



Berlin mayor, council review FY20 books

Audit finds clean records, procedures, full compliance

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Dec. 17, 2020) The town of Berlin's financial record keeping is clear and clean, the town's auditors from PKS & Company reported during a virtual Town Council meeting Monday night. Still, said PKS partner Michael Kleger and manager Leslie Michalik, work remains to be done on the town's fund balance and on the separate sewer utility fund.



Michael Kleger



Leslie Michalik

The report on FY20 showed that internal controls are what they should be, and that there were no instances of noncompliance with Government Auditing Standards.

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Fire co. adds day to Santa's annual Berlin area tour

St. Nick's ride-through will need both Sat. and Sun.

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Dec. 17, 2020) The Berlin Fire Company is expanding its annual Santa escort to a two-day event this weekend in town.

Fire Company President David Fitzgerald said the tour with Santa will cover the company's entire fire coverage district on Saturday and

See SANTA'S Page 7



GREG ELLISON/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

HO HO HO

The yuletide season is on full display in Ocean Pines with a decorative pelican decked out in full Christmas attire, including a Santa hat and beard, as the arrival of St. Nick inches closer by the day.

OP bylaws review gets underway

Work group sets schedule, objectives and how it will work with other entities

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(Dec. 17, 2020) The recently formed Ocean Pines Bylaws and Resolutions work group set about establishing objectives and schedules during an organizational meeting held virtually on Dec. 10.

Jenny Cropper Rines, Ocean Pines Communication Committee Chairperson, said during the recent annual Executive Council meeting for Advisory Committees, some consideration was given to making a "Master Calendar" to assure annual bylaw requirements are followed.

"We thought a calendar of when

these happen would be useful to committee chairs and new boards," she said.

Also on the work group is OPA Director Doug Parks who admitted to having an interest as a former Bylaws Committee chairman.

Parks said the work group would benefit from a wealth of "institutional knowledge" provided by two-time Bylaws Committee Chairman Jim Trummel, who had held the seat prior to Parks and subsequently reassumed the role. "He's been a guiding force for us for quite a while with regard to bylaws resolutions," he said.

Plotting long-term time frames

was the initial point of consideration, with Rines proposing the annual homeowners meeting in 2021 as an ideal target.

"Is that too long?" she said.

OPA Director Camilla Rogers said the process should be thorough and not rushed.

"We need a proper sense of plan," she said. "It hasn't been done in such a long time, it's going to warrant a pretty close review."

Parks was also less concerned with target dates than procedure.

"We need to look at the depth of bylaws and any changes we want to propose," he said. "Be advised if any

See BYLAWS Page 5



Jenny Rines



Doug Parks



Wishing Everyone A Very Merry Christmas & A Happy Hanukkah!

Carozza hosts meeting with area stakeholders

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(Dec. 17, 2020) Worcester County and community representatives met Friday with Sen. Mary Beth Carozza (R-38C) and minority leader Sen. Bryan Simonaire (R-31 Anne Arundel) to highlight their priorities ahead of the new Maryland General Assembly session in January.

The contingent of government, school and health officials, as well as business and civic leaders, gathered at the Roland E. Powell Convention Center in Ocean City to offer state officials, which also included Capital Budget Chairman Sen. Doug Peters (D-23 Prince George's), a comprehensive overview of the "Shore Way of Life."

"This is our opportunity to shine," Carozza said.

Simonaire, who was recently installed as Maryland Senate minority leader by Republican caucus officials, selected Carozza as policy and communications chairwoman earlier this month.

The duo had a comparable session scheduled Friday afternoon with Wicomico officials.

Ocean City Mayor Rick Meehan was first to address the senators and expressed gratitude for prior legislative support to establish "Special Event Zones" aimed at halting unruly road behavior during the unsanctioned pop-up car rally in late September.

"It made a difference in our community to help temper down that event," he said. "We've made progress, but we would not be able to do that without that legislation."

Meehan said the resort's priority this covid-cursed year has been the health and safety of residents, employees and visitors.

Meehan praised dining, lodging and retail establishments for managing to operate while adhering to the state's covid-19 health-safety guidelines and CDC recommendations.

"They've been creative and they've been resilient," he said. "The government and business community are on the same page and we're here to support each other."

Looking at the 2021 state legislative session, Meehan said Ocean City and Worcester officials are seeking legislation to require third party rental platforms, such as Airbnb or VRBO, to pay



GREG ELLISON/BAYSIDE GAZETTE
Sen. Mary Beth Carozza (R-38C) hosted a meeting with area stakeholders prior to the new Maryland General Assembly at the convention center in Ocean City last Friday.

state sales tax and county room taxes.

"Locally, we have no way to require payment of those taxes and we have no way to enforce," he said. "Not only is Ocean City losing millions of dollars in uncollected revenues, so is the state and other jurisdictions."

Meehan also said Annapolis lawmakers' consideration of amending or abandoning Maryland's Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights could cripple the resort's already challenged police recruitment effort.

"Public safety and the safety of our officers remain our number one priority," he said.

Worcester County Commissioner Diane Purnell also called on state officials to recognize that only a united effort will get the county and state through the debilitating circumstances brought on by the pandemic.

Using the county health department as an example of that close coordination with other county entities, she cited schools, medical facilities, and the business community for their cooperation as well.

"In order to survive we have to work together," she said. "We look at Annapolis to work with us on the Eastern Shore to make sure that we get through this storm together because we are vital to this state."

Another downside of the pandemic is crime. OCPD Chief Ross Buzzuro said crime rates at the resort had been decreasing for the last five season before going up this year.

He also echoed Meehan's comments

regarding special event zone legislation.

"With the special event zones and enhanced fines, we believe we're stemming this tide," he said.

Turning to the issue of police reforms, Buzzuro told state officials the department had difficulty maintaining order on the Boardwalk in June.

"This is a larger issue that happened throughout the country," he said.

Buzzuro said he hoped widespread concern about policing tactics would die down in 2021, he acknowledged that the burden is on police officers to adhere to acceptable rules of conduct.

"We have to get it right," he said.

He also said that reform measures should be considered objectively.

"I'm not going to be doing this forever," he said. "I need officers to come behind me and it's getting very difficult to attract younger folks into the field of law enforcement."

On another embattled front, Worcester County Superintendent of Schools Lou Taylor said keeping students on the right educational path during the pandemic has been hampered by internet connectivity issues in the rural areas of the county. He also didn't miss his chance to remind legislators that Worcester is the lowest funded school system in Maryland, even though 43 percent of its students live below the poverty level.

"We would ask the legislature to take look at the funding formula," he said.

Taylor also mentioned mounting concerns over food insecurity for students in Worcester and other jurisdictions statewide.

"State and federal funding is paramount for us to continue food distribution to kids," he said.

Facing as great or even greater covid-related challenge than the schools, however, is the Worcester County Health Department. County Health Officer Becky Jones told the group that more than 38,000 coronavirus tests have been processed in the county since last spring, producing roughly 1,500 positive results.

"About 1,300 of those have been released from isolation and quarantine," she said.

Jones said the department investigated

355 complaints about businesses failing to adhere to health-safety guidelines.

"Restaurants did an outstanding job of being compliant," she said. "We have over 700 facilities we regulate, and we only closed two."

Offering some optimism was Atlantic General Hospital President and CEO Michael Franklin, who said the facility was among 25 in Maryland about to begin a vaccination roll out.

"We have 50,000 doses of vaccine being delivered this week," he said. "More than half to residential health facilities throughout the state and the rest to front line health care workers as second level of priority."

Representing the largest population base in Worcester County was Ocean Pines Association President Larry Perrone.

Perrone said since Ocean Pines is governed by a homeowners association, it has no authority to tax residents, but does charges homeowners annual assessments fees to cover shortfalls and to balance the operating budget.

That leaves Ocean Pines heavily dependent on revenue it gains from community amenities such as the Ocean Pines Golf Course and Ocean Pines Yacht Club.

"Our budget is based on the revenue that we're able to generate from our amenities, as well as whatever grants and fees we're able to develop," he said.

That said, Perrone added that more state aid would be needed to help the community restore its stormwater drainage system.

Perrone said the Coastal Bays program helped secure a \$549,000 state grant for Ocean Pines through the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

"We are in the process of trying to replace our storm system and the filtration issue is a primary concern," he said.

Perrone said although further state aid is being sought, the OPA is also heavily invested.

"We are spending about \$300,000 of our own money this year on stormwater systems and have committed \$350,000 to the grant from Maryland," he said. "These are huge projects and we only have so many resources we can allocate."

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County promises fire departments funding

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(Dec. 17, 2020) Local fire and EMS companies, having lost out on CARES Act financial relief because of shifting requirements and confusing paperwork, got a sympathetic hearing from the Worcester County Commissioners in a special session last Wednesday in Snow Hill.

Demonstrating that sympathy, County Commissioner President Joe Mitrecic opened the meeting at the Snow Hill Volunteer Fire Department with a clear message.

“We want to give you the money,” he said.

The commissioners allocated the roughly \$30,000 remaining balance of \$4.5 million the county received in CARES Act funds for fire companies during its Dec. 1 meeting.

Worcester Chief Administrative Officer Harold Higgins indicated at that time that county staff was compiling data on payroll reimbursement for fire and EMS companies, which he estimated at roughly \$50,000.

Higgins also told fire company representatives that county officials plan to meet with fire department leaders to examine fiscal shortfalls.

Despite those recent assurances, numerous company representatives expressed frustration after filing funding requests months ago that re-



Fire and EMS companies pour out for a special meeting about the soon-to-expire CARES Act funding with the Worcester County Commissioners last Wednesday at the Snow Hill Volunteer Fire Department.

GREG ELLISON/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

main unfilled today.

Commissioners Jim Bunting shared those sentiments.

“I’ve been disgusted for two months now,” he said.

Bunting said over the last few months he has received a steady stream of emails from fire companies throughout Worcester unable to find answers about CARES Act funding reimbursements and what expenses qualify.

“I keep getting the same runaround you’ve been getting,” he said.

Mitrecic said funding procedures

were initially confounding for many.

“Back in May and June, I don’t know if anybody knew what you had to do anywhere in the state of Maryland, let alone Worcester County,” he said.

Mitrecic said the cloud of confusion surrounding application paperwork and qualified costs should have dissipated since that time.

“By September or October, we should have been able to hone in on it,” he said. “You should have gotten your money.”

Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young said the majority

of the \$4.5 million CARES Act funds awarded to Worcester County had been allocated, with remaining balances to be returned to the state on Dec. 15 and ultimately to the federal government if not spent by Dec. 31.

“Going into 2021, we’re not going to have CARES money,” he said. “There’s no answer for that.”

Mitrecic and Young promised to begin immediately consulting about paperwork requirements to assure all justified funding requests are filled this month.

“I apologize that it’s come to this,” he said.

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Nativity scene at SonRise Church and MBS

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Dec. 17, 2020) The Berlin campus of SonRise Church has incorporated covid-19 safety protocols in its live Nativity this year by making the Sunday, 6-8 p.m. presentation a drive-through event.

"This is the third year we've done the live Nativity," Pastor Tim Robinson said. "Normally people get out of the car and they can stand in front of the live Nativity and enjoy it that way. Then, as they exit, we have refreshments and we invite people to our Christmas Eve services."

Robinson said the Nativity scene will be staged in the back of the property on 10026 Main Street, behind the main building in a grass parking area.

"That way it will take a while to get there. When people pull in, they're not going to see it right away," he said. "We'll have socially distanced stations."

As drivers enter the property, they will pass a few stations.

"Then, they're going to hit a shepherd area," Robinson said. "It's going to be lit up."

He added that drivers will be encouraged to turn off car lights when approaching the Nativity in the back of the property.

Near the Nativity scene, five bag-

pipe players and two drummers from Ocean City Pipes and Drums will provide music.

Marshall Creek Farms, which is owned by Angela Smithhisler, will provide sheep and goats for the event.

Last year, the church had three camels for the live Nativity.

SonRise Church parishioners will act out the Nativity story in Biblical costumes.

"We'll also have a live baby Jesus," Robinson said.

Logan Adams will portray baby Jesus.

SonRise Church also has an FM transmitter, so, as drivers enter the property, they can set their FM car radios to 93.3 to hear a welcome and the Christmas story.

After driving through the display, traffic will be directed to exit right to-



The Berlin Campus of SonRise Church, 10026 Main Street, has adapted its annual live Nativity with stable animals and actors from the church to be a free drive-through event on Dec. 20 from 6-8 p.m. because of covid-19 concerns. Pictured is the 2019 Nativity production on the church's property.

PHOTO COURTESY SONRISE CHURCH

ward Route 113. Drivers will be notified to stay in a single file.

Robinson said that the church will consider the drive-through option for the future as well.

"For this first year, we're going to just keep it simple and have a few different stations, some music playing and a time where they can park in front of the live Nativity, coming in through Route 50 [and] exiting out toward [Route] 113," he said.

Robinson added that during the novel coronavirus pandemic, people are searching for peace and comfort.

"The birth of Christ reminds us that the Savior is coming to the world to be the light of the world," he said. "This time of year, people are seeking peace, and Christ can bring that peace."

Most Blessed Sacrament Catholic School, 11242 Racetrack Road in Berlin, is also hosting a drive-through

live Nativity on Thursday and Friday from 6-8 p.m., weather permitting.

"It will be located at our entrance on the west side of the building," said Amanda Evans, the director of admissions and advancement at the school. "Cars will simply drive past, pause to see and proceed forward. We are asking that no one gets out of their vehicles."

Traffic will be monitored by staff.

"This year, it will simply be the students in character in the manger but not acting out the Nativity play," Evans added. "Next year, we hope to have it set up like a walking tour of Bethlehem."

Little Farm in Berlin will lend animals for the drive-through event. A donkey will be present on Thursday and more animals on Friday.

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Bylaws review work group establishes its objectives

Continued from Page 1
of these changes will require a referendum, then we've got that in front of us as well."

Trummel, who joined the Bylaws Committee in summer 2008, confirmed that eventuality.

"Our current bylaws were approved at [the 2008] annual meeting and there was a public hearing about amendments to bylaws," he said.

Trummel said whether altering language to a single provision or a comprehensive bylaws amendment such as occurred in 2008, a referendum would be necessary.

"It's not how many changes or amendments are made," he said. "It's the fact that there's going to be an amendment that's made and that will require a referendum."

Trummel also raised the possibility of a related public hearing and associated bylaw mandates.

"If a change is proposed through a member petition, there will be a published hearing required," he said.

By contrast, OPA bylaws do not specify the same public hearing requirement for changes proposed by the board.

"Even if it isn't in the current bylaws, I think we would be remiss if we didn't have a public hearing," he said.

In response to Parks asking what role the Bylaws Committee should play in the process of reviewing documents for updates, Trummel said the group should be involved but not at the expense of other advisory committees.

"We do need to make sure we get a broad representation," he said. "I didn't want the Resolutions and Bylaws Committee to be the sole actor in developing what amendments to the bylaws may be appropriate."

Trummel also backed Parks' suggestion that the work group filter any potential revisions through the Bylaws Committee for presentation to the board.

Parks said another initial planning matter would be which bylaws sections to review for possible revisions.

"We need feedback on how to approach it," he said.

Trummel said the entire slate

should be examined.
"To be thorough about it, we need to make sure we cover the entire bylaws," he said.

Rogers inquired about top priorities among work group members.

"For me it's the election committee and the report," she said. "There's a lot of confusion about that."

Trummel said issues of importance include defining what constitutes eligibility for association members to vote in board elections and membership petitions.

"Unfortunately, there is an issue with how many votes must be accounted for on a valid petition," he said.

Parks said current bylaw language requires petitions to contain signatures of at least 10 percent of eligible voters but how to calculate which members qualify needs greater clarity.

"We clearly have to clear that one up," he said.

Parks also raised the importance of creating more stringent guidelines for board motions passed via email.

"We have been inconsistent on getting a vote on a motion by electronic means without having a meeting," he said.

Parks asked if the work group should also cross-reference association resolutions with bylaws to confirm consistency.

Trummel said resolutions are not permitted to violate any terms included in bylaw language.

"It's the resolutions that must be consistent with the bylaws."

Trummel said although the Bylaws Committee has ceased regular meetings during the covid-19 pandemic, the group is mandated to review the adequacy of resolutions periodically.

"It's not in motion right now, obviously," he said. "If anything resolutions should be a down the line secondary consideration."

The work group agreed to use the homeowners annual meeting as a soft target date to complete recommendations and decided to begin the process by reviewing bylaws sections 1-3 for an in-depth discussion at its next meeting tentatively set for mid-January.

Fishing tournament winners announced by Anglers Club

(Dec. 17, 2020) The Ocean Pines Anglers Club recently announced the winners of the 2020 Walt Boge Fishing Tournament.

Winners are: Harry Winand (bluefish, 31 inches), Budd Heim (tautog, 18 inches; flounder, 23 inches; croaker, 10.5 inches; sheepshead, 18.5 inches), Jillian

Donahue (weakfish (trout), 22 inches), Adam Thompson (tuna, 68 inches), Greg Donahue, (red drum, 18 inches), Kevin Welkner (black drum, 18.5 inches), Jim McWinney (black sea bass, 16 inches), Chuck Tornetta (large mouth bass, 25 inches) and John Jewer (fresh water trout, 12.5 inches).

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Audit shows improved revenues, expenditures

Continued from Page 1

Another positive note in the audit is that Berlin government took in about \$1 million more than it spent in FY20, with revenues were \$6.8 million versus expenditures of \$5.8.

The town's general fund is divided into five smaller sections: nonspendable fund balance, restricted fund balance, committed fund balance, assigned fund balance and unassigned fund balance.

The FY20 nonspendable fund balance was nearly \$3.4 million, restricted fund balance was \$994,629, assigned fund balance was \$791,005 and unassigned fund balance was \$1 million with a total fund balance of \$6 million.

"The nonspendable portion of that is \$3,375,000 and that includes the amounts that are due from the sewer fund mostly and a little bit from the stormwater fund that are not available to pay the current year expenditures," Michalik said. "After June 30, the mayor and council approved a transfer that's going to cut that number in half, which is going to reduce it to approximately \$1.7 million."

The total unrestricted funds (assigned and unassigned) are \$1.8 million, which represents 3.75 months of operating expenditures.

"Three-and-a-quarter months is your cushion or your buffer for future unanticipated needs," Michalik said.

According to a chart of the general fund balance over the past six years, the general fund balance was at its highest in 2016.

"I know last year we recommended, and we repeated it this year, that the town develop a fund balance policy, and I know that some work has been done on it," Michalik said. "But the policy would set the level at which the unrestricted balance should be maintained for budgetary purposes. The Government Finance Officers Association recommends no less than 60 days, which in Berlin's case would be about \$950,000. However, most towns need a cushion or a buffer higher than 60 days depending on their individual circumstances."

She added that the town may want to include a buffer for any future storm damages it might have to cover.

"Sixty days is probably less than ideal for you," Michalik said.

She then presented the general fund revenues by source for FY19 and FY20. For FY20, the total revenues were roughly \$6.8 million, with 59 percent coming from property taxes, 16 percent from intergovernmental, or grant, revenues and 12 percent from service charges from the enterprise funds.

Of the \$5.8 million total expenditures for the FY20 general fund, the biggest costs were public safety, general government and the public works department.

"If we compare expenditures this year to last year, expenditures decreased \$900,000 or 13 percent, and they basically decreased in all categories due to budget cuts and also some of the covid limitations and canceled events also caused some decreases," Michalik said.

The enterprise funds, which are separate from the general fund, are like separate accounts maintained by separate revenue-generating businesses, or enterprises. They are the electric fund, the water fund, the sewer fund and the stormwater fund.

"The electric fund had an operating loss of \$144,000 this year compared to an operating income last year of \$349,000," Michalik said.

The interest expense of the electric fund was \$155,061.

Michalik added that the fund had almost \$1.8 million of insurance proceeds for replacement of the No. 2 generator.

She then showed a three-year trend of decreases in revenue in the electric

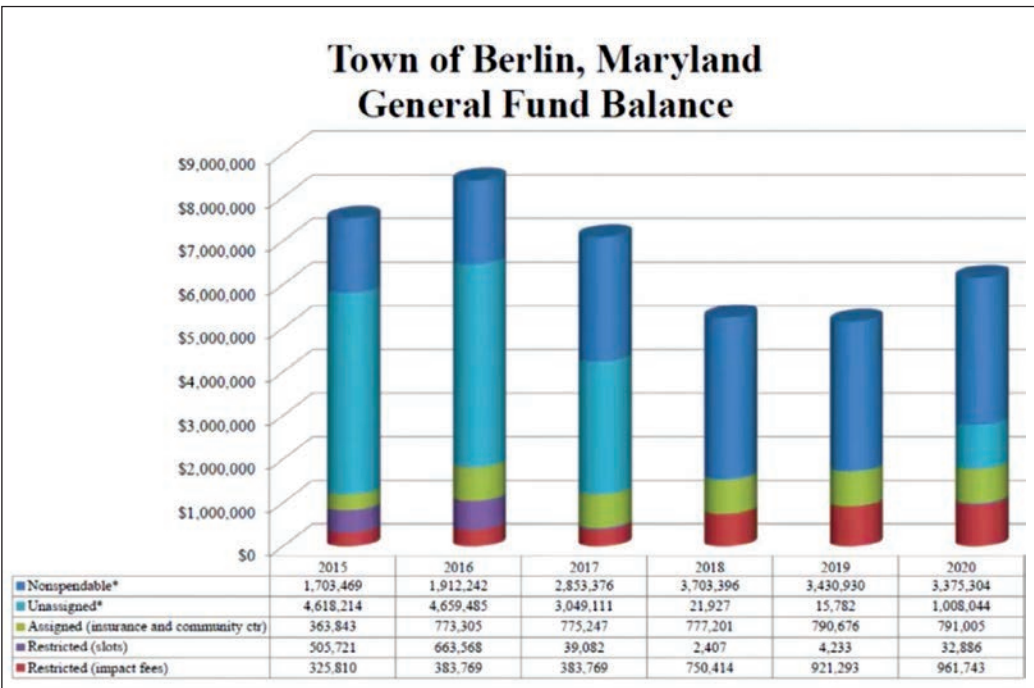


PHOTO COURTESY PKS & COMPANY

Representatives from PKS & Company presented a six-year comparison of Berlin's general fund balance, which showed that the general fund balance was at its highest in 2016.

fund.

As for the water fund, it had an operating loss of \$127,494 during FY20, down from a loss of \$202,048 in FY19.

"There was an increase in service charges of \$53,000 or 8 percent due to an increase in the rates," Michalik said.

Water fund expenditures decreased from the prior year by about \$19,00, she added.

"Then, special connections fees went way down. They were \$340,000 in 2019 down to \$65,000 in 2020," Michalik said. "So, the net position in the water fund actually decreased by \$60,000 for the year."

The sewer fund had an operating loss of \$140,000, compared to an operating loss of \$930,000 in 2019.

"Services charges increased \$540,000 or 3 percent due to the increase in rates," Michalik said.

"That's a pretty significant improvement in the sewer fund from the prior year due to increasing your rates and really cutting your budget in expenses, but I don't think you can relax," Michalik said. "The work is not

done. Going forward, you really need to continue to monitor the sewer fund. You need to continue monitoring your rates to make sure that they're set at a high enough level to cover not only your operating expenses, but your capital expenses and your debt service costs.

"The Fiscal Year 20 budget pretty much had no capital expenses included in it, and so you can't continue that going forward," Michalik continued "At some point, you're going to have to deal with some of the capital expenses, and then earlier we talked about the amount the sewer fund owes the general fund is going to be cut in half based on a transfer the mayor and council approved, so you have to watch that and be wary [the revenue-expense problem] doesn't start creeping up and then in a couple years, you're in the same position that you were before."

The stormwater fund had an operating loss of \$74,000 compared to an operating loss of nearly \$99,000 the prior year.

See BETTER Page 7

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Better fund balance recommended in audit

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“[It] had some capital grants of \$71,000 for a decrease in net position of \$3,430,” Michalik said.

The total net position of the enterprise funds for FY20 was \$23 million as of June 30. The electric fund had a total net position of \$4.4 million, the water fund had a total net position of \$3.1 million, the sewer fund had a total net position of \$12.9 million and

the stormwater fund had a total net position of \$2.4 million.

“In the enterprise funds, you want to look at working capital, and working capital is defined as ‘current assets less current liabilities,’” Michalik said. “Again, that’s your buffer for meeting your future obligations, so it’s important to maintain it at an adequate level. The Government Finance Officers Association recommends a target

of no less than 45 days.”

The number of days of working capital in the electric fund was 225 days, in the water fund was 563 days and in the stormwater fund was 33 days.

“However, the sewer fund has a negative working capital, which means that it might not be able to pay its debts because it’s current liabilities exceed its current assets,” Michalik said. Mayor Zackery Tyndall asked the accountants how to go about establishing a reserve account.

Kleger and Tyndall agreed that the reserve account should be established initially as an assigned fund.

Tyndall also asked the accountants if other municipalities have capital reserve accounts.

“In general terms, they do have enough to cover their operating expenses, but when it comes to the longer-term capital projects, there’s typically not reserve funds for those,” Kleger said.

Santa’s annual Berlin tour with fire co. goes extra day

Continued from Page 1

Sunday, beginning at noon on both days.

Fitzgerald said the fire company decided to expand the tour because the town is too large to cover in one day during daylight.

On Saturday, the fire company will escort Santa on the west side of Route 113. Then, Santa will tour Berlin communities on the east side of Route 113 on Sunday.

In addition, the fire company is accepting nonperishable donations for Stevenson United Methodist Church’s Spirit Kitchen.

The Spirit Kitchen was established in 2011 to provide a free lunch every Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and a food pantry for people in need.

As a result of the economic downturn and other covid-19 concerns, the Spirit Kitchen has been offering a drive-through food pantry, where volunteers place canned and dry goods in the trunk of cars.

Appointments must be made for the drive-through pantry. For anyone in need of groceries, call 443-235-3531.

Fitzgerald encourages residents to leave their food contributions on the curb. Canned goods will be collected by cadets and fire company representatives throughout the Santa tour this weekend.

Fitzgerald also said all fundraising events for the fire company have been canceled because of social distancing restrictions amid the pandemic. Mailers have been sent to residents and the fire company is seeking donations for its Emergency Medical Services (EMS) division.

Donations to the Berlin Fire Company EMS can be mailed to the Bank of Ocean City, 627 William St. Berlin, Maryland 21811.

Donations to the Berlin Fire Company can be mailed to Taylor Bank, P.O. Box 5 Berlin, Maryland 21811. Donors should indicate if the contribution is for a specific purpose.

According to the fire company’s website, there is a \$1,000 donor plaque program for its headquarters and a Station 3 Building Fund plaque program.

For more information, visit berlin-fire.com.

“Do we do that in the form of an assigned or committed fund balance, so then that’s under more of a lock and key and requires council action for those monies to be moved?” he asked.

Michalik replied that the town could commit the fund through a resolution.

“If you have a committed fund balance, in order to reverse it, you would have to pass another resolution,” she said. “In order to reverse an assigned fund balance, you just have to make a decision to reverse it. Like, you’ve got money ... assigned for the community center, but any point in time, you can say, ‘We’re not doing the community center. We’re going to unassign that.’ And you don’t have to pass a resolution or an ordinance to do that. It’s just a decision.”

Before the audit presentation concluded, Councilman Jay Knerr asked if the town receives a grant to demolish the old Tyson Plant at Heron Park in town or wants to sell it, can the lease agreement for the property with Bryan Brushmiller, which is until 2023, be canceled.

“There is a 90-day kickout and there is language in there for him to have first right of refusal to purchase that property,” said Town Administrator Jeff Fleetwood.

Town Attorney David Gaskill added that it is at market value.

Lastly, Tyndall echoed the need to invest in aging infrastructure in the town during the upcoming fiscal years.

Kleger said to finance such improvements the town should consider grants available at the time of projects.

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The Charles Dickens Award for the most spirited house went to 108 Bryan Avenue for the Light Up Berlin: Holiday House Decorating Contest & Tour.



ALLY LANASA/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

An Honorable Mention was awarded to 326 William St. Unit 201 for being one of the brightest houses in the Light Up Berlin: Holiday House Decorating Contest & Tour.

Berlin Mayor and Council Briefs

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Dec. 17, 2020) The following took place during the Berlin Mayor and Council meeting on Monday:

EDU agreement

The Town Council agreed to the allocation of 48 equivalent dwelling units (EDUs) for water and sewer at the Ocean's East Phase Two at 9828 Seahawk Road in Berlin for \$800,928. The 48 EDUs are for the

first two buildings of Phase Two. Blair Rinnier of Rinnier Development Company added that there will be five apartment buildings and a couple townhome buildings for a total of 153 units in Phase Two. Ocean's East Phase One features seven residential buildings and a clubhouse. Councilman Jay Knerr asked about the necessity of a clause in the EDU allocation agreement that states, "the owner in the future may desire to subdivide the property, or divide the prop-

erty by metes and bounds or by other means for the purpose of sale or otherwise change the permitted uses or intensify or increase a previously permitted use on the property so as to modify the water and sewer usage attributable to the property." Administrative Manager Kelsey Jensen said that clause is included in all EDU allocation agreements and could be discussed by the council in the future.

Vehicle purchase

Town Administrator Jeff Fleetwood informed the council that his work vehicle developed some mechanical issues with its transmission about a month ago. The vehicle was approaching 200,000 miles. Fleetwood obtained three quotes for the repair, with the lowest quote being \$2,200. Fleetwood received authorization to procure a similar vehicle under \$25,000. A similar vehicle was obtained at \$23,000. The Town Council unanimously agreed to purchase the vehicle for Fleetwood.

Retirements

Fleetwood announced that Dave Wheaton, the superintendent of the

public works department, will retire on April 1. He said the search for a replacement will begin after the holidays. In addition, Claude Holland, a senior police officer at the Berlin Police Department, will officially retire on Jan. 1.

House decorating contest

On behalf of Ivy Wells, the town's economic and community development director, Fleetwood announced the winners of Light Up Berlin: Holiday House Decorating Contest and Tour. The Clark Griswold Award for the brightest house went to 114 Maple Drive and Honorable Mentions went to 326 William St. Unit 201 and 208 Broad St. The Kevin McAllister Award for the most creative house went to 101 Middle St. Honorable Mentions went to 113 Davis Court and 102 Tingle Road. The George Bailey Award for the most traditionally decorated house went to 414 S. Main St. and Honorable Mentions went to 108 Cedar Avenue and 294 Powell Circle.

The Charles Dickens Award for the most spirited house went to 108 Bryan Avenue and Honorable Men-

Continued on Page 9

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Holiday Market set for Dec. 23

Vendors will sell baked goods, seafood in OP park next Wednesday

(Dec. 17, 2020) The Ocean Pines Farmers & Artisans Market has been in elf mode for several weeks, as its merchants have been working to turn the marketplace at White Horse Park into a hub for shopping during the holiday season.

Although the market normally takes place on Saturdays, market manager David Bean said it is being moved up to Wednesday, Dec. 23, because of

the holidays.

“Friday is the day that most of our merchants use to prepare for the following Saturday morning market,” Bean said. But because Friday is Christmas, the market will offer a holiday edition from 9 a.m. until noon on Wednesday.”

Along with artisan merchants, produce and seafood vendors, the Wednesday holiday market will emphasize baked goods.

“No time to bake dozens of cookies or make the perfect pies? The options available from the market’s bakers will be as-

tonishing,” he said. “All of the market’s bakeries are now taking special orders for holiday sweets and confections, to be picked up at the Dec. 23 special market day.”

As for the work by artisans, John Chandler, who manages that section of the market, said pottery, leather goods, paintings, and fashions will be offered.

The Ocean Pines Farmers & Artisans Market will return to its marketplace at White Horse Park on Saturday, Jan. 2. Market winter hours are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., through March 2021.

Artist proposals accepted now

(Dec. 17, 2020) The Worcester County Arts Council, in partnership with the Worcester County Library, announce a new initiative: “Artist in Residence” program.

In efforts to make art more accessible to underserved communities, this program is intended to connect the community with local, working artists and to provide free-of-charge creative and educational opportunities to residents in a way that supports cultural and artistic exchange.

The Arts Council is currently accepting proposals from artists who are accustomed to virtual interaction, who are willing to produce online art content with the assistance of the li-

See ARTISTS Page 11

Berlin Mayor and Council Briefs

Continued from Page 8

tions went to 7 Burley St. and 614 William St.

Voting for the People’s Choice Award is currently taking place on social media.

Water repairs

Fleetwood said Stormwater and Wastewater Superintendent Jamey Latchum and his crew fixed a leak from a severed wastewater pipe in a

resident’s home on Burley Street. Latchum had to find equipment to plug that leak from a significant distance, Mayor Zackery Tyndall said. The cost of the wastewater pipe repairs were borne by the homeowner, Fleetwood added.

Furthermore, Latchum said a fire hydrant and two water valves were replaced on the corner of North Main Street and Bryan Avenue.

He added that a water service tap was conducted on West Street Tues-

day.

As of last week, Latchum’s department has replaced 18 of the nearly 450 water valves in town this year. Those 18 water valves were about 40 years old.

United Way

Jensen encourages town employees to participate in United Way of the Lower Eastern Shore, which serves communities in Dorchester, Somer-

set, Wicomico and Worcester counties. The agency helps reduce the achievement gap between low and middle income students, advance the financial security of families and individuals and improve access to and awareness of local health and wellness services.

“I think this year more than ever local agencies really need the help,” she said. “The nice thing about United Way is all the money does stay on the Eastern Shore.”

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Although Berlin's sewer utility currently has significant debt, the sewer utility financial picture projects a decrease in deficit over the next five years, said Jean Holloway from Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc. (SERCAP).
CHART COURTESY SERCAP



Berlin's utility finances projected for years

Jean Holloway advises town officials to increase water, sewer rates in near future

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Dec. 17, 2020) Berlin government needs to narrow the gap between the water it pumps and the water it bills, Jean Holloway, from Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc. (SERCAP) in Delaware and Eastern Maryland told the mayor and Town Council Monday.

Holloway's advice came during her report on the evaluation and financial predictions of the water and sewer utilities.

SERCAP, which helps ensure that people in rural areas have clean and affordable drinking water, wastewater facilities and other services, has been assisting Berlin at no charge.

Holloway gave a presentation to the mayor and council in late August 2019. As a result of covid-19, a full rate analysis was paused.

Holloway's presentation on Monday was not a rate study, but an assessment of financial projections and some recommendations for action because some issues require immediate action to sustain the town's utilities.

ties.
"There's always three things in any preliminary rate analysis that I recommend be done before you even think about the rates. One is to get a handle on collections, and at the time (in August 2019) Berlin had an excellent collection rate. It was above what I usually recommend, which is 25 percent," Holloway said. "The second thing that I recommend is reducing or eliminating altogether any gallons that are included in the minimum bill."

The third and significant recommendation is to get a handle on non-revenue water.

Holloway said non-revenue water is lost or unbilled water that still costs to produce.

Non-revenue water can be real losses (gallons) or apparent losses on paper.

"If you're losing water, you're losing sewer revenue as well as water revenue," she said.

Holloway again recommended that the Town Council replace the town's water meters because they are under-registering.

The American Water Works Association (AWWA) suggests no more than 10 percent of water should be non-revenue water.

Berlin's annual loss from 11 months of figures is 25 percent of production.

"The highest month was a 41 percent gap between what was produced and what was billed," Holloway said. "The lowest was 13 percent."

That 25 percent annual loss is translated into 37 million gallons of water that is not paid for but is being produced. That equates to \$157,482 lost in water revenue and \$252,565 lost in sewer revenue in only 11 months.

"Now, that may not be translated into gallon for gallon, dollar for dollar that's actually lost, because there's a lot of ways you can narrow the gap between production and what you're getting billed for," she said. "But even if it's only half that, you're losing a lot of money by this lost water."

Non-revenue water in Berlin is primarily caused by the age of meters that under-register.

"Also, as I understand it, the ... register does not trip until it gets to the next 1,000 gallons," Holloway said.

Paper loss may be caused by soft-

ware and record inaccuracies by town administration.

Holloway added that conservatively 5 percent of water volume is likely in the lines, which creates a line loss.

Other sources of non-revenue water are leaks, hydrant flushing, storage tank refills, line breaks, repairs, filter backwash fire flows, authorized uses that are not charged such as for town buildings and fire houses and unauthorized uses such as stealing the service.

The water utility financial picture showed total costs for the 2020 base year with 54 percent of costs for operation, 38 percent of costs for personnel and 8 percent of costs for reserves.

"The water system has no debt as you know, but it's projected to have a deficit over the next six years," Holloway said.

She added that the water deficit can be significantly reduced or even eliminated by replacing meters.

"I also would suggest, before that's even thought about, a water audit, which we can also help with, to determine the actual gallons lost versus apparent loss," Holloway continued.

Meanwhile, the sewer utility has

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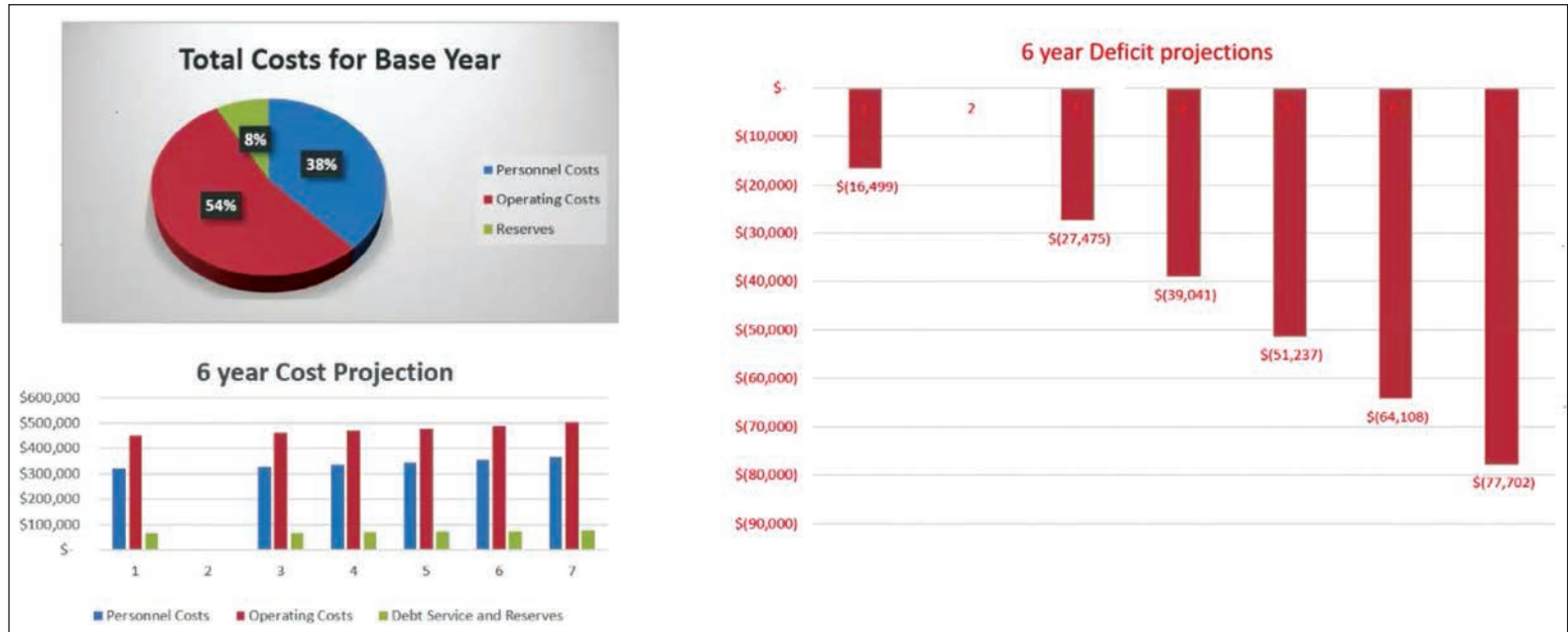
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Berlin's water utility financial picture projects a deficit over the next six years because of non-revenue water, said Jean Holloway from Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc. (SERCAP).
CHART COURTESY SERCAP

Artists to receive monthly stipend

Town needs to bill water produced

Continued from Page 9

brary's resources, and who have a direct connection to the local arts community.

Artists spanning all mediums (traditional/fine art; performance; film-making; musical; creative writing, poetry, etc.) are encouraged to apply.

Each artist in residence is expected to plan and present at least two interactive sessions, workshops, public programs, or other forms of community engagement during each month of the residency. These can be for a specific age groups or open for all.

Residents artists will receive a monthly stipend (programming supplies provided by the library) and a virtual exhibition/celebration of artist's work via Worcester County Arts Council and Worcester County Library website and social media platforms.

Proposals for the winter residency (January - March 2021) will be accepted until Dec. 31. Application for Art in Residence Program is available on the Arts Council's website: www.worcestercountyartscouncil.org.

Continued from Page 10

significant debt.

The sewer utility financial picture showed total costs for the 2020 base year with 37 percent of costs for operation, 29 percent of costs for personnel and 34 percent of costs for reserves and debt service.

"The sewer deficit looks like it's going to lessen over the course of the five-year period. It's at its highest right now," Holloway said. "But the thing that struck me is that one-third of your costs go to debt service and reserves."

That debt-to-revenue ratio is very unfavorable to any lender or funder, she added.

In the near term, Holloway said town officials should increase rates to make up for the projected deficit until a cost recovery rate can be adopted. She also recommended the town staff

develop a plan and timetable to replace water meters and associated software. The sewer found debt load should be examined for possible retirement or refinancing options as well, she said.

Furthermore, a cost recovery rate analysis should be conducted for both water and sewer. The town staff should identify funding options and apply for funds to replace meters. Holloway said she will provide alternatives for restructuring the rates based on the rate study.

In the long-term, both utilities should work toward full cost recovery and sustainability, Holloway said.

SERCAP can assist the town staff with developing a water meter replacement plan by identifying sources of funding for water meter replacement, helping with applications for funding, conducting a full

cost recovery rate analysis and restructuring and conducting a water audit.

She also said it can help investigate opportunities for re-financing existing debt and setting up an asset management plan to make both systems more sustainable.

According to Jamey Latchum, the town's stormwater and wastewater superintendent, 70 percent of water meters are 25-30 years old, while the lift of a meter is between 10 and 15 years.

Holloway also told the mayor and council that the town needs to establish a capital reserve and address the water loss.

Responding to Councilman Jack Orris, Natalie Saleh, Berlin's finance director, said the first part of replacing the water meters is to apply for grants to fund the project.

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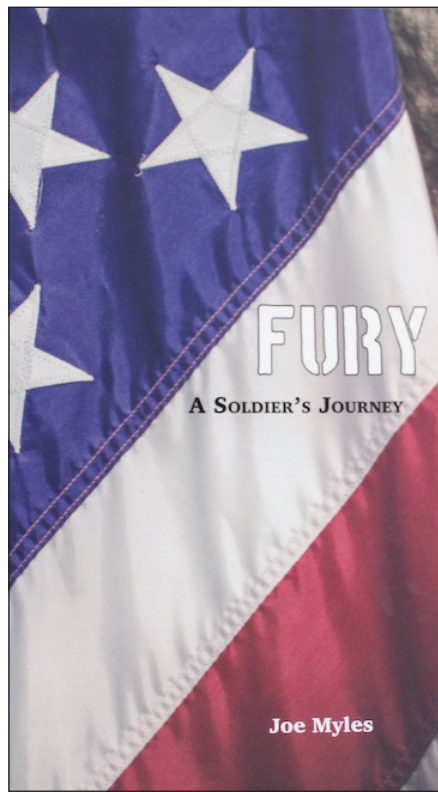
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OC resident writes autobiography

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Dec. 17, 2020) Ocean City resident Joe Myles has published an autobiography called “Fury: A Soldier’s Journey” about his service in Vietnam between 1968 and 1969.

“When I went to Vietnam, I was coming out of a special program in the states to create sergeants. So, I went into Vietnam as a sergeant after one year in service,” Myles said. “I was immediately given a platoon to lead with the 1st Infantry Division, which is usually a lieutenant or a first lieutenant’s position.”

He added that he led about 30 men through daily search-and-destroy missions, which later became “search-and-rescue missions” in the U.S. Army.

After 50-plus years, Myles was in-

spired to write a book about his experiences in the Vietnam War to leave a firsthand account for his relatives.



Joe Myles

“I hadn’t spoken of my events or service or anything having to do with that time period to my kids, wife or anybody,” he said. “I wanted to get it down on paper for the kids especially.”

Myles said his few pages of notes developed into a 174-page paperback book published by Salt Water Media in Berlin and released in March. The autobiography also includes pictures from his service in Vietnam.

“The fact that I started writing ... opened up more thoughts of what I kind of put in the back of my head, I

guess, and it has gotten easier to talk about it,” he said. “I was thinking that there’s a lot of soldiers, soldier’s wives and children of soldiers that might even have a question about what when on in their husbands’ or fathers’ lives.”

Myles believes most soldiers can identify with the first part of the autobiography.

“The basic training and advanced infantry training I went through most soldiers encountered the same experiences,” he said. “First of all, it was the new experiences that no one in civilian life encounters, such as having a drill sergeant decide your life’s actions — when to sleep, when to eat, how to stand, run, march, dress.”

“Fury: A Soldier’s Journey” is available for \$19.95 at Amazon, Walmart.com, and Google Books, Barnes & Noble, The Greyhound Independent Bookstore and Fine Art Gallery on South Main Street in Berlin, Salt Water Media in Berlin and directly from Myles.

After being discharged from the service, Myles spent 18 years working in the elevator trade.

“Right before I went in the service, I started an intern program with the [Montgomery Elevator], building elevators and installing and maintaining [them],” he said.

He installed elevators and escalators at Woody’s Department Store in the Iverson Mall in Hillcrest Heights, Maryland.

He went on to buy an elevator company and operated it for several years before selling it in 1995.

Later, he opened up Little Italy on the Shore, an Italian restaurant, in Ocean City. After selling the restaurant, Myles worked in real estate with Long and Foster until he retired.

Myles moved to Ocean City full-time in 1996, but he has owned properties in the area since 1984.

In addition, Myles belongs to American Legion Post 166 on 24th Street.

For more information, contact Myles at realchefjoe@yahoo.com.



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Boxcar on Main to officially open Fri. in downtown Berlin

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Dec. 17, 2020 The newest restaurant on Berlin's menu, Boxcar on Main, officially opens Friday at the former DiFebo's restaurant location at 104 N. Main St. downtown.



Paul Suplee

Paul Suplee, the chef and owner, took occupancy of the space on Nov. 1 and renovated the venue in six weeks.

"The Berlin location is, of course, the home of 'The Runaway Bride' since it was the Berlin Hardware Store," he said. Suplee added that the atmosphere of Boxcar on Main differs from his Boxcar40 restaurant on Gumboro Road in Pittsville with high ceilings and big windows, which brighten the venue.

"With the walk-in traffic, it's a different vibe altogether," he said.

Boxcar40 has more of a rustic, historic feel.

"It is built in the original Pittsville firehouse, with exposed brick walls and rich walnut wood," Suplee said. "Some of the original flooring was even used to build the bar upstairs."

Suplee said he will begin remodeling the upstairs of the Berlin restaurant in January with plans for an intimate bar, where local artists can perform acoustic music.

Suplee held open houses Thursday through Sunday last week at Boxcar on Main.

"We offered food off the menu, but we just kind of did a chef's table, where we just brought [them] food and filled them up," Suplee said.

The restaurant offered salmon on a Sicilian lemon arugula, caprese salad, shrimp and grits and brie with home-made preserves.

Suplee said the open houses were successful, adding that Boxcar on Main served about 20 guests on Thursday, 90 guests on Saturday and another 60 on Sunday.

"I've been trying to get into Berlin for years. It's just awesome to be here," he added. "I knew it was going to be a warm welcome, but I seriously can't believe how amazing it has been."

Suplee said he has received many positive responses from the community, such as "You're going to kill it," "This is the best thing to happen to Berlin in years," and "I love how everything in here has a story."

The restaurant was closed for staff training Monday through Wednesday.

Boxcar on Main opens full-time on Friday. The restaurant will be open six days a week for lunch and dinner

See BERLIN Page 15



Boxcar on Main, 104 N. Main St. in Berlin, had a successful open house on Sunday from 5-9 p.m. prior to the restaurant's grand opening this Friday. PHOTO COURTESY PAUL SUPLEE

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006131

Snapshots



MARY COOPER/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

ANNIVERSARY

GI Jane's Resale, located at 11312 Manklin Creek Rd. Unit 5 in Ocean Pines, celebrates its one-year anniversary with ribbon-cutting ceremony on Nov. 11.



MARY COOPER/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

OPENING CEREMONY

Sweet Shack celebrates opening in Ocean Pines at 11312 Manklin Creek Rd Unit 6, in July, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Nov. 11.



SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

MEMBER RECOGNIZED

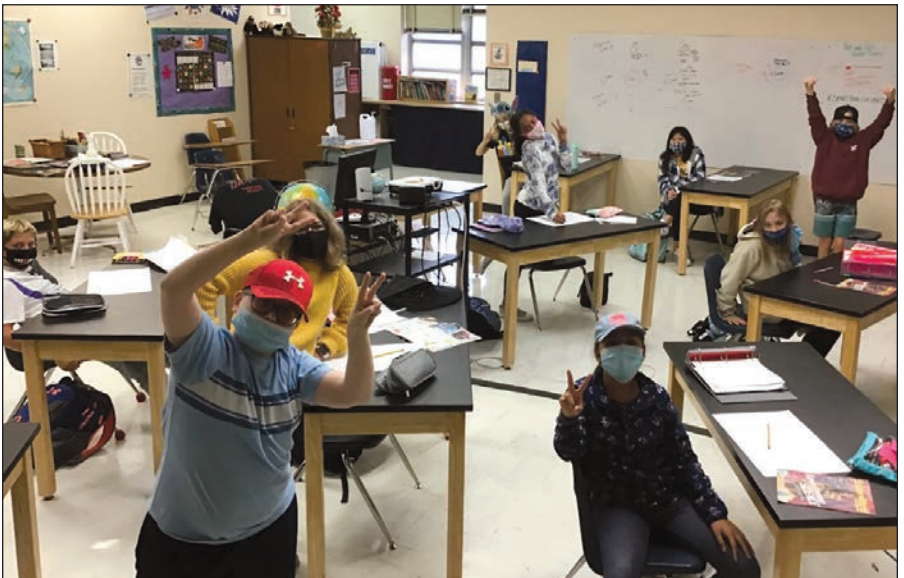
As a commemorative partner of the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration, the General Levin Winder Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution is encouraged to recognize Vietnam-era servicemen and women. On Veterans Day, the chapter honored member Carol Wanzer, right, by presenting her with a DAR certificate recognizing her military service along with a Vietnam Veteran lapel pin and copy of the Presidential proclamation for the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War. Wanzer was a nurse in the US Army during 1973-1976. She is pictured with Commemorative Events Chair Pat Arata.



SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

RETIREMENT

The Worcester County Commissioners present a retirement commendation to James "Poncho" Waters for contributing 22 years of dedicated service to Worcester County Government as a maintenance worker within the Water and Wastewater Division of Public Works.



SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

PHOTO OP

Students in Wendy Nash's sixth grade science class at Berlin Intermediate take a break to pose for the camera after reading the Science World article, "Understanding a New Virus," last month. They created posters explaining how to lower the risk of getting the virus and are social distancing, wearing masks and washing their hands for at least 20 seconds.

Atlantic Physical Therapy partners

Top-rated shore provider joins forces with Phoenix to expand outreach in future

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(Dec. 17, 2020) Looking to expand its market presence, Atlantic Physical Therapy merged operations last week with Phoenix Physical Therapy.

Atlantic Physical Therapy Director of Clinical Operations Bobby Hammond III said his namesake father founded the company in 1998 to provide exceptional patient care.

“As dad has gotten older, his health has started to decline and more has fallen on me,” he said. “I wanted to partner with a company that is going to continue to help us

Berlin restaurant offers American, Southern cuisine

Continued from Page 13

as well as for brunch, lunch and dinner on Sundays.

The operating hours will be Monday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. or later if it's busy and Sunday with brunch served from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. then lunch and dinner served until 9 p.m.

Suplee said that the menu of Boxcar on Main is different from Boxcar40's menu to encourage people to visit both locations.

Although most people probably would not open a restaurant during a pandemic, Suplee said he could not be happier with his decision, even if it was a gamble.

“I am not an ordinary person, in general. I tend to do things my own way, and it shows,” he said. “Luckily, I have found a team of players who are as enthralled by the unorthodox as I am. I believe that this synergy will be fun and positive for Berlin.”

The Berlin restaurant's menu features American cuisine with a Southern style, such as steaks, seafood and brick-roasted specialties, such as baked brie with homemade preserves and roasted root vegetable raclette.

“Boxcar40, our flagship, specializes in smoked treats such as pork ribs, pulled pork and brisket,” Suplee said. “We also offer hand cut steaks and pride ourselves as the only restaurant in Wicomico County who offers ‘you catch, we cook’ for anglers.”

In addition, Suplee's recipes can be found weekly in Bayside Gazette.

For more information about the restaurants, visit <https://www.boxcar40.com/?fbclid=IwARoH-nKEYrIR4oU1STrcLSJDyTa2YcV5fMqSl7tghH2Ca8CSyT3HPPLWjI>.



Bobby Hammond

build our brand and expand throughout the mid-Atlantic region.”

Suzanne Manella, Phoenix Physical Therapy vice president of marketing said the company was established in 1997 has more than 120 clinics in nearly a dozen states.

“We believe we're a leader in the middle market for physical therapy,” she said. “We have the ability to be small enough to care but big enough to make a difference.”

Manella said Phoenix Physical Therapy has remained focused on growth and expanded into Ohio and Colorado during 2020.

“Part of our growth strategy is to ... identify markets we already have some ... presence in and be able to expand ... through acquisition,” she said.

Phoenix Physical Therapy, which is headquartered in Cranberry Township outside Pittsburgh, now adds Atlantic Physical Therapy's nine Eastern Shore-based offices to its roster of providers.

“We already have some clinics in the area, so this was a great opportunity for us to grow that presence by partnering with an established firm,”

she said.

Manella said Phoenix Physical Therapy remains focused on operating community-based clinics that retain connectivity with patients.

“Phoenix can help provide some of that back office support to allow Bobby and his team to focus more on patient care,” she said. “The patient always comes first.”

Hammond said joining forces with Phoenix Physical Therapy seemed a logical step as both businesses share a common vision.

“Our cultures aligned perfectly,” he said. “I wanted to continue the vision that we originally had and continue to grow.”

Hammond said Atlantic Physical Therapy hopes to develop a larger footprint than its current nine offices in Ocean Pines, Berlin, West Ocean City, Salisbury, along with locations in Delaware.

“Our plans are to expand throughout the mid-Atlantic region and all along the Eastern Shore,” he said.

“I want the people on the Eastern Shore to know my father and I are so grateful for the support,” he said. “We're going to continue to support them.”

To learn more contact Atlantic Physical Therapy at 410-208-3630 or 1-888-208-3828.

Business Briefs

Staff addition

Dr. Freaw Dejenie has joined Atlantic General Health System's medical staff to provide care at Atlantic General Gastroenterology.

Prior to moving to the Eastern Shore, Dejenie practiced at Parkview Regional Medical Center in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and then Medstar Health's Southern Maryland Hospital and Montgomery Medical Center.



Dr. F. Dejenie

Dejenie completed his internship and residency in internal medicine as well as his gastroenterology fellowship at Howard University Hospital in Washington, D.C.

He received his medical degree from Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. Dejenie is board certified in gastroenterology, and has been diagnosing and treating ailments of the digestive system since 2013.

Dejenie provides consultations at Atlantic General Gastroenterology in Berlin, as well as Atlantic General Specialty Care, in Ocean View, Delaware.

He is currently accepting patients. To schedule an appointment in Berlin, call 410-629-1450, or 302-541-9690 for Ocean View.

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Opinion

Please send all letters and other editorial submissions to editor@baysidegazette.com by 5 p.m. Monday.

Public involvement will be key to rate changes

The Town of Berlin’s financial situation is like that of many small businesses that provide a great product, but can’t charge quite enough for it without making the customers angry.

It’s a tough spot to be in, as the mayor and council will acknowledge after hearing consultant Jean Holloway advise them, again, that they must raise the sewer rates to cover its costs. Holloway, who helps the town at no charge as the Delaware and Eastern Maryland state manager of the non-profit Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, also told town officials they will need to raise the water rates at some point as well.

Neither of those recommendations are what anyone wants to hear, but that’s what happens when prices are kept artificially low to accommodate one objective or another.

In Berlin’s circumstance it might have happened because of less-than-stellar financial management in years past, or it also could have been the belief that bargain rates would spur growth, which would cover the income gap by producing an increase in property tax revenue.

How or why it happened makes no difference at this point, since the question before the mayor and council is how to fix these problems — and build up an unencumbered rainy day fund — without getting kicked out of office the next time they face the voters.

Regardless of the course they choose, establishing an acceptable remedy will require involving the public via meetings, discussions and workshops, and, most importantly, acknowledgment by the public that something must be done.

There’s nothing to be gained by delaying the conversation, and the best time to begin developing a strategy would be early in the new year.



“This isn’t your regular Zoom meeting Frank, this is going to be a 2020 CHRISTMAS ZOOM!”

Tenants advised to take protections

(Dec. 17, 2020) Mid-Shore Pro Bono (MSPB) is ready to help tenants who are being evicted, even after Gov. Larry Hogan’s executive order halted certain evictions during the covid pandemic.

And while Maryland courts have also issued their own halt for failure to pay rent cases through the end of the year, people are still being evicted from their homes.

While currently there are limited protections available for tenants, these protections do not automatically prevent eviction. These protections may delay an eventual eviction, but they do not mean that tenants do not have to pay their rent. Rent will eventually have to be paid.

Tenants will still need to take the following actions to safeguard themselves and their families:

- Sign a statement about the impact covid-19 has had on their ability to pay rent.
- Provide proof that their income was affected by the pandemic, and could include loss of job, loss of wages, closure of the place of work, or the need to miss work to take care of school-age children.
- If a tenant receives an eviction notice or is served a

summons to appear in court for a landlord tenant issue, they must appear in court to protect their rights.

MSPB is advising tenants to apply for local emergency assistance and to keep records of the programs they apply for and if funding was provided. They need to know that their landlord can still evict them if their lease is ending and the landlord does not agree to renew the lease.

Tenants may have defenses to a failure to pay rent case under the Center for Disease Control Declaration, which provides protections for people who have made an effort to get assistance, earned less than \$99,000 in 2020, lost income or experienced increased medical expenses due to covid-19, made best efforts to make partial payments, if evicted, would likely become homeless.

Evictions are still taking place and landlords are obtaining judgements which gives them the ability to collect the rent later.

In general, when a tenant fails to pay rent, the landlord can file a complaint with the court to either recover the rent money or evict the tenant. There are usually two

steps in the process. The first is a failure-to-pay-rent hearing. If the tenant is unable to come up with the rent money, then the landlord can file for a warrant of restitution, which if successful will result in the tenant being evicted.

Maryland’s courts have gone back to Phase II, which means that until Jan. 15, 2021, the courts are limiting the types of matters they are hearing, limiting in-person appearances in court, and encouraging use of remote technology.

During this time, landlords can file a complaint in District Court, but their matter will not be heard until after Jan. 15, 2021. Failure to pay rent hearings scheduled between Nov. 15, 2020 and Jan. 15, 2021 have been postponed and will be re-scheduled by the court. If you have questions about when your hearing is scheduled, you should call the court.

Tenants in Worcester County who are behind on rent can seek help online at

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-eviction-declaration.html>, or contact Diakonia at 410-213-0923 or online at <https://diakoniaoc.org/>.

BAYSIDE

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Worcester County ice rink open for skating

(Dec. 17, 2020) Worcester County Recreation & Parks staff have announced the December hours for open skating on the synthetic ice rink at the Worcester County Recreation Center in Snow Hill.

“Last year over 200 skater participants visited over a seven-day time period,” Recreation Program Manager Allen Swiger said. “We’re excited to be able to expand this year’s ice rink schedule to 22 days with extended hours. Our safety protocols

have all been vetted through the Worcester County Health Department, making ice skating the perfect opportunity to have fun indoors this holiday season.”

Children under the age of 14 must be accompanied by an immediate family adult member at all times. Children 6 and under are not permitted to skate without an immediate family adult on the ice with them.

Reservations are required, and time slots are limited to 15 partici-

pants per hour to coincide with Maryland’s phased reopening plan and to protect public health during the current pandemic.

Spots are available on a first-call-first-serve basis. Call 410-632-2144 to reserve a spot. When making reservations, include the names of each member in the party.

The cost is \$2 per person for all skaters and skate observers. The price includes skate rentals, 45 minutes of skate time, and reserves a time slot.

The following dates are open to skate from noon to 7 p.m.: Dec. 21-23, 26-30; and Jan. 2-3, 5, 7, 9-10, 12, 14, 16-17, 19, 21, and 23-24.

Protective masks are required at all times. All recreation programs and special events adhere to state and local health department protocols that may be modified pending covid-19 updates.

For more information, contact Swiger, at 410-632-2144, ext. 2520 or email aswiger@co.worcester.md.us.

Community Briefs

New position



Hunter Walton

Hunter Walton, a member of the Ocean City-Berlin Optimist Club, was recently named the new Lt. Governor for Optimist International Maryland South Delaware Region, Zone 2.

Dean’s List

Alexander Wright of Berlin, was named to the Dean’s List at Bethel University’s College of Professional Studies for the term ending Sept. 30.

Samuel Tinkler of Berlin qualified for the fall 2020 Dean’s List at Belmont University in Nashville Tennessee.

Drawing

Purchase tickets through Dec. 31 for the Kiwanis Club of Greater Ocean Pines-Ocean City’s drawings to be held every evening in 2021. Tickets cost \$20 each and are valid for 365 drawings.

Payouts are \$20 per evening, except for special dates when winnings are \$50-\$250. All proceeds benefit local scholarships and youth programs.

Tickets may be purchased from any Kiwanis member, or at the Ocean Pines Farmers and Artisans Market, held Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in White Horse Park. Visit www.kiwanisofopoc.org or Facebook at Kiwanis Club of Ocean Pines/Ocean City for more details.

Fundraiser

Eastern Shore Type 1 Diabetes Support Foundation is hosting a fundraiser ticket drop auction online at est1dsf.ourraffle.org.

There are 46 baskets and gift certificate packages available. Visit the group’s Facebook page to view the

silent auction items. Winners will be announced on Dec. 19.

The foundation’s mission is to provide support for individuals living with Type 1 Diabetes and those that may be caring for someone with the disease by raising funds to send children to camp, currently.

The foundation is working to set up a scholarship program for a graduating Type 1 diabetic senior and to create a non-medical support network on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Southern Sussex County Delaware.

For more information, reach out on Facebook, email Katie@fraoc.com or call 410-251-4793.

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Cuisine

Suplee's recipe for roasted rack of lamb

The Christmas pajamas are on their way, finally. Yes, it is starting to feel like Christmas, at least a little. I can't believe that it is just over a week from now. I guess I had better start shopping.

With the drop in temperature (after warm days that followed cold days that followed even warmer days – welcome to Maryland), I stare out my back window at the trees that have lost all their leaves.

With a somewhat moderate winter thus far, it still feels like November to me and that Thanksgiving has



By Paul Suplee,
MBA, CEC, PC-3

yet to occur.

But I know that such is not the case. Thanksgiving has come and gone, 2020 is almost over, and 2021 is just staring at us licking his chops. Lord only knows what next year has in store for us.

So what do I do? I get ready to roast some lamb chops; that rich and buttery meat that I never cared for as a kid.

It wasn't until I worked at Michel Richard's Citronelle that I gained an understanding and appreciation for properly cooked lamb.

Up to that point, we would have leg of lamb at Easter as a family and I couldn't stand it. In fact, I loathed Easter dinner because of it.

But the rack of lamb is a different thing altogether. It is incredibly flavorful with a tender bite and great fat if you handle it correctly.

Served with a red wine that you would serve with a steak (Malbec, Cabernet, Shiraz et al.), few things can rival its deliciousness.

One great trick that I learned at a food show a few years back is frenching the bones of the rack (removing any excess meat, sinew and fat) with twine.

It is a very handy technique and does a great job. Plus, it saves your time and energy, and you don't have to scrape the bones with your knife, relieving yourself from that noise.

Yes, that noise; I know you know what I'm talking about. It is akin to running fingernails down the chalkboard. Just writing that gives me the willies.

Another favorite cut of mine is the neighboring lamb loin. An incredibly tender, bone-free alternative, you can cook it similarly.

At Blue Moon, we would coat the loin with ras al hanout, sear it in a hot pan with some clarified butter.

After a few minutes, we would turn it, remove the pan from the flame and let it rest for about 10 minutes. The result was always a perfect medium rare beauty.

But I digress. Back to the rack.

Lamb racks come in many different sizes and qualities. American lamb tends to be huge (insert "Merka!" here), while the wee lambs of New Zealand have a wonderful flavor in smaller packages.

Since the price is fairly high, get to know which one you like the best. It will save you time and frustration in the long run.

Either way, if you get the chance to work with



lamb chops or loin of lamb, do it as these are classic additions to your ever-expanding repertoire.

As you look at the recipe, you should note that nothing in it is difficult. In fact, it is overly simple as long as you follow some simple suggestions.

When you are cleaning the rack, remove any sinew and silverskin (without damaging the loin meat itself) and trim it neatly.

I like to leave a squared off patch of fat, maybe about 1/4" deep on the back of the rack, as it adds tremendous flavor.

It will take you some time to properly trim the rack, but don't get frustrated. Do yourself a favor and look up "Frenching a lamb loin with twine" and you will run across some great, simple tutorials.

And as we enter the cold months of 2020, herb-roasted lamb will be there to warm us up.

Roasted Rack of Lamb

serves 2

1 rack of lamb, frenched
1/2 c. bread crumbs, plain
1/2 c. good quality parmesan cheese
4 tbsp. fresh broadleaf parsley leaves
1 tsp. thyme
1/2 tsp. rosemary
Olive oil, as needed
Dijon mustard, as needed
Salt and pepper, as needed

1 lemon wedge

- If the rack has fat on it, clean it, ensuring to leave a nice, squared-off piece on the back of the rack. Fat is flavor, and we don't want to lose any of that.

- Score the fat in a criss-cross manner and set aside.

- In a blender or food processor, combine the bread crumbs, cheese and herbs. Pulse until smooth and bring it all together with just a touch of olive oil.

- Season the rack with salt and pepper.

- Sear or grill the rack in a hot pan with oil or clarified butter to get a nice crust on it; don't simply bake it. Treat it like a steak.

- After your crust has developed (and your kitchen smells delicious), remove and place on a plate.

- Brush the rack with mustard, and coat with the bread crumb concoction.

- Place in a 450F oven until the internal temperature is 125F and remove from the oven and let it rest for at least 15 minutes.

- While the rack is resting, squeeze the lemon wedge over the entire rack. This is a lively addition to this incredibly rich dish.

- Slice and serve with a good, starchy side and some roasted vegetables.

—Paul Suplee is a Professor of Culinary Arts at Wor-Wic Community College and owner of boxcar40. Visit him at www.boxcar40.com.

Puzzles

GET OUT OF HERE!
BY TONY ORBACH / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Tony Orbach, of Montclair, N.J., is a construction-project manager, saxophonist and crossword constructor. Tony's love of puzzles runs in the family. "My father was a big crossword solver, and as a teen, I would look over his shoulder and help." Tony once made a Puns and Anagrams crossword for his dad. "He loved it and made me one in return." By "my father," incidentally, Tony means the actor Jerry Orbach of Broadway and television fame. — W.S.

ACROSS

1 Impromptu musical get-together, informally

8 Counting tools

13 Most up to the task

19 Not much

20 Oddball

22 Commotion

23 Archaeologist's assertion about a finding?

25 Jackson not in the Jackson 5

26 Benchmark: Abbr.

27 Members of the genus Lepus

28 Some overseas seasons

30 Common vinaigrette ingredient

31 Russian pancakes

33 Swim-team guru?

36 Geri _____, late jazz pianist

38 Authority

39 Used to be

40 Hire Phil Collins's longtime band for a gig?

44 Brand that comes out a head?

45 Explosive sound

49 Curtain-call actions

50 One of 32 in the Thai alphabet

51 The Serengeti, e.g.?

54 TV journalist Curry

55 Long

56 Press

57 Covers with goo

58 Speck

59 Quits

62 Shadow during an eclipse

63 Knowing everything that's available to view on Netflix?

67 Look forward to

68 Clay-based

69 Unpleasant

70 Clishmaclaver or bavardage, to use some fancy language

72 Trim

73 A/C measures

74 Hwy. offense

77 Amenity offered at an internet cafe?

79 Nickname for baseball great Ernie Banks

81 Gets out in dodgeball, say

82 Sticks in

83 Yes, in Brest

84 Bit of reading at a bar mitzvah?

86 Director Lee

87 Entertain

89 Deconstruct for analysis

90 Stand-up's bombs?

95 Keys near G's

98 Actor Rutgers of "Blind Fury"

99 Keister

100 Less friendly

101 Assistance

104 Peninsula shared by Italy, Slovenia and Croatia

106 Art-shop worker's manual?

110 Urbanize

111 Spit it out!

112 Part of a canopy

113 The plus side

114 Cuisine that specializes in beef barbecue

115 No-parking-zone fixture

21 Short race, for short

24 Your: Fr.

29 "When the country was fallin' apart, Betsy Ross got it all _____ up" ("Maude" theme lyric)

32 Albanian coins

33 Something that's often rigged

34 TV's Burrell and baseball's Cobb

35 Looks longingly

36 Band that won the 1974 Eurovision Song Contest

37 Minnesota's state bird

38 Orlando-to-Miami dir.

41 Role for Patti LuPone and Madonna

42 Brand X

43 Flock member

44 Spotted bean

45 "Well, I'll be," to a Brit

46 Offspring of a 43-Down

47 Taiwanese PCs

48 Big butte

51 A dime a dozen, say?

52 It can help you get a grip

53 Drops (down) heavily

55 Beautifully worded

56 Joe Jackson's "_____ Really Going Out With Him?"

58 Van Gogh painting that once fetched a record amount at auction (\$53.9 million)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
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110							111						112					
113								114						115				

59 Hair-pattern protector

60 _____ nous

61 Get in gear?

63 Dubbing need

64 Used a stun gun on

65 _____ pants

66 Take a dive, maybe

67 Digital-imaging company that used to make film

71 Apt rhyme for "baloney"

73 Dating notation: Abbr.

74 Start of a seasonal request

75 "Fluff Yeah" slipper sandals, e.g.

76 "Gotcha"

78 Helical bit

79 Be off the mark

80 GPS calculation: Abbr.

81 Exam for H.S. jrs.

84 Original tale of robot rebellion

85 Boxed a bit

86 Untethered

87 Biblical mount

88 Team spirit

90 Spanish term of affection between young women

91 Spring in northern Africa

92 Many rescues

93 Gooseflesh-inducing, maybe

94 Some coin tossers

95 Serve well?

96 Liquor-store purchase

97 Suspicious

100 Where Shiraz is located

102 Pic to click

103 Corp. division

105 Exclamations of regret

107 Combine

108 Green of "Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children"

109 Always, in verse

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HARD - 16

Fill in the blank spaces in the grid so that every vertical column, every horizontal row and every 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9, without repeating any. There is really only one solution to each puzzle.

Answers to last week's puzzles

9	4	8	7	3	2	5	1	6
2	1	3	4	5	6	8	9	7
6	7	5	9	1	8	3	2	4
8	9	1	3	4	7	6	5	2
3	2	4	1	6	5	7	8	9
5	6	7	2	8	9	1	4	3
7	8	9	6	2	1	4	3	5
1	3	6	5	9	4	2	7	8
4	5	2	8	7	3	9	6	1



Calendar

Please send calendar items to editor@baysidegazette.com by 5 p.m. Monday. All community-related activities will be published at no charge.

Thurs., Dec. 17

CPAP MASK FITTING
Atlantic General Hospital Sleep Disorders Diagnostic Center, 9733 Healthway Drive. Free mask fitting clinic for patients who are having trouble adjusting to their CPAP equipment. By appointment only: Robin Rohlfing, 410-641-9726.

WALNUT CHRISTMAS MOUSE CRAFT
Meeting via Facebook, 10:30 AM. Walnuts form the body of this friendly mouse. No registration required. <http://www.worcesterlibrary.org>

DRIVE-THROUGH LIVE NATIVITY
Most Blessed Sacrament Catholic School, 11242 Racetrack Road, 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM. Presented by the Middle School students and complete with real stable animals. Guests are asked to remain in their cars.

AMONG US GAMING SESSION
Join other crewmates to complete tasks before being thwarted by the Imposter Among Us, 7:00 PM. Information on joining our Discord server is at www.worcesterlibrary.org. Participants will also have to download the Among Us game (free on most phones). For 13-17 year olds. Register: <https://worces-terlibrary.libguides.com/discord>.

Fri., Dec. 18

BERLIN BOOK OF THE MONTH
Meeting via Zoom, 2:00 PM. Featuring “Good Omens” by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett. Books are available at the Berlin branch and on Hoopla. Register: www.worcesterlibrary.org under events.

LIVE NATIVITY PAGEANT
Buckingham Presbyterian Church, 20 S. Main St., 5:00 PM. Held on the front lawn.

DRIVE-THROUGH LIVE NATIVITY
Most Blessed Sacrament Catholic School, 11242 Racetrack Road, 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM. Presented by the Middle School students and complete with real stable animals. Guests are asked to remain in their cars.

EASTERN SHORE TYPE 1 DIABETES SUPPORT FOUNDATION FUNDRAISER
Participants are invited to the Annual Ticket drop auction at est1dsf.ourraffle.org. Also, join their page on Facebook for the silent auction items. There are 46 baskets and gift certificate packages available. Ticket sales end 11:59 p.m. on Dec. 18. Winner will be announced on Dec. 19. Info: Katie@fraoc.com or 410-251-4793.

LETTERS TO SANTA
Shore United Bank encourages children

to drop off their letters to Santa in the mailbox located inside the lobby of the bank’s Ocean City location, 12905 Ocean Gateway, during business hours. Letters will be accepted through Dec. 18. Santa’s helpers will take care of the rest. Info: 443-856-2180.

LETTERS TO SANTA
Residents and visitors are invited to drop off their letters to Santa in the vestibule at the Berlin Welcome Center until Dec. 18. Children will receive a letter back from Santa and a coupon for a treat downtown. Info: iwells@berlinmd.gov.

Sat., Dec. 19

VIRTUAL WALK WITH A DOC
Join the group for a virtual Walk with a Doc on the Atlantic General Hospital Facebook page, where there is a short presentation by a doctor on a current health topic, 9:00 AM. Participants can then walk wherever they like and share a selfie on social media with the hashtag #walkedwithagh.

BRUNCH WITH SANTA AND FESTIVAL OF TREES
Princess Royale Hotel, 9100 Coastal Highway, 10:00 AM. The event will feature Christmas trees decorated by Atlantic General Hospital sponsors, breakfast and photos with Santa, children’s crafts and complimentary hot chocolate. Reservations: 410-524-2544, Ext. 2023.

FARMERS & ARTISANS MARKET
Saturdays - White Horse Park, 239 Ocean Parkway, 8:00 AM - 1:00 PM. Shop for everything from fresh local produce to unique handmade artisan goods. Open to the public.

Sun., Dec. 20

DRIVE-THRU LIVE NATIVITY
SonRise Church, 10026 Main St., 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM, Featuring live animals, live actors, music and snacks.

‘CHAMBER MUSIC BY THE SEA’ 2020 FESTIVAL
Hosted on Zoom at 7:00 PM. The program will feature the musical talents of Tom Poster, piano and Elena Urioste, violin and include Clara Schumann Romances, Beethoven Spring Sonata, JukeBox favorites, with some holiday surprises. Tickets: <https://www.wced.foundation/events>.

Mon., Dec. 21

STORY TIME - HATS AND MITTENS WITH A LIBRARY-TO-GO KIT
Meeting via Facebook, 10:30 AM. Listen and watch a delightful, funny, wintery story about a mitten and animals. Also,



PHOTO COURTESY GREGORY PURNELL

GARDEN
The Biddell Family Foundation planted a legacy garden in honor of Rachel Biddell’s birthday at the Bridgetown sign in Berlin .



ALLY LANASA/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

DECORATIONS
The Berlin Fire Company on North Main Street has decorated for the holidays with a gingerbread house near the parking lot entrance.

see what the Library-To-Go kit will be. Ages 2-10 years. No registration required. <http://www.worcesterlibrary.org>

TAKE OFF POUNDS SENSIBLY MEETING
Meeting via conference call, 6:00 PM - 6:30 PM. Dial 605-472-5789, wait for voice command, then press 944874. TOPS is a weekly support and educational group promoting weight loss and healthy lifestyle. Berlin group No. 169. Rose Campion, 410-641-0157

Wed., Dec. 23

FOOD DRIVE
Ocean Pines Community Center, 239 Ocean Parkway, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM. The Kiwanis Club of Greater Ocean Pines-Ocean City will be collecting non-perishable goods for Diakonia in the parking lot.

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY MARKET
White Horse Park, 239 Ocean Parkway, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM. The Ocean Pines

Farmers and Artisans Market for the week of Christmas will be held Dec. 23 rather than Dec. 26. All of the market’s bakeries are now taking special orders to be picked up on Dec. 23. Also featuring artisan merchants and producers of fresh, local fruits and vegetables, gourmet foods, seafood and meats. The market will return to its regular Saturday schedule on Jan. 2. <http://www.ocean-pines.org/web/pages/farmers-artisans-market>

ONGOING EVENTS

WORCESTER COUNTY ICE RINK
The Worcester County Recreation Center in Snow Hill will offer the synthetic ice rink again this year. The following dates are open to skate from 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.; December 21 to 23, 26-30; and January 2-3, 5, 7, 9-10, 12, 14, 16-17, 19, 21, and 23-24. The cost is \$2 for all skaters and observers and includes skate rental and 45 minutes of skate time. Reservations are required: 410-632-2144.

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BY MONDAY

5 P.M.



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Classifieds now appear in Ocean City Today & the Bayside Gazette each week and online at oceancitytoday.com and baysideoc.com.

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EOE

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