Tensions Rise at Yorktown Board of Ed Meeting Over DEI Initiative

By Samuel Rowland

Yorktown school community members rushed to the defense of a high school guidance counselor last week who was targeted by a small group of critics because he apparently spoke at Black Lives Matters events last year.

Last Monday’s Yorktown Board of Education meeting was to feature discussion on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiative, which detractors have referred to as critical race theory in disguise. The video showed her talking to a Yorktown School District parent complaining about Daks Armstrong, a Yorktown High School guidance counselor who spoke at multiple Westchester Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests last June. She accused Armstrong of using his position to indoctrinate students and parents.

“Daks-boy .” Most had attended the meeting in her Facebook video, called Armstrong a boy . I’m offended by that. I’m a grown man. He is a grown man.”

In all, 37 of the 41 people who spoke at the meeting supported Armstrong and the district’s DEI initiative. The initiative could help children from minority groups feel more welcome and represented, most of the speakers agreed. Adjusting the curriculum to include more discussion of the history of racism and previously untaught minority contributions to world history would enhance the learning experience.

Price and others, including Ariana Okoth, vice president of the Peekskill Youth NAACP chapter, asked district officials for greater faculty diversity to replace the 35 retired teachers and staff that retired last year.

Yorktown Officials Opt Out of Allowing Pot Dispensaries

By Rick Pezzullo

The Yorktown Town Board voted unanimously last week to opt out of state regulations that permit marijuana dispensaries. “It would be irresponsible for us to allow for a business when we don’t know what the rules of engagement are,” said Supervisor Matt Slater. “We still have questions on enforcement. We still have questions on breathalyzers.”

The New York State Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act became law in March and made marijuana consumption legal. The act also allowed municipalities to decide whether they will permit dispensaries in their jurisdictions. “I cannot in good conscious vote yes for this,” said Councilman Tom Diana, a retired police officer, who cited the dangers of driving under the influence of marijuana, which remains illegal.

The new marijuana law allows adults 21 and over to consume marijuana products legally. Yorktown cannot opt out of the provisions that make adult use of marijuana legal. “Look at the problems we have with the illegal drugs,” said Councilman Ed Lachterman. “What does this say to our children?”

Several Town Board members cited concerns that marijuana is a gateway to substance abuse. “Our children are the biggest accomplishment of our life’s work,” said Councilman Vishnu Patel. “You don’t want any child to die or get into the habit.”

Cannabis stores have already opened in Westchester County, including in White Plains. Town Board members said Yorktown’s future leaders could reconsider dispensaries once there is more clarity on regulations and enforcement. “I would be going against everything that I told my two kids,” said Councilwoman Alice Roker. “My feeling is once we have a real law with real regulations, the next Town Board can consider what it wants to do.”
Con Edison Work Sparks Outrage from Cortlandt Officials

By Rick Pezzullo

Cortlandt officials have notified Con Edison of their dissatisfaction with the condition several town roads were left following the installation of an underground gas line.

Supervisor Linda Puglisi sent a letter directly to Con Edison President Timothy Cawley and Chairman John McAvoy expressing her outrage on behalf of residents who have traveled on Croton Avenue, Locust Avenue and Watch Hill Road.

“This construction has left the roads where your contractors were putting in these lines broken up and with heavy raised metal plates covering the work. It has been weeks and no return to fix this disaster,” Puglisi wrote. “It is unacceptable to us as representatives of our Cortlandt residents and we have heard from many of them who have stated same.”

Deputy Supervisor Dr. Richard Becker also relayed his frustration with Con Edison, maintaining the utility has failed to meet its obligation to the community.

“Why is ConEd ignoring us? Easy answer: They don’t care, and it shows,” Becker stated. “Con Edison is responsible for restoring the roads to “as found” condition. These roads are owned by the town, and we allow ConEd to perform their repairs with the understanding they will meet their responsibilities. Normally, ConEd repairs only one side of a two-lane road, repaving only that side that was disturbed. This is unsatisfactory, as it leaves an unbalanced surface, and necessitates that the town repave the other side, at our expense, to correct for this.”

Puglisi noted Cortlandt spends an average of $2 million annually to maintain and resurface roads. She and Becker are demanding Con Edison repave the roads it disturbed or pay half the cost of the town repaving them.

Allan Drury, a spokesman for Con Edison, stated Friday Con Edison has reached out to town officials to try to resolve the situation.

“We have made only temporary restoration to roadways. We never intended to leave roads permanently in poor condition after completion of our work gas work, which is intended to keep our system safe and reliable,” Drury said. “We are in touch with the town about an agreement that will result in permanent repairs to the roads.”

Recycled Paws Rescue Owner Charged with Stealing Over $17K

By Rick Pezzullo

The owner and founder of a non-profit dog rescue organization was charged July 13 with grand larceny for allegedly stealing more than $17,000 from the Mohegan Lake-based group.

Lisa Marie Birdsall, 55, was arrested by the SPCA Westchester Humane Law Enforcement Unit following a joint investigation with The Economic Crimes Bureau of the Westchester District Attorney’s Office.

She is accused of stealing more than $17,000 from Recycled Paws Rescue by taking money intended for the organization and using it for her own personal purposes. As part of the probe, it was revealed Birdsall stole more than $3,000 from January 5, 2020 to December 31, 2020 without permission or authority to do so.

Birdsall’s next court appearance is scheduled for August 3 in Yorktown Heights.

According to its website, Recycled Paws Rescue, Inc., which was started in 2017, rescues dogs “from all over the world and all walks of life. From orphaned puppies, to abandoned pregnant mothers, to deserted senior dogs, and more.”

“Our goal is to provide every rescued pup with a loving forever home. We have amazing volunteers for all surrounding counties who help us provide temporary or sometimes permanent homes to our rescued pups! We save all breeds it doesn’t matter if they are big or small, Chihuahua to fluffy Newfoundland’s and everything in between! Our dogs come in to the rescue for many different reasons. Many were abandoned at high kill shelters, some were turned in by owners who could not properly care for them, and others we rescued from adds online such as craigslist. Regardless of their past, our mission is to provide a happy home where each dog is a well-loved member of the family!”

Tensions Rise at Yorktown Board of Ed Meeting Over DEI Initiative

continued from page 1

The four people who opposed the DEI initiative believed that the district was trying to have students agree with the ideology behind critical race theory against their parents’ wishes.

“DEI and CRT is trying to demonize the white race and create a stereotype that all white people are racist and that all minorities are incapable of succeeding,” Yorktown High School alumnus and college student Richard Giannasca said.

Common objections among the DEI opponents were the alleged shaming of white students for their race, an overemphasis on differences instead of common humanity and that any acknowledgement of experiences that differ by race is racist. Schools should also avoid injecting values that may conflict with the values their parents want to instill, they said.

The district’s new Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ronald Hattar addressed the controversy that had been expressed in numerous phone calls and e-mails prior to the meeting. Hattar rejected concerns that the new Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education framework from the state Department of Education (SED) would institute a curriculum involving “anti-police rhetoric” and “anti-American perspective.” He called attention to district statements denying it is teaching critical race theory in school.

Hattar explained that teachers are banned from expressing political opinions in the classroom, but the district cannot enforce a ban on outside political speech.

Among the most memorable speakers of the evening were Walter Masterson and Maximillian Clark, two political satirists from New York City who used their time to lampoon DEI opponents. Masterson and Clark run a variety of social media accounts across several platforms under Masterson’s name in which they share videos from controversial right-wing events and interview attendees while appearing as supporters.

Masterson’s initial plan had been to do his interview routine with what he expected to be a crowd of anti-DEI protestors outside the school, but that didn’t materialize.
COVID-19 Infections Continue to Rise Throughout the Area

By Martin Wilbur

COVID-19 infections throughout Westchester continue to rise, with the number of active cases having more than doubled in the past three weeks as numbers of newly vaccinated people have slowed to a trickle.

By Sunday, Westchester had seen an increase to 460 active cases, up from 295 last week and 185 from three weeks ago. On June 18, that number stood at 257.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer said it is likely that the Delta variant has played a role in increasing the caseload among the unvaccinated locally.

“So our concern is that the unvaccinated portion of our population is subject to a more highly contagious variant of the disease, and that’s why we’re seeing jump ups in the number of positive infections,” Latimer said during his weekly briefing on Monday.

In mid-June, the number of daily infections dropped to a low in the single digits, but over the weekend there were 51 new infections on Saturday and 55 more on Sunday, Latimer said. Westchester had an infection rate of 1.2 percent through Sunday on the seven-day rolling average.

In Putnam County, there were four positive results from 213 tests.

The encouraging news, at least for now, is that the County Center will remain open for vaccinations seven days a week.

The Westchester vaccination rate has nearly stalled at 78.3 percent of adults 18 and over, who have received at least one dose. On June 27, that number stood at 76.6 percent.

On Sunday at the County Center in White Plains, there were only 68 vaccine doses administered, down from a high of 2,200.

“It tells you we have reached almost exactly the point where almost everyone who is eligible for a vaccination and wants a vaccination has received a vaccination and these people who have not yet been vaccinated, the 21 percent or so, are those who apparently choose not to be vaccinated,” Latimer said.

The County Center will remain open for vaccinations seven days a week but Sunday hours will be reduced to 8 a.m. to noon. The hours for the remainder of the week continue to be from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

The encouraging news, at least for now, is that the recent sharp uptick in cases has not led to that level of care in mid-June, Latimer said. There has been only one COVID death in the past three weeks and four in the past month, he said.

Statewide, the positivity rate was 1.2 percent on July 18 and 1.3 percent on the seven-day average.

Latimer said he has no plans to make mask wearing mandatory and doesn’t see a need to take other measures at this time.

However, county officials are trying to focus on communities with low vaccination rates, he said. There are some zip codes in lower Westchester where the vaccination rate is just above or slightly under 50 percent, according to the county’s vaccination tracker.

“We are trying to customize strategies around specific municipalities that have low turnout numbers,” Latimer said. “We have a number of communities with very high turnout numbers, well above 80 percent. So we’re targeting those communities that generally are more urbanized that have a high percentage of people who are poor, and at the other end of the spectrum, we have people who are in a somewhat more rural setting and are also seemingly less willing to get vaccinated.”

Latimer said for anyone who had doubts about the vaccine, there is a clear correlation between the rise of vaccinations and the drop in the number of infections.

“Someone should really give me a strong reason why you shouldn’t be vaccinated because I haven’t heard it yet,” he said.

“This vaccination is the difference between being sick and not, living or dying in some cases, and (there are) people all around the world who would gladly take the unused vaccines we still have in our possession.”

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

COVID-19 infections throughout Westchester continue to rise, with the number of active cases having more than doubled in the past three weeks as numbers of newly vaccinated people have slowed to a trickle.
Armonk Keeps an Eye Out for Repeated Sightings of Black Bear

By Martin Wilbur

It’s hasn’t gotten to the point where it’s unbearable, but officials in portions of Connecticut and New York have alerted local residents to take precautions because of a black bear that has made himself a frequent visitor.

The animal, Bear 211, has been seen mostly in communities in Connecticut, but over the past few weeks there have been multiple sightings in Armonk. It has pink tags on its ears and was given the number 211 by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection earlier this year. Bear 211 even has its own Facebook page.

“It’s pretty comfortable around town, so if you do see this bear, please don’t attempt to feed it or become friendly with it,” said North Castle Councilman Barry Reiter.

In the town’s police blotter, there have also been multiple sightings, of a black bear on the afternoon of June 30 on Meadow Lark Lane. The next day, another sighting occurred on Round Hill Road, where it was reported that the bear had tags on its ears, and a third sighting from a caller on Long Pond Road. In that location, the bear was seen swimming across the pond before entering the woods on Pond Lane.

Budd Veverka, a wildlife biologist and director of land management at the Mianus River Gorge in neighboring Bedford, said if anyone encounters a bear along a trail, for example, they should avoid turning their back to run away. Instead, it’s recommended to back yourself away slowly and appear as large as possible.

“Most people aren’t paying attention because they’re on their phone or they have their earplugs in or they’re running,” Veverka said. “If you get close to the bear, if you encounter it, you start to back away from it but you don’t want to turn your back. Let the bear know you’re there. Make yourself look big and let the bear know you’re there.”

There was one report to town officials that Bear 211 went into a town resident’s swimming pool. On its Facebook page, it also went for a swim in a backyard pool in Weston, Conn.

If a bear comes into your yard or onto your property more than once, chances are there is a food source, Veverka said. Bears return where they know where they can have repeated access to food, including bird feeders.

“If a bear comes into your area, if it’s in the yard at a feeder or something like that, you don’t want to just let it do what it’s doing,” Veverka said. “It’s basically a kid in a cookie jar.”

Banging metal, such as pots or pans, should also be enough to signal to the bear he’s not welcome in the area.

According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), the leading cause of bear complaints in the state is getting into garbage or bird feeders. Leaving pet food outside or a messy grill can also attract bears.

Spring and summer are the most likely time of year to see or encounter them, the DEC materials stated.

For more information about black bears in New York State, visit https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6960.html.
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Special Use Permit for Farm Approved at Former Swim and Tennis Club

By Martin Wilbur

The New Castle Town Board approved a special use permit last week that will allow for the operation of a farm on the grounds of the old Twin Oaks Swim and Tennis Club.

Rockledge Farm would be a regenerative organic operation on the 38-acre parcel at 348 Whippoorwill Rd. in Chappaqua, said Madeline Wachtel, the farm manager and daughter of property owner William Wachtel. The farm would include two llamas, eight goats, eight sheep, a coop with 126 chickens and specialty flowers would be grown, she said.

The farm will be environmentally mindful, with minimal till, no use of tractors and rotational grazing, which would see the animals moved from one portion of their pen to another to allow for rest and regeneration of the land that is used.

Aside from Wachtel, there would be just two other people helping with the farming most of the time.

“Just in terms of scale, I think it’s important to note it’s a pretty small operation,” she said.

William Wachtel said during a New Castle Town Board meeting last month that he bought the property in late 2013 for $2 million from Twin Oaks, which was having financial difficulties at the time. Under the agreement between Wachtel and Twin Oaks, the organization was to pay the $400,000 it owed to a bond and use the remaining $1.6 million to improve the grounds.

It was Wachtel’s hope that after improvements were made, the Chappaqua School District would accept the property so students wouldn’t have to travel out of town for swim and tennis competitions and that there would be a place for children enrolled in the town’s summer camp to go swimming. There is no municipal Har-Tru tennis court or municipal pool in the town.

However, the school district never took over the property. Wachtel said they were left owning a parcel that they had no use for. It was then Madeline Wachtel’s suggestion to turn the land into a farm, her father said. A graduate of the Cornell School of Hospitality, she has been active in environmental protection efforts.

“I can assure you that if we are successful part of the ultimate success is that it will be a laboratory and a learning experience and an opportunity for kids to have farming literally right down the block,” William Wachtell said.

During a previous Planning Board meeting, its members had expressed concern about runoff containing animal manure since there is a slight downhill slope on the property.

However, Madeline Wachtell said the waste from the animals is dry manure, has no odor and would be used to help fertilize the planting beds.

Another concern had been from the Chappaqua Fire Department, which recommended a secondary road to be built at the site in case of a fire. There are a few small structures on the property, but with a limited number of people that would go into and out of the property, the Town Board determined that a second road wasn’t necessary.

Acting Supervisor Jeremy Saland said last week that the farm would be a major improvement to the property.

“I think it’s a great idea and it’ll be a great thing for the community and it would be wonderful to see it grow, this farm, and you folks have put your sweat into it to make it a reality,” Saland said.
State Supreme Court Dismisses Legion of Christ Suit Against Mount Pleasant

By Martin Wilbur

A civil rights lawsuit brought by the Legion of Christ against the Town of Mount Pleasant accusing the municipality of religious discrimination has been dismissed in state Supreme Court.

The Legion of Christ sued the town after it determined that the Legion’s undeveloped, 161-acre property in Thornwood was taxable. The Roman Catholic order, based in Cheshire, Conn., had sought a tax-exempt status as a religious group.

The July 6 decision followed a court ruling last year that the property was fully taxable.

“I’m pleased that the Supreme Court continues to uphold the town assessor’s determination of the taxability of the Legion’s 161-acre vacant property,” Mount Pleasant Supervisor Carl Fulgenzi said in a statement. “This was never about religious discrimination. The two decisions are not connected.

Eventually, Baker Residential, which had received town approvals to build the project, decided against moving forward.

Earlier this year, Fulgenzi said that Chappaqua-based Wilder Balter Partners has expressed interest in the property to possibly build senior housing.

Feeding Time

Hudson Valley Beta Kitchen held a grand opening last Saturday of its first kitchen at 163 Grand St. in Croton-on-Hudson. The innovative commissary kitchen will allow artisanal food producers, caterers and food truck operators to produce food products in a commercially certified space in accordance with health regulations so that they can then be sold legally in off-site locations.

The Legion of Christ bought the former conference center in 1996. It consisted of two parcels, a 164-acre unimproved area and a contiguous 97-acre parcel that contained the conference center. In 1997, the Legion applied to the Town for tax-exempt status for the unimproved parcel, which the Town denied, beginning years of litigation.

The Legion of Christ no longer owns the former conference center. In 2017, EF Academy opened a private boarding high school on the property. The Legion still owns the unimproved parcel and efforts to sell the property to a developer have failed so far.

This isn’t the first time the Legion has landed in court related to its Mount Pleasant properties. Baker Residential was in contract to buy the unimproved parcel and build about 73 homes as part of a cluster subdivision, but went to state Supreme Court after the Legion failed to convey the property.

The Legion applied to the Town for tax-exempt status for the unimproved parcel, which contained the conference center. In 1997, the Town denied, beginning years of litigation.

HDI submitted on Dec. 19, 2019, its PSDAR, which had been contingent upon the transfer of the plant licenses to HDI. The IPEC license transfer transaction closed on May 28, 2021. Accordingly, the NRC is holding a public meeting in the vicinity of the IPEC to discuss the Post-Shutdown Decommissioning Activities Report, or PSDAR, for the Indian Point Nuclear Generating, Unit Nos. 1, 2, and 3 (IPEC). The PSDAR, which includes the site-specific decommissioning cost estimate (DCE), provides an overview of Holtec Decommissioning International, LLC’s (HDI) planned activities, schedule, projected costs, and environmental impacts for the decommissioning of the IPEC. The public will have an opportunity to offer comments at the meeting.

The meeting will be held from 6-9 p.m. at the Sleepy Hollow Hotel and Conference Center (previously the DoubleTree Hotel), located at 455 South Broadway, in Tarrytown, NY. IPEC consists of three pressurized-water reactors located in Buchanan, NY, in Westchester County, all of which are permanently shut down.

The deadline for submitting comments on the report is Oct. 22, 2021.
Thomas Creamer

Thomas Chase Creamer of Somers passed away peacefully on July 4 after a courageous battle with cancer. He was 72.

Tom was born on Dec. 20, 1948, in New York City to Janet Oman Watters and Thomas Fishback Creamer, both deceased. His brother, George Creamer, and sister Deane Close predeceased him. He is survived by his wife, Patricia Creamer, and his sisters, Constance Sheppard (Les), Elizabeth Vinton (John), Jane Plank (Jeff) and Anne Hogeland (Andy). Tom leaves behind a daughter, Christine E. Creamer, and sons Thomas C. Creamer, Robert M. Creamer and Michael W. Creamer.

Tom was raised in Chappaqua and spent many happy days at his family home in North Pomfret, Vt. He attended Horace Greeley High School and graduated cum laude from New England College. He was employed by the MTA right after college and five years later moved on to work for Chase Manhattan Bank for 13 years in various financial roles. After leaving the bank, Tom pursued a successful 20-year career in financial services as an agent with MassMutual, obtaining numerous financial designations. His clients became friends over the years.

Tom was considered a larger-than-life person with his happy smile and an infectious laugh. Tom will be missed by his many friends and family. He loved to cook, loved to sing loudly along with all types of music and loved sport cars. He was an avid Yankee fan all of his life and will be remembered for his “dancing” on the jumbotron at the old and new stadiums.

Private cremation services were held earlier. Family and friends are invited to attend a Memorial Mass to be celebrated at St. Joseph’s Church in Somers on Saturday, Aug. 21 at 11:30 a.m.

Obituary

Croton-on-Hudson Police Department

July 5: Patrol responded to an area on Brook Street at 12:30 a.m. on a report of fireworks being set off on the street. The resident was advised and ceased the fireworks display for the night.

July 6: Report of a bear sighting at an area along Route 129 at 12:45 p.m. The area was canvassed with negative results.

July 9: Patrol located spray-painted graffiti to a commercial area on Elliot Way at 10:18 a.m. A report will be filed.

July 9: Patrol received a report from a village resident at 4:50 p.m. who reported fraudulent activity had occurred on accounts between herself and her husband for about the past four to eight weeks. The resident informed police that the purchases made were more than $9,000. The resident advised their respective banks. A report will be filed.

July 11: The department’s marine patrol was notified at 2:14 p.m. of a distressed kayaker on the Croton River. The individual was located and given a courtesy transport along with his kayak to the end of the Croton River where a friend was going to pick him up. The party refused medical attention.

North Castle Police Department

July 10: A female caller reported at 6:55 p.m. that a male party on Windmill Place was stung by bees multiple times and his hands and feet are swelling. Police notified 60 Control for EMS dispatch. The responding officer reported that the party was taken to Northern Westchester Hospital.

July 10: A caller reported at 9:35 p.m. that an injured fox was in the roadway on southbound Route 22 near the firehouse. The responding officers reported that the animal is deceased and on the side of the road. The state Department of Transportation was advised.

July 11: An officer reported that he is out with a disabled vehicle on North Broadway at 10:09 p.m. The car owner was originally having a private tow company come out due to the fact the car was a Lamborghini; however, the tow company couldn’t respond. The vehicle owner requested we assist him with having a tow company respond. Little Pete’s Towing ultimately removed the vehicle from the roadway.

July 13: At about 10:35 a.m., a man entered a bank on Main Street impersonating a Brinks armored security employee and attempted to pick up money deposit bags. The responding officers reported that depositions were secured. A hotline message was broadcast to all units.

July 13: A Nichols Road resident reported at 4:38 p.m. that a vehicle is parked in her neighbor’s driveway and someone is breaking into her residence. The caller stated that multiple items are missing including a set of car keys and a tank top-style shirt. She believes that the party that has taken these items was in her residence all night. Officers responded and reported speaking with the complainant.

Yorktown Police Department

July 16: Lee Madoian, 51, of Yorktown, was charged at 4:14 p.m. with assault, harassment and criminal contempt stemming from a domestic incident on Feb. 28. It is alleged he violated a temporary order of protection obtained by his sister. He allegedly harassed his sister and assaulted his father.

July 16: Juan Morales, 35, of the Bronx, was charged at 8:40 p.m. with speeding and driving with a suspended license after being stopped on Route 6 for traveling at 82 miles per hour in a posted 45-mile-per-hour zone.

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State Sen. Peter Harckham (D-Lewisboro), chair of the Senate Committee on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, called on President Joe Biden and Gov. Andrew Cuomo last week to declare a state of emergency in the United States and New York, respectively, to fight the overdose epidemic.

"Over four times the number of people died last year from drug overdoses than from gun violence in the United States, which is why I am calling on President Biden and Gov. Cuomo to each declare a state of emergency to address this public health crisis," Harckham said.

"We need to marshal every public health resource possible to stop the frightening increase in overdose deaths occurring every day in our cities and villages," Harckham added. "Federal and state officials have to act with utmost urgency and work together to save the lives of our friends and neighbors here in New York and around the country."

Harckham’s request follows the release last week of a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that more than 93,000 people in the U.S. – an average of about 250 people a day – died of a drug overdose in 2020. In comparison, 19,380 lives were lost last year to gun violence, according to The Washington Post.

Last week, Cuomo declared a state of emergency regarding gun violence and committed over $135 million to counter the alarming rise of shootings around the state. Also, President Biden recently convened a meeting of top law enforcement officials and others to discuss a plan to reduce gun violence.

"Where is our moral outrage regarding the latest overdose statistics and the lack of insistence that the overdose crisis be met with a massive response?"

Property tax levy growth will be capped at 2 percent in 2022 for local governments that operate on a calendar-based fiscal year, state Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli announced last week. This figure affects tax cap calculations for all counties, towns and fire districts, as well as 44 cities and 13 villages. It is the third time in the last four years for local governments to be allowed the full 2 percent under the tax cap.

"As the economy recovers from the pandemic, local governments have seen some revenues rebound and have benefited from one-time federal financial assistance," DiNapoli said. "At the same time, the risk of inflationary cost increases and the need for investments that will stimulate economic growth and fund essential services may lead to challenging budget decisions ahead."

The tax cap, which first applied to local governments and school districts in 2012, limits annual tax levy increases to the lesser of the rate of inflation or 2 percent, with certain exceptions, including a provision that allows municipalities to override the tax cap.

The 2 percent cap for the 2022 fiscal year is the third time since 2019 that municipalities with a calendar year fiscal year (Jan. 1-Dec. 31) had their levy growth capped at that amount. In 2021, the allowable levy growth was 1.56 percent.

"It is as if these lost lives simply do not matter, and the specter of future lives lost matters even less," he said. "When it comes to the overdose crisis, we are truly in a state of emergency. It’s now time to officially declare it so and begin to provide all the resources possible to save lives."

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Patrick J. McNulty Sr. • Patrick T. McNulty • Patrick J. McNulty Jr. • Daniel J. McNulty
Letters to the Editor

Community Risk Management a Must After Surfside Building Catastrophe

The Surfside, Fla., building collapse has offered up for view several areas of responsibility: the condo board, a consulting engineer’s report, various city officials, plus someone identified as a chief building official who in November 2018 apparently stated that, irrespective of any engineer’s report, the building appeared to be “in very good shape.”

I am not in any position to comment on who is or is not at fault here. And actually, that is my point: fault will be found and accountability brought to bear, but something else – not someone else – needs the light of day. I’m pointing to the system of accountability.

There are real benefits to using a community risk management process, not as offered by some paid consultant, but as a part of local government. (Dear God, not another meeting!) A risk management meeting that brings together representatives of local government departments who select an issue of concern – for example, pedestrian safety to identify the specific parts of concern (risk factors) such as vehicle speed, intersection design and signage – prioritize those factors in terms of potential impact and then propose changes that offer the greatest gain for the least loss, which can also include financial costs.

The goal is to fix a problem by identifying and prioritizing the things that cause the greatest amount of harm, and starting with the highest priority risks, considering changes to mitigate or eliminate them. And to do this within a group process so no one is left out and no one single voice dominates, providing a more level playing field. That’s risk management; it’s simple, costs little if any money and can result in savings of, if not money, perhaps pain.

One can only wonder what such a group meeting might have been like while reviewing the problems of the Chapplain Towers – had the meeting consisted of city trustees, consulting engineers, condo board representation, fire, police and other government representatives. Identifying and prioritizing the risk factors could have more clearly pointed to the problems that could (and did) bring about a crisis, and solutions that, though perhaps unpopular, would at least be supportable as well as deemed necessary.

Oh, to have been that “fly on the wall” for such a meeting. Local community governments can do more than be a fly. And now the question: Woulda, coulda, shoulda such a meeting prevented such a catastrophe? Would it have? Possibly. Could it have? Yes. Should it have? Who knows?

The negative side of reducing risk can be cost, of which it appears there was plenty to add up. The cost of any remediation for any issue is a factor that should be considered – as measured against the severity and likelihood of harm being caused. Another variable is assessing severity and likelihood of harm; at some point, deliberations often call for at least somewhat of a subjective opinion, expert or not.

One outcome is certain: a risk management meeting would have helped make clear exactly what the risks were, how significant each was and what it could take to remedy the most significant. Another is that risk-managed decisions that are made occur within group discussions, rather than independently, one entity to another, like the telephone game.

Alan Pakaln
Croton-on-Hudson

Subdivision at Pocantico Lake Park Would Degrade a County Jewel

One of Westchester County’s great treasures, Pocantico Lake Park, is a 164-acre park that sits adjacent to the Rockefeller Preserve in the Town of Mount Pleasant. The county park includes the 27-acre lake and surrounding wetlands in addition to trails and wooded grounds.

Mount Pleasant elected officials were instrumental in establishing the park when they recognized its value to our quality of life in the 1980s. Local officials worked with county and state officials to purchase the lake and park at taxpayer expense.

Millions of taxpayer dollars have transformed this land into a pristine wildlife preserve that draws residents from all over the county. Fisherman cast their lines in all four seasons, families enjoy the trails and runners dash through the woods. The birds and wildlife became increasingly important as more residents sought out the trails during the pandemic.

A proposed new 31-home subdivision along the lake that is currently before the Mount Pleasant Planning Board threatens the beauty of the park, the quality of the water and the wildlife and its habitats. Pocantico Lake is part of the Pocantico River, a major nine-mile tributary of the Hudson River, and runoff from this development would pollute the lake and river.

The developers propose removing more than one million square feet of forest. They will turn a pristine lake and unparallelled view into a visible McMansion development, ruining the beauty and recreational enjoyment of the park.

The area was designated a Critical Environmental Area in 1990, and is home to wetlands, wildlife habitat and an array of birdlife that awes daily visitors: bald eagles, osprey and blue herons, to name a few. We cannot remove their habitats.

We have no grievance with the developer, but we believe this is the wrong development in the wrong place for residents of Mount Pleasant and Westchester County.

We ask the following of the Mount Pleasant Town Board and Planning Board:

1. Require a full state Environmental Quality Review (SEQR), currently under consideration, before taking any further action on this project.

2. Do not approve variances allowing overdevelopment on this environmentally sensitive site.

We ask the Westchester County Board of Legislators to enter into good-faith negotiations with the developer to purchase the land and completely protect the lake from further development and approve a countywide watershed protection act to prevent further degradation of Westchester’s treasured and valuable watersheds.

Trusted David Vinjamuri
Village of Pleasantville
Democratic candidate for Westchester County Legislator, 3rd Legislative District

Joe Bonanno
Candidate for supervisor, Town of Mount Pleasant

Francesca Hagedus-McHale
Former councilwoman and candidate, Mount Pleasant Town Board

U.S. Should Provide Temporary Extensions of Expired Passports

The United States Passport Agency is stressing out many American citizens. Vacations, wedding plans outside the country, business trips are all being impacted negatively because the Passport Agency does not have the staff or resources to timely process expedited passport applications.

American travelers who do not have valid U.S. passports can’t travel overseas this summer because of the significant backlog of more than a million applications. The wait time for expedited applications are 12 weeks. That means that anyone who applies for an expedited passport today won’t get their passport till sometime this fall – messing up the summer.

A suggestion: Since there’s such a backlog of renewals and not enough staff, why doesn’t the agency issue a temporary extension of expired passports? If my proposal is enacted, citizens who have expired passports can get an extension of expired passports? If my proposal is enacted, citizens who have expired passports can get an extension of expired passports. This suggestion would enable Americans who do not have valid passports to travel overseas this summer.

Trusted Paul Feiner
Greenburgh Town Supervisor
Fixing Old Appliances Can Help Limit Ozone Layer Damage

By Miriam Gold

A few of the culprits helping to harm the environment are sitting inside our homes and yet many are unaware of it.

Old air conditioners and refrigerators are harming the ozone layer, which we depend on for our lives.

Ozone depletion is the thinning of Earth’s protective blanket that shields all life from UV radiation, which is responsible for causing many illnesses and even death in humans and animals.

Ozone depletion is often confused with global warming. It is mainly caused by chlorofluorocarbons, also known as CFCs. CFCs are composed of carbon, chlorine and fluorine. They are used to manufacture aerosols, solvents and refrigerator and air conditioner fluids.

Since the 1930s, CFCs have been released into the upper atmosphere and broken up by ultraviolet radiation. As CFC molecules break apart, they release chlorine and bromine. These gases then destroy ozone in the stratosphere.

Since these chemicals are destroying ozone faster than the atmosphere can create it, ozone levels have dramatically decreased over the years.

The ozone layer has been depleted about 5 to 6 percent in the middle latitudes since the late 1970s, according to NASA. This may not sound significant, but this amount of depletion has caused increases in skin cancer, eye cancer and cataracts.

Ozone depletion causes mutations in plants, which harm their ability to survive. Additionally, excessive exposure to UV radiation in phytoplankton, fish and other marine animals has greatly weakened their early stages of growth.

Ozone is crucial to the survival of almost all life on Earth because it prevents excessive ultraviolet light from reaching the surface of the planet. Exposure to ultraviolet rays can cause melanoma, lymphoma, cataracts and skin cancer, damage the immune system and result in genetic mutations.

In a 2014 study conducted by Stanford Medical School, UV radiation has caused a mutation in a gene known as KNSTRN. KNSTRN is a gene that assists cells in equally distributing DNA during the stages of cell division. The KNSTRN mutation may be the cause of millions of skin cancers, the study finds.

Contrary to popular belief, ozone depletion is the thinning of the ozone layer, not simple holes in the ozone layer.

There is also a misconception that ozone depletion and global warming are related or stem from one cause, although that is far from the truth. Ozone depletion is the thinning of the ozone layer, threatening the life and well-being of many organisms.

There is a worldwide consensus that ozone depletion needs to be addressed as soon as possible. Global warming is the gradual process of increasing atmospheric temperatures due to greenhouse gases and other pollutants.

According to NASA, the two phenomena may be confused with one another since CFCs are greenhouse gases. However, compared to carbon dioxide, CFCs have a lesser presence in the atmosphere. Some scientists believe global warming is responsible for some thinning of the ozone layer, but the impact of warming on the ozone layer is minimal.

There have been a multitude of successful efforts by countries to reduce ozone depletion. The Montreal Protocol, completed in 1987, aims to prevent additional production and use of chemicals that thin the ozone layer. It has been signed by 197 countries.

As a result, virtually every country has banned the production of CFCs and used hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) as a substitute. But it was found that HFCs also harmed the ozone layer. The production of HFCs was halted in 2001 and the use of HFCs to repair equipment was banned in 2015.

However, despite the banned production of CFCs and HFCs, we still use appliances that emit these harmful gases.

CFCs were used in appliances and equipment up until 1995 and HFCs were used as a replacement until 2001. So, equipment such as refrigerators and air conditioners that emit CFCs and HFCs are being used to this day and are harming the ozone layer.

Air conditioners manufactured before 1995 emit CFCs when they malfunction. Replacing an old air conditioner or refrigerator or getting it professionally repaired can limit the CFCs it produces.

The dangers of ozone depletion have been acknowledged and substantial actions have been taken to alleviate the threat around the world, but there is much more to be done in order to allow the ozone layer to fully recover and prevent further damage to our atmosphere. The protection of ozone is pivotal to the survival of planets, animals, and most importantly, us.

Miriam Gold is a rising sophomore at Pleasantville High School.

Letters to the Editor

Putnam Democratic Party Chair Got it All Wrong at Legislature Meeting

When Scott Reing, chair of the Democratic Party for Putnam, spoke at the full county legislature meeting, I was surprised to hear my name invoked as an example of so-called disrespectful treatment by fellow Legislator Neal Sullivan, and doubly so when he reiterated the example in his letter to the editor found in five newspapers.

It is a revelation to me that when a colleague agrees with my statements, it is considered disrespectful and rude to me.

Not only did Legislator Sullivan agree with the point I made regarding a small wording clarification and defend my point. Maybe in the future, Mr. Reing will call out a bully when he actually sees a bully on the legislature, like future, Mr. Reing will call out a bully when he

Federal Support for Public Transit is a Top Accomplishment

The success of public transportation can be traced to one of the late President Lyndon Johnson’s greatest accomplishments, which continues benefiting many Americans today.

On July 9, 1964, he signed the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 into law. Subsequently, this has resulted in the investment over time of several hundred billion dollars into public transportation.

The Putnam County public transportation system has benefited with more than $112 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Transit Administration (previously known as the Urban Mass Transportation Administration), going back to the 1970s. A majority of the Putnam County bus capital program, including buses, paratransit vehicles, bus garages, fueling stations, fare collection equipment, bus shelters, bus stop signs and other support equipment necessary to run the system were all paid for primarily with federal funding.

Millions of Americans today utilize various public transportation alternatives. They include local and express buses, ferries, jitneys, light rail, subway and commuter rail services. All of these systems use less fuel and move far more people than conventional single-occupancy vehicles.

Most of these systems are funded with public tax dollars, thanks to President Johnson.

Depending upon where you live, consider the public transportation alternative. Try riding a local Putnam County transit bus.

The ability to travel from home to the workplace, school, shopping, entertainment, medical appointments, the library, etc., is a factor when moving to a new neighborhood.

Economically successful communities are not completely dependent on automobiles as the sole means of mobility.

Seniors, students and low- and middle-income people need these transportation alternatives. Investment in public transportation today contributes to economic growth, employment and a stronger economy.

Larry Penner
Great Neck, N.Y.

Westchester to Host Spanish-Language Seminar for Business Owners

After a successful virtual seminar last month, Westchester County will host another Spanish-language seminar this Wednesday, July 21 at 1 p.m. Information will be provided to Spanish-speaking business owners on how to obtain a small business recovery grant.

“The number of Hispanic-owned businesses has grown exponentially in Westchester County and we want to make sure business owners are aware of the funding opportunities that are available to them,” said Bridget Gibbons, director of the county Office of Economic Development.

New York State has selected Lendistry, a financial technology institution, to administer the grant program with a focus on reaching businesses historically underserved and disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Lendistry will be making a presentation to show business owners how to apply for the grant.

The county is partnering with the Westchester Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Yonkers Mexican Chamber of Commerce.

To sign up for the seminar, e-mail mllopez@westchestergov.com.

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Yorktown Grange Fair to Feature Exciting Musical Entertainment

From Sept. 10-12, the Yorktown Grange Fairgrounds will be buzzing with great entertainment.

The fair, which will return this year, will feature a wide assortment of local bands and music to be part of what promises to be a great weekend.

“We are so excited to welcome crowds back to the fairgrounds for live musical entertainment,” said Fair Entertainment Director Betsy Ackerman. “This year is going to be special in so many ways.”

Fair organizers stressed that as they searched for entertainment options, the goal was to entice local citizens to “Get Out and About at the Fair,” appreciate being a part of such a wonderful community.

While the fairgrounds will be full of festival fun throughout the weekend, the main stage will be the hub for musical acts. On Saturday evening, from 7 to 10:30 p.m., catch The Dude of Life band, featuring Phish songwriter and White Plains native Steve Pollack. He co-wrote “Suzy Greenberg,” “Crimes of the Mind” and several other Phish hits.

On Sunday from 4 to 6 p.m., get ready for a little “Uptown Girl” and “Piano Man” from Billy Joel cover band River of Dreams. This amazing group will get you in a “New York State of Mind” with their authentic version of a Billy Joel live performance.

On Saturday and Sunday afternoons, the Grange Fair stage will feature participants from last year’s Virtual Fair Battle of the Bands. These groups were huge living room hits and will now take the stage to perform live. Fortuna is scheduled for Saturday from 3 to 5 p.m. and Alien Paradox will take the stage on Sunday from 12 to 2 p.m. A special surprise kids entertainment option for Saturday morning is also in the works.

On Friday evening from 8 to 10 p.m., a local Yorktown band, No Option, will take the stage to kick off the fun.

The 2021 Yorktown Grange Fair will be held at the Yorktown Grange Fairgrounds, located at 99 Moseman Rd. in Yorktown Heights. For more information, visit https://yorktowngrangefair.org.
Members of Dad Band Rekindle Love of Playing Music Together

By Martin Wilbur

It's common for groups of adult friends to get together for a guys' or a gals' night out. A chance to enjoy one another's company for a couple of hours after work or a long week.

For seven Chappaqua dads, their weekly night out is spent playing music.

The members of the septet – Greg Renza (keyboards/vocals), Seth Corwin (bass/vocals), Glen Carnes (guitar/vocals), Jason Asch (drums), Mike Liebowitz (guitar), Jordan Saletan (saxophone) and Eric Negrin (guitar/vocals) – make up The Station Agents, who perform classic rock and pop hits of the 1970s and '80s.

“We are sort of all in a similar situation,” Renza said. “We’re all dads in Chappaqua, we all have kids in school and we’re all professionals and we’ve all in a past life played instruments, and so through certain situations we got together and knew one another. All of a sudden, we found ourselves together playing music and we’re all energized.”

While they’ve performed locally at several local bars, fairs and church events as well as at a Battle of the Bands at the Chappaqua Performing Arts Center, next Wednesday night’s concert at Old O’Connor’s Pub in Pleasantville is the band’s first gig in a few and far between.

“We want people to sing along at our shows,” Saletan said. “We’ll play some obscure classic rock songs that are for us, but those are few and far between. We make sure our set are songs that people can sing along to.”

Everyone in the band, which formed about three years ago, has been friends with at least one other member. They all had been in a band in high school or college and decided it would be fun to recapture that feeling they had as youngsters.

An early problem was that there were too many guitar players, so Renza switched to keyboard, which he also had played previously, and Corwin transitioned to bass.

The Station Agents’ first gig was at the old O’Connor’s Pub in Pleasantville. Saletan recalled that that the bar owner told them that if they brought 50 people, they’d be paid $300. The band gathered their friends and family to get 50 people to attend, were paid the $300 and hit with a $350 bar tab, he said.

As the rehearsals became more frequent, the band needed a permanent place to practice. If the weather was good enough, they’d play in one of their backyards, but they couldn’t consistently rely on that. When the pandemic hit, they were forced to practice on their own and meet virtually.

“But we kept in touch,” Liebowitz said. “We kept the momentum going.”

They hope that local residents will come out to concerts yet, so hopefully we’ll get nice weather and we have a really nice crowd,” Liebowitz said.

The band has no illusions about stardom.

“Our sweet spot is a 50-year-old’s birthday party,” Renza joked.

Their reward is having the chance to play music together, something each one of them loves to do, while hoping that people enjoy listening to them.

“We have lives, but I think the important thing for us, as middle-aged men, is we found something for us because we do so much for our families and our kids, that it’s like this is for us, and we need it,” Renza said.

For more information on The Station Agents, visit their Facebook page or e-mail stationagentsband@gmail.com if you are interested in booking the band.

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Food Donation Day on Tap at P’ville Farmers Market This Saturday

Shoppers visiting the Pleasantville Farmers Market this Saturday, July 24, can help food pantries ease food insecurity in the region by purchasing extra items of produce and allocating those items to go to area residents in need.

Farmers (and bakers too) will have collection bins at their checkout stations. Items can also be donated at a tent staffed by representatives from The Pleasantville Community Garden and Hillside Food Outreach, a local charity that provides meals for thousands of residents in Westchester, Putnam and Fairfield counties each year.

“This is a situation where complementary efforts have come together, we’re each other’s missing pieces,” said Peter Rogovin, president and chairman of Foodchester, Inc. “The garden has volunteers and contacts with food pantries. Hillside Food Outreach provides a system to deliver nutritious food to those in need. The market has generous shoppers and vendors with fresh food, and we seek to support community organizations.”

Held twice a year, this event allows shoppers to contribute, the donation totals collected are inspiring. In previous events, shoppers have purchased and donated more than 650 pounds of fresh fruit and produce. Another 150 to 300 pounds of fruit and vegetables are often contributed by farmers and vendors at the end of the market as well. That’s over 900 pounds of fresh, nutritious food immediately donated to Hillside Food Outreach and other local pantries.

“Donations by shoppers on July 24 will help us celebrate the weekly generosity of our farmers and food artisans, who have really partnered with us in this cause,” said Steven Bates, executive director of market operations for the Pleasantville Farmers Market.

“The Pleasantville Farmers Market program has been an essential part of our organization and the amazing generosity of the farmers every weekend has allowed us to greatly expand and donate thousands of pounds of incredibly fresh vegetables,” said Ashly Juskus, farmers market manager.

For more information or to subscribe to market news, view vendor lists or an interactive map of the market or get to market news, view vendor lists or an interactive map of the market or get directions and more details, visit www.pleasantvillefarmersmarket.org.

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Blood Drive to Be Held Friday to Honor P’ville Boy Fighting Leukemia

By Martin Wilbur

Last May 31, Melissa Feola thought that her then-four-year-old son Owen had injured his pinky. It was swollen and red, prompting his doctor to prescribe an antibiotic.

But the medication didn’t help ease the swelling or the discomfort. Feola, a Pleasantville resident, took Owen to the emergency room to try and ease his pain.

It was there that a simple blood test changed the life of everyone in the family. Owen was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, a type of blood and bone marrow cancer that affects white blood cells and the most common of childhood cancers.

“She flipped our world upside down,” said Feola, who also has two daughters, Adele, 7, and Charlotte, 8. “COVID flipped everyone’s world upside down, and then this news certainly was as unexpected as it gets. It was a shock. At the time, there were so many restrictions in a hospital setting, where only one parent could be in the ER. My husband and I couldn’t both be present at the same time.”

So far, Owen’s treatments, which have included chemotherapy and more recently about a dozen blood transfusions, have been progressing well. While not out of the woods, Feola is hopeful that Owen will be able to make it to kindergarten this fall at Coman Hill Elementary School.

Mount Pleasant resident Josephine DiConstanzo, a family friend, helped to organize a blood drive, scheduled for this Friday afternoon and evening at the Thornwood firehouse at 770 Commerce St. in Thornwood in Owen’s honor. It will be held from 2 to 8 p.m.

“It’s sort of one of those helpless situations as parents where we’re just very thankful that our son has been on transfusions over the past few months,” Feola said. DiConstanzo, who has been friends since Owen Feola, with his parents and sisters, has successfully fought leukemia for the past 14 months. A blood drive in his honor will be held at the Thornwood firehouse this Friday.

Owen was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia one year because of COVID-19, and those that have held one are seeing low turnout, she said.

“That is contributing to the low amount of donors at our blood drives,” Hernandez said. “In addition to that, the traditional groups that host blood drives for the most part are not allowing us to come back with a blood drive.”

The universal blood types of O positive, O negative, A positive and negative and B negative are the most sought after but anyone who is eligible may donate, Hernandez said. To donate, you must be at least 16 years old, weigh at least 110 pounds and not have donated in the last 56 days. For 16-year-olds, they must have parental permission.

Feola said she is grateful that DiCostanzo, the fire district and the New York Blood Center were able to come together and help others who face life-threatening situations and need blood transfusions like Owen.

To make an appointment to donate at Friday’s blood drive, call 800-933-2566.
Yorktown Resident Offers Yoga Therapy to Address Health Needs

By Susan R. Eisenstein

Yorktown resident Marta Gil is bringing a new kind of yoga business to northern Westchester.

While the practice of yoga is considered an ancient art, yoga therapy is a relatively new field. "As a yoga teacher, I could offer my clients a feeling of overall well-being," said Gil, who has launched Yoga Therapy With Marta Gil. "As a yoga therapist, I can customize the practice that addresses specific health goals and conditions based on the client’s ability, lifestyles and available time."

She said yoga therapy is provided in private sessions or small groups where a common condition is shared. Gil works with clients in virtual and in-person settings, teaching them how to use yoga and mindfulness techniques to manage pain, stress, anxiety and autoimmune conditions.

Gil helps clients suffering from depression, lack of connection, insomnia, cancer, low energy, grief, weight loss and problems with focus. Often, she works in tandem with the client’s primary care doctor, physical therapist or other health professional.

Gil dreamed about opening her own yoga therapy practice full-time. She knew that she had the training, the knowledge and the passion and was keenly aware that her service was needed.

But her participation in a Westchester County business accelerator program, called Launch 1000, was the catalyst to taking that entrepreneurial plunge. "Suddenly I found myself among hundreds of people exactly in the same place where I was, passionate about an idea, convinced that their vision has the potential of positively changing people’s lives," said Gil, who was born in Poland and moved to the U.S. in 1999.

Participation in Launch 1000 gave her a fantastic community, resources and the guidance of coaches. The county is offering the program in response to the significant economic disruption last year. The goal is to enable 1,000 Westchester residents to start a business or develop an income stream for themselves and their families. Now Gil’s yoga therapy business isn’t a dream anymore.

When working with clients, she is mindful of traumas that they may be going through. Gil sets goals with them and emphasizes that she is a guide. She also wants clients to know that while yoga can be therapeutic, it is not yoga therapy. She provides clients with the knowledge and tools, and her yoga therapy classes are designed to give them the ability to improve their own health.

Gil and her husband also run a house painting company. Her daughter was born in Yorktown and the family enjoys Yorktown and the friendships that they have made. They also love the hiking trails, parks and farms.

Gil said she appreciates how Westchester takes care of its residents. "I had the honor to teach yoga classes to senior citizens in Yorktown and Peekskill," Gil said of what she did before the pandemic. "The classes were free for them."

Now, she is excited for clients to know about her new yoga therapy business in Yorktown.

For more information or to schedule a yoga therapy appointment, contact Marta Gil at 914-685-6859 or visit MartaGilYoga.com or Facebook.com/martagilyoga.

Groundbreaking Treatment for Skin Cancer

What you need to know...

Q: How is skin cancer treated?
A: Traditionally, skin cancers have been treated either with Moh’s surgery, in which the cancerous tissue is removed, or by conventional radiation. Both methods offer success rates of 96 to 99 percent. However, now a third option – High Dose Rate Brachytherapy (HDRBT) – offers a unique cosmetic benefit that’s particularly valuable for skin cancers the face, head and neck.

Q: What’s so unique about this new type of treatment?
A. With a Moh’s procedure, the cancer is cut out, leaving behind a hole which is filled with skin from somewhere else on your body. This forms a scar.

With conventional radiation for skin cancer, not only is the tumor radiated, but so are its “margins,” or edges. As a result, a wide area is radiated – sometimes causing the skin to thin or break, to get a bit darker or lighter, to develop red streaks, or to appear scarred or wrinkled. If this happens on your face, it is often highly visible.

By contrast, HDRBT involves radiating much smaller margins around the tumor. If we’re treating a tumor near the eye with conventional radiation, its wider field of radiation creates the risk of blindness, or of damaging the lens, or of the breakdown of surrounding tissue. But with concentrated HDRBT, these risks significantly diminish. Also, it’s fast. After just two weeks of fifteen-minute treatments with HDRBT, treatment is complete. In fact, the treatment itself takes only three to four minutes!

Q: Who is the ideal candidate for this type of treatment?
A. The cosmetic benefit is especially valuable if you have skin cancer near your lips, nose or eyes. With this treatment, there is minimal to no scarring. This new radiation therapy is also great for elderly patients who might not tolerate surgery. In Westchester County, we have a high population of older community members with skin cancer – this treatment has worked really well for them.

Q: Is there anything else you’d like to say about HDRBT?
A. Currently, Northern Westchester Hospital is the only community hospital in Westchester offering HDRBT for skin cancer. There’s this myth that community hospitals can’t provide the most advanced cancer care. But that’s simply not the case. Here, patients experience the warmth of a community hospital, yet receive a level of cancer care that’s first-rate.
Restaurant Week
July 23 — August 1

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Mount Kisco Chamber of Commerce Restaurant Week

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I will soon be listing a home for sale for a couple who is moving out of state to be close to their children. They thought that they had found their ideal retirement home in that location, but informed me that they had lost out in a bidding process because of a “love letter” sent by another buyer. “We even included an escalation clause in the offer, but still lost,” the wife told me.

An escalation clause states that if a competing offer is made on the property, the bid will automatically increase by a certain amount of money to surpass the new offer. However, the seller told my clients that she was influenced by a personal letter received by a competing bidder that “touched her.”

Such love letters may soon be a thing of the past. A new law in Oregon states that house hunters are prohibited from submitting a love letter to try to convince the sellers to accept their offers. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown signed a bill into law that contain information outside of the communications from buyers to sellers that says sellers’ agents must reject such letters outright.

The use of love letters by buyers has become a common tactic to help make a buyer’s offer stand out. Buyers may write to sellers about how much they love the home, how they can envision their family living there or how they’ll spend the holidays. But the National Association of Realtors (NAR) has been warning its members to be aware of the potential risks involving love letters.

“While this may seem harmless, these letters can actually pose fair housing risks because they often contain personal information and reveal characteristics of the buyer, such as race, religion or familial status, which could then be used, knowingly or through unconscious bias, as an unlawful basis for a seller’s decision to accept or reject an offer,” NAR recently warned on its Fair Housing Corner blog. Further, the NAR released a statement in response to Oregon’s action banning the letters outright.

“Although we are not aware of instances in which these letters have led to lawsuits or legal action elsewhere in the country, we continue to stress that all parties in a real estate transaction should consider only legitimate, non-discriminatory criteria when making business decisions,” the statement read. “Failing to do so, could also leave Realtors® in a compromised position. We also recommend that our members explain potential pitfalls to their clients about the fair housing laws.

However, in today’s market, the practice of using love letters has remained popular as buyers face fierce competition for homes and have been desperate to make their offer stand out. Bidding wars are not uncommon. These letters may seem harmless on the surface. But when a letter comes in, if it describes the family situation or circumstances, whatever that may be, or indicates or gives a clue to a religious or any other protected class, there’s always the risk that a seller could be accused of making a decision based upon inappropriate factors.

NAR’s Fair Housing Corner blog offers the best practices to help protect real estate agents and their clients from fair housing liability stemming from love letters. Realtors are advised to educate their clients about the fair housing laws and the pitfalls of buyer love letters. Further, we are advised to refuse delivering such buyer love letters to clients and they not be accepted as part of the MLS listing.

And finally, we are advised to document all offers received and the seller’s objective reason for accepting an offer. I have personally experienced a love letter situation only once, and it was a somewhat off-putting situation. The buyer prospects, a same-sex couple, assumed the sellers’ orientation (which the sellers represented), actually sending a letter stating that “we obviously have so much in common in all our preferences, including that we both own MINI-Cooper cars.” And then they made a really lousy offer.

Bill Primavera, while a publicist and journalist, is also a realtor associated with William Raveis Real Estate and founder of Primavera Public Relations, Inc. (www.PrimaveraPR.com). To engage the services of The Home Guru to market your home for sale, call 914-522-2076.
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The Jacob Burns Film Center announced last week it has hired a new executive director who will take over leadership of the Pleasantville arthouse theater and education center at the end of the summer.

Mary Jo Ziesel, a veteran in the field of nonprofit arts, will assume the post on Sept. 7.

“We are thrilled to welcome Mary Jo Ziesel as we celebrate our 20th anniversary,” Jacob Burns Board Chair Lyn Sobel said. “We are extremely fortunate to have someone of Mary Jo’s caliber at the helm as we launch our third anniversary,” Jacob Burns Board Chair Lyn Sobel said. “We are extremely fortunate to have someone of Mary Jo’s caliber at the helm as we launch our third decade. She is an accomplished, passionate arts and culture executive with a long track record. She holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Wisconsin, as well as a master of nonprofit arts, will become the next executive director of the Jacob Burns Film Center.

“After more than 25 years in the field of nonprofit arts, I continue to stand in awe of the transformational power of the arts to ignite curiosity and empower audiences to think critically, discover and learn new cultures and nurture empathy and tolerance,” Ziesel said. “As a passionate film lover who was new to the area, my pre-pandemic visits to the Jacob Burns Film Center left me feeling grateful to have discovered this artistic wellspring in the Hudson Valley.”

Ziesel added that she is also motivated by the film center’s commitment to artists and organizations that celebrate and engage the community of the transformational power of the arts to ignite curiosity.

Mary Jo Ziesel, a longtime executive in the field of nonprofit arts, will become the next executive director of the Jacob Burns Film Center.

Fireworks to Continue at Playland on Friday Evenings

After being closed for the 2020 season due to COVID-19, fireworks over Long Island Sound will take place every Friday through Labor Day weekend. There will also be a final fireworks show on Sunday, Sept. 5. All fireworks begin at 9:15 p.m.
Consider These Factors When Buying High-end Wines

By Nick Antonaccio

In last week’s column we delved into the world of high-end wines and the exorbitant prices they command. My focus was on the La Romanée-Conti Grand Cru bottling, produced by the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, most commonly known by its acronym, DRC, and perennially the most expensive wine sold.

The availability of DRC is severely limited. A small amount is produced each year and little is available in the retail market. A small portion is offered for sale at public auctions, many years (even decades) after its initial release. The price? The value a willing buyer and a willing seller arrive at. The vicarious pleasure of owning one of these bottles? Priceless?

Predictably, a buyer will have a difficult time finding and purchasing this wine. Herein is the perfect opportunity for bidding wars – at auctions (public and private) and the underground markets of questionable source and authenticity.

One might ponder if DRC, and other rare wines, are susceptible to those nefarious individuals who troll the winosphere for gullible consumers. Ponder no longer. In examining the attributes of the wine and the producer, I did not mention the allure this wine has with the dark side of the marketplace for rare and expensive wines.

I present several considerations facing buyers when purchasing DRC or any scarce, rare or one-of-a-kind objet d’art (or objet d’vin).

1. Price. Scarcity drives up prices. It is generally perceived wines from the Bourdeaux region of France command the highest prices, in particular a bottle of Petrus. However, the preferences of collectors (old line and the newly minted aristocrats) are wines from the Burgundy region of France, in particular DRC.

The most recent vintage available of Petrus costs $3,000 per bottle. This wine also has the distinction of being the first wine to travel, and age, in the International Space Station, returning to earth a few months ago after its 14-month journey.

By comparison, the current release of DRC commands a per bottle price of more than $15,000. As for older vintages, there seem to be quite a few willing buyers. At an auction held in Hong Kong several years ago, a single bottle of 1945 DRC sold for $558,000, a record price. A second bottle was auctioned immediately after. It commanded an equally staggering price of $496,000.

However, a few bottles of the space-aged Petrus are being auctioned, which will certainly challenge the DRC record-setting price.

2. Provenance. For those few who are able to afford rare wines there is no certainty that your purchase is genuine. The DRC wine market is rife with shady characters lying in wait for enthusiastic buyers. A few years ago, I reported that Rudy Kurniawan, a prominent wine collector, was arrested on counterfeit charges. He affixed fraudulent DRC labels to bottles filled with unidentified cheap wine and sold them in the high-end wine markets.

In a separate instance of fraud, European police, informed of counterfeit DRC wines being sold in the private (black) market, conducted a sweep in 10 countries, raiding 20 homes and companies. Over $2.7 million in fraudulent profit is believed to have been realized.

3. Blackmail. Owners of the winery producing the most expensive wine in the world have targets of nefarious blackmailers. In 2010, a father and son attempted to extort $1.4 million from the owners of DRC, threatening to destroy their vineyard. After much anguish, the owners contacted the authorities, who intervened and subsequently arrested the culprits.

Fear not if you are unable to find, or afford, that special gift of rare wine for yourself or someone special. Living vicariously through the adventures – and wallets – of others is a noble diversion. It may even enhance your enjoyment of lesser-priced wine.

Nick Antonaccio is a 45-year Pleasantville resident. For over 25 years, he has conducted 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.
Chappaqua Bistro Le Jardin is Always a Treat to Eat

It was mid-afternoon, pre-Bastille Day, when I stopped in at Le Jardin Du Roi on King Street in Chappaqua. It had been quite a while since I ate there.

Joe Quarara and Christian Larsen have been operating this bustling bistro in the heart of the downtown for the past 20 years. I took a quick look inside and it was the same cozy interior that I remembered.

I sat down on the pleasant tented outdoor patio and looked over the menu with surrounding garden flowers in full bloom. I knew exactly what I wanted: the signature Burger du Roi, prepared medium with bacon, Swiss cheese and sunny side egg on top.

To my memory, Le Jardin was one of the first to “throw an egg on it,” before the culinary concept became so commonplace. The large patio came with French fries and fresh chopped salad. (Ask for extra salad dressing on the side.) My burger was oozing decadence, deliciously so. The fries were nice, too.

For dessert, I had Le Jardin’s popular warm bread pudding. On this day it was prepared with blueberries resting on a shallow pool of vanilla sauce with some powdered sugar. A delight! Nothing like a good bistro meal.

Le Jardin Due Roi is located at 95 King St. in Chappaqua. Open daily. Free parking. Check ahead for hours. Info: 914-238-1368 or visit www.lejardinchappaqua.com.

Bistro-Style Roasted Chicken

In recent weeks I’ve had the pleasure of eating at two more favorite French bistros. Le Diplomate in Washington, D.C., always busy and delicious, and Café D’Alsace, a bustling spot on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. I have always been fond of the French way in the kitchen.

On Bastille Day, my companion decided to surprise me with a home-cooked bistro meal. It turned out very well. We shared a roasted chicken she found on sale at Fresh Market in Scarsdale, a tasty tapenade accompaniment and fresh corn salad. For dessert, we had a classic cherry clafoutis with fresh cream. Thank you, dear.

The Dog Den Expands

Hot dog mavens find their way to The Dog Den, located at the former bus depot at the White Plains Metro-North station on Bronx Street, all day long this time of year.

Hot dogs are an ode to the ultimate comfort food, according to dynamic owner and founder Dennis (Big Dennis) Rubich. On this beautiful late afternoon, the 7-foot-1 Rubich (he once played professional basketball in Europe) was chatting with customers as they ate their dogs and sides with gusto. The seating area has been expanded.

There are all sorts of combinations and toppings on the menu along with alternative bites galore. The Dog Den uses Sabrett all-beef certified gluten-free dogs and Martin’s long potato rolls.

On this visit we tried the Bernie Mac n’ Cheese, wrapped in bacon and loaded with decadent macaroni and cheese topping. The other, The Cool Beans, was topped with bacon bits and baked beans. We ordered a pile of crinkle cut fries, too.

On previous encounters, I consumed The Cali Double Dog, with bacon strips, guacamole, tomato, ranch dressing and celery salt. Also, The Chili Willy, which contains chili, nacho cheese sauce and chopped white onions. Both were well-assembled by the eager staff and delicious.

There are free half-hour parking spaces. Seating is well-spaced. According to Big Dennis, who is leasing the space from the county, there are plans for a breakfast menu and beer and wine service.

The Dog Den is located at 1 Main St. in White Plains at the Metro-North train station. Open Tuesday through Sunday. Info: 914-328-3288 or visit www.thedogdenwhiteplains.com.

Utica Pie Co. Returns

The Utica Pie Co. has reopened on White Plains’ Mamaroneck Avenue after closing during the pandemic. The space, two stores down from the old Francesco’s, now offers indoor and outdoor seating. Its signature tomato pie is one of the specialties. Owner Sal Torchia said the Italian-style eatery is now in full operation.

Torchia was nice enough to show off some of the menu items during a recent visit. There was the Utica Pie, UPC knots and veggie pie. Desserts included the lemon meringue pie, chocolate cream pie and banana coconut cream pie. I’m looking forward to a tasting down the line.

The Utica Pie Co. is located at 594 Mamaroneck Ave. in White Plains. Open daily. Info: 914-948-5600 or visit www.uticapieco.com.

Mt. Kisco Restaurant Week

The Mount Kisco Chamber of Commerce has launched its first-ever Restaurant Week, starting this Friday, July 23 and running through Aug. 1. More than 20 eateries are participating. Each restaurant will be serving its own unique dish or menu during the program.

The good news is that Mount Kisco restaurants offer a lot of tasty diversity. This would be a fine way to give a few a try. For the latest information, visit www.mtksicochamber.com.

Jack Knife Will Keep You Sharp!

There was a huge uptick in home cooking during the pandemic. Novice and pro cooks were busy honing their skills. There was a huge uptick in home cooking during the pandemic. Novice and pro cooks were busy honing their skills. So how do you keep those knives and kitchen utensils sharp? You may want to catch up with Jack “Knife” Martin, U.S. Navy veteran and owner of Jack Knife Sharpening in White Plains. Martin has become a regular at the Wednesday White Plains Farmers Market and at markets across Westchester and Connecticut. He works with professional chefs as well as home cooks, offering blade sharpening and restoration services for knives, scissors or garden tools. Gift cards are available.

For information and rates, call 914-434-0522 or visit www.jackknifesharpening.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 914-235-6549 or gutreactions@optonline.net.
I recently read “Good Friday: The Death of Irish Republicanism” by Anthony McIntyre, who as a member of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) spent 17 years imprisoned in the notorious Long Kesh Prison. McIntyre, incarcerated in his teens, raises some tough questions about the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which ended the 30-year-long “The Troubles” and brought a fragile peace to Northern Ireland. Brokered by the United States under President Bill Clinton, it was signed by two parties, then more diametrically opposed than any in the world.

Power in Northern Ireland, part of the United Kingdom (U.K.), would be shared by the Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein (Gaelic for Ourselves Alone) and their previously staunch opponents, the pro-British Unionists, who led by Bobby Sands, who gave their lives for recognition as political prisoners, as opposed to common criminals.

McIntyre spent his time in prison well. He earned a college degree, and ultimately a doctorate, and went on to become one of Ireland’s most insightful commentators on the aftermath of The Troubles. The premise of his book is that too much was given up by the Sinn Fein leadership, ostensibly championing the long-held dream of a united Ireland, in exchange for some measure of political power and buy-in to the “establishment.”

In return, that leadership effectively abandoned the long-held dream of a united Ireland. Whatever one’s beliefs, the book is an intriguing window on the politics surrounding the Good Friday Agreement and the unheralded price paid for it.

Now, enter Brexit. A major topic at the recent G7 meeting, it elicited a pointed warning by President Joe Biden to British leader Boris Johnson that he had better work soon to prevent the reversal of the Good Friday Agreement in light of its impact on a critical flash point between mainland Britain and Northern Ireland – the 365-mile-long border between them.

That border, for more than two decades virtually unseen, was a major turning point during The Troubles. I crossed a section of it a year after the 1998 agreement was reached, and was told by locals if I had been there a year earlier, I’d have been detained for a day or two of questioning by British military wondering what I was up to.

But with the U.K. leaving the European Union (EU), that quiet border now becomes the only land border between the U.K. and the rest of Europe, a situation the EU insists must be addressed in order to perform customs checks and inspections.

One solution is to have a sea border between mainland Britain and Northern Ireland and do inspections there. To Unionists, this is unacceptable, as it would force recognition that the six counties that they cherish are really more part of Ireland than the U.K. That could fracture the fragile peace the Good Friday Agreement brought, and bring a return to the years of sectarian fighting in which at least 3,500 perished.

In a perfect world, might not Brexit push Unionists toward a realization that a united 32-county Ireland be an acceptable outcome after all, in light of the benefits that continued membership in the EU would bring? Brexit threatens to render the U.K. a backwater as the EU pursues greater economic might.

A vote in neighboring Scotland to leave the U.K. might alter everything even further. While the last referendum on Scottish independence was narrowly defeated, that was pre-Brexit, which a large majority in both Scotland and Northern Ireland opposed.

Some envision a political union of Scotland and Ireland, both North and South, with a capital in either Dublin, Belfast, Glasgow or Edinburgh. Call the new nation the Republic of Dalriada, paying homage to just such a union that once existed long before the current fault lines of sectarian strife kept good people on both sides of the road from seeing past their noses.

Pleasantville resident Brian McGowan was born and raised in the Bronx and is a second- and fifth-generation Irish American/Canadian, as his immigrant ancestors followed several paths to the New World. Reach him at brian.m.mcgowan1952@gmail.com, or on Twitter (@Bmcgowan52M). He is the author of two books, “Thunder at Noon,” about the battle of Waterloo, and “Love, Son John,” about World War II. Both are available at Amazon.com.
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Orchestra 914 Appoints Music Director to Lead Rebranded Ensemble

Orchestra 914, formerly known as the Chappaqua Orchestra, last week announced the appointment of Russell Ger as its music director.

Co-executive Directors David Restivo and Amy Harter are thrilled to begin working with Ger, whose artistic energy encompasses Orchestra 914’s goals and vision for its future. Ger’s long-term experience will bring a collaborative approach to an inclusive and unexpected array of classical music, with the highest level of artistic integrity in mind.

“It is with great anticipation that I begin this new journey leading Orchestra 914,” Ger said. “I am looking forward to making some wonderful music and sharing it with our audience in new and exciting ways.”

Since 2016, Ger has been music director of the Greater Newburgh Symphony. He will remain in that capacity while he serves as music director for Orchestra 914.

Ger’s broad repertoire spans orchestral, operatic and choral music, which he has conducted across North America, Europe and his native country of Australia. He has toured North America with renowned violinist Itzhak Perlman, performed at the Hollywood Bowl with members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and at the Barclays Center for an audience of 6,000.

Ger received a master of music in orchestral conducting at The Boston Conservatory. In 2013, Ger was one of four finalists from around the world for the prestigious 2nd International Chicago Symphony Orchestra Sir Georg Solti Conducting Apprenticeship. As a proud alumnus of Symphony Australia, the leading conductor training program in that country, he had the opportunity to work with Australia’s top orchestras. Ger is committed to nurturing the next generation of musicians, and regularly works with young people to promote classical music.

The Chappaqua Orchestra was created in 1958 in an effort to bring high-quality classical music to northern Westchester. Over the years, the orchestra has had many incarnations, from a mix of professional and local amateurs, to what is now a fully professional orchestra. It has had several conductors, many of whom have gone on to national recognition.

To find more information about Orchestra 914, visit www.orchestra914.org. The 2021-22 season schedule will be announced within the next few weeks. The new season will include family and classical concerts in Pleasantville, Tarrytown and Peekskill, as well as other communities in Westchester.

Russell Ger was named the music director of Orchestra 914, formerly The Chappaqua Orchestra.
Six Things You Should Be Asking Your Pharmacist But Aren’t

An estimated 4.5 billion prescriptions will be filled this year in the United States, with about half of consumers taking at least one prescription medication over the past 30 days.

“Vous’d think we would be better at communicating with our pharmacists — just as we do with our other health care providers, like doctors, nurses and dentists,” said Susan Peppers, vice president of Pharmacy Practice at Express Scripts Pharmacy. “Unfortunately, it’s just not the case.”

In fact, a JD Power study shows that only 10 percent of people talk to a pharmacist when ordering or receiving their medications. Pharmacists at Express Scripts Pharmacy were asked what are the top six questions patients should be asking their pharmacists, but don’t.

Their answers offer insights into why we should take the time to ask these questions and why pharmacists play an important role in our health care.

• Could this medication interact with my vitamins and supplements? Non-prescription medications and supplements can interfere with your prescription or cause unnecessary side effects. Talk to a pharmacist about all the medications you take, especially when you are prescribed any new medication.

• I’m taking multiple meds. What do I need to know? If you are on multiple medications for one or more chronic conditions you should speak with a pharmacist any time there is a change to your medication regimen to check for potential drug-drug interactions, medication overlap or gaps in care.

• What should I do if I forget to take my medication? Always consult with your prescriber on what to do if this happens. Having access to your pharmacist 24/7 is particularly important when you forget to take a dosage at the scheduled time. He or she can help you get back on track so that you get the full benefits of your medication. Having access to your pharmacist from the privacy of your home is another great reason to look for this 24/7 convenience.

• Could this prescription make me unsteady on my feet? Some medications can make you dizzy or drowsy, and there are other hazards in the home that can cause a fall, especially as one ages and needs to get up frequently during the night. A pharmacist can provide home safety tips to avoid an accident.

• I sometimes forget to take my meds. What’s a reminder that works? Taking medications regularly can help avoid complications. When having trouble remembering to take your medications, turn to pharmacists who can suggest tech solutions that will work for you, such as reminder apps. They can also help you manage side effects that you may be having and identify alternatives that you can discuss with your prescriber, when needed.

• Is there a more affordable option for my prescription? If you are having trouble affording your medications, your pharmacist can help with more affordable options and recommendations, such as generics or less expensive formulary options.

For more tips and resources, visit www.esrx.com/AskYourPharmacist.

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Chappaqua Library Unveils New Furniture, Equipment

The Friends of the Chappaqua Library, a nonprofit organization and the fundraising arm of the library, has approved more than $90,000 to pay for new furniture and technology tools for the renovated Chappaqua Public Library, located at 195 S. Greeley Ave.

The Friends fundraise year-round to support initiatives for the library that are not covered by the town. The current construction has been going on since 2018, as part of the bond for all the Chappaqua school buildings. The library building is a school district building, but it is run independently.

The furniture requests from the library staff started last October, as construction was completed on the building while planning to reopen post-COVID-19. The final request was approved at the last board meeting of the Friends of their fiscal year, on June 9.

The Friends board meet 10 times a year and is staffed by volunteers. The team remained busy during COVID-19, meeting via Zoom, and even without regular fundraising events.

The funding included more than $35,000 for the new Children’s Room, including the custom service desk, two built-in benches and reupholstering two couches and a chair.

“The children’s room staff are so delighted to sit at our beautiful new service desk in our light-filled room, thanks to the Friends,” said Robbin Friedman, head of children’s services. “With refurbished couches and a brand-new window-seat bench, we look forward to seeing the community enjoy our new space as much as we do.”

Additionally, the Friends funding covered $15,000 of technology for the new Teen Room, including eight new Chromebooks, three drawing pads and two Google Jamboards (identical to the tools used at the middle and high school).

Cathy Paulsen, head of teen services, said “The teens and I are thrilled with our new Teen Room. It has everything we could ever have imagined. Thank you so much.”

The remaining $10,000 was allocated to new study room furniture, including a conference table, eight chairs and a glass whiteboard. The new study room is adjacent to the Teen Room, and the furniture is in the process of being ordered.

With more and more patrons wanting to use outdoors, the Friends also funded four new outdoor tables and 16 new chairs, along with a rented tent for the courtyard for July and August. The new outdoor furniture arrived in late June, and the tent arrived on July 8. Now all library programming can occur inside or outside as needed.

The gated courtyard is open to all library patrons, and access is available from the library gallery. The Friends are back to active fundraising, including a virtual author event this week on Tuesday evening featuring “The Cellist,” Daniel Silva’s new spy novel; and a pop-up book market in the train parking lot on Aug. 7 from 9 a.m. to noon, weather permitting.

The Friends’ annual Book Sale is also returning next Apr. 25, promising more than 30 miles of used books to purchase.

The library is open to the public Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Friday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Wolves Howling on 12U GHVBL Scene

Mahopac Tops Putnam Valley, 8-0

Mahopac Wolves 3B Orion Ortiz awaits throw as Putnam Valley’s Matt Quinn slides in safely in the Wolves’ 8-0 win over the host Tigers last Tuesday in 12U Greater Hudson Valley Baseball League action at Union Field where the surging Wolves improved to 9-3 while the Tigers fell to 5-7. Visit www.ghvbl.com for standings. See Focus on GHVBL.
FOCUS ON LAKELAND SUMMER SOCCER LEAGUE

Yorktown, Byram Hills, Somers
Among Top Challengers

Somers’ Hyugo Todo sends a pass against Eastchester in 1-0 Tusker loss to Eagles.

Somers’ Jack Van Tassell keeps his eye on the ball as he heads up the field in 1-0 loss against Eastchester in Lakeland Summer League contest.

Somers’ Liam Healy gets tangled up as he looks to maintain possession in 1-0 Lakeland Summer League loss to Eastchester.

Yorktown’s Tristan Santos sends it up the field in Huskers’ 8-1 summer league rout of Valhalla in Lakeland Boys Soccer Summer League action last week.

ROB DIANTONIO PHOTOS
FOCUS ON LAKELAND SUMMER SOCCER LEAGUE
Yorktown, Byram Hills, Somers
Among Top Challengers

Byram Hills’ Derek Araki-Kurdyla possesses along the sideline while Briarcliff’s Atti Smith defends in 1-1 Lakeland Summer League tie last Tuesday.

Briarcliff’s Ethan Klar sends a pass at midfield while Byram’s Lorenzo Amorosino defends in 1-1 Lakeland summer League tie.

Yorktown’s Tristan Santos sends it up the field in Huskers’ 8-1 summer league rout of Valhalla in Lakeland Boys Soccer Summer League action last week.

Byram Hills’ Derek Araki-Kurdyla possesses along the sideline while Briarcliff’s Atti Smith defends in 1-1 Lakeland Summer League tie last Tuesday.

Briarcliff’s Daniel Satran heads the ball in Bears’ 1-1 tie with Byram last Tuesday.

Yorktown’s George Popovic leads a break in Huskers’ 8-1 win over Valhalla.

Valhalla’s Eddie LoPresti looks to clear the ball out of the defensive end against Yorktown in Lakeland Summer League action.

Byram Hills’ Owen Fleischer looks to make his move against Briarcliff last week in a Lakeland Summer League game.

Valhalla’s Lucas Signes looks to pass to a teammate in Vikings’ summer league loss to Yorktown last Tuesday.

Somers’ Noak Saks leads a break in 1-0 Lakeland Summer League loss to Eastchester.

Somers’ Jack Van Tassell keeps his eye on the ball as he heads up the field in 1-0 loss against Eastchester in Lakeland Summer League contest.

Somers’ Liam Healy gets tangled up as he looks to maintain possession in 1-0 Lakeland Summer League loss to Eastchester.
FOCUS ON GHVBL

Mahopac Handles Put Valley, White Plains Falls, 2-1

Mahopac IF Orion Ortiz readies to score run in Wolves’ 8-0 win over host Put Valley in 12U GHVBL action.

Mahopac’s Johnny Keeney raps a single in Wolves’ 8-0 win over host Putnam Valley in recent GHVBL 12U action.

Putnam Valley P Eli Pierce shows solid form despite taking loss to Mahopac Wolves in 12U GHVBL action last week.

Hit-N-Run pitcher Sam Mendez was the hard-luck-loser in 2-1 setback against the Fairfield County Captains last Thursday at WPHS.

The 7-1 NW Thunder 9U celebrate a 4-1 win over previously undefeated Mt. Pleasant after Cristian Ormazabal singled home the go-ahead run.

Putnam Valley 1B Dylan Morales makes close put-out on Mahopac’s Max Sorrentino in Wolves’ 8-0 win in 12U GHVBL action last week.

Felix Morales of WP Hit-N-Run looks to escape a rundown last Thursday in 2-1 loss to Fairfield Co. Captains in 15U GHVBL action.
For folks in our neck of the woods, there is no idea how fortunate they are to have people like Lakeland educators/coaches Sharon Sarsen and Tim Hourahan providing a summer outlet for field hockey players and boys’ soccer players, respectively. Absolutely, you had a great idea. Every single summer Sarsen — the most decorated field hockey coach in state history (probably the country) — and Hourahan — among the most dedicated soccer coaches in NYS — provide Section 1 athletes with the chance to play competitive, well-organized, off-season sports in an effort to get them ready for the fall season.

The Lakeland Summer Soccer League and Lakeland Summer Field Hockey League provide a one-of-a-kind opportunity for local communities from Rye (lower Westchester) to Mahopac (Putnam County), and all points in between, to gauge their programs and see what they have returning in September. Not only does it allow local coaches to see their own players in action, it gives them a glimpse of what they’re up against once the Section 1 seasons begin in earnest. From the top teams in the league, to those that may be struggling, everybody gets a shot to see what they have and what they need to improve upon.

“I’ll tell you this,” Hourahan said. “Class A soccer is absolutely loaded again, and the top teams are all playing summer league.”

This year, the league added a bunch of teams and has 15 programs playing summer soccer at Lakeland. These Class A teams are good and I would be shocked if one of the 10 teams playing in this league from Class A are not in the sectional finals come the end of October, if not two teams,” Hourahan said.

Section 1’s recent boys’ soccer champions return some of the top players and rosters going into 2021. Rye, Byram Hills, Somers and Yorktown all will be considered legitimate title contenders in Class A and have shown great level of play already in September. Not only does it give them a glimpse of what they’re up against once the Section 1 seasons begin in earnest, but it also gives them a chance to work on their kicking, defense, and even try new formations.

Did you hear about that incident between Somers and Putnam Valley? The one where the opposing coaches had to be separated at home plate after exchanging F-bombs; right in front of the impressionable players. (Again, this actually happened in yet another Greater Hudson Valley Baseball League game)

Our goal was to promote the local baseball communities that are representing their towns proudly with the help of volunteers and local businesses to make an event centered around a sport we consider to be the best in the world,” said Subin, the co-director along with Rich Anderson. “We strive to have an event that is positive, fun for parents, players and siblings. We had food trucks, dunk tanks, a home run derby and a live national anthem sung to kick off the event. We invited classy teams and programs; who understand what the true spirit of youth sports is and are helping pave a path forward for boys to become strong, competitive, well-organized, off-season programs.

My son is learning how to pitch BEFORE he becomes a pitcher; form, release point, follow through... every single thing about the art of pitching,” the father of a 12U GHVBL player told me Friday. “This way, when he’s strong enough to throw 80-85 pitches, he’ll know how to do it. I’m not just going to throw him out there at 12 and tell him to throw the ball as hard as he can to blow dudes away. Learn the ropes first, get stronger along the way, develop good pitching habits, respect your coaches, be a good teammate and then have at it.”

With tongue planted firmly in cheek, I replied, “But how can your kid earn a college scholarship with a dad that puts the well-being of his child before his own delusions of grandeur?” The well-being of our kids, mentally and physically, is what it’s all about. Teaching them how to deal with adversity and how to bounce back from it are the important lessons parents and coaches should be teaching over derating umpires and fellow coaches, so we ALL need to understand and appreciate that it’s not about us... it’s about the kids. So, pipe down, y’all, and provide an experience that’s fun for all and free from negativity.

What we really need is more events like the Brew Crew 12U Invitational, recently sponsored by the Brewster Crush and Brewster Little League. The host Brewster Crush Orange edged the Mahopac Wolves, 3-2, for the title, but it wasn’t just about baseball for the organizers, including Coach Mike Subin.

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It’s been an absolute trailblazer this summer, and we’re excited to see what the future holds for this league.”

Here, here! #MoreOfThatPlease!
Yorktown’s Jack Prybylski gets up for a header in the undefeated Huskers’ 8-1 summer league win over Vincent Reyes’ Valhalla Vikings last Tuesday. Yorktown remained in first place and improved to 6-1-1 overall and appear to be part of the upper crust of a super competitive Section 1 Class A field of 30 challengers this fall, including summer league foes Somers (5-3), Rye (4-1-2), Eastchester (5-1), Panas (3-3-1) and Lakeland (4-1-2). ... see Focus on Summer Soccer/Direct Rays.