Macy’s Set to Close Longtime Store at Galleria WP

By Rick Pezzullo

Macy’s will be leaving the Galleria White Plains this spring, 25 years after becoming the premiere anchor store at the downtown mall.

It is among 45 Macy’s stores that will be shutting down as part of a companywide downsizing that will ultimately result in 125 locations closing nationwide.

“After careful consideration, Macy’s has decided to close our White Plains Galleria location. This closure is part of the company’s strategy announced in early 2020,” the company stated this week in a release.

“The decision to close a store is always a difficult one; but Macy’s White Plains Galleria is honored to have served our customers and the community over the past 40 years, and we look forward to continuing to do so,” the company stated, mentioning nearby Macy’s stores at the Cross County Shopping Center in Yonkers and the Palisades Center in Rockland will remain open.

Macy’s first came to White Plains in 1949 on Main Street and later expanded onto Mamaroneck Avenue in 1954. In 1996, Macy’s moved to the Galleria, replacing Stern’s.

Macy’s is planning a clearance sale at its Galleria store for the next two to three months. The company stated any employees who were unable to relocate to another Macy’s location would be eligible for severance.

Last November, the last remaining Sears in Westchester County announced it would be departing the Galleria on February 21, 2021. Sears has been part of the Galleria for about the last 20 years and has approximately 60 employees.

Macy’s has been part of the Galleria White Plains for the last 25 years.

Latimer Announces Re-election Bid for Second Term

By Martin Wilbur

Westchester County Executive George Latimer officially announced Monday that he is running for a second term this fall.

Latimer said there are still plenty of issues for him to tackle over the next four years.

“We still face more challenges ahead,” Latimer said in a nearly two-minute video that was released on his campaign Facebook page. “The pandemic is not over; our families and small businesses are still struggling and social inequities that existed before the pandemic have gotten worse. But we’ll fix these problems the same way. We’ll deal with them openly and honestly and look at the facts, not politics. We’ll work on solutions.”

He touted his accomplishments that included restoration of the historic Miller House in North White Plains and Memorial Field in Mount Vernon, construction of the new family courthouse in New Rochelle, repairs to the Sprain Ridge Pool in Yonkers and cutting county property taxes for the last two years.

Latimer, 67, also said that his administration has communicated key information to the public on a regular basis since the start of the pandemic nearly a year ago.

The announcement had been expected since after the holidays. Last summer, Latimer said he would likely announce his re-election plans after work on the 2021 budget was completed in December. A large deficit was expected but with federal funding from the CARES Act, a voluntary retirement program and sales tax revenues that were not as dire as originally projected, there was a small cut in the tax levy for this year.

It is currently unknown who Latimer’s opponent may be for the general election. Somers residents Dan Branda, a staffer for former state senator Greg Ball and communications specialist for former county executive Rob Astorino, had announced last August that he intended to run for the Republican nomination. However, he said Monday that he is pursuing “a family opportunity” and has decided to forgo pursuing the seat.

The Westchester County Republican Committee is working on identifying a nominee to challenge Latimer, Branda said.

If Latimer’s re-election bid is successful, this would be his last term in the seat. During his first term, he proposed a two-term limit for the county executive’s position. The Board of Legislators later approved the measure.
Two Harrison High Students Top Scholars in National Contest

By Rick Pezzullo

Two seniors from Harrison High School were among 300 students named in the Regeneron Science Talent Search 2021, the nation’s oldest and most prestigious science and main competition for high school seniors.

Tyler Burden and Christian Spadini were each awarded $2,000, as was Harrison High School. The Regeneron Science Talent Search scholars were selected from 1,760 applications received from 611 high schools across 45 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and 10 countries. Scholars were chosen based on their exceptional research skills, commitment to academics, innovative thinking and promise as scientists, and hail from 198 American and international high schools in 37 states, Puerto Rico, Chinese Taipei, and Singapore.

On January 21, 40 of the 300 scholars will be named Regeneron Science Talent Search finalists. From March 10-17, all 40 finalists will compete for more than $1.8 million in awards provided by Regeneron.

Burden was selected for his project titled: Evaluating the Effects of Dance Improvisation on Brain Activity Using a Battery of Cognitive Tests. Spadini was recognized for her project titled: Political Geographical Bias in Congressional House Elections: A Quantitative Analysis of the Real Gap Between the Popular Vote and Electoral Outcomes.

Six WDOC Students Receive High School Equivalency Diplomas

Six young people recently received their high school equivalency diplomas at the Westchester Department of Correction (WDOC) campus in Valhalla.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, WDOC did not have its traditional formal ceremony to recognize this important achievement, which in the past has included onsite participation from student family members, teachers, mentors and County Executive George Latimer.

This year, working within the Coronavirus restrictions, WDOC safely staged a small event in its main chapel, still allowing the opportunity for the students to enter in their cap and gowns while ‘pomp and circumstance’ played.

“I sincerely congratulate these students who have overcome insurmountable odds to achieve something truly great. These young people are once again shining examples of the work done at our nationally recognized WDOC under Commissioner Spano, First DC Padilla, DC Diaz and DC Gerald,” Latimer said.

Commissioner Joseph K. Spano recognized their hard work and encouraged them to remain focused on a better life path.

Spano said: “As you know firsthand, we did not allow the Pandemic to prevent us from delivering critical rehabilitation programs and services. To your credit, you did not allow your time here to get in the way of your desire to get on a better life path. Instead, you worked hard to further your education, something that is sure to benefit you and your families upon return home and something that you should be proud of.”

In her opening remarks, Spain Brook Academy Principal Dr. Michele Darby said: “We take great pride in the hard work and achievements of every one of our students. Those students earning their diplomas today have demonstrated their commitment to a better life for themselves and their families. None of this would be possible without the support and collaboration of the Spain Brook Academy and Department of Correction staff and their dedication to the students.”

Dr. Darby also advised that 19 other WDOC students took the high school equivalency exam this past weekend and were eagerly awaiting the results. The six student’s receiving diplomas are now eligible to participate in WDOC onsite college programs.

By Rick Pezzullo

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Post-Holiday COVID Spike Continues to Plague Area, State

By Anna Young

Westchester County Executive George Latimer said the COVID-19 infection rate is continually growing, attributing the latest spike in cases to residents flouting safety protocols to host indoor New Year’s celebrations.

In the last week, coronavirus cases in Westchester County have jumped by nearly 5,000, signaling a post-New Year’s Eve surge that closely resembles the pattern reported just after Christmas. Active cases also rose by more than 1,500 over the last week, with numbers far exceeding 10,000.

During the peak of the pandemic last spring, active cases had reached 12,000.

“That number is jumping dramatically. These numbers are not going down and there’s a reason why,” Latimer said Monday during a press briefing. “You weren’t in Times Square or in Renaissance Square in White Plains to watch the ball drop, but people were together in private settings and these numbers reflect that continued growth of the infection.”

Coronavirus cases increased by 789 on Sunday, bringing the total number of positive cases to 77,731 since the start of the pandemic. There are now 10,894 active cases, a number that is nearly identical to the active caseload reported during the height of the pandemic on Apr. 10, Latimer said.

The daily positivity rate stood at 6.55 percent, which is based on 12,011 tests taken last Friday. COVID tests were administered at high rates in Westchester throughout the week, with daily testing reaching a record high of 13,201 on Jan. 7.

On that day, just one week after New Year’s Eve, 1,019 coronavirus cases were reported in the county.

Overall, there have been over 1.5 million COVID-19 tests administered in Westchester since March.

The county reported nine more deaths on Sunday, increasing the number of COVID-19-related fatalities to 1,780 since March. Since Jan. 1, 66 people have died from the virus.

“The numbers are not good,” Latimer said. “Wishing them to be better does not make them so.”

As of Jan. 9, there were 504 virus patients in Westchester hospitals, about a 50-person increase over the last week, Latimer said. While Latimer is disheartened by the hospitalization rate, he said the only positive takeaway is that the county’s bed count is much higher than those currently admitted.

Putnam County’s total caseload has reached 5,750, with 105 additional positive cases recorded on Sunday. Putnam has seen numbers boom over the last four days with cases exceeding 100 for three of those days.

There were 116 cases reported on Thursday, 115 Friday and 94 added on Saturday, with a four-day case total of 430. The county’s daily positivity rate was 9.23 percent, with 1,138 tests administered Friday.

Putnam currently has 1,234 active cases. There have been 68 coronavirus-related deaths in Putnam since the pandemic began. No new deaths were reported on Sunday. However, Putnam did report one new death on Jan. 8, its first in nearly two weeks. The last fatality the county recorded was on Dec. 29.

Statewide there were 15,355 new positive cases on Sunday. The daily positivity rate is 6.22 percent.

The state recorded 151 additional COVID-19-related fatalities, bringing the death toll to 31,672 since March.

Total hospitalizations are at 8,484, a decrease of 43 over the previous day. Across New York there have been 1,129,442 positive coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic.

New Cases of UK COVID Strain

Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced on Saturday that three additional cases of the United Kingdom strain of the COVID-19 virus have been identified in New York, bringing the total to four. The first case was detected in a Saratoga County man on Jan. 4. Two of the new cases are connected to the Saratoga Springs exposure, while the third has been traced back to an individual living in Massapequa, Nassau County.

Cuomo urged that the U.K. strain is real and frightening. According to health officials, the variant is 70 percent more transmissible, although it does not make you sicker.

“There’s no mystery as to how it got here – it got on a plane and flew here from Europe, just like the original strain did,” Cuomo said.

“Yet, the federal government continues to refuse to learn from the spring and mandate testing for all international travelers. Their failure to act means the rest of us need to be that much more vigilant in our work to stop the spread, as well as do all we can to accelerate the distribution of the vaccine.”
W’chester Officials Appeal to Public to Get Vaccine When Available

By Martin Wilbur

Westchester County health officials urged residents to get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they have the opportunity in order to protect themselves, their families and people they come in contact with.

During a Facebook Live forum last Thursday evening, Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler and Dr. Dial Hewlett Jr., medical director of the division of disease control for Westchester’s Department of Health, said the risks to one’s health and society are far greater by avoiding vaccination then by getting inoculated despite reservations by a sizeable portion of the population.

“The most important tool we have right now to get back to life as we knew it before COVID is a vaccine, and we’re lucky that we have multiple vaccines done by multiple companies in record time,” Amler said. “Right now, we have to help the public understand what vaccines can do for them, who should be vaccinated, what the limitations of vaccines (are), and we just have to work this out.”

Pfizer and Moderna were the first two pharmaceutical firms that developed vaccines with more on the way. Westchester pharmaceutical firms that developed vaccines with more on the way. Westchester pharmaceutical firms that developed vaccines with more on the way.

The New Year is
Upon us and This Year
More Than Ever People
Are Ready to Commit to
Living a Healthier Life...

After enduring this on-going pandemic for months, people are coming to realize the importance of health and wellness in order to resume “real life.” Since many have reverted to old habits and comfort food, now they are looking for help to change unhealthy behaviors.

Elizabeth Pecoraro, MS, RDN of Katonah, NY offers private nutrition counseling (currently virtually) as well as coaching through an already established comprehensive wellness program. “When a potential client comes to me I learn about their lifestyle and personal health goals and we discuss which route is best for them. I am not a one-size fits all dietitian. I work with each person individually and together we map out the best plan for them.”

If you would like to work with Elizabeth in achieving your goals she is currently taking on new clients virtually in her private practice as well as in her wellness program.

Contact her via her website, www.eatinghealthy4life.com or email at elizanne1@gmail.com.
Cuomo Vows to Help State Recover From COVID, Economic Pain

By Martin Wilbur

Gov. Andrew Cuomo pledged Monday to prepare New York to defeat the COVID-19 pandemic through short-term health and economic measures while also strategizing to make long-term change by investing in the state’s future.

In his annual State of the State address, Cuomo laid out steps his administration will pursue, including vaccine distribution and tackling a projected $15 billion deficit in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget.

“First, we must defeat COVID and beat back the assault as the virus rages in the next few months,” Cuomo said. “It will not be easy. A high-performing hospital system and the diligence of New Yorkers are the keys to stop the spread.”

The speech will be followed by supplemental addresses in the coming days that zero in on more specific details of a proposed comprehensive telehealth bill and other belt-tightening measures, it won’t be easy. A high-performing hospital system and the diligence of New Yorkers are the keys to stop the spread.

Meanwhile, Cuomo mentioned an ambitious reinvestment plan. He hopes to create.

On Monday, the first day of sign-up for the second group of eligible vaccine recipients, he announced the distribution system is being expanded to include more sites for the currently eligible four million New Yorkers to be inoculated. The list of eligible workers and the form to register is available at https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/Public/prescreener.

While appointments for vaccines will likely stretch several weeks into the future, Cuomo said it is better to have people waiting for the vaccine rather than having the product and too few people signed up.

Cuomo was adamant that the vaccines will be administered fairly across the state by supplementing private health care systems to reach underserved communities, predominately communities of color.

“We will not allow politics or wealth to dictate the distribution of this life-saving vaccine,” he said.

Other health-related measures include a proposed comprehensive telehealth bill to ensure availability to all state residents; significantly increase the number of rapid testing sites across the state; create a public health corps in partnership with Cornell University and the Northwell hospital system to hire 1,000 fellows to be trained and serve for one year to help coordinate the statewide vaccination effort; and develop a citizen’s public health training program through Cornell to train up to 100,000 residents to protect themselves, their families, friends and co-workers in a public health emergency. The online training will be free.

For part of his address Cuomo reprised a familiar theme, assailing the federal government for failing to act quickly enough before New York and the Northeast was ravaged by COVID-19 in the spring. That has been followed by the current Senate and administration’s refusal to assist state and local governments.

“New York is suffering and New Yorkers are tired of being abused and demand Washington stops causing damage and starts resolving the damage they caused,” Cuomo said.

In addition to aid for state and local governments, he called on New York’s congressional delegation to repeal the cap on the state and local tax deductions. Even if the state renegoties on its contractual obligations to public employees, cuts education spending by 20 percent across the board, increases taxes on the wealthy and other belt-tightening measures, it won’t come anywhere near closing the $15 billion budget gap, he said.

Meanwhile, Cuomo mentioned an ambitious reinvestment plan. He hopes to improve roads, rail and airports; use empty office and commercial space to increase affordable housing and having New York become a green energy hub, bringing thousands of jobs to the state.

Expanding access to affordable broadband and invest in worker retraining is also essential.

While many people may expect returning to a pre-pandemic world, Cuomo said there are changes already underway that have changed the world and New York needs to be prepared.

“This is a moment that is made for New Yorkers,” Cuomo said. “This will be a moment to re-energize, reinvent and re-create.”

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SILVER, WATCHES &
Police, Committee Stress Importance of Outreach to Public in Mt. Pleasant

By Martin Wilbur

Strengthening trust and communication between the community and Mount Pleasant’s officers was a key focus of last week’s Mount Pleasant Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative.

The fourth session held by the 14-member committee last Wednesday night centered on how outreach to the public can be bolstered.

Chief Paul Oliva said that interacting with students in the local schools along with having a presence at various town events, such as Mount Pleasant Town Day, assist in building good relationships, although they can always be improved.

“I don’t know that we really have a rift in the community, per se, that we have to heal at this point but I don’t think we have strained relationships with any particular group,” Oliva said.

Programs such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.), addressing classes and youth groups and having a school resource officer help build relationships among the student population so they feel comfortable speaking to officers and know that they can turn to them for help, he said. Arrests in the event of wrongdoing are a last resort, Oliva said.

Committee member and town resident Kelsey Padgett appealed to the chief and Lt. Sean Forde, who is also part of the group, to continue reaching out to teenagers.

“I think it’s a good idea to engage with high schoolers because right now we’re living in a world in which the relationship is pretty broken and more so for that generation than generations before, the relationship of police to community,” Padgett said.

Forde said being an adjunct professor of criminal justice at Westchester Community College has been an education for him, seeing the perspective of the younger generation.

“It’s an extraordinary exchange,” Forde said. “It’s absolutely fantastic.”

While there have not been many documented hate crimes in Mount Pleasant, the town has not been immune from episodes. Hussein Elzoghby, a committee member representing the Upper Westchester Muslim Society, said there had been harassment of local Muslim residents.

Oliva urged him and other to report incidents. Elzoghby also offered that many of the society’s members speak various foreign languages and can help the department with interpreters should that need arise.

The most common language barrier is for Spanish-speaking people, Oliva said, although there is occasionally a need for someone who can converse in other languages. He stressed that the department does not target the immigrant community in search of undocumented individuals and hand them over to federal authorities.

“We want immigrant communities to trust us and come forward,” Oliva said.

The chief said he continues to reach out to the different constituent groups in Mount Pleasant, including the clergy and the business community, and encouraged residents to reach out to his office if they have questions or problems.

Oliva also said he stresses to his officers that how they interact with the public will help determine residents’ opinion of the police.

“If you have a contact with (an) individual police officer and it doesn’t go well that leaves a bad taste for a person,” Oliva said. “I tell (the officers) that they really are the best part of community engagement and outreach.”

He reiterated from last month how the department continues to work with personnel at the two residential homes for youths in town, The Cottage School and Hawthorne Cedar Knolls. The staff takes the lead on handling incidents since they are specially trained to help that population, but the police are there as a support presence, said Margarita Carson, the director of security at the JCCA campus.

“Our experience has just been that generally the police are very respectful, very caring, very understanding of our youth, their needs,” Carson said.

Oliva said that he and all department members are held to a high standard.

“You lead by example,” he said. “We follow the rules and I think we have to set the example for that. I think it’s just being open and knowing that we expect a lot from our officers but we don’t expect them to be perfect. If you make a mistake, you’ve got to own it and that’s how you learn.”

Padgett mentioned that she didn’t believe that a citizens’ advisory board was necessary for Mount Pleasant, but would like for the public and the department to periodically continue dialogue after this series of meetings has produced the mandated report to the state. She called for formalized meetings semiannually or quarterly, she said.

“I would hate for it to never happen again,” Padgett said.

The next Mount Pleasant Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative is this Wednesday, Jan. 13 from 6 to 8 p.m.
P’ville Ponders Small Group Meetings to Discuss Police Reform

By Abby Luby

Pleasantville officials are planning to schedule informal meetings to discuss police reform issues since the live-streamed format may limit some residents who are reticent about airing concerns and grievance to the wider public.

At the Pleasantville Village Board’s Dec. 28 work session, the board discussed the public’s hesitancy and decided to reach out to certain individuals and groups who have expressed a deeper interest and desire to be involved in the police reform process.

“We could put together three or four working groups and perhaps a pair of trustees could sit in on one or two,” said Trustee David Vinjamuri at last month’s work session. “It would be a manageable number, like 10 to 12 people. It could also be cross-functional and include students, teachers, youth officers and a school board member.”

Trustee Nicole Asquith supported the idea of meeting with particular groups who could more comfortably voice their opinions in a more informal environment.

“This would allow them to dig into the material a little bit more and develop ideas in a more informal environment,” Scherer said. “That way we were able to dig into it, respect each person as we converse face to face. The webinar format is a much more stilted means of getting at that.”

Asquith also suggested that the meetings not be recorded. Vinjamuri said he would mention that board members are meeting with certain groups in his monthly update.

“What’s Happening in Pleasantville,” that he has started to post on the village’s Facebook page.

At the start of the webinars in the fall, the village established a dedicated e-mail address for people to submit their concerns. The pandemic has forced the meetings to be aired via Zoom, and Scherer pointed out that before COVID-19, community comments would be handled differently.

“Ascent COVID, if folks had an issue, they didn’t feel comfortable discussing in a public arena and one that was being recorded, we would meet to discuss in living rooms or over coffee,” Scherer said. “That way we would reflect that (draft) back to the community that we are looking to do a deeper dive for significant change going forward.”

He compared meeting with certain groups as a future feedback mechanism to “laying down railroad tracks we can use process and how that works,” said Asquith.

“We are interested in knowing where people are coming from and if there are people who want to be heard but who are uncomfortable about coming forward, we want to make this process as inclusive as possible.”

The Jan. 14 and Jan. 28 forums will be held at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom with links posted on the village website. For more information on the process and to see videos of prior meetings, visit https://www.pleasantville-ny.gov/police-reform-reinvention-collaborative. Written comments can be submitted to policereform@pleasantville-ny.gov.
Editorial

Pleasantville Police Reform Meetings Must All Be Accessible to the Public

For the past few months, municipalities across New York and throughout the area have earnestly engaged in forums to discuss how policing can be improved.

There have been some very constructive discussions locally relating to appropriate use of force, communication and interaction with the public and de-escalation training and practices, among many other issues.

What has been learned is that Westchester and Putnam counties have some very fine police departments. In many instances the conversation centers not on what is wrong but how policing can be even better.

Even if there aren’t major problems within a police department, the mere exercise of police representatives speaking with community members that they might not otherwise have ever met helps break down barriers. These forums were mandated by Gov. Andrew Cuomo following the racial justice protests that erupted after George Floyd’s killing last May and adds to everyone’s workload, but conversations about problems or how to improve police work is critically important.

That is why it is intensely disappointing and misguided for Pleasantville officials to be strongly considering the addition of informal get-togethers to the process. These meetings would apparently be offline and wouldn’t be live-streamed or recorded to allow for public viewing or participation. The Village Board must put the kibosh to such a notion.

One of the reasons given for having informal meetings is that there are people who don’t feel comfortable airing concerns or grievances with everyone watching. That’s understandable, but it’s not how democracy works.

First, this process is mandated by law. No mayor, or what she doesn’t want to admit, is inaccurate. What she doesn’t want you to know, or what she doesn’t want to admit, is that she used the same spreadsheet when she was a Town Board member not long ago.

Second, the outcome of some of these discussions could influence policies and procedures that apply to everyone in Pleasantville. As a result, members of the community should have an equal chance to weigh in.

Additionally, leaving it up to a board member or resident to summarize the sum and substance of a meeting on social media or the municipality’s website is insufficient. Everyone can draw different conclusions from a forum, and unless there’s going to be a stenographer, each person should be allowed to formulate their points of view on what is important.

Last week, Mayor Peter Scherer explained that in the past meetings over a cup of coffee or in an environment more relaxed than a meeting or Zoom call proved more productive in many cases. In the past, and in the future, that is perfectly acceptable. It’s commendable when residents or members of organizations reach out to their local elected officials or their police chief to discuss issues that might be of concern to them.

But in this instance, for the development of a document where public policy could be influenced, every discussion needs to be public. There can be no exceptions made.

Letters to the Editor

Yorktown Supervisor’s Term Should Be Increased to Four Years

Over the past several decades some area municipalities have changed the length of term for a number of elected offices. In our own town of Yorktown, the terms of office for highway superintendent and town clerk were changed from two to four years. To me, it is common sense for the Yorktown supervisor’s position.

Now more than ever it is important to have our supervisor focus on addressing the serious issues facing the town without the distraction of campaigning and running for office every two years.

First, it takes time to learn the job and second terms. Over the past two decades we have had six supervisors elected, and three of them served one term. I have worked with and had the opportunity to observe many of our town supervisors over the past three decades, most all of whom had no experience running an organization of hundreds of employees or with budgets of tens of millions of dollars. It takes time to learn the ropes of such a large organization, time we cannot afford to waste.

It’s time to put this to the voters of Yorktown. I encourage all Yorktown residents to contact their elected officials and ask for a public referendum to be placed on the ballot this coming election cycle to consider changing the town supervisor’s term of office from two to four years.

Bob Giordano
Yorktown

Apology is in Order After Baseless Claims Made Against Yorktown Officials

There she goes again. Last week Susan Siegel kicked off the new year with a new volley of accusations and conspiracy theories against our town government (“The Truth About Yorktown Town Taxes in 2021.”) Does she ever have anything positive to say? No, she has proven to be an obstructionist and conspiracy theorist.

Her latest assault is especially shameful because it accuses our town government of using a spreadsheet that she claims is inaccurate. What she doesn’t want you to know, or what she doesn’t want to admit, is that she used the same spreadsheet when she was a Town Board member not long ago.

Not exactly breaking news when all the facts are presented now is it? Ms. Siegel owes this community, Local Officials Also Need to Take Stand Against President’s Lawlessness

In my 50 years of participating in demonstrations and peaceful dissent, I’ve been teargassed and sprayed with mace by “peace” officers. In 2016, I demonstrated peacefully against the new President; I was teargassed for simply gathering on the sidewalk.

I have never seen the violence and lawlessness I’m seeing encouraged by Trump. How could these thugs be treated with kid gloves? We know what would have happened if the complex of the demonstrators were darker.

I believe that all politics is local, thus I call upon Yorktown Supervisor Matt Slater and comptroller Caporale and the entire Town Board a public apology for their hypocritical criticism, but knowing her I wouldn’t hold my breath.

Brian Silik
Yorktown Heights

Supervisor Slater and Comptroller Caporale and the entire Town Board a public apology for their hypocritical criticism, but knowing her I wouldn’t hold my breath.

Melvyn R. Tanzman
Mohegan Lake
Guest Columns

America at its Best But We Still Have an Awfully Long Way to Go

By Adam Stone

Attention progressives: America, in many critical ways, is a better place than it has ever been.

In the 1600s, indigenous people were trampled.

In the 1700s, we seeded our nation with slavery.

In the 1800s, we endured a great Civil War, a reckoning over our Original Sin.

In the start of the 1900s, women didn’t attend college.

In the 1910s, women didn’t possess the right to vote.

In the 1920s, anti-Semitic legislation was enacted to limit immigration from Eastern Europe.

In the 1930s, no Black player had yet been allowed to play Major League Baseball.

In the 1940s, under FDR, we created internment camps to imprison Japanese-Americans.

In the 1950s, Blacks were ordered to the back of the bus.

In the 1960s, segregated water fountains belittled our highest values.

In the 1970s, a woman had not yet served on the Supreme Court.

In the 1980s, police brutality went widely ignored, with little public resistance or consciousness.

In the 1990s, gays were prohibited from serving openly in the military.

In the early 2000s, the War on Terror heightened anti-Muslim sentiment as sexual harassment ran rampant, unchecked by a subsequent #MeToo movement.

In the early 2010s, gay people remained barred from marrying those they loved.

At the start of 2020, we hadn’t yet elected a woman to be vice president.

At the start of 2021, after violent insurrectionists egged on by our commander-in-chief desecrated our Capitol, our (admittedly dreadful) political system rose to at least one moment, certifying Joe Biden’s election victory, condemning in bipartisan (but woefully insufficient) fashion a rogue, wayward, figuratively frothing-at-the-mouth president.

The political nightmare we’re enduring, while certainly featuring unique and terrifying characteristics, remains in many important ways an extension of our tortured but incrementally improving past, not a departure from our history. And, it should be noted, we’ll be severely tested in the days, weeks, months and years ahead: the tests will be painful, navigating the historically choppy waters. Optimists can hope we eventually emerge stronger, as we have in the past when we lived through bitterly divided eras.

The fringe elements have always been here. Certainly, over the past four years, the dangerous wackos have been elevated and tolerated in a way they weren’t previously. But, also, it’s not just the Capitol-storming freaks and their ilk who constitute the split electorate. It’s also the good people of the country who, for example, resist cultural change. Change that seems inevitable and obvious in retrospect but change that was met with fierce resistance by generally good people since our founding.

Most of the more than 74 million Americans who voted for Trump are nothing like the rioters who engaged in treason on Wednesday. But some of the 74 million-plus do share political sensibilities with Americans of an earlier time who held beliefs that are widely rejected in 2021.

Some political descendants of those Americans of an earlier age harbor unfortunate ideas of the day. The good news: the overwhelming majority of Americans hold cherished ideals – near unanimous ideals – that would have been considered enlightened in an earlier era but are mainstream today. Ideals politically like-minded decedents refuted. But this, perhaps counterintuitively, is what slow progress looks like.

It should also be stressed that today’s progressive outlook will eventually appear outdated and lacking. If you want the ultimate proof of this general point, look to Lincoln. The Great Emancipator himself didn’t believe in racial equality even as he fought ferociously to unshackle slaves.

Keep the faith and keep on fighting. As the famous Martin Luther King Jr. quote goes, the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice. There’s enormous work to do, as there’s always been.

Adam Stone is publisher of Examiner Media.

If You Don’t Condemn the Insurrection, You Condone It

By Brian McGowan

On Jan. 6, just 14 days before our nation’s duty and fairly elected President and Vice President will be sworn into office with a duly and fairly elected President and Vice President.

By the start of voting blocs they have made his baseless lies, afraid to put principle ahead of their own interests.

The insurrection has fostered for too long, fueled by fanatics once considered on the fringe, and thus not really anything we needed to concern ourselves over. There will always be lunatics, right? But were they ever led before by anyone as lunatic as the current occupier of the White House? The litany of his character deficits is too long to repeat, or ignore. Shame on the elected opportunists who have supported him and his baseless lies, afraid to put principle ahead of voting blocs they have made themselves captive to. Shame!

I am an independent voter, from a family with a strong progressive Democratic ethic, but with many Republicans as well. I have friends, associates and relatives in both major political parties, and have voted for candidates on both sides of the aisle when their positions seemed reasonable and likely to move our nation forward. I have voted in every election since I became eligible, and it was easy over many of those decades to make choices other than what my “political genes” might have dictated.

Sadly, that has been made more difficult in our recent past, as the party of Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and Dwight Eisenhower has fallen into the clutches of something far removed from what it once stood for. Would Nelson Rockefeller, Republican governor of New York, presidential candidate and vice president under Gerald Ford, have survived in today’s Republican Party? I think not.

And so we must condemn all those culpable for the violent attack on our democracy last Wednesday, beginning with the President who has committed acts against this country very short of, if not bordering on, treason. We must condemn every supporter who has continued to lend their voices and encouragement to his delusions. We must condemn the reckless, lawless and criminal behavior of the mob of tens of thousands of this President’s core supporters, who thought they could halt the working of our democracy.

We must condemn hatred, racism and any action that denies to our citizens, and those who would seek to be citizens, the rights of Americans to believe in our democracy, and know that it stands for something more than the twisted, warped beliefs of those who profess to revere it, but by their actions would bring it down.

If we do not condemn these things, then we condone them. Silence is not condemnation. Silence is collusion.

God bless America, and God preserve our democracy, both from our enemies abroad, and those within.

Brian McGowan is a longtime Pleasantville resident.
Vacant Pleasantville Building Destroyed By Fire

By Anna Young

A vacant building in Pleasantville that is expected to become the site of a residential community went up in flames last week.

The Pleasantville Volunteer Fire Department responded to a structure fire on Jan. 5 about 5:04 a.m. in the area of Vanderbilt Avenue and Depew Street, which had most recently been home to the former DeLuca Auto Body site. Fire officials arrived at the scene to find heavy smoke emitting from the vacant structure.

Due to the severity of the fire, the village received help from the Chappaqua, Thornwood, Valhalla, Briarcliff Manor, Hawthorne and Pocantico Hills fire departments, and Pleasantville Volunteer Ambulance Corps.

Officials said members performed search, hose line operations, master stream operations, ventilation, and overhaul. Units were able to successfully clear the scene around 11 a.m.

Fire officials were still investigating the cause of the fire.

The property, which housed the vacant building, will where Lighthouse Living’s 71-unit, three-story residential building. The project was approved by the Pleasantville Planning Commission in March.

The vacant structure located was scheduled to be demolished last Wednesday.

The project will include 10 studio apartments, 51 one-bedroom units and 10 two-bedroom units. Developers have previously said they’re looking to appeal to millennials and empty-nesters.

Robert Crawley

Robert “Bob” J. Crawley, 85, of Ossining passed away on Jan. 7. He was 85.

Crawley was born on Dec. 14, 1935, to Edward and Amelia Crawley. He was a graduate of Ossining High School. Bob was a local businessman, owner of Crawley’s Grocery, Campwoods Deli and Roosevelt Deli. He was a lifetime member of the Ossining Fire Department where he served for 58 years with Holla Hose. There, he was ex-captain and served on numerous committees. In addition, he had been president of the Ossining Rotary Club, Exalted Ruler of the Elks #1486 and a member of the St. Augustine Golden Eagles.

Crawley is survived by his daughters, Debbie (Mike) Cafarelli, Kathy (George) Lawrence and Kelly (Chris) Lovell; seven grandchildren, Amie (Richard) Berry, Nicholas (Jenn) Cafarelli, Zachary Cafarelli, Rachel (Alex) Bateman, Ryan and Brendan Lawrence and Christopher Lovell; two great-granddaughters, Audrey and Evelyn Berry; and many nieces and nephews. He is also survived by two sisters, Doris Smith and Judy Crawley.

He was predeceased by his sister, Jean Lippert, and his brother, Leroy Crawley.

In light of the current situation, we have put measures in place to continue to serve our beloved community.

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Pieces shot out from a vacant building at Depew Street and Vanderbilt Avenue in Pleasantville during the early morning hours on Jan. 5.
Jones Calls for Impeachment as Local Officials React to Capitol Riot

By Martin Wilbur

Local elected officials universally condemned the rioting at the Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump, with freshman Rep. Mondaire Jones (D-Suffern) calling within hours for the president’s impeachment or removal through the 25th Amendment.

Reaction from across the area was swift in the hours following the deadly Jan. 6 mayhem in Washington, D.C. that delayed Congress’s affirmation of President-elect Joe Biden’s and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris’s electoral college victory until after 3 a.m. the following morning. Five people, including a member of the Capitol police force, died during the lawlessness.

Jones was among a growing legion of congressman across the nation that supported impeachment or urging Vice President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove Trump, describing the president’s actions as inciting “an armed insurrection against our nation’s legislative branch.”

The House officially introduced an article of impeachment on Monday.

“Consequences must be swift,” Jones said. “I have signed onto articles of impeachment for abuse of power and high crimes and misdemeanors. I have joined a letter calling on Vice President Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment to remove Trump from office. I urge my colleagues to join me. The fate of our republic is on the line.”

Westchester County Executive George Latimer said in a statement last Wednesday that the barriers that protect the country’s democracy have broken down in recent years.

“In the history of this nation, no matter how much conflict we have had – and there is conflict built in every day in the halls of government – we never go from disagreements as fellow Americans to inciting violence or expecting that a mob can control a legislative body in order to impose its will outside of its legislative structures,” Latimer said.

Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell said the nation has lots of work to do to make sure the country remains a shining example of democracy.

“’The world is watching. Americans have the right to protest, but not to break the law while doing so,” Odell said. “For the future of our children, I would hope we could put our country first, despite any differences.”

State Sen. Peter Harckham (D-Lewisboro) said he was “disgusted and angered” by the attack on the Capitol and commented that the nation’s “stands in the shadow of shame.”

“The attempt to overthrow our presidential election deserves a full investigation, and anyone complicit in this anarchic free-for-all should be held accountable,” Harckham said. “It is entirely beyond belief that a lawless mob was able to force its way into the Capitol building without being apprehended.”

Several local officials also joined the large chorus who reacted last week. One of those, Peekskill Mayor Andre Rainey, said the rioting was a result of a lack of leadership which has emboldened thousands of citizens to disrespect fundamental American values.

Joseph Kaidanow, chairman of the Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center in White Plains, said the organization “had a corrosive effect which culminated in yesterday’s tragedy.”
Laura Moore was recently named the new coordinator of Pleasantville STRONG, a coalition dealing with youth substance abuse in the community.

Moore replaces Nicole Malgarinos, the five-year-old organization’s first coordinator. She is a longtime Pleasantville resident with two children currently attending Pleasantville High School.

Moore, whose neighbor, John Mueller was one of Pleasantville STRONG’s founding members, said his involvement inspired her to apply for the coordinator’s position.

“I remember John taking this on in true John fashion and how motivated he was,” Moore recalled. “He worked so hard to rally the community and I was in awe.”

Moore said she has seen firsthand the importance of connecting to teens concerning different types of substance abuse. She pointed to the impactful classes taught by Mary Ann Flately, a licensed mental health counselor and the Pleasantville School District’s student assistance counselor, addressing addiction to vaping, marijuana or alcohol.

“Mary Ann was a big draw for me,” said Moore, who holds a doctorate in education, health and behavior and a master’s in science, health and behavior, both from Columbia University. “I’ll be looking to learn a lot from her, what she’s learned and what the needs are.”

Malgarinos, who served on the Pleasantville STRONG Steering Committee to select a new coordinator, said she encouraged the hiring of a local resident. She called Moore a “perfect fit and a huge benefit.” The committee was impressed with Moore’s 20-plus years’ experience in nonprofit settings.

“She will be of great assistance when we move in that direction,” said Malgarinos, who works for Westchester County’s Mental Health Services and will help Moore transition into the position. “We have an on-boarding process that’s mostly administrative, but then I will be introducing Laura to those connected with the Westchester Coalition, Student Assistance Services and other coalitions who work for drug-free communities.”

Five years ago, the coalition received an annual $125,000 Drug-Free Communities federal grant, which has recently been renewed for Pleasantville STRONG for another five years. The grant stipulates that community groups collaborate to fight substance abuse.

“Laura comes to the table with much knowledge and she knows the community,” said Shane McGaffey, chairman of the Pleasantville Coalition, Student Assistance Services and other coalitions who work for drug-free communities.

“Kids don’t live at school. They are at home, at sports groups, clubs or church. The message has to go to all different places,” she said. “We need to ask how we can best work

Laura Moore, the new coordinator for Pleasantville STRONG, which fights substance abuse among youngsters.

A GOOD READ WHILE YOU’RE STAYING SAFE INSIDE

Four days after being temporarily assigned to the detective division of a sleepy suburban police department, a young officer is thrust into the task of investigating a double homicide. The investigation takes the upstart officer through unfamiliar and dangerous encounters, including suspicion that his agency is incapable of an investigation of this magnitude.

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Louis A. Dorio retired as Chief of Police after a 20-year decorated career with a suburban NY Police Department.

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“Couldn’t Put It Down. Finished the book in two days. I couldn't put it down and have received the same feedback from everyone I have passed the book along to. Louis Dorio does an amazing job of making the reader feel like they are right there with him on the case. I highly recommend Murder Finds the Suburbs.” ★★★★★

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When it comes time to sell a house, there are many issues to be addressed to make it attractive to prospective buyers, from curb appeal to functionality of all systems. Realtors are eager to provide advice to guide sellers through the process of “getting ready.”

Probably the most sensitive issue to address is unpleasant odor in the house. My sense of smell isn’t what it used to be, and as a realtor, I find that sometimes can be a good thing, such as occasions when an old house is riddled with mold or when a home is overpowered with the aroma of spicy cooking.

Every home has a particular smell. Sometimes it’s good, sometimes not. When it’s good, we might want to savor it and remember it, but when it’s bad, both we and a prospective buyer want to escape it.

I can still recall that sweet smell of the home I grew up in. Maybe it was a combination of my mother’s cooking, the home I grew up in. Maybe it was a mixture of tomato- and olive oil-based, with the aroma of spicy cooking. When we and a prospective buyer want to escape the smell, it running day and night to make it pleasant to be.

William Ravies Real Estate in Yorktown Heights, as well as a publicist and journalist personality Ed McMahon, should be aware of objectionable house smells was in the apartment of a very senior woman who had invited me, as a part-time antiques dealer at the time, to buy some of her things. When I entered her apartment, located in an old former hotel in Brooklyn Heights, I was hit with a smell that was very unpleasant, yet difficult to describe.

The windows were shrouded in heavy curtains and shades, and the furniture was all deeply tufted. When she showed me her things, some quite beautiful, I would ask her how much she wanted for them. She would often give me a low price, which she must have pulled from her value of things in the 1920s. It would have been unconscionable of me to not give her more.

Whenever I would offer her two and three times the amount she requested, which was still a bargain for me, she would say, “Oh,” with delight. She was lovely and I was getting tremendous deals, but I couldn’t wait to leave the terrible smell of her living environment.

I’m embarrassed to admit that I thought the smell was coming from what I had heard was called “old people smell,” but that was a wrong assumption. The闻的 smell was coming from what I had heard was called “old people smell,” but that was a wrong assumption. The smell was coming from what I had heard was called “old people smell,” but that was a wrong assumption.

When it comes time to sell a house, he can be called directly at 914-522-2076.

While the smell of lingering smoke and pets may be offensive to those not used to it, they aren’t harmful and might be corrected by household remedies. However, toxic mold, which is reputed to have hastened the death of television personality Ed McMahon, should be handled by a professional remediation service. There is just too much at stake, especially in the remediation process, to approach on one’s own.

If a house is being readied for sale and the owner is advised to eliminate the smell of smoking or pets, the best cure is good ventilation. The process can be expedited with good old-fashioned baking soda. Baking soda can be sprinkled on furniture and carpeting that has absorbed smoking or pet odors. After sitting for several hours, it is vacuumed.

The worst thing to do about household odors is to try to mask them with candles, incense or other odor-combating products. The layered smells can be worse than the offending odor.

Bill Primavera is a residential and commercial realtor® associated with William Ravies Real Estate in Yorktown Heights, as well as a publicist and journalist writing regularly as ‘The Home Guru.’ For questions about home maintenance or to buy or sell a home, he can be called directly at 914-522-2076.
Form Based Code Poses Traffic, Parking Hurdles in Chappaqua

By Martin Wilbur

Members of the New Castle Town Board indicated the likelihood of revisions to the proposed Form Based Code for downtown Chappaqua during discussions last week regarding the code’s potential impact on traffic and parking.

The board, which has listened to significant criticism during public hearings on the proposed rezoning at the recent public hearings, reassured the public that all comments and questions will be reviewed and addressed in writing by the town’s consultants.

“We really want to be able to get our consultants going and to start to do these initial analyses and really sort of write the answers to the questions that have come through this public process,” said Supervisor Ivy Pool.

Last Tuesday’s discussion came before this Wednesday’s scheduled joint Town Board-Chappaqua Board of Education work session and the scheduled continuation of the public hearing on Jan. 19. The Board of Education hired its own consultant in the fall after it disputed the town’s consultants who estimated less than 100 school-age children would be generated by nearly 1,000 units.

The town is required to include the full buildout under the state Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA).

There are issues that will need to be resolved by the board and its consultants before officials feels comfortable moving forward. Pool mentioned that any substantial downtown development would require improvement to the triangle intersection at the base of the Route 120 bridge.

Improvements such as a T-intersection or a roundabout at that location have previously received a frosty reception from the state Department of Transportation (DOT) during previous administrations.

“In my mind, we need to understand whether New York State DOT is going to support that,” Pool said. “They haven’t in the past. Do we believe they will going forward, and how will this work from a potential standpoint of the costs associated with that?”

Councilwoman Lisa Katz said she was very concerned about parking and traffic. She said that with previous studies showing a traffic service Level F downtown at certain times, there would need to be improvements to accommodate the likelihood of increased volume.

Another key issue facing officials is parking. Pool said getting a clear picture of how much additional parking may be needed, where it can be built and how much it would cost is a critical component of the proposed Form Based Code.

There has been discussion about the possibility of a parking structure in the town-owned land at the train station, but any use of municipal property is subject to a permissive referendum.

The town and its consultants need to guard against losing parking if there is development downtown, Deputy Supervisor Jeremy Saland said. But if there were to be a parking garage, which should be explored, it would need to be done so it’s not constructed in an offensive manner, he said.

“If we need town land to do it, then does that mean it just stops, does that mean it just doesn’t happen if we can’t get the land in play to make the development work?” Saland asked.

The town’s director of planning, Sabrina Charney Hull, said there have been many examples of when parking issues scuttle development plans.

New Castle officials and their consultants have plenty to consider in the weeks ahead.

“I’ve not made up my mind how I feel about the Form Based Code other than I am not going to adopt it in its current iteration, I can guarantee that,” Katz said. “But we’re still in the process of figuring out, evaluating what’s best for the town.”
Mt. Pleasant Police Arrest Connecticut Man on Weapons Charge

By Martin Wilbur

An 18-year-old Connecticut man was arrested early Monday by Mount Pleasant police on a weapons charge following a struggle with two officers when they spotted a gun in his waistband.

Malik Walker, of Hartford, was charged with second-degree criminal possession of a weapon in Thornwood about 2:30 a.m.

While on patrol, Officer Samantha O’Conner pulled over a vehicle occupied by three males after she observed it being operated erratically in Thornwood. She followed the car into a residential neighborhood where there have been numerous incidents of stolen property from vehicles and reports of stolen cars.

Once stopped, O’Conner engaged the driver in conversation and had reasonable suspicion to detain the men for further investigation.

After Officer Nicholas Mann arrived at the scene to provide assistance, the two officers asked Walker, the backseat passenger, to get out of the car. Police said he was uncooperative after exiting the vehicle, continuing to keep his hands near his waist.

Mann observed what later turned out to be a Smith & Wesson .40-caliber semiautomatic pistol, which was fully loaded with 16 rounds of ammunition, police said. Upon observing the gun, both officers brought Walker to the ground and a struggle ensued.

The suspect was handcuffed and brought to Mount Pleasant police headquarters.

W’chester Officials Appeal to Public to Get Vaccine When Available

continued from page 4

a card with an appointment for when they should return for the second dose, Amler said. When multiple vaccines are available, they cannot be mixed, she said.

It is unclear how long the vaccine provides immunity, but studies suggest that protection is four to five times stronger than having had the virus, according to Hewlett.

Perhaps the most serious challenge facing Westchester, New York State and the nation is the slow rollout of the vaccines. New York State is receiving 300,000 weekly doses of the vaccine from the federal government, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Friday. Health care workers have been the first recipients.

Cuomo announced that the second group of eligible vaccine recipients — police, firefighters, other public safety workers, educators, transit workers and people 75 and up — can start registering for their vaccination appointments starting Monday.

A state website and a call center were activated on Monday (see accompanying info box).

The governor said unions will organize the appointments for the various workers. Participating pharmacies and health care providers will administer the vaccine for seniors.

“This is the group that’s the most at risk,” Cuomo said. “This is the group with the highest death rate.”

So far, about 1,200 of the state’s 5,000 pharmacies have committed to giving the shots, with an initial group of 500 ready to accept registrants, he said.

Those 75 and older comprise, by far, the largest contingent in the second group eligible for the vaccine, totaling about 1.4 million state residents. In all, there are 3.2 million people in the second group and about one million health care workers who still need to be vaccinated, he said.

However, Cuomo said at the current slow pace of distribution it will take until mid-April to complete vaccinating the first two groups and 47 weeks to reach the minimum 70 percent herd immunity threshold.

Latimer said the third eligible group will consist of people with chronic medical situations, including the immunocompromised, followed by the general population. No date has been given when the next two groups can begin signing up.

He said the task to immunize the population just at the county level is daunting.

“We haven’t done anything like this…in our lifetime and I’m not sure 100 years ago that pandemic could not have dealt with this,” Latimer said. “So we’re in new territory.”

Amler said while most of the population waits its turn for the vaccine, it is crucial to continue the oft-repeated strategies to stay safe and for officials to educate the public.

“We’re in the middle of vaccinating the public right now, it doesn’t mean we can stop wearing masks,” Amler said. “It doesn’t mean we can stop social distancing and doing all the things that we’ve done before. It just means that we have to vaccinate about 70 to 80 percent of our population and we’ll reach herd immunity, which means that we will have less of a risk of widespread outbreaks of this virus.”

Hewlett also exhorted the public to avoid airplane travel and large gatherings.

“If we behave in the right way, we can keep our schools open and our pre-schools open and our children will be safer, and also it will allow the parents to do the kinds of work that they need to do,” he said.

By Patrick J. McNulty Jr.

Patrick J. McNulty Jr. • Patrick T. McNulty • Patrick J. McNulty Jr. • Daniel J. McNulty
New Shop to Provide Residents With Taste of Britain in Mt. Kisco

By Sydney Stoller

Stuck at home during the coronavirus pandemic, local Anglophiles and British expats have been unable to take a trip across the pond.

They may instead be satisfying their need for English culture by watching “The Crown,” “The Great British Baking Show” or “Bridgerton,” all trending shows on Netflix based in the U.K., and by drinking breakfast tea.

Fortunately, there will soon be a way for local residents to get a taste of Britain close to home.

A new retail shop called The Hamlet will be opening in Mount Kisco in late February at 23 S. Moger Ave. The Hamlet will mainly sell British food, books, gifts and vinyl records. The food items, mostly nonperishable snacks and dry goods, will be imported from England, which means that customers have the opportunity to try authentic delicacies like Cadbury chocolates and Monster Munch potato chips.

Monster Munch chips are a favorite of co-owner Drew Hodgson, who moved to the United States from England to tour as a musician in a 1990s alternative rock band. Born in Kendal, a small town in the Lake District near the Scottish border, Hodgson eventually moved to Manchester before relocating to America and settling in Mount Kisco with his wife, Leigh, and their daughters.

Opening the store alongside part-owners Karen and Mike Ransom has been a longtime dream for the Hodgsons. And their passion for The Hamlet and its merchandise is palpable.

“Ninety percent of the food in our store, you will not find in your local food store,” he said. “If you live in town and you are used to British groceries, then you will be able to do your grocery shopping at our store. From the curries, the jams, the jellies, the teas, to the frozen foods, the pies, the pasties (a British meat pie) and the sausages, it’s all here.”

They are dedicated not only to stocking British delicacies and records, but to providing customers with an experience each time they enter the shop. With murals of the English countryside painted on the walls, a red vintage phone booth in the middle of the store and music of The Beatles playing from the speakers, walking into The Hamlet will make anyone feel at ease.

“I want people to walk in and feel like they walked into a little piece of England,” Hodgson said. “I’m thinking about what I would want as an expat, as someone who is missing home.”

In a climate where many local businesses are struggling to survive, opening a new store with enthusiastic proprietors is a breath of fresh air.

“It’s exciting to see a new business open, especially one so unique,” said Jen Gerken, owner of Porch, a shop on Main Street, which sells home accessories.

“It’s encouraging and energizing to see people invest in our community, especially during this challenging time.”

By selling merchandise unavailable almost anywhere else, The Hamlet should help it lure new clientele to Mount Kisco.

As a musician who believes that records are the true way to enjoy music, Hodgson is committed to having a large catalog of vinyls, ranging from Motorhead to Harry Styles. Similarly, as a public school teacher, Leigh Hodgson has worked tirelessly to provide literature for customers of all ages. She has stocked British authors spanning the generations, from Charles Dickens to J.K. Rowling.

Just as its merchandise covers a variety of interests, the name of the shop has many meanings. In a reference to the classical British literature that the shop will be selling, The Hamlet is an homage to the famed Shakespeare tragedy. It is also the brand name of one of the U.K.’s most famous cigars.

Finally, a hamlet is a word commonly used in England as well as in America to refer to a small village, which is fitting given the shop’s location.

By the end of February, area residents may add a new meaning to the word—a place where they are able feel like they’re at home and in England.

Until then, British television shows should help it lure new clientele to almost anywhere else, The Hamlet should help it lure new clientele to Mount Kisco. 

By selling merchandise unavailable almost anywhere else, The Hamlet should help it lure new clientele to Mount Kisco.
Putnam Land Trust Accepts 31 Forested Acres in Southeast

The Putnam County Land Trust (PCLT) announced last week it has accepted the donation of 31 acres on Joe’s Hill Road in the Town of Southeast.

The property is 90 percent woodlands and consists of mature maple-beech and oak-hickory trees, many of which are two to three feet in diameter (estimated to be 100 to 150 years old). Plant communities are red maple swamp, oak-hickory forest and maple-beech forest. There are also rock outcroppings which make the preserve fascinating to walk and explore.

Joe’s Hill, 847 feet in elevation, is .5 miles to the south. This property’s land slopes westward to the reservoir from a peak elevation of 670 feet near the road along the eastern boundary to a low point of 430 feet at the wetlands and reservoir at the western boundary. This wetland along the western boundary is part of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation wetland BR-31. A wetland just east of the property feeds a stream that runs across the property. These woodlands and wetlands provide a high-quality breeding, nesting, foraging and stopover habitat for birds, reptiles, amphibians, beneficial insects and a variety of other wildlife. Birds observed on a June 18, 2018, visit include the wood thrush, red-eyed vireo and veery, all of which are interior-forrest dwelling migratory birds that require large, unfragmented blocks of woods such as those in which to breed.

This property helps to protect the quality of the water entering the East Branch Reservoir and provide much-needed wildlife habitat. Over the past 50 years, three billion birds have disappeared due to loss of habitat and use of pesticides. By conserving this property, PCLT is helping to provide undisturbed habitat for them.

The property requires work to make it accessible for visitors, and there are plans to have it open for walks by early 2022.

ArtsWestchester Seeks Art Created During Pandemic for Exhibit

ArtsWestchester has issued a call for submissions of artistic and creative projects made during the COVID-19 pandemic for a new curated exhibition that will open in the spring.

Janet Langsam, ArtsWestchester’s CEO, said at a time of great loss and physical distancing, many have turned to creative outlets to help cope and express anguish when feeling helpless.

“Painting, photography, sewing, crafting, singing, writing and other everyday creative activities are helping us to reclaim a connection to our friends, families and self,” Langsam said. “We invite you to share your creativity with us – your homemade puppet theater, your ‘COVID cookbook,’ your family Zoom concert – and tell your pandemic story. We are open to all of your creative ideas.”

The exhibit is expected to open in late April, with a parallel virtual presentation. However, depending on health guidelines and policies in place at the time, the exhibition may be solely virtual. The exhibit’s title and opening date will be announced in February.

ArtsWestchester will consider submissions in the following categories: crafts, visual arts, performing arts, cultural/traditional practices, writing and fashion, among others.

Artists must be Westchester County or Hudson Valley residents. Adults may submit up to three works in any category; minors are limited to one submission. The submission deadline is Mar. 3 at 11:59 p.m. Selected artists will be notified of submission status no later than Mar. 15.

ArtsWestchester will offer two 7 p.m. workshops on Jan. 19 and 26 to help artists and members of the public prepare submissions. Those who would like to view a recording of the sessions, e-mail Logan Hanley, gallery manager, at lhanley@artswestchester.org.


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Exploring the Changes in the Wine World During the Past Quarter Century

By Nick Antonaccio

The world is changing — rapidly. The wine world is changing — also rapidly. As we leave 2020 behind and venture into the uncertainty of 2021, let’s focus on the last quarter century — a mere speck of sand in the continuum of humankind’s presence on this amazing planet.

Over the span of the last 25 years, the global community has witnessed, and been directly affected by, greater advancements in science, medicine, technology, world health, world peace and human longevity than in the cumulative history of humankind. In 1995, we were primarily tethered to wired phones, receiving much of our information from the Postal Service and broadcast and print media. The internet was just beginning to surface as a consumer tool for information research and shopping.

What a phenomenal journey it’s been since then: smartphones have largely replaced traditional soft technology sources, not to mention still and video cameras and film, maps, board games, music and music storage on hard media, shopping carts, even face-to-face conversations. Adults live longer than in 1995 due to advances such as laser surgery, stents, statins, genetic sequencing and MRIs. The level of worldwide poverty is the lowest in history and much of the world’s population lives in relative peace.

In 2021, we can also enjoy life to the fullest (notwithstanding the obvious effects of the pandemic), including indulging in our favorite wines. Allow and indulge me, in the shadow of these momentous changes in our lives, to ruminate on the transformation of the wine world over the last 25 years. Let’s focus on the change in the proliferation and influence of wine producing regions.

New major players. A number of today’s major wine-producing countries were not even on the international radar screen 25 years ago. Nowhere has the surge in wine over this period been the greatest than in the United States; all 50 states now produce quality wines. The result of this surge? We have become the largest wine consumers in the world, and 75 percent of what we consume is produced domestically. American cult wines now garner similar respect as a number of esteemed French wines.

Resurgence of Old World producers. After languishing in the world markets for decades, winemakers have revitalized their wineries with bold, exciting new representations of wines — and at very affordable prices. In addition to numerous producers in France and Italy, those in Greece, Spain, Portugal, Austria and Switzerland have embraced New World technology, producing quality wines that were subpar 25 years ago.

Eastern Europe has an Old World wine heritage dating back to the early Romans. Virtually non-existent outside of their homelands 25 years ago, high quality/price ratio wines from Croatia, Romania, Czech Republic and Hungary are entering the United States market.

Surge of New World producers. Gallo’s Barefoot brand has risen from domestic sales of 40,000 cases in 1995 to an industry-leading 18 million today. And don’t forget the other New World behemoth, Yellowtail, which is still dominant in the United States market with over 11 million cases sold today. Add to the mix: New Zealand, Chile, Argentina and Canada.

New horizons. This is where it is truly amazing. Today, wine is produced in far-flung regions never thought to be commercially possible, let alone successful, in 1995. Primarily sold in-country, these wines haven’t hit our shores yet, but they have received acclaim for their high quality. Down the road, look for wines from the Black Sea countries (Russia and Georgia), North Africa (Morocco, even Ethiopia), Israel, Brazil and India. The newest giant entering the market is the United Kingdom, producing acclaimed sparkling wines.

Where is the world market for wine headed? There are a number of wild cards. Experts anticipate significant changes in the wine world in the future, influenced by global warming and the rise of the Chinese market, amongst others.

One thing is certain: Just as consumers and wine lovers everywhere have benefited from historic changes in the last 25 years, so too will we benefit from the ever-evolving world of science and wine production. Enjoy the ride.

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.

Crabtree’s Kittle House: A Dining Masterpiece in Chappaqua

As a travel writer I’ve been lucky enough to devour incredible meals in some of the world’s finest restaurants, from Paris to Saigon, Berlin to Los Angeles and Madrid to Florence. Now that COVID-19 has sadly “clipped my wings,” the world’s Michelin-starred restaurants of my travels are now just a distant memory. But recently I’ve discovered an incredible, world-class, Michelin-worthy restaurant just 30 minutes away from home in Hastings-on-Hudson. A magical, very special restaurant that’s blown me away in every possible way.

That charming, Old World, romantic restaurant is Crabtree’s Kittle House nestled in the woods in Chappaqua. Over 200 years ago this was a family farm, then a Prohibition-era roadhouse, a private girl’s school, a country playhouse where Henry Fonda and Tallulah Bankhead starred and a bed and breakfast during Hollywood’s Golden Era. The white, classically gorgeous restaurant that’s blown me away in every possible way.

The tables inside the lovely downstairs, with picturesque patio for dining on their expansive patio and main dining room are safely distanced. Dining on their expansive patio. Crabtree’s Kittle House is John Crabtree. Just as Leonard Bernstein was acclaimed by music critics as the renowned maestro of the New York Philharmonic, Crabtree is acclaimed by food critics as the renowned maestro of his establishment.

Like a great conductor, he orchestrates every facet of his outstanding restaurant. His attentive staff is Old World, serving every dish so artfully. They make you feel very special, explaining how each dish was prepared and how the ingredients were locally and sustainably sourced. Upon being seated they’ll bring you a basket of home-made sourdough bread, served warm with a crunchy crust and gossamer dough. Each course is presented to you as delicious works of art. My favorite wines. Allow and indulge me, in the shadow of these momentous changes in our lives, to ruminate on the transformation of the wine world over the last 25 years. Let’s focus on the change in the proliferation and influence of wine producing regions.

The delightfully charming owner of Crabtree’s Kittle House is John Crabtree. Just as Leonard Bernstein was acclaimed by music critics as the renowned maestro of the New York Philharmonic, Crabtree is acclaimed by food critics as the renowned maestro of his establishment.

Like a great conductor, he orchestrates every facet of his outstanding restaurant. His attentive staff is Old World, serving every dish so artfully. They make you feel very special, explaining how each dish was prepared and how the ingredients were locally and sustainably sourced. Upon being seated they’ll bring you a basket of home-made sourdough bread, served warm with a crunchy crust and gossamer dough. Each course is presented to you as delicious works of art. My favorite dishes included their Highland Farms venison osso bucco, pan roasted Hudson Valley pork belly, winter truffle and wild mushroom Gnocci and slow-braised grass-fed short ribs. Their seafood selections are beyond outstanding. Order a side of their seductive parmesan truffle fries with chipotle aioli.

Their incredibly delicious, artistic desserts are just as memorable as the food. The tables inside the lovely main dining room are safely distanced. Dining on their expansive patio is a warm and cozy experience, thanks to the towering heaters. You can also pick up most items on their menu curbside with family meals for four to six people. On weekends they have the most delicious four-course brunch in Westchester.

Until I take off again on my next travel adventure, I’m so thankful that I discovered Crabtree’s Kittle House, which has been as rewarding a dining experience as I’ve had in all my travels. This unique restaurant unequivocally deserves to be awarded two stars by the discriminating folks at Guide Michelin.

So take my advice, make plans today to treat yourself and your significant other to a delightfully decadent one-of-a-kind memorable meal. Of course, it’s a bit pricey but with all you’ve had to put up with this year and unable to celebrate all the special holidays with your loved ones, it’s absolutely worth the splurge. More importantly, you’re worth it.

Crabtree’s Kittle House is located at 11 Kittle Rd. in Chappaqua. For more information, call 914-666-8044 or visit www.crabtreeskittlehouse.com.

By Richard Levy
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Woodpeckers of Westchester: A Portentous Pileated

By Brian Kluepfel

We have considered the pileated woodpecker a bird of good fortune since we saw one just outside our apartment on moving day four years ago.

Such a massive, beautiful creature, we were compelled to watch, even as the rain drizzled down our necks and dampened our hair on a dank March morning. I even asked the landlord not to remove the tree where the woodpecker was situated. The tree is still there, but probably not due to my request.

As big and bodacious as the pileated woodpecker is (if you haven’t seen one, they’re crow-sized, with a bright red crest), they’re not easy to spot, especially in the spring and summer. They tend to be high in the canopy of thick woods, and eastern deciduous forests are dense with foliage until late autumn. While we often hear one on our walks through Mariandale, only once have we seen one there. We did see another, out in the open by the Ossining Metro-North station, a few years ago.

On New Year’s Eve I met a good friend at Pruny Sanctuary for a coffee and a quick hike. (It was another drizzly day.) As we strode through the lowland swamp, we heard the unmistakable tapping of a woodpecker, and a loud tapping at that. After inspecting the treetops for a moment, my friend spied the pileated woodpecker, and pointed it out to me. I had the advantage of binoculars and got a good view; a nice way to end the year.

I kidded with my friend that the American Birding Association was naming its Bird of the Year that night at 10 p.m. and that he should stay up for the announcement. We had a good laugh and went our separate ways, driving into the mists of 2021.

To my delight, on New Year’s morning I read that the pileated woodpecker had been named Bird of the Year. It was almost like the previous day’s sighting was a portent. Maybe a good sign in dark times. Perhaps as the woodpecker raps its head repeatedly against the trunk to get a reward of insects, collective humanity bashing our head against the wall of intolerance and misunderstanding will result in something positive. Or maybe we’ll have to fly to another tree.

There are 22 woodpecker species native to North America (for die-hards who insist the ivory-billed is still around, 23). You can see several at our Saw Mill River Audubon sanctuaries in Westchester. Among them are the red-bellied woodpecker (we just saw one at Cedar Lane Park), the hairy woodpecker, the downy woodpecker, the northern flicker (often visible on the ground, with gilded wings), the yellow-bellied sapsucker, and naturally, the pileated woodpecker. In recent years, Muscoot Farm in Somers had been home to a nest of stunning red-headed woodpeckers.

Brian Kluepfel is the editor of the Saw Mill River Audubon newsletter and a correspondent for Lonely Planet and Fodor’s travel guides, as well as Birdwatching and Westchester magazines. You can find him at birdmanwalking.com and @briankluepfel on social media.

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For a variety of reasons, lacrosse is more like family than most sports, so make no mistake: Laxers are there for each other, especially when the chips are down.

There is genetic royalty at just about every legitimate high school lacrosse program across the country. Families with two or more children often form the lineage that shapes the pedigree and stock of a particular program: the Fuscos of Yorktown High, the Lindseys of Walter Panas, the Prunty’s of Lakeland. Heck, Yorktown has a ton of families worthy of royal mention (the Marrs, the Nelsons, the D’Andraises, the Karovits, the Carcatturas, the Dooleys, the McDuffies, the Harringtons, the McCallis, the Vercruysses, et al.), but given the three All-American men — Frank, the dad in 1980, and sons Frank Jr. (2012) and Austin (2013) — and one All-American daughter, Riley — the Fuscos are about as given at Yorktown as the Bocketts of John Jay Cross River, who are dealing with a major setback to one of their three All-American sons.

The Bockett family means as much to the lore of Section 1 lacrosse as any family in history, including four siblings who all played Division I lacrosse. Mike Bockett (Fairfield ’07), Matt Bockett (Johns Hopkins ’08), Chris Bockett (Virginia ’11) and sister Casey Bockett (Virginia ’15) starred at John Jay prior to their NCAA and professional careers.

But, now-31-year-old Chris Bockett, the former three-time UVA All-American and high school All-American, remains in critical condition after a longboarding accident ended in calamitous fashion and placed Chris in a Florida intensive care unit with severe head trauma last week.

Lacrosse brethren from far and wide rushed in to support the Bockett family. Casey Powell, a former Syracusian All-American and professional hall of famer, established a GoFundMe page at Fundraiser by Casey Powell: Helping Chris Bockett, which had raised $203,412 and counting as of Saturday.

Direct Rays

By Ray Gallagher
Examiner Sports
Editor@Directrays

In light of the COVID-19-driven postponements of high-risk sports last fall, #Time2Advocate has taken on a life of its own after Mahopac High football Coach Dominick DeMatteo took to social media recently in an effort to revive and initiate a statewide push for varsity football in the spring of 2021. Several local politicians have jumped aboard the mission in an effort to get NYS Gov. Andrew Cuomo to give the green light for “high-risk” sports like football, basketball, ice hockey, wrestling and cheerleading. It was less than a decade when we couldn’t classify cheer as an actual sport, but now it’s a high-risk activity. Enough already! Depression is running rampant among our student athletes and academia in general. We need to turn these kids loose this spring — with strict protocols and safety guidelines — in an effort to bring back some form of normal, just like they have done in neighboring NJ.

“Governor Cuomo will allow thousands of fans to attend a Buffalo Bills game, it’s only fair we work together and find a way to safely let these young people have a season,” said NYS Assembly Member Kevin Byrne.

Make no mistake, futures are at stake. We need to trust the data from the 35 other states who have played football — and other sports -- last fall and currently. Cuomo recently released a report based on contact tracing data from throughout the state. It focused on the 46,000 cases from September through November, which is approximately 20% of all confirmed cases. More than 70% of cases were traced back to social gatherings. Sports accounted for just 1.04% of cases, making it the seventh-leading cause for infection behind college students, education employees, restaurants, bars, travel and vacations.

So kids like Putnam Valley All-American senior Caitlin Pellegrino are being cheated of their last big shot based on a one percent metric. Pellegrino, the 2020 Section 1 gymnast of the year, is set to lead a crew of talent in the vault (9.4), uneven bars (8.75) and floor (9.525). Pellegrino finished last season capturing the Section 1 all-around title (36.825) with the cancellation of the 2021 NYSPHSAA winter tournaments on account of COVID-19.

In my opinion, that is one of the saddest parts of this situation; the fact that the Pellegrinos and the Shannon Beckers and Katie Turks of the world won’t have the chance to pad their historical legacies due to cancelled junior seasons and abbreviated senior campaigns that, otherwise, would likely ensure their all-time greatness at PV, Mahopac and Carmel, respectively.

“We have adjusted the initial “metrics” established last March for a variety of things, so why not inter-scholastic athletics,” Mahopac PE, teacher and football coach Dominick DeMatteo asked? “We had 13 off-season workouts for Mahopac football with 40 student athletes per session with zero contact tracing and zero COVID transmission, so what are we doing? It’s time to advocate for our student athletes.”

Upwards of 189,000 high school athletes in NYS have missed their seasons so far. Statistics show 70% of these athletes are suffering from depression and anxiety due to missing school and athletic experiences because of COVID. That’s about 132,000 high school kids.

This is why it’s #Time2Advocate on behalf of all student athletes: Professionally and respectfully, call your local politicians and ask them to espouse on behalf of NYS student athletes to #LetThemPlay before another 11th-hour cancellation ends all hope.

Coach Thibbs’ NY Knicks are, evidently, going to go through their fair share of ups and downs in 2021, as evidenced from their 5-5 start to Friday’s 101-89 setback to OKC, but even without No.1 draft pick Obi Toppin ( calf strain) in the lineup, I’m far more entertained by this unit through 10 games than I have been much of the last decade, or two…

The puck drops on the 2021 NY Rangers season this week and Bluesshirt fans are hoping to see the rebuilding of a potential empire should Rangers GM Jeff Gorton and team president John Davidson hit on all these recent draft picks, including No.1 pick Alexis Lafreniere. Procuring a top four seed in the newly-revised eight-team East Division is anything but a sure thing given the top-heavy contenders within the division, including the Boston Bruins, NY Islanders, Philly Flyers and Washington Caps. That said, I’ll settle on qualifying in 2021 with an eye on Lord Stanley’s Cup in 2022.

When the nation was going to hell in a handbag last Wednesday, NY Mets owner Steve Cohen put a lid to my personal gloom and doom on Thursday when he, Sandy Alderson and Jared Porter aggressively traded for All-Star SS Francisco Lindor and P Carlos Carrasco. It got me thinking -- just #35Day.$300PitchersAndCatchers #Metsmerized.

Thanks, Uncle Stevey, for putting the smile back on my face.
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