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JANUARY 7, 2021

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ALLY LANASA/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

Berlin mayor, council agree on priorities

FY21 will see infrastructure, reserve fund get attention

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 7, 2021) Finances, Heron Park, a community center and utility infrastructure are the priorities that Berlin's elected officials hope to tackle in 2021.

Mayor Zackery Tyndall, who began his first term in October 2020, said he has adopted "more of a hands-on management approach throughout town."



Zackery Tyndall

"I've taken the time to meet with every department and try to better understand how they operate and discuss their short- and their long-term needs," he said. "I've also made it a point to meet with the councilmembers to hear their concerns."

See RESERVE Page 6

Restaurant Week offers good deals on meals in Berlin

Thirteen establishments join promotion next week

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 7, 2021) Thirteen dining locations will offer special meal prices from Jan. 11-17 for the fifth annual Berlin Restaurant Week sponsored by Bunting Realty.

Cam Bunting, the event founder and owner of Bunting Realty on Broad Street, decided to bring restaurant week to Berlin after experiencing

See BERLIN Page 2



Cam Bunting

NATURAL BODY CARE

Kirsten McGuigan, owner of Cetacea Organics, sells handmade organic, non-toxic products outside of The Buzz Meadery at 9040 Worcester Highway in Berlin on Dec. 23, during its bottle release celebration and vendors market.

OPA board's FY21 outlook guarded

Forecasting in time of covid makes setting next budget much greater challenge

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(Jan. 7, 2021) With questions outnumbering answers regarding the continued financial impacts from coronavirus, the 2021 outlook for the Ocean Pines Association Board remains guarded.

President Larry Perrone said the pending fiscal 2021-22 budget would come into sharper focus this week during a multi-day department presentation to the Budget and Finance Committee.

"Our biggest concern is continuing to manage the association through this covid period," he said. "We're trying to make assumptions and educated guesses and hoping we're going to be correct."

Perrone said thoughts vary regard-



Larry Perrone



Doug Parks



Colette Horn

ing the possibility that health safety restrictions will remain in place next summer.

"Some people have the opinion that in March and April the vaccine will be rolled out enough that people will be fine," he said. "Others, and I'm one of them, believe it's going to take until the fall."

Perrone said the initial proposed fiscal 21-22 budget included assessment increases of \$121 for non-waterfront lots and \$221 for residences on the water, but those figures do not account for possible declines in revenue because of coronavirus.

"If the covid situation remains the

same, we're looking at another \$77," he said. "There are a lot of unanswered questions going into the new budget year that starts on May 1."

While likely ending with a budget surplus to close the current fiscal year, Perrone highlighted the importance of roughly \$1.143 million in federal Payroll Protection Program funding the association received in 2020.

"Without the PPP money we probably would have had about a \$900,000 loss this year and probably would have been laying people off," he said.

Perrone said the odds are not favorable for the association to reap any future covid-related funding.

"They sort of closed the doors on not-for-profits after we had gotten our money last year," he said.

Treasurer Doug Parks said the immediate challenge to begin 2021 in-

See MURKY Page 7



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Berlin promoting its restaurants

Continued from Page 1
one in Bethesda, where she was visiting her daughter.

"It's worked out really well," Bunting said. "Everybody enjoys it. We get a lot of people that come to town, and some of the restaurants try something different that they normally maybe wouldn't try to see how that goes over."

The 13 businesses participating are Crush N Crab, The Atlantic Hotel, Fins Ale House and Raw Bar, Blacksmith, Burn Wood Fired Pizza, J & M Meat Market, Baked Dessert Café, Main Street Deli, Rayne's Reef Soda Fountain and Grill, Boxcar on Main, The Globe Gastro Theatre, Pop's Kitchen and On What Grounds?

"The restaurants change, and a lot of times people don't know what's here unless they come here and see," Bunting said. "We actually have a couple new ones."

Boxcar on Main, which opened last month, will offer a three-course meal for \$37 with a choice of four roasted oysters, pork belly or baked brie and homemade preserves for an appetizer, a caesar or caprese salad and a main course of roast pork tenderloin, shrimp and grits, Kauaian salmon, or Brazilian grilled sirloin with chimichurri. Vegetarian options are also available upon request.

Boxcar on Main is open every day from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Pop's Kitchen, another new restaurant in downtown Berlin, will offer pizza packages, \$2 off a quart of soup and a small crab pizza for \$12.95. In addition, customers will get a cup of soup for \$2.95 when they purchase a sub or cheese steak at regular price.

Pop's Kitchen is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The Globe Gastro Theatre will offer \$10 boxed lunches with a sandwich, side and a drink. Sandwich options are pulled pork, smoked chicken salad or smoked turkey sandwich. Side options are succotash, power slaw, collard greens or mac and cheese.

The Globe is open Sunday from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., Monday from 12-10



ALLY LANASA/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

Thirteen eateries will offer special meal prices from Jan. 11-17 for Berlin Restaurant Week, including Baked Dessert Café, which will have deals on savory and sweet items. All sustainable wines will be 20 percent off at the bakery as well.

p.m., Tuesday and Wednesday from 4-10 p.m. and Thursday through Saturday from 12-10 p.m.

On What Grounds? will have a made-to-order breakfast sandwich and small coffee deal for \$6. Customers can upgrade to any other drink and get \$1 off the additional price.

On What Grounds? is open Monday through Saturday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Main Street Deli will serve chicken pot pie for \$6.50, while Rayne's Reef Soda Fountain & Grill will offer a free ice cream with the purchase of a sandwich, fries and a drink.

Main Street Deli is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday from 11 p.m. to 3 p.m.

The operating hours of Rayne's Reef Soda Fountain & Grill are Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Crush N Crab will have a lunch special on a bowl of soup and a sandwich for \$14.99 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. throughout restaurant week. The soup options are chili, cream of crab, Maryland crab or chicken and dumplings. The sandwich options are BLT, six-inch cheesesteak or chicken

cheesesteak or tuna salad.

Featured specials available all day at Crush N Crab are a crab cake sandwich for \$10, crabby fries for \$10 and four pieces of fried chicken for \$10

Crush N Crab will also offer dinner specials between 3-9 p.m., including Chef's Special, two orange crushes, crabby fries, two pieces of fried chicken, and one pound of steamed shrimp, two mini crab cakes and a dessert for \$60; a fried seafood platter with fish, clam strips, shrimp and oysters for \$20; a crab cake platter for \$20 and a steamed seafood platter with a half-pound of shrimp, a pound of mussels and a half-pound of Snow Crab legs for \$30.

All dinner platters are served with two sides and bread.

All food specials are available for curbside pickup, carryout or limited inside dining.

Crush N Crab will also have drink specials for carryout only, including a four-pack of orange crushes for \$20, a four-pack of Barefoot wine for \$15 and a six-pack of Bud Light Orange for \$6.

The restaurant is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Baked Dessert Café will be participating. See MEAL Page 3



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Parks Comm. hopes to proceed with projects

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 7, 2021) The Berlin Parks Commission continues to hope its grant application for permanent restrooms at Stephen Decatur Park will be approved by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Community Parks and Playgrounds Program this year.

“Usually, we learn the results of those applications in the late spring/early summer,” said Deputy Town Administrator Mary Bohlen. “We are looking forward to . . . being able to move ahead with that.”

The grant amount sought is \$99,000, or 90 percent of the cost, for the 2022 fiscal year. The estimated total cost of the project is \$110,000, with \$60,00 for building construction, \$10,000 for site work,



Mary Bohlen

\$20,000 for utilities (sewer, water and electric), \$10,000 for engineering design and permitting, \$5,000 for engineering CA and inspection and \$5,000 for contingency.

The town will cover the remaining \$11,000 for the project.

In addition, the parks commission plans to present to the Town Council the draft of a program for park tributes.

“We are going to put before the mayor and council to approve a memorial and commemorative donation program, where people can commemorate their loved ones or events or any significant thing via donation to the park by purchasing things like

benches, tables, trees [and] flowers,” Bohlen said. “We’re going to formalize that program. We do occasionally get requests like that.”

Donors will select from model styles the parks commission provides.

“They’ll be keeping with what we already have in the parks,” she said.

Last year, many events and projects for the three Berlin parks were canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Public parks and playgrounds in town were closed on March 23, 2020.

“As soon as we went into the initial shutdown, we reached out to our playground equipment vendors and determined what we needed to do to make the playground equipment safe and implemented those steps,” Bohlen said. “Of course, as the pan-

demic continued, one of the things they said was . . . sunshine and fresh air was the best thing to get rid of the virus on solid surfaces.”

Then-Mayor Gee Williams reopened Stephen Decatur Park and Dr. William Henry Park to the public at noon on June 12, 2020, following the May 7, 2020 opening of Heron Park.

“We continued to work with Worcester County Recreation. They held some tennis programming in the late summer and fall,” Bohlen added about last year’s accomplishments. “We weren’t able to do the basketball programming this year for obvious reasons because of the close contact nature of that sport.”

The Jan. 5 parks commission meeting was canceled.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 2 at 5:30 p.m.

Meal deals available in Berlin

Continued from Page 2

pating in restaurant week from Jan. 12-16. The bakery is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. those days.

Customers have a choice of savory items for \$6.99 each: sweet potato biscuit sliders stuffed with ham, pepper jack cheese and homemade mustard served with a side salad; Maryland Crab stew with a choice of sweet potato biscuit or scone served with a side salad; buffalo chicken croissant with pulled chicken in a spicy sauce with hints of blue cheese served with a side salad or a roasted vegetable penne pasta bake made with tender gluten free pasta, roasted vegetables and five Italian cheeses served with a side salad.

Baked Dessert Café will also offer a \$4.99 dessert sampler plate, which includes The Original Peach Dumpling, a “croclair” (a croissant and an éclair combined), cupcake bread pudding and a chocolate bomb.

All sustainable wines will be 20 percent off as well.

The specials are offered for carry-out, limited indoor seating and limited outdoor seating, weather dependent.

Free delivery to downtown Berlin will be available on Wednesday and Thursday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Customers must call 24 hours ahead.

The Atlantic Hotel, which has participated in Berlin Restaurant Week since its inception, will have a lunch special of fish and chips with cole slaw for \$12.

The Atlantic Hotel will also offer a three-course dinner for \$35, consisting of an Atlantic House salad made with spring greens, fresh vegetables and a choice of house-made dressings, Salmon Oscar served with big lumps of crab meat, jumbo asparagus and bearnaise sauce and a Lemon Lust dessert that has layers of lemon

and cream on a pecan crust.

The restaurant week specials are available for dine-in and carry-out. Reservations are not required but accepted.

The Atlantic Hotel is currently closed through Jan. 14 for deep cleaning but will reopen 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekdays and 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.

Burn Wood Fired Pizza will have a side house or caesar salad, crab toast appetizer and chicken barbarossa entree for \$20 for dine-in only. No reservations are required.

The restaurant is open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Friday and 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

The full list of restaurant week menus will be posted on social media.

“It’s good for the restaurants, which is good for the town,” Bunting added.

Customers can compete for a chance to win restaurant gift cards and \$100 donated by Bunting by dining at three different participating locations and having their Berlin Restaurant Week passports stamped at all three eateries.

Diners can pick up Berlin Restaurant Week passports at either the Berlin Welcome Center on 14 S. Main St., Bunting Realty on 24 Broad St. or at any of the participating restaurants.

Then, diners will place copies of their receipts stapled to their passports in the drop box in the foyer of the Berlin Welcome Center.

The drawing will take place shortly after restaurant week, and the winner will be announced online.

For more information about the event, visit the “Berlin Restaurant Week” Facebook page or berlinmainstreet.com.

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Wor. schools in virtual instruction after break

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 7, 2021) Worcester County public and private schools will remain in distance learning mode this week, as school officials from both sectors agreed to abide by the Worcester County Health Department's request.

Health department officials told *Bayside Gazette* that the recommendation for schools to conduct classes virtually was based on metrics provided by the state.

State guidelines encourage limited or no in-person programs when a county positivity rate is above 5 percent and has a new case rate greater than 15 per 100,000, officials explained.

As of Saturday, when Worcester Preparatory School and Worcester County Public Schools notified families of the change in instruction, Worcester County had a positivity rate of 14.47 percent while the statewide positivity rate was 9.15 percent.

"Both metrics were on the rise last weekend, and as of [Sunday], Worcester County's positivity rate was 16.22 percent with a new case rate of 56.57 per 100,000 population, far above the state's guidelines to return to in-person learning," a statement from the health department read.

"Worcester Prep was contacted by the Worcester County Health Department alerting us that the metrics on the Eastern Shore have increased significantly,"

said Dr. John McDonald, head of school. "While we were planning a return to in-person instruction on Jan. 4, the health department asked that we consider a transition to virtual learning for a period of one week."

McDonald advised families on Saturday that the private school on South Main Street in Berlin would transition to virtual instruction this week for the first time this academic year.

"Our intention is to return to in-person instruction on our campus on Monday, Jan. 11," McDonald said.

Most Blessed Sacrament Catholic School on Racetrack Road in Berlin made the decision to switch to virtual instruction for Jan. 4-8 prior to the start of winter break, following the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington's direction.

"This week we are in session virtually as directed by Dr. Lou DeAngelo, superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Wilmington, in a letter to our families from December 10, 2020," said Principal Kathleen Manns.

The health department did contact the school's nurse to confirm that classes were conducted virtually this week.

Although Superintendent of Worcester County Public Schools Lou Taylor announced on Dec. 29 that some students would return to campuses on Monday, he changed plans last weekend after receiving an email from the health department late last week that strongly

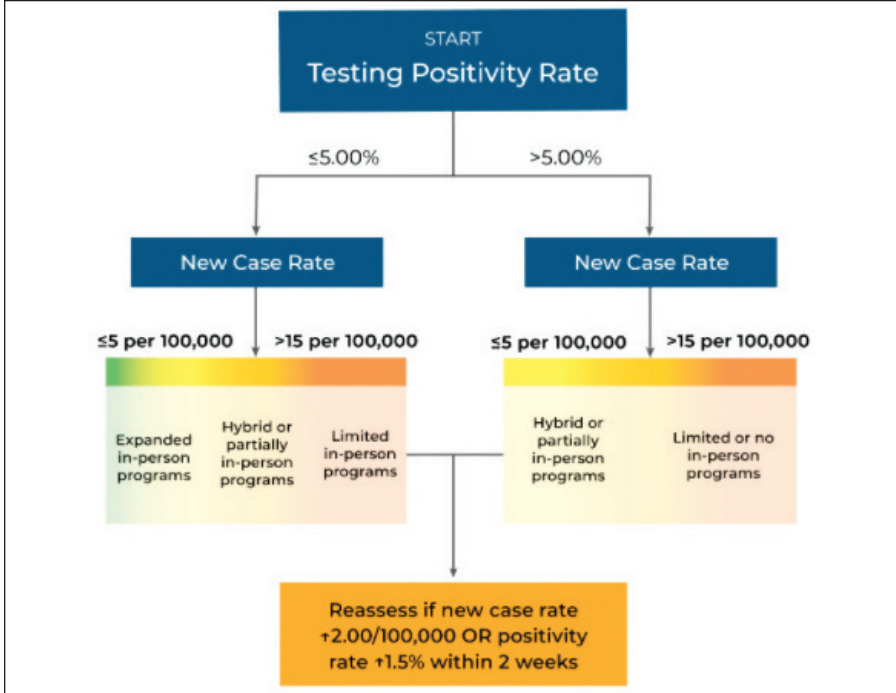


CHART COURTESY WORCESTER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Worcester County Health Department strongly recommended all Worcester County schools transition to, or remain in, distance learning after the holiday break based on state guidelines that encourage limited or no in-person programs when a county positivity rate is above 5 percent and has a new case rate greater than 15 per 100,000. On Sunday, Worcester County's positivity rate was 16.22 percent with a new case rate of 56.57 per 100,000 population.

recommended that students remain in distance learning after the holiday break.

"We understand that this decision creates challenges for many of our families," Taylor wrote on Saturday night. "Please know that decisions like this are not taken lightly. But there is something you can do. In order for us to successfully reopen for in-person instruction, we implore all of our students, staff and their families to be safe in the community. Wear your masks, maintain a safe physical distance at all times, be sure to stay home when sick and see a medical provider if you experience any symptoms of covid-19."

Taylor's latest announcement came after Gary McCabe Sr., UniServ director of the Worcester County Teachers Association and the Worcester County Education Support Personnel Association, sent a letter to him on Saturday morning after the associations met on Dec. 31 to discuss their concerns about bringing students back to the schools as the local covid-19 positivity rates rise.

"Your decision to disregard the state guidelines and return to in-person instruction is politically untenable for us," McCabe wrote. "It does not reflect the sentiment of our members. It follows neither the letter nor the spirit of the guidelines. It does not comport with your fellow superintendents, who have similar and high infections rates in their [counties]. Your decision gives us no solid political ground upon which to support your decision."

"If you change course now, you will have our full backing and we will dedicate all our resources to supporting you," McCabe continued. "We will immediately engage with all political leaders and the community to support you. We will work arduously to carry our message to parents. If, however, you continue down

the path you are on, you must understand that you will be doing so without the support of WCTA and WCESPA."

McCabe told *Bayside Gazette* on Tuesday that the associations appreciate Taylor's decision to remain in distance learning this week and look forward to working with him in the future.

Taylor said he has spoken with the Worcester County Board of Education members.

"They have basically supported the decision that was made that we remain in distance learning," he said.

Taylor also said he has received calls and emails on both sides of the debate.

A change.org petition called "Open Worcester County Schools!" was started on Monday calling on the Worcester County Board of Education and Taylor in support of in-person learning.

Dr. Brian DelliGatti, an emergency room physician at Atlantic General Hospital, along with others, created a private Facebook group called "Coastal Community Collaborative – Return to Learn" consisting of frontline healthcare professionals battling covid-19 in Worcester County and surrounding areas, mental health providers, educators, parents and community leaders, "all who recognize the invaluable benefits of in-person learning for the children in our community." The group has more than 480 members.

DelliGatti also sent a letter to McCabe in response to his letter to Taylor, saying he was part of a group of more than 30 local medical professionals, including emergency physicians, pediatricians, mental health professionals, social workers, and educators, who support "the safe return of students and staff to in-person learning."

"Our collaborative's goal is to involve See HEALTH Page 5

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Berlin permits show growth at end of 2020

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 7, 2021) Once again, the Berlin Planning and Zoning Department saw an increase in permits for building-related projects and other town-regulated matters and pursuits, with 308 total permits issued in 2020 as compared to 200 overall in 2019.

“It just shows how we’re still a destination, and we’re still on the uptick when other areas are slowing down as far as activity,” said Planning Director Dave Engelhart said. “I think that goes to the health of the town and how well everybody’s working to keep moving forward.”

Normally, Engelhart and Carolyn Duffy, the town’s permit coordinator, present an annual report on permits to the mayor and council, but have yet to do



Dave Engelhart

so. With coronavirus concerns, town staff are working modified schedules.

“I just like to show them the trend,” Engelhart said. “When I started here seven years ago or eight years ago, it was half of that. So, we’ve constantly gone up.”

Engelhart attributed the uptick in overall permits last year to economic conditions.

“Some of the projects that are going to start here any time, like Wolfe Terrace, they have 35 new units to build, and they did 35 single permits, not one project covering all 35 units,” he said. “With the idea being that they can complete one, get final inspection and then let a tenant

move in, instead of waiting for the whole project to be approved.”

Another factor is that many of the projects in town have been pending for a while, including Oceans East Phase Two off Seahawk Road, Isaiah Fassett apartments on Flower Street and Wil-lows at Berlin at the current Wolfe Ter-race location off Maple Avenue.

“I think like nationally the interest rates – borrowing money or funding sources – are a lot less expensive for any of these developers,” Engelhart added. “The time is now to do it.”

Engelhart has also learned from con-tractors and developers that materials prices are rising because of limited sup-ply.

“Some materials are getting hard to come by for building, and I think that’s just because manufacturing is down be-

cause of covid,” he said. “So, the prices are going up, and there’s no stopping that right now. But the cost of borrowing funds to do the project is down.”

However, the town did see a decrease in single-family home permits with only five filed last year.

In 2019, 10 permits were filed for sin-gle-family homes in town. Six permits were filed in 2018 as well as in 2017, En-gelhart said.

Permits are required for roofs, signs, fences, sheds, decks, additions to homes, detached garages, new homes, any dwelling units and exterior renovations.

“Commercial applications are a little different,” Engelhart said. “If you’re building a new commercial building or if you’re [remodeling] another building, you have to have a building permit be-cause it’s public occupancy.”

Health dept. encourages distance learning

Continued from Page 4

all of the key stakeholders in the process of developing a responsible and safe re-sumption of in-person learning, recog-nizing the significant limitations virtual learning presents, resulting in severely impaired educational attainment, loss of vital social support structure for children suffering with food insecurity, neglectful and abusive home environments, and the exacerbation of pre-existing socioe-conomic disparities within our public school system,” he wrote.

DelliGatti added that the group has been in communication with Taylor, Dr. Annette Wallace and Coordinator of School Health Services Lauren Williams.

“Our group contends that the tremendously impactful and tangible detrimental effects that the prolonged and ongoing school closures have per-petuated are persisting unjustifiably and are unsupported in the medical litera-ture,” he wrote. “These views are not unique to this coalition and are sup-ported by our national health experts in-cluding Dr. Robert Redfield and Dr. Anthony Fauci. There is a compelling body of medical literature demonstrat-

ing reassuringly low rates of student and staff transmission of COVID-19 that is additionally bolstered by data indicating that educators face no greater risk than other comparatively low-risk front-line workers. I would be happy to share this information with your organization in more detail at your convenience.”

Taylor is expected to update families about the “Responsible Return” by Fri-day after assessing all health and safety information.

“I am going to work with our parochial school leadership. We are scheduled to speak sometime this week, so that we can all try to be consistent,” Taylor said on Monday. “I am going to meet with our teachers association lead-ership this week to try to work out some things that would allow for us to return to in-person learning.”

He added that his decision will reflect what is best for the most amount of peo-ple.

“I feel strongly that when we do make a decision to come back whatever the metrics are, whatever the situation may be that we have done a tremendous amount of work as a school system to

prepare our teachers and our employees to lead safe environments, so that our kids can get back to learning,” Taylor said.

He strongly advocates for students to return to in-person instruction as quickly and as safely as possible.

As of Jan. 13, some of the students will have been out of schools for 10

months, he said.

“That’s not only damaging to the in-structional piece of their lives, but it’s also damaging to their social and emo-tional well-being,” Taylor added. “I want them back in our schools, but the num-ber one priority is the safety and the health of all who work and attend our schools.”

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Reserve fund, park, utilities on town's agenda

Continued from Page 1

and talk about what they believe are maybe the top needs for each of their respective districts and how they see the issues for the town as a whole.”

Tyndall said common themes of discussion with the council members are the budget and how to support businesses throughout town.

“The biggest thing is going to be the budget, and everything that includes,” Councilman Jack Orris said.

The Town Council plans to adopt a formal reserves policy and begin allocating funds to the reserves this year.

“Reserves policy was something I campaigned on and it’s something that I’d like to see happen,” Orris said.

Councilman Troy Purnell and Councilman Jay Knerr emphasized the importance of establishing a reserves fund to protect the town financially if a significant need or disaster occurs.

“The town does need to adopt a formal reserves account,” Tyndall said. “It’s been previously talked about as a policy ... some way to bind the funds so it requires council action to take money out of that reserves fund. That’s something you can expect to see in the early phases of 2021.”

Orris added that he would like to offer a quarterly report or newsletter to Berlin residents about the town’s budget.

The mayor and council will have open work sessions about the general fund and the enterprise funds for FY22 as well as review requests from department heads, the Berlin Fire Company and Atlantic General Hospital.

“We’ve started doing those quarterly reports, so we’ve got a decent idea where we are,” Purnell said. “We just got done the PKS review as well as Jean Holloway gave us her presentation. They gave us some pretty good insight into we’re going to need to spend some money on those enterprise funds.”

Jean Holloway, from Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project

Inc. (SERCAP) in Delaware and Eastern Maryland, told Berlin officials on Dec. 14 that the gap between the water the town pumps and the water it bills needs to shrink to avoid a deficit.

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.

As for the sewer fund, Holloway and PKS partner Michael Kleger and manager Leslie Michalik agreed that the sewer rates need to be monitored and increased to eliminate the existing debt.

Berlin’s sewer utility has lost money for years because of the low rates, which were subsidized by funds borrowed from the general fund reserves. In August 2020, the council agreed to write off half the \$3.4 million the town’s separate sewer fund owes the general fund, while committing to repay the remaining \$1.7 million to the general fund over 10 or more years.

Purnell said the council needs to evaluate “what it’s going to cost to run everything operationally and not lose any money.”

Tyndall said in years past the town’s approved budgets have not included items for capital to address aging infrastructure.

“The utility funds are going to be a big part of the budget process that’s upcoming,” he said. “So, one of the most important jobs that I have over the next few months is to create a FY22 budget that’s balanced, and

part of that includes capital needs for each department and the fact that our utility funds really do have some concerns that need to be addressed.”

Similar to Tyndall’s stance during the FY20 budget process, Knerr aims to prioritize keeping taxes low in the FY22 budget cycle.

“I want to make sure we hold our taxes in check and do not have an increase this year,” Knerr said, regarding the property tax increase to \$.80 per \$100 of assessed value in FY20. “I will be doing everything I can to prevent that or vote against it because I think the town of Berlin residents have paid their dues.”

Purnell believes it will be a challenging budget process.

“Nobody wants to talk about increasing anything, but I think the reality is, it’s pretty in-our-face from our experts,” he said.

In addition, Knerr hopes the town can switch all its diesel engines to natural gas at the Berlin power plant on William Street in the long-term.

“They’re much more energy-efficient. They produce more energy,” he said. “If there’s possible grants for that, we need to seek them out and start that process as well.”

In July 2019, the second engine out of four at the power plant was taken out of commission when a piston connecting rod failed on the 16-cylinder engine and knocked a hole in the side plate of the engine. The engine was at least 20 years old. The replacement natural gas CAT G3520 EPA certified generator set was commissioned in September 2020.

Berlin councilmembers also hope to continue progress at Heron Park.

“Heron Park, I believe, is going to be a high priority,” Orris said. “I believe Mayor Tyndall indicated that we do have \$200,000 in debt service that we’re doing on that, and that’s just a lot to sustain with no revenue coming in for that property.”

Knerr said some master plans have been drawn that the mayor and council should examine to move forward with the project.

“I know there’s a grant in play to

tear down the [former Tyson plant] building,” Knerr added. “We need to follow through and make sure that happens and see how we can best utilize that land because there is a lot of land area there.”

Knerr also stressed the need for a community center in Berlin.

“The one that is currently there is in deplorable condition,” he said. “It needs to be torn down. However, Berlin doesn’t own that land.”

The Multipurpose Building on Flower Street, which the town plans to transform into a new community center, is currently owned by the Berlin Community Improvement Association.

“However, on the corner of Flower Street and Route 376 (Assateague Road), Berlin owns three acres there, so we could put a community center with funds ... we have the land. We have some money ready to go, so we need to start developing plans.”

The Multipurpose Building is the site of the former Flower Street School and is in walking distance to Dr. William Henry Park.

“I think that’s going to be something we’re going to have to sit down and talk to some of our community partners about and see how we can fund such an endeavor and what we’re going to do to remember the history and honor the history, but also look ahead to the future,” Orris said. “So, we’re going to have to figure out a way to do that.”

Tyndall hopes to work with the Berlin Community Improvement Association to revitalize the building that has functioned as a polling place for municipal elections as well as a meeting place for town community meetings over the years.

“There’s definitely some hurdles that we need to overcome with transitioning that property to the town and figuring out an agreement between the [Berlin Community Improvement Association] and the town for how that property is going to be moving forward,” Tyndall said.

Another priority for the council is

See BERLIN Page 7



Jack Orris



Troy Purnell



Jay Knerr

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Murky financial picture complicates budget

Continued from Page 1

volves forecasting what this year's finances will look like at the end of the fiscal year in April, and then projecting next year's revenues and expenditures.

"We're going to be facing, most likely, an increase in the assessment," he said.

Parks said at this point, the current fiscal year is projected to beat the budget bottom line by more than a half-million dollars.

"We're projecting some kind of surplus," he said. "The question is how do we effectively manage that surplus, because we have options."

The budget vetting process for the year ahead will have to look for potential cost efficiencies that can be

gained, Parks said.

"I don't want to get to the point where we're cutting services just to control the potential increase to the assessment," he said.

Another means to trim costs would be assessing the viability of completing currently proposed capital projects

"Should we do them or not," he said. "If not, what is the impact, direct or indirect, on assessments."

The financial picture will be discussed in depth during a multi-day departmental presentation to the Budget and Finance Committee this week, followed by continued contributions from General Manager John Viola before the board finalizes numbers.

"You're going to get a lot of different input," he said.

Parks said deciding how to allow for the possibility of lingering covid-19 health safety restrictions will be the challenge in setting the budget.

"How do we effectively predict, without becoming overly confident, that everything will be 100 percent?" he said.

Parks stressed the importance of forecasting revenues based on some limitations on the availability of amenities.

"We have to be careful and do the due diligence that's associated with creating a budget that's able to account for those potential restrictions associated with covid and control the amount of potential increase to the assessment," he said.

Vice President Dr. Colette Horn said even with the financial havoc caused by covid-19, strong financial oversight from Viola and Director of Finance and Operational Logistics Steve Phillips allowed the association to complete several capital projects and maintain positive budget numbers.

"One of the big goals of 2021 is to continue that effort to make sure we manage with good fiscal responsibility with respect to the operating of our amenities and administration,"

she said.

Horn said both the new Golf Clubhouse and Police/Administration building projects wrapped up on time and under budget during 2020.

"The opening of the clubhouse and the successes that golf operations realized," she said.

Horn also counted the work to complete the Bainbridge drainage project in sections two and three as a major success during 2020.

"I think the other major goal for 2021 is to continue that effort with drainage throughout Ocean Pines," she said. "There are also sections on the south side by Manklin Creek that have some serious drainage issues that need to be addressed."

Perrone said resolving longstanding drainage issues tied to storm water runoff is a top priority this year.

"We're budgeting more money for drainage," he said. "From a budgetary standpoint, that's a big item."

Parks said before proceeding with expenditures planned for fiscal 21-22, close consideration needs to be given to the financial impacts on residents.

"We can't assume all residents can shoulder an increase without repercussions," he said. "At the end of the day it's the assessment number that is near and dear to everybody in Ocean Pines."

Berlin priorities will include community center, flooding

Continued from Page 6

addressing stormwater issues.

"Flooding is an issue all around town. As a District 2 representative, although I represent the whole town, flooding affects a lot of folks in that particular area," Orris said. "So, that's a concern and a high priority for me personally as a councilmember."

Knerr agreed, saying the town should apply for grants to correct the low-lying areas, so stormwater does not flow into streets or residents' properties.

As for short term goals, Tyndall said the council will focus on the beautification of town, such as increasing routine maintenance of parks and playgrounds and improving landscaping.

"It's just getting back to the basics of making sure that our town's a beautiful place to live, work, visit and hopefully invest," he said.

Orris, who works for the Worcester County Health Department, said he is most concerned about making sure Berlin citizens and employees stay healthy and return to some sense of normalcy as quickly and as safely as possible.

Tyndall said officials will also consider how the local government plays a role in the business community and "help create an environment where businesses can thrive not just during covid but after covid."

Amid the impact of the coronavirus on the small town, Purnell is most of proud of "keeping the businesses moving, keeping the wheels turning."

The Berlin Mayor and Council held a work session virtually with District 38 legislators on Dec. 17, during which Tyndall asked the politicians to act for the town to seek any supplemental covid-19 financial support that be or become available.

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Budget options impact Pines assessments

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(Jan. 7, 2021) Ocean Pines residents are facing the possibility, but probably not the likelihood, of triple-digit assessment increases based on the proposed fiscal 2021-22 budget released late last month.



John Viola

While by no means set, as extensive negotiations remain before the board votes to adopt a budget in February, the initial numbers include assessment increases of \$121 for non-waterfront lots and \$221 for waterfront residences.

General Manager John Viola said numerous moving parts remain, including potential financial offsets and forthcoming monthly actuals that could alter final budget numbers.

“We came up with an overall budget, which did show an increase in assessments. However, we have options,” he said.

The fiscal 2021-22 proposed budget, which was released on Dec. 22, reflects an assessment increase from \$986 to \$1,107 for non-waterfront lots and \$1,501 to \$1,722 for waterfront properties.

Total assessment revenue for fiscal 2020-21 is forecast at \$9,126,237 from 8,452 properties, while the proposed 2021-22 budget would yield \$10,290,804, reflecting an increase of \$1,164,567.

“There are options here depending on what we want to do for this assessment,” he said. “I want to utilize the next seven weeks, when we will have two more months of financials, to see where we are financially.”

Viola said the final numbers through January represent three quarters of the

current fiscal year, thus allowing for more precise budget forecasting.

“Right now we show a favorability of \$1.2 million,” he said.

Viola estimated the \$1.2 million favorability recorded at the end of November would likely to be cut nearly in half to about \$650,000 by the end of fiscal 20-21 on April 30.

“That \$650,000 is not locked in stone,” he said. “I still have five months to go.”

From that sum, Viola is recommending the board pay off an earlier operating deficit of roughly \$186,000.

“Last year, I suggested the board take some of that years’ favorability and offset the operating deficit,” he said.

After devoting \$250,000 to the old debt last fiscal year, Viola said earmarking about \$200,000 from the anticipated favorability this year would erase the debt for good.

Viola said the board has potential methods to reduce the impact on assessments, including reallocating funding for road repairs for other infrastructure expenses.

“We do receive about \$325,000 for roads but the money is also for infrastructure,” he said. “We could on a one-time shot ... allocate that money to the drainage expenses that we have proposed and that would offset some of the assessment increase.”

Viola also said there are a number of smaller maintenance projects that could be delayed to cut costs, with the final call falling to the board.

“A lot’s going to happen over the next seven weeks and could shed more light on larger issues,” he said. “You can’t just take any one of those schedules that we do and say the assessment is increasing \$121, there’s too many variables right now.”

Trash contract price raise built up

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(Jan. 7, 2021) The annual cost for trash service in Ocean Pines is set to jump nearly \$50 annually after the Board of Directors voted unanimously last month for a contract renewal with current provider Republic Services.

During the Dec. 19 board meeting, the directors renewed a three-year agreement with Republic Services that would increase monthly charges from \$20.27 to \$24.20 for twice-weekly trash removal and once-weekly recycling pickup.

General Manager John Viola said the rate increase had been building over the last several years, since Re-

public was restricted to a maximum price boost of 3 percent annually under its 2017 contract.

“We would have gotten an increase two years ago, but because we had a contract, people didn’t see an escalation,” he said.

Viola said the refuse industry was hit with higher costs in 2018 after China outlawed importing two-dozen categories of solid waste materials, including plastics and paper products.

“They lost all that two years ago when China stopped buying this stuff,” he said.

In January 2018, China’s Operation National Sword banned the importation of the majority of plastics and various recyclable materials.

Prior to this policy, for the past several decades, China was the endpoint for roughly half of global recyclables.

Viola said waste haulers lost significant revenue for raw recyclable materials following the policy change in China.

“There’s no market for it, so it’s kind of a double whammy,” he said.

To further exacerbate the financial problem, last month China announced a ban on importing all solid waste materials starting this January.

Despite waste haulers seeing revenues from recycles reduce, Chesapeake Waste Management submitted a significantly lower bid for the Ocean Pines contract.

The price proposed by Chesapeake Waste at \$19.28 monthly was both less than the current or pending charges from Republic Services.

The bid from Chesapeake Waste represents a nearly \$12 annual savings for residential pickup over the

Worcester offers residents recycle options for trees

(Jan. 7, 2021) The Solid Waste Division of Worcester County will host its annual collection of Christmas trees through Jan. 15.

Area residents can drop off Christmas trees at the Central Landfill in Newark and the Berlin, Pocomoke, and Snow Hill Homeowners Convenience Centers at no cost.

Businesses and organizations that sold trees will not be permitted to drop off trees at the convenience centers, but may take them to the Central Landfill where applicable tipping fees will be assessed.

The trees will be ground into mulch for use at the Central Landfill. For more info, contact Recycling Manager Mike McClung at 410-632-3177.



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PHOTO COURTESY WORCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Matthew Record, principal of Pocomoke Middle School, was recognized by the Worcester County Board of Education on Dec. 15, for being named Maryland Middle School Principal of the Year.

Board of Education Briefs

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 7, 2021) The following took place during the Worcester County Board of Education meeting on Dec. 15:

Principal of the Year

Matthew Record, the principal of Pocomoke Middle School, was recognized by Superintendent Lou Taylor and the school board members for being named Maryland Middle School Principal of the Year.

“One of the most impressive things besides his instructional leadership is his attention to detail in every aspect of the school,” Taylor said. “When you ride up to his school, it’s different because the grounds are immaculate.”

Record is working on his doctorate.

Retirements

Taylor presented proclamations to retiring District 2 Board member Barry Brittingham and District 3 Board member Sara Thompson at their last meeting.

“They have always stayed focus on what the needs are for our kids, and I’m going to miss them,” Taylor said. “I’m going to miss their leadership. I’m going to miss their support. I’m going to miss their way of handling business here.”

Brittingham was elected twice to the Worcester County Board of Education, serving for nine and half years.

Thompson is the longest serving Worcester County board member with 26.5 years of service. Taylor said she is the longest consecutive serving board member in the state.

“She’s been one of those people who has made our school system successful and that will carry on for years and years to come,” he added. “And I’m grateful to her on a personal note for the support she has given me at every level that I’ve always worked in the school system for the last 37 years.”

Donald Smack and Dr. Jon Andes will begin their terms on the board on Jan. 19.

Holiday card contest

Worcester County Public Schools hosted a holiday card making contest with the theme “High-tech Holiday.” Students were encouraged to use digital photography and graphic design through iPad apps to create card designs.



PHOTO COURTESY WORCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Ashley Alvarez, a senior at Snow Hill High School, was the overall winner of the county school system’s card “High-tech Holiday” making contest.

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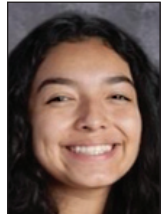
Board of Education Briefs

Cecilia Diehlmann, a fifth grader at Berlin Intermediate School, was the elementary school winner for her “Let’s Zoom into the Holidays!” design.

Luke Riser, a sixth grader at Berlin Intermediate School, was the middle school winner for his #BetterTogether snowmen design with the county school system’s logo.

Silas Cascio, a senior at Stephen Decatur High School, was the high school winner for his snowman holiday card that featured the binary code as snow.

Lastly, Ashley Alvarez, a senior at Snow Hill High School, was the overall winner for her “Happy Holidays” card with holly and decorated reindeer.



Ashley Alvarez

Check for hotspots

The Worcester County Education Foundation presented a check for \$45,000 to the school board to purchase additional internet connectivity hotspots.

Covid-19 training

Dr. Dwayne Abt, chief safety and human relations officer at the public schools, told the board that employees are being trained almost daily about safety protocols. The training began on Dec. 2 and will continue until early January.

Bus contractors were also trained via conference call on Dec. 14 about covid-19 prevention protocols pertaining to the buses, Abt said.

Lastly, the committee has discussed purchasing more sanitation materials and personal protective

equipment with a safety grant.

Showell update

Joe Price, facilities planner for the county school system, presented a monthly Showell Elementary Replacement School contractor construction requisition request for the board’s approval.

The payments to date for the new school construction are \$37 million. The total contract amount is nearly \$40 million.

The board approved the current payment requisition of \$484,267.56.

Electronic signatures

Bess Cropper, resources and management and monitoring facilitator at Worcester County Public Schools told the board that a policy regarding electronic signatures needed to be adopted.

The board agreed to adopt the new policy that states “the superintendent may authorize the use of secure electronic or other types of digital signatures when required by law or regulation and when required for efficient operation of the school system.”

The electronic/digital signatures may be authorized for specific purposes or for specific people.

According to the policy, the electronic/digital signature must be: authorized by the superintendent, required by law or regulation or deemed necessary for the efficient operation of the school system by the superintendent, be secure and verifiable, be in compliance with local, state and federal laws and regulations and be renewed annually.

The superintendent will maintain the roster of people authorized to sign electronically or digitally and permit procedural uses of such signatures.



PHOTO COURTESY WORCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Worcester County Education Foundation presented the school board a check for \$45,000 on Dec. 15 to purchase additional hotspots. Pictured, from left, are Worcester County Board of Education President Eric Cropper, Worcester County Education Foundation Chairman Ray Thompson, Board of Education member Todd Ferrante, Worcester County Education Foundation Manager of Operations & Community Relations Olivia Momme and Superintendent Lou Taylor.

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Snapshots



CONFERENCE HONORS

SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

A number of Worcester Prep students received Eastern Shore Independent Athletic Conference honors in cross country, field hockey, golf, soccer and volleyball during the fall season. Award recipients are: boys soccer, Dylan McGovern (honorable mention), Vishnu Mohan, Brice Richins, Michael Wehberg, Logan Ginnavan and Jack Gardner (also championship game MVP); golf, Harrison Humes, Griffin Jones, Kaden Mault, Vanesska Hall and T.J. Bescak; cross country, Connor Carpenter, Graham McColgan (Male Runner of the Year) and Caitlyn Hoen (Female Runner of the Year); and in back, field hockey, Carly Young (honorable mention) and Claire Williams; girls' soccer Ava Nally, Morgan White (championship game MVP), Ansley Gardner, Claire Windrow (honorable mention), Anna McDonald and Lily Baeurle; and volleyball, Sophia Ludt (honorable mention) and C.C. Lizas.



PLAYER RECOGNITION

SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

Worcester Prep Middle School students presented team awards during the fall sports season were: Max Carpenter (seventh grade boys' soccer, MVP), Jake Campbell (seventh grade boys' soccer, Coaches Award), Ben Holloway (seventh grade boys' soccer, Most Improved), Ben McGovern (eighth grade boys' soccer, MVP), Ryan Mann (eighth grade boys' soccer, Coaches Award), Jack Fernley (eighth grade boys' soccer, Most Improved), Caitlin Shimko (girls' soccer, MVP), Danielle Carr (girls' soccer, Coaches Award), Lydia Schwartz (girls' soccer, Most Improved), Mike DePalma (golf, MVP), Frankie Miller (golf, Coaches Award) and Kain Crossett (golf, Most Improved).



Members of Boy Scout Troop 225 from Berlin/Ocean City, recently planted trees and shrubs at Assateague Island National Seashore.

SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

Boy Scout troop completes service project

(Jan. 7, 2021) Boy Scout Troop 225 from Berlin/Ocean City, completed a service project at Assateague Island National Seashore on Nov. 13, that will enhance the landscape surrounding the visitor center, parking area and environmental education complex.

The National Park Service has

been working during the past few years to convert several managed garden beds in these areas to more natural, lower maintenance plantings. Troop 225 assisted with this effort by successfully planting 12 native trees and approximately two dozen native shrubs during this service project.

“Making even small changes to any landscape by planting native trees and shrubs can provide significant benefits to birds, pollinators and other wildlife, and planting a tree just makes you feel good,” said Bill Hulslander, chief of Resource Management at the National Seashore.

The Maryland Coastal Bays Program donated the native trees for this project, which included species such as American sycamore, river birch, tulip poplar and black oak. Boy Scout Troop 225 provided the necessary labor to get these plants into the ground.

Last-minute drive to give family holiday gifts

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(Jan. 7, 2021) An outpouring of last-minute donations saved the day for four children who are being raised by their grandmother and weren't going to receive Christmas gifts this year because of tight finances.

The family's plight came to light after contacting members of the Community Church at Ocean Pines and parishioner Larry Walton, who reached out to Colby Phillips on Dec. 22 to inquire about providing yuletide cheer.

"He asked if I had any toys left over," she said.

Phillips, who was involved in numerous charitable efforts this holiday season, assured Walton a number of people had made contact in hopes of lending aid for those still in need this Christmas.

"A lot of times people want to help but they don't know where to start ... or where to go," she said.

Phillips, who helped found the Facebook page Local Help for You Worcester County, put out a social media alert the following day seeking assistance.

"Within hours I had almost \$1,000," she said. "It was unbelievable."

Dozens of concerned souls jumped on board after learning about the grandmother who could assure a visit from Santa. Donations came in the form of toys and cash donations made through Venmo, a mobile payment service owned by PayPal.

"I gave out my Venmo because a lot of people want to help but they can't get to the store or don't feel comfortable going to the store with covid," she said.

With the clock ticking and Christmas quickly approaching, Phillips enlisted help from her daughter, Sadie Kauffman, who also obtained assistance from three friends: Delaney and Addison McDaniel and Brooke Fitzgerald, who are all freshman classmates at Stephen Decatur High School.



PHOTO COURTESY COLBY PHILLIPS

Helping to wrap gifts for an area family in need, from left, are Brooke Fitzgerald, Delaney McDaniel, Sadie Kauffman and Addison McDaniel.

"The girls and I were willing to go do the shopping," she said.

In addition to having enough money to buy gifts for two boys, ages one and five, and two girls, ages seven and nine, a gift card was purchased with the remaining donations to help the grandmother defray costs for raising the children.

"We had a lot of fun picking out the toys," she said. "I don't get to buy toys anymore so it was fun for me."

One of the primary requests from the family was for cold weather gear.

Phillips said that need was almost instantly responded to by Skip and Sandra Schlesinger.

"Anytime we have families in need, they're very quick to act," she said. "They immediately went out and got all the kids coats, hats and PJ's."

Phillips said upwards of 40 people tagged on the social media post were fast to lend aid.

"Within 24 hours we were able to provide for that ... it was overwhelming," she said.

Phillips said the display of community kindness was had an effect on her daughter and friends who helped purchase and wrap the gifts delivered by Santa.

"They were my elves in Santa's workshop," she said. "They spent 2-3 hours wrapping."

Sadie Kauffman said witnessing the rapid community response was an eye-opening experience.

"It's important because you need to make sure everybody has what they need and [are] happy," she said. "It felt good giving to other people."

Delaney McDaniel concurred with that perspective.

"I always volunteer," she said. "I always enjoy it and it makes me feel good to help other people."

Phillips said answering a call for help is generally a powerful experience.

"The biggest reward is what you get in giving and the smile on their face," she said. "That's our purpose in life ... to do for others."

While the financial backing offered was tangible, Phillips was quick to note that people who cannot afford to donate can still lend support in other forms.

"Praying for people that are in need is also a way that you can contribute," she said. "It doesn't have to be material."

NEW YEAR
NEW LOOK
NEW INVENTORY

The ReStore has reopened
with ALL NEW inventory!

Habitat for Humanity

ReStore

9026 Worcester Hwy Berlin, MD
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Record turnout in Letters for Santa campaign

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 7, 2021) More than 200 people sent a letter to the North Pole through the “Letters for Santa” mailbox in the foyer of the Berlin Welcome Center on 14 S. Main St. from the middle of November to Dec. 18.

“This year was more than ever,” said Ivy Wells, the town’s economic and community development director. “We send them to Santa, and Santa reads each and every one.”

He shared some of the letters he received with Wells.

“It was amazing to see how many children were asking for things for their brothers and sisters, which was so heartfelt” she said.

Wells added that a few letters stood out with comical and compassionate messages for Father Christmas.

“Somebody wanted a flamingo. Somebody wanted their own Easter



Ivy Wells

Bunny,” she said. “One of the children said, ‘Please make all the germs go away,’ and he was probably referring to covid. Someone had put a P.S. to Santa, saying ‘Remember to wear your mask.’”

Old St. Nick then responded to the letters he received with personal messages as well as coupons for a “free treat” from the following downtown locations: Baked Dessert Café, On What Grounds, Rayne’s Reef Soda Fountain & Grill and Island Creamery.

Wells has served as Santa’s helper in Berlin for five years after bringing the letter campaign to town, which she started at her previous job in Sykesville, Maryland.

“Steve and Debbie Frene donated the giant mailbox,” Wells said after she struggled to find one for the campaign. “We have a perfect setup because the foyer of the Welcome Center is open 24/7, and this way parents [and kids] could come and drop the letters off at any time.”

Most of the letters for Santa came from residents in Berlin and Ocean City, but some addresses were from Pennsylvania, Virginia and other parts of Maryland, Wells said.

She also said that Santa looks forward to the letters from Berlin every year.

“Santa hopes that everyone did receive a letter back,” she added. “He wanted us to share that 2021 was going to be better than 2020, and he looks forward to reading everyone’s letters for next year.”



ALLY LANASA/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

Over 200 people sent a letter to Old St. Nick at the North Pole through the Letters for Santa mailbox located in the foyer of the Berlin Welcome Center on 14 S. Main St.

OP Police: report suspicious activity quickly

(Jan. 7, 2021) Ocean Pines Police this week reminded residents to call police at 410-641-7747 if they witness suspicious activity.

Chief Leo Ehrisman said the public also needs to do its part to fight crime by forming a strong partnership with the department.

Ehrisman said residents can be the eyes and ears for officers when police are not in the immediate area, and notifying police right away is always the best approach.

Police, he said, “can’t take action for something reported tomorrow that happened last night.”

“Call the police anytime something looks out of place in your neighborhood,” Ehrisman said. “We have to get there when it’s happening, not a day later.”

Lt. Greg Schoepf also offered public safety tips for residents:

- Get to know your neighbors. You don’t have to be best friends or share coffee every morning, but at least be aware of who they are.
- If you are having a problem with your neighbors, try to speak to them about what is bothering you. Often times people don’t realize that what they are doing is disturbing to someone. In Ocean Pines, we have folks from many different places with different customs and habits. So, what seems perfectly normal to them is not normal for someone else.
- If a neighborly discussion does not resolve the issue or takes a negative turn, call the police and we may be able to mediate a solution that is acceptable to both parties.
- Any kind of violation of the law requires an immediate notification of the police. We are here 24/7 and 365 days a year and are at your service. It is not mandatory that you give your

name, but it is helpful for follow-up of the situation.

- Join the Ocean Pines Neighborhood Watch. They are very involved in the community and are in regular contact with the members of the police department. Contact Jim Hamlin at jim1127@mchsi.com for more information on joining this worthwhile community involved group.

“In short, we are here whether it is a loud party, barking dog, parking complaint, or an occurrence of a crime,” Schoepf said. “Our officers are highly trained and dedicated to the residents of Ocean Pines. Keeping our neighborhoods safe and secure is our top priority.”

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Opinion

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

Schools officials had no choice in closings

The decision by public and private school officials not to begin the new year with in-person instruction isn't as simple as popular discussions suggest.

Assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, the continuation of distance learning at local institutions was not born completely of a desire to protect the kids from covid-19 infections. Other factors and responsibilities also figured into the independent conclusions of school officials.

Worcester County Public Schools Superintendent Lou Taylor, for instance, had three components to consider in addition to his own preferences: student safety, advice from the county health department, and the formal positions of the teachers and school employee associations.

The health department issued strong advice against re-opening schools during this post-holiday surge of cases. Similarly, the teachers union and employee associations opposed returning to the classroom, partly out of concern for their own safety.

Essentially, the associations told Taylor they would do their jobs if he ordered them to return to school, but they wouldn't necessarily have his back if something went wrong.

Additionally, if Taylor did ignore the health department's counsel and covid-19 did infect members of the staff or the student body, however probable or improbable that might be, he would be left with no defense against upset parents, a critical public, angry teachers and staff and all the second-guessers who would contend he should have listened.

Naturally, opinions abound on whether this was the right or wrong call for students, and chances are some school administrators would have preferred to resume in-school instruction. But opinions, even valid ones, are no substitute for consensus, which has been absent throughout the entire covid-19 turmoil.

Realistically, once the health department issued its advisory, neither Taylor nor the leadership at the county's private schools had much choice on how to proceed.



Letters

OP beautification efforts requested

Editor,

We have lived and owned property in Ocean Pines for almost 31 years and I have never seen the streets/roads look so bad with trash and debris, tree branches, leaves in the ditches and raked leaves just lie on the streets/roads.

When the residents of Ocean Pines take their time to rake the leaves, they should be collected, not just left out there to eventually blow back into ditches. Tree branches should be collected, not just left on the roads, maybe trim and cut back the trees.

You have code enforcement, press the construction sites to clean up instead of having trash blowing down the streets. I clean up the area in our neighborhood, it is no big deal, maybe come up with a fun incentive program to get everybody involved. We should take pride in our neighborhood and community.

Instead of spending money on another capital project, I think you need to focus on making Ocean Pines look a little better. I have no problem with an increase in annual dues if it is used properly. Maybe the general manager and board members should take a ride in the neighborhoods, you should be embarrassed, I know, I am. Just take a ride down Ocean Parkway, you don't even have to ride down the side streets/roads.

Thank you.

Wayne Littleton
Ocean Pines

Recovery orgs merge missions

Editor,

In 2016 two mothers, Jackie Ball and Heidi McNeeley, joined forces to battle opiate addiction in Worcester County and to provide resources and support to people dealing with addiction whether in themselves or in people that they loved.

The citizens of Worcester County, along with the Worcester County Health Department, embraced these moms, and the non-profit organization Worcester County Warriors Against Opiate Addiction was born.

Articles of incorporation were written, by-laws were approved and a passionate, talented board of directors came together.

Monthly "town hall" meetings were held and valuable resources were introduced to the community. Over five years, the Warriors grew to 300 registered members and countless business owners and politicians who joined the battle.

Because of the generosity of the Humphrey's Foundation, the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore and numerous local citizens, over \$100,000 has been raised by the Warriors in five years' time.

That money has been used almost exclusively for funding recovery for more

Continued on Page 17

BAYSIDE

GAZETTE

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We invite you to share your opinion, but all letters are subject to verification, so please include your name and phone number. All letters are subject to editing for space and to protect the author and this newspaper from legal action. Email letters to editor@baysidegazette.com. For questions, call 410-723-6397.

Letters

Continued from Page 16
than 150 people.

This year, the Warriors are excited to announce that they will be merging with the organization, Worcester Goes Purple (WGP).

WGP was started with grant funding from the Opioid Operational Command Center grant which was facilitated by the Worcester County Board of Education.

Partnering with the Worcester County Health Department and Atlantic General Hospital, WGP was born.

Led by Debbie Smullen, Worcester Goes Purple has been an important player in the battle against all addiction.

Debbie has led the charge in reducing stigma and bringing awareness to the addiction of Worcester County.

Debbie will continue her leadership of the new organization, Worcester Goes Purple Warriors Against Addiction.

Jackie and Heidi will continue to support Debbie and will always be passionate fighters against addiction everywhere.

For more information please contact Debbie at wgpwarriors2021@gmail.com.

*Heidi A. McNeeley, President
Worcester County Warriors
Against Opiate Addiction*



The Worcester Preparatory School girls' soccer team earned the United Soccer Coaches Team Academic Award and the Team Pinnacle Award for the 2019-20 academic year.
SUBMITTED PHOTO/
BAYSIDE GAZETTE

Worcester Prep team earns awards

(Jan. 7, 2021) The Worcester Preparatory School girls' soccer team was the recipient of the United Soccer Coaches Team Academic Award and the Team Pinnacle Award for the 2019-20 academic year.

Coached by Carol Hartnett and Alison Bescak, this is the fourth year the Lady Mallards have earned the Team Academic Award, which recognizes student athletes for their com-

mitment to achievement on the field and in the classroom.

This is the first time that the Prep squad has been awarded the Team Pinnacle Award.

The group was one of only 33 teams (24 high school and nine college teams) nationwide to be honored, of which only three were from Maryland.

The Team Pinnacle Award was ini-

tiated two years ago to recognize teams that achieve a high level of fair play, educational excellence, and success on the pitch.

To be considered for this award, teams must have previously received the Team Academic Award, earned a Team Ethics and Sportsmanship Award, and achieved a winning percentage of .750 or higher during the respective season.

OPEN HOUSES

JAN. 6 - JAN. 13

DAY/TIME	ADDRESS	BR/BA	STYLE	PRICE	AGENCY/AGENT
Fri-Mon, 11am-4pm	Heron Harbour, 120th St., Bayside	1BR/2BR/3BR/4BR+	Condos, Towns & SF	-	Nanette Pavier/Holiday Real Estate

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Cuisine

Eggs Chesapeake and fried green tomatoes

Good riddance 2020.
Of course, we know that changing the year on our checks won't exactly mean that we are out of the woods, but for me, knowing that it's 2021 at least gives me hope that we are closer to the end of this fun little journey.



By Paul Suplee,
MBA, CEC, PC-3

With the new year, I truly hope that we can find some new adventures; perhaps take a vacation, even if it means a short drive and sitting on the beach (personally, I am way too ADD to just sit on a beach, but I hear that it's a nice thing to do). Or a trip to the mountains where there are limited people around to keep us as safe as possible.

Either way, I hope that 2021 is a year of restoration and repair. Lord knows that we all need it. For me, though, I'm just glad that I was able to make some decisions in the past six months that will greatly favor my family and kids. Strangely, this involved opening a new restaurant in a pandemic. I know, right?

It seems like a contradiction. Yet, it has been a fun ride, and everyone is excited about being a part of Berlin, this great, funky little town that we all know and love.

As New Year's fell on a weekend, I imagine that many of you went out for brunch (or brunch carry-out) and grabbed a bloody Mary and some good, fatty food to work on that hangover. Of course, I won't assume that you drank anything, as I did not imbibe Saturday night myself, but I'm pretty sure that you catch my drift.

If you do happen to have a festive evening, however, a nice greasy burger can fix a lot of problems. And so can a beautiful poached, runny egg-on-fried-green-tomatoes dish cloaked in Hollandaise. Add fried green tomatoes and crab? You'll be right as rain by noon.

Happy 2021.

Boxcar Eggs Chesapeake

Serves 4
8 ea. Fried green tomatoes (recipe follows)
3 c. baby spinach leaves
8 oz. Lump or jumbo lump crabmeat
8 ea. Eggs
2 c. Blender Hollandaise (recipe follows)
8 slices lemon

- Set a pan of water on the stove deep enough to hold at least 5 inches and wide enough to be able to cook multiple eggs at once.
- Add 3 tablespoons of white vinegar and stir.
- Bring to a simmer and get back to other ingredients.
- Bring a fryer (recommended) to 350F and fry the green tomatoes until they are golden brown.
- Remove to a paper towel and keep warm.
- Sauté the spinach in a little bit of butter and season with salt and pepper. Remove and keep warm until ready to assemble.
- In the same pan (why make more pans dirtier than you need to?), quickly warm up the crab meat.



- Be careful not to break any lumps up
- Poach the eggs in the simmering water until the whites are firm and the yolks still runny.
 - For each plate, place two fried green tomatoes on the middle of the plate.
 - Top with the spinach, crab, egg and hollandaise
 - Garnish with the lemon and serve with breakfast potatoes or fresh fruit. That's the dealer's choice.

Fried Green Tomatoes

Enough for 8 fried FGTs
2 green tomatoes
1 c. AP flour
Salt & Pepper, as needed
3 eggs
1/2 c. Milk
4 c. Panko bread crumbs, finely ground
2 Tbsp. Dry parsley

- Set up a breading station with 3 low-rim bowls or pans.
- In the first one, add the flour and season it.
- In the second one, mix eggs and milk, and season.
- In the third pan, add the finely ground panko, parsley and seasoning.
- Slice the tomatoes into 4 slices each.
- For each slice, place it in the flour and with one hand coat it entirely and shake off the excess.
- Move to the egg wash and with the other hand, coat it.
- Remove and place in the breadcrumbs. Go back to the "dry" hand and press the breadcrumbs

- into the tomato.
- You may need to repeat steps 7 and 8 to make sure that the breading sticks on the skin. That can be tricky sometimes.
 - When breaded, you can refrigerate or freeze the tomatoes until ready to put in the fryer.

Blender Hollandaise

makes about 1 quart
3 whole pasteurized eggs
Dash hot sauce (my favorite is Hank Sauce)
Pinch white pepper
Juice of 1 lemon
1 1/2 # butter, clarified

- Using a high-quality blender like a Vitamix helps with this, but any blender will do.
- Add all ingredients except for the butter and blend well at a medium speed
- Bring the clarified butter to 130F.
- With the blender going at a medium-high speed, start drizzling in the butter slowly.
- Add the butter until the sauce stops spinning. When this happens, the sauce is done.
- Remove to a warm bowl and keep warm until service. This sauce will hold much better than a traditional Hollandaise, and in fact will even survive a hot box in a plate-up situation. So, if you have your oven set to proof or have a warming drawer, it will last in there. Just keep it covered so that it doesn't get a skin.

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

PARTNERSHIPS

BY DANIEL GRINBERG / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Online subscriptions: Today's puzzle and more than 4,000 past puzzles, nytimes.com/crosswords (\$39.95 a year).

1 Officers above capt.	work (or not?)
2 What San Diego and Tijuana do	40 Simple palindromic reply to "Madam, I'm Adam"
3 Airplane ____	41 Fiscal year div.
4 "Notorious" rap nickname	43 Ryder ride
5 It may be blond, brown or ginger	46 Dweeb
6 Of the utmost quality	47 Rihanna or Mariah Carey
7 Snapchatter's request	49 Have a preference
8 1981 Stephen King thriller	50 Deep-fried tortilla dish
9 Certain bolt holder	51 Group of heavies
10 Being fixed, as a car at a garage	52 Universal donor's blood type, in brief
11 Vegan milk source	53 Brand of pads
12 Still being debugged	59 Sewing 101 assignment
13 Turn against	60 Didn't go anywhere
14 Event organizer's count	61 Spanish article
15 ____ to come	62 Investment options, for short

63 Setting for Hitchcock's "Notorious," informally	73 Big game changer?	83 Cheer for Real Madrid	98 Close call
64 Portend	74 This is what it sounds like when doves cry	84 Drinking game that requires aim	102 Sport with saddles
65 Emperor who ruled for more than 13 years, dying at age 30	75 P.D. or F.D. worker	87 Winter setting in N.Y.C.	103 Bevy : quails :: mob : ____
66 More eye-catching	77 Kindergarten comeback	89 Deceptive talk	105 Fill with freight
67 Anthony ____, 1950s British P.M.	78 Indefinite degrees	90 Perturbation	106 Lake largely fed by the Detroit River
68 Villain with the "real" name Edward Nigma	80 Sweetness and sourness	91 Small hole-drilling tool	107 Lemon or lime drinks, informally
69 Teen's woe	81 Canoodling in a crowd, for short	92 Obstinate sort	109 Wonder
	82 Prominent feature of the Who's "My Generation"	93 Talents	110 Piano tune
		94 Really stood out	111 Words accompanying a headshot, in brief
		95 Patchy in color	

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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., Jan. 7

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.

MERRY MAKERS-MARBLING NAPKINS CRAFT
Held via Zoom, 10:30 AM. Join this adult craft group as they demonstrate a technique on cotton dinner napkins that creates a marbling pattern using paint and shaving cream. Supplies provided. Kits available for participants by calling 410-208-4014. Register at worcesterlibrary.org under events.

BOOK DISCUSSION: 'AN AMERICAN MARRIAGE' BY TAYARI JONES
Held via Zoom, 2:00 PM. Join in each month for a lively book discussion. Books are available on Hoopla (hoopladigital.com). Register at worcesterlibrary.org under events.

AMONG US GAMING SESSION
Held via Discord, 7:00 PM. Can you and the other Crewmates complete tasks before you are thwarted by the imposter? Information on joining the Discord server is at worcesterlibrary.org. Participants will also have to download the Among Us game (free on most phones). For 13-17 year olds. Register: <https://worcesterlibrary.libguides.com/discord>.

Sat., Jan. 9

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.

Mon., Jan. 11

BERLIN RESTAURANT WEEK
Many restaurants will be offering carry-out options to keep participants safe. Check the event on Facebook for menus as they come in. Dine 3 Times to Win is back. Staple copies of 3 receipts from 3 different participating restaurants to the entry card and drop into the collection box located at the Berlin Welcome Center. Prizes are restaurant gift cards and \$100 cash. Entry cards are located at each participating restaurant and in the Berlin Welcome Center vestibule.

STORY TIME - WINTERTIME AND SNOWY FUN
Meeting via Zoom, 10:30 AM. Interactive stories, songs and rhymes about the winter season. For children ages 2-5 years. Register: www.worcesterlibrary.org under events.

TRAVELING THROUGH BOOKS WITH KIKI AND FIFI
Held via Facebook, 2:00 PM. Join the group for a laugh-out-load episode of the popular book talk show, with special guest, Texas Sean. <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 Champion, 410-641-0157

Tues., Jan. 12

BERLIN RESTAURANT WEEK
Many restaurants will be offering carry-out options to keep participants safe. Check the event on Facebook for menus as they come in. Dine 3 Times to Win is back. Staple copies of 3 receipts from 3 different participating restaurants to the entry card and drop into the collection box located at the Berlin Welcome Center. Prizes are restaurant gift cards and \$100 cash. Entry cards are located at each participating restaurant and in the Berlin Welcome Center vestibule.

PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP
Meeting via video call, 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM. Group provides discussions and mutual support, as well as education on exercise, nutrition, coping techniques, medications and developments in treatment. Kay Kinnikin, kkinnikin@atlanticgeneral.org, 410-641-4765, <http://www.delmarvaparkinsonsaliance.org>

CREATIVE JOURNALING: PART 1
Meeting via Zoom, 6:00 PM. Sacred, creative and fun ways to stimulate your brain to bring forth truth on the tips of your soul pen. No experience necessary. Register: worcesterlibrary.org under events.

Wed., Jan. 13

BERLIN RESTAURANT WEEK
Many restaurants will be offering carry-out options to keep participants safe. Check the event on Facebook for menus as they come in. Dine 3 Times to Win is back. Staple copies of 3 receipts from 3 different participating restaurants to the entry card and drop into the collection box located at the Berlin Welcome Cen-

ter. Prizes are restaurant gift cards and \$100 cash. Entry cards are located at each participating restaurant and in the Berlin Welcome Center vestibule.

ZOOM WITH YOUR BABY
Meeting via Zoom, 10:30 AM. Babies less than 2 years old and their caregivers are welcome to join in for songs, rhymes and stories. Optional: have a scarf and rattle/shaker handy for interactive rhymes. Register: www.worcesterlibrary.org under events.

SIT 'N STITCH
Meeting via Zoom, 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM. Drop in and join others for an afternoon of knitting, crocheting and other needle arts. Register: worcesterlibrary.org under events.

LOOKING AT ART: PART 2
Meeting via Zoom, 6:00 PM. In part 2 the group will lean the basics of talking about art also called the language of art. Learn about line, color, space and elements of composition. For beginners. Register: worcesterlibrary.org under events.

ONGOING EVENTS

FREE WELLNESS WORKSHOPS
Free workshops dealing with hypertension, chronic pain self-management, chronic disease self-management, diabetes and fall prevention. If you would like to register for one of these workshops or you would like more information about bringing any of the workshops to your business or group, contact Jill at MAC, 410-742-0505, Ext. 159 or jak@macinc.org. Another workshop, titled "Building Better Caregivers" has been added. It's a free, 6-week workshop for caregivers of those with TBI, PTSD, dementia and other conditions that affect memory.



WPS SPORTS AWARDS
Worcester Prep Upper School students presented team awards during the fall sports season were: C.C. Lizas (volleyball, MVP), Sophia Ludt and Moorea Phillips (volleyball, Co-Coaches Award), Maddy Warren and Sara Freih (volleyball, Co-Most Improved), Caitlyn Hoen (girls' cross country, MVP), Caroline Anderson (girls' cross country, Coaches Award), Sydney Lamson-Reich and Natalie Foxwell (girls' cross country, Co-Most Improved); Graham McColgan (boys' cross country, MVP) and Sajiv Satyal (boys' cross country, Most Improved); and in back, Claire Williams (field hockey, MVP), Caitlin Williams (field hockey, Coaches Award), Elaina Elrick (field hockey, Most Improved), Morgan White (girls' soccer, MVP), Ava Nally (girls' soccer, Coaches Award), Myranda Beebe (girls' soccer Most Improved), Michael Wehberg (boys' soccer, MVP), Brice Richins (boys' soccer, Coaches Award), Vishnu Mohan (boys' soccer, Most Improved), T.J. Bescak (golf, MVP), Vanesska Hall (golf, Coaches Award) and Riley Schoch (golf, Most Improved). Not pictured: Riley Moyer (boys' cross country, Coaches Award).

SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

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