

'Project Schooner' master plan gets Planning Board's OK

By JACOB MARROCCO

After more than 3½ hours of presentations, questions and public comment, the Johnston Planning Board on Tuesday approved the master plan for a proposed major distribution facility on Hartford Avenue.

The opening 90 minutes of the special meeting focused on Bluewater's blueprints and potential impact on the surrounding area, featuring testimony from DiPrete Engineering Vice President Nicole Reilly and planning expert Joe Lom-

bardo. The unanimous vote also included separate motions on dimensional variances and waivers requested by Bluewater.

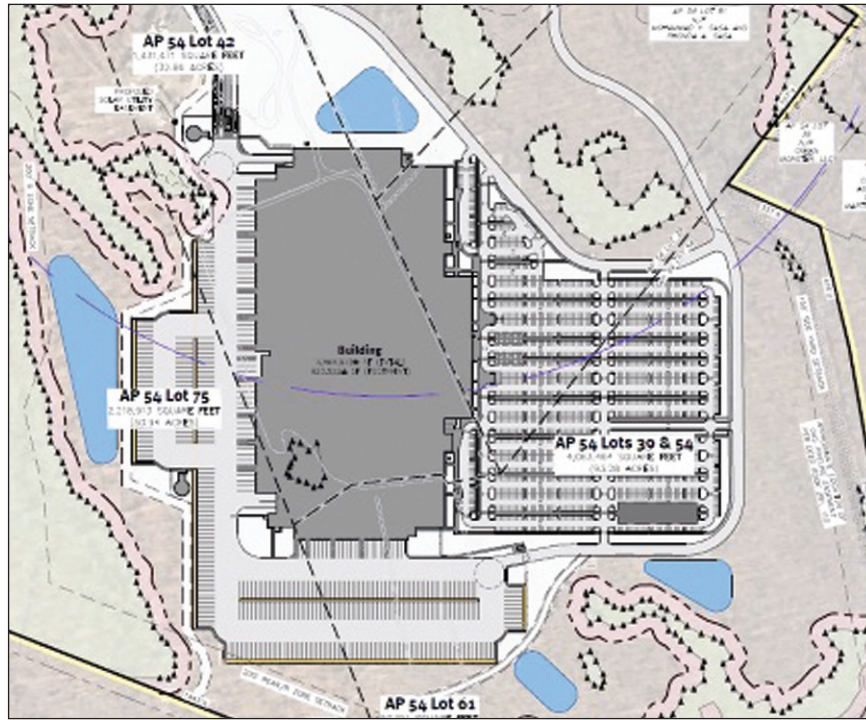
Attorney John Bolton led proceedings, largely uninterrupted by questions initially, during which Bluewater Principal Don Chase explained the layout and design of the facility for more than 100 people in the virtual audience.

None of the "Project Schooner" representatives announced the identity of their client, which has rumored to be Amazon. A

couple of speakers during the public comment portion of the evening referred to the building as an Amazon structure, which was neither confirmed nor denied when mentioned.

"We believe Project Schooner is a win for the town of Johnston, a crucial economic development from a rapidly growing industry leader in the landscape," Chase told the board.

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AT THE HEART OF IT: The 120-foot-tall distribution facility itself will be about 820,000 square feet, encompassing less than 10 percent of the project's total area. (Screenshot / Zoom)



OPEN FOR BUSINESS: Members of the Johnston Fire Department await the first patients at Johnston's indoor recreation center vaccination pod on Wednesday morning. (Sun Rise photo)

Town's vaccination pod gives first shots

By JACOB MARROCCO

The Johnston Recreation Center's vaccination pod opened Wednesday mornings as seniors 75 years and older waited eagerly in their cars for the first appointments to begin.

Mayor Joseph Polisena offered a brief tour of the facility, which was filled with socially distant volunteers, police officers, firefighters and EMTs serving their role in the process. Patients are signed in and have their temperatures taken upon arrival, at which point they proceed into the second basketball court, where volunteers will confirm their identity and direct them to a table.

On one court, nurses and pharmacists drew the vac-

cine as the firefighters next door took their seats to administer the shots. After their inoculations, patients head to the first basketball court and wait between 15 and 30 minutes with a pair of firefighters monitoring for adverse effects. The longer period is reserved for those with EpiPens or a history of allergic reactions.

The trip is almost complete at that juncture, as patients will then schedule their next appointment exactly one month after the first shot. Volunteers will assist with that step, as others await them at the exits to usher them out into the parking lot. Johnston police officers were on hand outside to direct traffic.

"We've got everything un-

der control," Polisena said, overlooking chairs stationed 6 feet apart for patients to wait their 15 to 30 minutes.

Polisena said Thursday morning that the process was "flawless" and there were "no hiccups." He thanked the first responders, volunteers and Town Hall workers who made it possible.

The pod's setup drew a positive review from Dr. John Stoukides, vice chairman of the Department of Medicine and chief of the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine at Roger Williams Medical Center. Polisena and Stoukides are the co-chairs of incoming Gov. Dan McKee's transition COVID-19 advisory group.

■ POD - PAGE 10

What's in the \$400M bond package?

By ETHAN HARTLEY

On Tuesday, March 2, Rhode Island will hold a special election that could potentially green-light \$400 million in state bonding – borrowed money that is to be paid back over a period of time, with interest, similar to a mortgage.

The ballot is split into seven questions, each dedicated to providing financial assistance to various sectors that advocates say are crucial to bolstering the state's economy and supporting its emergence and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The early in-person voting period started last week and runs through March 1 at city and town

halls. Mail voting is also available to those who got their ballot applications in prior to the Feb. 9 deadline.

Of course, the traditional in-person Election Day option remains available to voters on March 2. For more information, visit the state's online Voter Information Center at vote.sos.ri.gov.

So, what is on the ballot? Why should you care? Let's break down each question and the pertinent facts.

Question 1: \$107.3 million for higher education facilities

Question 1 would provide \$57.3 million to the University of Rhode Is-

land Fine Arts Center, \$38 million to fund renovations at Rhode Island College's Clarke Science Building and \$12 million to fund renovations and modernization efforts at the Community College of Rhode Island's (CCRI) Knight and Flanagan campuses in Warwick and Lincoln, as well as its Liston campus in Providence.

"The higher education bond on the March 2 ballot is an opportunity for Rhode Island voters to support their public university and colleges and provide students with an education and experience that will serve them well in their careers and lives," URI President David M. Dooley said in a joint

press release issued by URI, RIC and CCRI. "Rehabilitating and modernizing our facilities is critical to staying competitive, and to being a vital partner in helping to revitalize and strengthen the Rhode Island economy."

The URI portion of the bond, in addition to funding renovations of the 53-year-old Fine Arts Center that supports 5,000 students and sees 50,000 visitors annually, would enable the construction of an 82,000-square-foot academic building to provide updated classroom and laboratory space. The project would begin in the summer of 2022 and create an estimated 647 construction-related jobs, according to the release.

The RIC portion of the bond, the university posits, would enable the state to continue to offer a competitive academic environment in STEM – modernizing the Clarke Science Building for the first time since it was constructed in 1962. This would open up space for new research labs to support its scientific curriculum, which includes physics, chemistry, nuclear medicine, geology, astronomy and oceanography. They argue it would also support related curriculums such as environmental studies, medical imaging and their touted nursing and health education programs. Renovations would be completed by 2024.

"Upgrading Clarke Science would dramatically improve our ability to offer top-notch academic programs and experiential learning opportunities for future generations of Rhode Islanders who hope to pursue careers in science," RIC President Frank D. Sánchez said in a statement. "This will be responsive to the growing demands for science and technology degrees in Rhode Island, providing benefits to the entire state for decades to come."

According to CCRI public information officer Amy Kempe, the \$12 million earmarked for CCRI would enable the college to construct a "one-stop

■ BOND - PAGE 8

State steps up vaccine rollout with mass clinics, expanded age eligibility

By DANIEL KITTREDGE

If you're 75 years of age or older, a new way to get vaccinated against COVID-19 is now available.

And starting Monday, those 65 and older will be able to register for shots, too.

In an expected announcement, the governor's office and Department of Health on Wednesday said two large, state-run vaccination sites – one at the Dunkin' Donuts Center in Providence, the other at the former Citizens Bank office building on Sockanosset Cross Road in Cranston – would begin vaccinating hundreds of seniors a day starting Thursday.

Registration for appointments opened at the state-run sites, which opened immediately, can be done online at VaccinateRI.org. An automated phone line, 844-930-1779, is also available. Appointments can be made by the person seeking a vaccine or by someone else on their behalf.

At the time of a Zoom call with reporters Wednesday afternoon, health officials said roughly 1,300 people had already scheduled appointments at the state-run sites. As of Wednesday, appointments were being offered through Feb. 27.

According to health officials, the Providence site will be able to administer 500 shots a day to start, while the Cranston site will have the capacity to give 900 shots a day. The goal is to double that capacity within weeks.

To this point, the state's approach to the rollout has made COVID-19 vaccination available

to Rhode Islanders based on factors like risk and profession – nursing home residents and first responders, for example – as well as age, with a limit on those 75 and older.

On Monday, however, that approach will be broader. Those 65 and older will be able to schedule vaccination appointments at the state-run Providence and Cranston sites through the same website and phone number listed above. Vaccination for people in that age group will begin Tuesday.

During the Zoom call with reporters, Health Director Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott said the expanded availability is in keeping with the schedule set out in the state's age-based rollout strategy.

Acknowledging the growing criticism of Rhode Island's rollout to date, however, she added: "I know people want doses administered more quickly. We hear you, and we agree as well. We get it 100 percent."

Alexander-Scott said municipalities will continue to focus their locally run clinics on residents 75 and older, an approach she indicated has yielded positive results. When vaccination for the 65-plus population opens, those residents are being advised to utilize the state-run system. CVS and Walgreens also continue to offer vaccination appointments for those 75 and older.

Moving forward, Alexander-Scott said there are plans for a more centralized registration process as younger age groups become eligible for shots. That system, she said, will include the state-run sites and the local and

regional "pods" that are being developed. The two pharmacy chains, she said, will continue to maintain a separate registration system.

Alexander-Scott said steps are being taken to make the online and phone registration processes "a little more user friendly." "More appointments will be added as we go ... We're asking people to be patient," she said.

A statement from the Department of Health also announces the launch of a new "Vaccine Information Notification List" for those under the age of 65. The list, the statement reads, will allow those who sign up to "get updates as eligibility opens to new groups," adding: "Enrolling in this list does not guarantee an appointment for vaccination." Signup can be completed at portal.ri.gov.

In another piece of welcome news, Alexander-Scott told reporters the state's weekly allotment of vaccine from the federal government – which has been approximately 16,000 for several weeks – will increase to 22,500 next week. That amount is expected to remain steady for at least three weeks.

Alexander-Scott said the additional doses are being provided partially through an increase in supply, but that a shift on the part of drug manufacturer Pfizer – which is now advising that six doses, rather than five, can be drawn from a single vial – is a significant factor.

During the Zoom session reporters, as well as during a Facebook Live event featuring Gov. Gina Raimondo later in the af-

ternoon, officials repeatedly defended the state's rollout strategy. Recent reports indicate the state ranks lowest nationally in terms of the percentage of received vaccine doses that have been administered, and many have questioned why Rhode Island has not made vaccination more widely available.

Alexander-Scott said "our strategy is meeting the main objectives of the first portion of our vaccination campaign in Rhode Island." Those objectives, she said, are protecting residents of nursing homes and similar facilities – a group that has made up a large majority of the state's COVID-related deaths – as well as frontline medical workers "to ensure we have a health care workforce."

The health director said the state has seen a 46-percent drop in hospitalizations during the last month, a figure she said well surpasses national (32 percent) and regional (22 percent) declines. While the expansion of monoclonal antibody treatment and other factors have played a role, she said the approach to vaccination is owed a significant part of the credit for the improving numbers.

During the Facebook Live event, Raimondo – who has been largely removed from public view for weeks and is expected to be confirmed as U.S. Secretary of Commerce next week – said the "general COVID picture in Rhode Island looks very good." She pointed to the decline in hospitalizations, a test positivity rate that is the "lowest it's been in months," and an R-naught of less than 1 – meaning, in scientific terms, that

each infected Rhode Islander is spreading the coronavirus to less than one other person.

"We have a lot of work to do, and we're going to put the pedal to the medal on vaccinations ... [But we are in a] safe, stable place with our COVID-19 response," she said.

Elsewhere this week, health officials announced Tuesday that the first cases of the so-called U.K. variant of COVID-19 have been identified in Rhode Island.

During a Zoom call with reporters Tuesday afternoon, Dr. James McDonald, medical director of the Department of Health, said the U.K. variant – which was first identified in Great Britain – had already been identified in 40 other states. He said the South African and Brazilian variants of the virus have yet to be found in Rhode Island. He also said health officials have been conducting regular testing to detect the presence of the variants locally.

"It's new for us, but not new for the United States," he said, adding: "This is not surprising ... we knew the variant would come."

In terms of protecting themselves against the new variant, McDonald urged Rhode Islanders to take steps such as doubling up cloth masks or utilizing higher-grade masks, such as KF94s or KF95s.

"Now more than ever, it's really important to have a high-quality mask," he said.

McDonald also spoke of the importance of proper ventilation in enclosed spaces and limiting "how long you're in any particular place."

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Police chiefs put spotlight on rising roadway fatalities

By JACOB MARROCCO

Members of the law enforcement community gathered at Doric Park in Cranston on Feb. 12 for a "Blessing of the Roads," an event meant to promote driver safety and spotlight the growing number of deaths of the state's major roadways.

Shortly before Father Joseph Escobar, chaplain for the Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association, led a prayer, Department of Transportation Director Peter Alviti offered some stark statistics on roadway fatalities thus far in 2021. He said the state has already seen seven fatalities, up from four at this point in 2020.

Last year ended with 73 roadway fatalities, which State Police Superintendent Col. James Manni noted was the second-most on record. That figure was up from 57 in 2019, a jump that Alviti said represents a "huge increase."

"I wish I could tell you so far this year, so good. But the fact is, we've already had seven fatalities, and it's only February," Alviti said, before turning his attention to the spike in 2020. "[Seventy-three fatalities] is just too many lost souls, and while we can chalk it up to various factors related to the pandemic — like increased substance abuse, anxiety, suppressed anger or people seeing fewer cars on the road and therefore feeling that they can speed — the fact is the results are all the same, an increase in fatalities."

There were some signs of promise recently, though. There were no fatalities during the "notorious" Super Bowl weekend, and no drivers lost their lives during either of the last two snowstorms.

Despite those glimmers of hope, Alviti said, "we're still not having



BLESSING THE ROADS: Participants in last week's ceremony look on as RIPCA Chaplain Father Joseph Escobar recites his prayer. (Sun Rise photo)

a great new year." He pledged that his department's Office on Highway Safety would continue working closely with local and state law enforcement to curb the figures.

"Today, every one of us participating, and every Rhode Islander, wants a better and safer year ahead," Alviti said. "So today's ceremony, we're recognizing first responders and ask through the power of a simple collective prayer, to keep them safe. It's a way to also take a breath and start anew, and make a fresh commitment to be more responsible on our roadways and be more attentive and to not get on our highways while we're under the influence."

Manni recalled a 2019 conversation with Alviti

outside the State House, during which the director said the state has a "serious issue" regarding DUIs and fatal crashes. Manni said he told Alviti that if he could secure the funding, Manni would create a traffic safety unit of troopers devoted to enforcing impaired driving and DUI regulations.

As soon as the unit came together, violations increased "from one corner of the state of Rhode Island to the other." He said, in 2020, State Police issued 36,275 citations, including more than 12,000 for speeding and 1,400 for not wearing a seatbelt. He did add, though, that seatbelt citations decreased significantly from 13 percent of tickets to just 4 percent.

"The members of the

traffic safety unit, the Rhode Island State Police, we're out there 24/7, and we'll arrest anyone that is caught driving under the influence, but we're not done," Manni said. "We have a long way to go. I've met with my command staff, and we're going to be meeting with DOT soon and the Rhode Island Police Chiefs Association soon, and we're going to be coming up with a plan to include our municipal partners, which are integral in helping us solve this problem in the state of Rhode Island."

Sean Cassidy, executive director of the Rhode Island chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, said the state "has a lot more work to do" in curbing alcohol-related

accidents and deaths. He noted that the "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" initiative recently paired victims' families with officers across the state for more than 30 DUI patrols.

"This was a great way to pay tribute to these victims during the holiday season," Cassidy said. "In 2021, we're asking everyone to please help law enforcement as we try to have a better year on our roadways. We need you to think ahead, have a plan. There is never a reason to be behind the wheel impaired. With the options of rideshare programs, taxis, staying at somebody's house — making sure you make good decisions while you're out there."

West Greenwich Police Chief Richard Ramsay,

president of RIPCA, offered three tips for drivers to follow to make roadways safer — ask oneself if they're impaired before driving; wear their seatbelt; and turn their phone off before starting the car.

"Before you leave your driveway, turn your phone off or ensure that it's connected to a Bluetooth device," he said. "Whatever that text message or phone call that you might be receiving, there's one thing I can assure you: It's not more important than someone's life. We all have a long way to go to achieve our goal of zero roadway fatalities in our state. Law enforcement will be doing their part. We cannot do it alone, we need your help."



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 **Watch Your MOUTH** 
 by Rochelle Rhodes, D.M.D. and David McFarland, D.D.S.
WHEN A ROOT CANAL FAILS
 A root canal is often thought of as a last stage effort to prevent a complete tooth removal leaving you with a crown. However, if a root canal does not work and you start to experience pain in that tooth again, there may be one more option available before pulling the tooth. An "apicoectomy," or root end surgery, is a surgical procedure that removes the very tip of the problem tooth's root as well as any infected tissue. The tip is then sealed off with a small filling, similar to a cavity. Unlike a root canal or tooth extraction, this procedure usually requires a few small stitches to close the gum and avoid possible infection.
 Root canal therapy may have had a bad reputation in the past as being painful, however, as most anyone who has experienced this procedure can attest, today's techniques make root canal a virtually painless, effective treatment. If you are experiencing pain or have unusual symptoms (before or after a root canal), call your dentist. Be aware of threats to your health, and take steps to prevent problems from occurring in the first place. If you don't have a family dentist at this time, we invite your call at DENTAL ARTS GROUP, 401-521-3661. You'll find our full-service dental practice at 1136 Hartford Ave., Johnston.
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GRAND GREETING: Akshay Talwar (left), owner, president and CEO of the Briarcliffe Campus in Johnston, presents a "Share the Love" Valentine's gift bag to Jenny Miller, who owns Senior Care Concepts in Warwick, during last week's special drive-through preview of The Preserve. He's joined by marketing manager Stefany Reed and sales director Jen Burns. (Sun Rise photo by Pete Fontaine)

Valentine's drive-thru offers preview of Briarcliffe Preserve

By PETE FONTAINE

The woods off Old Pocasset Road in Johnston have never before looked so inviting as they do today.

There's an ongoing construction project that, once completed this spring, will feature The Preserve at Briarcliffe, which will be the home of Johnston's most unique residential development in recent history.

"We have spent the last decade dreaming about this project and are incredibly excited to be able to add The Preserve to our campus," Akshay Talwar, Briarcliffe's president and CEO, told the Sun Rise. "We really believe that, like our other offerings, The Preserve will be in a league of its own and comparable to none."

The Preserve at Briarcliffe will be an ultra-modern and active, supportive, independent assisted living community, blending the care and compassion for which Talwar's ever-expanding campus is known with the modern elegance of 66 luxury private residences.

For example, Talwar related that residents will enjoy beautiful indoor and outdoor living spaces along with amenities, concierge and personal care services, creating the perfect lifestyle.

Last week's "Share the Love" drive-thru event offered people a taste of the special hospitality residents will enjoy while liv-

ing in the extraordinary, well-designed development that is under the construction expertise of the nationally famous DF Pray Company, which has projects throughout the country.

One-by-one, cars pulled up to the front entrance and were graciously greeted by Talwar, marketing director Stefany Reed and sales director Jen Burns, who thanked people for coming and handed each guest a Valentine's favor bag that contained hand-dipped, chocolate covered strawberries made at Briarcliffe, a personal size bottle of Prosecco and other amenities.

Everyone from Jenny Miller, who owns Senior Care Concepts in Warwick, to Our Lady of Grace Pastor Peter J. Gower and Monsignor David G. LiPuma visiting from New York, marveled at what looks like a luxury hotel. They were seemingly overwhelmed when learning that The Preserve features Benjamin's Restaurant-style dining, Jack's Hideaway Bistro, Gracie's Private Dining Room, and a library, along with a media center and exercise/fitness center.

"Our valued residents will also have The Preserve Salon and Barber-shop, The Preserve Gathering Place - an expansive clubhouse/lounge like living space opening out to the Terrazzo, and beautifully-landscape grounds," Burns explained. "We will also have state-of-the-art

emergency call systems and secure mail and a package delivery center."

Moreover, as Talwar explained: "The spaces within the Preserve are light and airy with a home-like environment, and The Preserve was designed to feel just right ... not too big, not too small, and personalized to meet the discerning standards of those who will soon call The Preserve home."

The Preserve is constructed in such a manner that climate issues will not be a problem and the back generator is big enough to power the entire building for approximately seven days, considerably more than the standards require.

Also, there will be two large elevators for access to the 44 second-floor apartments, and the second elevator was added for peace of mind and safety. There will be barrier-free showers in every bathroom for ease of access and emergency pull stations in the apartments, as well as individual heating and air conditioning controls in each apartment.

Residents won't have long walks to the bistro, dining and other areas. There will be plenty of access to the outdoors and most ground floor apartments will come with individual patios and The Preserve will feature wide corridors, extra-large windows and high ceilings designed to bring an abundance of natural light and create a light and airy

feeling.

The Preserve will also offer Yoga and Tai Chi classes, and as Reed suggested, "imagine waking up and enjoying coffee or tea on the patio followed by breakfast in the dining room overlooking the natural preserve where there is always a variety of wildlife, including deer." He added: "Notably missing from a day in a resident's new life will be the hassles of home ownership, grocery shopping and meal preparation and the loneliness of social isolation. If residents need assistance with laundry, personal care and/or mediation management, The Preserve associates will be on hand to help, just as they've been doing for more than 50 years."

Nisha Talwar, who will serve as executive director at the Preserve, shared her thoughts about the unique residences that are expected to be completed and be open in the late spring.

"All our residences are beautifully designed, wired to meet media needs and incorporate kitchenettes with quartz countertops, microwave and personal-size refrigerator/freezer and deluxe private, accessible bathrooms," she began. "Our living areas are carpeted; kitchenettes feature vinyl floors and bathrooms are tiled. We feature four complimentary color palettes to harmonize with the beautiful, natural landscape at The Preserve."

Cicilline: From public defender to prosecuting the president

TALKING POLITICS



by
IAN
DONNIS

U.S. Rep. David Cicilline has gone from working as a public defender in Washington, D.C., to prosecuting an impeachment case against the former president of the United States, Donald Trump.

Although he was recruited by a well-known Wall Street law firm after graduating with honors from Georgetown Law School in 1986, Cicilline pursued the lower-paying public defender work because he found it more fulfilling. "I got to defend people who never had anything," Cicilline told Jim Taricani for a story in The Providence Phoenix.

More than 20 years later, Cicilline worked with fellow Democratic impeachment managers last week to create a visceral sense of the threat posed by Trump supporters on Jan. 6.

"Armed insurrectionists with guns, weapons, zip ties, brass knuckles – they were coming for us," the congressman said. "They were inside the United States Capitol, trying to stop the certification process. The police were outnumbered. And but for the grace of God, they would have gotten us, all of us. And our commander-in-chief makes a call about an hour after the siege began, not to preserve, protect and defend you and our country and the Capitol, but to join forces with the mob and pressure a senator to stop certification."

While the Senate acquitted convict Trump, Democrats describe their prosecution as a matter of necessity, to draw a line, take a stand against a possible repeat of similar events (and hurt Trump's future prospects). All this hasn't come without some personal cost for Cicilline; as The Boston Globe notes, three U.S. marshals are providing security for the congressman, and he's long had his share of critics. Nonetheless, Cicilline and his supporters would probably draw an idealistic line between his long-ago work as a public defender and his zeal in trying to dispatch the former lead of the free world.

GinaWorld

The ProJo's Patrick Anderson and WPRI's Kim Kalunian caught up with Gov. Gina Raimondo as she was leaving the State House last week, marking the first time in more than a month when she's taken questions from reporters.

Raimondo said the Biden administration did not ask her to clam up. "I thought that was appropriate in this transition to let Lt. Gov. McKee step out in front," she told Kalunian. "By the way, he's doing a great job. We talk every day, if not more than once a day, his team and my team are in contact all day long."

While acknowledging that McKee will soon be governor is unavoidable, Raimondo's praise contrasts sharply with how she gave him the cold shoulder for a long part of her current term.

Elsewhere in GinaWorld, Chinese telecom company Huawei – an issue in Raimondo's confirmation as U.S. Commerce secretary – is extending an olive branch to the Biden administration. Some of the governor's lame duck appointments are drawing opposition, both for the CRMC and the Public Utilities Commission. And Warwick Mayor Frank Picozzi and some other municipal leaders say they think Raimondo should step down.

Change in the RI Senate?

A time will come when Rhode Island Senate President Dominick Ruggerio will yield the leadership of the chamber. Could it be as soon as the spring of 2022?

Ruggerio, 72, said he's just hitting his stride as president and plans to seek reelection next year. ("I look forward to earning the continued support of the residents in the Fourth Senatorial District and my colleagues in the Senate by enacting a bold agenda that ensures Rhode Island and its citizens emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic stronger and more resilient," he said in a statement.)

The question of succession nonetheless became a topic this week, with Ruggerio's chief of staff, Stephen Iannazzi, departing for a job with Cox Communications, and Senate Majority Leader Michael McCaffrey's top staffer, Jake Bissaillon, getting the nod to succeed Iannazzi.

Speaking last week on The Public's Radio Political Roundtable, McCaffrey downplayed differences with progressives on policy issues in the Senate, saying that Democrats agree on most issues. But there clearly remains a divide between the chamber's different ideological elements, raising the question of whether progressives can make a successful claim to the presidency when Ruggerio decides to call it a day.

Filippi's Pursuit

Rhode Island House Minority Leader Blake Filippi is pursuing his lawsuit regarding the Joint Committee on Legislative Services (JCLS), the hiring and spending arm of the legislature. Filippi

wants to individually sue a series of defendants, including House Speaker Joe Shekarchi, House Majority Leader Chris Blazewski, former speaker Nicholas Mattiello, Senate President Dominick Ruggerio, Senate Minority Leader Dennis Algieri and incoming JCLS executive director Henry Kinch.

While Superior Court Judge Michael Silverstein recently ruled that state courts lack say over legislative spending and operations, Filippi is seeking to assert federal claims through state court, arguing that his rights to free speech, due process and equal protection have been violated by how JCLS has operated. The GOP lawmaker is seeking a jury trial and damages of \$50 from each of the defendants. (Silverstein will consider arguments from

both sides and decide whether the action can move ahead; Filippi said the case could potentially go all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court).

In a joint statement, Shekarchi and Ruggerio said: "We will commence regular meetings of the JCLS at the conclusion of litigation. We are not going to comment on the specifics of any pending legal complaints. However, we thought last week's decision by Judge Silverstein was well thought-out, on point and legally sound."

McCaffrey on the issues

Here are some of the issues we discussed with Senate Majority Leader Michael McCaffrey on Political Roundtable.

The IGT-Bally's proposal: while critics say there's a better deal to be struck

on gambling, McCaffrey takes the view that a bird in hand is better than two in the bush.

The three-year charter school moratorium passed this week by the Senate: "Charter schools serve a purpose, charter schools help certain people. However, we have to do a balancing test to see what are they going to provide, how are they going to provide it. And one of the things that I continually hear from the superintendent in Warwick about the different charter schools is, if a student goes to a charter school and then they return to the district, whether it's a week later, half a year later, the school district doesn't get any of that money back."

Legalizing recreational marijuana: McCaffrey said the Senate's proposed legislation could emerge as soon as the coming week,

so interested parties can begin reviewing it.

Raising taxes on upper-income Rhode Islanders: "Right now, it's not fair to the people who are at the lower end of the spectrum – they're paying at much as 12.1 percent and at the higher end of the spectrum, they're paying 7.9 percent." If \$475,000 is the threshold for a tax increase, "there's approximately 5,000 taxpayers in the state of Rhode Island who fall in that category." Would raising this tax hurt perceptions of the state's business climate? "Obviously, that's a balancing test that we have to make ... The economy, obviously, is important."

Ian Donnis is the political reporter for The Public's Radio. He can be reached at idonnis@ripr.org. For more of his coverage, visit thepublicsradio.org and follow him on Twitter (@IanDon).

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Treasurer: Bonding 'appropriate, necessary' during time of crisis

By ETHAN HARTLEY

To Rhode Island General Treasurer Seth Magaziner, the question is not whether Rhode Island can afford \$400 million in state bonding that will be voted on during a special election on Tuesday, March 2, but whether the state – in the early stages of its recovery from the unprecedented economic damage caused by COVID-19 – can afford not to approve the package.

"During times of crisis, it is appropriate and often necessary to go big," Magaziner said during a recent interview via Zoom. "It's when we're in times of crisis that we need to be bold and have a big policy response to the challenges the state is facing. That is why I'm advocating in favor of all seven bonds, because we need to stimulate the economy in Rhode Island and put people back to work. We need to make investments that will help us have a strong and broad-based recovery."

The seven questions going before Rhode Islanders in span a wide range of sectors and could have far-reaching impacts if approved, or not approved. Bonds could infuse money into early childhood learning and higher educational facilities, affordable housing and historic preservation, transportation infrastructure and statewide economic development initiatives.

All of these areas, Magaziner argues, are crucial to supporting an economy during normal times, but are even more essential in light of the pandemic, which continues to sicken thousands of Rhode Islanders and millions across the world.

Although it's difficult to predict exactly how much economic impact each of these measures would have, Magaziner said that a general rule of thumb to follow is that every million dollars spent on a construction project generates the equivalent of 20 jobs that last at least one year.

To varying degrees, most of the seven questions do contain elements that tie directly into construction projects. Question 1 includes the construction of new and renovation of existing collegiate facilities; Question 2 would fund environmental infrastructure renovations; Question 3 would seek to build additional affordable housing units; Question 4 would continue to rebuild roads and bridges; Question 6 would fund renovations to artistic institutions and fund historic preservation projects; and Question 7 would fund new developmental projects and the renovation of infrastructure at Quonset's port.

But it's not only construction jobs that bolster economic activity, as Magaziner points out. Question 5, which would approve \$15 million to expand early childhood learning facilities throughout the state, would be investing in the future workforce of Rhode Island – something that's difficult to quantify in today's dollars and cents but cannot be discounted, either. Question 1 would keep Rhode Island's higher educational institutes competitive as students enter competitive workforces in areas such as health care and STEM.

"I think it's safe to say it would create thousands of upfront construction jobs," Magaziner said. "But then also a lot of these bonds will improve our economic competitiveness in the long run."

But can Rhode Island afford this?

It is understandable to be skeptical of Rhode Island's ability to borrow more money – especially in light of concerning reports released by entities such as the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council (RIPEC), which warned recently that the state could be facing a budget deficit of more than \$500 million in fiscal year 2022 if federal aid for COVID-19 doesn't come through. Eyes may also pop at the estimated figures for interest over the course of this bond, which the Secretary



Magaziner

of State's office posted as nearing \$242 million over the life of 20-year loans at a 5-percent interest rate.

However, Magaziner says without hesitation that Rhode Island can handle this borrowing, and much more beyond it, due to the simple means by which debt is accrued and paid off by the state. He said the state paid off \$170 million in principal debt payments and \$77 million in interest in fiscal year 2020 alone.

Magaziner, who authored a comprehensive state debt affordability study in 2019, said that the state's goal is to not allow debt to reach more than 7 percent of the state's budget, and that even if all \$400 million in bonds are approved, that threshold would not be exceeded.

A further metric utilized is to examine the state's total debt load relative to average residential income – basically a metric set to evaluate the affordability of tax-funded debt. Even if all bonds are approved, Magaziner said, debt would not exceed the acceptable threshold set as a standard in this metric – which is set by bond agencies and independent third parties, not the state.

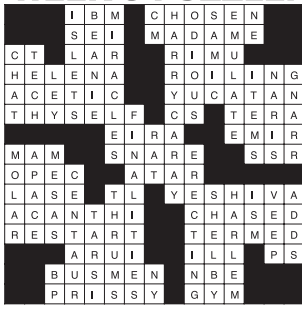
"Even if all these are approved, we could still do more than \$2 billion in additional bonding across 2022, 2024 and 2026 and stay below those limits," he continued. He added that the Secretary of State's estimates of 5 percent interest for the loans was also far above what the state has paid in recent history – and would likely be the case for these loans as well, given the historically low interest rates seen today. He said getting a 1.5 to 2 percent interest rate on borrowing at this time would be realistic.

Of course, pending a worst-case scenario where the state does not receive federal funding to aid in its recovery, Magaziner said this would likely "necessitate cutting services or raising taxes – neither of which is a desirable path to go down," he said. However, to him, this serves as another reason to support bonding to pay for such initiatives, "because the cost of the bonding does not fall in the current budget year."

While opinion pieces have already begun to sprout up denouncing or supporting the individual pieces within the \$400 million bond initiative, for Magaziner, each of the questions could be a key piece in the puzzle of Rhode Island's recovery, and he advocates the passage of each item.

"Big challenges call for bold action, and every Rhode Islander has the opportunity to be a part of our economic recovery by voting 'yes' on all seven bonds," he said. "So, I encourage everyone to vote and vote 'yes.' Let's get our state back to work."

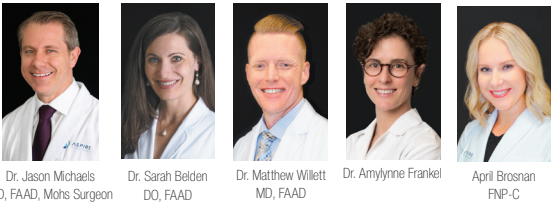
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One of a kind

Mario DiPaolo just keeps on dancing.

DiPaolo, a Johnston resident who recently turned 98 years old, has loved to get moving his whole life. His daughter, Deb Santagata, told the Sun Rise last week that right up until the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, her father could be found at the VFW in East Greenwich dancing on the weekends.

"My mom always loved to go out dancing," Santagata said of her mother, who passed away in 1999. "He found the VFW post in East Greenwich and on Sunday he would go and they would have dancing for his age group."

Mario and his wife moved to Johnston in 1962, where they raised Santagata and her siblings, Richard and Diane. He worked for 48 years as a transmission specialist at DiPaolo's Gulf Service Station in Providence before retiring at more than two decades ago.

"He's really one of a kind," Santagata said. "I always say he's one of a kind. He's a very laid back person, always has been. He's lived by the philosophy of, everything changes, nothing stays the same, don't worry about it. Tomorrow will be different. Don't get upset. He has that kind of attitude about everything."

DiPaolo enjoyed a pleasant surprise for his 98th birthday, as a parade including a Johnston fire truck, a dozen cars filled with family and friends and two Johnston Police Department vehicles drove by his home to wish him well on Super Bowl Sunday. JPD Sgt. Joseph Scichlione Jr. stopped by the festivities to issue DiPaolo a special commendation from Mayor Joseph Polisena.

"He loves to tell old stories. He's just one of a kind," Santagata said. "You can go to him, he can fix anything. If he can't find a part for something, he will make the part for whatever is needed. He can do it. He's a very smart man. He loves the family, loves having everybody around him." (Text by Jacob Marrocco, photos courtesy Deb Santagata)



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Bond

(Continued from page 1)

shop” to help students easily receive support services such as advising, veterans’ affairs, financial aid and career services. It would provide for an additional elevator at the Warwick campus to increase accessibility and enable classroom and technological upgrades – including facilities that “have seen little change in more than 50 years,” per the release. These improvements would occur in 2021 if approved.

“As the only community college in the state, CCRI serves more than 44,000 Rhode Islanders annually, with most of our students remaining in the state after graduation, joining the workforce and continuing their education,” CCRI President Meghan Hughes said in a statement.

Question 2: \$74 million for environmental resiliency and outdoor recreation

According to Topher Hamblett, director of advocacy and policy for Save The Bay, Question 2 would mark the largest investment in environmental protection and outdoor recreational facilities in more than 30 years in Rhode Island. The question originated as a \$43 million package, but steadily grew throughout discussions in the general assembly.

The list of initiatives supported by this money, if approved, is long. The two largest chunks include a \$33 million pot for capital improvements to state beaches, parks and campgrounds and a \$15 million pot to improve the quality of the state’s drinking water – which will make the state eligible to receive up to \$75 million in additional federal funding for infrastructure improvements related to drinking water and wastewater facility upgrades.

A \$7 million portion of the bond would go to a 75 percent matching grant program for communities to make improvements related to climate resiliency.

For example, Warwick could potentially apply for matching funds to protect neighborhoods against flooding or identify and address other areas of concern.

Other pieces of the initiative include \$10 million for developmental infrastructure projects along the reclaimed I-195 land in Providence near the new Pedestrian Bridge, and dredging of the Providence River; \$4 million for an 80 percent matching grant program for communities to rehabilitate outdoor parks, playgrounds and athletic fields; \$3 million to protect forested land and farmland throughout the state; and \$2 million for the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council to fund public recreation-

al projects from North Smithfield and Glocester through Smithfield, North Providence, Providence and Johnston.

All projects included in this scope are anticipated to be completed within five years of approval.

“To protect and enhance what is valuable to you, you need to maintain your assets. If you don’t, they will degrade and the cost of fixing problems become much greater,” Hamblett said. “In our view, Narragansett Bay and the rivers and coasts that feed the Bay are Rhode Island’s greatest assets.”

Hamblett further argued that maintaining access to high-quality outdoor recreation and ensuring a healthy Narragansett Bay is “the foundation of [Rhode Island’s] economy.” A study commissioned by the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation from Tourism Economics likewise concluded that recreation and its accompanying industries accounted for more than \$1.1 billion of the \$4.7 billion spent by visitors to the state in 2019.

“Rhode Islanders are famous for loving Narragansett Bay and always stepping up to make investments in supporting the bay,” Hamblett said. “Now is not the time to stop investing in that recovery.”

Question 3: \$65 million to support affordable housing

According to Brenda Clement, director of HousingWorks RI – a research and policy organization operating out of Roger Williams University’s Providence campus – no initiative is as integral to stabilizing the state’s economy, improving its public health outcomes and uplifting its educational achievements as ensuring there is enough affordable housing stock to serve the populace.

According to Clement, more than one-third of Rhode Island households (about 146,000) are cost-burdened, meaning they are forced to spend more than a third of their income on housing costs. Despite this, only one out of every four Rhode Islanders who qualify for affordable housing in Rhode Island can actually access it due to lack of available capacity.

“We just simply have not been producing enough housing units,” she said, adding that Rhode Island sits firmly in last place among its New England peers in affordable housing per capita. According to HousingWorksRI data, Rhode Island spent only about \$22 per capita towards housing in 2018, compared to \$101 in Massachusetts, \$96 in Connecticut, \$78 in Vermont and \$26 in Maine.

Clement said that despite all communities in Rhode Island being legally obligated by the Low to Moderate Housing Act to achieve 10 percent of all housing as “afford-

able” – meaning priced at or below 80 percent of the median income – only six out of 39 Rhode Island communities have actually achieved the metric.

Question 3 would provide funding for a \$65 million grant program run through the Rhode Island Office of Housing and Community Development to help communities construct more affordable housing and get closer to that goal. If approved, projects could commence in 2021 and conclude in 2026.

For Clement, the impetus to approve Question 3 resides in having empathy for fellow Rhode Islanders.

“In Rhode Island, pretty much everybody knows somebody who needs housing or more stable housing,” she said. “This is about helping our neighbors and friends and families and the people who bag our groceries at the supermarket or take care of our children or grandparents every day. I want these people to have a safe and decent place to lay their head at night. I think we, as a community, should care about that.”

Question 4: \$71.7 million for state transportation infrastructure

According to Charles St. Martin, public information officer for the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, approval of Question 4 is “critical to the agency’s ability to rebuild Rhode Island’s roads and bridges while employing hundreds of construction workers.” The money would be utilized throughout 2021 and 2022.

St. Martin said that approval of the bond funding would unlock an additional \$286.8 million in federal funding (a four-to-one match) – amounting to a \$358.5 million total investment into Rhode Island transportation infrastructure repairs. He listed Route 37, the Pell Bridge Ramps Phase 2, the Providence Northbound Viaduct, Washington Bridge, Henderson Bridge, Huntington Viaduct Bridges, the Route 146 Safety Improvement Project, the Cranston Canyon Corridor Project, the Pawtucket/Central Falls Train Station, and unspecified, additional “bike and pedestrian projects” as examples of projects that could be funded by this money.

St. Martin said that through DOT’s RhodeWorks program, the department has already invested \$2.6 billion into the state economy through the completion of 171 projects and the repair or replacement of 167 bridges. Passing the bond would help continue that work, while failure to pass the bond would result in “delays or scope changes” to all the aforementioned projects.

Question 5: \$15 million to expand early childhood learning

According to Courtney

Hawkins, director of the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Question 5 marks the first time in Rhode Island’s history that voters could potentially approve bond funding specifically to increase the amount of early learning facilities in the state.

“Early learning is a challenge nationally,” Hawkins said. “While Rhode Island is doing better in some measures, the system is still struggling as a whole.” She said that, specifically, infant and toddler care is a particular sore spot, with many places in the state having no capacity for infants and toddlers whatsoever.

Question 5 would fund a grant program overseen by DHS to help early childhood learning facilities expand their existing services or open up entirely new programs throughout the state. While Hawkins praised the efforts of outgoing Gov. Gina Raimondo to increase the quality of early learning programs in the state, she said the impetus now must be on expanding the number of programs available to utilize those programs.

“Now we need capacity,” she said. “[Existing early learning facilities] don’t have the resources to expand, and we’re hopeful that this fund could lay the groundwork. If you have a high-quality program in one part of the state, maybe they could think about expanding.”

Hawkins said that investing in early childhood learning has never been more important than right now, since young children have been directly and adversely affected by the challenges posed by COVID-19. Parents, too, will need to rely more on preschools and daycare facilities to care for their children as jobs return and they go back to work in the coming months.

“In my mind this is the perfect time for us to make this kind of investment and recognize that childcare is integral to our state’s economy, and that if we don’t make these kinds of investments, our economy will not be successful,” she said.

“The pandemic has shown that so many of the workers who are using childcare are truly essential workers. This is a moment for us to remember that and make some investments not only in things like facilities and program quality but also, frankly, workers’ wages and opportunities for workers who go in there every day to care for kids.”

Question 6: \$7 million for cultural arts and historic preservation

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Opinion

EDITORIAL

In support of the bond questions

Rhode Islanders may still be mentally fatigued from the recent presidential election - which went about as tumultuously as could possibly be expected - however there is another election of crucial importance coming up in a couple of weeks on Tuesday, March 2, that could make a big impact on the state's ongoing recovery from COVID-19.

During the upcoming special election, the state will ask voters for permission to borrow as much as \$400 million in bonds to fund initiatives including environmental resiliency, affordable housing, cultural and historic preservation, economic development, educational upgrades and infrastructural renovations. Seven questions will appear on the ballot, and our story in this week's edition breaks down the details of what is included in each.

• WHERE TO WRITE:

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Alongside the story is an endorsement from Treasurer Seth Magaziner, who believes that given the severity and extent of the economic damage wrought by COVID-19, a large bond package is exactly what the state needs to create short-term construction jobs and invest in long-term projects that will ultimately benefit the state's economic health for years to come.

We agree with Treasurer Magaziner both in his assessment that bold steps should be taken to provide relief during times of crisis, and in his assessment that the state can afford to take on more debt - and should take on more debt while interest rates are historically low. The work included in the scope of this bond needs to get done regardless, so why not do it at a time where you will save money on interest payments over the lifetime of these bonds, and at a time where thousands of Rhode Islanders need to get back to work?

Going right down the line, it's hard to find an issue on the ballot that isn't worthy of your support.

Question 1 will bolster the state's two public universities by allowing for renovations to two of their most important buildings and keep the state competitive in its STEM, medical training and fine arts offerings. It will provide updates and renovations for CCRI's campuses that will encourage more students to partake in the Rhode Island Promise initiative - increasing their academic opportunities and eventually adding value to the state's workforce.

Question 2 should be an easy decision for any Rhode Island resident - whether you've lived here for generations or moved here recently. Narragansett Bay is the state's heart, soul and its very bloodstream through which its economy thrives or languishes. Making improvements to public parks and beaches adds value to our most essential natural resource - our open space - and prioritizing infrastructural safeguards against the advancing march of climate change is inarguably the wise and right thing to do.

Question 3 would provide more funding to build more affordable housing - of which there is a severe need in the state. Simply uttering the phrase "affordable housing" is enough to spark panic in certain self-minded circles, but we cannot be a successful community or preside over a successful economy when over one third of our population is forced to spend a third of their money on housing. Everyone deserves a clean and decent place to stay for an affordable rate.

Question 4 has already faced opposition from some groups who do not trust the Department of Transportation - and while it is not our place to advocate on behalf of DOT's efficiency, we find it irresponsible and unrealistic to advocate against shoring up our transportation infrastructure when a simple cross-state drive will reveal just how badly such an investment is needed.

Question 5, like Question 3, is an initiative that may not directly affect every Rhode Islander, but indirectly will play a huge role in Rhode Island's future. Children have been adversely affected by the pandemic in many ways - missing school and crucial socialization time. Parents working from home or those who have been laid off have learned firsthand how fragile our childcare system is, and it is not a problem that will go away on its own. Investing in more early learning facilities is another wise decision that will pay dividends in the future.

Question 6, the smallest item from a monetary standpoint on the ballot, could make one of the more visible differences in the state. Rhode Island has a vibrant history and culture of fine arts, which should be kept and celebrated. The money from this bond would go towards big improvements at some of our most popular and economically important fine arts establishments, and would create an opportunity to preserve more of our historic structures worthy of protection.

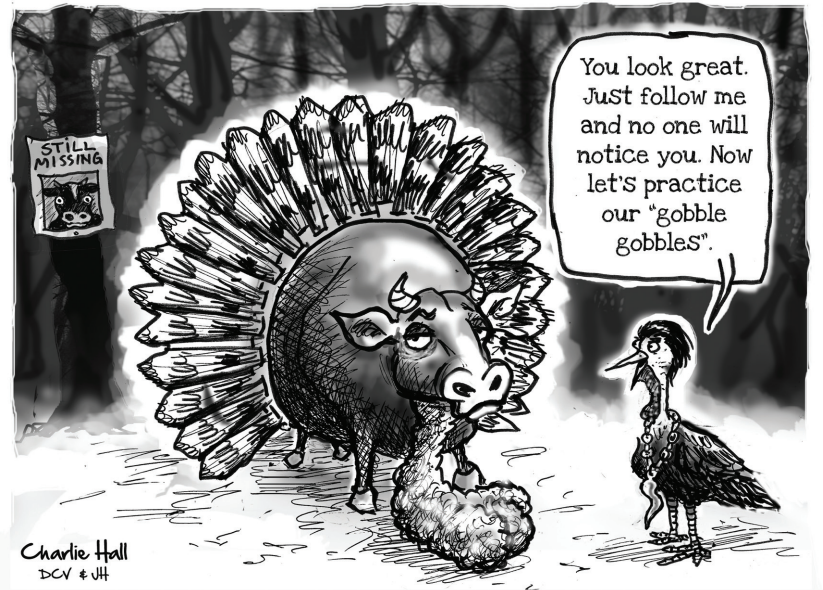
Question 7 is a bit more nuanced in its potential impact on the state, but its merit is nonetheless justified. The "site readiness" model utilized at Quonset would be a valuable model to be replicated elsewhere in Rhode Island, and shoring up the infrastructure at one of our state's most economically significant ports to be ready for future industrial activity - such as offshore wind - is another investment we should make now, not later.

When discussing bonds, the natural inclination of skeptics and cynics is to assume the worst when it comes to what debt actually means. They see the national turmoil that COVID-19 has wrought on the country and assume, understandably, that now is not the best time to incur more bills down the road.

However, we would argue that this specific moment calls for aggressive action on the part of our representatives and enthusiastic buy-in from all residents. These bonds will create work in the short-term and make the state a more desirable, equitable and cleaner place to live in the long run. The fact that it requires borrowing more money is simply not a good enough argument against these initiatives given the state's financial rating and today's low interest rates. Debt can be paid over time, but deferred maintenance will only lead to more problems and a steeper price tag to fix them.

We strongly urge each Rhode Islander to study these ballot initiatives and to support them through a "yes" vote - either by voting early at your local Board of Canvassers or at the polls on March 2. Let's help kick start Rhode Island's economic recovery.

And with the bull still on the lam, the Johnston turkey steps in...



Moratorium on for-profit hospital transfer will protect Rhode Islanders

By DOMINICK J. RUGGERIO and CHRISTOPHER CALLACI

We all want to see our community hospitals succeed. They employ Rhode Islanders and provide vital services. Unfortunately, our recent experiences in Rhode Island lead us to believe that the for-profit ownership model of a community hospital may in fact be detrimental to the overall health of our hospital system.

The collapse of the St. Joseph's pension fund affected thousands of retirees and active employees. Individuals who spent their entire lives caring for the sick at a community hospital watched as their pension fund seemingly dissolved overnight. This tragedy inevitably led to litigation, which is proceeding steadfastly to ensure these pensioners are made whole.

Yet, as the litigation has unfolded, court filings have shed much needed light on the risky behavior of the for-profit, private owners of Roger Williams and Fatima hospitals - Prospect Medical Holdings. Court documents allege that Prospect has incurred over a billion dollars in debt, is insolvent, and headed for bankruptcy. Perhaps most concerning is that the two largest individual Prospect shareholders - Sam Lee and David Topper - pocketed more than \$220 million in dividend payments while saddling the hospitals with debt. Prospect has behaved in a reckless manner, and they can only get away with these actions because of their for-profit status.

For the sake of our overall statewide hospital network, which is critical to the well being of Rhode Islanders, we need to conduct a comprehensive review of for-profit hospital entities and their impact on the financial condition of the hospitals they operate, as well as the broader health care network in the state. That's why we are writing in strong support of legislation that has been in-

troduced in the state Senate that will impose a one-year moratorium on the transfer of any hospital that involves a for-profit entity.

Under the leadership of Chairman Louis P. DiPalma, the Senate Rules, Government Ethics & Oversight Committee will conduct a series of hearings on the for-profit hospital model. These hearings will review applications pending at Health Services Council for a transfer of control at Fatima and Roger Williams, the Hospital Conversion Act application pending through the Department of Health and Office of Attorney General, and the broader impact of this and other potential for-profit hospitals on the state's overall hospital network.

We are extremely grateful to Attorney Max Wistow and Receivers Stephen Del Sesto and Thomas Hemmendinger for their unwavering efforts to protect the dignity and security of thousands of Rhode Island health workers by bringing about settlements in the pension case. Their efforts have also helped bring to light these serious questions regarding the current financial

condition of the facilities. It is appropriate and necessary that, before the approval of any additional transactions we undertake an exhaustive review and gain a thorough understanding of all the implications involved with for-profit hospitals operating in our state.

We have experienced the ripple effect that takes place when a hospital closes. Not only does access to care get harder for the members of the community that has been served by the facility but the impact of the closure is felt in crowded emergency rooms across the state.

A pause is needed before any consideration of a hospital sale to or from a for-profit operator in Rhode Island. The one-year moratorium on such transfers under consideration in the state Senate should be enacted in order to ensure the strength of the state's overall health care network.

Dominick J. Ruggiero (D Dist. 4, North Providence Providence) is president of the Rhode Island Senate. Chris Callaci is general counsel of United Nurses and Allied Professionals.

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Pod

(Continued from page 1)

Stoukides said the center was a prime location for vaccination because it "can move a ton of patients through" and is easily accessible for the elderly and those with disabilities.

"You've got to make it easy, it's got to be on the first floor," Stoukides said of an ideal pod design. "It's got to have easy parking. It's got to be wheelchair accessible. All the stuff we have here. A site like this, we have one in every town. We'll get everyone vaccinated. It's a perfect setup."

Johnston Fire Chief Peter Lamb had "all the confidence in the world" that his firefighters were ready for the job. He said that since they hook up countless IVs every day, "the mechanics are all the same" and patients shouldn't worry.

"What happened is we sent a bunch of folks up to Smithfield, to kind of shadow their people to replicate what we see here today," Lamb said. "We feel very comfortable. Someone else has made some mistakes, so we've got those plans built in so we don't replicate them."

Lamb said he also felt a sense of pride seeing his force helping to save lives in Johnston.

"You know how the mayor feels about this," Lamb said. "This is Johnston, and the firefighters that take care of the folks every day are out here taking care of them in this setting, and it's certainly different."

Stoukides criticized the state's vaccine rollout thus far as "sluggish," but noted that McKee has a "huge commitment" to turning Rhode Island's lackluster figures around. The New York Times vaccination

tracker shows the Ocean State last in percentage of people who have received at least one shot, and in the middle of the pack for two shots. Rhode Island is tied with Alabama for last in doses used, with only 63 percent of inoculations allotted being used thus far. That figure is 14 percent below the national average.

"No one's going to deny the fact that it's really been pretty poor," Stoukides said. "I had great hopes that we're the smallest state, we can get everyone vaccinated and move on, but a lot of times it's easy to look at it, but when you're in the midst of it, it's a little harder. I honestly think that we can do a lot better, and we're going to do a lot better."

Stoukides said giving a vaccine is easy, but the process becomes more difficult when considering the logistics of registering residents

and ensuring people don't jump the line. He said the state's sign-up website "has a lot of information" that he would like to see streamlined a bit to make sure those who aren't "computer literate" can easily register.

"[We're] trying to make it easy for the frail populations that really need it," Stoukides said. "The elderly are hard, too, because they're not computer literate. The undocumented people in the state because they're not computer literate and they're afraid to register. ... What I need is to see people getting the shot."

"I understand we've got to do the right data reporting and everything, but we've got to think through it and think about the roadblocks that we've put up that have put us 50th in the country, get rid of those, make it simple, make it fast,

make it equitable and get the right people vaccinated as quick as we can."

Stoukides said the incoming administration is examining what facets of the rollout have succeeded and failed, hoping to get "the right people involved" while practicing accountability. He said it's important to keep the process community-based and local, allowing towns to establish pods that can get all of its residents vaccinated in a timely manner.

"Every dose that comes in should be given as quick as it comes in, because a dose of vaccine doesn't prevent disease sitting in a fridge somewhere," Stoukides said. "We've just got to get it out there, and big sites - yeah, they're nice. They'll be great for the 45-year-olds that want to go in. Little places like this, this is what we need. We need to keep it local,

community-based. Get the towns involved. They're the ones who care about their citizens, and they'll get them all vaccinated."

Both Stoukides and Lamb have been vaccinated already, and neither had a negative experience. Stoukides said he felt fine, while Lamb said the worst he suffered was a sore arm and a headache. Stoukides' message was simple for those who feel wary: "Just do it."

"Even if you feel sick, people who have had COVID tend to feel a little off for about six hours after the dose. Bottom line is, a few hours of feeling sick is better than being on a respirator. I take care of COVID patients every day in the hospital, and I've seen so many of them die really impaired from it," he said. "It's just not worth it, for something as simple as getting a shot in the arm."

Bond

(Continued from page 8)

preservation and support of Rhode Island's thriving cultural centers. According to Tom Parrish, executive director for Trinity Repertory Company and spokesman for a more than 20-member coalition in support of Question 6, \$7 million is a fraction of the money necessary to bolster one of the state's economic pillars.

"We discovered there was about \$70 million in capital need among the sector in the state," Parrish said.

Parrish said that the 2014 bond, upon which Question 6 is based, funded nearly 70 construction and renovation projects, employed people from

over 350 companies in 38 communities throughout the state, benefited 1.7 million visitors, 400,000 children and 20,000 artists and ultimately amounted to approximately \$90 million in additional investments from the community at large for arts and historic preservation endeavors.

Question 6 would put aside \$6 million to continue that effort, funding a one-to-one grant program administered by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts. Of that money, \$2.5 million is earmarked for Trinity Rep to renovate and expand its Lederer Theater, which Parrish said would make it "more flexible" and able to host a greater number of events. Additionally, it would enable Trinity Rep

to expand its educational programming - which currently accounts for 40 percent of the company's budget and supports 124 schools in 36 Rhode Island cities and towns.

An additional \$1.5 million would go to the Rhode Island Philharmonic to bolster its Carter Center of Music Education and Performance in East Providence, and \$2 million more will be available to artistic programs throughout the state to apply for. An additional \$1 million would go into a grant program administered by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission to "preserve, renovate and improve public and nonprofit historic sites, museums, and cultural art centers located in

historic structures."

For Parrish, the importance of supporting the arts community in Rhode Island cannot be overstated.

"We're one of the economic drivers in the state, not just from a tourism and hospitality standpoint but also in quality of life as well," he said.

"Art helps attract people and businesses to be in our state, and supports hundreds of good-paying, steady jobs for Rhode Islanders. Coming out of COVID especially, these venues and this infrastructure supports restaurants and parking garages and hotels and all sorts of supporting services that make for a very vibrant community."

Question 7: \$60 million for Quonset infrastructure and economic development

Question 7 may seem less straightforward than the other questions on the ballot. But the concept is relatively simple once broken down with the help of Steve King, managing di-

rector of the Quonset Development Corporation, the quasi-state agency that would administer the bond funds if approved.

The Quonset Business Park constitutes a 3,200-acre, multi-use piece of land that employs over 12,200 people across 200 different companies. Of that large footprint, there is less than 200 acres yet to be developed.

According to King, "one of the biggest issues for site expansion is having a pathway to getting approval and getting approval for projects to be built."

Approval of Question 7 would provide \$40 million in funding to replicate what the Quonset Development Corporation describes as its "site readiness" initiative throughout Rhode Island. This initiative prioritizes completion of preliminary "groundwork" to ensure that parcels within the park that could potentially become the site of lucrative development projects have already gone through the extensive screening processes -

things like environmental impact studies that take large amounts of time and money to conduct - prior to a development opportunity coming along.

According to King, this kind of preliminary effort can be the difference between a large company choosing a site in Quonset or going elsewhere to save time and money. He estimated that "several dozen" projects could be funded throughout the state by emulating this model, and that grants would be chosen through a review process conducted by the board of the Quonset Development Corporation.

The majority of the remaining \$20 million from the bond would go toward rehabbing the 80-year-old Pier 1 at Quonset. King said this money would be used in part to match an \$11.2 million federal government grant and be used to help bolster the auto importing industry that currently thrives at Quonset, which King said was one of the top 10 such industries in the country and supports 1,700 Rhode Island jobs.

LEGAL NOTICES

JOHNSTON ZONING BOARD MEETING AGENDA
Thursday, February 25th, 2021
at 6:30 PM
VIA Video Conference

Via Computer:
<https://zoom.us/j/92680323802>

Via Telephone: +1 929 205 6099 US
or +1 301 715 8592 US

Meeting ID: 926 8032 3802
Passcode: 557268

NOTE: Please check out the "ACCESS INSTRUCTIONS for e-meetings held via Zoom" on the Town's web page under Meetings & Events. <https://www.townofjohnstonri.com/>

The Johnston Zoning Board of Review will hold its regular monthly meeting on February 25th, 2021 at 6:30 pm, by ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE. Persons interested in the following petitions are encouraged to join the Video Conference. If you require accommodations call the Zoning Office 48 hours in advance of the meeting at (401) 231-4000 ext 4117. Persons utilizing TDD equipment may contact the Town through "Relay Rhode Island" at 1-800-745-6675. The agenda for the evening will be as follows, subject to change:

Case to be heard at 6:35 PM
File 2021-37 - Petition of Arthur Carulo, Owner/Applicant for 267 Sim-

mons Avenue, AP 28 Lots 107, zoned R-20. The petitioner is seeking a Variance from Section 340-9. Table of Dimensional Regulations. to create an undersized lot.

Case to be heard at 6:45 PM
File 2021-2 - Petition of Gabriel and Jennifer Merlino Owner/Applicant for 28 Pine Hill Avenue, AP 50 Lot 89, zoned R-40. The petitioner is seeking a Variance from Section 340-9. Table of Dimensional Regulations. to create an undersized lot to build a Single-Family Dwelling.

Case to be heard at 6:55 PM
File 2021-3 - Petition of Off Course Properties, LLC, Owner/Applicant for Plainfield Pk/Capitol St, AP 26 Lots 1, zoned B-2. The petitioner is seeking a Variance from Section 340-9. Table of Dimensional Regulations. to build a metal storage building.

Case to be heard at 7:05 PM
File 2021-4 - Petition of Gary and Karen Marandola, Owner/Applicant for 1756 Atwood Avenue, AP 53 Lots 188, zoned R-20. The petitioner is seeking a variance from Section 340-8. Table of Uses. Subsection 1, Number 2 to operate a kennel for the breeding of dogs.

Case to be heard at 7:15 PM
File 2021-5 - Petition of the Ida Reedy Estate c/o May Kernan, Owner/Applicant for Steere Drive, AP 62 Lot 72, zoned R-40. The petitioner is seeking a Variance from Section 340-9. Table of Dimensional Regulations. to

build a Single-Family Dwelling on an existing non-conforming lot.

Case to be heard at 7:25 PM
File 2021-6 - Petition of Bruce Losini, Owner/Applicant for Rosemont Avenue, AP 16 Lots 161, zoned R-15. The petitioner is seeking a Variance from Section 340-9. Table of Dimensional Regulations. to build a Single-Family Dwelling on an existing non-conforming lot.

Case to be heard at 7:35 PM
File 2021-1 - Petition of Anthony and Emilio Pillozzi, Owner/Applicant for 30 Hopkins Avenue, AP 57 Lot 77, zoned R-40. The petitioner is seeking a Variance from Section 340-9. Table of Dimensional Regulations. to create an undersized lot to develop a single family home.

NOTE:
If a Case has not been called for a hearing by 10:30 p.m., the Board, at its discretion, may continue the Case to a subsequent or a special meeting.

The Zoning Board Agenda and Minutes are available for review at ClerkBase on the Town's web page or Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. at the Building Office, 100 Irons Avenue, Johnston.

Per order of the Zoning Board of Review
Thomas Lopardo, Chairman

2/12, 2/19/21



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■ Facility

(Continued from page 1)

Chase took a three-pronged approach to explaining why the facility would be beneficial for Johnston, including the addition of more than 1,000 full-time jobs and a “responsibly developed” plan that includes relocating an existing solar farm on the site and “preservation and protection of natural resources.”

He said the proposal also represents a more than \$300 million investment, relying on locally sourced services and expanding the town’s tax base. Chase said the 200-acre site is about the size of downtown Providence, but Reilly would later testify that only about one-third of the land will be developed. The presentation noted the main building would be located a minimum of 1,000 feet from “any adjacent residential structure,” and about 70½ acres are protected wetlands. He said the center would open in the first half of 2023.

Reilly said there will be two access points off of Hartford Avenue en route to the 820,000-square foot, 120-foot-tall distribution facility. The blueprint for the building shows a massive parking lot to the east, with loading docks in the south and west. She noted the building is less than 10 percent of the total site, while parking composes 20 percent of the footprint and drainage and roadways account for another 11 acres. About 70 acres, or 36 percent, of the site would be developed. Town Planner Thom Deller, in response to a question in the Zoom comment section, said it’s “highly unlikely” the remaining acreage would be developed in the future because of protected wetlands.

“The biggest limitation is the presence of wetlands,” Reilly said. “We’re trying to make sure we’re not impacting wetlands. The proposed parking is as far back into the site as possible for neighbors.”

Reilly said that while the process is in its infancy, “initial due diligence” has been conducted regarding tie-ins to local

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PROJECT LOCATION

THE WHOLE PICTURE: This screenshot from Tuesday’s presentation shows the total 200-acre site, only one-third of which will be developed for Project Schooner. (Screenshot / Zoom)

water and sewer lines near the property. The 14.6-acre solar field on site will be relocated as part of a secondary project.

Lombardo added during his remarks that “this is the type of business envisioned when the town enacted the B-3 zone” for the area.

The public hearing drew mixed reviews of the proposal, starting with concerns from Warwick’s Rob Cote and Western Cranston’s Caren Belli. Cote was worried about dust mitigation from the project and urged the board not to overlook “negative ramifications of every Amazon project in neighboring communities.”

“Why is it the Schooner Project? Everyone knows it is an Amazon distribution center. It’s a bit deceptive we don’t tell residents it is an Amazon distribution center,” Cote said, noting he’s connected to a separate Amazon facility. “There’s a high stress

rate, high worker injury rates, workers are basically treated as disposable. Listen to the testimony on the other side of the development of the project. I would hope everyone keeps an open mind and does their due diligence to look at the negative side.”

Belli asked for clarification on what’s in store for undeveloped land in the area, to which Deller said the property would remain “undisturbed.” She echoed Cote’s sentiments about the workplace environment, but added that she would prefer to see the project in a currently vacant lot or brownfield site.

At that point, Planning Board Chairman Josh Laurito interjected to say, “I’d rather hear from Johnston residents in regards to their concerns as opposed to you proposing different land sites for this project.” He requested that non-residents wait until after those who live in the town were done speaking to offer their comments.

The board then heard

from a half-dozen Johnston residents, starting with former Dist. 42 state Rep. Stephen Ucci. While he lauded Bolton’s presentation and offered support for the overall plan, he implored the board to “really look at what the impact is going to be on residents.”

“This is a great project for us,” Ucci said. “I’ve seen in my research where they’ve paid over \$5 million in property taxes. ... We have the time to do it. I’d like to welcome the developer with open arms, I just want to make sure we do what’s right and we minimize the impact to the residents.”

Mike Zannini, a resident who lives within a half-mile of the proposed

site, asked Bolton about mitigating the noise level of trucks operating on a 24/7 basis at the facility. Bolton cited Johnston’s “strict” noise ordinance and said he was “quite confident” they will ameliorate those concerns.

Michael Sabitoni, president of the Rhode Island Buildings and Construction Trades Council, said that he has not only lived in town for five decades but represents the workers who may be employed on such a project. He said the facility would be a “win-win.”

“The quality of life will be better for Johnston residents,” Sabitoni said, adding that major construction proposals such as this often have “incon-

veniences” for surrounding citizens.

Sean Connor of Johnston pushed back against the idea that quality of life will be enhanced, especially for those in the west end of town. He asked Bolton if truck traffic would be going through the west entrance, to which Bolton said that is the plan, but no final decision has been made yet.

Sam and Rhonda Sasa who own property 50 feet from the proposed entrance of the facility, were worried about the “noise the dust, the blasting” that such a project would require. Sam Sasa said they are not opposed to the project, but would like to talk further with Bolton and Bluewater.

johnstonsunrise.net

Obituaries

In your time of need, the *Johnston Sun Rise* will print your loved one’s full obituary for a small charge. The paper also places the obituary on our Web site, johnstonsunrise.net.

Should you desire our services, kindly inform your funeral director, or call Sue Howarth at (401) 732-3100 or email sueh@rhodybeat.com for additional information. Obituary prices start at \$50. You may place the obituary in any of our other newspapers for half price. *Thank you.*

Jerry T. Badessa

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ANIMAL TALK

By Karen Kalunian

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Lucy

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Meet Miss Lucy! This gorgeous seven year young girl is looking for a loving home, she loves to go for walks, play doggie games and wants to be your best friend. Lucy lost her home and family, the only ones she's ever known because they could no longer care for her so she is hopeful that there is another family out there who will give her a chance at a new life! She is available for adoption through Rhode Home Rescue and you can contact them via email at rhodehomerescue@gmail.com You can also visit their website at www.rhodehomerescue.org Lucy is hoping to be the queen of your castle and to spend many happy moments with you!

Photo credit: Erin McGinn Photography

If you have been looking to adopt or know of an animal in need, please contact Karen directly at animaltalk1920@gmail.com

Bow chika Wow Town, a full service pet care facility in the Apponaug section of Warwick, is excited to announce the launch of its transportation service. Bow chika Wow Town's transportation service will offer Rhode Island dog owners a simple, safe, affordable, and worry free way to get their pups to and from daycare, grooming, and boarding appointments. Call: 401.737.2900 for more information



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SUN RISE SCOOPS

By MERI R. KENNEDY

News from the library

The fine-free period for all Rhode Island public libraries has been extended to March 1, 2021. However, if you have overdue books, please bring them back, so other patrons can enjoy them.

NAMI-RI

Family-to-Family course

The local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness is now accepting registration for its virtual Family-to-Family course, which begins Feb. 24.

This is a free, eight-session educational program for family members, significant others and friends of people with mental health conditions. It is a designated evidenced-based program, which means that research shows the program significantly improves the coping and problem-solving abilities of the people closest to a person with a mental health condition.

NAMI Rhode Island's Family-to-Family course is taught by trained family members who have lived experience, and includes presentations, discussions and interactive exercises.

For more information on the Family-to-Family curriculum and registration requirements, visit namirhodeisland.org or call 331-3060.

Library Book Club

Kids ages 8-10 can meet online, by invitation, Thursdays at 3 p.m. to hear readings and discuss books with library trustee and volunteer Denese Carpenter.

Interested in other times or want to suggest a book for discussion? Let us know.

Parents can learn more about sign-up procedures by contacting Library Director Jon Anderson. Email info@mohrlibrary.org or call (401) 231-4980, ext. 7.

Artist Applications now open for Wickford Art Festival

There are new changes to the festival set to bring artists back to Wickford after last year's cancellation due to COVID.

Artist applications are now open for the annual Wickford Art Festival, which is slated for July 10 and 11, 2021. Produced by the Wickford Art Association since 1962, this year's festival will aim to feature top artists from the state, region and nationally but will have a new look and feel due to changes since COVID-19 rocked the art and event industry. This year, Wilson Park, located within Wickford Village, will be the base for the festival in order to safely spread-out artists, patrons and adapt to any necessary state guidelines in place come July.

For the first time artists will be able to apply to this year's festival through a new online application. Accepted artists will also be featured on a new vir-

tual festival platform that will be heavily promoted throughout the entire summer through the end of September.

The Wickford Art Festival is a juried fine art show. Work will be juried on originality, workmanship and professional presentation. Jurors also consider total show composition and for the first time will be accepting a limited number of talented artists that create fine functional art pieces – including ceramics, decorative fiber, furniture and jewelry – will be able to apply to the festival. Applications will be open through April 15.

For more information visit the Wickford Art Association website for details on the festival, application instructions and jury information or contact the festival director, Ainslie Daly, at wickfordartfestival@gmail.com.

For more information on individual exhibits or programs, please contact us, or visit wickfordart.org. All programming is subject to change; all juried and judged exhibits will be featured through online virtual galleries as well as in-gallery hours (Wednesday through Saturday, noon to 4 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 3 p.m.) at WAA's beach-front North Kingstown home.

Medical education scholarships

The Chartercare Foundation is now accepting applications for undergraduate and graduate medical education scholarships for the 2021 academic year.

The scholarships will support studies in nursing, pharmacy, dental hygienists, physician assistants, public health, occupational and physical therapy, dieticians, etc. The scholarship is open to Rhode Island residents only, and the application deadline is March 31, 2021.

Please visit chartercarefoundation.org and click on "scholarships."

'Meet the Artists' at Warwick CFA

Join Warwick Center for the Arts for its "Meet the Artists" opening reception, to be held Monday, Feb. 15, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. via Zoom. See the multimedia exhibit of over 75 original works of art available for purchase or online. The entire exhibit in person runs through March 13. For more information, visit warwickcfa.org/exhibits-events/on-view or email exhibits@warwickcfa.org.

Craft and Arts kits now available for pick up

The Mohr Library now has winter craft and art kits available for children, which may be picked up. Email Ms. Meri at Meri@mohrlibrary.org to reserve one.

Johnston Senior Center offers services

If you need any help

with heating, housing, etc., during this cold winter or any other time, contact the Johnston Senior Center Social Services Department by calling (401) 944-3343. Madeline or Amy will be happy to help you.

ARTS Scholarships

Applications are now available at ppacri.org/artsscholarships for the 2021 ARTS Scholarships Program. This year marks the program's 25th anniversary! Since 1996, the program has awarded 700 arts scholarships.

The ARTS Scholarships 2021 program, sponsored by The Textron Charitable Trust and the PPAC Annual Fund Donors with support from WPRI 12, awards up to \$500 in financial assistance to each of the 30 talented Rhode Island students selected as recipients. Qualified students must be age 11-14 by June 1, 2021, and reside in and attend school in Rhode Island.

These scholarships offer young artists an opportunity to participate in local summer arts education programs that will broaden each student's experience in their chosen area of study.

Support the Johnston Historical Society

The Johnston Historical Society has T-shirts available for sale in sizes small through extra large in slate blue, sand and a few in light green.

The JHS is an all-volunteer organization. Its museum is not staffed, but they are happy to open up by appointment for a tour of the museum, the house, and to purchase T-shirts and copies of books.

Call 231-3380 and leave a message with the color and size you would like.

Did you know?

Presidents Day falls on the third Monday in February in the United States. It is also known as Washington's Birthday, after George Washington, the first president of the United States. The day is meant to celebrate George Washington and all the presidents of the U.S. It became a federal holiday in 1879.

Although there was an attempt in 1968 to officially call the third Monday in February Presidents Day, it failed. It eventually came to pass that in 1971. Still many states choose to call this day Presidents Day instead of Washington's Birthday. Some states also celebrate Abraham Lincoln's birthday at this time as well. (Source: Presidents Day Fun Facts)

SunriseScoops@aol.com. Photos in jpg format are accepted and news can include community events, promotions, academic news and nonprofit events. Email today and see your news in our column in the Johnston Sun Rise. Please include a daytime telephone number in case we require any further information.

Sports



LEADING THE WAY: Johnston forward Thomas Zednik in a recent game. (Photos by Alex Sponseller)

Panthers heating up with three straight

By ALEX SPONSELLER

After getting to a late start this winter season, the Johnston boys basketball team has caught fire and is on a three-game win streak in league play.

The Panthers' most recent victory came in a 67-53 decision over Juanita Sanchez earlier in the week. Senior forward Thomas Zednik led the way with 30 points while Derek and Justin Salvatore added 12 each. The club also topped Cranston West 72-65 and was led by Hunter Remington with



IN THE PAINT: Johnston defenders get set in the paint.

■ **Panthers**
(Turn to page 16)



LEAPS AND BOUNDS: Johnston's Lala Olagundoye competes in the high jump. (Photo by Leo van Dijk/rhodyphoto.zenfolio.com)

Locals shine at class meet

By ALEX SPONSELLER

a look at some of the results:

The Indoor Track and Field Class Championships were held this past weekend and the Providence Career and Technical Institute, and many locals shined as they set their sights on this month's upcoming state championships. Here is

GIRLS

Johnston's Lala Olagundoye continued to impress, taking first in

■ **Class**
(Turn to page 14)

A wild finish and a budding rivalry

Last Friday night, I was lucky enough to cover two very exciting games that each went to overtime.

The first was Bishop Hendricken basketball, who managed to tie the score on a buzzer-beating shot at the end of regulation to send it to the extra period. The Hawks went on to roll in overtime to collect the win over Barrington.

The next was the Warwick and Cranston boys hockey game. The visiting Falcons were up two goals heading into the

My pitch



by
ALEX
SPONSELLER
SPORTS EDITOR
ALEXS@
RHODYBEAT.COM

final period, but Warwick surged back to knot

■ **Pitch**
(Turn to page 14)

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■ Pitch
(Continued from page 13)

things up and send the contest to overtime. The two teams battled hard in the extra period and each had its moments to take control, but the game ultimately led to a tie and allowed each team to remain unbeaten.

As a journalist, overtime periods can be tricky.

Fortunately as the editor of weekly papers, my deadline schedules are not quite as strict as a daily. I am not looking at my watch quite as intently as other reporters. However, I gave myself very little time in between the two games, so when the Hawks went to overtime I began sweating a little bit.

Once I got my interviews, I ran to my car, hopped in, and drove like Jeff Gordon to the Thayer Arena and was able to get there in time to watch the majority of the game. It was a hectic hour or so.

Once the game ended and I did my reporting, something hit me how lucky we are to have sports back even if things are different than the norm. Sure,

my head was spinning and things became kind of blurry as I rushed from one event to the other. But looking back on it, the two games I covered were each outstanding and made my night a fun one.

Now, in terms of the actual games, I have a lot to touch on here.

First off, the Hendricken basketball program continues to be the gold standard in the state. That is not breaking news or anything, but I feel like every time I have the pleasure of covering the team, I leave more impressed than the time before.

Barrington was shooting lights out for most of the game and seemed to have the Hawks on the ropes in both the second and fourth quarters. The Hawks remained composed, upped their defensive efforts, made some plays on offense and pulled themselves out of the hole twice.

Hendricken was down two points with one second on the clock. It had the ball in its own end and was ready to inbound. The Hawks had a shot, but really, we all knew Barrington would hold on to the win. The upset was just so unlikely.

However, the Hawks took the court and executed the play a throw in that was tipped in by big man Cam Hughes that sent the game to overtime. They were confident, poised, and kind of made it look easy.

I then found out after the game that not only had the team never run that play before, it never even practiced it. Coach Jamal Gomes drew it up in the timeout prior to the inbound and the players pulled it off. Crazy.

It's times like that where you have to just tip your hat to the team. Gomes is the state's best tone setter, and his kids all buy in to what he's selling. Not to take away from the kids, they're the ones that actually hit the court and play, but it all begins with Gomes.

Back to the kids though, what a play and what an effort. Considering the circumstances and the fact that every bit of it was in the moment and on the fly, it showed a tremendous amount of smarts and athleticism, as well as discipline, to get it done the way they did. What a game.

Then with hockey.

Similarly, Warwick showed a lot of guts in the tie as well.

The Falcons were in control for the first two periods and forced Warwick to come back from a three-goal deficit.

For a team that is new as a cop, against a team like Cranston that has been atop the standings all year, what an effort to pull themselves back into it. One thing that I adore about hockey is the importance of momentum.

In fact, I would say the momentum plays more of a role in hockey than any other sport out there. The swings are just so strong sometimes and that is what you saw all night at Thayer.

Leaving that game, I also came to the realization that these two teams seem destined to square off again. As of this writing, each team is still undefeated and near the top of the Division II standings. Now that Division II essentially absorbed Division III in the realignment, there are plenty of great teams and it will surely be competitive down the stretch.

But when it is all said and done, at the halfway point of the winter, it is clear that these two neighboring clubs are contenders. When looking at how great

of a game it was, I just feel like they will be seeing each other again and probably when the lights are even brighter. Can't wait.

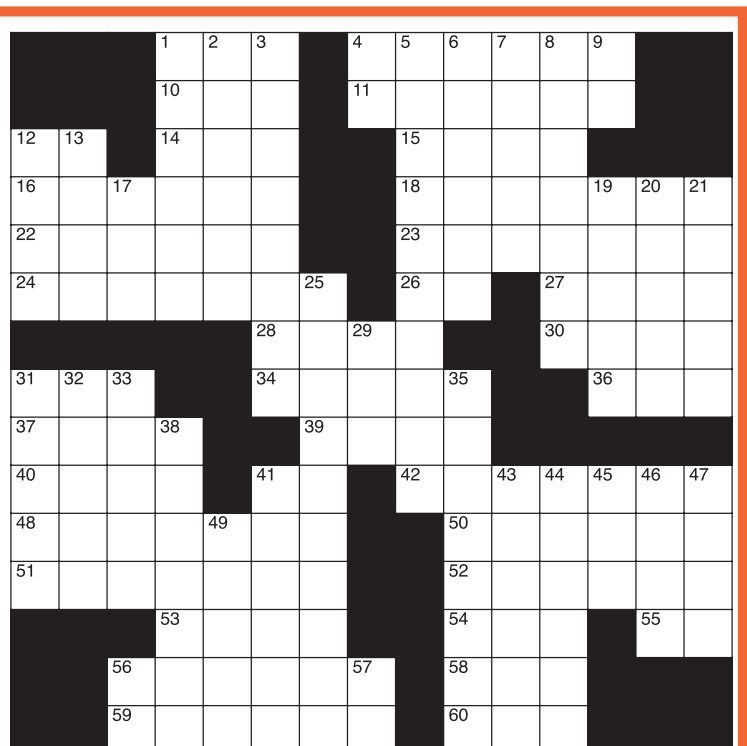
One last tidbit here. The Providence Journal pointed out last week that schedules have been made for the upcoming football season which is supposed to take place during the third season in March and April. At the same time, the state has yet to clear football from its high risk designation, so things are kind of at a stalemate.

I've been asked a few times over the last couple weeks what my thoughts are regarding the season and whatnot. To be honest with you, it's hard to really have thoughts on it when we are all at the mercy of the state.

I would love to see the season kick off on time and to give the kids their chance to compete. I missed the Friday night lights in the fall and would be ecstatic to get a season in.

Ultimately, not much has changed, but I am happy to see the league start putting plans in place in the event the sport does get cleared for action. Better off being prepared than falling behind.

**CROSSWORD
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CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Big tech firm
- 4. Picked
- 10. Type of whale
- 11. A woman of refinement
- 12. New England state
- 14. Common gibbon
- 15. Tall coniferous tree
- 16. State capital
- 18. Making a liquid muddy
- 22. Vinegary
- 23. Peninsula
- 24. Thee
- 26. Atomic #55
- 27. Used in units of measurement
- 28. Welsh female name
- 30. Arab ruler title
- 31. One's mother
- 34. Trap
- 36. Soviet Socialist Republic
- 37. Assn. of oil-producing countries
- 39. Holy fire
- 40. Emit coherent radiation

- 41. Atomic #81
- 42. Orthodox Jewish college
- 48. Herbs
- 50. Ran after
- 51. Begin again
- 52. Named
- 53. Barbary sheep
- 54. Unwell
- 55. Postscript
- 56. Drivers
- 58. One point east (clockwise) of due north
- 59. Prim
- 60. A facility equipped for sports or physical training

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Small islands
- 2. Skullcap
- 3. Unexplained events
- 4. One hundredth of a meter
- 5. Beloved baseball announcer
- 6. Repulsive
- 7. Northern European languages
- 8. Match or surpass
- 9. Northeast
- 12. Chew the fat
- 13. Innovative industry
- 17. Land to put down to grass
- 19. Products
- 20. Nostril
- 21. Surprise Icelandic politician
- 25. Conclusive acts
- 29. Inform on
- 31. Grinding tooth
- 32. Keep up
- 33. Tablelands
- 35. Raising
- 38. Mythical creature
- 41. Hums
- 43. Mountain in Antarctica
- 44. Neighborhood in Manhattan
- 45. Distinctive practice
- 46. Vice president
- 47. Contributes to
- 49. Small bones
- 56. Oil company
- 57. Empire State

■ Class
(Continued from page 13)

the high jump and second in the long jump. Milana Melvin finished third in the shot put for the Panthers, followed by teammate Isabella Johnson-Viola in fourth while Talia Laflamme finished seventh.

Johnston's Taylor Powell took 10th in the 300 dash.

Lindsey Hobin placed second in the 55 hurdles while teammate Julianna Bucci took second in the shot put. Madison Alves finished second in the long jump.

West's relay team of Rachael Hobin, Juliana Andrus, Waimea Dodge and Dea Xhupi finished third in the 3,200, while Alves, Quiana Pezza, Gianna King and Ailanu Sutherland took third in the 800. Alves also finished third in the 55 dash as well as third in the 300 dash.

Sutherland, Xhupi, Pezza and Ashlee Tennett finished fourth in the 1,600, while Sutherland later finished fourth in the 55 dash. East's Zoe Catrambone finished sixth in the 600 run.

Stella Loezos finished seventh in the 1,500 run, while West's Emma Wenzel finished seventh in the long jump. Hobin later finished eighth in the high jump, while Loezos also took ninth in the 1,000 run.

Catrambone took 10th place in the high jump, while West's Sophie Hmid-douche finished 10th in the shot put. Pezza placed 10th in the long jump.

Toll Gate was led by Hannah Horace with a second-place finish in the shot put and third in the weight throw. Pilgrim's Dasani Stewart finished fourth in the long jump.

Toll Gate's relay team of Oce Lowe, Camille Remillard, Mollie Cunningham and Callie Fagundes took fifth in the 3,200. Lowe, Cunningham, Kendall Brooks and Alison Pankowicz took fifth in the 1,600. Samantha Larrivee finished sixth in the weight throw for Toll Gate, while Amaya Coffie finished sixth in the long jump for Pilgrim.

Larrivee took eighth in the shot put for Toll Gate, while Pilgrim's Katarina Hermanowski took eighth in the large school shot put. Lowe later finished 10th in the 1,500 run as well as 10th in the 1,000 run. Pilgrim's Amber Lopes took 10th in the 1,500.

BOYS

Johnston's Jose Echeverria finished second in the shot put and fourth in the long jump. Teammate Jared Trotter finished 10th in the long jump.

Kris Degaitas finished second in the 55 hurdles while Michael Conti took second in the long jump. Peter Morales finished third in the 600 run for West.

West's relay team of Morales, Matt Bacari, Nathan Quero and Shawn Robbins took fifth in the 3,200, while Degaitas, Makai Teixeira, Luke Schmidt and Conti took sixth in the 800. Alex DelNigro took sixth in the long jump for West.

West's Dimirti Lablanc finished seventh in the 55 hurdles, while Conti took seventh in the 55 dash. West's relay team of Schmidt, Teixeira, Degaitas and Lablanc finished seventh in the 1,600. Nicholas Williams finished seventh in the high jump for the Falcons.

West's Steve Faccenda finished eighth in the shot put while East's Nicholas Cobb placed ninth in the 1,500, and Quero took ninth in the 600. DelNigro took 10th in the 300 dash. Degaitas also took 10th in the long jump.

Evan Reynolds led Hendricken with a first-place finish in the 3,000 run while teammate Luke Mead won the 55 hurdles. Hendricken's John Santos also won the high jump.

The Hawks relay team of Jacob Naief-eh, Mead, Hayden Clare and AJ Monteiro finished second in the 1,600, while teammate Josiah Nhar took second in the high jump.

Hendricken's Ryan Dyer finished third in the 1,500 as well as the 1,000 run, while Jake Kopech took third in the 300 dash. Cam Hughes took third in the shot put for Hendricken, while teammate John Fay took third in the weight throw. Kamalie Pemberton took third in the long jump for the Hawks. Bishop Hendricken's relay team of Clare, Evan McGregor, Neiefeh and Wilson Jablonski finished third in the 3,200.

Hendricken's Alex Morin took fourth in the shot put, while Pilgrim's Justin Dorsey took fourth in the 3,000 run. Santos finished fourth in the long jump. Pemberton took fourth in the 55 dash, followed by Kopech in fifth. Reynolds later took fifth in the 1,500.

Toll Gate's relay team of Josh Paiva, Dylan Aunchman, Jamie Luna and Domenic Calise finished fifth in the 800. Toll Gate's relay team of Andrew St. Laurent, Cian Roberts, Greyson Pasquina and Tom Belanger finished sixth in the 3,200. Toll Gate's Calise, St. Laurent, Luna and Mason Tanner also finished sixth in the 1,600.

Troy Silvestri took sixth for Hendricken in the 3,000 run, while Dorsey took sixth in the 1,500.

Hendricken's Jude Ibarra finished seventh in the shot put. Pilgrim's Andrew O'Leary finished eighth in the shot put.

Josh Beard finished eighth for the Hawks in the 3,000 run, followed by teammate Keegan Tierney in ninth. Hendricken's Dante Salvaggio took ninth in the shot put. Pilgrim's Thomas Flanders finished ninth in the 1,500. Jablonski finished 10th in the 1,500, while Hendricken's Blessjoey Nyannah finished 10th in the weight throw.

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Casting for striped bass is a hoot

By CAPTAIN DAVE MONTI

If you want to be entertained while you learn striped bass fishing tips, tactics and techniques from one of the best you should tune into Charley Soares and his 'Successful Stripper Fishing' Zoom seminar sponsored by the Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association (RISAA) on Monday, Feb. 22, 7 p.m.

There is no finer way to catch striped bass than casting to them on or below the surface. Have a large bass explode on your surface lure and you are in for a lifetime memory. Charlie Soares is always willing to share his knowledge with anglers and this new seminar will be on casting lures for striped bass detailing locations, techniques and tackle. Soares says, "Fooling jumbo striped bass with a hunk of wood or plastic is the ultimate fishing achievement." Soares is a fulltime fishing guide and fishing writer and has columns in On-The-Water magazine (In The Wake), The Fisherman and Surfcasters Journal and writes a weekly fishing column for The Herald News, Fall River.

RISAA members attend free, it's easy to join at www.risaa.org. Non-members are welcome with a \$10 donation to the RISAA Scholarship Fund. For information contact Steve Medeiros, president, at 401.826.2121 or steve@risaa.org.

Massachusetts shellfish plan up for public comment

On Feb. 11, 2021 the Massachusetts Shellfish Initiative (MSI) announced that it completed an initial draft of a strategic plan and is currently accepting public comment on the document.

The draft document may be viewed online at massshellfishinitiative.org. The MSI will host a virtual public meeting on Zoom on Monday, Feb. 22, 2021 at 6 p.m. At that time, the MSI will present the strategic plan and accept questions and comments. The public is also invited to submit written comments on the strategic plan through 5PM on Friday, March 5, 2021. Public comment may be submitted via e-mail (MassShellfishInitiative@gmail.com) or google forms.

Council and Commission to hold public hearings/comment period on favorite fish

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission), that provides regulations in Massachusetts and Rhode Island for fishing in state waters from shore to three miles offshore, are seeking public comment on the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment. Comments may be submitted at any of five virtual public hearings to be held between Feb. 17 and March 2, 2021 or via written comment until March 16, 2021.

The Council and Commission are developing this joint amendment to consider adjusting the allocations of catch or landings between the commercial and recreational fisheries for summer flounder, scup, and

black sea bass. The commercial and recreational allocations for all three species are currently based on historical proportions of landings (for summer flounder and black sea bass) or catch (for scup) from each sector.

Recent changes in how recreational catch is estimated have resulted in a discrepancy between the current levels of estimated recreational harvest and the allocations of summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass to the recreational sector. Some changes have also been made to commercial catch data since the allocations were established.

The amendment considers whether modifications to the allocations are needed in light of these and other changes in the fisheries. The amendment also considers options that would allow a portion of the allowable landings to be transferred between the commercial and recreational sectors each year, in either direction, based on the needs of each sector.

Anglers are encouraged you to visit the Council's Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass Commercial/Recreational Allocation Amendment web page, information on the amendment, the public hearing schedule, how to submit written comments or how to register for the online public hearing visit the press release at http://www.asmfc.org/uploads/file/6001eb69pr01_SFSBSB-Allocation-public-hearings.pdf.

Contact Nichola Meserve (MA) at 617.626.1531 or Jason McNamee (RI) 401.222.4700 for information.

East End Eddie Doherty presenting at Norfolk Library

East End Eddie Doherty, Cape Cod Canal fishing expert and author, will be presenting a fishing seminar titled "Surfcasting the Cape Cod Canal for Striped Bass" with stunning color photography by world renowned professional photographer John Doble.

Surfcasting the Cape Cod Canal for Striped Bass will be presented by the Norfolk Public Library via Zoom on Feb. 27, 2021 at 2 p.m. The free event is open to the public, but attendance is limited, so reserve a spot at <https://norfolkpl.org/events/> then click on Surfcasting the Cape Cod Canal for registration. A Zoom link will be sent by Library Director Libby O'Neill the day before the event.

Doherty is a retired Massachusetts District Court Clerk-Magistrate and the author of SEVEN MILES AFTER SUN-DOWN which was announced on Amazon as the No. 1 New Release in Fishing and selected as an Award Winning Finalist for American Bookfest in the Sports Category at the 2019 International Book Awards in Los Angeles.

Doherty is a former Attleboro resident who now lives in Mattapoisett, MA.

Where's the bite?

Freshwater. Ice fishing has been good at Massachusetts and Rhode Island ponds where ice is safe. John Littlefield of Archie's Bait & Tackle said, "Ice fishing is great. One customer was setting up five pills and by the time he



ICE FISHING GOOD: Anglers are catching pickerel, perch and crappie like this 14-inch crappie caught on a South County Pond by Gil Bell. Check safe ice conditions with local authorities. (Submitted photo)

got the third one set he was catching fish. The largemouth bite with shiners is pretty good." "Customers are catching perch, crappie and pickerel at Stump Pond, Smithfield, RI and Caruncle Pond Coventry, RI." said Dave Henault of Ocean State Tackle, Providence. Ted Oven of Northeast Trading Company, North Attleboro said, "We just starting to get calls for ice fishing as we haven't had good ice until this past week." At press time Pam Quinn of the Attleboro Fire Safety Department said, "We can't proclaim an entire pond safe for fishing or skating as there is no way of telling if it is safe all around so we tend not to declare an entire pond safe." For fresh water licensing information in Rhode Island visit <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/fish-wildlife/freshwater-fisheries>; and in Massachusetts visit www.mass.gov/freshwater-fishing-information.

Cod fishing. Party boats fishing for cod this winter (weather permitting include) the Frances Fleet at www.francesfleet.com, the Seven B's at www.sevenbs.com, and the Island Current at www.islandcurrent.com.

Dave Monti holds a captain's master license and a charter fishing license. He is a RISAA board member, a member of the RI Party & Charter Boat Association, the American Saltwater Guides Association and the RI Marine Fisheries Council. Forward fishing news and photos to Capt. Dave at dmontifish@verizon.net or visit www.noflukefishing.com.



SEMINAR: Charley Soares will speak about "Successful Stripper Fishing" casting to striped bass with lures on Monday, Feb. 22 at 7 p.m. at a RISAA online Zoom seminar.

■ Panthers

(Continued from page 13)

24 points while Zednik and CJ Ragosta scored 14. Derek Salvatore also put up 14 points in the win.

Although the Panthers got off to the late start and dropped their first two league games, coach Mike Bedrosian felt that the team has been competitive in every game and is finally hitting its stride.

"In our two (league losses), we only lost by three and four, so we were right there. Those were each games that we could have won, but credit to those teams, they played well. We were there at the end of the games though," said Bedrosian.

He and head coach Mark Livingston have also been encouraged by the early chemistry between the young players and senior leaders in Zednik and Justin Salvatore.

"They're blending well together. We're fortunate that Justin has (his brother Derek), those guys have been playing together their whole lives and Derek is our floor general and has played with these guys for six, seven years. Tom Zednik has been great, two of the three games he had 30 points and 10 rebounds. We go as far as he goes and I would say he's one of the best big men in the entire state right now," said Bedrosian.

Zednik has also been energized by the new level competition after moving up a division and hopes to carry the momentum into the playoff push.

"He's embracing it and is looking forward to the challenge of playing in Division II. Playing in Division III for a few years, he wants to prove that he can play at the next level, Thomas has been up for the challenge," said Bedrosian. "He's more mature and more confident. He knows that he's the man now. Last year we had five or six guards that ran the team, he now knows that it's his team and he's taken a special interest in it."



UP THE COURT: Johnston's Hunter Remington dribbles the ball up the court last week.

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BUSY BEES



At Rizzo Farms, a simple switch to help fruit plants has grown into much more



HONEY HARVEST: Kevin Shea, right, handles a honeycomb while collecting honey from one of his 20 hives.



By ARDEN BASTIA

For Kevin Shea and Sue Baron of Rizzo Farms, beekeeping isn't just a hobby or something to do on the weekends, but a way of life.

And even though Shea manages the hives and Baron oversees marketing, the real stars are the bees.

Shea started keeping bees as a way to help his fruit trees produce a harvest.

"I was getting no fruit. Year after year, I was doing everything right and couldn't figure out what was going on," he said during an interview. "And then I started doing the research, and found out that we lose half the bee population in this country every year due to pesticides and people using Roundup on the yard to get rid of dandelions. Dandelions are really [the bees'] first choice to feed their babies. Most people have no idea, and I was one of them."



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Design Showcase



Designer: **Michelle Parenteau**
Michelle Lee Designs



Quaker Valley Condominium – West Warwick – Remodel/Flip

Rich Paolo's dated 1300 sq. ft. condo, built in the 1980s, needed to be brought into the current decade, with a total makeover. In October 2020, Michelle came in with her team of professional contractors, to tackle this extensive renovation.

They started in the Kitchen with new granite countertops, tile backsplash, updated lighting and painted cabinets, along with vinyl plank flooring.

Then it was on to the Living Room, for a fresh coat of paint. Old carpet was removed and replaced with the same vinyl plank flooring as in the kitchen.

The Master Bath received a complete renovation with brand new plumbing fixtures, floor and wall tile, vanity, countertop and a beautiful tiled walk-in shower. The 2nd Bath was partially renovated with new floor tile, vanity, and countertop.

New lighting was carefully chosen for each room throughout the condo.

The two bedrooms were freshly painted, and updated with new carpet.

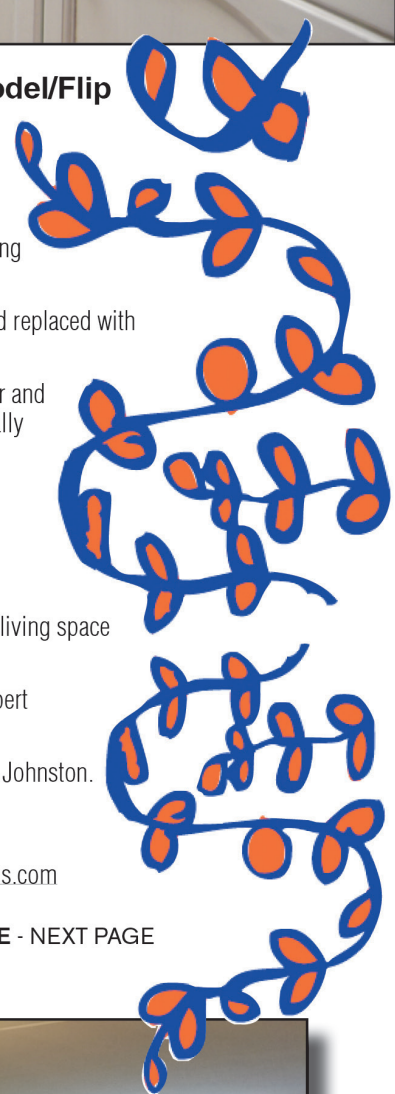
Lastly, new carpet was installed in the two heated lanais.

By November 2020, just one month later, the project was complete. This once outdated living space had been completely transformed, and it was ready to list.

Within a week and half this condo sold for well over the asking price – thanks to the expert design work of Michelle and her team.

Michelle Lee Designs is an award-winning and published interior design firm, based in Johnston. Michelle will create distinctive designs tailored to the lifestyles of each of her clients.

For questions on your upcoming projects, call 401.954.2065 or email info@MichelleLeeDesigns.com. See more of Michelle's work at www.michelleleedesigns.com



■ SHOWCASE - NEXT PAGE



Home is where the heart... and soul is

By Donna DeLauro

With many of us spending more time at home, we have a new appreciation and need for space.

Pre COVID-19 some of us were able to get by with modest living areas, as we spent our time at work and school, then maybe grabbed something quick for dinner between activities, socializing, shopping, etc. We choose where to live based on where we work, and how much property we want based on how much time is spent at home.

■ Showcase

(Continued from previous page)



Now we are working, schooling, cooking, eating, working out, and socializing all from home.

Maybe you are fortunate to have excess room to create office space, schoolwork space for the kids, and room for more than one cook in the kitchen.

Some are opting for refinancing and making alterations to the current home, building an addition, or finishing lower levels for increased living space.

If you decide to upsize to a larger home in a more rural area, you will be in competition with many folks looking for the same thing for the same reasons. Unfortunately, there are not many homes available to purchase these days.

As the promise of Spring, vaccines, and return to normalcy is upon us, we can hope to see more homeowners decide to make that move and list their homes for sale. That would open the market for more buyer opportunities. If the interest rates remain low, we could potentially enjoy a healthy housing market in many ways.

In the meantime, finding a quiet corner away from the other action going on with everyone staying home can be a challenge. Being creative with your space and time may help. Find an area that currently houses décor and replace it with a desk and shelving to store those books, folders, electronics, etc. A lap desk can be comfortable and efficient working from a favorite chair.

A SmartTV will allow access to internet for Google classroom, Zoom meetings for work, and virtual visits with friends and family. Taking turns using these options and quiet places can allow everyone some work time in privacy while others enjoy time spent at home.

If you are a mature adult in need of transitioning out of your larger family home to a smaller place, perhaps an assisted living or extended care community, or if you wish to rent, you can contact a Senior Real Estate Specialist who can assist with your goals and unique situation to create a plan for a safe move at the right time. Now more than ever it's more than just a home sale. It is a coordinated plan to prepare the home for sale while transitioning to your future lifestyle safely and timely.

In any case, if now is not the time to make that move, you can use the opportunity at home to organize, downsize and be prepared when the situation is safe to do so.

Cleaning out closets, drawers and basements can be done now while it is cold outside. Once the weather gets a little better you can go outside and get the property ready for sale.

Hopefully we are coming to an end of this unique situation. But maybe we can find some positives in it all with newfound ways to be happy at Home Sweet Home.

Donna DeLauro is a Realtor at RE/MAX Real Estate Center in Coventry. She is also a Senior Real Estate Specialist and the Proud Founder of Mature Matters. For more information she can be reached at donnadelauro@hotmail.com

Concerned about buying or selling due to COVID-19?

Contact me for a consultation to determine if it's the right time for you based on your unique situation.

Donna DeLauro, Realtor

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spotlight ON BUSINESS

Dreamland Learning Center

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NOW ENROLLING
 6 Weeks – 12 Years Old

By JENNIFER COATES

Elementary schools across the state are open for class, in some form or another. Parents are returning to the workforce, though many are restrained by the ongoing worry about childcare in these challenging times. Childcare centers like Dreamland Learning Center on Hartford Avenue are open for business and working hard to assure parents that they have implemented every possible safety precaution. Working parents are forced to fulfill their professional commitments while weighing the necessity of returning to work against their concern for the health and well-being of their loved ones. These are times like none of us have seen before. But there is hope.

It is times like these that the residents of Johnston and its surrounding neighborhoods can depend on the steadfastness and due-diligence of Dreamland Learning Center, a centrally-located child care center that is accepting new children and upholding all the standards of safety and hygiene mandated by the CDC.

Dreamland Learning Center is part of a network of childcare centers which reopened its doors this past summer with a whole new set of protocols ~ guidelines which will make parents and caregivers happy, and, with all the usual schedules, programming and FUN it has always been known for, will make the children happy too.

A few of the safety measures that have been put in place begin at the front door where a quick and easy temperature is taken to verify that no child has a fever. Parents are met by staffmembers Nicole and Tiara who are friendly, cheerful, and welcoming. They are the only people who can go between the secure lobby door and the classrooms, besides scheduled teachers. Beyond this constantly-sanitized space, all teachers and caregivers wear masks. Everything is done to keep the environment clean, germ-free, and safe.

Meanwhile, the fun, learning and socialization continue inside,



The lobby of Dreamland Learning Center is equipped with a thermometer which gives a quick and easy temperature reading. Once inside, children play in colorful, stimulating and imaginative spaces! Call today to enroll your child at this safe and sanitized center in Johnston.



all while maintaining as much distancing as is possible with young children. The center has a huge outdoor play yard which is a perfect place for the children to run off all their pent-up energy, even in these snowy wintery days. Each room is filled with developmentally appropriate toys and equipment, and each day is filled with fun, seasonally-themed activities, crafts, and play. The overall feeling here is one of childhood wonder and learning!

One phenomenon of this unusual time in our history is the practice of "distance learning." For those students who are in hybrid school settings, Dreamland Learning Center provides a safe, comfortable, and accommodating space for students

to do their work. Students bring their laptops and can study independently in a room where stable, compatible groups can work quietly and efficiently.

Dreamland Learning Center is now accepting enrollment for children ages 6 weeks through age 12. After school programs are up and running. The Center is located at 1253 Hartford Avenue. For more information, to discuss your questions or concerns, call 401-280-1400 or visit their website at www.dreamlandlearningcenter.com.

Be sure to check out the other Dreamland Learning Centers in West Warwick (401-828-8200) and Pawtucket (401-655-1000).



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COLLECTIBLES

Toys of the 1990's



What to Keep a Look Out for in the Future



By Travis Landry
Auctioneer & Specialist
Bruneau & Co. Auctioneers
Cranston, RI

When it comes to determining the value of an item in the antique and auction world, the one thing always discussed is collectability. Regardless of its category whether it be fine art, pottery, or comics, value is determined by a multitude of factors including supply, demand, collector age group, the length of time which the item has been collected, and of course by studying the trends of the market with past sales. When combined these factors also determine the cyclicity of a genre which allows specialists to see where the market is going. After reading this you might look at an antiques professional as more of a stock broker.

Out of any category in the realm of antiques and collectibles, the fastest changing market is vintage toys, and let me tell you why. Your average "high end" vintage toy collector is between the ages of 24 and 35, married or single (Not an important factor), but no children. This is a time in life were successful young adults have an expendable income to buy back their childhood. Act two; enter children... that income no longer remains expendable and now it is time to sell. And because collecting toys is based off of childhood that next generation of collectors does not want what they didn't grow up with, which now enters the market at an expedited rate. Do you follow? Before it was collectors seeking out the merchandise from dealers and auctions which later turns into the collectors trying to sell their items to a smaller collecting crowd.

The supply begins to outweigh the demand and values plummet quickly, because remember these are toys, and in most cases they made millions. In general antiques are time tested even though they are subject to severe market fluctuation. To put it into perspective, most antiques have been collected on the secondary market longer than certain vintage toys have existed. Everyone is familiar with Star Wars, Transformers, G.I. Joe, and He-Man because that's what's hot now, but where is the market going?

In 1993 the United States was introduced to the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, the American adaption of Japan's live action Super Sentai series revolving around a team of young individuals given special strength and the ability to pilot large robots known as Zords. The success of the Power Rangers in the early 1990's brought an influx in Japanese live action series being adapted for American T.V screens in the middle and late 1990's. While original Power Rangers have peaked in value, the value of Power Ranger spin-off toys have been exponentially increasing. *Superhuman Samurai Syber-Squad* and *Big Bad Beetleborgs* were released in 1994 and 1996 respectively. Both series consisted of the same formula as Power Rangers, good guys, bad guys, and big robots. The difference is that Power Rangers are still around today while these two series came and went within two years each, making pristine toys hard to find today. In today's market, these toys are only beginning to rise in value, and if history tells us anything, the demand pool for these figures is only going to continue to grow. When it comes to collecting for investment, it is no different than having an online trading account for stocks. While it is fun to do it yourself, contacting a trusted specialist to help guide and fill your collection is key, it's no different than having a quarterly consultation with your financial advisor.



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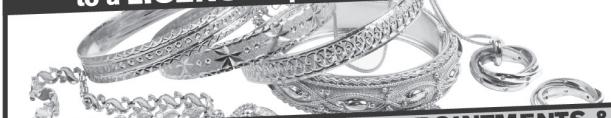
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■ Bees

(Continued from page 17)

Shea stopped using pesticides for weeds and bugs in his yard, and since then has relied on a healthy bee population for the past 11 years. In 2019, Baron joined the Rizzo Farms team to lead sales and marketing.

"It ended up working out," Shea said in an interview. "Sue loves the craft sphere, and her son and the whole family gets involved. I have so much going on, we presented a business opportunity together, and I said 'Would you be interested in doing all the fairs?' And that's where Sue kind of took over, and has really blossomed Rizzo Farms to a whole other level."

For Rizzo Farms, the beekeeping season starts in April, when Shea receives 3,000 to 5,000 honeybees, including a queen bee, from Northern California to replace the dead hives that didn't make it over the winter. The bees then reproduce and create honey until late summer.

"That's pretty much it," Shea said. "The bees really do all the work."

Shea explained that inexperienced beekeepers run the risk of injuring the queen, which can set honey production back by several weeks.

"It takes 16 days from egg to hatch for a queen to come out," he said. "Then she has to fly out of the hive for the first week and mate before she comes back. And then you risk her getting picked off by a bird."

He recommends that anyone interested in beekeeping or starting their own hives should take a certification class through the Rhode Island Beekeepers Association.

Rizzo Farms is not based in a single location, but rather all over the state. Shea has beehives in locations like Smithfield, Johnston and Chepachet, and leases hives in Sterling, Connecticut. Currently, Shea has 20 hives, but says he unfortunately lost quite a few during the past year.

Shea said fertilizing the fruit trees got him started, but then love of the process took over.



BUY LOCAL: Sue Baron is pictured during indoor and outdoor markets, pre-COVID, selling Rizzo Farms honey. To purchase honey from Rizzo Farms, contact Baron at bbhoney@cox.net.



"All of a sudden, I had more honey than I know what to do with," he said, adding that he isn't even a fan of honey.

Baron is a big fan of honey; she says it helps with her seasonal allergies.

"It's funny how you should buy honey, and I've been telling people this for years," she said in an interview. "The fall honey you should buy for next fall. And the spring honey you should buy for next spring. There's an old saying: ask five different beekeepers and you'll get six different answers."

Despite the competition among local beekeepers, Shea says there is more camaraderie than one would expect. "I know so many other beekeepers that I get honey from them when they have too much and don't know what to do with it. We all became friends."

The main focus for Rizzo Farms is "to keep the price low, make a small profit, and move as much as we can to help everyone out," explained Shea. "We're not looking for a huge

profit."

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Baron found it easy to sell at farmers markets and local craft fairs, like the Scituate Art Festival.

"People would just come up to my table, and I would have a small jar with a little taste spoons and [the customers] would taste it and then buy four or five jars. But now because of COVID, I can't allow samples, but we do have 340 regular customers," she explained. "I love going to farmers markets. You meet so many really nice people that are so down to earth. It's just a different culture."

Rizzo Farms honey can also be found in 11 local establishments like Belmont Markets and Dino's, as well as a few hardware stores and cigar shops. Honey can also be purchased by contacting Baron directly at bbhoney@cox.net. One pound jars of raw honey cost \$12, honey sticks in a variety of flavors are \$0.50 each, and wooden drizzlers are \$1.

"We pick up little spots here and there, and believe it or not, some

quaint little places sell the best," Shea said. "You think Dino's being a grocery store would outsell a lot of these other places, but I've found the hardware store sells the best out of everybody."

Both Shea and Baron are passionate about saving the bees. The top action to take toward preserving bee populations is to stop spraying weed killers and pesticides in the backyard.

Shea advises people to put up birdhouses, welcoming more birds into the yard to take care of unwanted insects like ticks and grubs. Baron encourages people to plant flowers, like black-eyed Susans and daisies. Even keeping dandelions around is helpful to bees. If dandelions must be removed, Shea invites people to pour boiling water on the plants instead of toxic chemicals.

"That's the sad part," he said. "We have everybody spreading pesticides to kill all the bugs that they don't want, but they end up killing all the ones we do need."



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