tax.

The proposed change, introduced April 20, would move that line item from property taxes into a separate line item like the water use tax or charge. Billing would then be made with a base charge plus a charge based on water consumption.

Proponents cited PVSC's 35 percent increase of its billing over the last four years to shift the payment burden from residential to non-residential sewer users. Advocates said that 98 percent of residential users' bills will drop from an average annual decline from \$211 by \$111.

Critics counter that moving sewerage billing out of property taxes would cause senior citizens, veterans, nonprofits and disabled users to lose that part of their federal tax deduction. Separate fees would also not be covered by the state's annual two percent tax increase cap.

MONTCLAIR - Some parents of Montclair High School scholar-athletes

(Continued on page 15)

TOWN WATCH

(Cont. from page 14)

are in a \$176,000 fundraising race to save the freshman sports program, cut by the township's board of education here May 6, on or before June 1.

A group of MHS parents formed the Montclair Athletic Blue & White Club May 7, the morning after the board of education passed a 2026-27 school year budget that eliminated the sports program along with clubs and staff cuts to plug an overall \$19.6 million two-year deficit.

MA Blue & White President Kevin Price told a reporter that Friday that the \$176,000 goal would cover 13 freshman coaches and retain 12 teams. Price added that the club, which knew of the pending cuts since March 16, is halfway to their goal as of May 8. The goal is to be met on or by June 1 - but, once that goal is reached, they will pursue an overall \$350,000 goal to cover all MHS sports.

Montclair Public Schools Superintendent Ruth B. Turner said that freshman sports should be either all saved or all cut. The district, by passing the \$179.8 million budget, also authorized the cutting of 32 teaching jobs and transferring the Rand at Renaissance Middle School student body into either the Glenfield or Buzz Aldrin junior highs. (The Renaissance school is being converted into a central Pre-Kindergarten preschool.)

MPS and its board chose ending freshman high school sports, which is different from some other public districts' similar cost-cutting. The West Orange Public Schools, for example, balanced its budget in part by asking that township's recreation department to take over its middle school sports programs. (See related TW item.)

The club first filed for federal 501 (c)(3) nonprofit status in January. Details are found at MontclairBlue-White.org and donations made on the club's Givebutter page.

GLEN RIDGE - Borough residents and motorists are being asked by Montclair and Caldwell police if they have noticed a black 2025 Range Rover likely speeding on their streets on May 1.

A Montclair police officer told supervisors that Friday that he had to break off his eastbound pursuit of the SUV when it had crossed into Glen Ridge. This was after about four miles of a high-speed chase from the Upper

Montclair section of town.

The officer said that the vehicle matching Caldwell police's description was spotted on Bloomfield and North Mountain avenues by the Montclair Art Museum while on traffic monitoring patrol. The Range Rover was running at a "high rate of speed."

The chase began after the MPD officer's attempt to first stop the SUV failed.

The car was earlier reported as stolen from the Dunkin' Donuts at 226 Bloomfield Ave., Caldwell. 226 Caldwell happens to sit north of the former Erie Railroad Caldwell Branch right-of-way, east of a Caldwell University pedestrian bridge and across the avenue from President Grover Cleveland's birthplace. The Caldwell Branch was part of the Erie's Greenwood Lake Division/Boonton Line whose trunk line went through Glen Ridge.

BELLEVILLE - The Belleville Public Schools' 2026-27 \$139,110,586 school year budget, which the Board of Education Trustees passed April 29, is in the Essex County Superintendent of School's examination on its way to the New Jersey Department of Education's Trenton headquarters.

The \$139.1 million budget includes a 5.99 percent property tax increase and the layoff of 29 employees. This budget was drawn with a 1.51 percent state aid decrease to \$67,268,777 and BPS being deemed \$13.3 million "below adequate" in aid.

The tax increase translates to \$268 over the next four quarterly tax bills on a house assessed at a township average of \$280,565. The 29 layoffs, effective July 1, include 12 school coaches or interventionists, eight teachers, five clerical and secretarial staff members and two administrators.

BPS Schools Superintendent Dr. Erick Alfonso said that the district had to plug a \$2 million deficit. Some of that shortfall came from the loss of federal and state education funding. Other cost increases were found in employee insurance benefits (around 30 percent), health insurance benefit plans (around 12 percent) and paying for sending charter school, special education and other students out of district (13.5 percent).

Alfonso added that BPS, under the state's Student Funding Reform Act, should be adequately operating on a \$123.1 million budget. The DOE's own calculation translates to the district having less resources than relevant dis-

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tricts. The calculation does not include federal grants, capital funds or other factors outside BPS control.

NUTLEY - The Nutley Public Library, for the first time in 106 days, is to fully reopen to the public at 9 a.m. May 27.

A water sprinkler line above a second floor ceiling had burst, causing extensive damage to 93 Booth Dr. It is not clear whether the burst happened in the original 1914 Carnegie library, or the 1942 and 1990 additions.

It is also unclear whether the burst pipe was in the same 2,600-square-foot ceiling area that toppled bookshelves overnight Aug. 25, 1980. While services were shifted onto the first floor back then, this year's carpet replacement and other remediation closed the bulk of the library.

Although the annual April 22-25 Friends of the Nutley Public Library Delores Capabalo Book Sale was held in the library's Stockton Room, donors, staff and patrons entered through the Vincent Place entrance. Other events, like May 2's North Jersey Concert Band, were held outdoors or postponed or canceled.

Patrons otherwise used NPL's material drop box and ask reference department questions by phone or online. Borrowing, interlibrary loans and computer services were made at fellow BCCLS member libraries.



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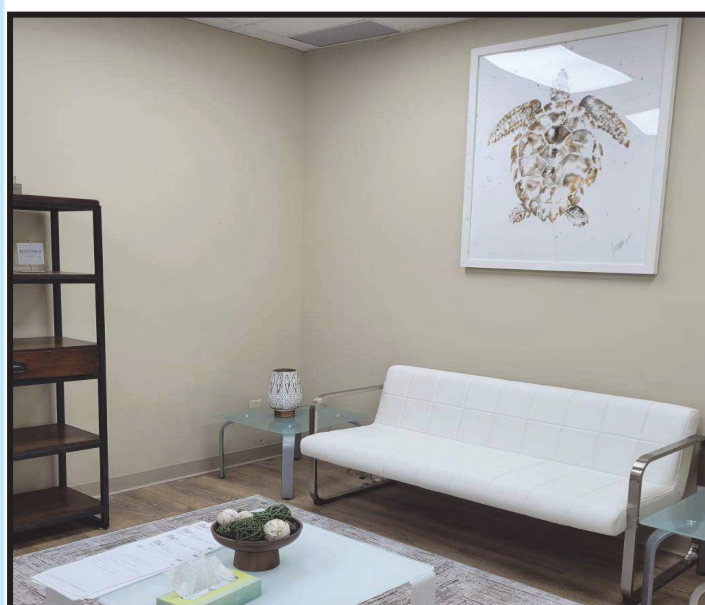
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