

The NORTHERN WESTCHESTER Examiner

Covering Yorktown, Somers, Cortlandt, Croton-on-Hudson, Buchanan, Ossining and Peekskill

February 2 - February 8, 2021

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Volume 13, Issue 580

Mixed-Use Project with 150 Apts. Proposed in Yorktown

By Rick Pezzullo

A mixed-use building with 150 luxury rental apartments and ground-level retail shops is being proposed to transform the downtown Yorktown Green shopping center.

During a work session with the Yorktown Town Board last week, representatives of Oster Properties also announced lease negotiations were underway with a new supermarket to replace the long empty former Food Emporium on the almost 15-acre site at 335 Downing Drive.

"This is very welcome news and yet another sign of the economic upswing we are working hard to see in our town," Yorktown Supervisor Matt Slater said. "It is a key property in many ways,



Rendering of building planned in downtown Yorktown Green shopping center.

not the least of which is its prominent location in the heart of the town. This proposal recognizes the evolving economy that we are facing, especially e-commerce."

Matthew Jarmel, Oster's architect, said the plan calls for the 90,000-square-foot building that has been vacant since Kmart

closed two years ago to be demolished and replaced with a four-story, U-shaped structure that will have 84 one-bedroom and 66 two-bedroom residences.

The approximately 9,000 square feet row of stores that currently exist on both sides of the old Kmart will remain but receive

a facelift.

"Throughout the retail world there's a rethinking of how retail spaces are designed to service the world," Jarmel said. "This Kmart is empty because of e-commerce. What we see as architects and as planners is that many retail centers, and some very large shop-

ping malls as well that we're working on, are being repositioned to mixed-use."

Town Board members reacted positively to the project, which is included in the Planned Overlay Zone District that the board is currently grappling with and hoping to formally adopt in the near future.

"I think this is a smart development both from a commercial and residential point of view," Councilwoman Alice Roker said. "You won't have Lake Caldor anymore."

"I think it looks great so far," said Councilman Ed Lachterman. "I look forward to see this go through the planning process. There's a lot of questions to be answered."

Oster representatives said a formal application to the town's Planning Department could be made in about two weeks.

Dems Select McKenzie for Peek Mayor; Slate Faces Primary

By Rick Pezzullo

The Peekskill Democratic Committee Thursday night selected its slate for the November citywide election, with Deputy Mayor Vivian McKenzie heading the ticket for mayor.

McKenzie, who has been on the Common Council since 2013 when she was appointed to replace Don Bennett, will be joined by incumbent councilmen Ramon Fernandez and Dwight Douglas, along with Steve Kollias, vice chairman of the committee.

"I do have high faith in Deputy Mayor McKenzie," said current Mayor Andre Rainey, who decided not to seek a third term. "She's been fearless. I think she will be great."

McKenzie was born and raised in Peekskill and is owner of Kathleen's Tea Room

downtown. She said she will continue to work "to build a 21st Century city."

Fernandez is seeking a second four-year term, while Douglas, who was appointed last year to fill a vacancy, is running for his first full term. Kollias has never run for elected office.

"We represent the Democratic community. We are not just a small segment," said former Councilwoman Drew Claxton. "I do hope we will unify behind this ticket."

However, that doesn't appear to be the case as a team called "Progress 4 Peekskill" has stepped forward to challenge the committee's choices in a

June primary.

Progress 4 Peekskill includes current Councilwoman Vanessa Agudelo, who failed to earn the committee's support to run for a second term after being nominated by a district leader.

Agudelo made history as the youngest person to be elected to the council in 2017 and received a lot of publicity for her controversial stance not to recite the Pledge of Allegiance at meetings.

Agudelo, who is employed as New York Immigration Coalition's Hudson Valley Member Engagement Manager and is co-chair of the national committee for Local Progress on

Reimagining our Economy, maintained since she differed with her council colleagues on several policy issues her opinions were ignored.

"I was dismissed, disrespected, marginalized and, in many ways, blacklisted," she remarked. "That is not what our democracy should look like. I would like to see Peekskill elections slowly move away from whether you are just a Republican or a Democrat."

At the top of the Progress 4 Peekskill ticket for mayor is Conor Greene, co-founder and board chair of Peekskill Walks, a resident-led nonprofit advocating for safer streets and healthier neighborhoods.

"I'm humbled that so many neighbors have asked me to step up on their behalf, and I would be honored to represent Peek-



VIVIAN MCKENZIE

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Residents, Town Board at Odds over Underhill Farms Project

By Rick Pezzullo

A newly formed group of residents is continuing to claim a proposed project for 165 units of market rate housing on the former Soundview Preparatory School on Underhill Avenue in Yorktown is being given special treatment.

Members of the Committee for a Sound Plan for Soundview are planning to publicly confront the Town Board on February 2 with a detailed timeline showing Unicorn Contracting, the developer of the mixed-use plan called Underhill Farms, has not followed the town's standard planning review process.

"The issue that's before the Town Board right now is one of transparency," said Trish Rothberg-Sullivan, a member of the

committee. "The issue is not the Underhill Farm(s) plan, but how the Town Board is going about changing what could be developed on the property without going through the regular rezoning process."

The Underhill Farms development is one of dozens of properties throughout the town that the Planning Department has determined would be suitable to be placed in a Planned Design District Overlay Zone. The stated purpose and intent of the Planned Design District Overlay Zones is to provide the town with "flexibility in land uses which bolster economic development by providing not only a diverse array of commercial businesses, but mixed-use residential and commercial parcels to both provide abundant job opportunities and contribute to the local tax base."

"Putting Soundview in an overlay district is nothing more than a backdoor way for the Town Board to avoid having to vote on a controversial rezoning," Rothberg-Sullivan said.

During a January 19 meeting, board members took offense with some of the allegations made against the board, with Supervisor Matt Slater remarking, "Any accusations of nefarious wrongdoing is just unacceptable in my eyes."

In a joint statement issued January 31, the Town Board and Planning Department stated the Soundview School property was included in the planning for the Overlay Zone from the start of the Planning Department's evaluation of the new district, which was based on the announcement in early February of last year that the school would

be closing.

"Clearly, the Soundview property has historic elements worthy of protection and preservation," town officials stated. "We take the town's motto, 'Progress with Preservation,' seriously, and we will be guided by it. Inclusion of Soundview in the Overlay District is the best way of assuring this is accomplished."

Town officials stressed the concept of enacting overlay zones to spur development was first proposed more than 17 years ago, and, in 2011, were adopted as part of the town's Comprehensive Plan. The Committee for a Sound Plan for Soundview claims the Comprehensive Plan never recommended the Yorktown Heights business hamlet be part of an overlay district.

Ossining to Gauge Resident's Pulse on Changing Village Seal

By Rick Pezzullo

The Village of Ossining Board of Trustees is hoping to get a better sampling on how residents feel about possibly changing the longtime village seal.

"The people that live here are the ones that will decide," Ossining Mayor Rika Levin said during a work session last month.

A survey circulated in late November on social media, spear-

headed by former Mayor Victoria Gearity, revealed 77% of the 1,817 respondents favored replacing the Native American head, which has been the village's government seal since 1950, with a Double Arch.

However, the majority of the board did not accept those results, contending many of those opinions could have come from non-residents, and they heavily criticized Gearity for leaving them

out of the process.

"Process is very important when it comes to something like this," said Trustee Robert Fritsche.

The current board agreed it was worth exploring if there were strong sentiments in the community to change the seal.

"Seventy years is a pretty good run. It's not about changing history. Time's change," said Trustee Dana White, a former village historian. "I

very much respect the feelings of people. Nostalgia is a very powerful emotion. We're just looking at what represents the village now."

The Double Arch seal, a version of which the Town of Ossining utilizes, was designed by Ossining High School graduate Daniel Avile. The Double Arch, the only one of its kind in New York State, is the seal already being used in correspondence and communications from the Parks and Recrea-

tion, Police and Fire departments and was used during village's bicentennial and in the Master Plan.

The board discussed doing an online survey, but Village Manager Karen D'Attore maintained village officials would be unable to limit the responses to village residents. The board instructed staff to report back with viable options.

"We need a plan of action. Let's not take a long time on this," Levin said.

Cortlandt, Buchanan to Discuss Waterfront Revitalization Plans

By Rick Pezzullo

The Town of Cortlandt and Village of Buchanan will be hosting a public information meeting on February 11 and a series of public workshops regarding plans for the development of the Hudson River waterfront.

The February 11 Zoom meeting at 7 p.m. will include an overview of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP), a summary of the progress to date, a presentation of the findings of a community survey and a review of some of the proposed projects and preliminary land use concepts.

"We are excited about our continued partnership with the village on this water-

front planning initiative as it dovetails well with a number of important issues we are facing as a community and we are pleased that the state is supporting our efforts with grant funding," said Cortlandt Supervisor Linda Puglisi.

Buchanan Mayor Theresa Knickerbocker said the waterfront revitalization program will assist the town and village "in a number of ways, from the ongoing enhancement of our waterfront parks to our planning for economic development projects that can contribute to our tax base and create employment opportunities."

Both municipalities are looking for ways to offset the loss of revenue following the

closure of the Indian Point nuclear power plants in Buchanan in April.

Cortlandt officials have been focusing on a large tract of town-owned land it owns in Verplanck. The town was awarded a \$3.2 million grant through the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration Assistance to Nuclear Closure Communities Program that will be used to build infrastructure at what is known as the Cortlandt Quarry Park Site.

Part of the town's plans include leasing a portion of the property to an indoor recreational facility known as Cortlandt Pitch, which specializes in soccer.

The Town Board has also signed a letter

of intent with the owner of a cider distillery called Merchant's Daughter.

In addition, Town Attorney Thomas Wood said Cortlandt has been approached by an individual who once was interested in developing a water park that now has a vision for zip lining and other recreational activities at the former rock quarry on the same site.

A schedule of interactive workshops with town officials includes: Annsville Area Workshop, February 18, 7 p.m.; Village of Buchanan Workshop, February 24, 7 p.m.; Verplanck Area Workshop, March 4, 7 p.m.; Montrose/Crughers Area Workshop, March 11, 7 p.m.

Dems Select McKenzie for Peek Mayor; Slate Faces Primary

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skill at City Hall," Greene said. "We have a wonderful city with an amazing community, but we're at an important moment that demands new ideas and a vision for our shared future. I am running to improve city services and the government's response to resident's needs; for green, healthy and sustainable neighborhoods; to promote a vibrant, thriving downtown and to bring residents together to create an even stronger city."

Running with Agudelo for three available council seats are Amy Vele and Amy Perlow.

Vele currently serves as a Legislative Aide for Westchester County Legislator Colin Smith and served as Campaign Manager for the Democratic Party in 2019. Perlow has been a Peekskill resident since 2013 and has spent her career fighting for school equity, working alongside nonprofits and public schools to increase the percentage of Black, Latinx, and low-income students who graduate

from New York City schools prepared for the future. She is also a founding member of the Peekskill Equitable Housing Coalition, a group committed to halting the gentrification of Peekskill by ensuring the city's housing policies and agreements are in the best interest of current residents.

"Working on issues like education and housing has increased my awareness of the systemic inequities that sadly still exist in our society, but it's also given me hope for what lo-

cal government can accomplish. There's so much we can do to advocate for equitable funding, quality housing, and safer and cleaner streets — and residents deserve a seat at the table in the process. Improvement comes from harnessing community relationships and expertise, and creating spaces for all to be seen and heard," said Perlow.

I'm running for City Council because we are at a crucial moment," Vele said. "We have the chance to rebuild, create policies

that truly benefit everyone and find ways to connect City Hall to the community in ways we haven't seen before. We need to bridge the gap between the English and non-English speaking communities and create a space where residents feel safe to come forward when they need help, know where to go to find resources and have the same accessibility to information as everyone else."

It's unclear when the Peekskill Republican Committee will announce its slate of candidates.

Slow, Steady Decline Continues in Active COVID-19 Cases

By Anna Young

As the coronavirus infection and hospitalization rate continues to fall across the state, Westchester County Executive George Latimer expressed some concern that daily cases are still being reported in the high hundreds.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that New York's COVID-19 positivity rate has declined for 23 straight days, but Latimer on Monday said that while the area is headed in the right direction, he's hesitant to predict any trends. Latimer did note Westchester has seen a downturn in recent active cases.

"There are still a lot of new infection cases," Latimer said. "So, it's still a significant percentage, but nonetheless, the numbers are heading in the right direction."

Coronavirus cases in Westchester increased by 484 on Monday, bringing the total number of positive cases to 94,968 since the start of the pandemic. There are now 10,278 active cases, a decrease of 1,217 since last week.

The county's daily positivity rate is 4.94 percent with 9,801 tests administered Saturday. Overall, nearly 1.8 million COVID-19 tests have been dispensed in Westchester since March.

The county reported 11 more deaths on Monday, bringing the COVID-19-related death toll to 1,917. Over the last week, 71 people have died from the virus in Westchester, with 242 fatalities since Jan. 1.

"That represents about a 2 percent fatality rate of all the people that contract the disease, so as a fatality rate that number has dropped because we've had more people test positive and a lesser percentage of them suffer fatality," Latimer said. "But it is still a large number of absolute deaths."

As of Wednesday, there are 571 virus patients in Westchester hospitals, a number that has remained steady over the last three weeks.

On Sunday, the county government has directly administered 23,351 vaccines to eligible residents, Latimer said, with 18,584 individuals inoculated since the County Center became a distribution site on Jan. 13. The county health department has immunized 4,767 people, he said.

Both locations were closed Monday and Tuesday due to the snowstorm. Officials said those with appointments would be rescheduled later in the week.

Putnam County's total caseload reached 7,384, with 46 additional positive cases recorded on Monday. The county's daily positivity rate is 5.23 percent, with 880 tests administered on Saturday.

Putnam currently has 937 active cases, a decrease of 223 since last week.

There have been 81 coronavirus-related deaths in Putnam since the start of the pandemic. Five people died from the virus last week, with 14 overall fatalities since the start of 2021.

No new deaths were reported on Monday.

Statewide there were 8,508 new positive cases on Monday, with the daily positivity rate clocking in at 4.86 percent. There were 141 additional COVID-19-related fatalities, bringing the death toll to 35,319.

Statewide hospitalizations stand at 8,003, an increase of 27 over the previous day. Across New York there have been 1,419,164 positive

coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic.

"We're locked in a footrace between the spread of COVID and the vaccine's quick distribution, and New Yorkers should stay vigilant as we work to get more shots," Cuomo said. "The good news is the holiday spike is over and the experts say that we're on a downward trajectory. We just need to put in the work to keep it that way."

As of Monday, New York's health care distribution sites have received 1,554,450 first doses and administered 90 percent of those. Seventy-five percent of first and second doses have been administered.

Wedding Receptions to Resume

Brides across New York can rejoice as

Cuomo announced that marriage receptions can resume in March in accordance with state guidance.

As infection and hospitalization rates improve following the post-holiday surge, Cuomo said wedding receptions can be held starting Mar. 15 but must be approved by the local health department. All patrons must be tested prior to the event, he said.

Additionally, there will be a 50 percent capacity limit and no more than 150 people may attend.

"We are developing more rapid testing capacity all across the state," Cuomo said. "We're also developing an app which a person, once they receive the test, can have on the app. We're also developing guidance, much

like, much like marriage receptions for events where you can do testing and you can do monitoring and the local health department can regulate it."

He added that indoor dining in New York City can reopen at 25 percent capacity on Valentine's Day.

"As data on infection rates and hospitalizations continue to improve, we must begin taking steps to jumpstart our economic recovery as long as public health can be protected," Cuomo said. "This is a great development, but we cannot become complacent now."

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Residents Arrive in Drove to Get COVID Vaccine at County Center

By Kristen McNerney

For Myron Wisotsky, an 81-year-old retired teacher from Chappaqua, the decision to get the COVID-19 vaccine was a no-brainer.

"I want to stay alive," he said.

After hearing positive feedback about the vaccine from those who had received the first of the two-dose shot, Wisotsky made an appointment at the County Center in White Plains once he became eligible. Currently, health care workers, police, firefighters, public safety workers, educators, transit personnel and people 65 and up can receive the vaccine.

But the White Plains facility, which had been converted into an auxiliary hospital to help handle a potential overload of COVID-19 patients last spring during the pandemic's initial wave, is now serving as the only state-run mass vaccine distribution site in Westchester.

With the National Guard and county police providing security and instruction outside the building and even more personnel inside the facility directing patients on what to do and where to go, Wisotsky said his experience was personal and "ramped to perfection."

"The doctors are fabulous," he said, giving a shout-out to Dr. Augustine Moscatello, who helped

administer his shot.

And while Wisotsky said it was interesting to be part of a mass operation, he advised others who may feel skepticism or concern about receiving the vaccine to not be afraid.

Since the doors opened on Jan. 13, eligible individuals have been coming out in droves to get immunized, with appointments booked through spring. As of last Wednesday, County Executive George Latimer said the facility had inoculated 15,715 people.

As a Byram Hills High School teacher who struggles with asthma, Barbara O'Connell said she was eager to receive the first dose of the vaccine and felt at ease and a bit more protected walking out of her appointment. She added that her experience was organized and informational.

"They take the time with every patient," O'Connell said.

While many are excited and ready to get vaccinated, some cited a level of urgency and desperation due to the impact and proximity the virus has had on their personal lives.

After losing people he knew to the virus last year, Port Chester resident Nate Casterella didn't hesitate to get vaccinated.

"Why not?" said Casterella, a retired county Department of Public Works employee, when asked about

his willingness to get immunized.

For Rockland County resident Virginia Fitzpatrick, who works as a substitute elementary school teacher in the East Ramapo School District, watching her husband's bout with COVID-19 provided her with a level of apprehension. She showed up days ahead of her appointment to see if she could get seen earlier.

Her husband, an internal medicine doctor at Montefiore Nyack Hospital, experienced some of the vaccine's side effects, such as a fever and body aches, after receiving both doses. But that didn't stop Fitzpatrick, especially working as an educator with young children.

"We're doing the best we can as teachers," she said, remarking that young elementary students have been bearing the brunt of the pandemic.

About seven million New Yorkers are currently eligible to receive the vaccine, but a supply shortage from the federal government has hampered efforts to inoculate people more quickly. Appointments are required before arriving to the County Center or the Department of Health or local pharmacy administering the vaccine.

Currently, those 65 and up can receive the shot at pharmacies receiving allocations from the



The County Center in White Plains opened on Jan. 13 as the area's only state-run COVID-19 vaccine distribution site in Westchester. Appointments are booked every day through the springtime, with eligible individuals scrambling to register online.

state. For all appointments at any location, proof of appointment, identification and eligibility is required upon arrival. The County Center is dispensing vaccines by appointment only from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. each day. (On Sunday, the county announced it had canceled all vaccine appointments scheduled for Monday because of the forecasted snowstorm.)

As of Sunday, the state has received 1,554,450 first doses and administered 88 percent, or 1,361,212, of those. Seventy-three percent of first and second doses

have been administered.

"I'm pleased that President Biden has put forth a plan to fix the mess left by the previous administration, including increasing our vaccine supply by 16 percent in the short term and ramping up production substantially to ensure we have the supply we need for the coming months," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said last Friday. "It will still take months to vaccinate the entire eligible population but with new leadership in Washington, I'm confident we're headed in the right direction."

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A big shout out to Cortland Lanes and Anthony Pullissio for making this happen!

Jones Introduces Bill to Repeal \$10G SALT Deduction Limit

By Martin Wilbur

Freshman Congressman Mondaire Jones (D-White Plains) is co-sponsoring a bill that would repeal the \$10,000 cap on homeowners' state and local tax (SALT) deductions, which has been in place since the December 2017 federal tax legislation.

Jones and Rep. Thomas Suozzi of Long Island introduced the SALT Deductibility Act in the House last Thursday, a measure that would restore the full deduction that was taken away by Congress. Joined by local, county and state officials from Westchester and Rockland counties Friday morning in White Plains, Jones said the cap has taken money from thousands of hard-working New Yorkers who have been hurt since the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was enacted, and even more so during the past year.

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer is sponsoring the bill in the Senate.

"That was money taken directly out of their pockets," Jones said. "It was and continues to be double taxation, and of course, this is money that won't be used to pay for housing, health care, food, transportation and child care and so many other things."

Jones said he hopes to have the legislation approved sometime this

year. He is optimistic that it will receive enough Republican votes to pass, but there is also the possibility in the Senate that Schumer opts for reconciliation since the bill is a budgetary item, which would only require a simple majority, rather than 60 votes.

At least one Republican congressman, Rep. Andrew Garbarino of Long Island, has voiced his support for the bill, Jones said.

"In the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, it is more important than ever before that we relieve the tax burden for residents of Westchester and Rockland counties," he said.

Local, county and state officials who accompanied Jones at the county office building last week praised him for making this issue his first piece of legislation. They assailed former President Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress for pitting residents of high-tax states like New York, New Jersey and Connecticut against the rest of the nation.

"We were targeted because we are a blue state, we were targeted because there was some animus and animosity and we know we had to find a way," said state Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D-Yonkers). "We tried to



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Rep. Mondaire Jones is accompanied by an assortment of elected officials at the county office building in White Plains last Friday to announce he is co-sponsoring a bill to eliminate the \$10,000 limit on deductions for state and local taxes.

have a workaround, we tried to have deductions in specific categories, in education, whatever, and no matter what we were blocked."

About 45 percent of households in the congressional district saw their tax bills increase since the \$10,000 cap was enacted, Stewart-Cousins said. She estimated that over the past three years, the cap has cost New Yorkers State taxpayers about \$30 billion.

County Executive George Latimer called repealing the cap on SALT deductions "the single biggest issue that we face as local governments and taxpayers of this area."

He called out congressional Republicans, particularly those representing districts in New York State who supported the 2017 tax cuts that was a break to millionaires and corporations. Latimer said it

has punished a state like New York that invests heavily in mass transit and education while those extra tax dollars go to other states.

Furthermore, the full deduction had been in place for about 100 years, he said.

"People who say they are the protectors of your wallet are the ones who have their hand deep into your pocket to pull money out of it, and for what purpose?" Latimer said.

Projections from independent analysts have shown that the cap on SALT deductions has led to at least 100,000 New Yorkers leaving the state, according to state Sen. Elijah Reichlin-Melnick (D-Nyack). He said that if the cap was eliminated it would lead to the creation of more than 55,000 jobs, with most of those in the metropolitan area.

"This will make a real positive difference for families in our counties," Reichlin-Melnick said.

Jones said eliminating the cap is the first of several tax equity issues that must be addressed.

"It is something I think everyone should get behind," Jones said. "Everyone should have a sense of fairness and unfairness and understand quite clearly that the \$10,000 cap was meant to punish states like New York for political reasons."

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The Ashikari Breast Center has joined Northwell Health and moved to two new state-of-the-art locations.

Andrew Ashikari, MD, FACS and Pond Kelemen, MD, FACS of the Ashikari Breast Center, recognized as leading experts in compassionate breast surgery, have joined Northwell Health Cancer Institute in Westchester. They are now part of our multidisciplinary team of breast specialists who work together to develop an individualized treatment plan to achieve the best possible outcome.

Dr. Ashikari and Dr. Kelemen are now part of Northwell Health and have moved to these new locations:

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Mount Kisco, NY 10549
(914) 362-6270

Northwell Health Physician Partners Breast Surgery at Phelps
777 North Broadway, Suite 301
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Hudson Valley Counties Authorize Higher-Risk Sports to Proceed

By Anna Young

With the COVID-19 infection and hospitalization rate on the decline, leaders across the Hudson Valley have determined that high-risk high school athletics can officially resume.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo granted local municipalities the ability to decide if high-risk sports should proceed after being halted by the state last fall. Seven county executives from regions in Section 1 and Section 9 released a joint statement last Wednesday giving the go-ahead to allow practice to begin on Feb. 1 at the sole discretion of the governing school district or non-scholastic athletic organization.

The decision applies to scholastic and non-scholastic sports, including football, wrestling, ice hockey, rugby, basketball, contact lacrosse, volleyball, martial arts and competitive cheerleading.

Officials in their statement agreed that sports provide many positive impacts for a student's social, physical and emotional well-being and should be authorized whenever possible.

"Children in particular have suffered significant mental harms due to the isolation of not being in school consistently, not socializing with friends and family, and not partaking in extracurricular activities," Westchester County Executive George Latimer said. "I am in favor of providing our children with some normalcy so that

they can begin to heal from this horrific pandemic."

Under the agreement, county health departments in the region must monitor whether there has been a more transmissible variant of COVID-19 identified in the area, as well as the infection rate of residents and the ability to monitor compliance.

Westchester County has had three known cases of the U.K. variant of COVID-19. While the strain is 70 percent more contagious, health officials have not deemed it more harmful. However, it has been determined it will be the dominant strain circulating domestically by March.

Latimer noted that if the infection rate begins to rise again, officials will have the power to reverse their decision.

"We will monitor results and should the worst-case scenario occur, we will reassess the strategy," Latimer said. "However, over the past year, we opened pools and beaches, Bicycle Sundays, amidst criticisms that we were taking dangerous action and we suffered no such result as we managed those actions effectively."

Further protocol will require school districts and organizations running sporting events to provide oversight and compliance in accordance with all state and local guidelines. Parents, coaches and athletes will also need to sign a consent form.

The form will indicate all parties



Higher-risk high school sports, including football, which was postponed from its traditional fall slot, may resume with practices this week.

understand the risk of disease transmission before participation, officials said.

Additionally, surveillance testing programs may be considered, but are not required to minimize the spread of coronavirus within the activities.

"It is up to each school district to decide whether to allow their students to

participate in high-risk sports," Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell said. "The health and safety of students, staff and local community during this pandemic must be each district's first priority. What works in one district does not necessarily work in another."

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Editorial

Form Based Code Fear-Mongering is Wrong Approach for Community

Since October, when many New Castle residents began to realize that their Town Board was seriously considering a major overhaul to the town code for downtown Chappaqua, there have been hours and hours of questions, comments and debate.

The encouraging part of the public discussion on what has come to be known as the Form Based Code is just over a year after the concept was first introduced by the town as a way to help reinvigorate the hamlet, it has engaged residents and generated intense input. The unfortunate part is there has been a feeding frenzy of opposition, and like so much else today, not all of it rooted in reality.

A Form Based Code is a relatively new concept for municipal planning purposes. It emphasizes the form of structures more than land uses and is a tool to help a community hopefully realize the character and look that it hopes to achieve.

The expediency of online shopping in recent years and other changes in retail and shopping habits have forced officials everywhere, not just in the New Castle hamlet of Chappaqua, to consider remaking their downtown to compete and thrive in the 21st century.

A common strategy today is introducing mixed-use development – a combination of ground-floor retail with apartments upstairs – in an area that is near a transportation hub. The thinking is the more people there are in a downtown, the more activity and business it will generate.

To be sure, there are serious questions about the New Castle plan, which have

been raised during five public hearings so far and additional discussions. Parking, a universal source of concern, may be the most critical. It appears unrealistic to expect anyone living in Westchester County not to have a car, even if they're near a bus and train line and can walk to stores downtown.

That may require a parking structure, but is that the right move? If so, where?

Then, if more people are downtown on a consistent basis and there are more vehicles, will the traffic flow easily or will there be frustrating congestion, particularly during peak hours, that can end up hurting the hamlet? Residents who currently live near downtown also need to be reassured that their quality of life won't be hurt.

A valid point raised during the hearings has been whether the pandemic will permanently affect commuting habits and living arrangements.

Appropriate building height and mass are credible concerns as well. However, residents who apparently don't want any change, have seized on the most unlikely outcome to try and stymie the process. They have pointed to the full buildout scenario that the town is required to provide under the state environmental review process. Full buildout would mean 997 new residential units.

The likelihood of that happening is virtually non-existent. In the off chance it materializes, it would take decades, not years, to materialize. Why? Because in the 72-acre study area there are too

many different private property owners for an entire block to be redeveloped with hundreds of new units at one time.

That also doesn't take in the large acreage the town owns, which would have to be sold or leased and developed. That would likely trigger a permissive referendum, if enough residents signed a petition to force a vote.

There have been doomsday scenarios offered, including the flooding of Chappaqua schools with too many children for the district to comfortably handle. Enrollment has been declining since the onset of the Great Recession, and while that doesn't mean a community should fill up those seats, even 150 new students, which the district's consultants have initially projected in a worst-case scenario, would not hurt the schools.

In fact, local birth rates, something that is out of anyone's control, have a much greater impact. And the district's own projections for the next five years, keeps enrollment largely stagnant.

During the Comprehensive Plan update process, which is now about seven years ago, the overwhelming sentiment among residents who participated was the town's hamlets need to be reimagined. The challenge facing the hamlet was correctly identified then, and it remains today.

No one can say for certain whether the Form Based Code will make Chappaqua's downtown more vibrant. What is known is no community can afford to be fearful of change and remain inert forever.

Letters to the Editor

Nothing Nefarious About Yorktown's Calculation of 2021 Town Budget

Government on all levels can always do a better job simplifying and communicating important issues to its constituents. For local governments, budgets are often the most complicated issue to explain and digest.

Recently, a prior Yorktown supervisor questioned the information we released about the current town budget. To ensure accuracy, the impacts of our town budget are calculated by the nonpartisan Finance Department and is overseen by our town comptroller who currently sits as the vice president of the New York Government Finance Officers Association.

Across Westchester County, municipalities like the Town of Cortlandt, City of New Rochelle, City of Rye and City of White Plains use the exact same mechanism

to calculate changes in local tax rates. Notwithstanding her inaccurate conclusions and partisan rhetoric, Susan Siegel should already know this since she has held elected office twice including having served as town supervisor.

Our 2021 town budget holds the line on town taxes despite a massive reduction in state aid and the crippling impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on businesses and municipal finances. I'm proud that the Town Board developed a Comprehensive Plan to grow our way out of this crisis, instead of raising taxes. A key aspect of our plan was to make Yorktown a more attractive place to live and do business by controlling spending and protecting taxpayers.

Town taxpayers should rest assured

that our Finance Department includes experienced professionals and the information they produced about this year's budget is both accurate and calculated in conformity with the office of the state comptroller's accepted standards.

While some former politicians in our town are focused on partisan politics, I want to acknowledge the work of our administration and the Town Board that unanimously passed a budget that will grow our local economy to mitigate the fiscal impacts many communities are struggling with.

Matt Slater
Yorktown Town Supervisor

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Guest Column

Ossining Village Erred in Keeping Black Men From Police Reform Process

By Jermain Smith

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd, communities across the country are standing in opposition to the injustices suffered at the hands of the police.

In response to the outcry, Gov. Andrew Cuomo issued Executive Order 203 last June requiring police reform. Calling for a collaborative process of trust and transparency, stating “Collaborative is the key word. It would be a mistake to frame these discussions as an adversarial process...” The intent of Executive Order 203 is to eliminate racial inequities in policing, and it identifies victims of these inequities as predominantly “Black and African-American men.”

The Village of Ossining, a Democratic community 35 miles north of Manhattan, attempted to first exclude the community entirely, with closed-door meetings and establishing the foundation for this important work. Ossining originally began negotiations with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) without community input. After key community members discovered their clandestine dealings, Ossining changed course and formed the working committee consisting of names frequently found on

mayoral-appointed boards.

Upon reproach, Ossining altered course, yet continued to limit the voices in the community. This time those of Black men, by appointing committee members who have good standing and/or are relatively new to the community; a pastor and police officer are the only Black men. After continued protest, one Black man was added at the eleventh hour.

I was one of a handful of people that immediately stated my desire to serve. Officials strategically reached out to fill the committee with other representatives from boards and organizations in the community. Notably, not one citizen from the community at large that was not already representing a board or office was contacted. No Black men, no Black youth, no Black organizations.

In September, I e-mailed now-former mayor Victoria Gearity, asking about an alleged “application process,” among other things. After the mayor’s initial reply, to date only Trustee Omar Lopez has replied to e-mail, and now a phone call with the newly-elected Mayor Rika Levin. Neither Gearity nor County Legislator Catherine Borgia have answered e-mails from persons of color who are looking for answers or who are seeking support and

guidance.

Gearity, now a senior adviser to state Sen. Elijah Reichlin-Melnick, in her only e-mail to me referenced George Floyd in an incredibly inappropriate manner, stating “more than one woman spoke about her son...And perhaps that is fitting, given that George Floyd’s final act was to call for his mother,” this in reference to having Black women serve on the working committee instead of Black men.

During what was supposed to be a trust-building and transparent process, Black men have been told that “it is too late” or “just move on.” Time and time again, Black people are told “just move on.”

When protesting racial injustices, Black citizens are first victims of the police brutality and then portrayed as villain by the media and other communities. Case in point: George Floyd went from a father lying dead in the street after 8 minutes and 46 seconds of strangulation by a police officer, to being portrayed as an accused abuser and ex-drug dealer.

We are vilified and labeled as “looters” and “thugs” for looking for answers, for asking questions, for wanting someone to acknowledge that our lives matter. We are denigrated for fighting against systemic racism, injustice and of the murders of

people who look like we do.

I still must have “the talk” with my son, as my father had to have with me. I still hold on to the pain of my father’s stories of growing up in the South in the 1960s. Internalizing the agony of hundreds of years of injustice as a marginalized part of society of fighting for equity, only to be told to “move on.”

Why are more Black people not involved? The answer is simple: We are tired, after years of eroding trust in any process, continued injustices. We are tired of screaming, asking to be seen and time and time again no one answers, no one sees you.

This was supposed to be the point in history where we become a better nation. The executive order insisted on an inclusive process of trust and transparency. Sadly, for Ossining, it is business as usual and political leaders have obscured the process, appointed members to the committee who enjoy privileges that come with their titles and effectively ignoring the intent of the order and ignoring Black citizens who have begged for a seat at the table. We are unwilling to just move on. This time we need to be heard.

Jermain Smith is a Village of Ossining resident.

Letters to the Editor

Despite a Year of Grief, There is Plenty for Which to Be Grateful

One year ago, we were just learning about the coronavirus, COVID-19, a pandemic. It’s a word that we only read about in history books. What occurred over the past 12 months has been surreal, unbelievable and tragic. So many people have lost their lives and so many others became infected with COVID in our nation, state and region. We had to change our lives in order to be safe and survive.

We will be forever grateful to those who

took care of us and provided essential services. They have been on the frontline and are true heroes – from doctors and nurses to grocers, emergency service providers and so many others. I want to also thank our town government workers who have been dedicated to make sure all of our important services continued.

Thank you to our children who had their lives and schooling change to keep them safe. Our seniors couldn’t engage in their

events and outings and also had to remain home as we were told they were the most vulnerable to this horrific virus.

So finally, a vaccine was developed by the amazing scientists. We are forever grateful to them as well.

One year later we have come together in our Cortlandt community to help one another, to adapt to what we had to do to keep our families and ourselves safe, and continue to have hope that we will prevail and return to our lives and way of life that

we cherish. However, we will never forget how fragile life can be and we’ll never take even the smallest things for granted.

Someday in the future we will read about the pandemic of 2020 and never forget and always remember how truly blessed we are to be on life’s journey together.

Thank you all and continue to stay safe.

Linda D. Puglisi
Supervisor
Town of Cortlandt

Tone Down the Rhetoric Rather Than Making Sensationalized Accusations

I was surprised to see a full-page petition on page two of the Putnam Examiner’s Jan 19-25 edition. The document chastises Putnam County officials for specific comments they supposedly made and supposedly should have made about national and local events over the last eight months.

It was indeed deeply saddening during an already sad year to see week after week of arson, vandalism and looting taking place in some of our cities. The message of the peaceful protesters in the eyes of many Americans was diluted and distorted by being filtered through this lawless rioting. Then, on Jan. 6, all of America was outraged and sickened to see a lawless mob break into the U.S. Capitol building with relative ease. The events of the past year are almost impossible for people to make sense of.

I assume the petitioners’ grievances about harassment and threats were reported to

and investigated by local law enforcement authorities. Their broader message, however, was diluted and distorted by being filtered through sensationalized rhetoric. For example, the opening paragraph is an inaccurate recap of the riot of Jan. 6. It evokes images of the rioters storming the Capitol with guns drawn and with bombs ready to be lit or detonated. Evidence suggests the situation could have been worse, but the petition’s account is nothing like what actually happened. Regarding the petitioners’ highly-charged assertions, accusations and demands throughout the text, I expect county officials will give them appropriate consideration.

Let’s moderate the rhetoric as we usher in the Biden administration. Who knows, things might even improve.

Doug Williams
Mahopac

Common-Sense Gun Laws Must Be Pursued at the Federal Level

National Gun Violence Survivor Week is this week, Feb. 1-7, when the community honors survivors of gun violence and their resilience. Despite experiencing incredible trauma, they are leading work to support other survivors and advocating for common-sense measures that save lives.

As a volunteer for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, I am awed by the steadfastness of survivors who push through their profound, boundless grief to work toward ending the scourge of deaths by gun across our nation. Fifty-eight percent of American adults are survivors of gun violence, either having experienced it themselves or caring for someone who has experienced gun violence in their lifetime.

With a gun death rate 11 times greater than other high-income nations, more people are killed with guns in the U.S. by early February than are killed with guns in our peer countries in an entire calendar year. This is a travesty ripping at our collective sense of safety. No one is immune from becoming a victim of gun violence.

With the dramatic increase in gun ownership during the pandemic, it’s more important than ever to stem the tide of gun deaths and to enact common-sense gun laws like universal background checks at the federal level.

Naomi Marrow
Volunteer, Moms Demand Action for
Gun Sense in America

Obituaries

Joel Sachs

Joel H. Sachs, who served as attorney for the Village of Pleasantville and other municipalities, passed away unexpectedly on Jan. 24 after a brief illness in White Plains. He was 78.

Born Mar. 27, 1942, Joel leaves behind his loving wife of 47 years, Roslyn Carol Sachs, and cherished daughters Beth Sachs Zoller (Ron) of Livingston, N.J. and Lori Sachs Harrison (Alexander) of Scarsdale. He was extraordinarily proud of his grandchildren, David, Sarah and Talia Zoller and Maxwell and Lily Harrison. He is also survived by his beloved aunt, Gertrude Berlin, of Boca Raton, Fla. and his dear cousin, Dr. Jo Ann Berlin, of Port Saint Lucie, Fla. Joel was preceded in death by his brother, Melvin A. Sachs, Esq., and his parents, Rose (Ronnie) and Harold Sachs.

Joel was born in New York City, attended Mount Vernon High School and raised his own family in Edgemont/Scarsdale. He was the epitome of living life to the fullest and he was always on the move, aiming to fill each day with fun and excitement. He and his wife Roslyn traveled the United States and the world over as he loved history, culture and the arts. Joel enjoyed going to the theater, concerts, museums and sporting events, often with his wife and family. He loved to watch and to play sports of all kinds. He enjoyed golf and swimming and attended frequent football, baseball, hockey and

basketball games. He held season tickets to the Giants for over 50 years, and even in the deep cold, he rarely missed a game.

Sachs served as counsel for the Lake Placid Winter Organizing Olympics and also attended the winter Olympics in Turin, Italy and summer Olympics in London and Montreal.

For the past 28 years, Joel was a member of the White Plains law firm of Keane & Beane, P.C. where he represented numerous private entities and governmental agencies in a wide variety of environmental and land use matters. He established the firm's environmental law practice and greatly expanded the firm's land use practice. A significant portion of his practice was devoted to representing municipalities and private clients throughout New York State in land use, zoning and environmental disputes.

Throughout his long and distinguished career, he represented clients in all federal and state courts in New York, including the New York Court of Appeals, the Appellate Divisions and the federal district courts in New York, the Second Circuit as well as the United States Supreme Court. He also served as construction arbitrator for the American Arbitration Association.

For the past 40 years, Joel also served as an adjunct professor at the Elisabeth Haub School of Law of Pace University teaching courses on state and municipal environmental law, land use and construction law. He was also the first director of the Municipal Law Resource Center at the school.

Joel received his undergraduate degree from Cornell University and his law degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He has a Masters of Law from New York University. Early in his career, he clerked for the Honorable Charles H. Tenney of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, and then served as an assistant attorney general for the state and deputy chief of its Environmental Protection Bureau for five years in the 1970s.

Thereafter, he served several years as an attorney for the Town of Greenburgh, and continued as counsel to many municipalities throughout the Hudson Valley and beyond. Sachs was widely recognized as a leader in the Real Property Law Section (Chair) and the Environmental Law Section (Chair) of the New York State Bar Association, the Westchester County Bar Association (President), the Westchester County Legal Aid Society, the White Plains Bar Association (President) and the National Institute of Municipal Law Officers. He was also a member of the Board of Trustees of Lyndhurst.

Sachs received numerous awards, accolades and honors for his pioneering work

in environmental law. He had been named best environmental attorney in Westchester County by Westchester Magazine, the New York Times Magazine and one of the best environmental attorneys in the New York metropolitan area by New York Magazine on multiple occasions.

In addition, Sachs was annually listed in the reference book, Best Lawyers in America (Environmental). He was also named to the Metro Super Lawyers List, one of the 25 best attorneys in Westchester County on multiple occasions. Sachs enjoyed writing and lecturing on environmental law matters for many years before bar association groups on environmental and land use topics.

In honor of Joel's memory, donations may be made to the Lustgarten Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research in honor of his late brother Mel A. Sachs who bravely fought the disease.

There was a private graveside funeral and interment at Sharon Gardens in Valhalla on Jan. 27. In light of COVID-19 restrictions, shiva took place over Zoom. A larger memorial will be planned once restrictions are eased.

Russell Krosiak

Russell J. Krosiak of Amenia, Dutchess County, passed away on Dec. 19, 2020, at Sharon Hospital in Litchfield, Conn. at the age of 68.

Krosiak was born on Mar. 1, 1952, in New York City to Henry and Eleanor (Trompe) Krosiak. He is survived by his wife, Cynthia.

Krosiak was an equipment operator for New York State Electric & Gas.

Arrangements were handled by Scott D. Conklin Funeral Home in Millerton, N.Y. Krosiak was buried at Raymond Hill Cemetery in Carmel.



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Yorktown Town Board Adopts Anti-Drag Racing Laws

By Rick Pezzullo

The Yorktown Town Board unanimously amended a local law last week by adding specific prohibitions on drag racing.

The fine for anyone caught drag racing in town ranges from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

Officials also added a vehicle confiscation law that police can use to impound a vehicle used in a drag race. The confiscation law allows the Yorktown Police Department to seek storage fees and fines and includes provisions for seizing the vehicle's title for auction or municipal use if the owner is unable to reclaim the vehicle.

"These two laws are a warning to anyone who thinks they can get away with drag racing in our community," said Supervisor Matt Slater. "We have adopted the harshest penalties permitted under the law to stop this irresponsible behavior that poses a grave danger to every driver or

pedestrian. Drag racing is not a victimless crime and we have seen horrible crashes because of it."

"You street-race in Yorktown, we're looking to take your car and lock you up. End of story," remarked Police Chief Robert Noble.

James Nolan led the adoption of anti-drag racing laws in Westchester County. He spoke with the Town Board prior to the law's adoption. In 2015, Nolan's brother, Mike, was shot to death in Yonkers over a drag race-related dispute.

"I'm very thankful. It's going to help save and protect many peoples' lives," said Nolan, adding that he has ramped up his efforts during the pandemic. "The people who are doing drag racing actually felt that they could do it because there were less people on the streets. It's something I couldn't allow."

Other communities with anti-drag-racing laws include Greenburgh, White Plains and Yonkers.

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Joint Meeting Fizzles Over Chappaqua’s Proposed Form Based Code

By Martin Wilbur

A New Castle Town Board-Chappaqua Board of Education joint meeting to discuss the proposed Form Based Code failed to materialize this week after school officials announced they would wait until their consultant’s report is complete to offer comments.

At last Wednesday’s Board of Education meeting, President Victoria Tipp read a more than 10-minute statement on behalf of the board related to the town’s controversial zoning proposal. School board members have expressed uneasiness that the new code could cause a proliferation of mixed-use development in downtown Chappaqua causing school enrollment to mushroom. Under the full buildout scenario, which the town is required to show under the state Environmental Quality Review Act, nearly 1,000 new units would be built.

Near the conclusion of the statement, Tipp said the school board would weigh in with written comments on the Form Based

Code when it receives the finished report related to enrollment and school capacity. She said the proposed Form Based Code is major legislation “that would transform our town at the very moment that we are struggling with one of the greatest health crises in history.”

“I listened to the last public hearing on Jan. 19 and someone said this is one of the most stressful times of our lives,” Tipp said. “This is not hyperbole, it’s reality. In our school district our top current priority is the physical safety and the physical and mental well-being of our students and by extension our community.”

An attorney for the district, Allison Sloto, said at that hearing on the code that she expected the complete report to be returned within a month.

In recent weeks New Castle Supervisor Ivy Pool had pressed for a joint meeting of the two boards to discuss areas of concern. Much of the Jan. 13 joint session was devoted to the district’s consultants presenting information on their findings.

The presentation showed that full buildout as currently proposed would cause a districtwide increase of 150 students, not the 114 the town’s consultants have projected.

Other issues raised by Tipp in the statement included concern that downtown construction could increase traffic and safety challenged for Bell Middle School students, the potential for developers to seek payment in lieu of taxes or other tax abatement programs, and the Town Board’s willingness to use the lowest possible enrollment projection offered by the district’s consultants.

“We use an inquiry-based approach,” Tipp said. “I feel that the Town Board show more curiosity and more inquiry rather than an eagerness to justify the lowest possible numbers.”

The Town Board, which had originally sought to close the public hearing on the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Jan. 19, postponed closing the hearing until at least Feb. 23 to try to accommodate the school board’s request of affording it more time to comment once the district’s consultant’s report is submitted.

Last week, Pool said she understands the Form Based Code would represent a significant change from the current zoning that has been in place since the 1970s. For some people, the proposal is exciting while for others it’s scary, she said. But the Town Board soon needs to have its consultant address the many issues that have been raised during the hearing that stretches back to October.

“I want to make sure, and it’s very important for me to have a process where the public has had sufficient opportunities to comment and ask questions and that the town feels responsible to the residents of this community, to get answers to all of their questions,” Pool said.

The supervisor said with consistently declining district enrollment, one of the projections should include that possibility.

“My request, or my interest, is what would happen if theses numbers continue to decline rather than increase?” she said.

Pool also said there has been no discussion among town officials about a PILOT program or other tax breaks for developers to serve as an incentive to build in Chappaqua.

At last week’s Town Board meeting, there was a discussion whether the town can ensure the mix of one- and two-bedroom units it is looking for. Concerns have been raised about whether its estimate of two-thirds of downtown units being one-bedroom apartments and the remainder being two bedrooms is realistic. Additional larger units would likely impact school enrollment.

Town Attorney Nicholas Ward-Willis said the town can consider writing into its code the balance of the different-sized units, the number of bedrooms or square footage.

“You’re allowing the developer the ability to build something that’s going to serve the needs of the community and the marketplace, but also is enforceable,” Ward-Willis said.

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• Dry beans/lentils	• Cooking oil	• Diapers
• Pasta & Pasta sauce (in plastic)	• Adobo, salt, pepper	• Tissues
• Flour (5lb bag)	• Coffee, Tea	• Feminine hygiene products
• Rice	• Canned fruit	• Shampoo/Conditioner/Soap
• Peanut Butter (in plastic)	• Canned vegetables	• Dishwashing liquid
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Famed French Restaurant to Make a Comeback in North Castle

By Martin Wilbur

A highly-acclaimed French restaurant in North Castle that was forced to close last year after it went bankrupt is back in business and its owner intends to have a fully-functioning establishment once pandemic restrictions end.

La Cremaillere Restaurant, which had operated for about 70 years on Bedford-Banksville Road in Banksville before closing last February, has reopened for a limited takeout menu, property owner Peter Orthwein told The Examiner last week.

Orthwein's company bought the restaurant's assets and is leasing them to owner Robert Meyzen's reconstituted company La Cremaillere II, he said. Meyzen had owned the original La Cremaillere since the 1970s, buying it from his father who established the restaurant that was frequently visited by celebrities. It had been considered one of the premiere French restaurants in the northeastern United States.

"We'll get indoor dining space eventually," Orthwein said, "but right now we're just takeout."

La Cremaillere II, which also had impressive wine offerings during its first incarnation, has applied for a New York State liquor license.

The restaurant, located in a 1750s



The interior of the French restaurant La Cremaillere in Banksville before its closure last winter. The owner is reopening the establishment following his wife's messy legal troubles.

farmhouse, had run into money troubles when Meyzen's wife, Barbara, was accused of running a multiyear scheme to defraud the restaurant's lenders, mortgagee, bankruptcy creditors and customers

and to obstruct the bankruptcy process, according to federal prosecutors in the Southern District of New York.

Last Sept. 23, she was sentenced to two years in prison, was given another two years

of supervised release and forced to pay forfeiture and restitution of \$320,289.35, the U.S. Attorney's office stated.

The restaurant entered bankruptcy in April 2019, according to the U.S. Attorney's office, and operated through last Valentine's Day before being shut down by the state, Orthwein said.

He said Robert Meyzen was unaware his wife was engaged in the illegal activity and looks forward to another opportunity.

"Unfortunately, this happened and it really has been devastating for him," Orthwein said. "We were able to buy the assets out of bankruptcy and look forward to him getting back and running the restaurant the way it was."

Last week, the restaurant established a new website, www.frenchcountryrestaurant.net, to feature a limited takeout menu of classic French food. The liquor license application indicated that there would be live music for private and special events as well as recorded music.

North Castle Councilwoman Barbara DiGiacinto said La Cremaillere reminded her of one of the Michelin restaurants you would find out in the countryside. She said the food, service and interior made for a remarkable dining experience.

"To have that in the little hamlet of Banksville, it's almost paradise," DiGiacinto said. "It's always been such a gem."

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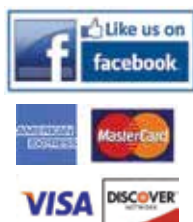
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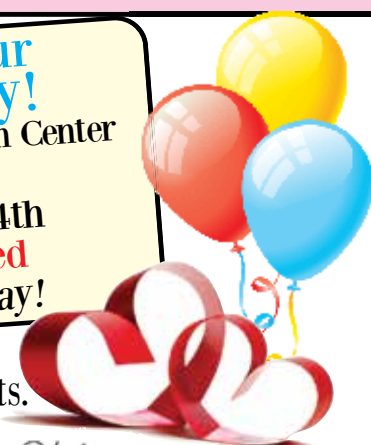
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Working at Home, as My Grandfather Did, is an American Tradition

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many of us to work from home, which for some is a big switch in both working conditions and home life.

But my family has had a long tradition of working from home, starting with my paternal grandfather, Emanuele Primavera. I remember my mother telling me stories about how he worked my poor grandmother half to death in the basement of their home in South Philadelphia where he had set up a soda water bottling business. It was my grandmother's job to wash the returned bottles and to refill them.

Along the way, she gave birth to 18 children, but only five survived, owing to the pandemic of 1918 and generally the lower survival rate of children before and after that time.

I am told that some people are having a hard time finding themselves in a situation now where they must work from home for the first time because of COVID-19, but I myself have worked from home for nearly 40 years, running first an antiques business, then a public relations firm and later adding my real estate business to that.

Other entrepreneurs forewarned me



By Bill Primavera

that I might have a hard time disciplining myself to put in the effort and time required to run my own business, especially from home, where I might easily be distracted. But for me, it was natural, maybe because of my heritage.

The first home I bought, an 1826 landmarked home in Brooklyn Heights, was first built by a cooper (barrel maker) who ran his business from the first floor. When I purchased that home and ran the antiques store in that same space, I felt a connection to its workplace history.

Then when I moved to Westchester, I specifically chose an historic home whose layout facilitated an at-home business, first an antiques store, then the public relations business. Originally it was owned by a gentleman farmer who was also one of Westchester's most prominent physicians in the 18th century.

I eventually reached the stage where I wanted other people to do all the home chores that I became expert in over the years, and which I share with the reader in this column. So, I next bought a condo at Trump Park, where all services are provided. I still work from home.

Recently, I conducted research on my grandfather who established the Primavera homestead on 10th Street in South Philadelphia. I considered it a neat coincidence when my first apartment in New York City happened to be on 10th Street. What's more, I was thrilled just last week to find on eBay an antique soda water bottle from my grandfather's business with his name and address on it.

My grandfather died in 1934 before I was born, so I never got to know him, but somehow my finding that antique soda water bottle has connected me to him. By the time this article is published, that bottle will likely be in my possession, and I can't wait to hold it in my hands, knowing that it passed through his hands a hundred years ago while working at home.

For all of my other community members who are also working at home right now, consider that you're experiencing a long-held American tradition that can be enjoyed as much now as it was then.

While both a writer and publicist, Bill Primavera is also a realtor associated with William Raveis Real Estate and founder of Primavera Public Relations, Inc., the longest running public relations agency in Westchester (www.PrimaveraPR.com), specializing in lifestyles, real estate and development. To engage the services of The Home Guru and his team to market your home for sale, call 914-522-2076.



A mid-1920s soda water bottle from the at-home business of The Home Guru's grandfather.

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Floral Program Aims to Help Elderly, Benefit Alzheimer's Association

By Lindsay Emery

When Oren Shapiro founded Mrs. Bloom's Direct during his lunch hour at a Manhattan law firm in 2003, he always knew he wanted to give back to those in need.

Now Shapiro's new PETALZ floral program will deliver flowers nationwide to seniors living in long-term care communities. A portion of the sales will benefit the Alzheimer's Association.

The Elmsford businessowner hopes to brighten the recipients' day while supporting those who need help.

"Flowers convey affection, appreciation and caring to those who give and receive them," Shapiro said. "Our hope is that the PETALZ program will become a sought-after amenity so that together we can raise significant funds for a larger cause – the fight against Alzheimer's."

Shapiro said he launched the program specifically for owners and operators of nursing homes, assisted living facilities and memory care centers to help residents overcome feelings over isolation made worse by the pandemic. For as low as \$10 per week per resident, communities can receive a variety of fresh flowers from growers worldwide, he said.

Mrs. Bloom's imports flowers from every continent except Antarctica.

There is a biweekly package of seven to 11 stems for \$12 per resident and a monthly fee for \$14. A second package offers 12 to 20 stems for \$15 per resident weekly, \$20 bi-weekly and \$25 monthly.

"They could have flowers every single week in their rooms," Shapiro said. "So, we think it's a really small price to pay for flowers because we think it's a program that they will really be looking forward to from week to week."

The flowers are delivered directly to the facility via FedEx and each resident would receive a complementary vase and clippers. Depending on the level of participation, the facility could also be eligible for flowers for its welcome area, dining room and other common spaces.

The idea to partner with the Alzheimer's Association stemmed from Shapiro's personal experience with the disease. After witnessing his neighbor suffer from Alzheimer's, he researched how much support those diagnosed needed.

Shapiro and his brother, Ari, eventually reached out to the Alzheimer's Association to pitch PETALZ.

"In keeping with just giving back, what better cause is there than Alzheimer's," Shapiro said. "It is a malady of unbelievable proportions and only getting worse."

Senior living communities are a great focus for the PETALZ program because of

the number of residents, he said. Shapiro explained that there is the potential to raise millions of dollars for Alzheimer's research through the national program.

"We think that there is certainly an opportunity for residents to include this new amenity into the overall services that they provide and if they wanted to increase their costs just slightly," Shapiro said. "We certainly think that the vast majority of families would approve of it."

With the pandemic making it more difficult for seniors to have visitors, isolation has taken a toll on residents, Shapiro said. He added that research indicates flowers make people happier, makes them more social and can help improve cognition in the elderly.

While Shapiro has been told that it's a bad time to roll out the PETALZ program because of the pandemic, he hopes that the delivery of just one flower can make a person's day brighter.

"It's the most important time to start something like this because of the isolation issue that many of them are facing," Shapiro said. "What better way to say thank you and hey, we're thinking about you, than making sure the residents receive beautiful flowers every week in their rooms."

To learn more about the program, visit www.petalz-flowers.com.



A recent recipient of a flower arrangement from Mrs. Bloom's, creator of the PETALZ program.

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P'ville Schools Highlight Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity in Curriculum

By Lindsay Emery

The Pleasantville School District's diversity, equity and inclusivity (DEI) curriculum coordinators explained to school officials last week the steps being taken to incorporate that education into each grade level.

Bedford Road School curriculum coordinators Kim Schulman and Jen Picco described how they used the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) Anti-Bias Building Blocks curriculum guide to create a five-unit, comprehensive and developmentally appropriate program for children to explore social issues that might be uncomfortable to discuss.

"All of the lessons really let the kids explore these topics, and then it gives them the empowerment to be able to go back out into the world and sort of deal with it on an everyday basis and also to make a change in the world and realize that there are things to

be changed," Picco said.

The ADL's curriculum emphasizes that students should have a strong sense of their own identity before they can distinguish their differences. Picco and Schulman explained that there will be a school-wide project based on the book "Only One You" by Linda Kranz where children will decorate their own rocks to represent their individuality. When all of the rocks are put together, students will be able to see the beauty despite the differences.

In addition to the school-wide project, each grade level will have a homeschool project based on the ADL curriculum. Kindergarteners will reflect on the meaning of family, first-graders will participate in an identity study, second- and fourth-graders will focus on their culture and third-graders will reflect on their heritage.

The middle school and high school DEI framework was derived from a joint meeting of the social studies and English departments

where it was determined that more could be done to celebrate and acknowledge different racial, ethnic and religious groups across all disciplines, said middle school Curriculum Coordinator Melissa Brown. The middle school staff has already begun efforts to highlight exceptional individuals during various awareness months through music, announcements, slideshows and display boards.

"Teachers are exposing students to rich literature, documentaries, current events materials, and a lot of what I consider the most powerful and important, are discussions about some tough issues around intersecting historical events," Brown said. "Perspectives from African Americans, Indigenous Americans, Chinese Americans, Syrian immigrants and women, to name a few – not all – have occurred in our classrooms."

Eighth-graders work with Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center in White Plains, a partnership that arranges for Holocaust survivors to have discussions around respect for humanity.

Brown met with seventh-graders who shared their biggest takeaways with their experiences with the ADL. Among the themes the students noted were diversity matters, we can educate people and think before we act.

"Our work to educate our students will help to shape the stories that those kids like to tell one day, and so we hope that this will positively change the direction of history because our kids can and we're teaching them that they can," Brown said.

Each middle school grade read a core

novel that displays character education. Superintendent of Schools Mary Fox-Alter stressed that the teachers at the middle school were encouraged to keep novels like "Esperanza Rising" and "Number the Stars" for students even though there were some comments received about the difficult nature of the books.

Curriculum Coordinator George Lamar explained how the high school students are taking the lead on their different experiences. Teachers are encouraging students to pursue their own ideas, he said.

In addition to exposing students about the unheard voices in history and why that occurred, Lamar said it is important to have students communicate through argumentative essays, Socratic seminars, online discussion boards and other methods so they can express themselves creatively.

Students are also studying human rights violations in African nations and homelessness and participating in fundraising campaigns through Pleasantville High School's Upstanders Day to focus on supporting a cause. Clubs and organizations also help encourage the theme of identity for the students.

"When we think about the mission statement and what's written on the building, 'Enter to learn, go forth to serve,' this component of DEI is now essential to students being successful in the future and they have to practice these skills and they have to integrate the skills on a daily basis and that's the expectation and we're doing our best to support students in that endeavor," Lamar said.

Ready to Say Goodbye

Fox Lane Middle School Principal Susan Ostrofsky announced last week that she will be retiring at the end of the current school year. Ostrofsky has had a 38-year career in education, the last 30 years with the Bedford School District. Before becoming principal, she worked at Bedford Village and Mount Kisco elementary schools.



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Neck or Shoulder Pain? A Few Easy Ways to Feel Better

Neck and shoulder pain is one of the most common complaints from patients in the outpatient physical therapy and chiropractic clinic.

The causes of pain can be extensive especially if there was acute trauma that caused an injury; however, most times the cause of the pain can be very simple – poor posture.

Poor posture that causes neck and shoulder pain or stiffness is gradual. It will typically start as stiffness with some activities throughout the day, then will develop into pain and discomfort while doing most activities. Finally, it will cause pain that will interrupt sleep at night.

Poor posture for your upper body involves one or more of the following: excessive forward head posture, increased thoracic kyphosis (your mid-back is excessively bent over like a hunchback) and/or rounded shoulders.

This poor alignment affects certain muscles differently. The muscles in the front of your chest, shoulders and neck will shorten, which pulls on the structures they are attached to causing discomfort and stiffness.

Conversely, the muscles in the back of your neck, shoulders and mid-

back become lengthened. Over time, this lengthening causes the muscles to fatigue faster and fail in correctly stabilizing your joints causing pain, soreness and dysfunction.

These muscle imbalances aren't the only cause for concern. If not addressed properly and quickly, more serious musculoskeletal disorders and conditions can develop such as tendonitis, impingement or nerve pain. These conditions undoubtedly take more time to heal.



Sometimes it can take several more weeks for pain to subside, reverse the damage that poor posture habits have caused and return to pain-free activities.

On the bright side, management and treatment can be as simple as addressing your posture throughout the day. You can start by fixing your standing and sitting posture. Sit, stand and walk with your shoulders back and your head and chin tucked so your ears are over your shoulders. Focus on pulling your belly button back into your spine and engaging your core while walking and sitting to help keep you upright and in proper alignment.

Modifications to your daily tasks will also be beneficial. If you sit at

a desk for extended periods of time, assessing your workstation is essential. Rearrange your workstation so that everything is close to you and you don't need to reach far for your phone, keyboard or mouse.

Chair support, height and position are important as well. You want a chair to provide proper support for your lower back or lumbar spine. If the chair lacks that support, you can use a lumbar pillow and pad or try a small towel roll. Chair height should be adjusted so that your feet are flat and thighs are parallel to the floor. (Your knees will be at a 90-degree angle in this position.) Also, have your chair at the right distance as well. If it's too far from your desk it will cause you to reach too far and strain your muscles.

Check where your computer screen is located. Positioning your screen to be directly in front of you is critical. Looking straight ahead so you aren't keeping your neck and head turned to one side or looking up for long periods of time will be enormously helpful.

These sitting position adjustments



By Rachel Amarosa

can be helpful with driving as well. Adjust your steering wheel and seat so that you aren't reaching for the wheel and you can maintain shoulders and the head and chin tucked in throughout your drive.

Trying these simple good posture habits is the first step. However, sometimes additional steps are needed in addition to rearranging your workstation and correcting your posture. Visiting a

physical therapist or chiropractor may be necessary. They would evaluate and assess your posture and pain and would be able to prescribe corrective exercises and ergonomic adjustments that are needed for proper restoration of function and a quick reduction of pain.

Rachel Amarosa is a certified athletic trainer for ProClinix Sports Physical Therapy & Chiropractic. She is also the marketing and patient relations director for ProClinix's three locations in Armonk, Pleasantville and Ardsley. She can be reached out 914-202-0700 or at ramarosa@proclinix.com.

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Bid Approved to Convert No. White Plains Community Center Into Shelter

By Martin Wilbur

The North Castle Town Board approved the bid to renovate the North White Plains Community Center last week that will make the facility suitable to be used as an emergency shelter.

After years of thwarted attempts to upgrade the building, the board awarded a \$896,500 bid to AFL General Construction of Farmingdale, L.I., coming in below the desired \$1 million threshold. Even if the town must use all of the 10 percent contingency, it would still fall below that mark.

Previous bids for the work easily exceeded the \$1 million mark.

“I think that this was really quite exciting to see, and they’re ready and raring to go,” said architect John Sullivan, who was brought in to help the town complete the project. “This is a woman-owned company, by the way. I don’t think that matters, but I think it’s worthy of noting and that they’re honorable from what I can tell.”

AFL General Construction was one of 12 companies that bid on the project. Sullivan said the impressive response from contractors could be that companies are hungry for work, particularly during the winter when construction in the region often lags. Much of the project is interior work with the exception of the roof replacement.

Work includes an interior alteration of



The North White Plains Community Center and library on Clove Road. The North Castle Town Board awarded a nearly \$900,000 bid more than five years after officials began planning for the work.

about 1,200 square feet of space that will include a kitchen, multi-function room, storage room, closets, shower room and bathrooms; three new HVAC units with associated duct modifications and a one downdraft unit; and a new asphalt shingle roof and associated gutters, downspouts and other accessories.

There is also a list of six alternate bids for other work to be done, including

installation of a generator, a crucial feature for a shelter to have.

Sullivan said that work can start during the winter and be completed by summer, possibly by the end of June.

Town officials had been planning to make upgrades to the community center at 10 Clove Rd., which shares the site with the North Castle Public Library, for more than five years after North White Plains

residents asked that the hamlet have its own emergency shelter.

The town’s other shelter, at the Hergenhan Recreation Center in Armonk, forced North White Plains residents who would lose power during a storm to travel about five miles to the north. There were times where residents have had difficulty getting out of their driveways, let alone making the trek to Armonk, said Supervisor Michael Schiliro.

“We just really appreciate you basically bringing this project home for us,” Schiliro told Sullivan. “It’s been a long process. Residents have been very patient, especially in North White Plains. We want to make sure we get it right, and we had some speed bumps, I guess. Not roadblocks, but we had full confidence that once we brought you on, we would get to this point.”

Councilwoman Barbara DiGiacinto said the idea of renovating the community center for use as a shelter originated at her monthly Saturday morning meetings at the facility.

“This is going to be very, very meaningful for North White Plains residents,” she said.

The generator would hold 700 gallons of fuel and the facility has the ability to store another 2,000 gallons, ensuring it would have enough to power the building for at least a week, said Councilman Jose Berra.

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Estate Planning for Your Collections May Be a Smart Decision

COVID-19 has altered how we spend our time. Most forms of socialization were scaled back or continued virtually. The forced isolation reignited a passion for hobbies and collecting.

While breadmaking, gardening and crafting received the most attention, another trend was emerging. Childhood collections of baseball cards, comic books, video games, sneakers, model trains and Barbie dolls were dusted off and re-examined.

The legacy we leave is not always numbers in a bank account or a piece of property. Artifacts that people collect or create have a value that extends beyond dollars and cents. The importance of hobbies and collections in a person's estate plan deserves to be highlighted.

A collector or hobbyist must catalogue their collection. An adult child 30 years down the road may not take the time to separate the valuable antique woodworking tools from the wrench picked up at Home Depot. Taking photos on a smart phone and

saving them in a sharable file entitled "my antique tool collection" is one way to get started.

After identification, valuation is helpful. Informal valuation may include checking eBay prices or prices for non-eBay auctions on items similar to the ones in your collection.

Collections exist in raw and authenticated formats. Grading services scrutinize many collectibles from trading cards and autographs to coins and comic books. A high grade based on condition often increases the value of a collectible substantially. The cost of grading may be a wise investment for collectors who have acquired higher quality collectibles. Car collectors understand how original parts with corresponding serial numbers impact classic car prices.

Some hobbyists create their own works. Paintings, sculptures and handcrafted furniture are a few examples. A parent that was a professional draftsman may have, as

a hobby, painted original pieces that have real value. Each hobby has their own framework tied to valuation. Imparting this information to your heirs or as instructions in your testamentary documents is important.

Collectibles can be gifted to a trust through gift memorandums and specifically listed on a trust's Schedule A. If the collectible is a classic car and has a title, the title can be transferred to the trust. Once part of a trust, a collectible can be distributed or maintained the way other trust assets are governed. Trusts avoid probate and allow the collector greater flexibility to control how their collection is handled, appreciated and ultimately sold.

Without specific bequests, simple wills may only mention personal property as a catch-all for non-financial accounts or real estate belonging to the decedent. This means that collectibles are lumped in with clothing, furniture and various household items. An



By Alan D. Feller, Esq.

executor unfamiliar with the collection seeking general valuation assistance may not be educated enough to maximize the collection's value.

There is no guarantee that your heirs will share your enthusiasm for your collection or want to store it indefinitely. Valuation provides a price point, but the act of selling a collection can be time

consuming for a trustee or executor. For many collectors, disposing of an unwanted collection while still alive makes sense. You are the person who understands the market for your collectibles. Obtaining the best prices and allowing your heirs to use the windfall for their individual purposes is the best of both worlds.

Alan D. Feller, Esq. is managing partner of Sloan & Feller Attorneys at Law, located at 625 Route 6 in Mahopac. He can be reached at alandfeller@sloanandfeller.com.

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Films on Purpose to Screen Film on Mexican Migrants This Week

Films on Purpose in partnership with Neighbors Link and in conjunction with Pleasantville Community Television is hosting a free screening of “Llévate Mis Amores” (All of Me), a 2014 documentary that tells the remarkable story of Las Patronas, volunteers who prepare food that they toss to migrants passing through on

freight trains. The film is available for streaming at www.pctv76.org/video/2732/ now through this Thursday, Feb. 4 when a panel discussion will be held via Zoom at 7:30 p.m. A link to the Zoom discussion can be accessed through www.filmsonpurpose.org and on Films on Purpose’s Facebook page.

The panel will consist of filmmaker Arturo González Villaseñor, Neighbors Link Executive Director Carola Otero Bracco and someone who experienced this dangerous journey.

“Llévate Mis Amores” recounts how, since 1995, a group of women have cooked and packaged food and filled bottles of water that they hand or toss to migrants who are hanging off the train as it rushes through the village of La Patrona in Veracruz, Mexico. This incredible choreography, requiring strength, agility and timing is the work of a devoted group of volunteers, and the film captures the love that goes into every bag they fling toward the speeding trains.

Villaseñor describes how he originally came to this project while visiting Veracruz.

“I met the group of women called Las Patronas,” he recalled. “Gradually, I realized that I wanted to tell a story while I was there with them. Not only about their work and the topic of immigration, but about the dedication and love with which they carry out their work.”

While the film is graphic in its depiction of the condition of the migrants hanging onto speeding trains and of the poverty of the people in the village that has taken on this challenge, its message is one of hopefulness: when people sacrifice to help those in greater need than they, love flourishes and humanity benefits.

This screening is funded by a grant from the Westchester Community Foundation.

Films on Purpose also thanks fiscal sponsor, the Pleasantville Presbyterian Church, for its support.

Films on Purpose is a grassroots organization screening documentary films on important contemporary issues. Initially conceived and operated as community events held in-person to foster community engagement, screenings and panel discussions are currently online, keeping the conversations going, providing avenues for involvement and activism to interested audience members.

Neighbors Link’s mission is to strengthen the whole community through the healthy integration of immigrants. Its mission is achieved by filling a service gap for new immigrant families, offering education and empowerment programs, involving longer-term residents in volunteer opportunities and creating substantive partnerships with other local organizations. Their strategies to educate, empower and employ families include a worker center, English as a Second Language (ESL) education, legal services and advocacy, workforce development, parent education, early childhood programs and academic support for school-age children of immigrants.

Neighbors Link is headquartered in Mount Kisco and operates throughout Westchester County. For more information on locations or programs, call 914-666-3410 or visit www.neighborslink.org.

Yorktown Grange Making Preparations for Annual Fair; Seeks Volunteers

Happy New Year from the Yorktown Grange! The Grange is excited to begin planning this year’s event with cautious optimism. Currently scheduled for Sept. 10-12, the 97th annual Yorktown Grange Fair will be a big step in our return to normal and a chance for all of us to revel in the joys of community, together, once again. In the spirit of community, the Grange needs volunteers to organize and staff an event to remember. There are plenty of opportunities to help with all activities. Assistance will be needed for

the competitions including Lego, needlework, photography, baking, woodworking, horticulture, livestock, poultry and audience participation contests. There are also posts available to help the fair run smoothly; everything from the gate to the garbage is important. Westchester County’s only true country fair will be here before we know it and we can’t wait to spend the weekend with you. For more information or to lend a hand, visit yorktowngrangefair.org and fill out the volunteer form.

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THERE’S A WORD FOR IT

A vocabulary-building quiz By Edward Goralski

Word Warriors Word List. Last month, the Wayne State Word Warriors released their 12th annual list of “words especially worthy of retrieval from the linguistic cellar.” The annual list of 10 selections provides “a batch of words that make our language richer.” The quiz this week is composed of words from the 2021 list.

1. maleolent (adj.)

A) foul-smelling

B) productive of evil

C) misshapen

2. snollygoster (n.)

A) a tattletale

B) an unprincipled person

C) a head cold

3. footle (v.)

A) to add up

B) work carelessly

C) mess about

4. blatteroon (n.)

A) general dissatisfaction

B) a senseless boaster

C) a dazzling display

5. paralian (n.)

A) an editorial writer

B) similarity

C) a dweller by the sea

6. anagapesis (n.)

A) falling out of love

B) a mathematical proof

C) a plot twist

7. sophronize (v.)

A) to settle a score

B) alter secretly

C) imbue with self-control

8. dysania (n.)

A) an inability to leave bed

B) short of breath

C) loss of power

1. A. Foul-smelling; odorous

2. B. A shrewd, unprincipled person, especially a politician

3. C. To engage in fruitless activity; mess about

4. B. A senseless babbler or boaster

5. C. Someone who lives by the sea; a dweller by the sea

6. A. Loss of feelings for someone who was formerly loved; falling out of love

7. C. To imbue with moral principles or self-control

8. A. The state of finding it hard to get out of bed in the morning; an inability to leave bed

ANSWERS:

How to Make Remote-Learning More Rewarding and Fun



In the remote-learning environment of the 2020-21 academic year, certain types of classes have been deprioritized and the school day has lost some of the structure and sociability that in-person learning affords.

In the face of these challenges, how can you make remote-learning more rewarding and fun for your child? Consider the following tips and ideas.

- Encourage video study sessions. Socializing is an invaluable aspect of a traditional school day. Unfortunately, remote learning can be a lot more isolating. Have your child invite classmates to form a remote study

group. Doing so will help reinforce lessons, make learning the material more interactive and provide a much-needed opportunity for students to socialize.

- Reincorporate music education. Have music classes been canceled this year? Your child can still reap the benefits of a music education by playing an instrument. Learning to play an instrument is not only fun, it can help with science, math and cognitive learning. Studies have shown that children and adults with musical training have heightened skills in an area called executive functioning.

- Schedule midday movement. Physical

education may no longer be part of your child's curriculum, but you can still make time for movement. Schedule a screen-free block of time each day to replace gym class or recess. Encourage kids to move around, and if possible, get some fresh air. They'll return to their next class refreshed and focused.

- Master math at home. Math can be an especially tricky subject to master remotely. But new tools can help students grasp complex concepts. For example, ClassPad.net is a tool geared toward K-12 and beyond that exceeds the functionality of a calculator. Among its many features are a virtual protractor and compass, and a math-based text editor that provides a rich assortment of mathematical templates. This web-based calculator also gives users the ability to create folders,

organize and share work. These tools are free to educators and students and can eliminate the need for an expensive graphing calculator.

- Create digital masterpieces. Art is still an important subject for kids, even if it is not being offered this year. However, you don't need to install a full-fledged art studio in your home for your children to be able to create artwork in a range of mediums. Digital apps mimic the act of drawing, painting, illustration, collage and more, helping to build a foundation of skills and lay the groundwork for further exploration.

While some of the challenges of remote learning are inevitable, there are many ways families can make the experience more positive for students.

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Valentine's Day: A Time to Romance Over Food and Wine

Amore!

The coupling of good food and wine with the sensual is the aphrodisiac of literature and verse through the ages.

Warm things up a bit this Valentine's Day and make a whole weekend out of it. Restaurants in Westchester are gearing up to serve some of their most titillating specialties. You can also opt for takeout and delivery.

Here is an eclectic round-up of delectable dishes and dining venues for you and your loved one. Don't forget to reserve early.

Steak for Two at Macelleria

This new high-end Italian steakhouse opened last November and offers classic cuts of prime beef and chops along with a hearty helping of Italian-American specialties. The crew will take good care of you. Be seated in the handsomely renovated dining room and bar and lounge and peruse the menu over a glass of wine. There are diver scallops, steak tartare, slabs of Canadian bacon, spaghetti



By Morris Gut

carbonara, pappardelle with short rib ragu, zuppa di pesce and even a classic burger. Carnivores should consider the lamb chops, veal chop or New York strip steak.

Open seven days for lunch and dinner. Free parking. Reservations suggested.

Macelleria Italian Steakhouse, which also has a Pelham location, is located at 111 Bedford Rd. in Armonk. Info and reservations: 914-219-5728 or visit www.macelleriaarmonk.com.

Heart-Shaped Ravioli at La Bocca

Chef-proprietor Tony Spiritoso has been on the Westchester restaurant scene for 40 years. A meal here usually begins at his signature antipasti bar loaded with tempting cured imported meats, cheeses and appetizing house-made salads. A special three-course dinner with wine will be served on Valentine's Day.

Some consider La Bocca the most authentic Italian kitchen in the area. The wine selection is among the best in the county. The dining room contains artistic columns and serving pieces. There is a new wine room for private events. Open seven days.

La Bocca is located at 8 Church St. in White Plains. Info: 914-948-3281 or visit www.laboccaristorante.com.

'Love Shots' at Cantina

Cantina Taco & Tequila Bar will be serving complementary "love shots" to couples on Valentine's Day. While most patrons concentrate on the tasty tacos, try their crispy mango-jerk chicken wings and other Tex-Mex treats. Professional actor, proprietor and host John Solo has created a sprawling rustic multilevel interior dining room and long bar.

Tempting specialties include Modelo beer-battered fish tacos, garlic shrimp and the chicken-lime bowl, served with rice, peppers, black beans, sliced avocado and fresh corn. Open seven days.

Cantina is located at 166 Mamaroneck Ave. in White Plains. Info: 914-601-1697 or visit www.cantinany.com.



The chocolate processing area at Mast Chocolates in Mount Kisco is a great place to pick up some delicious treats for Valentine's Day.

Classics at Alex's Bar & Grille

Proprietor Alex Ahmetaj updated the menu at his restaurant and bar and lounge, offering big cuts of aged steaks and chops along with generous portions of northern Italian and continental fare. The handsome dining room is split into cozy sections with white tablecloths, colorful de Villeneuve impressionist paintings and warming sconces. Mediterranean clay-colored banquets and chairs complement wooden walls and plush beige curtained windows.

Check out the pan-fried calamari with hot cherry peppers, linguini alle vongole, a delicious fresh branzino-prepared tableside; classic veal parmigiana; grilled filet mignon; New York sirloin steak; a hefty rib-eye; or pork chops.

Alex's Bar & Grille is located at 577 N. Broadway in North White Plains. Open daily. Free parking. Info: 914-358-1444 or visit www.alexsbarendgrille.com.

Exotic Indian Flavors

Owner Mohammed Alam of Ambadi Kebab & Grill in White Plains will be serving his exotic Indian and halal



You can't go wrong with the half rack of ribs at Freebird Kitchen & Bar in White Plains.

specialties all day. Look for regional dishes such as the lasuni gobi (cauliflower florets tossed with bell peppers, onion, garlic and green herbs); chicken barbecue kabab (marinated boneless chicken cooked in the tandoor oven); and lamb bhuna (pieces of lamb cooked in a medium-spiced sauce of bell peppers, tomatoes and fresh Indian herbs). A glass of lassi will help wash it all down. Don't forget delicious house-made Indian breads to scoop up the sauces.

Ambadi is located at 141 E. Post Rd. in

continued on next page



Macelleria Italian Steakhouse in Armonk, with its classic cuts of prime beef and chops, is one of many places to choose from to take your valentine for a special outing.

Menu Movers & Shakers



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Valentine's Day: A Time to Romance Over Food and Wine

continued from previous page

White Plains. Info: 914-686-2014 or visit www.ambadiusa.com. Alam also operates Mughal Palace at 16 Broadway in Valhalla. Info: 914-997-6090 or www.mughalpalace.com.

Chocolates for Your Valentine

The Mast brothers recently moved Mast Chocolates from Brooklyn to Mount Kisco. They took over a long one-story building along South Moger Avenue, not far from the Metro-North station, and remodeled into a manufacturing facility, market and café featuring the Mast product line. The designers had given the entryway a carriage house look.

Once inside, our eyes were immediately drawn to a large window peeking into the chocolate processing area where big gleaming silver urns of liquid chocolate were in constant motion, whirling in circles. There are house roasted coffees and teas, and the chocolates and pastries were on display. Below the counter there is a lovely selection of cake and pie platters. The store manager is helpful with your questions. A fine Valentine's Day indulgence. Online orders or take-out only at this time.

Mast Market + Café is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Info: 914-244-8628 or visit www.mastchocolate.com.

Celebrating Fat Tuesday

Freebird Kitchen & Bar serves a Southern-themed menu that includes such specialties as pimiento cheese balls served with pecans and Ritz crackers; fried green tomatoes; shrimp and grits; and chicken fried steak. Look for a dramatic swarm of origami flying birds hanging from the ceiling.

Open Tuesday through Sunday for lunch, dinner and weekend brunch. Happy hour is back Tuesday through Thursday from 4 to 6 p.m. and Friday from 2 to 6 p.m.

Freebird Kitchen & Bar, 161 Mamaroneck Ave., White Plains. Info: 914-607-2476 or visit www.freebirdkitchenandbar.com.

Southern Table Kitchen & Bar offers a big dose of Southern hospitality along with the house specialties – fried green tomatoes, cheddar biscuits, grit bowls, Cajun-style seafood boils and chicken and waffles. There's good fried chicken, too. Open daily.

Southern Table Kitchen & Bar, 39 Marble Ave., Pleasantville. Info: 914-618-3355 or visit www.southern-table.com.

Holy Crab serves fresh Cajun-style seafood. It is a long sprawling space with a bustling bar and lounge. Check out such specialties as the lobster mac and cheese, po' boys, gumbo, snow crab legs and jambalaya. Open daily for lunch and dinner.

Holy Crab, 32 Mamaroneck Ave., White Plains. Info: 914-948-3888 or visit www.holycrabny.com.

You can also check out **Rye Roadhouse** on Fat Tuesday. The fun starts at 4 p.m.

with specialty cocktails, authentic New Orleans dishes and traditional King Cake. Beads and giveaways are also promised.

Rye Roadhouse, 12 High St., Rye. Info: 914-925-2668 or visit www.ryeroadhouse.com.

Savannah & Company, a family restaurant, serves up New Orleans classics such as shrimp and grits, bayou fish and chips and hearty jambalaya. Savannah & Company, 3901 Crompond Rd., Cortlandt Manor. Info: 914-736-1203 or visit www.savannahandco.com.

The King Crab features Louisiana-

Cajun- and Creole-influenced cooking. From po' boys to crawfish boils, they serve it up big.

The King Crab, 250 Main St. (2nd floor), White Plains. Info: 914-848-4038 or visit www.thekingcrab98.com.

Morris Gut is a restaurant marketing consultant and former restaurant trade magazine editor. He has been tracking and writing about the food and dining scene in greater Westchester for 30 years. He may be reached at 914-235-6591 or at gutreactions@optonline.net.



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Indian Point will close soon after operating for nearly 60 years. We don't have to wait another 60 years for it to be dismantled.

Learn about the smarter plan at **indianpointdecommissioning.com**

The illustration above is an artist's depiction of the Indian Point property after the completion of major decommissioning work.

Indian Point Energy Center



Guidelines for Drinking Responsibly During an Ongoing Pandemic



By Nick Antonaccio

As this devastating virus crisis continues to take its deadly toll on the nation's health, it is becoming increasingly difficult for many to maintain their diligence in interacting with others.

To alleviate the angst and tension of following the current pandemic protocols, a number of individuals have increased their alcoholic intake. Whether to assuage their frustrations or to seek psychological shelter in a bottle of wine, beer or spirits, there is a growing risk of the deleterious health effects associated with excessive consumption.

Wine consumption is one of the more pleasurable components of a healthy diet and a healthful lifestyle. While the Mediterranean diet has proven that drinking wine can enhance our health, we are also mindful of the negative effects of consuming alcohol.

In the interest of helping cope with the many temptations for excessive wine consumption, I offer you my personal guidelines for drinking responsibly and in moderation.

The key approach is moderation. However,

the effects of wine differ for each of us; therefore, moderation is defined differently for each of us. We must know what our individual limits are and incorporate them into each wine experience we encounter. Factors that contribute to our personal limits of alcohol consumption include age, gender, physical condition (health, fitness, weight), ethnicity, medication and family history of alcohol consumption.

But there are general guidelines that you can follow. As you might expect, the U.S. government has provided such guidelines.

In its "Dietary Guidelines for Americans," moderation is defined as no more than one glass of alcohol for women and two glasses for men in a single day. (a glass of wine is defined as five ounces.)

Of course, it is entirely possible to appreciate life without wine, but in my opinion, wine is more than an alcoholic beverage. It is the common gateway to interactive socializing. In moderation, it creates an environment that slows down our otherwise hectic lifestyle, providing a more mellow state of mind and, in the process, reducing stress levels and perhaps relaxing our latent inhibitions. Not to mention enhancing our appreciation of food.

Here are additional guidelines.

1. Don't start off with a high-alcohol cocktail (or multiple glasses of wine) on an empty

stomach. (I've learned my lesson.)

2. Consuming food with wine is vital. Food absorbs alcohol; without food, alcohol enters your bloodstream faster and stays longer.

3. Be sure your pours are moderate. If I'm sitting down to a meal or binge-watching videos during the pandemic, I try to limit each pour to three ounces (it takes practice). My rationale:

I was raised as a child to finish whatever is placed in front of me – small pours equal small cumulative quantities.

4. Sip your wine. Pacing your drinking permits your body to self-regulate absorption without overly stressing your digestive process. A side benefit: your glass has wine in it for a longer period of time; pre-pandemic hosts – and servers, bartenders and friends – hate to see you with an empty glass.

5. Eat protein whenever possible. Cheeses and meats will absorb alcohol more readily than vegetables and pasta; more absorption equates to slower release of alcohol into your bloodstream.

6. Be sure to drink a full glass (eight ounces) of water for every glass of wine you consume. Alcohol dehydrates your body while water hydrates. The more dehydrated you are, the faster alcohol is absorbed into your bloodstream

and goes to your brain (where your "drunk" receptors reside).

7. Stop drinking alcohol at least one hour before the end of the function you are attending (whether on Zoom or within a bubble). Switch to coffee or water. This gives your body ample time to process – partially mitigate – the effects of the alcohol you've consumed.

Wine has been enjoyed for centuries by many cultures, from the Greeks and Romans to modern Western Europeans to the American public. By adhering to a few simple guidelines, it can enhance our health, our food

and our lifestyle. Using a common-sense approach to wine drinking is a responsible way to continually enhance and enjoy the pleasures of life, even a stifling pandemic lifestyle.

Nick Antonaccio is a 45-year Pleasantville resident. For over 25 years, he has conducted numerous wine tastings and lectures. Nick is a member and Program Director of the Wine Media Guild of wine journalists. He also offers personalized wine tastings and wine travel services. Nick's credo: continuous experimenting results in instinctive behavior. You can reach him at nantonaccio@theexaminernews.com or on Twitter @sharingwine.



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