



New Castle Sign Controversy Grows After Town Board Stresses Enforcement

By Martin Wilbur

A decision by the New Castle Town Board to limit the escalation of lawn signs in public spaces throughout town has been met with concerns that some signs are being removed from private property.

The growing controversy occurred after a board majority recently tried clarifying for its code enforcement officers a longstanding town law that prohibits signs from being displayed in the public right of way.

While the town has not traditionally enforced the code for political signs, Supervisor Ivy Pool said there has been a steady stream of complaints since she's been in office requesting that the board crack down on those who place signs of all types on public property.

Pool said she responded at one point to a resident that the town would likely steer

clear of enforcement on political signage because their presence has been a democratic tradition during the run-up to an election, but the code enforcement officer and town counsel instructed her that there needs to be consistency and clarity.

There have also been signs for various businesses scattered about town that also clutter the roadsides, she said.

"It came down to essentially were we going to allow signs to proliferate throughout town or were we going to enforce the law that we have and have had for decades," Pool said.

The issue has strained emotions among some town residents in what has been a tense six-month period since the public hearing commenced on the Form Based Code. Signs opposing the proposed code have sprouted since last fall, and now with a Democratic primary for Town Board heating up in what

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Welcome to Our Garden

The Pleasantville Community Garden at St. John's Episcopal Church hosted an open house last Saturday for the community where volunteers provided the public with a tour of the garden and how produce is grown, gathered and distributed to the food insecure at Hillside Food Outreach and Neighbors Link. Nearly 100,000 pounds of food have been distributed since the garden's 2014 inception. Pictured, left to right, are Abi Wright, the garden's chair of the board of directors, and board members Katie Beatley, Sarah Hoadley and her daughter, Elizabeth, Andrea Parada and Helen Meurer. For more information, visit www.pvillegarden.org.

Pleasantville Faces Decision on Future of Village Swimming Pool

By Abby Luby

In less than four weeks Pleasantville residents will have a chance to swim in the village pool for the first time in two years after the pandemic forced the facility's closure last summer.

Last week a task force that was established to conduct a community survey to gauge community feedback addressed the pool's longer-term future.

At the Apr. 26 Village Board meeting, Troy Tassier, head of the Pleasantville Pool Task Force, and task force member Jim Kennedy were joined by pool design consultant Steve Rimkunas of Rimkunas Engineering of Huntington, L.I. They have been meeting along with village officials for the last two months in an effort to weigh different options for the Lake Street pool's future.



Pleasantville officials will consider possibilities for the village pool in the coming months.

"We want to give the community something new for the future and we realize there are cost constraints," Kennedy said.

Sometime this summer, Rimkunas is

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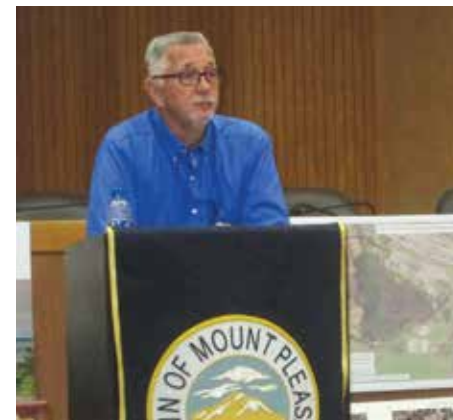
Comp Plan Completion, Senior Housing Focus of Mount Pleasant This Year

By Martin Wilbur

Completing the long-awaited Comprehensive Plan update and attracting developers to consider construction of housing for seniors and empty-nesters are two of the key issues Mount Pleasant officials hope to address in the months ahead.

Last Saturday morning, Supervisor Carl Fulgenzi and most of the Town Board held an in-person forum at Town Hall for residents to ask questions and receive updates on issues large and small facing the town. About 20 residents attended the session, in what Fulgenzi hopes will be the first of periodic public forums to interact directly with town residents after more than a year of virtual board meetings. The board was also joined by Highway Superintendent Richard Benkwitt

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MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

Mount Pleasant Supervisor Carl Fulgenzi addressed a gathering of about 20 residents last Saturday morning at Town Hall on a variety of issues facing the town.

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is viewed by some as a matchup of slates with opposing views on the code, tensions continue to intensify.

Councilwoman Lisa Katz, one of the Democratic candidates for supervisor who opposes stepping up of sign enforcement, said she finds the timing of the remainder of the board's action "troubling." She said she believes the Stop the Form Based Code signs are being targeted as a strategy "to suppress free speech."

"So I find it troubling that these signs are really being targeted because it is such a hot-button issue in the election," Katz said. "It seems like they're trying to suppress political expression here so that it's not an issue for people to be aware of to vote upon."

Pool said employees will not be scouring the town's roads removing signs, but where there are complaints that turn out to be valid and if there are obvious violations, those will be addressed.

"We don't have an army of code enforcers who are going to go out and remove political signs or any other lawn signs from around town," Pool said. "We don't have the manpower for that, or the person power for

that, nor do we have the budget for that, nor do we have the appetite to do so."

Town Attorney Nicholas Ward-Willis explained that signs on private property are not affected by the more stringent enforcement, but any sign in the public right of way could be subject to removal. The right of way is defined as the roadway, then if there is a sidewalk and what could be up to three feet from the edge of the pavement.

"So your first two or three feet of what you think is your property is likely not your property, it's the right of way," Ward-Willis said.

Highlighting the politically-charged emotions in town, resident Margaret Ferguson, president of Residents United to Save Chappaqua Hamlet, a group opposed to the code, said last month a resident had two signs on her property vandalized, having been slashed with a box cutter and covered with profanities.

In the early afternoon on Apr. 25, Ferguson said someone came to her house, ripped her lawn sign from its holder, cut it in half and tossed it in her driveway. Later that day, after she had replaced the sign, a car arrived at her property, and the driver seeing her sign,



MARTIN WILBUR PHOTO

One of the lawn signs near the intersection of Route 117 and King Street in Chappaqua. The Town of New Castle's stepped-up enforcement of signs in the right of way has been met with skepticism by some residents.

made lewd gestures.

"It's extremely serious what's going on in this community," said Ferguson, who did not specifically criticize the town's recent sign enforcement. "There is a lot of animosity

directed toward us for no good reason."

Katz said she has heard from hundreds of residents who believe that the town's actions are going too far.

"I don't have hundreds of people calling me saying their signs are getting stolen; I have hundreds of people calling me asking about this law, and many – yeah, hundreds – asking me about this, and many others are saying their signs are being stolen," Katz said.

Deputy Supervisor Jeremy Saland said residents who have their signs vandalized should call the police. Citizens should not be deputizing themselves as enforcement officers.

"By all means make the report. We don't want that to happen," Saland said. "No residents should take the law into their own hands to effectuate it and enforce it, and they shouldn't do it now."

There are two authorized public spaces in town where organizations can ask the town to place their signs for upcoming events – on the grassy portion of the triangle in downtown Chappaqua and near the corner of routes 133 and 100 in Millwood.

Comp Plan Completion, Senior Housing Focus of Mount Pleasant This Year

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and County Legislator Margaret Cunzio.

Fulgenzi said the town is working toward completing the Comprehensive Plan update, which would be the first revision to the document since 1970 when it was known as the Master Plan. It is believed the town will have it completed within the news few months, he said. Currently, public comments from the scoping document are being incorporated into a Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS), which could be completed by June, followed by a public hearing.

The focus of the Comprehensive Plan is on revitalizing the hamlets through targeted

rezoning to improve the Hawthorne, Thornwood and Valhalla business districts and entice builders to include mixed-use development.

While there will be changes, Fulgenzi said the idea is to freshen, not alter, the look and feel of the hamlets.

"We're not going to change the face of our hamlets," Fulgenzi said. "We want to improve the spaces in our hamlets, that's all."

He also hopes the updated Comprehensive Plan will motivate property owners to make improvements to their buildings, and if one building owner makes upgrades, it could inspire others to follow suit.

He said the stakeholder meetings over the

past three years have been resident-driven with the help of the town's consultants. It's the Town Board's responsibility to approve the updated plan and implement the zoning changes to help realize the community's vision, the supervisor said.

"Now we have a Master Plan to help drive the town into the future, and this Master Plan was done by residents like you who came to meetings and gave suggestions on how we should move forward," Fulgenzi said.

Also part of the plan for the future is to attract senior housing to town. While there are plans for assisted living facilities, including the recent overlay zone approval for Brightview Senior Living on Grasslands Road that contains some independent living units, there is currently no restricted housing reserved for the 55-and-up crowd.

Fulgenzi said while the town approved the 73-home Baker Residential plan on 165 acres of the Legion of Christ property off of Columbus Avenue in 2018, that project has been abandoned by the developer. The town is pushing hard for the Legionnaires to accept the idea to entertain developers of age-restricted communities, but they have been resistant so far, he said.

Fulgenzi called the Legion of Christ property "an ideal site" for senior housing. The parcel is located next to the town's community center.

Councilwoman Laurie Smalley said the need for senior housing is crucial because Mount Pleasant, more than many Westchester communities, is a multigenerational town.

"It's so important to keep generations here," Smalley said. "We're unique in that way."

There were complaints about the ongoing noise from the Saw Mill Parkway road raising project by the state Department of Transportation (DOT). Fulgenzi said the DOT has been largely unresponsive not only to the town but to state representatives Sen. Peter Harkham and Assemblyman Thomas

Abinanti as well.

The state is raising the parkway to alleviate the persistent flooding in heavy rain.

"They have no regard at all for the hours that they're working," Fulgenzi said. "They're there on Saturdays, they're working until one in the morning, making all kinds of noise. It's one thing getting the project done. We understand that it needs to be done, but have a little respect for the neighbors' property."

Benkwitt said the 18-month project is advancing at an impressive pace because of the extended hours; otherwise, the work could last up to four years. He said the pile driving on the southbound side of the highway is progressing quickly with crews approaching the Marble Avenue exit. That exit will soon be raised about 18 inches, Benkwitt said.

Then work will commence on the northbound side, he said.

Residents along Pollywoggle Lane, Booth Street and Hobby Street have been severely impacted, and some in the crowd asked officials to arrange a meeting with Harkham and DOT representatives.

"The DOT is going to accept that you're not going to be happy," Benkwitt said. "They're going to try to do it in 18 months, they're going to try to do it shorter, and I'm not telling you to do that, but you're going to be very frustrated for the next 18 months."

Fulgenzi mentioned that there are currently no plans to move forward with the controversial lights project at Pat Henry Field, which was a source of angst for South Kensico Drive residents before the pandemic. However, he expects there to be movement soon to revive a plan.

He also expects installation of the carports at Town Hall and the Community Center that will hold solar panels to be done this year. Solar panels are also being installed on the roof of the Highway Department building.

Pleasantville Faces Decision on Future of Village Swimming Pool

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expected to present designs on rehabilitating the existing pool or constructing a new pool.

"We're excited to see what can be designed," Tassier said.

According to Village Administrator Eric Morrissey, a resolution is expected to be voted on at the May 10 Village Board meeting that would formally hire Rimkunas as a consultant.

Keeping the kiddie pool or building a new one as part of a larger facility has been an issue that has been raised repeatedly in the past. Mayor Peter Scherer mentioned the matter again last week.

"There have been many comments about how many new pools are now dispensing with kiddie pools," Scherer said. "Our pool survey indicated that a separate kiddie pool is preferred."

Rimkunas said he also believes that a separate kiddie pool is a good choice.

"If you have one pool with a large wading pool, it would take up too much space," he said. "Also, if there's an accident in the kiddie wading area (of the larger pool) you'd have to

shut the entire pool down."

The existing larger pool's basic shell is more than 70 years old and has seen numerous repairs. The liner was replaced in 2006 for \$80,000, and village officials are not sure how much longer it may last.

Two years ago, the kiddie pool sprang a leak from return pipes around its perimeter. It was closed, the pipes were replaced and the pool was reopened.

Last year the village received a proposal from another pool designer for \$3.5 million to completely rebuild the pool. Another estimate to rehabilitate the pool was \$1.5 million. Both choices would have required a bond with an increase in property taxes and possibly a hike in pool fees.

"If we're looking at rehabbing the existing pool, we are looking at over a \$1 million bond," Morrissey said. "If we are looking at a new pool construction, that too would require a bond. But something needs to be done to move forward. We'd like our pool to be used this summer and next summer and possibly start work after the next summer."

State to Lift Most Capacity Limits for Businesses, Offices Later This Month

By Martin Wilbur

Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced Monday a significant step toward fully reopening the economy in the next two weeks with the lifting of many of the COVID-19 capacity limits imposed on businesses and venues.

In coordination with New Jersey and Connecticut, Cuomo said that starting May 19, retail, restaurant and food service establishments, gyms and fitness centers, amusement and family entertainment outlets, museums, theaters, hair salons and barber shops and offices will be allowed to return to full capacity.

The governor said each business or organization may make its own decision on when and how to fully reopen based on economic and health considerations, but most establishments will be able to operate freely.

"It is irrefutable when you look at the numbers that New Yorkers have made tremendous progress," Cuomo said. "All the arrows are pointed in the right direction, have been for awhile and are dramatically pointing in the right direction."

There will still be 33 percent capacity limits at outdoor stadiums starting on May 19, including Yankee Stadium and Citi Field, one area where limits will remain in effect.

In addition to the lifting of most limits, outdoor food and beverage curfews will be eliminated on May 17 while the indoor food and beverage service curfews will also expire on May 31.

For indoor catered events, the limit on guests will rise to 250, but if the venue requires proof of full vaccination or a recent negative COVID-19 test, up to 500 guests would be allowed.

Residential gathering limits will also increase to 50 people on May 19.

As vaccinations have increased across the state, there has been a sharp reduction in infection rates and hospitalizations, enabling the state to take the relatively bold step. The state's positivity rate on Sunday was 1.94 percent, and 1.79 on the seven-day rolling average.

Over the past month there has been a 50 percent decline in the positivity rate statewide and a 38-percent reduction in hospitalizations, Cuomo said.

As of Monday, the state has administered more than 15.7 doses of the vaccines, with just over seven million people, or 35.2 percent of the state's population, now fully vaccinated. About 9.3 million people have had at least one dose of either the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines.

However, the slowing of the vaccination rate in the past couple of weeks is a cause for concern. Cuomo pledged that his administration will work on convincing young people, most notably the 16-to-25 age group, to take the vaccine. Last week, he asked high schools to schedule their own drives to help students 16 and up get vaccinated.

While that age group was the last to be eligible for vaccines, which partially explains why only 18.5 percent have been vaccinated, the "superhero" mentality also is a factor, Cuomo said.

"We're going to continue focus with the vaccinations," he said. "Young people have to get vaccinated and I'm going to continue working on that."

In Westchester, County Executive George Latimer said the county is launching a public information campaign to try and vaccinate the younger and the skeptical population.

The campaign, titled the "I Kicked COVID to the Curb" drive, is an illustrated mailer geared toward students and their parents on the importance of vaccination.

The county also has created a public service announcement video with New York Knicks players Obi Toppin, an Ossining native, and Immanuel Quickley about the need to get vaccinated. Latimer will also host a virtual Town Hall that is geared toward younger people on May 13.

This Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., the

county is hosting a Mother's Day vaccination drive at Westchester Community College that encourages residents to bring their mom if she hasn't gotten vaccinated yet, and the adult child can get vaccinated as well. Gift baskets are available while supplies last.

For appointments for Saturday's drive, visit <https://on.ny.gov/3gJdD5B>. Walk-ins are also welcome.

While young adults can feel invincible, COVID-19 has affected people of all ages, Latimer said.

"So the message is very simple: We're not indestructible at any age. Get vaccinated," Latimer said. "That's the best path that we have, and for people that are young, you have

a great future ahead of you. When you're 20 years old, you may not realize how many more mountains you can still climb, not just physical mountains but thing that you can achieve in your life, and you want to be around for those things."

Westchester continues to have a sharply declining active caseload, down to 2,187, as of Sunday. For each of the past three weeks, there has been an average decline of about 1,000 cases.

On Saturday, there were 116 COVID-19-related hospitalizations, a number that has been continually dropping over the past month. Fatalities are up to 2,258, including nine deaths in the past week.

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New Castle, Croton-on-Hudson Mask Laws Lifted as Numbers Drop

By Martin Wilbur and Anna Young

New Castle and Croton-on Hudson allowed their mask mandates to sunset last week as both municipalities lifted their states of emergency.

The New Castle law, approved last July, required masks for everyone on public

property as well as on some private property such as in places of business, although there was a list of exemptions.

Supervisor Ivy Pool said she rescinded the local state of emergency last Wednesday because the only aspect of the emergency that remained in effect was the mask ordinance. It also came after the Centers for Disease

Control issued new guidance that masks do not need to be worn outside if a person is fully vaccinated and can maintain social distancing.

"I'm proud of the proactive response that we took to this incident and I'm also pleased to report that this action, along with the other public health measures that were enacted by the county and the state, really helped to control the spread of COVID-19 in New Castle," Pool said.

Approval of the town's mask legislation, the first of its kind in the state, was in response to the cluster of 27 COVID-19 cases that were linked to activities surrounding the Horace Greeley High School graduation last June and to provide the town's police department the opportunity for enforcement.

Although Gov. Andrew Cuomo had called on the public to wear masks as early as April 2020, there wasn't a mechanism to enforce the regulation.

The law required masks for everyone on public property as well as on some private property such as in places of business except for a list of specific exemptions.

While in effect, violators were subject to summonses carrying a fine of up to \$250 for the first offense and \$500 for each subsequent offense.

Pool said vaccination will be the solution to returning to as normal as possible.

"Our success really depends on the ability for folks to go out and get vaccinated," she said. "Being able to continue down this path means everyone needs to be able to do their part."

Croton Ends Emergency

In Croton-on Hudson, nearly five months after a public health emergency was declared, village officials also lifted the order last week as widespread availability of the COVID-19 vaccine has resulted in a sharp decline of active cases.

The emergency order was rescinded by Village Manager Janine King on Apr. 29, with the village reporting only six coronavirus cases. When the order was enacted, the village had 48 active cases, a number that fluctuated during the holiday season.

The village's emergency declaration, which was enacted on Dec. 15, was renewed every 30 days and required face masks or coverings be worn on public, private and commercial properties when unable to maintain a six-foot distance from another person who is not a member of the same household. Residential property was exempted from the emergency order.

The order also required individuals playing sports, participating in fitness classes or recreational activities to wear a mask or face covering. Police officers, firefighters, ambulance personnel and other first responders engaged in public safety situations were also required to be masked.

Those who violated the law were subject to a maximum fine of \$1,000 for each infraction.

Since March 2020, Croton-on-Hudson has reported 761 cases of COVID-19.

Westchester Recognizes Mental Health Awareness Month

Westchester County Executive George Latimer officially launched May as Mental Health Awareness Month on Monday.

Mental Health Awareness Month is a nationwide effort to address and overcome the stigma associated with mental health needs. One in five people will experience a mental health illness during their lifetime. Everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health, especially now.

The message of Mental Health Awareness Month is that mental health wellness is for everyone, and there are practical tools that everyone can use to improve mental health.

Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health (DCMH) Commissioner Michael Orth said the well-being of all residents is a top priority.

"The pandemic has taken a toll on everyone's mental health," Orth said. "Knowing the signs and symptoms and who to link to if you are concerned about yourself or a loved one is an

important first step in getting help."

As part of the county's efforts to promote Mental Health Awareness Month, DCMH is launching a "Tweet a Day for May" campaign, sharing information about events, ideas and resources. Posts will be accessible by going to Twitter at @WestchesterDCMH, Facebook at @westchesterdcmh and Instagram at westchester_county_dcmh.

The department will also be hosting a special event on May 6 in recognition of Children's Mental Health Awareness Month, "Westchester Strong: A System of Care Response to a Global Pandemic," which features a panel of key stakeholders representing the county's robust Community Network Model and a keynote presentation from Kristina Ramos-Callan of The United Hospital Fund.

To learn more about the event, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/10th-myra-alfreds-roundtable-tickets-149372331665>.

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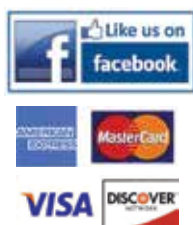
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New Castle's Democratic-Endorsed Slate to Run on Indie Line

By Martin Wilbur

The New Castle Democratic-endorsed slate that is being challenged in a June primary has been collecting signatures to appear on an independent line, ensuring a contested election in November.

Supervisor candidate Holly McCall and candidates for Town Board, Councilwoman Lori Morton, who won a special election last November to complete an unexpired term, Michael Weinberger and Jennifer Bounds will be on the 4 New Castle line.

Their opponents, current Councilwoman and supervisor candidate Lisa Katz and her running mates Andrea Sanseverino Galan,

Tara McAdam Kassel and Jennifer Louis-Jeune, announced their candidacies on the independent Unite New Castle in early February before forcing a primary in March.

The two sides must submit their petitions to the Board of Elections from May 18 to 25 in order to appear on their respective independent lines.

McCall said the decision to seek an independent line was to guarantee that all voters, including registered Republicans, those who are unaffiliated and registered members of minor parties, will have a choice in November. There are close to 7,000 registered Democrats who live in town and there are no Republican candidates for the

town election this cycle.

"We know that they are going to seek an independent line as well, so while we're really confident that we have the best ticket and will prevail in the primary, we still want to make sure and let everybody have the choice in November, and the decision is not made in June," McCall said.

She said she expects that the message for the primary and the general election will be to address issues that are important for the entire town, including development opportunities for Millwood and social justice and equity issues relating to affordable housing.

"We know we are the best candidates to move New Castle forward," said McCall. "The issues out there are bigger than just a rezoning issue and the Chappaqua hamlet, so our message is unchanged, whether it's June or November."

Morton added that she found it "a bit baffling" that New Castle United jumped into the race to pursue a non-partisan line, but is now seeking to run as Democrats.

"Again, it seems like what is fairest to the community is for the community to get to vote," she said.

Weinberg said the decision to go on an independent line provides their slate another chance to talk to the town's voters. However, Democratic voters will have the chance to decide in June who they want to represent their party, which in his opinion should not be someone who ran twice for town council on the Republican side, Weinberg said,

alluding to Katz.

"The question is who is deserving of the Democratic line, and what have you done to earn the Democratic line and what will you do when you have the Democratic line," Weinberg said. "I would agree that that would include the ability to step up and support other Democrats."

Asked about her reaction to the opposing slate also seeking an independent line, Katz said she believes in the democratic process and the right to ballot access. Katz said she found it inconsistent, however, that a party that challenged their 2019 opponents right to an independent line would be seeking their own.

Katz brushed aside comments about her Democratic loyalties and having run twice as a councilwoman endorsed by the town Republicans, saying she has been a registered Democrat since she was 18 years old. Sending out postcards doesn't bolster party credentials, she said.

Katz also maintained that town elections should be about ideas and not about party labels.

"To attack someone who has served on the Town Board for eight years as not having done their Democratic duty to this town, I find that a little reprehensible because I didn't mail a postcard," Katz said. "I ran this town for eight years; no one on their slate has done that. They don't know how to defeat somebody who has a lot of support from almost 7,000 Democratic voters in this town."

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No. Castle Moves Ahead to Upgrade Sewer Plant for Downtown Armonk

By Martin Wilbur

North Castle officials are planning improvements to the wastewater treatment plant for the sewer district that serves downtown Armonk rather than opting for the far more expensive facility expansion to accommodate additional downtown development.

Last week, the Town Board agreed to authorize Environmental Design & Research (EDR) of Syracuse, an engineering and environmental consulting firm, to complete final design for the upgraded treatment plant.

The town had previously considered expanding the plant's capacity from the current 500,000 gallons of flow a day to either 600,000 or 700,000 gallons, but the cost was estimated to be at least twice as much as the projected \$4.5 million upgrade project.

Sal Misiti, the town's director of water and sewer, said the municipality's Request for Proposal with EDR to improve the treatment process focused on five areas that would not cause the plant to exceed its daily flow capacity while maintaining the mandated nitrogen removal requirements.

He said the five improvements would include adding granular carbon filtration to a remove additional nitrogen from the effluent; upgrading the existing ultraviolet disinfection system; upgrading the sludge thickening equipment to increase efficiency; install a water system using clean plant effluent to complete the facility's processes, thereby easing demand on the town's Water District

#4; and upgrading three pumping station control panels.

Misiti said the town needs to show the state that it can accept the flow from the projects that may be built and to better control the carbon and nitrogen levels.

"What this does is really polish off our effluent to a greater degree," Misiti said. "Once we supply that data to the regulatory agencies with higher flows, it won't be as much as an impact on our current limit of loading on the Long Island Sound."

Officials are confident that with the upgrade, the town can accommodate the approved projects and those under consideration in and around Armonk that would Sewer District #2.

While Councilman Saleem Hussain asked if the town could look for ways to pare down the upgrade to save some money, Town Attorney Roland recommended the town be more proactive.

"We're trying to stay ahead of the development that we know is on the heels because that development, once on line, will pretty much cap the plant at capacity, and since we're not increasing capacity, we need to be confident that the plant will run at its existing capacity, which is 500,000 gallons per day," Baroni said.

Robert Butterworth, principal at EDR, said the \$4.5 million estimated cost were based on historical perspectives, although costs over the past year are much higher because of the pandemic. He mentioned that the firm also estimates to the high side so there aren't surprises later in the process.

"You want something to come in that we have considered ourselves for some of the worst-case scenarios because we're developing these costs doing a worst-case scenario," Butterworth said. "We are trying hard to make sure that as costs come in,

they're lower than ours. Can we guarantee that? No, but that's our goal."

There may also be opportunities from grants from various governmental agencies that could reduce costs by 20 to 25 percent. Then there is always the hope that Congress passes an infrastructure spending plan that includes money for sewer and water improvement projects such as this.

During the Apr. 28 Town Board meeting, officials agreed that they must proceed with the design phase of the project. Councilwoman Barbara DiGiacinto said the proposed upgrade "is not a luxury, it's a necessity."

"Make no mistake, it's something that's definitely needed," added Councilman Barry Reiter. "Sal's put together an incredibly detailed report of what has to be done. There's the question expenses and costs, obviously. It's long overdue."



No Objection Here

Byram Hills High School emerged as the winners of the 40th annual Mock Trial Tournament over Scarsdale High School that was conducted virtually last month. The competition, presided over by Hon. Walter Rivera of the New York State Court of Claims, is organized by the Westchester County Bar Association. Byram Hills was one of 16 Westchester high schools to enter. The team will now represent the county in the regional tournament to be held this month, also virtually.

YORKTOWN HYDRANT FLUSHING NOTICE

The Yorktown Consolidated Water District will be flushing fire hydrants in sections 4, 5, 6 & part of 7 from May 10, 2021 thru June 25, 2021 between the hours of 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Please refer to your Town of Yorktown Trash Collection Schedule for the list of streets included in these sections. Visit us online at www.yorktownny.org/water for a daily list of the streets being flushed. We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

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Letters to the Editor

Bedford Schools Has Made Impressive Strides in Multiple Areas

It has been my privilege to serve on the Bedford Central School District (BCSD) Board of Education since 2018 and I am now running for re-election. I am proud of what has been achieved in my first three years and I am excited for our district's future.

I am particularly proud of how we have navigated COVID-19. We were ahead of the curve in connecting students with Chromebooks and offering in-person instruction since the beginning of this school year. I have supported the investments necessary to keep our students and faculty safe and connected, and I was thrilled to see so many students have the recent opportunity to return to full in-person instruction.

BCSD will continue expanding on its tradition of excellence if we focus on:

- A safe, purposeful recovery from COVID-19;
- A challenging and enriching school experience for all;
- A commitment to inclusion, diversity and equity;
- Effective communication; and
- Fiscal responsibility.

Since I joined the board, the district has continued its strategic growth while improving its fiscal health. We have consistently adopted responsible budgets. In 2019 and 2020, New York's comptroller determined that BCSD had no fiscal stress for the first time in many years.

I am also proud of the contributions I've

made to further the district's work toward true inclusion, as well as its anti-racism initiatives. A steadfast commitment to inclusion, diversity and equity will help ensure that all students and staff have the opportunity to thrive.

During my first term, I have listened attentively to community members, BCSD employees and partners and my board colleagues in order to make informed decisions. If re-elected, I will remain committed to thoughtful leadership. I would be honored to represent our community for another term.

Michael Bauscher

Member, Bedford Central School
District Board of Education

Yorktown Officials' Discussion of Overlay Law Was a Dereliction of Duty

You might have heard that the Yorktown Town Board is considering a change to town rules that would effectively greenlight a plan to turn the historic Soundview property at the corner of Route 118 and Underhill Avenue into a mixed-use strip mall.

Regardless of whether you support or oppose the draft of the revised overlay law, have no position on the law or don't even know what the law is about, you'd have to agree that last Tuesday's Town Board discussion of an updated version of the law was an egregious failure of our Town Board's ability to lead. The meeting was depressing, frustrating, disheartening – and frightening.

Our Town Board members abdicated their responsibility to grapple with the substantive issues involved in a major piece of legislation.

See for yourself. The video is on the town's website. Scroll to the one-hour, 47-minute mark.

<https://tinyurl.com/5e97dhhr>.

If this is this how laws are made in Yorktown, we've got a problem. A serious problem.

The purpose of the meeting agenda item was clear: to review the comments the Town Board had received from its advisory boards to the draft of the new overlay law. Like all proposed legislation, draft laws can usually benefit from additional sets of eyes and some tweaking before being scheduled for a public hearing. That's the purpose of the referral process. The Town Board doesn't have to accept any of the recommendations, but, at a minimum, one would expect them to discuss them. Otherwise, why bother asking the advisory boards to spend their time reviewing the drafts?

But that's not what happened last week.

Instead, Town Board members spent an hour selectively reading portions of the comments that supported the general goals

of the overlay law and justifying the need for an overlay law, which the Town Board already adopted in 2020. What's new, and in need of a serious discussion, is a significant procedural change to the way the law currently works – and the addition of two specific overlay districts: Yorktown Heights and Lake Osceola.

At one point, Supervisor Slater said he disagreed with one of the Planning Board's recommended tweaks. But he never explained what that recommendation was or why he disagreed with it. And the rest of the Board said nothing. Nothing.

Shame on the members of our Town Board. We expect more from you. We hope for more the next time these matters come before you.

Michael Hickins

Yorktown Heights

Bedford School Candidate Would Represent All Constituencies in District

I am running for the Bedford Central School District (BCSD) Board of Education for my daughter and all other young girls and women, especially those of color, so that they know they too can be leaders in their own communities.

I serve on numerous local boards, committees and commissions where I often find myself being the only person of color at the table. I now see a district striving to better serve our broad, diverse community and I will do everything possible to support that effort.

BCSD residents who recently moved here from New York City repeatedly tell me that they were attracted by our diversity and the opportunity to learn a second language. Our greatest strength is our diversity, and by effectively communicating this to current and potential residents, we can combat the trend of declining enrollment happening all over Westchester.

I have 13 years of mission-driven nonprofit experience in communications, operations and fundraising with a proven track record of success in organizational growth, engaging

diverse audiences, building brand identity and fostering long-term partnerships, all while making data-driven decisions. I've successfully managed tight budgets and have a deep belief in public accountability and transparency.

I encourage people both with and without children in the public schools to share their priorities with me because I am only one person with a limited perspective, and while I am in a seat on the Board of Education, I represent you. Parents with young children, parents with high schoolers, empty-nesters, senior citizens, private school families – you are all taxpayers, all affected by the quality of our public schools through your property values and an educated populace. We are all in this together. If elected, I will have a fiduciary responsibility to the district and I will uphold it.

I humbly ask for your vote for on May 18.

Namasha Schelling
Pound Ridge

Monsignor's Passing Evoked Humorous Memory

Seeing Monsignor Dermot Brennan's obituary in the Apr. 27-May 3 Examiner reminded me of a story that he told me once. He grew up in the Corpus Christi Catholic parish in Manhattan in the same house as the late comedian George Carlin and was a very good friend of George's brother. When his brother (or possibly his mother) died, George called Monsignor Brennan and

asked him to perform the funeral, which he did.

As a bit of irony, Monsignor Brennan once served on the faculty of Cardinal Hayes High School which, years earlier, had dismissed George.

John F. McMullen
Yorktown

Guest Column

Massive State Budget Comes With Massive Costs for Taxpayers

By Assemblyman Kevin Byrne

For the past several months, I participated in numerous committee meetings and budget hearings to advocate for more responsible state policy that would put taxpayers first and support essential services that assist public health and safety, as well as our schools, seniors, veterans and first responders.

In the end, despite our best efforts to work collaboratively with colleagues from across the aisle, one-party rule still stuck taxpayers with a whopping \$212 billion budget. Astoundingly, New York's budget is now larger than the budgets of Texas and Florida combined.

The truth is that most of the omnibus spending bills which appropriated billions of dollars in taxpayer money were voted on before a final budget deal was agreed to or submitted in writing for legislators to review. This type of process continues to be reckless, irresponsible and quite simply fails New Yorkers, which is why I ultimately voted against the state budget in its entirety.

In typical Albany fashion, the budget process lacked transparency. Shockingly, the most transparent part of the closed-door budget negotiations may have occurred from when the Democratic Conference's infighting about an Excluded Workers Fund found its way into the press. The fund, which was ultimately included in the budget, provided \$2.1 billion in taxpayer money to unemployed illegal immigrants. Under this new program, recipients will be eligible to receive a lump sum of up to \$15,600, and can even be eligible to receive up to \$3,200 without providing paperwork demonstrating loss of income.

New York's unemployment rate is

already second worst in the country, and the Department of Labor still has serious issues processing unemployment claims. While so many of our law-abiding citizens continue to struggle with loss of income and an inability to receive unemployment, it shouldn't be a surprise that spending an additional \$2.1 billion for illegal immigrants on unemployment would be highly controversial.

Expensive new programs like this cost money, and to fund them we saw record-setting tax hikes included in the budget despite our state receiving over \$23 billion in federal aid from the American Rescue Plan. Sen. Charles Schumer said the aid alone eliminated the state's previous deficit. The federal aid should have also eliminated any need for tax hikes or budget cuts, but Albany politicians simply couldn't help themselves.

The new tax hikes include increased tax rates on businesses and on high-income earners who already pay disproportionately more in income taxes. In fact, the top 1 percent of income earners already account for 40 percent of the state's personal income tax.

New York continues to lead the nation in out-migration, and the pandemic has only exacerbated our state's affordability crisis. These tax hikes will only increase the likelihood of tax-migration and limit the opportunity to create new wealth, jobs and economic growth.

Not surprisingly the state still managed to double down on its reputation of picking winners and losers by allocating \$1.5 billion from settlement funds for the governor to spend at his discretion, \$385 million in additional pork barrel, \$370 million for the governor's special economic development programs and \$42.5 million for marketing

programs like StartUp New York. That's in addition to the state continuing its \$420 million special tax credit for the Hollywood film industry.

Adding insult to injury, the budget afforded New York City employees an option for early retirement but specifically excluded other counties in the state from participating. This type of option, if carefully implemented, could have helped save money for county governments throughout the state.

Counties will also be hurt by the state continuing its practice of unfairly diverting millions of dollars in county sales tax revenue from county governments to fund the state's own budget needs.

This year's budget inappropriately spent billions of our tax dollars and it will undoubtedly cause additional hardship for our state down the road.

All that said, it's worth noting there is always some good mixed in with the bad. I was pleased to see that some of the items I advocated for made its way into the final package, including but not limited to:

- The Adult Cystic Fibrosis Assistance Program that was indefensibly eliminated in last year's budget during the pandemic was partially restored at \$375,000. However, it's still worth noting the budget didn't restore the program permanently, and is only funding the program at about half of what it did in previous years.

- The legislature was able to successfully restore and expand funding to \$5 million for the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer Peer to Peer Program. It was previously cut by Gov. Cuomo in his proposed budget. The Dwyer program, started by Rep. Lee Zeldin, is a tremendous program for our military veterans, and is deserving of expanded funding.

- Capital spending to support local transportation and infrastructure like roads, bridges and culverts did receive a welcomed boost in funding through the state's CHIPS (\$538.1 million), PAVE-NY (\$150 million), Extreme Winter Recovery (\$100 million) and Bridge NY (\$100 million) programs. This type of investment benefits all New Yorkers.

- Likewise, the state's Environmental Protection Fund received \$300 million to help preserve our open spaces, keep our air clean and protect our drinking water.

- A proposed pause of the middle-class income tax cut that was previously passed by the Legislature in 2016 was soundly rejected.

There's no reason our state couldn't have funded all these important programs while still decreasing the tax burden and doing more to pay down the state's debt. Albany continues to have a massive spending problem, and it's only been amplified under one-party rule.

We still have many challenges ahead. Some were caused by the costly sacrifices we've been forced to endure due to the pandemic. Others were caused by an incompetent government that spends tax dollars as if it were monopoly money.

I look forward to the day where I can vote on a budget that supports essential programs and does right by our taxpayers. Sadly, yet again, this year's budget failed to do just that.

Assemblyman Kevin Byrne (R-Mahopac) represents the 94th Assembly District, which includes portions of Putnam and Westchester counties. Byrne is the ranking minority member of the Assembly Committee on Health and serves as chair of the Assembly Minority Program Committee.

Letters to the Editor

Bauscher Right Choice to Keep Bedford Schools Headed in Right Direction

My family moved to Mount Kisco in 2011 and I have two children currently attending Mount Kisco Elementary School. Having seen how the Bedford Central School District Board of Education has successfully handled the challenging situations in the past several years, I enthusiastically support Mike Bauscher for the board. Mike and the board have helped our children and schools through the difficulties of implementing the DLBE School of Choice as well as with the move to virtual schooling during COVID.

Mike is an accomplished lawyer, an effective communicator and a critical thinker who has the appropriate experience with his previous tenure on the school board as well as the Budget Advisory Committee. Perhaps as important is Mike's presence in the community as he is a fixture on the fields of Leonard Park coaching both of his two sons' teams for

the Mount Kisco Little League (which as a board member I truly appreciate), and has also coached for Mount Kisco AYSO and the Bedford Youth Soccer League.

Mike is always the first to offer assistance when needed, and to organize whatever efforts are required in order to accomplish a particular goal. It is that sort of innate quality that makes him a tremendous leader, team player and a great friend. There are so many people within our community that count on Mike for sound advice and an educated opinion, which he gladly offers both genuinely and honestly.

For these reasons, I will be voting for Mike Bauscher in the upcoming Bedford Board of Education election on May 18.

Marshall Tilden III
Mount Kisco

Local Area an Example of Excellent and Poor Choices for Solar Power

Your reporting on solar energy progress in the Apr. 20-26 issue was a perfect example of the incredible potential of one solar energy project and the perplexing choices of another.

On the big plus side, I would like to commend Club Fit for its amazing rooftop solar array. What a perfect example of a smart business investment, an incredible use of a huge open space that gets direct sunlight and an amazing boon to our community by supplying power for 100 homes in the area. These are the types of business leaders we need for America's future!

On the other end of the spectrum is your

report about the Mount Kisco solar farm project rejection. With the number of huge rooftops, parking lots and other suitable open space in our town, it is quite perplexing that the developer, Sunrise Community Solar, would choose to cut down trees in a heavily wooded area to put up a ground-mounted solar array.

Thank you for your terrific reporting, and looking forward to more smart, sensible solar in Westchester's future!

Pete Friedrich
Mount Kisco

SMALL NEWS IS BIG NEWS

Obituaries

Arthur Foley

Arthur Thomas Foley, 74, of Peekskill passed away peacefully of natural causes on Apr. 16 with family by his side at NewYork-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital. He suffered from a lifelong debilitating condition, which in recent years included Parkinson's disease. At the time of his death, he was a resident of The Emerald Peek Nursing & Rehabilitation Center where he lived for the past 10 years.

Arthur was born in Yonkers on Feb. 11, 1947, where he was raised by his loving parents, Arthur and Edith (Conti) Foley, in the Park Hill section of the city.

He attended Yonkers schools, which included Sacred Heart High School. An avid swimmer and dancer in his youth, he also was adept at roller and ice skating and later bike riding. He was somewhat of a history buff and the "go-to guy" when it came to family history. He loved to cook (and eat!) and for a while worked in southwest Yonkers restaurants.

Arthur is survived by his older brother,

Robert (Bob) Foley, and sister-in-law Mary Foley of Cortlandt Manor, who were his faithful companions. He also has three older sisters, Edith, Kathleen and Jacqueline. He has seven nieces and nephews, nine grandnieces and grandnephews and numerous cousins around the country.

Arthur was a devout Roman Catholic who prayed the Rosary and was devoted to Our Lady of Fatima, Padre Pio and prayed daily to St. Dymphna and the Blessed Mother. When he was able-bodied in his younger years, he was always trying to help the less fortunate at St. Denis parish in Yonkers.

Yorktown Funeral Home handled the arrangements. There was a Mass of Christian Burial at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Cortlandt on Apr. 24. Interment was at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Freedom Gardens for the Handicapped, 1680 Strawberry Rd., Mohegan Lake, N.Y. 10547.

much joy from her hobbies during her life.

She is survived by her children, George Presti Jr. of Southbury, Conn., Steven Presti and his partner, Kathy Kato, of Brewster, Toni Presti and her husband, Korey Elsesser, of Kent, Conn., Dianne Presti and her husband, William Cash, of Catskill, N.Y. and Caryn Presti and her husband, James Billesimo, of Poughquag, N.Y.; her grandchildren, Samantha and Caitlynne Cash and Marra Elsesser; her sister, Lucille Piccoli; sister-in-law Paula Coniglio and her husband, Bob; and several nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her sister, Anne Inaora, daughter-in-law Shirley Presti and her father-in-law George Presti and mother-in-law Mildred Presti.

Gloria Presti

Gloria Presti, a Brewster resident, died peacefully on Apr. 11 at her home. She was 92.

Presti was born July 26, 1928, in the Bronx to Anthony and Rose (Prester) Mancini. She was a graduate of Walton High School in the Bronx.

On June 12, 1948, she married the love of her life, George J. Presti, in St. Helena Church in the Bronx. He predeceased his wife after 50 years of marriage on Nov. 28, 1998.

Presti was a nursery schoolteacher for 15 years at Noah's Ark in Mahopac. She loved her job and working with children. She was an active member of the Putnam County Italian American Social Club in Brewster and a longtime parishioner of St. Lawrence O'Toole Church. Presti was also an avid reader and gardener and got so

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Police Blotter

Croton-on-Hudson Police Department

Apr. 20: A woman reported at 8:30 a.m. that in the area of Cleveland Drive and Croton Gorge Trail she was walking her leashed dog and a group of adults with about four unleashed dogs approached her, and the loose dogs started attacking her dog. The caller stated that she attempted to get the names of the adults involved but nobody would cooperate. Patrol responded to the area and did not locate any of the parties involved. Patrol continues to investigate.

Apr. 21: Patrol conducted a seatbelt safety checkpoint on Croton Point Avenue at 9:41 a.m. At one point, officers reported advising a female operator to pull over for not wearing a seatbelt. Patrol reports the female became irate and started screaming and yelling and exited the vehicle. Patrol was able to calm the individual down initially and have her sit back in her vehicle. The individual involved then attempted to drive off but patrol was able to stop the vehicle again. Patrol issued a summons to the operator for not wearing a seatbelt as well as a warning for another VTL violation.

Apr. 22: A caller reported at 3:24 p.m. that her daughter got off the school bus on Mount Airy Road 10 to 15 minutes ago and an unknown man in a black SUV drove up alongside her and asked if she wanted a ride. The girl was able to leave the area and run home. A description of the male indicated that he was a white male, bald, with beard stubble and possibly in his 40s. Patrols canvassed the area and could not locate the vehicle or individual involved. The investigation is ongoing.

Apr. 25: A caller reported finding graffiti on his building located on Old Post Road South at 2:46 p.m. The graffiti was caused sometime the previous overnight. Patrols will investigate.

North Castle Police Department

Apr. 25: Caller reported at 4:38 p.m. seeing a rowboat on Byram Lake capsized, with both occupants swimming to shore and appearing to check okay. The responding officer checked whether the parties involved needed medical attention. The officer reported the parties had left

the scene upon his arrival; however, the initial caller called back and stated he had made contact with the parties who were fine, did not require further assistance and had left the scene.

Apr. 27: A complainant arrived at headquarters at 2:08 p.m. and reported receiving harassing and threatening text messages and phone calls from an ex-boyfriend. The most recent message stated that he was going to come to her place of employment and kidnap her.

Yorktown Police Department

Apr. 24: Diane Harris-Hines, 54, of Peekskill, was arrested and charged at 11:52 a.m. with making a terrorist threat, a Class D felony, in connection with a threatening phone call made to the main office at Lakeland High School the previous day. During the call, Harris-Hines allegedly made threats that she was on her way to the school to cause physical harm to school administrators over an unresolved complaint. School Resource Officer Lawrence Panaccia put the school in lockdown and additional Yorktown police officers responded. Detectives responded to the defendant's residence but were unable to locate her. Later that night, Harris-Hines contacted detectives by phone and agreed to respond to Yorktown police headquarters the next day. She was remanded to Westchester County Jail in lieu of bail by Yorktown Town Justice Gary Raniolo.

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Retired Teacher Now Has the Time to Pursue Her Dream as a Novelist

By Martin Wilbur

Maureen Morrissey had for years wanted to write a book about the stories of her family.

But raising her three children, teaching elementary school full-time for 37 years and having a husband with a business, there was little time and energy to indulge in a dream.

Last June, Morrissey retired from Hutchinson Elementary School in Pelham, where she spent the final 20 years of her career. She finally was able to write a novel based loosely on her family's experiences while also incorporating her husband's ancestors as well.

The result was "Woven: Six Stories. One Epic Journey," which Morrissey self-published and released in December.

"My original idea when I was throwing around what I wanted to do with these stories, I didn't want them to die with me," said Morrissey, a 25-year Mount Kisco resident. "I have children, now I have grandchildren, I want them to know these stories."

The stories had been in Morrissey's head for years. The daughter of Holocaust survivors and refugees, she is a first-generation American. Initially, she thought about writing a memoir, but concluded that she didn't have enough material to make it a strong enough read.

As someone who loves novels, Morrissey thought fictionalizing portions of the story to bring the larger message to light was crucial.

"Woven" tells her story through a young girl named Tessa, raised by her parents in 1970s

New York City. She battles her own challenges as well as the demons of her parents.

Meanwhile, Cam looks to escape his own unhappy upbringing in the Midwest. His family's story dates back to the mid-19th century during the time of Great Famine in Ireland.

Tessa and Cam find each other in a chance meeting, overcoming their circumstances and building a life together into the 21st century over a couple of generations despite each receiving grief from their families for marrying out of their faith.

"Some people who have read the book have said it's kind of like a quintessential American story from that 20th century (perspective) of looking at how the kids in America grew up in the mid-1950s, '60s, '70s and '80s, how their lives were affected by their past, but how they then took that and how they are now affecting the future generations," Morrissey said.

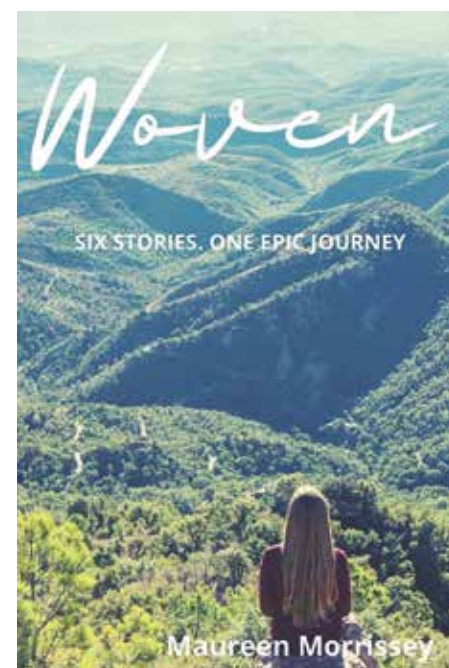
It didn't take Morrissey long to get started writing once she had the time. The day after retiring last June, she sat down and started cranking the story out, setting a five-day-a-week writing schedule for herself.

Morrissey acknowledged she was a bit impatient and decided to self-publish. She has left copies of "Woven" at most of Westchester's independent bookstores, along with getting the word out on social media.

"So I guess it's trying to get people to read it and share it and talk about it," Morrissey said. "I wasn't looking for a hugely wide



Mount Kisco resident and retired teacher Maureen Morrissey has written her first novel, "Woven: Six Stories. One Epic Journey," a book loosely based on stories of her family.



audience, but again, if it happens, I'll be very happy. I certainly wasn't looking to make it a high-paying second career. I really wrote it for myself and for my family. I'm hoping that people will read it and make some connection to it."

Now that Morrissey has seen her first novel into print, she's not planning to stop writing anytime soon. Morrissey is working on a new project, a historical novel, something she enjoys because of her love of history. While it's a completely different

story than "Woven," she hopes that her works can encourage people to get their stories out and preserve them for future generations.

"My biggest thing is I want people to think about their own history and to realize the importance of what their history is, that it's people's stories," Morrissey said. "That's what history is."

"Woven: Six Stories. One Epic Journey" is also available at local independent bookstores as well as on Amazon

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BluePath Service Dogs Hosts 5th Annual Virtual Walkathon May 15

On Saturday, May 15, BluePath Service Dogs will host its fifth annual walkathon – this year virtually.

The event, which begins with an online kick-off at 10 a.m., will raise funds in support of BluePath's mission to provide autism service dogs, offering safety, companionship and opportunities for independence.

As with many nonprofits, BluePath Service Dog's mission continues despite the uncertain times. The virtual walkathon, which is open to all ages, will help ensure that the organization's important work extends beyond the pandemic. Following the online kick-off, participants will head out to walk in their own communities and at their own pace – while doing their part to support children with autism and their families.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, one out of every 54 children born today will develop an autism spectrum disorder. It is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States.

For the Millman family, BluePath Clancy

has helped their 14-year-old son Alex lead a safer, fuller life. Shortly after being paired with the yellow Lab, Alex ran from his car in a crowded parking lot. "Without being given a command, Clancy dropped down and stopped Alex as a car came speeding down the row," said his mom, Sandi Millman. "We are indebted to BluePath for keeping our son safe."

Each BluePath dog comes with thousands of hours of training from dedicated volunteers and professional staff. While the cost to prepare these incredible dogs is upwards of \$40,000, BluePath provides its service dogs – and intensive, ongoing follow up support – completely free of charge. Reduced stress, improved sleeping routines, and more meaningful social interactions can allow families to feel a renewed sense of hope and empowerment.

"Clancy is an amazing dog who helps our family go out and do all the things that families do, including our regular walks around the neighborhood," Millman said. "These are ordinary experiences, yet they

would be impossible without an autism service dog by our sides. We are so very grateful for our ordinary days...for us, they are truly extraordinary."

"Elopement is a critical safety issue for individuals with autism," noted BluePath President and CEO Jody Sandler. "Our service dogs act as an anchor for children who wander and dramatically reduce danger. The virtual walkathon may look a little different than in years past, but it is every bit as essential – and great family fun. We had an amazing turnout last year and look forward to another fantastic event. I encourage all those interested in BluePath's life-changing mission to get involved."

Walkathon registration, which includes a BluePath t-shirt, is \$30 for the first participant and \$20 for additional participants. To learn more or register, visit www.bluepathservicedogs.org/ events. Sponsorship opportunities are still available. For more information, contact Erica Stanzone at 914-804-4023 or at erica.stanzone@bluepathservicedogs.org.



BluePath Clancy has helped 14-year-old Alex Millman lead a safer, fuller life.

BluePath Service Dogs, Inc. is located in Hopewell Junction. They can be reached at 845-377-0477 or by visiting www.bluepathservicedogs.org.



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Jacob Burns Postpones Reopening After Staff Member is COVID-19 Positive

By Martin Wilbur

Last Friday's highly-anticipated reopening of the Jacob Burns Film Center after being closed for more than 13 months due to COVID-19 restrictions was postponed to May 12 because a staff member tested positive for the virus.

The film center issued a statement Thursday morning that mentioned that numerous staff members had been exposed to the staff member who was found to be positive on Apr. 28. Proper public health measures were implemented and those who were exposed are now quarantining, the statement read. It did not say how many staff members are quarantining.

"With the temporary reduction in staff, we made the difficult yet necessary decision to postpone our reopening," the statement read. "Therefore, we will not open tomorrow, April 30, as planned."

As a precautionary measure, the Burns' facilities are being deep-cleaned.

Anyone who purchased a ticket for the first week of screenings, will receive an e-mail from customer service and their credit card will automatically be refunded.

Even at limited capacity, the film center and community were looking forward to welcoming back patrons for the first time since mid-March 2020. Capacity for theaters in New York State was increased on Apr. 26



The Jacob Burns Film Center in Pleasantville will be back in operation for in-person movies on May 12 after last Friday's reopening was postponed. A staffer tested positive for COVID-19 last week.

from 25 to 33 percent.

Among the roster of films that the Jacob Burns was scheduled to show in its opening week was the 2020 Oscar winner for Best Picture "Nomadland."

An updated film schedule, including 24-hour advance member pre-sale for the first week of screenings, will be released before the new opening.

"This delay has not dampened our enthusiasm," the statement read.

"April showers will bring May movies and we will continue to discover new films – together."

Photography Group Holding Outdoor Exhibit at Ossining Library

The Ground Glass photographers are on a roll again!

Undaunted by the pandemic, the group's members have taken their exhibits off the gallery walls, out the door and into the streets.

The current exhibit, "Abstractions," is part of The Ground Glass Road Show series. The exhibit is on display outdoors at the Ossining Public Library now through mid-June. An opening reception with the photographers will be held on Thursday, May 6 at 5 p.m. in the library's parking lot. Social distancing and masks are required. The event is free and open to the public. (The rain date is May 13.)

"Our members are dedicated to presenting several annual exhibits," commented Patrick Cicalo, president of The Ground Glass. "Considering closures, limitations on gathering and social distancing requirements, we decided to take our exhibits outdoors in the form of road shows."

The exhibit represents the work of 21 photographers throughout Westchester County. Large photographic prints (36 inches by 48 inches and some

even larger) on weatherproof material are displayed on walls, fences and sidewalk railings. This type of exhibit is a significant departure from a typical gallery show where photographic images are often no larger than 16 by 20 inches.

"Artwork in public places is uplifting, and we're pleased to return to the Ossining Library for a second Road Show exhibit," said Rita Baunok, exhibit chairperson for The Ground Glass. "It's exciting to see artistry outdoors and the creativity it represents. People will enjoy the unusual images in this show and the unique way they are presented."

While the exhibit is best seen in person, a web rendition of "Abstractions" appears at www.thegroundglass.org. The photographs in the exhibit are available for sale in large or small sizes. Given the enthusiastic response to its series of outdoor exhibits, The Ground Glass is offering to make exhibits available to towns, venues or organizations interested in hosting future shows.

The Ossining Public Library is located at 53 Croton Ave. in Ossining.

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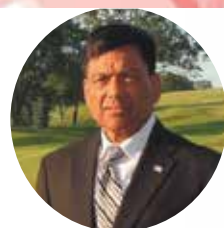
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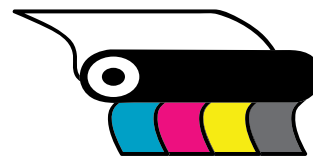
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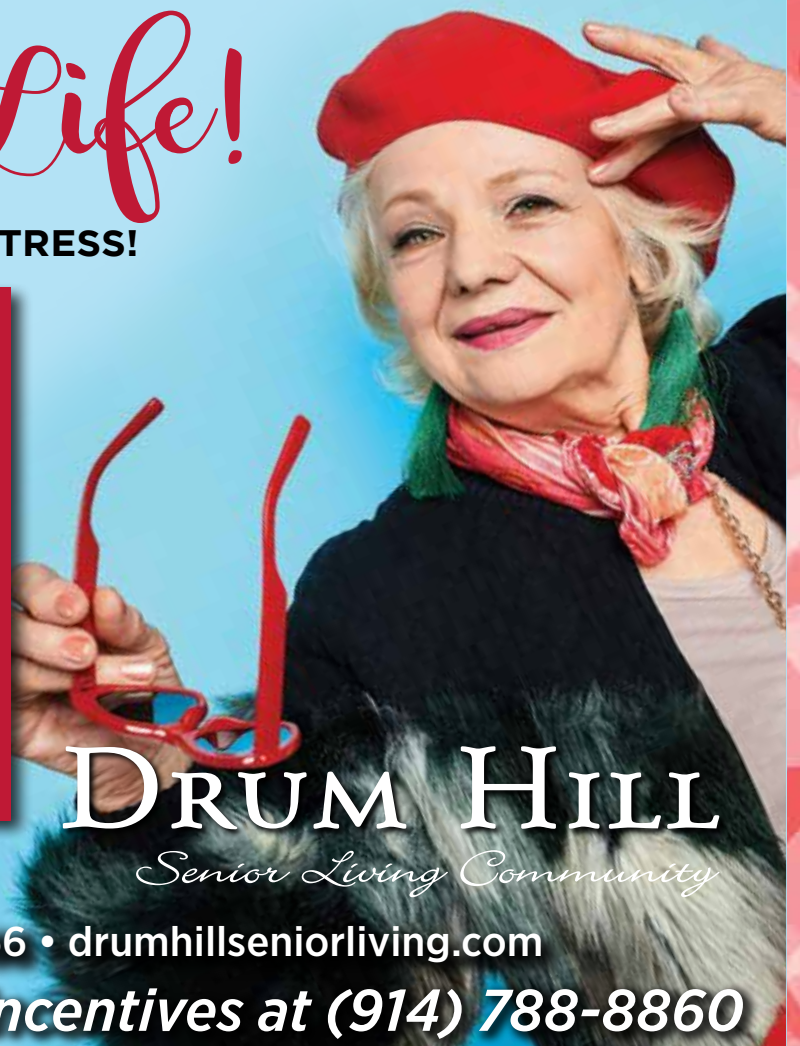
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Rebel Gym Offers a Well-Rounded Approach to Fitness and Exercise

By Abby Luby

There's a fresh energy when you step inside Rebel Gym, the newly-opened fitness center in Mahopac.

The large, brightly lit workout room features an array of treadmills, ellipticals, free weights and other workout equipment. The adjoining room is spacious, replete with hardwood floors, mirrored walls, workout mats, step platforms and exercise balls. From the locker rooms to the sauna and bathrooms, the entire facility is spotless.

Rebel Gym's grand opening was in March, and since the pandemic had closed or limited area gyms and fitness centers last year, many local residents have been eager to sign up. To date, the club has 50 full-time members.

There are 15 different classes as well as personal training sessions.

"Our busiest classes are on Saturdays," said Jennifer Viani, who co-owns the gym with her partner Chad Collesian. "Our members range in ages from 10 to 73, and they all have different levels of fitness."

Viani is a longtime personal trainer, certified by the National Academy of Sports Medicine, a youth exercise specialist and corrective exercise specialist.

She believes in a well-rounded approach to fitness.

"Fitness is not just about muscle building," Viani said. "Picture your health like a chair. If one leg is off, you are unbalanced. You need sleep, nutrition, cardio and resistance to maintain good health."

Besides Viani, there are now six other coaches, trainers and instructors. Andrew Fervan is a personal trainer and a kickboxing instructor who Viani said emphasizes both mental and physical applications. Lisa Sumusa is a cardio and core instructor, specializing in strength, endurance and technique. Annette Leone leads the Recover and Restore class focusing on movement, stretching, breathing, yoga and meditation.

They have been recently joined by yoga instructor Lucy Conway, group exercise instructor Peggy Caruso and Dawn Kelly, an essential oil instructor.

A possible tai chi class may be added in the future and perhaps an on-site massage therapist as well.

Personal training sessions are tailored to a person's fitness ability and health status. "A personal trainer can't let someone do something they shouldn't do," Viani said.

Personal training looks at one's



ABBY LUBY PHOTOS

The cardio class is one of a variety of workout sessions for those of any age or fitness level who want to get into shape at Rebel Gym in Mahopac. Right: Rebel Gym owner Jenn Viani working out at her facility, which opened on Route 6 in Mahopac in March.



fitness goals along with training habits, mobility, flexibility, cardio and strength training, she said.

Chris Giuliani, a member from Mahopac who joined Rebel Gym in March, works out three times a week.

"I really like the fitness classes," said Giuliani. "But I especially like the equipment where you can do your own kind of workout."

A special HOTWORX sauna is also available, where one person works out for 45 minutes in a sauna to work up a sweat. When the weather permits, classes meet outside in the seldom-used parking lot behind the gym. Reserving a spot in a class or in the main exercise room allows the gym to honor COVID-19 restrictions.

Prices range from \$25 for a single-day pass to \$69 a month for access to the gym, classes, training with a coach, a 30-minute professional training session, three HOTWORX sessions and one 30-minute fitness assessment. Family memberships are available starting at \$192 a month for a family of three. Four personal training sessions cost \$400.

"It's not really a gym but a school for life fitness and for body awareness," Viani said.


Viani is also involved with Hike for Hope Hudson Valley, an American Foundation for Suicide Prevention program that supports mental health. She is leading hikes on weekends throughout the month of May and has encouraged members to sign up.


Rebel Gym is located at 989 Route 6 (between Stop & Shop and Ocean State Job Lot) in Mahopac. Hours are Monday through Thursday from 5:30 to 11 a.m. and 3 to 8 p.m., Friday from 5:30 to 11 a.m. and 3 to 7 p.m. and Saturday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information, call 845-621-1776 or visit www.rebel-gym.com. For a virtual tour, visit <https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=FVSBzuNDK27>.

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As Our Lives Change, So Do Our Furniture Needs

When I first moved to New York City, fresh out of college in the South and ready to start my intended climb to a sophisticated urban life, I brought with me just one piece of furniture: a record player to which I had attached screw-on legs.

My only possessions other than that were a cardboard box of accompanying 33 1/3 rpm long-playing records and a suitcase of clothes. I arrived with two other fellows, friends I had made as cast members from a summer stock show I appeared in. (Yes, I started out in show business, but with no intention of staying in it.)

One of my roommates had a kind grandmother who gave us a fold-out bed,

meant for one, which I shared with one of my roommates. It was terribly uncomfortable, but the other option would have been the floor. My other roommate was lucky enough to have a nice single bed that his parents, who lived in New York, had purchased for him.

Sharing a fold-out bed with another big guy was not my idea of fun and, in fact, I found that apartment sharing overall was no fun. All through college I had happily lived alone and perhaps lacked the social grace or patience to accommodate space with the habits of roommates.

I moved out on my own, and my first purchase was a Danish Modern sofa. In retrospect, it was probably the ugliest thing I had ever seen, but it accommodated sitting around and sleeping. The odd thing is that I had graduated from the College of William & Mary in that bastion of Americana, Colonial Williamsburg, and was thus drawn more to traditional and antique furniture, but my sofa bed was purchased in a close-out sale, which I could afford.

Once I got a decent job as an editor, I was able to start acquiring furniture that was more to my taste. The first was a Chippendale sofa I purchased at that great but long-gone 5th Avenue store, W. & J. Sloane. It was big and beautiful, so big in fact that when I moved to a fifth-floor walk-up when I could afford living on my own, it was unable to accommodate the turns in the stairway and had to be returned to the

store. Thank goodness, I had a friend with an "in" at Sloane's who negotiated their taking it back.

In its place, I chose to buy a smaller Chippendale settee in the old Williamsburg shop that B. Altman featured. As a bittersweet memory, I recall that I invited a young lady from work to accompany me when making that purchase. A year later, that lady became my wife and enjoyed the benefit of the purchase she had helped me make.

Our first apartment together was a small studio, so as a practical matter, we bought a sofa bed from a Castro competitor, whose name I forget. Talk about being a dumb consumer; that sofa bed folded out in such a way that one side of the bed was soft and comfortable, while the other side was rock hard and a killer on the back. I recall sleeping on the uncomfortable side.

After a year, when we moved to a one-bedroom apartment, we were able to purchase a comfortable double bed, which we kept for many years.

When I was offered a job at The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, we started looking for a home in "the country" and wound up purchasing a colonial home that afforded us much added space. Besides the living room, there was a formal dining room, an office, a library and five bedrooms!

Suddenly we were on the hunt for a heap of additional furniture to fill the rooms, and I must say it was fun scouting the countryside for it.

But the reckoning came when, six years ago, we decided to sell that big old house, which was no longer practical for us and downsize from five to two bedrooms.

We held two house sales of all the extra furniture that we could not take with us and, fortunately, we had buyers who implored us to just leave whatever we did not want to take with us. We took them up on that and left everything from rugs to dining

and living room furniture and bedroom sets as well.

Today we live with a mix of modern and antique furniture that was culled from our favorite pieces that we had collected over the years. I must say that at this phase of our lives, it's enjoyable to live in a more pared-down way, with only our most favored furnishings.

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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Can My Hospitalized Parent Return Home Instead of a Rehab Center?

Hospital discharge planning for a parent should be an opportunity to craft the best possible therapeutic solution to an ongoing health issue. The reality is that arranging care for a parent is often aggravating with time pressures and fear of failure punctuating the entire experience.

Bringing a parent home to recuperate, receive physical and occupational therapy as well as assistance with activities of daily living is a worthwhile goal. The familiarity and comforts of home may provide a calming effect for the parent.

Calm is something adult children thrust into the role of decisionmaker probably will not feel. Hospital stays are structured under the payment guidelines set by Medicare and other health insurance plans. Timetables and coding set the trajectories for a patient's treatment and stay up until discharge.

Discharge does not mean that a

patient is recovered, only that the acute phase of the treatment has run its course. Hospitalizations with periods of immobility, nutritional inconsistency and lack of sleep will weaken a patient requiring some form of rehabilitation. Medicare will cover short-term stays in rehabilitation facilities as well as therapeutic services at home.

Preferential discharge planning for rehabilitation and nursing facilities is common. It is easy. A few phone calls, an assessment and your mom can go from hospital bed to rehabilitation bed. The rehabilitation facility will provide a bed, closet and usually a nightstand. Laundry and meals are included. Physical therapy may be conducted in a special room or in the patient's room.

Discharge planners can make the arrangements faster than with alternative options. Families will have more time to work on long-term care planning

while Medicare is the primary pay source.

While all of these features seem advantageous, adult children who have dealt with these situations know that there are plenty of drawbacks to institutional recuperation including food issues, staff-to-patient ratio, potential difficulties with roommates and defining what is a productive physical therapy session.

For home discharges, there has to be a safe environment and enough care to support the patient's return. Setting up home care and preparing the home takes time and there will be pressure from the hospital to move faster. Do not let that pressure deter your efforts.

An adult child decisionmaker should reach out to the parent's primary care doctor, a physical therapist offering home services,



By Alan D. Feller, Esq.

a licensed home care agency, a vendor for any necessary durable medical equipment and a hospital bed.

If your parent has a specific diagnosis then there are organizations that understand the needs of that population, which can guide your efforts. More work needs to get done, but there will be more family oversight and

control over this very important recuperative stage. There are experienced social workers and long-term care professionals who have set up home discharges for other families and can help you too.

Talk to the professionals at Sloan & Feller today for guidance on home care planning.

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

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Finding Ways to Overcome Being Shortchanged in the Lottery of Life

It is fair to say that life is a lottery, with our birth being the first drawing, rendering us little choice of our looks, intelligence, social status and health.

These are only the visible sides of our life lottery, and not easy to disguise. In essence, we grow into our likeness.

This drawing picks our psychological and mental well-being that are easier to disguise and deny to a degree, since most of our thoughts and emotions are not transparent and well-guarded. Though it's our character, we are free to forge in the hope of being better people.

Although science has advanced health care to the point of reducing morbidity, extending life spans and offering many cosmetic procedures to help minimize some of the results of a bad draw, our frail human condition, along with our emotions that follow us like a shadow, oftentimes is a cause of many of our problems that filter into society. Our personal psychology when interacting with society becomes a community's sociology.

There is a school of thought that supports the view that philosophy is one of the



By Richard Cirulli

medicines of the soul, along with psychology and psychoanalysis. My tongue-in-cheek approach to my articles is grounded in the belief humor has a healing power and can also be applied to learning as well.

To find true happiness and peace, we need to transmute our existence into essence. This may be more difficult in our stressed-filled and consumer lifestyles. To achieve this, we may need to take a closer look as to

what we choose to pull off from the rack of life to secure our true happiness, and not a perplexing surrogate desire. Maybe we should approach finding our essence of life by finding harmony in the analogy of opposites.

Let's take good, old Quasimodo from "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." Unfortunately for Quasimodo, he did not do well with life's first draw. Old Quasi (as known by his fiends) was given the nom de plume as the ugliest person in Paris, unlike the lottery winner, Narcissus, of Greek mythology fame.

Quasi was born with red bristles for hair, a large wart on one eye, a hump between his shoulders, a protrusion from his chest and deaf from sleeping next to the bells at Notre

Dame. He had to wake up every morning knowing its hump day.

True, he wasn't born deaf, just found himself with little choices to sleep. Like many of us boomers who decided to fix ourselves in front of woofer speakers while listening to rock music.

Quasimodo is jeered with taunts and ridicule that gives the crowd a false sense of self-esteem and confidence, from a philosophical and psychological perspective. What the crowd sees in Quasimodo's ugliness is their own narcissism. As long as Quasi is in town, no one will look at their own imperfections – also the result of their lottery draw.

And unlike Narcissus, who won the handsome lottery, his self-obsessive nature wins him the wrath of Nemesis, the personification of righteous anger, who condemns Narcissus to love no one but himself. He dies looking at his own face in a pool of water, unable to break away from his own sight. This is some real heavy, reflective karma.

We can learn a lot about ourselves in Quasimodo's story if we sincerely place ourselves within the context of our place in life. What the crowd seeks to obtain in jeering and mocking Quasimodo is a false escape from their own morbidity and mortality and to believe they are as beautiful as Narcissus. What Quasimodo lacks in

beauty his tormentors possess in interior ugliness and cowardness. Though the crowds mock Quasimodo, in the end he is the one who saves the city from the conspiring and malicious Frollo, who has committed a number of atrocities. Quasimodo was able to build his character and boldness, to redeem the same city that mocked and tortured him.

We should consider avoiding such metaphors as shoot for the stars, aim for the moon we so often hear as a guide for life. Rather, we should not shoot for anything that is beyond our capability, but also not to abstain from achieving goals within our capability. So, if you wish upon an evening star, wish for good eyesight complete with a good scope before you take aim and shoot. A sure miss will result in a meteor of disappointment that will come crashing down upon our unreachable dreams.

Philosophy and the study of the classics are excellent tools that we can use to help straighten our crooked timber of humanity, as opposed of using our frail human condition as a weapon to construct stakes to impale our human advancement on. Be safe! Be well! Be happy! Be nice! Amor fati!

Dr. Richard Cirulli is a published author, playwright and retired professor. His body of works can be viewed at www.demitasseplayers.com. He looks forward to your comments, and can be reached at profcirulli@optonline.net.

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Eric Morrissey
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The Ascension of the California Wine Mosaic



By Nick Antonaccio

If you've been following my recent columns, you know how well the United States is faring across the globe in the production and consumption of wine. From the back of the pack just 75 years ago, the United States has ascended

into the elite ranks of wine-producing nations in production and consumption – quite a feat within the millennia of wine history in Western and Eastern Europe.

Over the last century we have opened our doors to immigrants who have persevered to introduce European grape varieties to the American palate. The popularity of California Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Merlot has skyrocketed in the last 50 years. More recently, grape varieties have been planted that were rarely grown in the United States.

From Pinot Noir and Syrah (French origin), to Sangiovese (Italian origin), to Tempranillo and Albarino (Spanish origin), American winemakers have embraced these grapes just as American citizens welcomed European immigrants – with open arms and the freedom to pursue their dreams.

'American winemakers have created a mosaic of diversity and a melting pot of international varieties'

As diverse as we are as a nation, so too are our wine interests. American winemakers have created a mosaic of diversity and a melting pot of international varieties, and in the process, they have created new expressions of wines that are challenging age-old precepts about wine styles, structure and flavor profiles. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in California.

In this epicenter of the New Order (on its own, California is the fourth largest producer of wine in the world), there are, in my opinion, three distinct differences that set California apart from the Old Order in its quest for world recognition.

1. Terroir. In the Old Order European countries, specific, defined geography determines the grape variety that is grown.

Nearly 2,000 years ago, the Greeks and Romans experimented with various grape varieties and ultimately settled on specific grapes to be grown in specific areas. These practices have been carried forward to modern times. Across Europe, Pinot Noir still grows best in the Burgundy region of

France, Sangiovese in Tuscany.

In California, the early pioneers of wine in the 1970s experimented wildly with numerous grapes across the state. Although certain areas are known better for one grape than another (Cabernet Sauvignon in Napa, Chardonnay in Sonoma), these same areas produce a mélange of other wines that have received critical acclaim.

These grapes are generally not grown outside the boundaries of their Old Order ancestors – Spanish Tempranillo and Albarino, as well as French Viognier, to name a few.

California's climate and soils are producing styles of wines that can be emblematic of Old Order wines or harbingers of individualized styles the wine world has rarely experienced.

2. Regulation. In the Old Order countries, governmental bodies dictate which grape varieties may be planted in specific locales. For example, in Burgundy, only Pinot Noir may be grown for red wine production (although the Gamay grape is permitted in the southern extreme). In California, every region may produce Pinot Noir, allowing multiple expressions of style, thereby

offering consumers multiple choices to suit their individual preferences.

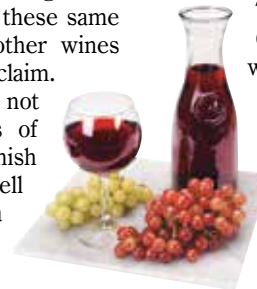
3. Food pairing. When tomatoes were introduced in Italy, they were paired with local pastas. To suit the rich acidic flavors of these dishes, Italians hybridized various grapes until they found the perfect match for their recipes, and Chianti was born.

In California, the hybridization of grapevines and experimentation with food dishes were mutually exclusive. The New Order winemakers focused on producing the best wines for the local region.

They relied on (very talented) California chefs to pair their wines with appropriate dishes of varied cuisines.

California has fashioned a mosaic of divergent grapes and styles that is reminiscent of the mosaic of ethnic backgrounds that was woven as the fabric of modern American society. The future beckons with similar potential results.

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.



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Nearly half of all campers either started camping for the first time in 2020 or restarted after having not camped in recent years, according to KOA's North American Camping Report. Plus, a recent GoRVing.com study conducted by Ipsos reveals RV ownership is at a record high, with 11.2 million American households owning an RV in 2021, up 62 percent over a 20-year period.

Whether you're a seasoned RV enthusiast or a first-time camper, being prepared to hit the road is essential. In time for the warmer months ahead, here are some tips to tackle all your excursions into the great outdoors with confidence.

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For obvious reasons, ensuring you have a surplus of drinkable water for the duration of your trip needs to be a top priority. As you plan, take a cue from experts in preparedness, the U.S. Armed Forces, and put Scepter Military Water Cans on your "must-have" list of gear. Standard issue to the U.S. and Canadian Armed Forces, these easy-to-carry, virtually indestructible containers are up to the task of camping trips, sports expeditions, boating and more. They're also BPA-free to keep chemicals, odors and tastes out of your water, as well as corrosion- and fungus-resistant, so your drinking water is clean and safe.

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From rugged off-roading escapades to serene nature hikes, all your outdoor activities will be much more enjoyable when you have the confidence that comes with the right gear and preparation strategies.

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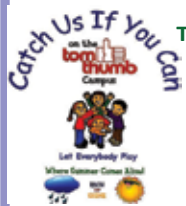


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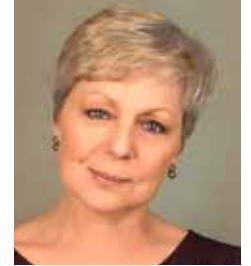
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