

## Should the mayor get a \$50,000 raise?

### Johnston's Charter Review Commission considers boost in town council and mayoral compensation

By RORY SCHULER

Johnston has the lowest paid mayor in the Ocean State.

Should the town's next mayor get a \$50,000 raise, from the current \$75,000 annual salary to at least \$125,000, as several members of the town's Charter Review Commission (JCRC) proposed last Thursday? One member suggested raising the mayor's salary to \$130,000, or possibly as high as \$150,000.

The members of the JCRC agreed last week that the mayor was due for a raise. But how much more mon-

ey will the next mayor make?

Is a 60% raise "outrageous" (as the JCRC's joint spokesperson, attorney and former Cranston Mayor Allan Fung called a similar proposal made by Cranston City Council in 2019).

That question's still up for debate. And voters will have to approve changes to the Johnston Town Charter, the document that sets a minimum compensation rate for the mayor and members of Town Council, at the ballot box.

■ MAYOR PAY - PAGE 7



## Landfill says 'pay first, read later'

### RIRRC sends *Sun Rise* a \$900 bill for documents

By RORY SCHULER

The Central Landfill wants the Johnston Sun Rise to pay \$900, in advance, to search for documents that may (or may not) exist, detailing the past business relationship between Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) and Johnston's J.R. Vinagro Corp.

RIRRC's recently resigned ex-Executive Director Joseph Reposa has been named CEO of Vinagro Corp., and took the job immediately after tendering his resignation at the landfill. His new employer, formerly known as Patriot Hauling Co., Inc., has also moved into Cardi Corporation's Warwick headquarters, taking over the defunct bridge and road contractor (potentially leaving a long, expensive list of uncompleted taxpayer funded projects in limbo).

Following six years running the Ocean State's lone operating landfill in Johnston, Reposa acquired intimate knowledge of RIRRC, and his contract with the

■ LANDFILL - PAGE 9

## PASSING THE CLUCK

WHO YOU CALLING 'CHICKEN'? Raising Cane's plans to open to customers next week. Turn to Page 8 for more details. (Sun Rise photo by Rory Schuler)

## Johnston roads closed after fresh flooding; apartments evacuated

By RORY SCHULER

As the Johnston Sun Rise went to the printers Wednesday morning, Johnston's emergency management officials had barely finished celebrating good news from the federal government regarding FEMA assistance when a fresh storm triggered yet another flood event in town.

First responders in boats reached some flood victims. A Johnston apartment building was evacuated, and the residents have taken shelter in a recently refurbished gym in town.

"We are currently evacuating residents from the Park St. apartments with boats," Johnston Mayor Joseph M. Polisena Jr. posted on social media at 9:45 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 10. "We are also sending another boat to the residents trapped on Belfield Drive. Our military Humvees are shuttling employees to Briarcliffe Manor."

As of 8:40 a.m. Wednesday morning,

according to Johnston Police Chief and Emergency Management Director Mark A. Vieira, several frequently flooded roads were closed off to traffic: Atwood Avenue from 1463 Atwood Ave. (area of Stop & Shop Plaza) to the area of the Route 6 overpass (the off-ramps from Route 6 to Atwood Avenue are also closed); Atwood Avenue from Simmonsville to Central avenues; River Drive at Lafazia Drive; Memorial Boulevard; and Belfield Drive.

Johnston Mayor Joseph M. Polisena Jr. posted updates on his social media profiles Wednesday morning: "First responders are deployed with Humvees and boats to extract people if needed."

"Atwood Ave. from Stop & Shop to the Washington Trust is under 2-3 feet of water and closed," Polisena wrote. "This includes the Rt. 6 exit ramps. Please seek an alternate route."



**ROADS SUBMERGED:** Early Wednesday morning, Jan. 10, Mayor Joseph M. Polisena Jr. took this photo from "Old Pocasset at Briarcliffe." According to the mayor, "There's also large scale residential flooding throughout Johnston." (Photo courtesy Mayor Joseph M. Polisena Jr.)

■ FLOODING - PAGE 11

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# JHS Panther of the Week



**POTW:** This week's Panther of the Week is Trinity Blondin. Trinity is a senior at Johnston High and was nominated by her Chorus teacher Mr. Matthew Gingras. Mr. Gingras said, "Over the summer Trinity participated in the Berklee College of Music summer camp. This is a 5-week camp in Boston, where participants get to see what it is like to be a music major in college. They take voice lessons, perform in groups, and it all culminates with a performance. Trinity was featured as a soloist during the musical theater showcase. She learned a lot and is able to bring what she learned back to the classroom. Yay Trinity!" (Photo submitted by Matt Velino, Johnston High School Principal)

**Editor's Note:** This is the newest installment of an ongoing weekly series highlighting Johnston's amazing students. Staff at Johnston High School will be nominating students and submitting a caption and a photo for publication. You'll find each week's winning Panther within the pages of the *Johnston Sun Rise*.

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# George helps them dig away at their family tree roots

By RICHARD J. DELFINO JR.  
Special to the Sun Rise

The Johnston Senior Center Spotlight this week shines on George Blanchette.

George and his wife, who live in Cranston, were invited by some friends to visit the Johnston Senior Center, where they would enjoy lunch, and check out the activities.

That visit about eight months ago, resulted in their joining and participating, along with their initial hosts, a minimum of two days per week.

While their wives enjoy various exercise programs, their husbands can be seen enjoying coffee, treats, and good conversation, while securing a table for a greater number of friends expected for lunch.

George, a Vietnam Veteran, proudly identifying that fact by wearing a cap boldly stating the same, worked for an alarm company and then the U.S. Postal Service, retiring in 2007.

George has a special hobby and interest in researching ancestry and genealogy. He regularly provides members and staff with interesting documents and facts regarding their family history.

Besides the socializing, George, like many others, enjoys the day trips provided by the Center. George, also like many others, made that initial step into the building, and continued visiting and enjoying what we have to offer.

**Editor's Note:** Richard J. DelFino Jr. serves as Executive Director of the Johnston Senior Center, at 1291 Hartford Ave., Johnston. The Johnston Sun Rise regularly publishes a senior profile, called "Senior Spotlight," submitted by the senior center.



## Senior 'Spotlite'

**DEDICATED DIGGER:** George Blanchette, of Cranston, a Vietnam Veteran, has a keen interest in researching ancestry and genealogy. He regularly provides members and staff with interesting documents and facts regarding their family histories. (Photo courtesy Richard J. DelFino Jr.)

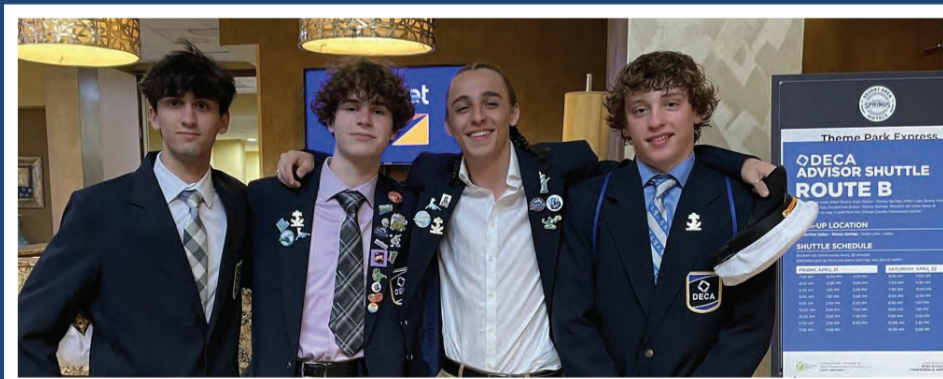
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**HAVING A WINTER BALL:** From left to right, Tommy Iasimone, Nina Lautieri, Sarah Vasquez, Alessandra Pesare, Hannah Lavergne, Alexia DiLorenzo, Matt Clements, Steven Finegan, Jayden Testa, Donavin Quinones, Lucas Anderson, and Anthony Felella pose for a group shot at this year's Winter Ball. The students were joined by Santa Claus, and his helper, The Elf. (Photo courtesy Lucas P. Anderson)

# Memories from 2023 Winter Ball won't melt

By ALEXIA DILORENZO

**O**n Dec. 15, Johnston Senior High School held its annual Winter Ball at the Kirkbrae Country Club in Lincoln.

This year, the doors opened at around 7:30 p.m., when the students walked into the decorated ballroom. This year's theme was "Evergreen and White."

At the end of the night, Homecoming King Steven Finegan continued the tradition of reading "The Night Before Christmas" to all of the students. As he read, eight students ran around the ballroom impersonating reindeer. They were followed by Santa Claus, and his helper, The Elf.

As the night went on, students were chosen randomly to come up and choose a present. These presents included gift cards from Starbucks, Panera Bread, and McDonalds, but also some strange gifts like a dictionary, diapers and a singing chicken.

At the conclusion of the night, the students eagerly awaited to hear the crowning of the Winter Ball King and Queen.

The Queen Nominees this year were Alexia DiLorenzo, Hannah Lavergne, Nina Lautieri, Alessandra Pesare and Sarah Vasquez.

The King Nominees for this year were Lucas Anderson, Matthew Clements, Steven Finegan, Donavin Quinones and Jayden Testa.

This year's King and Queen were Matthew Clements and Alexia DiLorenzo!

The Student Council would like to thank all of the students, teachers, and administrators who came out to support and help make the night successful!

**Editor's Note:** Alexia DiLorenzo serves as Johnston High School Student Council President. The Johnston Sun Rise regularly publishes submissions from JHS students.



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**WINTER BALL ROYALTY:** Winter Ball King and Queen Alexia DiLorenzo and Matt Clements take to the dance floor. (Photo courtesy Lucas P. Anderson)

# Opinion

EDITORIAL

## GOP's Inspector General proposal has merit

There are few qualities we value more in the media world than that of transparency. As the famous slogan of the Washington Post has long declared: "Democracy dies in darkness."

It seems a pretty universally agreeable notion, but since the dawn of democracy itself there have always been those who benefit from a lack of transparency and relish a bounty of dark space to hide malfeasance or embarrassing mistakes in order to skirt responsibility and accountability for their actions.

We believe that transparency is an important check and balance on power regardless of which political party finds themselves in charge. And as unsettling as it can be for those who wield power to feel subjected to such scrutiny throughout the course of conducting their public duties, such a burden should be an expected and accepted one to carry for those wishing to conduct business on behalf of thousands of their fellow citizens, particularly when many of these positions come with enviable salaries and when many of these positions can have a profound impact on the daily lives of other people, whose taxes fund those salaries.

For these reasons, and more, we believe that 2024 should be the year that the General Assembly takes seriously the perennial proposal of the Rhode Island GOP to institute a wholly independent Office of the Inspector General.

This editorial is not meant to ambiguously accuse any one public official of having dirty laundry that needs airing, nor should it be seen as an indictment on the Rhode Island political system at large. We respect the difficult task that legislators and public administrators have in balancing many different constituent groups, opinions, and grievances throughout their careers. They are often tasked with choosing options that aggrieve the fewest number of people, rather than find those mythical solutions where everybody ends up smiling.

However, we do believe that there is a need for such an independent office to be created, and be adequately funded. We find it a suspect argument to claim that an estimated \$1.5 million expense is too great to provide residents with a greater belief in the political and bureaucratic system around them. We have found many more dollars for far less worthy endeavors in the past.

The existing checks and balances on our governmental systems have their roles, and perform their duties to the best of their abilities; but they are limited, perhaps by design. A wholly independent office would enable neutral investigations of quasi-public boards (many of which no longer have Rhode Island legislators as a part of their boards, cutting the public out of these groups almost entirely). An independent office would not be beholden to a tricky relationship between its organizational structure and holding that structure accountable for any wrongdoing potentially found.

While there is no one silver bullet to weed out waste and corruption in any government, we find there to be no logical reason not to add another useful check on a system that, as with any other system, can always be improved for the betterment of all.



*"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."*

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**  
January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968

LETTER

## In Honor of Martin Luther King Day

To the Editor,  
Martin Luther King Day is a national holiday to remember and honor Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his work for racial justice. He was an ordained minister, as was his father. Compared to the many who oppressed him, he was a towering figure intellectually and spiritually. His professed and lived Christian faith was the power source for his life's work and his legacy.

Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela's right-hand man in emancipation from apartheid in South Africa, was a Bishop in the Anglican church. Again, Bishop Desmond Tutu was a man of faith. As Abraham Lincoln is quoted, "Let us have faith that right makes might, and to that end let us dare to do our duty as we understand it."

It is spiritual warfare. The power source for these men was faith in a righteous God being on their side in what humanly looked like an impossible power struggle.

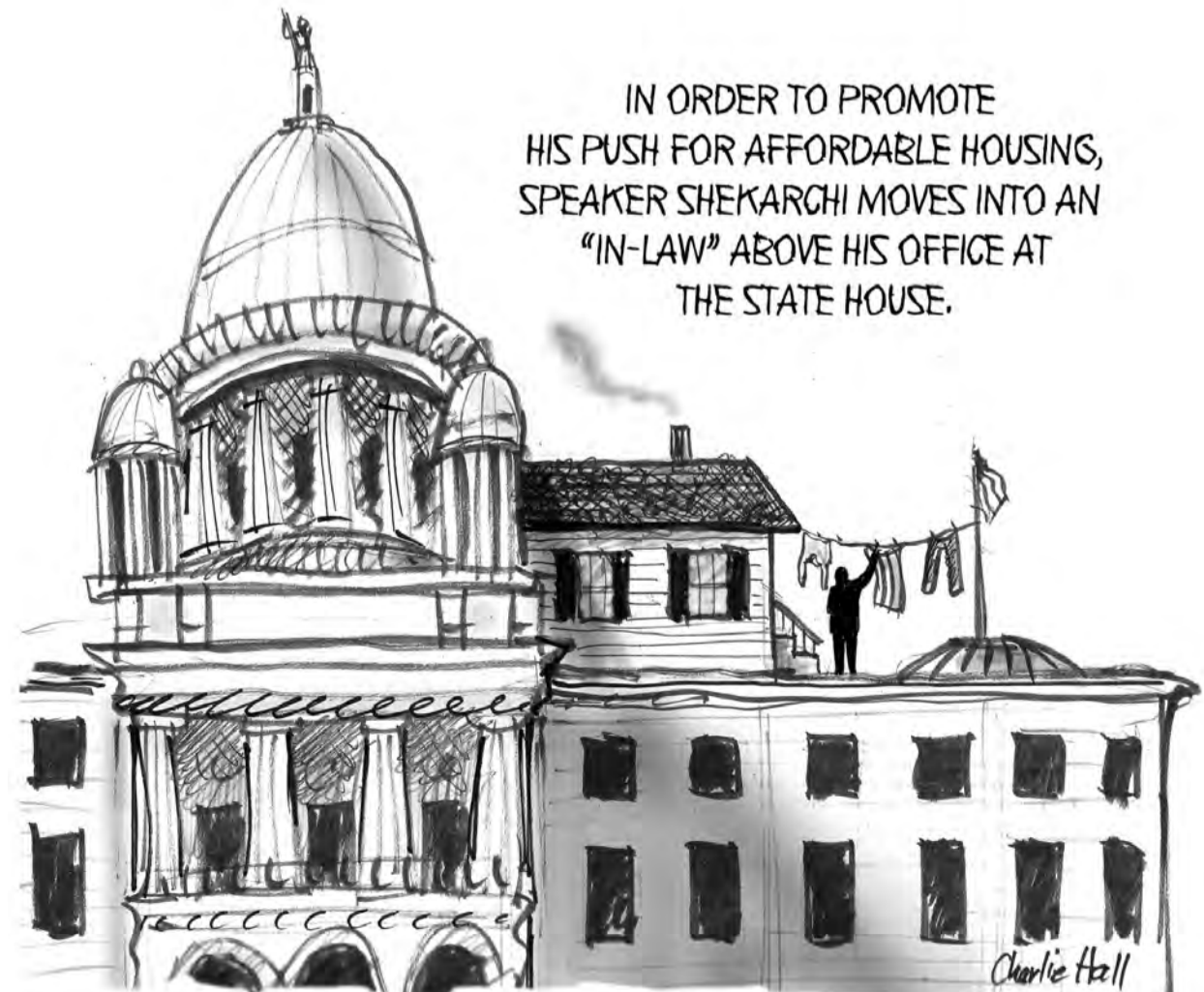
Can one truly say we honor and respect Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. if one denies the very existence of the

God he studied, preached about and depended on? Was Rev. King a fool to believe in God or a life-long faker? Was Bishop Tutu a fool to believe in God or a life-long faker? They studied and followed the teachings of Jesus Christ. They staked their very lives and their eternal souls on their faith.

It is easy to be disappointed in human institutions, like a church or civil government. On any given day, a fellow human can disappoint us, but human failings do not invalidate truth. A person's math error does not invalidate math's essential principles. Go to the source. These men of faith read the words of Jesus Christ and it inspired and empowered their life's work.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was trusting God to be on his side. "The battle belongs to the Lord." This was how he could look at the life of Gandhi and the writing of Henry David Thoreau and use nonviolence to seek change. It took faith in God.

Lorraine Potter-Cooper  
Warwick



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## JOHNSTON Sun Rise

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## HIGHER ED ACHIEVERS

Sun Rise Staff Reports

**SNHU**  
MANCHESTER, NH — It is with great pleasure that Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) congratulates the following Johnston students on being named to the Summer 2023 President's List. The summer terms ran from May to August.

Full-time undergraduate students who have earned a minimum grade-point average of 3.7 and above for the reporting term are named to the President's List. Full-time status is achieved by earning 12 credits over each 16-week term or paired 8-week terms grouped in fall, winter/spring, and summer.

Johnston students earning the Summer 2023 President's List distinction include: Michael Montella, Tara Pettiway, Sonya DaRosa, Christian Lang, Mia Ross, Paul Pathana, Erick Figueroa Pineda and Briena Bushong.

Last month, SNHU sent out congratulations notices to the following students for being named to the Fall 2023 Dean's List. The fall terms run from September to December.

Johnston students earning the Fall 2023 Dean's List distinction include: Christian Lang and Juliana Wright.

SNHU is a private, nonprofit institution with a 90-year history of educating traditional-aged students and working adults.

SNHU has also announced its Fall 2023 President's List.

Johnston students earning the Fall 2023 President's List distinction include: Tara Pettiway, Cyrus Cotto, Paul Pathana, Mia Ross, Alyssa Holland, Layla Jennings, Sonya DaRosa, Katelynn Volpigno and Erick Figueroa Pineda.

**Seton Hall University**

SOUTH ORANGE, NJ — Seton Hall University is pleased to announce the following Johnston students who qualified for the Spring 2023 Dean's list and to congratulate them for their outstanding academic achievements.

The following students from Johnston made the list: Olivia Gilbert and Angelique Pena.

One of the country's leading Catholic universities, Seton Hall University has been a catalyst for leadership - developing students in mind, heart and spirit - since 1856.

**ECSU**

WILLIMANTIC, CT — This past fall season, Johnston's Grace Muller competed on Eastern Connecticut State University's soccer team.

The women's roster was comprised of 27 players, including 16 returning letter winners.

Among the student-athletes was Muller, of Johnston, number 22, who played midfield for the women's team.

Muller is a graduate student who majors in Accounting.

The women's team kicked off its season at Mount Holyoke College on Sept. 1. To learn more about the program, visit <https://gowarriorathletics.com/sports/womens-soccer>.

Eastern Connecticut State University is the state of Connecticut's public liberal arts university, serving upwards of 4,100 students annually on its Willimantic campus.

**Emerson College**

BOSTON, MA — Emerson College student Angelina Parrillo, of Johnston, participated in Emerson Stage's production of "Bonnets: How Ladies of Good Breeding Are Induced to Murder," which ran from Nov. 8-11 at the Greene Theater in Boston, Massachusetts.

Written by Jen Silverman and directed by Annie G. Levy, this punk comedy production explores the consequences of societal expectations on women in the Victorian Era and their journey through breaking the rules.

Parrillo is majoring in Writing, Literature and Publishing and is a member of the Class of 2024.

Then, last month, Emerson Stage members, including Parrillo, performed "Bat Boy: The Musical" from Dec. 6-9 at the Semel Theater in Boston. The story and book is by Keythe Farley and Brian Flemming, and this production was directed by Ilana Ransom Toepfetz. It has been described as a blend of comedy, horror and drama, the musical follows the journey of half boy/half bat in the hills of West Virginia and his integration into human society.

Parrillo kicked off the Fall 2023 theater season participating in Emerson Stage's production of "Little Women," performed Sept. 27-30 at the Greene Theater in Boston.

A timeless classic by Louisa May Alcott, this adaption performed by Emersonians encapsulates the world of the March sisters, and their journey through sisterhood.

Then Parrillo joined the cast of "How We Got On," which was performed Oct. 12-14 at the Paramount Center in Boston. Written by Idris Goodwin and directed by Summer L. Williams, this adaption performed by Emersonians explores the life of suburban teens coming of age in 1980s, dreaming of fame and fortune, and their journey of finding themselves in the culture of Hip-Hop.

It's been a busy season for Parrillo. Emerson Stage and the Department of Performing Arts are where the next generation of actors, designers, stage managers, technicians, administrators, and educators work alongside distinguished faculty, professional staff, and visiting artists to bring skills learned in the classroom to vibrant life on stage.

HIGHER ED - PAGE 8

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE CORNER

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**CLUES ACROSS**

- Defensive nuclear weapon
- Moved back and forth
- One-time coach of the Cowboys
- Last letter
- Cause to become less intense
- Genus of tree bugs
- Body art
- Romance novelist
- Be filled with love for
- City
- Make vivid
- Horses
- Mauna \_\_\_, Hawaiian volcano
- Atomic #18
- Shortly
- A type of prejudice
- Whirls
- Six
- Old world, new
- \_\_\_ Hess, oil company
- Talk
- Not off
- Begets
- Cars need them
- Computing architecture (abbr.)
- Of |

**CLUES DOWN**

- Indigenous people of Mexico
- Dietary supplement
- Having a particular sheen or luster
- Views
- Academic Bill of Rights
- Automobile
- When you anticipate arriving
- Beef or chicken intestine
- Conspiracy
- Blood disorder
- Long-time NBAer Shawn
- Time zone

**CLUES ACROSS**

- US, Latin America, Canada belong to
- Upton Sinclair novel
- What a cow does
- Cavalry-sword
- Ancient Greek war galley
- Stars
- Rebukes
- Billion year periods
- Some are in a bottle
- Tears down
- Lethal dose
- Humorists
- Midwestern US state (abbr.)
- Frameworks
- Rocker Billy
- More thin
- Dog
- Habitual repetitions
- State of fuss
- Uneasy
- Chemical compounds
- More cognizant of reality
- A place to build
- Exclamation that denotes disgust
- Supplement with difficulty
- Very slick
- Hill or rocky peak

## LEGAL NOTICES

**CITATION**

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Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court

**PETITION TO FORECLOSE RIGHT OF REDEMPTION PM-2023-05471**

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, and CLARA SPINA, ANGELINA ZOGLIO, ELAINE MATARESE, GUY V. PIROLI, JEAN A. SPINA AND THEIR UNKNOWN HEIRS AND ASSIGNS; THE RI DIVISION OF TAXATION, THE TOWN OF JOHNSTON and all other persons unknown or unascertained claiming or who may claim any right, title, estate, lien or interest in the real estate involved which is or might become adverse to the Petitioner's right, title or interest therein as alleged, or which does or may constitute any cloud upon Petitioner's title as set forth in Petition.

Whereas, a petition has been presented to said Court by AMERICAN SUSTAINABLE PROPERTIES, LLC, of 140 RESERVOIR AVE, PROVIDENCE, RI and said State, to foreclose all rights of redemption from the tax lien proceedings described in said petition in and concerning a

certain parcel of land situated in the Town of Johnston and in said State, bounded and described in said petition as follows:

THOSE TWO (2) CERTAIN LOTS OF LAND WITH ALL BUILDINGS OR IMPROVEMENTS THEREON, SITUATED ON THE WESTERLY SIDE EOF COOLIDGE STREET AND ON BOTH SIDES OF DAVIS STREET, IN THE TOWN OF JOHNSTON AND STATE OF RHODE ISLAND, LAID OUT AND DELINEATED AS LOT NOS. 21 (TWENTY-ONE), AND 22 (TWENTY-TWO) UPON THAT PLAT ENTITLED "DAVIS PLAT JOHNSTON, RHODE ISLAND BY J. A LATHAM & SON NOVEMBER 1921" AND RECORD IN THE RECORDED IN THE RECORDS OF LAND EVIDENCE, IN SAID JOHNSTON, RHODE ISLAND, ON PLAT CARD 98.

Further identified as Assessor's Plat 1, Lot 22 & 23.

If you desire to make any objection or defense to said petition you or your attorney must file a written appearance and answer, under oath, setting forth clearly and specifically your objections or defense to each part of said petition, in the office of

the Superior Court in Providence on or before the 8th day of February, 2024 next, that you may then and there show cause, if any, why the prayer of the petition should not be granted.

Unless your appearance is filed by or for you, your default will be recorded, the said petition will be taken as confessed and you will be forever barred from contesting said petition or any decree entered thereon. And in addition to the usual service of this notice as required by law, it is ordered that the foregoing citation be published forthwith once each week for three successive weeks in the JOHNSTON SUN RISE, a newspaper published in said TOWN OF JOHNSTON to wit: January 4th, January 11th, January 18th, 2024

WITNESS the SEAL of our SUPERIOR COURT, at Providence this 27th day of December, 2023.

/s/ Susan M Diggins, CLERK

DOUGLAS SMITH  
140 Reservoir Avenue  
Providence, RI 02907

1/4, 1/11, 1/18/24



**it's cool to be kind**

cherry hill manor nursing & rehabilitation center



# ■ Mayor Pay

(Continued from page 1)

"The Charter Review Commission needs to make that determination on their own," Johnston Mayor Joseph M. Polisena Jr. responded to questions via email earlier this week. "What I do when negotiating with unions for collective bargaining is I use comps in other similar municipalities as a determination for pay. As far as a numerical percentage increase, when the salary hasn't been increased in over 20 years, any comparable increase percentage is going to be high."

## Keeping Up With The Jones'

Polisena provided a study from the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, "a non-partisan advocacy and membership organization representing all 39 municipalities across" the state.

According to their database, mayors of neighboring cities and towns make more than Polisena's \$75,000 annual salary, but less than the \$125,000 proposed by JCRC Vice-Chairman Fred Iafra.

JCRC member Joseph Andriole asked the committee to consider a much larger raise, proposing raising the next mayor's salary up to \$130,000 to \$150,000. Andriole served as a former battalion chief for the Johnston Fire Department, ex- IAFF Local 1950 union president, and he's the current president and business agent for the Rhode Island State Association of Fire Fighters.

Johnston's population hovers around 30,000 residents (29,568, according to the 2020 U.S. Census). More than 82,000 people reside in the nearby cities of Warwick and Cranston, nearly triple Johnston's population. The mayors of Warwick and Cranston each earn a \$100,000 annual salary.

The median household income for a family in Johnston, Warwick and Cranston all hover around \$80,000 (just \$5,000 less than Polisena's current salary).

The League of Cities and Towns also lists mayoral pay in other Ocean State cities and towns: Central Falls, 82,335; East Providence, \$90,000; Woonsocket, \$90,050; Cumberland, \$100,000; North Providence, \$105,000; and Pawtucket, \$105,912. And according to Providence Mayor Brett Smiley's office, he's currently earning \$157,207.

## Town Council Members Underpaid?

The JCRC also considered a raise for Town Council members. According to JCRC Chairman Richard DelFino Jr., council members currently earn a \$6,450 annual salary (the president earns \$6,900 for presiding over the council).

While the JCRC discussed pay raises for the mayor and town council members, they heard only proposals, and DelFino cautioned members against throwing out random pay raise numbers.

"No committee member should throw out a number unless it's data-driven," DelFino argued Tuesday morning. "It's got to be very well defensible. We're not going to just throw a number out. I think it has to be very well documented so that we can support it."

Andriole, however, proposed increasing town council member stipends to \$10,000 per year.

Three of five town council members — Linda Folcarelli, Lauren Garzone and Robert Civetti — attended last week's JCRC meeting.

Two of them, Folcarelli and Garzone, argued they should get paid more for their duties, which often involve a deluge of constituent requests at all hours of the day, every day of the week.

Civetti said he was satisfied with his current pay and didn't want or need a raise from taxpayers.

## Longer Terms & A Raise

"I do like the idea for this, however you decide," said Folcarelli, who represents Johnston's District 1. "Staggered

or term limit, but four years would be much better. We just get there, we're just learning our job, we're just beginning to know all the constituents, and then you got to run for office. Doing both is like crazy. You got to do it, but you have no time, you have no life, which I don't have any life at this point, but ... honestly, I get calls, a lot of calls, with different problems."

Folcarelli made an impassioned plea to the JCRC, filling them in on the life of a town council member (or lack thereof).

"(I'm) on the phone sometimes with someone for an hour and a half," she told the JCRC. "And I'm not kidding you. They love to talk to me. The elderly love me. They talk to me for hours. They're lonely. And I'm not going to tell them 'no.' I'm going to sit there and listen to every problem. Hear about their kids, and their grandkids, and every other thing they want to talk about. Then I have to go check the problem. I have to get in my car. I go to wherever they complained about. I sit there; I take pictures. After I take the pictures, I load them into an email. I send them to DPW, to the enforcement. And I'm doing this all the time. So I spend a lot of time, tear on my car, a lot of my personal time. I've been to meetings with constituents Saturdays, Sundays, holidays; you name it, I'm there. It's like, I really don't have a life."

She was asked to estimate how much a bi-annual re-election campaign costs.

"Oh my God, the expense I mean ... I keep hitting up all my friends and family every two years for money for fundraisers," Folcarelli said. "After a while, they're going to get sick of giving me money. Do you know how much money I spend? ... It's money out of my pocket. Not campaign funds. I have to save those campaign funds for campaigning. So I spend a lot of money in-kind ... I'm at Simmons Village. I play bingo with them ... I never win."

She eventually estimated she spent around \$6,000-7,000 on past re-election campaigns.

"She's recommending that we come up with a proposal that gives her her life back," DelFino joked.

The room laughed with Folcarelli. "I mean I'm out days, nights, weekends, holidays, you name it, I'm out there," Folcarelli boomed, loudly addressing the small room. "They call me, I run. And they're like, 'Oh my God, you came.' It's a lot of time."

According to the unapproved meeting minutes, "a discussion ensued regarding increasing the stipend of the Town Council members," but the issue "will be revisited after receiving a comparison of other cities and towns."

Garzone, who represents District 2, also voiced her support for a raise in her town council stipend (the raises and term limits wouldn't take affect until the beginning of each office's next term).

"As far as the stipend; definitely an increase, as Linda said," Garzone told the JCRC. "Sometimes you can be out three times on a Sunday visiting with constituents. You want to, if it's in your heart of hearts, and I like one-on-one. I want to see the problem. I can listen over the phone, but I need to be there. I need to look in their eyes, to make sure, number one, (they're) telling me the truth. And I want to see what the problem is. And I'm making a phone call or sending an email to the department head ASAP. This is a 24/7 job. I work full-time for the city of Providence."

Garzone said she sometimes takes constituent calls while she's working at her full-time job.

"I think eight years is enough," Garzone said. "I am very close with council members in the city of Providence and they like having term limits as well. Give somebody else a chance."

Garzone also mentioned her Newport beach club membership to cap her argument for a raise.

"I belong to a beach club down in Newport," she told the JCRC. "I've met some of the council people there — (they) don't operate like we do. It's totally different. City of Providence, I love what they do. The council people are in it for the people."

## Town Council Term Limits?

In addition to raising the annual stipend for Town Council members, the JCRC also entertained a proposal to increase Town Council terms from two years to four years (the commission also discussed possible term limits and/or staggered council district terms).

Garzone stood to speak in favor of longer terms and term limits.

"I am in favor of a four-year term," Garzone argued. "And I am in favor of a term limit. So the last time I campaigned, I did broach the subject of a four-year term with the majority of my constituents. And they are in favor of a four-year term. I said, whether it's me or someone else. They would feel more comfortable with a four-year term. That's in my district."

DelFino asked Garzone why her constituents were in favor of term limits.

"Why would they care?" He asked, playing devil's advocate. "Why would they say that they care, unless they like the person, and want to keep you there ... Why would they care? If someone came to my door and asked me if I was in favor, I would say 'no.' Because I can hold you accountable to two years. Why would I wait for four years? I was just curious how that came to be."

"Some of the constituents, honestly, were new to District 2," Garzone replied. "And they said they want consistency in a person. So, they want to deal with that same person, for a while."

Garzone's answer seemed to contradict her earlier argument for term limits.

Civetti took the floor next. He said he's in favor of four-year terms, but not staggering the terms.

"I prefer to see it go where everybody's up," Civetti explained. "If you have a total turnover, you have a total turnover. Let the voters vote. I don't think there's a reason ... to worry about continuity. I think that if you have some members on the council that are doing their job, they'll remain there ... The public should have the right, that if they feel the entire council should be replaced, replace them."

Civetti also rejected the term limit proposal. "I'm not in favor of term limits," Civetti argued. "Again, if somebody's doing a good job, you keep them there. If the taxpayers want them out, they'll remove them."

And he said he didn't want a raise. "As for the compensation, I think the current compensation's more than adequate," Civetti told the JCRC. "I don't think there's a need to change that ... you're not doing it for the money. You should be doing it for the public; for the difference you can make in your community. It's not about the money. I think the compensation's fine where it's at."

## Mayor Fung Agreed (in 2019)

In 2019, the Cranston City Council proposed increasing the mayor's base annual salary from \$80,725 to \$125,000, a year with guaranteed 2.5 percent annual increases.

At the time, Fung was finishing his final term as mayor (pushed out by term limits).

In August 2019, Fung told the Providence Journal that the proposed "56% increase to \$125,000 plus an annual 2.5% increase each year for the next Mayor" was "outrageous."

Fung refused to sign-on to such a significant pay increase.

"If this ordinance passes the council as is and ultimately transmitted to me, I will veto it," Fung told the Providence Journal in 2019. "I believe that people should seek election to any office based upon a belief in public service, not just a salary."

Ultimately, in September 2019, Cranston City Council bypassed Fung and increased the future mayor's salary to \$105,000. Current Cranston Mayor Ken Hopkins, who was a City Councilor at the time, joined the majority in voting to approve the mayoral pay raise (he was elected the next mayor).

On Tuesday morning, Fung replied to emailed requests for comment on his

2019 objections to the very similar scenario as the discussion launched last week in Johnston. He emphasized that he was responding to a political question, and not a question of law (Fung is not only the attorney for the JCRC, but also the co-spokesman).

"I believe that the compensation for the mayor and council should be reviewed and raised," Fung wrote, emphasizing that he's speaking for himself, and not the commission. "When we are facing huge inflationary costs in our country that hits everyone in their wallets and pockets, it is important to raise the pay significantly to keep up and ensure we have quality candidates for office who are not deterred from running because of the salary."

Polisena also addressed Fung's past statements on mayoral pay raises.

"I believe the circumstances of that situation was that an individual on the council had already declared for mayor in their upcoming election, which had made it very political," Polisena wrote via email Tuesday morning. "Dissimilar to this, this isn't about me or any one individual, it's about the office of mayor and every person who will be in the position in the future in 2026, 2030, 2034, 2038, 2042, etc."

Despite the lowest mayoral salary in the Ocean State, Polisena still ran (successfully) to succeed his father last year.

"If this change is implemented, it won't take effect until 2026," Polisena explained. "I am only eligible to run for one more term, which is from 2026-2030, then I'm done. I think the current salary suppresses good people from running and town is going to miss out on good candidates who won't give up their current job to run if the salary remains at \$75,000."

## Final Raise Proposal TBD

Both Polisena and the JCRC have yet to settle on a final number to take to the voters.

"As far as the specific amount, that's not for me to say, it's for the Charter Review Commission ... and ultimately the voters," Polisena argues. "I think any number that's given needs to be justified and compared to other communities similar to ours. Also, I would refer to the changes going on in Pawtucket as well, although that's a bit different because I don't believe they have term limits."

Last week, Pawtucket City Council considered an ordinance to increase their own pay, and the mayor's (from an \$80,000 base pay to \$150,000; though, after an inflation adjustment, the city's current mayor currently makes more than \$105,000).

"Other communities have raised salaries to meet up with the cost of inflation or are discussing increasing salaries significantly for their mayors and councils," Fung wrote Tuesday. "For instance, Pawtucket is currently considering raising the mayor's salary to \$150,000 and council salaries to \$15,000 for the council president and \$13,000 for its council members."

Polisena expects the JCRC will carefully consider executive pay in other, similar Ocean State municipalities.

"The League of Cities and Towns posts the annual salaries of municipal leaders," Polisena wrote earlier this week. "While it shows Johnston is the lowest in the entire state, I would use that list to make a determination as to what the proper number should be. I think the salary now suppresses a lot of good candidates from running, and that shouldn't be the case."

Andriole made a motion directing Fung "create a comparison of Cities and Towns similar to Johnston with filtering for budget, median income and population." The motion passed unanimously.

After the JCRC holds its final meetings, the group will decide which proposed Town Charter amendments they should take Johnston's voters.

The commission will next meet at 6:30 p.m., Jan. 11, at the Johnston Senior Center. Johnston Town Charter Articles V, VI & VII (Town Clerk, Town Solicitor and Probate Judge, respectively) will top the agenda.

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**ANIMAL TALK**  
 By Karen Kalunian  
 Local ♥ Adoptable ♥ Loveable



**Jordan**

Photo credit: Karen Kalunian

Once in a lifetime, that special dog comes along and steals your heart!! Jordan is waiting to steal your heart! Jordan's looks are beyond beautiful but he's beautiful on the inside too! He likes other dogs, he loves people, he's smart, what more can we say! He is just under a year old with a gorgeous cream-colored coat and super model legs! His eyes are filled with love he looks right into your heart! If you've been looking to adopt you should call the rescue now because he is going to get adopted fast! Call 401-320-8802 or visit their website for more info  
 www.anchorpawsrescue.org  
 Whoever adopts Jordan is going to be very lucky!

If you are thinking of adopting or know of an animal in need, please contact Karen directly at **animaltalk1920@gmail.com**



**COMING SOON:** On Jan. 17, Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers will open at 1386 Atwood Ave. (Sun Rise photo by Rory Schuler)

# Raising Canes sets opening date

By RORY SCHULER

A Raising Cane's representative attended Monday's Johnston Town Council meeting, carrying a chicken gift basket topped with a bright red bow.

The restaurant chain missed their spot on the agenda last month, but made it just in time to secure a business license for their official grand opening next week, Jan. 17.

The day before, the chicken finger specialists plan to hold a "Cainiac Celebration," with VIPs from the community.

"We will be opening on Jan. 17," said Hannah Henderson, Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers Senior Manager, Public Relations, Fry Cook & Cashier.

Earlier this week, the restaurant lobby was packed,

likely with employees and trainers, working hard to prepare for launch. Cane's boasts more than \$20 per hour starting pay.

Last year, Henderson promised a big surprise for customers on opening day: "I can tell you we will be giving away 'Free Cane's for a Year' to 20 lucky customers! That usually draws a crowd!"

The restaurant at 1386 Atwood Ave. will occupy a key spot in the shopping plaza along Atwood Avenue, sharing the complex with Burlington, Pet Smart and Aldi.

The Cane's representative, Philip Yost, stood before Town Council and accepted their unanimous approval of the finger joint's business license. But for some reason, he left with the meeting room after the vote, with the gift basket under still his arm, ungifted.

## Higher Ed

(Continued from page 6)

### Husson University

BANGOR, ME — Congratulations to Justin Salvatore of Johnston, who has been named to Husson University's Dean's List for the Fall 2023 semester of the 2023-2024 academic year.

Salvatore is studying toward a degree in Exercise Science with a Doctor of Physical Therapy at Husson.

Full-time students who earn President's List, Dean's List and Honors List recognition must be enrolled as an undergraduate, carry a full-time load of 12 credit hours over the course of 21 weeks, complete all attempted courses in the time allotted, and achieve a designated semester grade-point average. Credits from pass/fail classes do not qualify toward meeting the minimum credit hour requirement.

For 125 years, Husson University has prepared future leaders to handle the challenges of tomorrow through innovative undergraduate and graduate degrees.

### St. Mary Academy

EAST PROVIDENCE: St. Mary Academy-Bay View principal Dr. Marcela Rossi is proud to announce 200 students made the honor roll for the Fall semester: "Congratulations on your achievements! You are a source of pride for your families and teachers."

This academic distinction recognizes the dedication of students in grades 6 through 12 who demonstrate exceptional performance in their studies. Students who achieve As and Bs for the quarter grading period are recognized with "Honors."

Students from Johnston who earned Honors include: Elsa-Nicole Mendez, grade 12; Pamela Mendez, grade 11; and Sophie Roda, grade 10.

### Hofstra University

HEMPSTEAD, NY — Mackenzie Hanna, of Johnston, excelled during the Fall 2023 semester at Hofstra University, achieving a GPA of at least 3.5 to earn a spot on the Dean's List. Hanna's major is Music.

Hofstra University is a dynamic community of nearly 11,000 students dedicated to civic engagement, academic excellence and becoming leaders in their communities and their careers.



■ **Landfill**

(Continued from page 1)

quasi-public state agency contained both non-disclosure and non-compete clauses.

Beacon Communications (publisher of the Johnston Sun Rise, Warwick Beacon and Cranston Herald) submitted a public records request for "documentation linked to any payments, receipts, accounts payable, accounts receivable, contracts, projects or any other interaction between J.R. Vinagro Corporation and RIRRC during the tenure of (Reposa)."

"In response, Resource Recovery has performed the first hour of the search and retrieval process and identified that potentially responsive documents include thousands of items likely made up of email messages, scale tickets, invoices, checks, credit card transactions, bank statements, bid submittals (sic), staff memorandums, contracts, lease agreements, easements, deeds, meeting agendas, minutes, etc.," Public Records Officer Jared Rhodes wrote in response to our request. "Many of these thousands of documents require manual retrieval. While it is difficult to estimate the time it would take to search and retrieve such an expansive request for documents, we are providing an initial conservative estimate of sixty (60) hours."

Last month, Rhodes, who serves as Director of Policy and Programs at RIRRC, revealed his annual salary, \$151,205.60, following a public records request by Beacon Communications (one of 13 requests filed with RIRRC since Reposa's resignation).

Attorneys for RIRRC have insisted all inquiries follow official public records request procedure.

So far, records requests have revealed that Reposa was earning a \$253,239.48 annual salary, plus a \$25,000 annual performance bonus, before he quit and took the helm at Vinagro, a private company.

Rhodes estimated "the cost for search and retrieval efforts for these documents" at \$15 per hour, "with the initial hour already expended being free."

"Accordingly, please provide prepayment of \$900.00 should you wish to continue with retrieval of these documents," Rhodes wrote. "Pre-payment should be by check made payable to the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation and should be mailed to my attention at the address provided below."

Even if Beacon Communications foots the bill for document retrieval, Rhodes said there's no guarantee the search will yield sharable results.

"Pre-payment is required prior to RIRRC engaging in further search and retrieval," Rhodes wrote. "However, pre-payment does not guarantee that the records you have requested constitute public records (in whole or in

part, i.e., redacted), but only authorizes RIRRC to conduct its search and retrieval to determine which exact responsive records exist and if so, whether they are public records."

According to Rhodes, the \$900 may not cover the entire tab.

"Should actual search and retrieval fees exceed prepayment, RIRRC will seek your authorization as well as additional fees prior to continuing," Rhodes wrote. "Should your pre-payment exceed actual search and retrieval costs you will, of course, be reimbursed."

Requesting public records can be more of an art than a science. Perhaps the scope of the request was too broad. Rhodes suggested possibly paring it down.

"If you would prefer to narrow your search to a more defined type of documents, we will be happy to re-evaluate the estimate and provide you with an update," Rhodes replied.

On Tuesday, Beacon Communications sent a thirteenth public records request to RIRRC, this time asking for documentation linked to "any payments from J.R. Vinagro Corporation to RIRRC" during Reposa's tenure (although we have not withdrawn our initial public records request).

RIRRC also said they needed more time to complete the request (once pre-payment is received).

"Given the voluminous nature of this request and the difficulty of manual retrieval of certain records, the time for RIRRC to respond to this request is extended an additional twenty (20) business days ... Notwithstanding this extension, the time-period for RIRRC to respond to your request is also tolled as of the date of this letter pending pre-payment and authorization to proceed," Rhodes replied. "Of course, if you would prefer to narrow the scope of your request we can review whether a narrower scope of documents requested would take less time to search and retrieve."

Last month, RIRRC refused several public records requests from Beacon Communications, providing legal explanations, including personnel privacy and attorney client privilege. Most notably, they refused to provide documentation linked to alleged misconduct and a subsequent investigation, which was discussed during an executive session at the last RIRRC Board of Commissioners meeting.

Beacon Communications took RIRRC's hefty demand for pre-payment and records request rejections to the Rhode Island Attorney General's Open Government Unit and filed an official complaint.

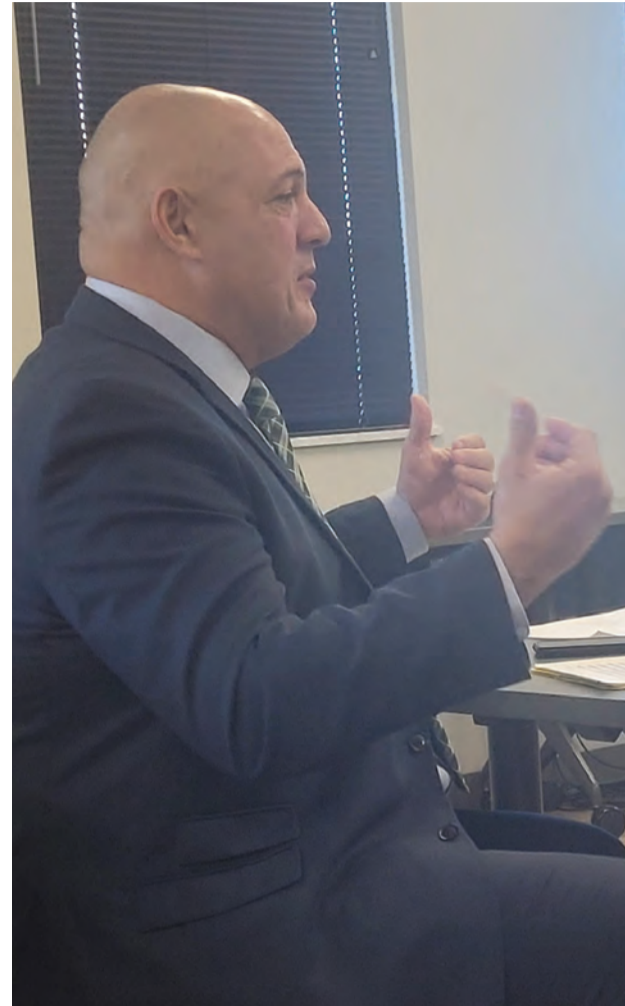
Colleen Cole, administrative assistant in the AG's Civil Division, notified RIRRC's attorney's of the complaint Wednesday morning. Outside counsel for RIRRC, attorney Joseph J. Rodio Jr., confirmed receipt minutes later.

Part of the notification included a summation of Bea-

con Communication's complaint, in a letter drafted by Special Assistant Attorney General Adam D. Roach.

"Enclosed please find an Access to Public Records Act ('APRA') complaint filed against ... RIRRC," Roach wrote to RIRRC's attorneys. "(On Jan. 9) the Complainant alleges that the RIRRC violated the APRA by 1) assessing prepayment in response to his Jan. 2, 2024 request; and 2) withholding records in response to certain requests he submitted between Dec. 8-11, 2023."

RIRRC has 10 days to respond. Beacon Communications then has five days to offer a rebuttal. Then the AG's office will eventually make a determination whether the public has the right to see these documents.



**LAST DAY:** To start his last day on the job, Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation (RIRRC) Executive Director Joseph Reposa awaited the start of a pair of public meetings on Dec. 8. (Sun Rise photos by Rory Schuler)



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# LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

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By JENNIFER COATES

For working parents everywhere, there is no more important decision to be made than to whom they will be entrusting their child's care and supervision while they are apart from them. Pressing questions such as "Will my child be safe? Will my child get the attention and individual care he/she needs? Will my child get the developmentally appropriate learning opportunities he/she needs? Will my child be disciplined with love? Will my child be happy?" must all be satisfactorily answered when parents make this decision.

Dreamland Learning Center in Johnston will answer these questions for you and bring you the peace of mind you need as you search for the best childcare option for your child. This busy center is a bright, welcoming, and progressive center located in the heart of Johnston.

Dreamland Learning Center is a family-owned and operated learning center whose guiding philosophy is stated in their website: "We aim to provide quality care that will inspire each child to explore and discover the infinite possibilities available

to them through the power of learning. Our environment was created to enhance a child's natural curiosity and desire to learn. At our center, opportunities are provided to help children prepare to make the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical adjustments needed in life. We believe children learn best from their own experiences."

Their mission statement also clearly outlines their objectives: "We aim to provide safe, affordable, high-quality childcare for all families. In doing so, we support them in their efforts to reach their goals. Dreamland provides a developmentally appropriate curriculum for children ages 6 weeks to twelve years. The Dreamland staff is committed to the families we serve, providing support and encouragement to promote children's desire to be life-long learners."

As parents visit the center, they will find attentive caregivers tending to a sunny room of infants while elsewhere, toddlers are toddling, preschoolers are exploring, and rooms await the before & after-school crowd of students which arrives here every day. Each day at this sparkling clean, regularly sanitized and whimsically decorated center is filled with activity, learning, discovering and yes, even dreaming!

The curriculum and staff-to-child ratio requirements here meet the strict guidelines of the RI Early Learning & Development Standards while all staff are licensed; many are also CPR certified. The staff work as a team with one goal in mind, to enrich the lives of the children over whom they have been given this very special stewardship. The center is also highly "Bright Star" rated.

If you are looking for safe, loving and dependable childcare for your child, come take a tour of this happy learning center.

The Dreamland Learning Center is located at 1253 Hartford Avenue. For more information, call them today at 401-280-1400 or visit their website at [www.dreamlandlearningcenter.com](http://www.dreamlandlearningcenter.com). Rhode Island state subsidies are accepted!



**SPECIAL SMILE:** The late Rachel E. Carson always had a super smile and is shown here during a JHS concert during which she played bass clarinet in band. (Courtesy photo)

## Wear a crazy hat to remember Rachel Carson

By PETE FONTAINE

One of the most important days of Johnston High School's calendar year will be held tomorrow — Jan. 12 — on Cherry Hill.

It's a day for remembrance, and to raise money, for the prestigious Rachel E. Carson Memorial Scholarship named in honor of the late and talented JHS student who passed away on Jan. 14, 2018.

"Rachel was a senior when she unexpectedly passed in 2018," said Ron Lamououreux, chairman of JHS' national award-winning music department. "She was a sweet kid that played bass clarinet in the band, wrote skits for and acted in our Friday Night Lights shows. And ... she was an exceptional student who her parents named after the famed ecologist Rachel E. Carson."

So tomorrow, the Music Department will hold Crazy Hat Day to remember Carson and raise money for the scholarship fund.

For only a \$2 donation, students will be allowed to wear their hats during the entire school day and receive a Crazy Hat Day button.

"Over the years since Rachel passed, we've had hundreds of kids from the music department and the entire school donate and many donate well over \$2," Lamououreux offered. "It's really nice to see the kids from all different peer groups contributing to a great cause."

Moreover, anyone who donates will be entered into the Music Department's yearly raffles and in two categories, one for students and the other for JHS faculty and staff that have long supported the Rachel E. Carson scholarship program."

Lamououreux announced that in the spring, two JHS students will receive a \$500 Rachel E. Carson Scholarship. He said applications are available in the JHS guidance office and all seniors — not just those in the music programs — are eligible for the awards.

So tomorrow, JHS will remember Rachel E. Carson, an exceptional student-musician that many people once vowed to remember her with a scholarship fund hat is coordinated by the Johnston School Music Association (JSMA) that continues to raise money each year to remember an incredibly kind, funny and generous person.

## Help Troop 20 Fill the Bus!

On Saturday, Jan. 20 from 8-10 a.m., the scouts from Troop 20 Johnston will be collecting old clothing, bedding, pillows, jackets, anything soft, and books — all in good and usable shape.

"We are hoping that the community will take the opportunity to clean and declutter your space and drop these belongings off to us in the parking lot of the Johnston Courthouse located at 1600 Atwood Ave.," said Susan DeAthos, leader of Troop 20 Johnston. "In addition, you will be helping the scouts raise funds to send them on an educational adventure to Sea Base Camp in Florida."

According to DeAthos is Sea-Base, "a high adventure camp that helps scouts learn to survive in the wilderness."

"They will learn to snorkel, fish, and use non-motorized water craft while living off the land and sea for a week long adventure," she said. "They will practice leadership skills and team work while sailing a boat together for 2 days. They will also participate in a service project to protect the reefs. We look forward to seeing our community on Saturday from 8-10 at the Johnston Municipal Court House."

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# ■ Flooding

(Continued from page 1)

Around 9 a.m., Polisena responded to emailed requests for updates on the town's most recent damage assessment. According to the mayor, Atwood Avenue flooded from Stop & Shop to Bar Lino restaurant, where the water was approximately three feet deep.

All of Memorial Boulevard, the access road to Johnston War Memorial Park was under water. The intersection of Atwood and Simonsville avenues was closed to traffic.

"We had to evacuate the residents of the Park St. apartments (Park Plaza Apartments on Park Street) and will put them up temporarily in Rainone Gym," Polisena said Wednesday morning. "There's also large-scale residential flooding throughout Johnston."

Johnston Public Schools delayed the start of classes by two hours on Wednesday.

Johnston Police issued an alert to town residents: "Please be vigilant during this morning's commute and watch for flooded roads, debris, or downed power lines."

The town has been forced to mop up after multiple major flood events over the past year. Following the September tornado and subsequent flooding, residents have barely dried out from the pre-Christmas storm on Dec. 18.

Earlier this week, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced a small dose of good news for those residents whose property was damaged during the "severe storms, flooding and tornadoes, Sept. 10-13, 2023." FEMA announced federal disaster assistance will be made available to the state.

Polisena said it's good news, but may not actually cover the town's tornado damage.

"This is great news for Johnston," Polisena wrote via email Tuesday morning. "This is only for the Sept. 10-11 flooding event, not for the summer tornado or the ... Dec. 18 flooding disaster."

The federal help, however, may aid some Johnston homeowners.

"Assistance includes grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-interest loans to cover uninsured property loss and other programs to help both residents and businesses (affected) by the disaster," Polisena wrote. "Individuals and business owners who sustained losses can begin applying for assistance by registering online at [www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov) or by calling 1-800-621-3362."

The mayor also announced a cooperative effort with the federal government.

"Additionally, FEMA is looking to set up Disaster Recovery Centers in Providence County, where residents can meet in person with FEMA representatives," Polisena wrote Tuesday. "As soon as we find out further details on these centers, we will inform the public."

A FEMA press release announced, "President Joseph R. Biden Jr. Approves Major Disaster Declaration for Rhode Island."

"The President's action makes federal funding available to affected individuals in Providence County," according to the press release. "Assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-interest loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster."

FEMA named Robert V. Fogel as the Federal Coordinating Officer for federal recovery operations in the Ocean State's affected areas.

## ATWOOD AGAIN:

According to Johnston Police Chief and Emergency Management Director Mark A. Vieira, Atwood Avenue, from 1463 Atwood Ave. (area of Stop & Shop Plaza) to the area of the Route 6 overpass (the off-ramps from Route 6 to Atwood Avenue are also closed) was closed to traffic after flooding early Wednesday, Jan. 10. (Photo courtesy Police Chief Mark A. Vieira)



## UNDER WATER:

Johnston War Memorial Park was under water Wednesday morning. Memorial Boulevard was closed to traffic and impassable. (Photo courtesy Mayor Joseph M. Polisena Jr.)



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## An Extra in the Movie Gettysburg



**By Joel Bohy**  
*Historic Arms & Militaria*  
 Bruneau & Co. Auctioneers  
 Cranston, RI

Shaara was in the works. In order to film something of this scale with a large number of soldiers, the producers reached out to the reenacting community. I, with a few other friends, sent in pictures of ourselves in both Union and Confederate uniforms and we were approved to participate. We decided with our work schedules we could only film for two weeks, and we chose the time (they would be filming the Pickett's Charge scenes).

So, in the summer of 1992, I loaded up my car and headed to Gettysburg. The set was just off the battlefield (although the actual charge was going to be filmed on the battlefield). We pitched our half tents with rows of others and prepared for the next two weeks. It was important to us and the producers that we were as historically accurate as possible and knew the days of marching and charging ahead would be grueling work!

We were up before dawn every morning and would form up where they were filming and do what we were told to do (similar to actual Civil War military life). I remember it being hot as hell, and many people dropped from heat exhaustion

(also similar to actual Civil War military life). There was a line of ambulances waiting on the sidelines to take care of those who fell (definitely not similar to actual Civil War military life). A director would yell "cut" and the medics would take the person away; then we'd go right back to marching and charging and filming again.

At the end of the day, we would head back to our massive tent camp, have dinner, and inevitably drink way too much (which didn't help with hydration). One night while I was out for the count from exhaustion and imbibing in drink, I woke up to someone dragging me from my tent by my feet. The entire row of tents we were in was on fire, and luckily, they were there to pull me out! I don't know who it was, but I woke up in the morning extremely hungover, lying in a street with smoldering tents behind me.

There are many other stories I could tell, but not enough space to share them all here. Suffice it to say, it was an experience I won't ever forget, and I met some amazing people there from all over the country, some I am still friends with today. If you've never seen it, I encourage you to watch Gettysburg. It's a great movie, and no, I'm not just saying that because I was in it!

I was digging through boxes the other day looking for some things I hadn't seen in years. As I peeled off the old, cracked tape and looked inside one of the boxes, I noticed it contained photos from the past. Interested to see what they were, I pulled them out. On top there was an old album, and in it were all the photographs taken while I was an extra in the movie Gettysburg. I had forgotten I even saved any of this stuff and settled in to reminisce. It's hard to believe the 30th anniversary of the movie first coming to theatres was last October!

Back in 1991, I remember hearing the rumors that an epic series based upon the novel The Killer Angels by Michael



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# RhodyMoney

## Should home equity loans be used to pay off credit card debt?

**C**redit card debt could be compromising the financial security and well-being of millions of individuals. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Americans' total credit card balance in the second quarter of 2023 was more than \$1 trillion, and LendingTree reports that the average credit card balances among U.S. cardholders in December 2022 was \$7,279. Average balances are lower but still a concern in Canada, where data from TransUnion indicates the average cardholder had an outstanding balance of \$3,909 as of the first quarter of 2023.

Effective credit utilization is a vital component of long-term financial health. The average credit card balances in both the U.S. and Canada suggest many consumers are putting their financial futures in jeopardy by relying too heavily on credit to fund their lifestyles. The good news is consumers tend to have a sense of self-awareness regarding their credit usage, as a recent NerdWallet survey of more than 2,000 adult consumers found that 83 percent of respondents acknowledged they overspend. Recognition of an over-reliance on credit could be a solid first step toward eradicating debt, and consumers who own their homes may consider home equity loans or lines of credit in an effort to tame their debt once and for all.

### What is a home equity loan?

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau notes that a home equity loan allows homeowners to borrow money using the equity in their home as collateral. Equity is the amount a property is currently worth minus the amount currently owed on a mortgage. So if a home is worth \$500,000 and homeowners have a mortgage balance of \$300,000, then their equity is \$200,000.



### Why do homeowners consider home equity loans to pay off debt?

One of the biggest concerns when consumers wrack up lots of credit card debt is the likelihood that they will end up paying substantial amounts of interest on that debt. That's because credit cards typically have high interest rates. Indeed, the LendingTree reports that even consumers with good credit may have an APR around 21 percent on their credit cards. That figure only grows for consumers with lower credit scores. Bankrate notes that the average interest rate for a home equity loan is typical-

ly much lower than the rate on credit cards, so homeowners can theoretically save a lot of money by paying off their credit card debt with a home equity loan.

### Are there risks associated with using home equity to pay off credit card debt?

Though lower interest rates and consolidated debt are two advantages to paying off consumer debt with a home equity loan, this option is risky. Perhaps the biggest risk associated with this approach is the potential of losing a home. Individuals with substantial credit card debt should know that a

lack of discipline when using a home equity loan to pay off debt could result in foreclosure. If homeowners cannot make their monthly loan payments on time, they could lose their home. In addition, Bankrate notes that if a home is sold with an outstanding home equity loan balance, that balance must be repaid at once.

Home equity loans can help homeowners consolidate and ultimately eliminate their credit card debt. However, this approach carries a level of risk, so homeowners may benefit from working with a financial advisor to determine the best way to pay off their existing debts. MM23CS05

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# Sports

## Panthers ready to roll in DIV playoff race

### JHS girls resume action this week

By ALEX SPONSELLER

The Johnston girls basketball team resumed its regular season this week after cruising to a 5-1 start to take second place in Division IV before the holiday break.

After a tough opening night loss to Davies on the road, the Panthers roared to five straight wins to climb up to second place in Division IV.

Leading the way for Johnston to this point has been sophomore standout Bella Gesualdi, who scored 31 points in the team's win against Block Island and has led the Panthers in total offense. Ava Waterman finished the game with 18. Waterman also



LEADING THE WAY: Johnston's Bella Gesualdi.

■ PANTHERS - PAGE 15



UNDEFEATED: Johnston's Mike Carlino.

## JHS boys stay unbeaten

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The Johnston boys basketball team remained unbeaten in Division II after beating both Shea and Tiverton, improving to 6-0 overall.

The Panthers beat Shea in a big 86-79 decision last week. The Panthers trailed by as many as 18 points in the fourth quarter but would surge to force overtime, then dominate the extra period to escape with the victory.

Neari Vasquez led Johnston with 31 points scored while Mike Carlino added 20. Jayden Testa, Branden Testa and Cam Walker all reached double figures as well.

Johnston then rolled to an 89-46 thrashing of Tiverton on Monday night. Vasquez led the way with 22 points scored while Carlino recorded 13 and Jayden Testa 10.

Johnston returned to the court on Tuesday night against Hope, but the results were not available at press time.

## Polar golf tourney raises \$2k for Hasbro

By PETE FONTAINE

Glocester Country Club, a picturesque nine-hole layout located on the shores of Waterman Lake in Chepachet and was founded in 1929, recently added an impressive chapter to Rhode Island's illustrious golf history book.

For the eighth time in as many years Glocester Country Club played host to the annual Polar Golf Tournament - which was the first official golf event of 2024 - and wound up raising \$2,000 for Hasbro Children's Hospital in Providence.

"The Johnston Memorial Cancer Events and Hasbro



POLAR PACK: This is the 43-player field that played in the 8th Annual Polar Golf Tournament at Glocester Country Club and raised \$2,000 for Hasbro Children's Hospital on New Year's Day. (Submitted photos)

■ POLAR - PAGE 17

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# Girls hoops living up to hype

I know that it's early in the season, but it is becoming clear that our girls basketball teams are going to be factors in the eventual playoffs at winter's end.

Here is a look at what we have seen in the early going from three specific teams that could be playing for championships in March:

## My pitch



by  
**ALEX SPONSELLER**  
SPORTS EDITOR  
  
ALEXS@RHODYBEAT.COM

### Cranston West

The Falcons were in the state semifinals not that long ago and took a step back last season as a mid-dling team in Division I.

When watching them last year, you could see the pieces in place. You could tell that this was a well-balanced lineup. The problem? Experience. The Falcons just did not have the experience to go toe to toe with the elite teams and lost a handful of close games in the second half because they just did not know how to close things out.

This winter has been different, as the Falcons as of this writing are 5-1 and in first place. They've been arguably the best team in the state.

Maia Riccio is one of the state's most complete players while Olivia Tedeschi-Moran is a high-level point guard that can do a little bit of everything. She's above average in each aspect of the game.

Then there's Kyla Buco, the sharp-shooting sophomore that made her presence felt as a freshman. She seems to have put on some muscle since her freshman year and really is becoming more than just an outside shooter, she has been finding ways to score all over the floor. The fact that she's one of the state's best shooters is not just a piece to her game.

Another underclassmen making noise is forward Sinayya Chase. Although Chase has been buried in the depth chart by the senior class, she has quietly become a staple to the Falcon lineup. Coach Nerson Santaigo called her "a walking double-double" and when keeping up with the boxscores, she's been just that.

The Riccio, Tedeschi-Moran, and Buco trio is one of the strongest cores in the state. Chase's emer-

gence has been huge and the Falcons will need one or two more girls to make a difference, but this is a team that has the makings of a potential state champion ... not just a divisional one.

### Toll Gate

Prior to the season, the Titans were my top choice of our girls teams to make a deep run. They lost their best player in Adeline Areson before the year started last season and still managed to reach the Division III Semifinals. So far, the Titans look to be right back toward the top of the division again.

Now, Toll Gate has hit some adversity after dropping games to North Smithfield and Narragansett, who are in first and second place, respectively. However, early lumps are not surprising as the team reintroduces Areson and works through replacing last year's top scorer in Bri Simono, who is up at CCRI this winter.

The Titans were 4-3 as of this writing and in sixth place in Division III. They did pick up big wins over the Lincoln School on opening night then got a holiday win over defending champion Pilgrim ... who they will be meeting on Thursday night.

I expect the Titans to compete with anyone in the division and to return to at least the semifinals. Areson is too dominant and the pieces around her are plenty, including girls like Dulce Garcia among others. Division III was a dogfight last winter and is shaping up to be one again this time around. Don't let the Titans' uneven start fool you.

### Johnston

The Panthers entered the season confident with new coach Jhamal Diggs and the return of All-Divi-

sion underclassman Bella Gesualdi.

I covered their opening night loss against Davies. It was a tough one for the Panthers, as they led and controlled much of the game and let it slip away in the fourth quarter. Since then, they have rattled off five straight wins and Davies has maintained first place. It will be a fun race between these two teams the rest of the way and I suspect it will be those two at RIC for the title game in March.

Gesualdi has been lighting up the boxscores and appears to be potentially the division's best overall player. In basketball, you need elite pieces to compete for championships, and that is exactly what she has proven to be ... elite.

Ava Waterman is a well-rounded veteran while Aubree Allen and Hannah Lavergne are also key starters. This Johnston team is deep and experienced coming off an early playoff exit last year.

Diggs' influence cannot be overlooked, either. He is a former coach of the year and revitalized the Cranston East program in short order, eventually leading him to Rhode Island College last season to coach at the college level. Diggs may be the missing piece in getting Johnston over the top and back to perennial contention.

One last note before I sign off.

The start of this winter has been a tough one, personally. My family, which includes an 18-month old, has been through the ringier when it comes to health. A terrible flu ripped through the house in December, then this past week we were faced with Covid.

Between the two illnesses and the holiday break, I have struggled to get into a rhythm early this winter season, but am optimistic I will be back in full force starting this week. I just wanted to take a moment to explain why you may not have seen me on the sideline yet. I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and truly getting back into the swing of things. I'll see you out there!

### Panthers

(Continued from page 14)

scored 20 points against Blackstone Valley Prep while Jayannah Rollins scored 30 against Times Squared.

After losing to Davies, the Panthers have been motivated and slowly settling in on their lineup, according to coach Jhamal Diggs.

"We were trying new things, trying to figure out what we could do. That game was a good learning experience for us in getting to know what our philosophies are going to be and what we're going to have to do to be successful. Since then, we've been able to execute and be productive," Diggs said.

Diggs has been thrilled with Gesualdi's start as she was called on to be one of the team's leaders as an underclassmen after a breakout freshmen cam-

paign. "Bella is off to a great start. This year she's playing a more versatile position, she's distributing the ball really well, she's had a few double-doubles. She's made a huge impact, not just scoring, but rebounding and getting her teammates involved. She's done a really good job with that," said Diggs.

As the Panthers get geared up to enter the meat of their regular season slate, the goal is to inch their way toward being a championship-caliber team.

"We're a really well-balanced basketball team. We've been playing really good basketball and everyone has been contributing," said Diggs. "The season is still young and we're off to a really good start. We just want to keep getting better night in and night out. We want to get better until we accomplish our goal. We're going to focus on ourselves and just try to improve on our weaknesses."

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| 16 Yale Dr               | Mulvey, Ryan A and Mulvey, Rebecca A | Mccollum, Austin J and Mccollum, Sarah     | 12/22 | \$345,000 |
| 17 Francis St            | Drago, Andrew C                      | Stevko, Natascha                           | 12/19 | \$379,900 |
| 181 Ayoho Rd             | Doire, Chad and Doire, Robert        | Northup, Heather                           | 12/20 | \$165,000 |
| 182 Arnold Rd            | T & C Properties LLC                 | Hasbun, Jorge E                            | 12/21 | \$460,000 |
| 266 Arnold Rd            | Jbl Enterprises LLC                  | Brown, Adam and Courtemanche, Nicole       | 12/18 | \$345,000 |
| 270 E Shore Dr           | D2 Homes Inc                         | Reynolds, Jennifer and Schwarting, Zachary | 12/22 | \$695,500 |

## Cranston

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| 42 Bailey St Lot 26 | Peter, Henry J                       | Durand, Daniel J and Durand, Amy L | 12/18 | \$300,000 |
| 42 Bailey St Lot 27 | Peter, Henry J                       | Durand, Daniel J and Durand, Amy L | 12/18 | \$300,000 |

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| 166 Black Plain Rd              | Reilly, Shirley A and Federal Natl Mtg Assn | Burke, Timothy J and Burke, Karen L          | 12/21 | \$152,000 |

## Johnston

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| 7 S Fairview St              | Boliek, Charles and Costa Jr Paul     | Torres, Maritza L                       | 12/20 | \$340,000 |
| 21 Cavalcade Blvd            | Tatarka, Janice S                     | Stenglein, Erik M                       | 12/20 | \$214,000 |
| 21 Scenery Ln Lot 21         | Fnma                                  | Pescarino, Robert and Pescarino, Sandra | 12/21 | \$245,000 |
| 29 Zanfagna St               | Jordan J Correia T and Correia        | Lori A to West Bay Hm Solutions LLC     | 12/21 | \$190,000 |
| 163 Greenville Ave           | Coppola, Bryan D and Coppola, Linda A | Schadone, Jason                         | 12/26 | \$350,000 |
| 1139-1/2 Hartford Ave Lot 5C | Bisiak, Pawel                         | Coner, Robert and Coner, Michelle       | 12/26 | \$198,000 |

## Warwick

| ADDRESS                    | SELLERS                                      | BUYERS   | DATE  | PRICE       |
|----------------------------|--|--|-------|-------------|
| 4 Metcalf St               | Rvb Cap Invest LLC                           | Kelly, Ryan P                                  | 12/19 | \$420,000   |
| 7 Eagle Run Lot B          | Benz, Patricia L and Cienava, Sheila M       | Swanholm, Brianna                              | 12/19 | \$325,000   |
| 17 Winslow Ave Lot 61      | Maletesta, Luigi                             | Guerrero, Ricky and Gonzalez, Eddie            | 12/21 | \$385,000   |
| 24 Tell St Lot 50          | Paul, Heather M and Paul, Mark M             | Brown, Eddie and Dotten, Ivda                  | 12/21 | \$500,000   |
| 24 Tell St Lot 51          | Paul, Heather M and Paul, Mark M             | Brown, Eddie and Dotten, Ivda                  | 12/21 | \$500,000   |
| 24 Tell St Lot 52          | Paul, Heather M and Paul, Mark M             | Brown, Eddie and Dotten, Ivda                  | 12/21 | \$500,000   |
| 24 Tell St Lot 53          | Paul, Heather M and Paul, Mark M             | Brown, Eddie and Dotten, Ivda                  | 12/21 | \$500,000   |
| 26 Nash Ave Lot 120        | Tiberio, Kristen E and Tiberio, Robert T     | Parsons, Christen M                            | 12/21 | \$352,000   |
| 26 Nash Ave Lot 1          | Tiberio, Kristen E and Tiberio, Robert T     | Parsons, Christen M                            | 12/21 | \$352,000   |
| 26 Nash Ave Lot 132        | Tiberio, Kristen E and Tiberio, Robert T to  | Parsons, Christen M                            | 12/21 | \$352,000   |
| 30 Belt St Lot 62          | Federal Natl Mtg Assn                        | Jasonapril LLC                                 | 12/20 | \$271,000   |
| 30 Belt St Lot 63          | Federal Natl Mtg Assn                        | Jasonapril LLC                                 | 12/20 | \$271,000   |
| 30 Glen Farm Ct            | Grenci Steven A Est Grecni, Danielle         | Grenci, Nicholas A                             | 12/21 | \$115,000   |
| 35 Madison St              | Mckenna, Matthew A and Mckenna, Amanda N     | Herne, Megan M                                 | 12/20 | \$480,000   |
| 41 Grove Ave Lot 76        | John E Norquist Lt and Norquist, John E      | Greenwald, Diane                               | 12/18 | \$600,000   |
| 41 Grove Ave Lot 79        | John E Norquist Lt and Norquist, John E      | Greenwald, Diane                               | 12/18 | \$600,000   |
| 41 Grove Ave Lot 77        | John E Norquist Lt and Norquist, John E      | Greenwald, Diane                               | 12/18 | \$600,000   |
| 41 Grove Ave Lot 78        | John E Norquist Lt and Norquist, John E      | Greenwald, Diane                               | 12/18 | \$600,000   |
| 55 Montebello Rd Lot 122   | Teverow, Cheryl                              | Economou, George                               | 12/21 | \$225,000   |
| 55 Montebello Rd Lot 123   | Teverow, Cheryl                              | Economou, George                               | 12/21 | \$225,000   |
| 57 Stokes St Lot 22        | Francis H Kowalik Lt and Kowalik, Francis H  | Kowalik, David                                 | 12/19 | \$1,443,300 |
| 57 Stokes St Lot 20        | Francis H Kowalik Lt and Kowalik, Francis H  | Kowalik, David                                 | 12/19 | \$1,443,300 |
| 57 Stokes St Lot 21        | Francis H Kowalik Lt and Kowalik, Francis H  | Kowalik, David                                 | 12/19 | \$1,443,300 |
| 58 Spooner Ave             | Medina, Michelle L                           | Tejeda, Emmanuel and Tejeda, Wilson O          | 12/21 | \$580,000   |
| 84 Dartmouth Ave           | Preece, Mark H                               | Aubin, Cassandra and Lamountain, Matthew       | 12/18 | \$499,000   |
| 95 Claypool Dr             | Goodness, Pamela                             | Wahl, Jenna                                    | 12/20 | \$375,000   |
| 100 Peabody Dr             | Ann G Gallogly lrt and Gallogly, Gavin T     | Piggott, Tayla C and Salemi, Brian J           | 12/21 | \$360,000   |
| 104 Morse Ave Lot 101      | Perrino, Jodie                               | Queen Invest LLC                               | 12/21 | \$247,000   |
| 104 Morse Ave Lot 102      | Perrino, Jodie                               | Queen Invest LLC                               | 12/21 | \$247,000   |
| 115 Irving Rd              | Fennessy, Kelsey A                           | Galvan, Roysy and Mella-Nunez, Rina A          | 12/19 | \$340,000   |
| 135 Lewiston St Lot 38     | Condon, Glenn P and Cascella, Richard        | Brogno, William                                | 12/21 | \$373,700   |
| 135 Lewiston St Lot 36     | Condon, Glenn P and Cascella, Richard        | Brogno, William                                | 12/21 | \$373,700   |
| 160 Suburban Pkwy          | Frey-Kipyego, Starla                         | Kim, Klara and Mason, Kirk                     | 12/18 | \$520,000   |
| 188 Wood St,               | Gervasio Family Re LLC                       | Brian & Heather Johnson L and Johnson, Brian J | 12/20 | \$145,000   |
| 300 Centerville Rd Lot 203 | Bri Rlty Corp                                | Smm Ri Rlty LLC                                | 12/19 | \$199,000   |
| 345 Nausauket Rd           | Federal Hm Ln Mtg Corp                       | Gongoleski, Nicholas                           | 12/20 | \$44,000    |
| 444 Pequot Ave             | Accredited Mtg Ln T and Deutsche Bk Natl TCo | Giardello, Jeremy                              | 12/20 | \$24,400    |
| 526 Post Rd                | Rihdr Inc                                    | Guzman-Espinal, Arianna R and Espinal, Teresa  | 12/21 | \$345,000   |
| 756 Quaker Ln Lot A110     | Lamb Locked Rlty LLC                         | Fain, Scott J                                  | 12/21 | \$1         |
| 756 Quaker Ln Lot A110     | Fain, Scott J                                | Tavares, Carlos B                              | 12/21 | \$234,700   |
| 3524 W Shore Rd Lot 501    | Jackman, Earl F and Jackman, Barbara A       | Stuckert Invest LLC                            | 12/18 | \$245,000   |
| 3933 Post Rd               | Tazawa, Makio                                | Gharaee, Mustapha,                             | 2/22  | \$540,000   |

## West Greenwich

| ADDRESS            | SELLERS                                   | BUYERS            | DATE  | PRICE     |
|--------------------|---|-------------------|-------|-----------|
| 358 Weaver Hill Rd | Smith 2nd, Timothy L and Smith, Barbara S | Federico, Antonio | 12/18 | \$550,000 |

## West Warwick

| ADDRESS            | SELLERS  | BUYERS  | DATE  | PRICE     |
|--------------------|--|---|-------|-----------|
| 2 Duke St Lot 1    | Heidenthal, Alexandra                            | Combes, Timothy C and Struzinski, Brianna M             | 12/21 | \$320,000 |
| 2 Guertin St Lot 1 | McKee, Janice and Bk Of Ny Mellon T Co Na        | Resi Asset Mtg Products I and Bk Of Ny Mellon T Co Na T | 12/21 | \$246,400 |
| 5 Queen Ave        | Deigham, Linda                                   | Hawkins 4th, Earl                                       | 12/21 | \$285,000 |
| 68 Clyde St        | Terraciano Vincent J Est and Terraciano, Kerry C | Bettencourt, Taylor C and Mina, Robert P                | 12/21 | \$420,000 |

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**CHAMP'S CORNER:** Chris Dumas and Walter Geer are all smiles after winning the 8th annual Polar Golf Tournament at Gloucester Country Club.



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**■ Polar**

(Continued from page 14)

Children’s Hospital would like to extend or deep appreciation to everyone who joined for our 8th annual Polar golf festivities,” said Judi Graham who founded and chairs the annual benefit event.

The \$2,000 was a record for the Polar Golf Tournament that featured 43 players and other GCC members who stopped by and made donations that Graham added “we greatly appreciate all the support from everyone on New Year’s Day.”

In keeping with the tournament tradition, the morning began with people enjoying coffee and muffins to warm up before they went out to play and as Graham noted “the conditions were ideal; the sun was out, and the temperature was 40 degrees.”

Players were encouraged to wear shorts and tee shirts and the 43-golfer field played on holes seven, eight and nine and players could only use three clubs. Once completed, everyone gathered inside the GCC clubhouse for snacks and to wait for the results.

Thus, Chris Dumas and Walter Geer had a combined score of 24 to finish first and were presented with a beer glass filled with candy.

“Thank you to all!” Graham exclaimed. “We could not do what we do for Hasbro Children’s Hospital without Gloucester Country Club and our great club members. This was a great start to the year looking for a cure for cancer using one stroke at a time.”

Graham also announced the JMCE’s highly popular major golf tourney will be played on Saturday, May 11 at Connecticut National Golf Club in Putnam, Ct. Details will be forthcoming.



**STEPH'S SHOT:** Stephanie Rich was among the golfers who played in the 8th Annual Polar event for the first time. Here, she connects for a super shot.

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**SUMMER FLOUNDER HARVEST LIMITS TO BE REDUCED:** Shaina Boyle and her father Gary Vandemoortele both of Smithfield with the 27-inch summer flounder Shaina caught this summer. Overall the fluke harvest limit will be reduced by 28 percent this year.

# Scup and summer flounder regulations on the cutting block

By **CAPT. DAVE MONTI**

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council has asked coastal states for their thoughts on what scup and summer flounder (fluke) management measures they would propose for 2024 to meet mandated reductions in recreational fishing harvest limits. The Council in cooperation with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has one Fisheries Management Plan for Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass coast wide including Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Fortunately, black sea bass will not take a reduction next year, while scup requires a 10 percent reduction and summer flounder a 28 percent reduction.

Last week Rhode Island recreational fishing leaders were asked their thoughts on the types of changes to the bag limit, minimum size, or season dates they recommend to achieve the needed reductions for each species. The deadline for states to provide the Council with thoughts on what their state's regulations might be to achieve reductions is Jan. 19. This early date does not dovetail with the state's public process. For example in Rhode Island the public comment process on recreational fishing regulations does not normally start until February.

In Rhode Island, increasing the minimum size of summer flounder from 18" to 18.5 inches would represent an 18 percent reduction, with 10 percent left. Ideas floated by both private anglers and the for hire industry to make up the 10 percent included a delayed season and reduced bag limit. For example an 18.5-inch minimum size with a season start moving from May 3 to June 3, missing May 27 which is Memorial Day weekend, with the season ending August 31, with a reduction bag limit from four fish to three fish would meet required reductions. Oddly enough, reducing the bag limit from four fish to three fish only garners a two percent reduction.

So, more than likely, the proposed minimum size for summer flounder will be increased to either 18.5 or 19 inches with a possible season reduction, and bag limit reduction in 2024. We will have to wait to see what states submit for proposals on Jan. 19 and what the Council, Commission and committee ultimately approve for Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

In regard to scup, Capt. Rick Bellavance, president of the RI Party & Charter Boat Association and vice chair of the New England Fishery Management Council provided and easy to understand solution to achieve the 10 percent harvest limit reduction for this species in Rhode Island.

Capt. Bellavance said, "My first thoughts for scup would be a size increase of 1/2 inch across all modes. Looking at the catch, the shore mode is significant. Although I strongly support measures to help the shore fisher, I think a 1/2 inch across all modes will be easier than trying to configure the 10 percent cut in the for hire and private modes." Final proposals on scup on how to meet the required 10 percent reduction are being considered for the January 19 deadline as well.

So we will have to wait until January 19 to see how both Massachusetts and Rhode Island suggest they meet mandated reduction for scup and summer flounder. The Council and its Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board will then review and rule on what the states submit.

### New England Boat Show this weekend

The New England Boat Show is this week, Jan. 10 to Jan. 14 at the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, Boston, MA.

Check out the shows website at New England Boat Show Official Site | Boston, MA to use their 'Boat Finder' software which filters vessels by boat type, length, price range and more. Also see the complete list of events and get a \$2 discount on tickets when you purchase online.

### Where's the bite?

Freshwater fishing in stocked ponds for trout continues to be very good with a decent large-mouth bass bite. For a complete list of trout stocked ponds in Massachusetts visit Mass Wildlife at Trout stocking report | Mass.gov and in Rhode Island visit [www.dem.ri.gov/fishing](http://www.dem.ri.gov/fishing), or call 401-789-0281 or 401-539-0019 for more information on trout stocking.

Saltwater. The tautog and black sea bass seasons closed Dec. 31. Anglers have now turned their attention to cod fishing, striped bass fishing in hold over areas with many switching off to freshwater fishing. If you want to try your hand at cod fishing call ahead to make a party boat reservation, vessels generally sail between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m. and return in the afternoon. Visit [www.islandcurrent.com](http://www.islandcurrent.com) and [www.francesfleet.com](http://www.francesfleet.com). Full day rates for vessels are generally \$130 to \$135 per adult and around \$80 for those under 12 years old.

Dave Monti holds a captain's license and charter fishing license. He serves on a variety of boards and commissions and has a consulting business focusing on clean oceans, habitat preservation, conservation, renewable energy, and fisheries related issues and clients. Forward fishing news and photos to [dmontifish@verison.net](mailto:dmontifish@verison.net) or visit [www.noflukefishing.com](http://www.noflukefishing.com).

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