



ALLY LANASA/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

WINE WITH BUBBLES

Diners stay warm while enjoying "outdoor" seating with heated igloos on Saturday at Windmill Creek Vineyard and Winery on Worcester Highway in Berlin.

Budget chips away at hike in assessment

Spending reductions make revenue needs less urgent

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(Jan. 28, 2021) In addition to reviewing current financials with two thirds of fiscal 2020-21 now in the ledgers, Ocean Pines General Manager John Viola last Wednesday gave the Ocean Pines Association Board of Directors the latest figures for next year's proposed budget.



John Viola

Viola said the fiscal 2021-22 budget had been vetted by the Budget and Finance Committee and received an initial board review.

"I have included reconciliation of FY 2020-21 to the recommended budget reflecting the board's review and feedback," he said.

Among the changes in the newest version is an assessment increase significantly less than initially proposed \$120.

See ASSESSMENT Page 2

Berlin cited for meetings violation

State compliance board finds multiple instances where act wasn't followed

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 28, 2021) The Maryland Open Meetings Compliance Board found that the town of Berlin violated the Open Meetings Act at the Nov. 16 closed session and the following Nov. 23 open session, according to an opinion dated Jan. 20.

The Maryland Open Meetings Compliance Board found violations of several requirements, including the pre-meeting notice and agenda requirements, the requirements for properly closing a session to the public, the requirement that closed-session discus-

sion be limited to matters within the exception claimed on the closing statement and the requirement of a closed-session summary in the minutes of the next open session.

The board's review of the Berlin mayor and Town Council's procedures was prompted by a complaint filed by resident Jason Walter. Although he cited the two November meetings in his complaint, Walter alleged that the

conduct of future meetings to comply with the procedures as set forth in the Act and explained in Chapter 5 of the Open Meetings Act Manual," the opinion states.

"These procedures are designed to ensure that bodies will conduct public business in secrecy only when there is a genuine need for secrecy, and, even when there is such a need, to ensure that the public is made aware of that

need, and is meaningfully informed after the fact about the actions the public body has taken."

The opinion also states that the council must notify the public that it plans to close part of a meeting to the public, and the notice must invite the public to an open meeting to vote on whether to close the

See MAYOR Page 4



'If there's merit, then we need to weigh that before a vote were to be taken. If not, the council could still choose to go into closed session.'

Mayor Zackery Tyndall

town's closed session practices consistently violate the Open Meetings Act.

"While we do not address whether any other such violations have, in fact, occurred, we encourage the council in

Council ends Heron Park committee

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 28, 2021) The Berlin Mayor and Town Council on Monday agreed to disband the Heron Park Advisory Committee and make it an ad-hoc committee as needed because of a lack of funds for suggested projects.

"It's no surprise to anyone that the funding that was associated with Heron Park and the money that we had earmarked

See WITH Page 2



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With no work to do, Berlin advisory committee ended

Continued from Page 1

for some of the projects and development has gone to the chemical spill that occurred, and there's really no funding left in that project to be able to make many of the suggestions come to fruition from the committee," Mayor Zackery Tyndall said.

"Rather than having the committee continuing to churn their wheels and generate ideas that are very good but also have very little likelihood at the present moment making it to fruition, I'm asking the council to consider dissolving the Heron Park Committee for the time being."

Tyndall added that he offered committee members the opportunity to serve on other boards and commissions where vacancies exist.

"One thing I would ask is that if you agree to disband the committee that we retain the minutes and ideas that have been generated through the committee, so the work is not lost and that when future funding becomes available and we're looking to do some things on that site that we can go back to those ideas and hopefully progress right where the committee left off," he said.

The mayor also suggested writing a joint letter to the committee members

to thank them for their service.

Responding to Councilman Dean Burrell, Tyndall said the committee would have to be re-established in the future when funding becomes available.

He added that several current members wanted to step down from the committee and there are too many councilmembers serving on the committee.

With the council's approval to disband the committee, town staff agreed to maintain the past meeting minutes on the town's website at <https://berlinmd.gov/government/boards-commissions-and-committees/>.



ALLY LANASA/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

The Berlin Town Council agreed on Monday to disband the Heron Park Advisory Committee and make it an ad-hoc committee as needed because of a lack of funds for suggested projects following the chemical spill at the park on Old Ocean City Boulevard.

Assessment boost lowered by cuts

Continued from Page 1

Viola said the current estimates set the assessment rate at \$1,021, which reflects a \$35 increase over the \$986 rate charged this year.

"Where are we and what caused the increase?" he said.

Higher costs for medical benefits and payroll, along with property and casualty insurance, are anticipated to

increase assessment fees by \$30, \$13 and \$7 respectively.

Significant revenue deficits from aquatics are estimated to account for an additional \$17 to next year's assessments.

"For aquatics and beach parking, at this point Budget and Finance and the board feel even if covid eases it will impact this amenity," he said.

Viola said the return of pool patrons would be guided, in large part, by state directives.

"We don't know what will be mandated by the governor [Larry Hogan]," he said.

To partially offset the higher rates, other costs were trimmed, primarily payroll, from Public Works and the Police Department.

Viola said roughly \$133,000 savings — resulting in \$16 off the assessment rate — came from not filling three open positions in from Public Works.

Roughly \$110,000 in savings — and another \$13 cut from the assessment rate — was accomplished by not filling one open position in the Police Department.

Additionally, higher revenues from the OPA Golf Course and racquet sports are earmarked to reduce assessments by \$4 and \$3 respectively.

"These are the major components," he said.

The largest cost-cutting measure is tied to a proposed reallocation of \$350,000 in roadway funds the state pays the association from the casino impact grant, which knocks \$44 off assessment fees for next fiscal year.

With a bottom line that will be well

into the black at the end of current fiscal year ends on April 30, the association is aiming to zero out roughly \$180,000 in debt remaining from the \$1.6 million operating debt incurred three years ago.

"We will use the ending favorability to offset any operating deficit," he said. "Any remaining favorability will be used as a cushion for covid."

Looking at current year budget figures, for December the association's operating fund had a negative balance of \$209,428, with revenues under budget by \$39,349 and expenses over budget by \$170,079.

Despite the negative December figures, the association continues to maintain overall favorability with four months remaining in fiscal 20-21.

To close last month, fiscal 20-21 ledgers reflect a positive year-to-date operating variance of \$1,145,696, with revenues over budget by \$235,462 and expenses under budget by \$910,234.

Viola estimated the current year favorability would be reduced to roughly \$650,000 by the end of April.

Expenditures for December were also negatively affected by the \$250,000 transferred from general maintenance to drainage.

Included among expenses for December was \$50,000 for reversal of allowances for doubtful accounts based on guidance from Director of Finance and Operational Logistics Steve Phillips.

"We've had some good progress on collections so he wanted to try and balance it out now," Viola said.

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OP committee holds first meeting of 2021

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(Jan. 28, 2021) While holding off in-person meetings until pandemic health-safety protocols are eased, the Ocean Pines Communications Committee convened virtually last week to discuss updating community signs, establishing an online residents academy, recruiting new committee members and staging town halls.

Marquee signs

Efforts to update existing analog community marquee signs with digital messaging boards appear near completion with the county approval for zoning authorization to be discussed next month.

Communications Committee Chair Jenny Cropper Rines said the Worcester County Commissioners are reviewing a proposed zoning amendment during its meeting on Feb. 16.

"I will plan on going," she said.

Initially discussed in the fall of 2019, the switch became more involved after the committee learned Worcester County zoning regulations would require a change in the zoning code specific to the Pines.

Last month, a contingent of committee members finalized the language of a code amendment with the Worcester County Planning Commission to permit digital signs in residential communities.

Board liaison Dr. Colette Horn joined Rines and committee member Cheryl Jacobs to shed light on the intent of the signage update during the Worcester Planning Commission meeting in December.



Jenny Rines

As currently proposed, the text amendment would permit the OPA to keep three of the existing marquees and install three electronic signs at prime spots in the community.

Horn said recent discussions with County Commissioner Chip Bertino indicate that number might be expanded.

"He actually said he would like to request 8-10 signs," she said. "We were a little conservative in our ask."

Residents academy

Work to develop an online "virtual resident's academy" is also nearing completion.

Rines said Marketing Coordinator Julie Malinowski is fleshing out details to complete the new venture.

"I'm so pleased this is moving forward," she said.

Malinowski said proposed chapter headings, which the committee formulated last January, were recently distributed to department heads for their

comments.

Work on the academy was halted after coronavirus sidelined committee meetings last spring.

Plans are afoot to film related video content at the Ocean Pines Golf Club-house next week, Malinowski said.

"We will do a test run in the middle of next week," she said. "We're operating a little bit in the dark just because we haven't done this before."

Rines said the resident's academy would incorporate a blend of video and written content.

"If you've got a combination ... your likelihood of reaching people is better," she said. "Thankfully it's finally coming to fruition."

Member recruitment

Turning to new business, Rines asked committee members help find new candidates to join the advisory group.

Rines said with several members' term limits nearly expired, there could be a challenge to maintain ranks.

OPA bylaws require a minimum of seven members on the Communications Committee.

Rines said her own term, which has previously been extended, is set to end this spring.

"I would like someone to step into the role of meeting planning and chairing it," she said.

Although still interested in participating, Rines expressed a preference to change committee leadership.

"I would like a new person to handle new business," she said.

Committee members agreed that the recruiting effort needs be included on the OPA website and next newsletter.

Town halls

Jacobs asked about the feasibility of holding a town hall in the immediate future.

"It's a new year [and] the budget is coming up," she said.

Noting the influx of new residents, Jacobs asked how other members felt about staging a virtual town hall meeting within the next few months.

Horn said previous town hall meetings have been tied to contentious issues.

"It probably should be a board discussion," she said.

Horn proposed asking the board of directors if any particular points of interest exist.

"It's really been driven by community interest," she said.

Rines said the committee has previously proposed assisting in producing future town hall gatherings and remains prepared join any efforts if requested.

The next OPA Communications Committee virtual meeting is scheduled for Feb. 18 at 10 a.m.

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STOCK B211075A

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Mayor says town will enhance transparency

Continued from Page 1
meeting before the scheduled closed session.

Walter alleged that council never held an open session on Nov. 16 prior to the “special executive session” to discuss public safety. In response, the council said a vote to close the session was taken and that a written closing statement was prepared, however, it was done so out of public view.

“This nonpublic closure vote violated the Act,” the opinion states. “[M]embers of the public were deprived of the opportunity to object to closure, which violates the Act.”

Walter also said that the public was only notified two business days in advance of the closed session.

“We understand that during the ongoing pandemic, the council may need to meet on relatively short notice to address new or amended executive orders and other public health directives,” the opinion reads. “Such exigencies do not eliminate the requirement that the council provide reasonable advance notice of its meetings, but they are a factor to be considered in assessing the reasonableness of notice. The council may wish to advise the public to check the council’s website often while the current public health emergency continues.”

Furthermore, the agenda for the

Nov. 16 closed session stated that the meeting would take place via Zoom with the time and date of the meeting. The only other information provided was “to discuss public security, if the public body determines that public discussion would constitute a risk to the public or to public security, including (i) the deployment of fire and police services and staff; and (ii) the development and implementation of emergency plans[.]”

The board found the council violated the agenda requirement because “it failed to clearly notify the public that the meeting would be entirely closed, nor did it invite the public to a separate open session preceding the closed session,” the opinion states.

In addition, a list of topics to be discussed must be included in the agenda if the council plans to use the agenda as the closing statement for the meeting, according to the Open Meetings Act.

“The council may find helpful the model closing statement currently posted on the Attorney General’s website; this most recent version has been formatted to more clearly remind the presiding officer to include, for each topic to be discussed, the public body’s reasons for discussing that topic behind closed doors,” the opinion states. “The closing statement can then serve as a reminder to the presiding officer, once

the closed session has begun, of the limits within which the discussion must be kept.”

Another issue the board found was that the council did discuss topics at its Nov. 16 closed session that were not included on its closing statement.

“Here the confidential meeting minutes the council submitted to the board indicate that the council discussed a number of topics at the November 16 meeting extending beyond matters that would threaten public safety if discussed publicly,” the opinion reads.

“As the text of the Act indicates, closure is not allowed simply because the discussion relates to safety or security matters; rather, the body must ‘determine’ that the issues are sensitive enough that an open discussion would itself imperil the public.”

Lastly, the council failed to disclose the public information about the closed session at the following open session on Nov. 23.

“The mayor, presiding over the meeting, stated that a closed session occurred on November 16 and that the vote to close the session was unanimous with all members present, and cited Section 3-305(b)(10) as authority for closing the meeting,” the opinion states.

“Significantly, however, there was no listing of the topics of discussion, persons present, and each action taken during the session.”

Before the scheduled executive session on Monday, Mayor Zackery Tyndall addressed the report by explaining that the Open Meetings Act requires the Town Council to provide the opportunity for the public to hear the purpose of the closed session, the time and place of the meeting, the justification for the closed session and the time for a return to open session.

Then, the public could object to the closed session before the council votes to go into the closed session, the mayor continued.

“If there’s merit, then we need to weigh that before a vote were to be taken,” he said. “If not, the council could still choose to go into closed session.”

Following a closed session, a list of

the agenda items should be disclosed to the public as well as the code which those items are in compliance.

“There is no deviation from the agenda item while in closed session,” Tyndall said.

He read the closed session summary for Monday before the council took a vote whether to go into closed session live on Zoom that was open to the public via Facebook Live.

The council planned to meet in executive session to discuss a negotiating strategy for selling a portion of Heron Park.

Councilman Dean Burrell said the agenda did not notify the public that an open session would occur before the closed session, thus the public might not be aware they could participate. Attorney Dave Gaskill agreed that it needs to be advertised to the public.

“I would suggest that if we want to provide more time for people to understand the process and make sure that it’s clear and transparent that we postpone the executive session until our next meeting on Feb. 8,” Tyndall said.

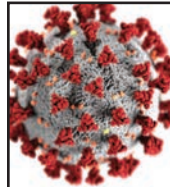
The council unanimously opposed going into executive session on Monday.

During the open session, Tyndall read the statement on behalf of the Town Council.

“On Jan. 20, 2021, the town of Berlin received notification from the State of Maryland Open Meetings Compliance Board regarding a closed session meeting held on Nov. 16, 2020,” he said. “The mayor and council of the town of Berlin take open meetings and their compliance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act very seriously. We are going to use these findings as an opportunity to enhance our transparency and adapt to the reporting of closed sessions to comply with the guidelines.”

In the future, the Town Council will go live before an executive session and read a statement of closure, which will be published in the meeting packet.

After an executive session takes place, Tyndall said the statement of closure will be updated with the list of agenda items discussed as well as the vote tally to go into closed session.



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OP Board approves capital spends

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(Jan. 28, 2021) With the current budget year getting closer to its conclusion, and net operating favorability projected to eclipse \$600,000, the Ocean Pines Association Board of Directors approved nearly \$300,000 in capital expenditures last Wednesday.

Of that tally, more than \$160,000 is earmarked for proposed upgrades at the Manklin Meadows Racquet Sports Complex.

General Manager John Viola provided separate estimates to install four pickleball courts, a junior tennis court and associated fencing for both projects during the board meeting on Jan. 20.

Terra Firma submitted the lowest bid for the pickleball court expansion at \$67,895.

"It's not in this year's budget but [we] are recommending to include it," he said.

Director Doug Parks asked if there would be remaining space for additional pickleball courts at the racquet complex in the future.

Viola said while the current expansion would be adjacent to the existing pickleball courts further growth at that location is limited.

"Where we put these, that's basically filled," he said.

Terra Firma was also the low bidder, at \$66,000, to build a junior tennis court located behind platform tennis courts five and six.

Viola said the junior tennis court would offer a new marketing element and could increase revenue for the racquet center.

Lastly, the winning bids for associated fencing work was awarded to Nanticoke Fence at just over \$14,000 for the pickleball courts and \$12,000 for the junior tennis court.

"We have worked with them before," he said.

Viola said the cost could be taken from current year budget's excess above expenses and would not affect assessment rates.

The board also signed off on purchasing pair of 2021 Chevrolet Tahoes for the Police Department, including both two-and four-wheel-drive models.

Viola said one police vehicle had been previously approved for the current year budget but was put on hold until the need became greater.

"Both vehicles need major repairs," he said.

The new vehicles will replace the police department's oldest rides, including a 2011 Ford Expedition with 176,000 miles that is suffering major engine problems and a 2014 Ford Ex-

plorer with 143,000 miles also in need of major repairs.

With plans already in place to include the second vehicle in the pending fiscal 2021-22 budget, Viola said approving the purchase now would allow the funds to be spent a few months earlier than planned.

"They do buy them through a state program," he said. "They need it."

Viola said repaving work, following the razing of the old craft building in White Horse Park, is ready to begin at an estimated cost of \$59,500.

"It was in the budget this year for about \$35,000," he said.

Despite selecting the lowest of three prices received, Viola said following the pandemic onset and subsequent rise in material costs, earlier estimates fell flat.

The White Horse Park campus parking lot has 44 spaces presently, with the renovation boosting the count to 64.

Work is slated to begin after providing season allowances, Viola said.

"Due to asphalt plants closing for winter, we'll be paving in early spring when they reopen," he said.

In reply to a question from Director Doug Parks, Viola noted the renovation includes parking areas currently blacktopped and would not include the stone lot located just past the police station.

Pines assessment collections keeps charting to close

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(Jan. 28, 2021) Along with updating investment and reserve account balances, Ocean Pines Treasurer Doug Parks reported continued progress on homeowner assessment collections during the Board of Directors meeting last Wednesday.

To end November, the association had approximately \$12 million in cash and investments, divided between \$7.1 million in CDARs (Certificate of Deposit Account Registry Service), along with \$4.9 million in money market funds and other operating accounts.

The overall investment rate of return on CDARs remained at 1 percent in November, where it has hovered since September after dropping from 1.8 percent in August.

Parks said association cash totals took a slight dip in November.

"At the end of October, we had \$12.5 million in cash," he said. "We did have some approved and exe-

See ASSESSMENT Page 6



Doug Parks

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Berlin Fire Company provides Town Council budget update

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 28, 2021) Berlin Fire Company President David Fitzgerald presented the quarterly report from Oct. 1, 2020 to Dec. 31, 2020 to the Berlin Mayor and Council on Monday.

During that period, the Berlin Fire Company responded to 37 in-town fire or rescue calls, which is 42.5 percent of the total calls. The fire company responded to 50 calls outside of the town limits.

For the fire and rescue staff, the busiest days were Wednesday and Thursday from Oct. 1, 2020 to Dec. 31, 2020, with the busiest times of day being 4-5 p.m.

The fire-rescue response time during that period was 3.97 minutes, and the Matrix report states the response should be nine minutes or less.

Fitzgerald added that the county response time standard to respond from the station is six minutes.

“What happens then if Berlin Fire Company does not respond within six minutes? They start alerting the next appropriate company based on the location of the call,” he said.

Fitzgerald also presented revenue budget highlight that showed the fire company has received all of its funds

from the county and 75 percent of its funds from the town as per the contract.

Donations to the fire company were less from October to December 2020 than the same period in past years, but Fitzgerald said the donations were higher than budgeted because of memorial donations for several firefighters who passed away.

The fire company was unable to host any fundraisers because of covid-19 social distancing restrictions.

“Nor did we feel our members should increasingly be exposed to covid ‘cause we need to make sure they’re ready to respond for emergency responses,” Fitzgerald said.

As for expenses, the fire company had an unexpected cost for replacing two computers, which was indicated in the last quarterly report as well.

There were no large repairs for the vehicle maintenance that was completed in this quarter, so the account remains in budget.

“However, we did recently find that our building generator has some repairs, and we should be able to stay within our budget in that category,” Fitzgerald said. “We have a large generator that if we have a power outage, it can power the fire station fully.”



ALLY LANASA/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

Berlin Fire Company President David Fitzgerald presented to the Berlin Mayor and Council on Monday the quarterly budget report for the fire company and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) with revenue and expenditure data from Oct. 1, 2020 to Dec. 31, 2020.

The fire company was reimbursed by Worcester County through CARES funding for personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitation supplies in the amount of \$7,269.17.

The Town Council will discuss the fire company’s capital budget during the budget process.

In the immediate future, Fitzgerald said breathing apparatuses, which have approached the end of their shelf life, need to be replaced.

“We will try to apply for some grants,” he said. “We do know that grants will not cover 100 percent of

See EMS Page 7

Assessment collections revised

Continued from Page 5
cuted capital expenses in November.”

Turning to reserve account balances to end November, including replacement, bulkheads, roads, drainage and new capital, Parks said the cumulative balance was more than \$6.7 million to end November.

The totals include approximately \$4.2 million in replacement funds, \$1.8 million for bulkheads, \$215,000 for roads, \$433,000 for drainage and \$87,000 for new capital.

Parks said the total balance was \$5.6 million at the beginning of fiscal 20-21, with a targeted balance of \$5.01 million to close the year on April 30.

“We’ll continue to make sure we track towards that,” he said. “We have to make sure that any unplanned expenditures or emergency expenditures that may come up that we manage that accordingly.”

Collection of outstanding assessment dues continues to track posi-

tively, with Parks reporting to close December about \$8.8 million of \$9.1 million due is in hand.

Now at above 96 percent, Parks said remittance of annual assessments is now tracking a tick above prior averages of 94-95 percent at this point in the year, but still represents significant dollars.

“That 96.6 percent reflects a \$303,000 shortfall that we haven’t collected,” he said.

On a related note, Parks said General Manager John Viola and staff are continuing to track delinquent account balances from previous years.

“The cumulative of accounts that have not been collected for more than one year,” he said. “It covers multiple years.”

Parks said to end the 2020 calendar year, 461 properties had outstanding balances totaling approximately \$921,000.

“These are funds we hope to recover at some point,” he said.



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EMS reduces staff after town budget cuts

Continued from Page 6
our needs, but we will make every attempt to get some grant funding for these breathing apparatuses.”

He also reminded the council that town cuts will result in reduced state aid funds in the next budget.

Fitzgerald also provided a quarterly update for the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) at the Berlin company.

Between Oct. 1, 2020 and Dec. 31, 2020, the EMS staff responded to 258 in-town calls, making up 60.9 percent of total calls, and 165 calls outside of town.

The EMS staff also conducted 189 transports and 69 non-transports in town during the quarter.

The busiest day for EMS was Thursday followed by Tuesday. The busiest hour of the day was 10-11 a.m. The majority of calls for EMS came between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. for the quarter, Fitzgerald said.

The average response time of the EMS staff is nearly one and half minutes, which includes the second and third run calls that may be full volunteer response from home.

The review of random staffed EMS calls meet the 60-second standard for response times, which is based on the Matrix report.

“We mail out our annual donations for EMS in November every year,” Fitzgerald said. “They are on budget.”

He added that invoices were down about 11 percent because the call volume is down with the coronavirus. Although the quantity of calls have decreased, Fitzgerald said the time to respond on calls has significantly extended for the safety of staff, their families and patients.

“Now, there’s additional procedures to disinfect,” he said. “There’s also downtime with the staff. Many, especially if they are transporting a covid patient or what we call a PUI (a person under investigation) because they have certain symptoms, they are changing their clothes, they are showering.”

Additionally, all county funds were received for operating and the ambulance replacement.

Per the agreement, EMS have received 50 percent of town funds.

As for expenses, payroll was slightly higher than 50 percent.

“We’re going to check those numbers, but we believe it was slightly over because some of the over-time and stuff it’s taken to staff the ambulances,” Fitzgerald said.

All the other EMS accounts are within budget.

Similar to the fire company, the EMS was reimbursed by Worcester County through CARES funding for additional expenses of PPE and sanitation supplies in the amount of \$33,557.33.

Currently, there are no capital funds for ambulance replacements.

“Fortunately, all three of the ambulances have been replaced,” Fitzgerald said. “We do have a loan payment due on the last ambulance.”

All county funds are used to pay for the ambulance loan payment with no town funds provided.

The capital budget for FY21-22 has been submitted to the town.

“One of the discussions we’ll have to have is our cardiac monitor replacements,” Fitzgerald said. “Besides the ambulance, that’s the second largest expenditure and most important piece of equipment for a life-saving cardiac event.”

The 15-year-old cardiac monitors are at the end of their life cycle.

Responding to Councilman Dean Burrell’s request at the previous budget report, Fitzgerald presented the personnel reduction due to town budget cut.

The FY 19-20 EMS budget, which was \$319,000, was reduced \$84,285 for FY 20-21 EMS budget.

As a result of the 26 percent reduction, the EMS immediately eliminated the fourth person of the day crew from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. for a total of \$56,575.

The EMS had further cuts to make, so the third provider shift is not being filled for another \$27,710.

Furthermore, there are 24 shifts where only two personnel work to save approximately \$9,300.

Councilman Jay Knerr asked Fitzgerald to provide a written report to the council prior to the meeting with more detail about finances to which he agreed.

Responding to Town Administrator Jeff Fleetwood, Fitzgerald said the fire company is evaluating its eligibility for an Assistance to Firefighters Grant.

Fleetwood told him the town received the annual Sen. William H. Amoss Fire, Rescue and Ambulance Fund from the county on Monday, which totaled \$10,800 for the Berlin Fire Company.

Those funds have already been allocated as the fire company expected to receive the grant.

Fitzgerald clarified to the council that EMS does not receive state aid funds.

Lastly, he also informed the council about Senate Bill 389, which was introduced by three senators, for the Maryland Medical Assistance program emergency services reimbursement.

Fitzgerald said that if an ambulance responds to a call anywhere in the state for a patient on Maryland Medical Assistance, the EMS has only received \$100 for years.

“What [the bill] does is increases — not by much — but it authorizes in fiscal year ’22 to increase the amount \$25 each year until this gets to \$300,” he said.

Mayor Zackery Tyndall asked Fitzgerald to provide the Town Council with more information about the calls for service and estimated projections for that to write a letter of support in favor of the bill.



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Tax rate review to take place at next meeting on Feb. 8

Town Council approved to extend schedule this week

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 28, 2021) The Berlin mayor and Town Council agreed Monday to extend the deadline for the review of the financial projections to its next meeting on Feb. 8.

The town's finance director Natalie Saleh said the council adopted a motion to review the real estate tax rate prior to the budget process on June 24, 2019.

"In that resolution, there are three categories," said Town Administrator Jeff Fleetwood.

Firstly, the mayor and council should review the town's short- and long-term financial projections as well as the general fund reserves at or before the second meeting in January.

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, Fleetwood said a lot of the checks had not cleared in time.

Additionally, the resolution states the mayor and council should set a date for the tax rate public hearing at or before the second meeting in February, as well as the public hearing for the tax rate should be set and the decision made by the mayor and council about the tax rate should occur no later than the second meeting in March.

Mayor Zackery Tyndall said review of the financial projections will take place on Feb. 8 as well as the scheduling of a tax rate public hearing.

The motion presented on Monday stated that town staff requested the approval of the mayor and council in extending the deadline for the review of the financial projections to no later than Feb. 28.

Councilman Jack Orris suggested the approval of the motion with the amendment of "no later than Feb. 8."

The council unanimously approved the motion as amended.

OP Board mulls aquatics revenues

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(Jan. 28, 2021) Seeking clarity regarding ongoing financial impacts from coronavirus, last week the Ocean Pines Board of Directors weighed options to reduce projected six-figure losses next year in aquatics.

The board performed departmental reviews of the proposed fiscal 2021-22 budget during an all-day meeting on Jan. 19, which followed a vetting by the Budget and Finance Committee earlier this month.

Director of Amenities and Operational Logistics Colby Phillips said pool facilities, which are forecast to lose \$236,000 this year, are projected to lose \$381,000 during the next budget year.

With the pandemic continuing to alter societal interactions, and timeframes to complete vaccine disseminations yet unknown, the influx of pool patrons is likely to be slowed next spring.

"Based on community feedback we feel it will start slow and have to be rebuilt," she said.

OPA President Larry Perrone, while noting aquatics was one of the departments most impacted by coronavirus, said strategies should be developed to decrease the bottom line deficit.

"Do you have a plan in place to try and reduce that number?" he said.

Phillips said the first consideration would be reducing operating hours at select pools.

Following the earlier review of next fiscal year's proposed figures by the Budget and Finance Committee Phillips and Director of Aquatics Kathleen Cook crunched numbers to identify savings.

"If we closed Sports Core Pool for 14 weeks we'd save \$42,000 on payroll," she said.

Phillips said the move would entail lost revenue of a smaller magnitude.

Phillips said prior to that possibility would be consideration to either close or reduce hours at the Beach Club Pool.

"Adjustments can be made based

on where we are ... next summer," she said.

Perrone expressed concerns that despite reducing hours last summer the revenue loss for aquatics was massive and looks to increase further next season.

"I think we need to do more, I'm just not sure what that is," he said. "We need some more solutions ... because this is big number."



Colby Phillips



Larry Perrone

ate revenue exists with the Swim and Racquet Club Pool, Yacht Club Pool and Sports Core Pool.

"Everyday I opened the beach pool this summer I lost money because of the capacity," she said.

Director Frank Daly asked if revenue and expense data could be obtained for each individual pool.

"It appears there will be capacity restraints this year," he said.

Daly said each facility should be vetted individually to ascertain potential lost revenue prior to reaching a conclusion on potential closures.

"When we hit the opening button on Memorial Day, best case projections there's still going to be a whole lot of people not vaccinated and ... a whole lot of virus still in the U.S.," he said.

Phillips said budget figures from the prior five years are readily available and pool specific operating costs could be broken out in short order.

Director Doug Parks, who con-

curred capacity restrictions would persist this year, questioned the need for definitive solutions for cost containment at this time.

"The message I would like to convey would be that all options are on the table," he said. "If faced with a significant loss there would be an appetite for closing pools."

Parks said the matter should be entrusted to the operations team, with the potential for pool closures a board-approved option.

"That option is one for them to consider," he said.

Parks said a real-time analysis of profit and losses should be the top priority next season.

"One of the challenges you're going to have is to continue to do an analysis on a weekly basis to see how revenues are coming in based on capacity," he said.

Director Tom Janasek questioned the impact of shuttering pools on membership percentages.

"If you look at the numbers we're close to \$300,000 down in memberships for the last full year of numbers," he said. "That's a huge hit we're taking, period."

Aquatics membership dues were more than \$414,000 in fiscal 2019-20, with the current budget year forecast at close around \$142,000 and projected at more than \$216,000 for fiscal 21-22.

Janasek said closing pools at the Yacht Club and or Beach Club would impact profits from food and beverage sales.

"Last year food and beverage took a huge hit when we closed the Beach Club pool," he said.

Perrone disagreed with the sentiment to track revenues and expenses in real time next season to ascertain the best path forward.

"To come and say in the budget process, 'Well, we're going to close some hours like we did last year' doesn't change anything," he said. "We need your team to come forward with a plan for us to look at."

Director Dr. Colette Horn echoed
See PINES Page 9

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ALDI plans new store in shopping center off Rt. 50

Berlin location of chain to open this year, source says

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 28, 2021) The grocery store chain ALDI confirmed Monday that it plans to open a store in the Ocean Landings II shopping center off Route 50 near Berlin.

“Through our aggressive national expansion plans, we’re on pace to become the third-largest U.S. grocery retailer by store count by the end of 2022,” said Jeff Baehr, ALDI Frederick Division Vice President. “As a part of this expansion, we are excited to confirm we are planning to open our first ALDI store in Berlin, Maryland, this year.”



ALLY LANASA/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

The grocery store chain ALDI plans to open a Berlin location this year in the Ocean Landings II shopping center off Route 50.

Although details about the store are still limited, the new ALDI will be located at 11330 Samuel Bowen Boulevard next to the Dollar Tree, according

to Paramount Realty Services, Inc.

ALDI is a German grocery store founded by the Albrecht family in 1961. The company opened its first U.S. store

in Iowa in 1976.

ALDI now has more than 2,000 stores across 37 states and employs over 25,000 people.

Bus contractors’ requests approved

Drivers sought extensions, replacements of vehicles nearing end-of-life service

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 28, 2021) The Worcester County Board of Education approved requests from bus contractors to extend the use of their buses to transport students beyond 12 years and agreed to requests from bus contractors to purchase replacement buses for the 2021-22 school year during its meeting on Jan. 19.

A & B Lewis LLC, M & N Donoway LLC, Teresa Adams and Harry Wimbrow requested a three-year extension, while Robert Reed and William Holden requested a two-year extension.

Wesley Townsend, who transports students in the northern Worcester County area, requested only a one-year extension.

“They have to do everything the other buses have to do with the exception they have an additional inspection in January,” said Kim Heiser, manager of transportation for the county school system.

With the approval of the school board, a bus contractor may operate a new bus, a bus less than five years old or a Worcester County school bus less than 14 years old for an assigned daily or regular route.

A new bus or a used bus less than 14 years old may be put in service as

a spare bus with the board’s approval.

Six contractors sought approval from the school board to replace buses that will be going out of service this year.

Kenneth Rantz, a bus contractor from the Pocomoke area, currently operates a 2007 spare bus. The last day of service for the bus is Aug. 23. Rantz sought to purchase a used replacement bus.

Jason Donoway, a bus contractor serving Snow Hill area Cedar Chapel students, currently operates a 2007 handicap-accessible bus. The last day of service for the bus is Sept. 1. He requested permission to purchase a new handicap accessible bus.

Keith Downs, a bus contractor from the northern county area, operates a 2006 regular run bus, which

has a last day of operation on Sept. 1. Downs requested permission to purchase a new bus.

Susan Hutchinson, a bus contractor from the northern county area, operates a 2007 spare bus, which has a last day of operation on Sept. 1. She requested permission to purchase a used replacement bus.

Eugene MaGee, a bus contractor from the northern county area, currently operates a 2009 spare bus, and he requested to purchase a new bus.

It is his intention to use his current bus as a spare bus and use the new bus as his regular run bus, Heiser said.

Lastly, Ruby Baker, a bus contractor from the northern county area, operates a 2011 regular run bus, and she sought to purchase a new bus.

Pines examines pool operations

Continued from Page 8

Daly’s earlier sentiment about analyzing individual facility net operating figures.

“We should at least look at that data and see what story it tells us,” she said.

Phillips and Cook pledged to provide financial data to later that day.

Perrone said the search for solutions could resume after further research into past fiscal benchmarks is conducted.

“Let’s get the information and see what contingency plan is proposed,” he said.

The board will hold a public hearing for the fiscal 21-22 budget on Feb. 6 prior to potential adoption on Feb. 20.

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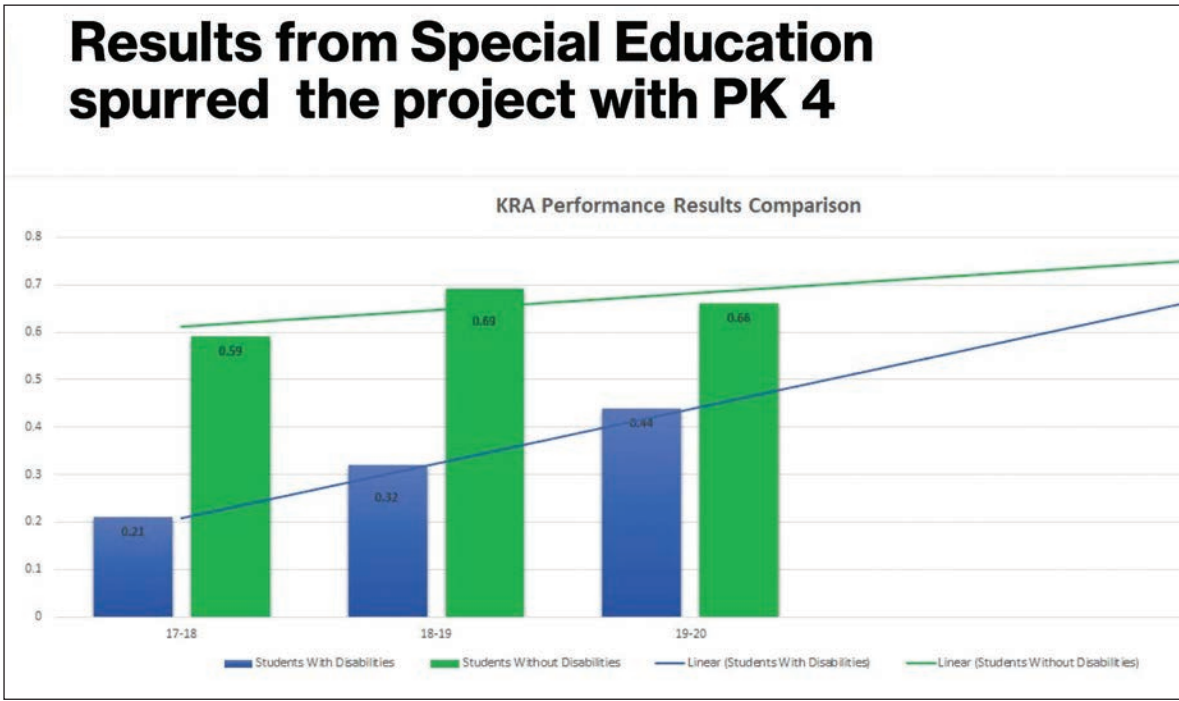
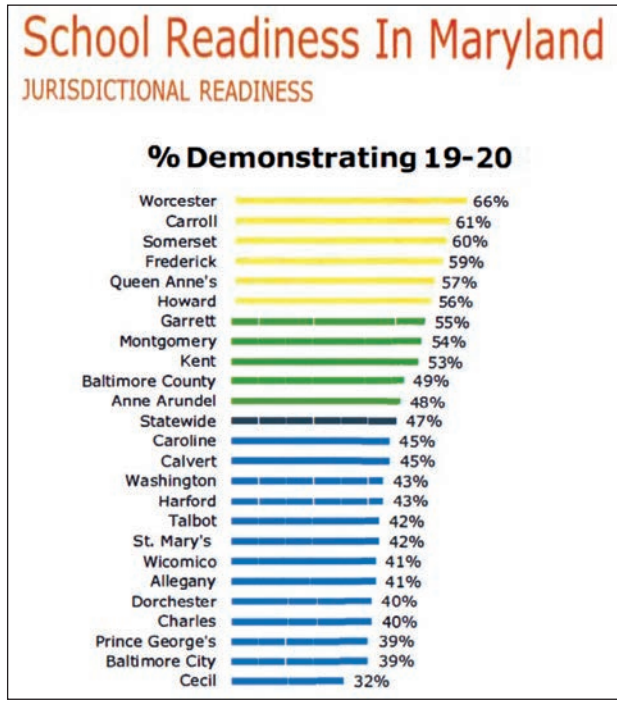
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Buckingham Elementary School in Berlin has joined Johns Hopkins University (JHU) and Caroline County to test an Early Learning Assessment project with all Pre-Kindergarten 4 students that encourages educators to more authentically assess students' learning progressions of the skills, knowledge and behaviors.

Pre-K 4 students will be evaluated with ELA

Caroline County, JHU and Buckingham Elementary partner for assessments

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 28, 2021) Buckingham Elementary School in Berlin has joined Johns Hopkins University (JHU) and Caroline County to test an Early Learning Assessment project with all Pre-Kindergarten 4 students during the 2020-2021 school year.

The Early Learning Assessment is a precursor to the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) and provides insight to students' educational performances.

According to the presentation to the Worcester County Board of Education on Jan. 19, the Early Learning Assessment, is "a unique formative assessment tool to inform instruction, a valid instrument to show development and strengths across the whole child, designed to use teacher observation, with evidence collected over time, designed to fit into the nat-

ural flow of an early childhood setting and ensures that children are on the path for kindergarten readiness."

Todd Hall, the county school system's early childhood specialist, said Worcester leads Maryland jurisdictions in school readiness. During the 2019-20 school year, 66 percent of students demonstrated readiness for kindergarten.

"Are we really happy with 66 percent of our students demonstrating readiness, even though it is top in the state? Yes, but no," Hall said. "So, we're always looking to better ourselves to take it to the next level."

Performance results from special education students encouraged the project for Pre-Kindergarten 4 students.

Cassidy Hamborsky, the coordinator of instruction reading for language for the school system, said the project started for special education about four years ago.

"We focused on inclusion, practices and achievement data," Hamborsky said. "We were below the state level. Through this project and the

collaboration with Johns Hopkins University and Caroline County, we were able to close the achievement gap by 16 percent for our students with disabilities."

This was achieved through Dynamic Impact, a team-based continuous improvement process through Johns Hopkins University, she added.

"What makes it different than other strategic planning is it really focuses on the UNITED Protocol," Hamborsky said. "UNITED Protocol is a team-based approach based on implementation plans, and it really focuses on getting the right players at the table."

The Dynamic Impact also prioritizes fidelity.

"Our team meets quarterly with Caroline County and JHU," Hamborsky added, while the county school system coordinators meet monthly.

The presentation also included a sample of the literary learning progressions of skills, knowledge and behaviors of the Early Learning Assessment. Students would respond

to questions about a text.

Levels A-D represent developmental stages and standards that precede Levels 1-5 and allow teachers to assess children who may be at earlier stages of development, including children with disabilities and children who are English learners.

Levels 1, 4 and 5 represent the milestones at approximately 3 years of age (Level 1), entry to kindergarten (Level 4) and the end of kindergarten (Level 5). Meanwhile, Levels 2 and 3 represent a child's progress between 3 years of age and kindergarten entry.

The project encourages educators to conduct assessments authentically.

Curriculum implications of the project for literacy are: 100 Book Challenge Pre-Kindergarten Framework, which provides a designated time for "kid-watching" to intentionally assess students; Fountas and Pinnell Interactive Read Aloud and shared reading materials, which provides formative assessment "look-fors" within each lesson; Pre-Kindergarten Foundations, which

See ASSESSMENTS Page 11

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Md. schools urged to start hybrid instruction

Gov. Hogan, Dr. Salmon ask county systems to return to combination of instruction

By Ally Lanasa
Staff Writer

(Jan. 28, 2021) Gov. Larry Hogan and State Superintendent of Schools Dr. Karen Salmon on Jan. 21 urged Maryland school systems to return to hybrid instruction—a combination of in-person and virtual learning — no later than March 1 because of the learning loss caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic.

“Every single Maryland student must have at least the opportunity to return to attending school in some form or fashion,” Hogan said. “Our children simply cannot afford any more endless roadblocks, or any more moving of the goalposts. The time has come to get all of our kids back in the classroom, and to open the schools.”

Hogan and Salmon sent a letter to Maryland State Education Association President Cheryl Bost imploring her to aid the effort to get students back into classrooms.

“While the online setting for instruction has improved in many ways since March of 2020, far too many students remain unable to participate and thrive in such an environment. We have already seen this in a tangible way, as failing grades for students

throughout Maryland were far higher in the first term of this school year than in the previous year,” the letter states.

“The clear social and emotional toll that online learning has taken on students, families, and educators is yet another unquantifiable impact of the prolonged school building closure. Therefore, immediate action must be taken by every school system in our State to provide opportunities for in-person instruction to all students.”

Bost responded in a letter of her own Tuesday, taking the governor to task for what she said were his implications that teachers were more concerned about themselves than helping to restore classroom instruction.

The problem, Bost said, is the state’s failure to protect teachers and to institute certain safety protocols in schools.

“We are frustrated by the lackadaisical implementation of, and resources for, safety measures in our schools,” she said. “We are frustrated by the lack of availability of vaccines after being told how important it is for us to get vaccinated. We want to be back in our schools, safely and sustainably, for our students.”

“While your letter called for partnership, your actions have consistently and inappropriately tried to paint educators as opponents and ob-



PHOTO COURTESY WORCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
State Superintendent of Schools Dr. Karen Salmon visited Annette Waters’ Pre-Kindergarten 3 classroom at Buckingham Elementary while touring Worcester County Public Schools on Jan. 22.

stacles.” Numerous back-to-the-classroom advocates have made their pitch for classroom instruction, from President Biden to Dr. Anthony Fauci. In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics recently stated, “Children absolutely need to return to in-school learning for their healthy development and well-being, and so safety in schools and in the community must be a priority.” “While school systems have made strides with remote learning, far too

many students remain unable to thrive in such an environment,” Hogan said. “There can be no debating that online learning has taken an unmistakable toll on students, families and educators.” State health officials recommend daily in-person learning for students with disabilities and special learning needs, phased daily in-person learning for elementary students, and hybrid learning for secondary students. The governor said keeping children in remote learning is more damaging than any potential risk of having them return to the classroom.

“By law, these decisions to reopen the schools ultimately rest with the duly elected and appointed county school boards, and I cannot order them to open schools, but I want to make it perfectly clear I will do everything I possibly can do within the law to push to get all of Maryland’s children back into the classrooms,” Hogan said. “I call on every leader in this state to join me and President Joe Biden in making this an immediate priority.”

In her response, Bost said, “No one wants to open school buildings safely

See HYBRID Page 14

Assessments to be more authentic

Continued from Page 10
increases consistency across early grade levels with letters and sounds; and skills and goals specific to curriculum materials are aligned to skills, knowledge and behaviors in curriculum document.

As for mathematics, all curriculum standards are aligned with KRA and support learning progressions of the skills, knowledge and behaviors.

“We had our teachers this past

summer go through out curricular documents and label which lessons would be good to look for with [the skills, knowledge and behaviors], so before they teach a lesson, they look at the documents,” said Christina Welch, principal of Buckingham Elementary.

In addition, formative checklists have been provided to teachers to conduct authentic assessments without interrupting instruction.

The Pre-Kindergarten math assessment has also been revised, so that it could be administered with PearDeck. Board member Elena McComas asked if students, who are behind developmentally, are given “grace.” The presenters assured her that the Early Learning Assessment project does not compare students, but rather assesses students on an individual basis.

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Snapshots



DONATION
Worcester Preparatory School students and faculty did not let the pandemic stop them from giving back to the community this past holiday season. From virtual concerts and food drives throughout Maryland and Delaware to handmade cards for local and international assisted living residents, the WPS family united to help make the holidays a little brighter. In lieu of the annual WPS pajama, gift, food and toy drives, the Student Government Association collected monetary donations from Lower/Middle/Upper School students totaling \$5,526 to distribute to the following eight organizations in Maryland and Delaware: Diakonia, Inc. in West Ocean City and Atlantic United Methodist Church in Ocean City; The Joseph House and HALO in Salisbury; Berlin First Baptist Church and Stevenson United Methodist Church Spirit Kitchen in Berlin; the Food Bank of Delaware and the Seaford Community Food Closet in Delaware.

SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE



WPS MUSICAL
Worcester Preparatory School students and faculty did not let the pandemic stop them from giving back to the community this past holiday season. From virtual concerts and food drives throughout Maryland and Delaware to handmade cards for local and international assisted living residents, the WPS family united to help make the holidays a little brighter. Even with a year full of challenges, WPS creative team - made up of Lower School music director Joanie Brittingham and art teacher Rebecca Tittermary, along with Middle/Upper School music director Christopher Buzby and art teacher George Zaiser - coordinated efforts to produce multiple virtual programs combining art and music to share the gifts of their talented student artists and choral vocalists. Students are pictured while filming the manger scene for Brittingham's virtual Lower School musical, "Just One Candle."

SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE



PROCLAMATION
Worcester County Commissioner President Joe Mitrecic, left, presents a proclamation marking January as the 19th anniversary of National Mentoring Month to Commissioner Josh Nordstrom, who serves on the Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Eastern Shore Board of Directors.

SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE



TOY COLLECTION
First State Marines, Bob Broderick, Frank Del Piano and Jim Wright were on hand to welcome and receive a trailer load of toys collected at the Right Coast Tattoo shop on Coastal Highway in Fenwick Island. Jeff Brown and Adam Weir, artists from Right Coast Tattoo, delivered the toys that was the result of a promotion the shop ran that matched the value of the donated toy dollar for dollar with tattoo services. Brown valued the cache of Toys and Bikes at over \$4,000. Where covid-19 has had an adverse impact on collections, First State Marines continue the tradition and commitment to the Toys for Tots program.

SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

Hybrid learning expected statewide by March

Continued from Page 11

and sustainably sooner than educators. That will continue to be our focus, and I hope it will be yours as well, rather than more U-turns in the state's guidance and further inappropriate public bullying of educators. These actions do nothing to improve and save the lives of Marylanders, but your concerted efforts to improve vaccine distribution and health and safety protocols in school buildings very well could."

Salmon said vaccinations are not a requirement for reopening schools, but "they can further ensure a safe and comfortable learning environment for those that are wary about the prospect of returning to school buildings."

Salmon recently visited Worcester County Public Schools to evaluate the school system's safety protocols amid the pandemic.

"In my travels across the state to visit open schools, I am always impressed to see the creative, innovative ways school communities are safely opening for in-person instruction," she said. "From playgrounds to band practices to classrooms, public health measures and safety protocols were meticulously implemented, including social distancing, mask wearing and intense cleaning and sanitization - I even saw masks for musicians and their instruments! I celebrate our teachers and school staff who are back in classrooms at Buckingham and Showell Elementary and Stephen Decatur Middle schools, providing our state's children with the opportunity for a meaningful, comprehensive education and learning experience."

Following the press conference on Jan. 21, Salmon and education staff from across the state received their covid-19 vaccinations live.

"However, and I would emphasize,

school reopening decisions should not be based on the availability of vaccination or the level of vaccinations among staff," said Maryland Department of Health Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services Dr. Jinlene Chan.

Additionally, Chan said health officials are providing school systems with more school reopening guidance and educational design options based on scientific evidence, recent studies on the impact of school reopening on community transmission and the effects of school closures on children and learning.

"First, there is little evidence that school reopening is a major driver of overall community spread," Chan said. "Second, studies have indicated transmission in schools ... is relatively uncommon when there is effective implementation of the mitigation strategies, including social distancing, use of masks and cleaning."

Evidence shows that children less than 10 years old are less likely to spread covid-19, she added.

"Research shows that many students as a result of this prolonged pandemic isolation, including school closures, are falling behind academically, and those will have long-lasting impacts unless we can turn the tide now," Chan continued.

The updated school reopening guidance still allows parents to decide whether to continue with remote learning or transition to in-person instruction.

On Jan. 15, Salmon announced

\$781 million in covid-19 relief for education.

"As our education system demonstrates resilience in the face of the public health emergency wrought by COVID-19, we must continue to prioritize the needs of the State's children and ensure that all children have access to a meaningful education founded in excellence and equity," Salmon stated in a press release. "These additional resources will help bridge the gaps widened by the pandemic and supplement the supports already in place to safely return students to in-person instruction, focusing on those most impacted during the crisis."

The new funding, more than four times the initial awards to state education agencies under the Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in spring 2020, is intended to help states and school districts reopen schools, measure and effectively address significant learning loss and take other actions to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus on the students and families who depend upon public K-12 education.

The funding allows flexibility so that local school leaders can address the needs of their individual schools and encourages investment in students with unique needs including children from low-income households, students and children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness and foster care youth.

In addition to the \$780 million in funding provided by the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, the State of Maryland and Maryland State Department of Education had already distributed \$400 million in emergency funding to assist with technol-

ogy, supplies, materials and equipment.

The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act requires the Department to allocate the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Act (ESSER II) Funds based on the proportion that each State received under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) in the most recent fiscal year. Local systems will submit applications for the funds.

Worcester County Public Schools will be allocated \$6,406,920.

A total of more than \$1.2 billion has been made available in the most recent stimulus to every school system in the state.

Furthermore, the governor submitted a FY 2022 recovery budget to the General Assembly, which will provide a record \$7.5 billion for K-12 funding, hold schools harmless from the impact of declining enrollment figures and ensure that every jurisdiction receives more funding than in the previous year.

Maryland State Sen. Mary Beth Carozza thanked Governor Hogan and his Administration on Jan. 21 for their calls for Maryland school systems to return to in-person hybrid instruction no later than March 1.

"This call for our schools to return to in-person hybrid instruction by the beginning of March, if not sooner, is outstanding news, and I know it can be done safely and effectively," Carozza said after reviewing the new guidelines issued by the Maryland Department of Health and Department of Education to help ensure safe, in-person learning. "I have heard from countless parents and guardians in my district who would like to see their children back in a classroom so they may receive the best education possible. I also agree that based on the science, there is no public health reason to keep students out of schools. It is past time for our students to return safely to in-person learning."

She noted the American Academy of Pediatrics reports that children absolutely need to return to in-school learning for their healthy development and well-being, and so safety in schools and in the community must be a priority.

Carozza supports the vaccination of teachers and school personnel in Phase 1B of the covid-19 vaccine rollout.

She also supports the \$780 million in additional funding from the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act to assist Maryland schools and students as they recover from the covid-19 pandemic. This funding will be used to help reopen classrooms, assess and address learning loss, provide targeted tutoring, and other initiatives to help students.



Gov. Hogan



Karen Salmon

Melson's

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Board of Ed Briefs

Continued from Page 13
Teacher Jennifer Taylor will represent Pocomoke High School.

Board Appreciation Month

Superintendent of Schools Lou Taylor presented a proclamation to the board in honor of January being Board Appreciation Month.

“We are very honored and privileged in Worcester County to have an outstanding board of education,” Taylor said. “Our school board focuses on our students and what’s best for our kids.”

Safety hotline

Dr. Dwayne Abt, chief safety and human relations officer of the school system, said he will be attending an annual training for the “B SAFE” hotline.

“This hotline was established by the Maryland Center for School Safety a little over a year ago for anyone to report safety threats to the school system,” Abt said.

Superintendent of Schools Lou Taylor said the county schools have received few reports.

“The neat thing about this is if we get a report at midnight of a safety issue with a kid from the proper law enforcement it goes to Dr. Abt,” Taylor said. “They will call him 24/7, and the law enforcement will be in the home within a few hours, so that kid doesn’t bring that to school the next morning.”

The Safe Schools hotline is a 24-hour service. Call in a tip at 1-833-632-7233.

Showell update

Joe Price, the school system’s facilities planner, said the current payments to date on the new Showell Elementary School project total approximately \$37.7 million. The remaining balance is \$2.1 million.

With the unanimous approval of the requisition, Price said nine of the 15 contractors will be fully paid.

PMS roof replacement

The Worcester County Board of Education approved Flynn Mid-Atlantic’s bid as presented with a total construction contract amount of \$2,600,442 for Pocomoke Middle School Roof Replacement project.

On Jan. 7, the county school system received and opened bids for the project. Bid documents were released to prospective bidders on Nov. 2, 2020. A pre-bid meeting was held at Pocomoke Middle School on Nov. 13, 2020.

Flynn Mid-Atlantic will provide construction materials and labor for the demolition of the existing roof and installation of a new roof at Pocomoke Middle School.

Parent Engagement

Karen Marx, principal, and Kristina Belcher, curriculum resource teacher of Snow Hill Elementary School, shared how the Parent and Family Advisory Committee and School Improvement Team have created opportunities for parent and family engagement in education during the



Worcester County Clerk of Circuit Court Susan Braniecki administers the oath of office to the elected Worcester County Board of Education members on Jan. 19. Pictured, from left, are Elena McComas, Dr. Jon Andes and Donald Smack.

pandemic.

Parent and family engagement events usually include academic-themed workshops and family activities, classroom visits, resources and take-aways and opportunities for reflection.

Examples of resources and take-aways are books to add to a home library, literacy, math and/or STEM-based resources, manipulative materials for a hands-on approach and online resources.

With the current coronavirus regulations, Snow Hill Elementary School suggests the following virtual parent and family engagement activities: a literacy event, a career day, an African American read-in, a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) event with community vendors, a summer care exposition

with over 19 community vendors and One School, One Book Club Trilogy with a week-long virtual writing workshop by the author.

Summit Learning

Dr. Mary Anne Cooper, principal; Dr. Jon Kehl, assistant principal; and Angela Landreth, curriculum resource teacher, of Snow Hill Middle School informed the school board about Summit Learning.

The middle school has been implementing Summit Learning, which is self-directed learning, in sixth and eighth grades since the 2016-17 school year.

Three components of the learning management program are student engagement, student-teacher relationships and meaningful learning.

Inside the classroom, Summit Learning involves mentoring during personalized learning time (PLT), independent or collaborative projects in core content areas like math, science and social studies as well as self-direction during personalized learning time.

In addition, Summit Learning provides ongoing professional development for teachers as well as bi-weekly professional development for school leadership.

Final exam waiver

The board agreed to waive the final exam policy for Semester One courses for the 2020-21 academic year because of the impacts of distance learning during the coronavirus pandemic.

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Opinion

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

Ignorance of meeting law is law's fault too

The blame for the Berlin mayor and Town Council's failure to follow the prescripts of Maryland's Open Meeting Act in November should be assigned as much to the law itself as it has been to the elected officials who did not abide its rules. Chances are the mayor and council simply didn't know what they were doing when they broke numerous Open Meetings Act rules, a circumstance that corresponds to the philosophical principle known as "Hanlon's Razor."

In short, the Hanlon's argument advises against attributing to malice that which might be more easily explained by ignorance.

Although ignorance of the law is no excuse, it's easy to see how and why it happens in situations involving the open meetings statutes. Violations of the law are punishable by ... a good, stern talking-to in the form of an opinion by the Open Meetings Compliance Board. That's it. No whopping fines, no withheld revenue, no loss of anything.

This absence of actual adverse consequences is why many officials don't know the law's specific requirements. Without the threat of real punishment, there's no compelling reason for them to know precisely how and when the law applies, beyond wanting to avoid public criticism and, perhaps, political fallout should it become clear that illegal meetings are no accident.

In essence, the opinion in this and all the other cases the compliance board hears explains the nature of the offender's violation and leaves it at that. There is no serious "or else" clause beyond that written admonition.

Unfortunately, the act was written for elected officials by elected officials, who understood the need for such a statute, but who also wanted to protect public bodies from legal assaults by concerned citizens. The reality is that it's little more than a legal pacifier that quiets the public when it cries foul.

Until such time as substantial penalties are part of the law, officials' understanding of it and adherence to it, won't be as strict as it should be.



"I thought the Closed Sessions were Prayer Meetings."

Annual birding weekend on Delmarva

(Jan. 28, 2021) Delmarva Birding Weekends is partnering with Dogfish Head Craft Brewery and its harbor-front hotel, the Dogfish Inn, to host the 2021 "Winter Delmarva Dogfish BirdINNing Weekend," Jan. 29-31.

While the celebrated event still boasts its popular seal and birdwatching boat cruises and strolls through some of the most pristine habitats on Delmarva, the Dogfish Inn in Lewes, Delaware, is seeing to it that a warm bed and craft beer are an integral part of the mix this year.

Nestled along the canal in historic downtown Lewes, just a short walk from Fisherman's Wharf, the Dogfish Inn is the Mother Nature-basecamp for coastal Delaware, providing beer lovers and adventure seekers alike with fun-filled opportunities to explore the area's many splendors.

For Winter Delmarva Dogfish BirdINNing Weekend participants, the Dogfish Inn will offer a special lodging package that includes a custom Dogfish Head X Patagonia beanie, a slew of off-centered swag, and a 10 percent discount at the brewery's Rehoboth brewpub, Brewings & Eats, and Milton-based Tasting Room &

Kitchen.

With covid-19 protocols in place, field trips include forays into Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge, Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge, Cape Henlopen State Park, the inlets at Indian River and Ocean City, Heron Park in Berlin, and Newport Farms.

Small group "Scoters, Seals & Slightly Mightys" boat tours in Lewes aim to dazzle onlookers with incredible opportunities to view sea ducks, as well as Harbor and Gray Seals.

Bird and nature lovers can sign up for a trip or two during the award-winning weekend at www.DelmarvaBirding.com.

Dogfish Head Founder and Brewer, Sam Calagione, said the brewery's nature-centric mindset made this partnership an easy marriage.

"Mother Nature is at the heart of everything we do at Dogfish, because without the natural agricultural ingredients with which we craft our recipes, our beers would not exist, he said. "That's why we are continuously seeking new ways to protect and give back to the Earth, especially in our local community.

"In fact, our motto here at the Dogfish Inn is, 'Welcome to Lewes. Mother Nature, Let's

Do This!," he continued. "In coastal Delaware, we are surrounded by opportunities to explore the great outdoors, and we are lucky enough to have one of the world's best birding scenes. Through our partnership with Delmarva Birding Weekends, we are hoping to not only encourage folks to get outside and experience the goodness just beyond their doors, but to inspire them to do their part to protect the planet we call home."

Now in its 26th year, Delmarva Birding Weekend organizers point to local wildlife as the event's economic engine.

"Folks all over the East Coast are starting to realize how spectacular the winter birding is here on Delmarva," said Event Organizer Dave Wilson. "Hailing from all over the East Coast, our guests travel here to pair local outdoor experiences with local food and craft beer. It makes perfect sense to unite with Dogfish to bring it all together."

Indeed, Harlequin Ducks, eiders, Purple Sandpipers, falcons and more than 25 species of duck, goose and swan are on full display in the mid-Atlantic for about four months a year.

See DOGFISH Page 17

BAYSIDE

GAZETTE

P.O. Box 3500, Ocean City, Md. 21843

Phone: 410-723-6397 / Fax: 410-723-6511.

EDITOR Stewart Dobson

MANAGING EDITOR Lisa Capitelli

STAFF WRITERSGreg Ellison, Elizabeth Bonin,

.....Ally Lanasa, Neely James

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER Elaine Brady

ACCOUNT MANAGERS Mary Cooper, Vicki Shrier

CLASSIFIEDS/LEGALS MANAGER Nancy MacCubbin

SENIOR DESIGNER Susan Parks

GRAPHIC ARTIST Kelly Brown

PUBLISHER..... Christine Brown

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT Gini Tufts

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OP will offer indoor soccer program in Feb.

Classes to occur weekly on Wednesdays for children between ages 2 and 8

(Jan. 28, 2021) Young soccer players can get a jump on spring season training with two indoor soccer programs offered by the Ocean Pines Recreation and Parks Department this winter beginning Wednesday, Feb. 3.

“Coaches Joe Monteverde, Eric Benson and I are excited to still be

holding the program with a few minor changes,” said Recreation and Parks Program Supervisor Katie Goetzinger.

Goetzinger said coaches and parents must wear a mask and only one parent per child will be allowed to come into the community center gym because of limited capacity.

Happy Cleats Soccer will allow children ages 2-3 the chance to burn off some energy in a non-competitive environment. Socialization, simple soccer fundamentals and fun will be

stressed.

The six-class program will be offered weekly on Wednesdays from 5-5:30 p.m. for children age 2. The class for children age 3 will be held from 5:40-6:10 p.m. The cost is \$40 for Ocean Pines residents and \$50 for non-residents.

Pee Wee Soccer, for ages 4-8, will use skills, drills and games to help children build self-confidence and have fun.

The six-class program will be offered weekly on Wednesdays from

6:20-6:50 p.m. for ages 4-5. The class for children ages 6-8 will be held from 7-7:30 p.m. The cost is \$45 for Ocean Pines residents and \$55 for non-residents.

These programs are open to the public and registration is required.

For more information or to register, call the Ocean Pines Recreation and Parks Department at 410-641-7052.

Information regarding additional recreational programs is available at www.oceanpines.org.

Dogfish Inn offers special packages for event

Continued from Page 16

More than 100 species were tallied in 2020 during the winter weekend, and dozens of seals flaunted their flippers on the Lewes breakwaters.

Guided by fun-loving local birders with decades-long experience on the shore, the walking tours and boat trips accommodate visitors from the curious nature lover to fowl fanatics. Last year, birdwatchers from more than a dozen states flocked to the winter event.

“Delaware is teeming with bird species in winter,” said Southern Delaware Tourism Director Scott Thomas. “And Delmarva is a great place

to experience them with the combination of wildlife refuges, local fare, and accommodations like nowhere else.”

Melanie Pursel, the director of Worcester County Tourism concurred.

“We enjoy such an abundance of bird species in the colder months that it just makes sense to market winter birding experiences,” she said.

Much of that fare will be available both Friday and Saturday nights at Irish Eyes in Lewes, when guests can enjoy Dogfish Head beer specials as part of the “tally rally” to count the weekend’s species and relate tales of the day’s exploits. Mask wearing and social distanc-

ing will be the rule at the rally.

Afterwards, those staying at the Dogfish Inn can enjoy the short walk along the harbor back to their off-centered rooms, where the Winter Delmarva Dogfish BirdINNg Weekend perks keep flowing.

The Inn’s Cowboy Cauldron outdoor fire pit is perfect for recounting the day’s events or just counting stars. To book the Inn’s special, Winter Delmarva Dogfish BirdINNg Weekend package, type ‘Delmarva Birding Weekend’ in the special requests section during online booking or call 302-644-8292. Field trips and events must be booked separately

through Delmarva Birding Weekends.

After the feathers have settled and the birding and imbibing are done, outdoor enthusiasts can start recharging their engines for the next birding extravaganza March 5-7. Details and Dogfish Head deals will be divulged in February.

Other sponsors for the Winter Weekend include Southern Delaware Tourism, Worcester County Tourism, Jolly Roger Amusement Park, and the Delaware Center for the Inland Bays.

Event registration and sponsorship information can be found at www.DelmarvaBirding.com and the www.dogfish.com/inn.



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Cuisine

Reminiscing of chicken and waffles, trips

I woke up this morning pondering a dream that I had. There was a waffle iron, chicken and waffles, my old boat stowed in the garage, a chicken coop and the first car that I ever bought.



By Paul Suplee,
MBA, CEC, PC-3

I'm sure someone out there knows what this means. If you do, give me a jingle, Doc.

I know what happened to the boat and the car, but for the life of

me I can not remember what happened to the waffle iron.

We used to love making waffles from scratch. Whether it was from a mix or composed piece-by-piece from the pantry, it didn't matter. We simply enjoyed making waffles.

In the days of yore, travel was a big part of our family. This dreaded pandemic changed things for everyone, but even before that, my ill-fated decision to start opening restaurants definitely put a damper on family trips.

That is now easing up and we will have some new adventures in the future. But for now, I guess I'll have strange dreams of kitchen appliances and nautical vessels acting as my outlet.

On these trips, and we took quite a few, there were often waffle irons in the hotel lobby when continental breakfast was an offered amenity. And they were always a mess.

The good folks of this fine land of ours often lacked the skillset of adding just the right amount of batter, spinning the iron quickly enough to prevent spillage and waiting the appropriate time before opening the iron. Nay, they were messy.

I would often find myself cleaning up the iron a bit before making a masterpiece waffle, amazing the guests around me as the haunting and compelling opening of Beethoven's 5th would blare over the hotel's sound system.

OK, maybe none of that is true. My fellow guests did not care, it was more likely a ditty by Justin Bieber or Demi Lovato, and my kids in their younger years were there, tugging at my sweatshirt whining and complaining that it was taking too long.

Perhaps my reminiscence of the former scenario is easier for me to enjoy than the latter. Who knows?

On one particular trip to Williamsburg – a weekend full of Great Wolf Lodge, Busch Gardens and of course Colonial reenactments – there was no breakfast in the hotel.

As such, we went to the recom-



mended local diner and had a fabulous repast to start the day. Nourishing ourselves for what would prove to be a monumental day of walking, swimming, sliding and roller coasters, there was plenty of coffee and good food to be had.

Since we were far enough south, they had country ham on the menu. I ordered my obligatory Chicken & Waffles and a double order of country ham.

Recognizing our Yankee accents (it still amazes me how a three-hour drive can make us stick out as northerners), the server, an older woman who we learned had worked there for decades, patted me on the shoulder and said "Honey, I think you'd like the regular ham."

I asked her if the country ham was salty as hell and stinky, and she laughed and said "of course, honey."

"Then, I'll take a double order please," I mused with a smile.

She obliged and it was perfect. She was mightily impressed that a northerner would find such pleasure in this southern delicacy.

Finished breakfast, we piled into our two cars, and started pulling out when my wife loudly exclaimed, "Where's Ethan?"

We looked around for our 5-year-old, and his seat was empty. We peered toward the restaurant and there he was,

his deadpan face plastered against the window of the front door of the restaurant. We were the very last table of the day, and he was locked in.

He had asked to go to the restroom alone, as he was a 'big boy', and we forgot the kid. The employees didn't realize until we were out of the building. I guess you have to do that once to get it out of your system.

And that is what I think about every time I eat Chicken & Waffles.

Chicken & Waffles

serves 4

4 ea. large fresh waffles
8 fried chicken tenderloins (recipe follows)
2 c. pure maple syrup
3 tbsp. Hank's Hot Sauce
2 tbsp. red chili flakes

This is going to be the easiest one yet. Simply place the fried chicken tenderloins atop the waffles

1. Mix the last three ingredients together and slather your glorious dish with that warm, drippy sauce

Fried Chicken Tenderloins

serves 4

8 ea. chicken tenderloins

2 c. AP flour
1 tbsp. salt
1 tbsp. ground black pepper
1 tsp. paprika
2 tsp. granulated garlic
1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper
1 tsp. blackening spice
4 eggs
1 c. milk

1. Trim the tendon off of each tenderloin and discard

2. Preheat a fryer to 350F

3. In one bowl, add the flour, salt and all of the spices

4. In another bowl, combine the eggs and milk

5. To bread the tenderloins, dredge (lightly coat) in the seasoned flour

6. Proceed to the next bowl and coat with the egg wash

7. Return to the seasoned flour and coat evenly

8. When all of the tenderloins are coated, fry them until golden brown and the internal temperature is 165F

9. Keep warm until ready to serve, but cook these as close to service as possible

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

Visit him at www.boxcar40.com.

Puzzles

DOUBLE-CROSSED

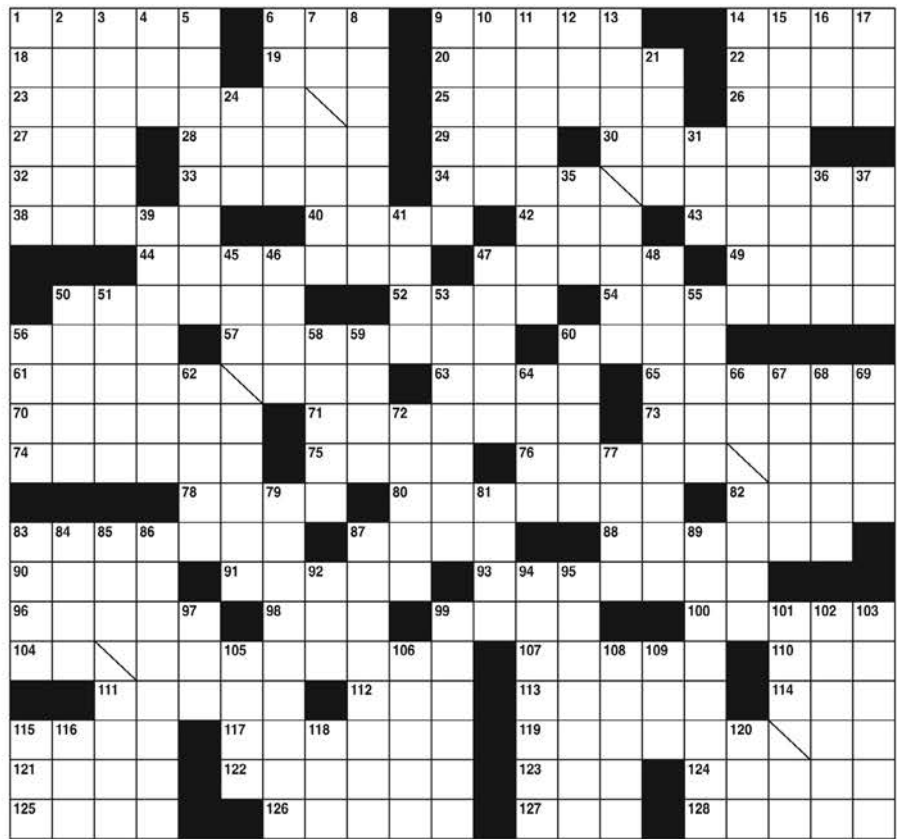
BY TRACY GRAY AND TOM PEPPER / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Tracy Gray lives in Sparks, Md., near Baltimore, where she and her husband own and operate a lawn-and-landscaping business. Tom Pepper lives in Eden Prairie, Minn., next door to Edina, of crossword fame. In April he plans to retire from his position of finance director for the city of Eagan after 29 years. Tracy and Tom met at a crossword tournament several years ago and have been exchanging theme ideas ever since. — W.S.

- ACROSS**
1 Getting warm, so to speak
6 It was established by a 1926 royal charter
9 Ulan ____, Mongolia
14 Be against
18 Send, as payment
19 No. 1 of 50, alphabetically: Abbr.
20 Former basketball star Gilbert ... or the places he played
22 Garb in a duck blind, informally
23 Way into a garage, typically
25 California wine region
26 Road-trip guessing game
27 Freak (out)
28 Tennis star who won at least one Grand Slam title for a record 13 straight years
29 Initialism that can include an "h" for "humble"
30 Old-timey "OMG!"
32 GPS guess
33 Variables in πr^2 and $2\pi r$
34 Nickelodeon competitor
38 Bagless-vacuum maker
40 Savvy couple?
42 ____ the Kid, nickname for N.H.L. star Crosby
- 43 Party game similar to Catch Phrase
44 Grows increasingly more irksome
47 Starbucks sizes smaller than grandes
49 Dove bar, e.g.
50 Given as a bequest
52 Suffix with mega- or multi-
54 Ones making strong impressions?
56 "Je t'____" (words from a beau)
57 Prince Andrew's younger daughter
60 On the main
61 Prominent women's rights lawyer
63 Member of an Iraqi minority
65 Obscure knowledge
70 Violent, maybe
71 Certain laundry-detergent capsule
73 Causing constriction of the pupils
74 Nailed the test
75 007's alma mater
76 Visual phenomenon created by short flashes of light
78 Linguist Chomsky
80 Dense fog, metaphorically
82 When repeated, a Hawaiian fish
83 Major utility pipeline
87 Whimper
88 It has its pros and cons
90 Part of P.R.
91 Far from wild
93 Pesto ingredient
- 96 For one purpose only
98 Org. that takes many forms
99 Five-star
100 Quark-antiquark combo
104 Some entertainers at children's birthday parties
107 Europe's longest river
110 Trouble
111 O icon
112 Western Hemisphere grp.
113 Legendary firefighter
114 Curler's surface
115 Kind of palm cultivated for its fruit
117 Prove wrong
119 Awards show that airs at night, ironically
121 Part of une éclipse
122 Submits an online return
123 Brown. ender
124 "
- 7 Subject of a Sleeves Up campaign
8 French luxury jeweler
9 ABCs
10 Lead-in to therapy
11 Jazz instrument pitched in the key of B flat
12 Peace activist Yoko
13 Classic dorm-room meal
14 Fading process for jeans
15 Deep-toned cousin of an English horn
16 One whose calling is making calls?
17 American Kennel Club designation
21 Stuffing herb
24 Green on the screen
31 QB's passing stat: Abbr.
35 Up to
36 Din from a den
37 Keystone ____
39 Put forward
41 TV channel that owns the website The Undefeated
45 Beer in a green bottle
46 Part of a college visit, typically
47 Prepare to swing, say
48 Unseal furtively, as an envelope
50 Floral fragrance note
51 Behave theatrically
53 Restored to mint condition
55 Lesser Antilles native
56 City that's home to three UNESCO World Heritage Sites

DOWN

- 1 Sang one's own praises
2 Humor regarding a serious matter
3 "w"-like letters
4 Anthony Hopkins, for one
5 Wi-Fi alternative
6 Complained about getting fleeced?



- 58 "Go ____!" (coach's encouragement)
59 Computer menu with Undo and Redo
60 Expand upon
62 Tony winner Menzel
64 Antarctica's ____ Ice Shelf
66 Nestlé creamer
67 Bothered persistently
68 Not for mass audiences
69 When the Battle of Yorktown occurs in "Hamilton"
- 72 Took steroids, say
77 Like loud phone conversations in public
79 Designed to deter stealing
81 T-Bonz dog treat brand
83 Word before bag or bar
84 Musical with the opening number "Every Story Is a Love Story"
85 Sallie Mae products
- 86 Marshmallow-filled snacks
87 University of Montana city
89 Hitchhike
92 Shapiro of NPR
94 Emulates the Mongols
95 Old genre for 12-Down
97 Z4 or Q50
99 Judge
101 Pool competitions
102 Immature egg cell
- 103 Star of the "Taken" trilogy
105 Like snow leopards and Siberian tigers
106 What tots might go after?
108 Easy two points
109 "Scram!"
115 ____-American
116 Tool for pool
118 Old-timey cry of disgust
120 Will Smith/Tommy Lee Jones film series, for short

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Walk In

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HARD - 10

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.

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

Answers to last week's puzzles

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

P	R	E	S	S	U	R	E		O	R	A	L	B		S	P	I	F	F			
A	I	R	L	A	N	E	S		A	M	E	L	I	A		A	R	N	I	E		
N	O	M	A	N	I	S	A	N	I	S	L	A	N	D		L	A	C	E	D		
S	T	A	M	P		H	U	E	D		O	R	E	O		A	D	O	R	E		
						D	E	M	O		B	A	H	A	M	A	M	A	M	I	X	
H	A	S	A	D	A	T	E		I	D	S		E	L	I	S	E					
A	M	O	N	R	A		C	R	E	D		A	N	T		T	E	N				
W	E	L	C	O	M	E	H	O	M	E	H	O	N		M	C	H	A	L	E		
K	N	E	E			V	O	W	S		A	R	I		E	L	I	X	I	R		
						S	O	H	O			P	R	I	M	E	T	I	M	E	T	V
S	S	R		T	O	K	E		G	O	D		E	V	A	N		S	E	E		
W	H	E	R	E	W	E	R	E	W	E		A	L	G	A							
A	R	T	U	R	O		I	L	E		I	C	E	D		R	A	S	H			
T	E	R	R	I	F		K	I	N	G	K	A	M	E	H	A	M	E	H	A		
S	K	I		T	S	A		R	E	F	I		O	N	E	R	U	N				
			B	I	D	E	T		T	K	O		T	H	U	D	D	I	N	G		
A	L	U	M	I	N	U	M	I	N	G	O	T		O	R	E	G					
D	O	T	E	S		A	O	N	E		D	I	B	S		R	U	R	A	L		
A	R	I	A	S		R	O	M	A	T	O	M	A	T	O	S	A	U	C	E		
P	R	O	N	E		T	R	A	D	E	R		R	E	V	E	R	S	E	S		
T	E	N	T	S		S	E	N	S	E		B	L	A	N	D	E	S	T			

Calendar

Thurs., Jan. 28

OPEN SKATE
Worcester County Recreation Center, 6030 Public Landing Road, 12:00 PM - 7:00 PM. Cost is \$2 per person for all skaters and skate observers. Price includes skate rental, 45 minutes of skate time and reserves your time slot. Time slots available each hour on the hour and are limited to 15 people. Participants must call ahead: 410-632-2144. Allen Swiger, aswiger@maryland-scoast.org, 410-632-2144, Ext. 2520

Fri., Jan. 29

WINTER DELMARVA DOGFISH BIRDINNG WEEKEND
While the Delmarva Birding Weekend, Jan. 29-31, will still boasts its seal and birdwatching boat cruises and strolls, the Dogfish INN will offer a special lodging package that includes a custom Dogfish Head X Patagonia beanie, a slew of off-centered swag, and a 10 percent discount at the brewery's Rehoboth brewpub, Brewings & Eats and Milton-based Tasting Room & Kitchen. To book the INN's special, type Delmarva Birding Weekend in the special requests section during online booking (www.dogfish.com/inn) or call 302-644-8292. Bird and nature lovers can sign up for boat trips and outings at www.DelmarvaBirding.com.

ADULT CRAFT NIGHT: PAPER COLLAGE
Meeting via Zoom, 6:30 PM. Create a landscape picture out of torn pieces of paper gathered from around the house (colored sheets, magazines, cards, old calendars, etc.). Tips and instructions will be emailed in advance to registrants. Register: worcesterlibrary.org under events.

Sat., Jan. 30

WINTER DELMARVA DOGFISH BIRDINNG WEEKEND
While the Delmarva Birding Weekend, Jan. 29-31, will still boasts its seal and birdwatching boat cruises and strolls, the Dogfish INN will offer a special lodging package that includes a custom Dogfish Head X Patagonia beanie, a slew of off-centered swag, and a 10 percent discount at the brewery's Rehoboth brewpub, Brewings & Eats and Milton-based Tasting Room & Kitchen. To book the INN's special, type Delmarva Birding Weekend in the special requests section during online booking (www.dogfish.com/inn) or call 302-644-8292. Bird and nature lovers can sign up for boat trips and outings at www.DelmarvaBirding.com.

ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT BREAKFAST
Whaleville United Methodist Church,

11716 Sheppards Crossing Road, 7:00 AM - 10:00 AM. Pancakes, bacon, sausage, scrapple, scrambled eggs, chipped beef, hash brown potatoes, toast, fruit and assorted beverages will be served. Cost is \$8 for adults and \$4 for children. Masks are required to enter. Carry-out also available.

OPEN SKATE
Worcester County Recreation Center, 6030 Public Landing Road, 12:00 PM - 7:00 PM. Cost is \$2 per person for all skaters and skate observers. Price includes skate rental, 45 minutes of skate time and reserves your time slot. Time slots available each hour on the hour and are limited to 15 people. Participants must call ahead: 410-632-2144. Allen Swiger, aswiger@maryland-scoast.org, 410-632-2144, Ext. 2520

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., Jan. 31

WINTER DELMARVA DOGFISH BIRDINNG WEEKEND
While the Delmarva Birding Weekend, Jan. 29-31, will still boasts its seal and birdwatching boat cruises and strolls, the Dogfish INN will offer a special lodging package that includes a custom Dogfish Head X Patagonia beanie, a slew of off-centered swag, and a 10 percent discount at the brewery's Rehoboth brewpub, Brewings & Eats and Milton-based Tasting Room & Kitchen. To book the INN's special, type Delmarva Birding Weekend in the special requests section during online booking (www.dogfish.com/inn) or call 302-644-8292. Bird and nature lovers can sign up for boat trips and outings at www.DelmarvaBirding.com.

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Mon., Feb. 1

STORY TIME - COOKIES
Held via Facebook, 10:30 AM. Miss Susan shares stories, rhymes and finger plays about cookies. For 2-5 year old children. No registration required. <http://www.worcesterlibrary.org>



ALLY LANASA/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

DINNER TUNES
Full Circle Duo performs for diners at Windmill Creek Vineyard and Winery near Ocean Pines on Jan. 15. Pictured are Michelle Schachter, left, and Kathy Denk.

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

AGH DIABETES SUPPORT GROUP
Meeting via conference call, 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM. Dial 978-990-5451, wait for voice command, then press 3753651. Open to the public and meets the first Monday of each month. Discussion and education related to diabetes is provided. AGH Diabetes Outpatient Education, 410-208-9761

Tues., Feb. 2

FAITH-BASED PARTNERSHIP
Meeting via video call, 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM. Join the Faith Partnership: A cooperative effort for local Worship Centers and Atlantic General Hospital & Health System to increase health awareness, education and healthy living incentives. Gail Mansell, gmansell@atlanticgeneral.org, 410-641-9725

MIDDLE SCHOOL ZOOM BOOK CLUB
Meeting via Zoom, 11:00 AM. Join in the discussion of the book The Volume of Possible Endings by Barbara Else. For 12-14 year olds. Register: www.worcesterlibrary.org under events.

OPEN SKATE
Worcester County Recreation Center, 6030 Public Landing Road, 12:00 PM - 7:00 PM. Cost is \$2 per person for all skaters and skate observers. Price includes skate rental, 45 minutes of skate time and reserves your time slot. Time slots available each hour on the hour

and are limited to 15 people. Participants must call ahead: 410-632-2144. Allen Swiger, aswiger@maryland-scoast.org, 410-632-2144, Ext. 2520

VIRTUAL MARYLAND BASIC BOATING SAFETY COURSE
The course takes place over three evenings, Feb. 2, 3 and 4, from 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM. The Maryland Safe Boating Certificate is required for all boat operators born after July 1, 1972 and is awarded after successful completion of the course. Cost is \$20. Register: Barry Cohen, 410-935-4807 or CGAUXOC@gmail.com.



THE DARK ALCHEMY OF THE THREE FIFTHS CLAUSE
Meeting via Zoom, 7:00 PM. Dr. Richard Bell will discuss the Three Fifths Clause, an article of the Constitution that allowed a person who was not free to be counted as 3/5 of a human being for the purpose of voting. Register: worcesterlibrary.org under events.

Wed., Feb. 3

AGH DIABETES SUPPORT GROUP
Meeting via conference call, 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM. Dial 978-990-5451, wait for voice command, then press 3753651. Open to the public and meets the first Wednesday of each month. Discussion and education related to diabetes is provided. AGH Diabetes Outpatient Education, 410-208-9761

THE HISTORY OF BLUES IN AMERICA
Meeting via Zoom, 7:00 PM. Acclaimed guitarist and music historian Joey Leone covers the history, influence and social impact of American blues music through songs, stories and historical facts. Register: worcesterlibrary.org.

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