

BAYSIDE GAZETTE



MARCH 27, 2025

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TARA FISCHER/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

MORNING HIGHLIGHT

The reward for an early-morning exerciser last weekend was this sunrise seen from The Point neighborhood in Ocean Pines.

OPA balks at utility fee plan

Ocean Pines didn't cause Enterprise Fund problem, but would help pay for it

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(March 27, 2025) Ocean Pines residents could experience a significant increase in fees if a proposed water and wastewater budget presented at a Worcester County Commissioners meeting last week is passed.

The fiscal year 2026 Water/Wastewater Enterprise Funds budget was presented at a meeting of the Worcester County Commissioners on March 18. If implemented, the proposed plan to make up a \$2.1 million deficit for fiscal year 2026 may raise Ocean Pines ratepayers' – and those in the other 10 services areas – quar-

terly bills by an estimated \$32 despite the community's mere \$116,699 share of the losses.

However, as Ocean Pines boasts 10,000 of the 18,000 utility users countywide, making it the largest service area, the fee bump should come to only \$1 to \$3, Worcester County Commissioner Chip Bertino said.

Bertino and Commissioner Jim Bunting oppose the plan. The pair argue the outline, which equally charges all 11 service areas, will unfairly impact Ocean Pines ratepayers, given their low contribution to the deficit. For context, Riddle Farm's enterprise fund shortfall comes to a little over \$1 million.

This equality model could be used to pay back a looming \$6 million loan to address budgetary shortfalls

within the combined water/wastewater enterprise service areas, increasing Ocean Pines residents' bills even further despite the community's minimal impact on the funding insufficiencies.

Furthermore, county code prohibits the proposed budget move, according to Bertino. The current code requires the debt of each service area be the responsibility of that individual service area. Each enterprise fund should be self-sustaining with income equaling expenses.

"By county code, we should not be paying for another district's shortcomings," Bertino said. "What was presented is contrary to what our current code is. As with so many other things, the commissioners can decide to change the county code and tweak

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County seeks clean cure for mixed-up mess

By Brian Shane
Staff Writer

(March 28, 2025) Worcester County officials have proposed raising water and sewer rates as a possible solution to balancing the county's water and sewer district budgets, which have run at a deficit for years, relying on comingled reserve funds to cover losses.

The operational deficit, affecting seven of the county's 11 independent sanitary sewer districts, was only discovered last fall by county leadership, who now find themselves in a "fund-

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County scrambles for way to cover deficits

Continued from Page 1

finding, troubleshooting phase,” said County Administrator Weston Young.

“We’re not out in front of this like we probably should be. The fact of the matter is, many of these service areas have not been paying for themselves,” he said.

New revenue is needed to cover a system-wide operating deficit of \$2.1 million for fiscal year 2026. Young said this could be covered by rate hikes, transfers from the general fund, a use of prior year surplus funds, grant awards, or some combination thereof.

“The initial thought was, you take that \$2.1 million and you divvy it up over, say, the 18,000 ratepayers and then in a quarterly bill, that’s probably a \$32, \$33 addition. That is one way of doing it,” Young said.

He emphasized that this particular rate hike proposal is one potential approach and isn’t a final decision.

The matter will be up for discussion before the Worcester County Commissioners at a May 6 public hearing. The commissioners already held a public hearing on this issue in December, where the public did express some frustration with the prospect of higher bills.

The commissioners were briefed on the rate hike proposal at their March 18 meeting in Snow Hill. User rate increases, which would vary across the county’s 11 service districts, are intended to cover the operating deficit, according to Quinn Dittrich, the county’s enterprise fund controller.

“We took the budgeted FY 26 expenses and looked at the service areas as a whole and applied the expenses to the ratepayers,” he told the commissioners.

Here’s how the finances are supposed to work: Water and sewer operations are considered “enterprise funds.” Each is separate from the county’s general fund and is designed to generate its own revenue and to break even. Some enterprise funds generate a budget surplus and can set aside money in reserve.

However, it was discovered that a majority of sanitary sewer service areas were not generating enough revenue to cover expenses and ran in the red for years. The districts have occasionally dipped into each other’s reserves to cover costs – Young made the analogy to an IOU on a Post-It note – but historically, they repaid these loans.

However, one service district in particular, Riddle Farm outside Berlin, went deeply in the red when its aging physical plant became inefficient at treating wastewater. That sludge was trucked to the Ocean Pines wastewater treatment plant at a cost of \$532,000 annually.

“Somebody made the call to pump and haul,” Young said of Riddle Farm, “because it was cheaper to fix the problem at hand. The entire time,

from a public works standpoint, it wasn’t treated effectively. They said, ‘let’s just take our sludge and treat it elsewhere’ – and that’s not free.

“The downside is,” Young continued, “the rates never change. The folks who use water and sewer in Riddle were paying the same amount, but it costs more to operate. Every quarter, every year, Riddle is going further and further in the hole. At a certain point, the comingled reserves would run out.”

Young also said, if money was needed for improvements, the individuals overseeing wastewater plants were supposed to formally request for an overage in expenditures from elected officials. Not only did that never happen, Young said, but the IOUs and comingled continued for years.

The commissioners last fall were briefed that many of the enterprise funds were in debt. That led them in February to authorize a \$9.2 million transfer out of the county’s general fund to cover the shortfalls through the fiscal year. Some of it was designated as a grant for the Riddle Farm system, but the majority was a loan to be repaid over a 10-year period starting next summer.

The commissioners also decided to form a workgroup to brainstorm solutions. Serving on that group were Commissioners Ted Elder (District 4, Western), Eric Fiori (District 3, Sinepuxent) and Jim Bunting (District 6, Bishopville).

“The fact is, money was taken from one profitable district out of the 11 and used to pay problems in other districts. That should not have happened,” Bunting said at the March 18 meeting. “When we go through the budget procedures, we’ll hear from the public about all this, and then we’ll make decisions on what happens with these rates.”

That one profitable district is West Ocean City, which has low overhead and is has been running in the black for years, according to Young.

Fiori called the latest pricing proposal “a base point” to begin addressing years of issues with the county’s water and sewer systems.

“Trying to put out an explanation of how we got to his point would take literally the Encyclopedia Britannica salesman at your door. It is so many different pieces that got us to this – way before this body was up here and got voted into these positions,” he said at the meeting. “These numbers that were put up, these are simply a solution to the enterprise funds to stop losing.”

When it comes to rate increases, the situation is complicated for county officials because the system is a hodgepodge – not all customers are getting the same services, and they all aren’t billed in the same way.

Some ratepayers are charged a

quarterly base fee and a usage fee, while others in a different area see a flat fee for sewer services. Some get a mix of services, like having county sewer but well water, or county water with private sewer service. Even the billable limits of gallons per day varies between districts.

Not only that, but the number of customers in each area can vary. Ocean Pines’ district serves thousands of homes, while the Newark district, for example, has about 100 customers. Smaller service areas may see bigger bills because they don’t have enough of a population to spread the cost around, resulting in some residents paying far more for water and sewer service than their neighbors.

“Instead of raising those rates in the past gradually like they should have been, and running the EDUs for

capital improvements, that’s what happened,” said Elder, the commissioners’ president, at the meeting. “That’s how it got caught up on us.

“We’re partially responsible because we didn’t dig down deep enough,” he added, “and I gotta admit that right here. I wish I had looked into it even deeper 10 years ago. But the train was already running down the tracks toward a dead end. By what we’re doing now, we’re trying to put it together in a way that puts less pain on everyone; everybody’s gonna have some.”

Looking ahead, one audacious solution to dealing with a patchwork of independent wastewater treatment plants would be to physically combine all 11 facilities into a centralized forced sewer main.

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Employee honored for completing program

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(March 27, 2025) The Town of Berlin Mayor and Council recognized Dave Davis, a recent graduate of the municipality's utility meter technician apprenticeship program, earlier this week at a meeting.

The honoree was joined by his family, and Berlin leaders, staff, and state representatives celebrated the accomplishment.

Berlin's electric and utility director, Tim Lawrence, who helped present the graduate's certificates at the Monday gathering, said the program is four years long and requires 8,000 hours of on-the-job training.

"All kinds of testing goes into it," Lawrence said. "It's a very hard program."

Davis began employment with the Town of Berlin in September 2019. He kicked off the certification process on July 12, 2021, and officially graduated from the program on January 31, 2025.

Lawrence said that Davis is the second apprentice to have graduated thus far, while a third is gearing up to finalize their education.

Alicia Dennis, an apprenticeship navigator from the Maryland Department of Labor serving Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset counties, attended Monday night's meeting to extend congratulations to Davis from the state level.

"I want to start by bringing greetings and congratulations from our governor, Wes Moore, Lieutenant Gov. Aruna Miller, and Maryland Secretary of Labor Portia Wu," she said, addressing Davis. "This evening is truly special. You have worked several thousand hours on the job. You have attended and passed all of your required classes."

The apprenticeship navigator continued, saying



TARA FISCHER/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

Dave Davis, pictured with the Mayor and Council, family members and others, was recognized at this week's meeting.

that this graduation is just one of a greater mission to enhance the municipality's workforce.

"We are all here to celebrate [David], but I think it's also important to recognize just how special this achievement is," Dennis added. "This is one part of a larger collective effort. We also celebrate the Town of Berlin and its unwavering commitment to workforce development. The support from Berlin Mayor Zack Tyndall, the Town Council, and the entire community has been instrumental in making this apprenticeship program a success."

The learning opportunity is in partnership with the Maryland Apprenticeship Program, which offers job seekers the opportunity to gain skills while earning money to make a living. It includes classroom instruction to enhance the students' career preparedness.

"By partnering with the Maryland Apprenticeship

Program, Berlin is not only helping to create opportunities for individuals like [Davis] but also ensuring that local businesses have access to a skilled and prepared workforce," Dennis said.

The program, which includes the Northwest Line-man College curriculum, will also strengthen Berlin's financial success.

"This partnership makes a difference," Dennis said. "It fosters long-term economic growth and stability, not just for Berlin, but also for the State of Maryland, and the town's active participation is a shining example of how communities can work together and invest in their people and create a strong, sustainable future."

The apprenticeship navigator concluded by thanking Lawrence for his help in making Berlin's program possible.



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OP not keen on paying for deficits elsewhere

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it. But as it stands right now, the option before us is contrary to county code.”

The code reads, “The County Commissioners shall levy assessments by resolution on all properties within the sanitary service area or sub-area for the sole purpose of raising funds to retire any indebtedness of the service area or sub-area incurred for the purpose of acquiring or constructing sanitary facilities.”

The Ocean Pines Board of Directors met with Bertino and Bunting on Thursday, March 20, in a public meeting to discuss the budget plan, what can be done to prevent its passage, and what has led to the current situation.

At this gathering, Bertino said that in February 2024, the county budget office and deputy chief administrative officer were implementing new procedures and discovered “financial inconsistencies within the Enterprise Fund operations.”

It was learned the finance department was not bringing to anyone’s attention “accumulated deficits and that the budget transfers were being made on paper from reserves that did not exist in individual areas,” Bertino said.

At this time, the commissioners were informed of the gravity of the sit-



TARA FISCHER/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

County Commissioners Jim Bunting and Chip Bertino, left, are pictured during a meeting last Thursday with members of the Ocean Pines Association Board of Directors.

uation.

Upon further inspection between early 2024 and September, it was revealed that the Enterprise Funds “as a whole would soon run out of money.”

Bertino said the commissioners approved a transfer of about \$9 million from the general fund to the Enterprise Funds to avoid a financial crisis.

“Of this, \$2.7 million was designated as a grant to the Riddle Farm Service area,” Bertino added. “The re-

maining \$6.3 million was designated a loan with an interest rate of about 5% that would be required to be paid back to the general fund over a period of 10 years beginning in fiscal 2027.”

Bertino emphasized the Ocean Pines service area did not contribute to the accrued losses.

“Of the \$9 million transfer to stabilize the Enterprise Funds for accrued operations and maintenance shortfalls of individual service areas, the Ocean

Pines service area was not a part,” Bertino said. “The Ocean Pines service area did not contribute at all to the accrued losses.”

A plan was created by a water/wastewater discussion group made up of staff and Commissioners Ted Elder, Eric Fiori and Bunting to address the situation. Bertino said the team met three times and a majority voted to present the plan that came before the commissioners last week.

Under the proposal, Ocean Pines must contribute to the loan repayment by shouldering more of the debt than it is responsible for. The other service areas are Assateague Pointe, Briddletown, Edgewater Acres, Landings, Lighthouse Sound, Mystic Harbour, Newark, Riddle Farm, River Run, and West Ocean City.

Bertino said Ocean Pines’ share winds up being “ten times more” than what the community should be required to pay. He added that the increase would “more or less remain forevermore on our bills.”

“That’s just for this year’s identified \$2.1 million shortfall,” he said. “Waiting in the distance is the \$6 million loan that needs to be paid back to the general fund beginning in FY2027. If the plan presented Tuesday requiring Ocean Pines to shoulder the shortfall debt of other service areas passes in the final budget, it’s likely the same model will be used for the \$6.3 million loan plus interest repayment over the next 10 years.”

Bertino continued, arguing that the potential rise in rates is inequitable to the Ocean Pines community.

“Doing simple math – and I want to reiterate that nothing about this situation is simple – our rates in Ocean Pines will increase about \$9 per quarter per ratepayer for the repayment of this loan over 10 years, that equates to \$3.6 million collectively over 10 years that we weren’t responsible for to begin with,” he said.

Also impacting Ocean Pines fees is See BUDGET Page 7



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Budget hearing set for May 6

Continued from Page 6

that while the community's service area currently accepts waste from the Riddle Farm service area and is being compensated approximately \$532,000 annually, the location is expected to be back online in December. Therefore, soon, "the pump and haul expenses to that service area and the revenue our service area has been receiving for many years" will be eliminated, Bertino said.

It is likely that lost revenue will need to be made up. The commissioner noted that a quick calculation reveals that bills will include about a \$13 quarterly increase. This modification will remain regardless of the outcome of the budget draft proposed last week.

Bertino noted the presented spending plan is a "conversation starter" and that while it is currently the only option on the table, it has not been approved.

"Those of us in the Ocean Pines service area have a responsibility to pay for the operations and maintenance and capital improvements of the facility that provides us clean water and processes our effluent," Bertino said. "Ocean Pines ratepayers do not have a responsibility, nor should we be expected to shoulder the costs of other service areas that through the years were not financially managed properly by county government. The plan put forward Tuesday was a draft, an option that will be dis-

cussed and deliberated by the commissioners. It's possible it will change ... But this is the only plan now before us, and it is not in Ocean Pines' best interest."

The Ocean Pines Board of Directors expressed their concerns with the proposed plan.

"This sounds like a neighbor who takes out a loan to do a major redo of their home then goes walking down the street asking everybody else to help them pay it off," Director Steve Jacobs said.

A public hearing to express concerns has been set for Tuesday, May 6, at 6 p.m. at the Worcester County Government Center in Snow Hill.

"Everybody in the Ocean Pines service area needs to be informed," he said. "They need to understand so they can articulate their concerns. They should come out to the public hearing. They should write letters and emails. We need to educate our people. Knowledge is power ... Ocean Pines is not a shy community."

OPA Board of Directors Secretary John Latham echoed Bertino's sentiments.

"Our community is going to do everything we can," he said.

OPA Board President Stuart Lakerick asked the commissioners about the possibility of legal action. Bertino maintained at this point since no decision has been made except to accept the budget as an option for consideration, this step cannot yet be taken.

County seeks cure for deficits

Continued from Page 3

That way, if one plant should malfunction, county public works employees could reroute wastewater flow to prevent a service interruption. However, this would be an extraordinarily expensive solution that would take years to complete, officials said.

"By consolidating the service areas, the county will be better able to take care of all the plants through increased efficiencies," said county spokeswoman Kim Moses. "The current situation is not ideal, and we are trying to fix it."

Also at the meeting, Commissioner Chip Bertino (District 5, Ocean Pines) expressed his dissatisfaction that pricing proposal meant that his constituents would be forced to pay higher user rates, even though their wastewater fund wasn't among those being mismanaged.

"This government did a lousy job overseeing the financial operations of our service areas, and the people who are being held accountable are the ratepayers, not the people who created this situation to begin with," he said.

"This issue has so many different variables of, I guess, we'll just call it gross negligence," Bertino added. "I understand that certain service areas,

if they were held to pay for deficits in their own areas, their rates would go up. Well, their rates would go up. I think it's wrong that Ocean Pines is being asked to foot the bill for this because we have the most users – and, relatively speaking, operating more efficiently than some others."

Bertino asked his fellow commissioners to approve sending a detailed notice to all ratepayers, outlining the per-household rate increase, percentage increases over the current year, and where the money would go, dollar for dollar.

When that motion failed in a 3-4 vote, Bertino then scolded his peers, saying, "we're not asking for anything more than providing information to the ratepayers. This body has decided that – let's just keep them in the dark."

"I don't think we're trying to keep anybody in the dark here," shot back Commissioner Joe Mitrecic (District 7, Ocean City). We voted to have a public hearing. I don't support spending money out of an already underwater enterprise fund to send out a letter."

The board finally decided to post all the information Bertino requested on the county's website in the immediate future.

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Berlin spikes EDU financing policy for now

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(March 27, 2025) The Berlin Town Council this week voted to abandon a previously existing policy that allows developers to finance up to five equivalent dwelling units (EDUs) over five years.

At a Berlin Mayor and Council meeting on Monday, March 24, the municipality's governing body unanimously voted to eliminate a 2017 policy that allows developers to finance up to five EDUs, to be paid in full within five years, along with a 3% annual administration fee to cover staff costs.

Three contracts under this agreement will be grandfathered in. Town Administrator Mary Bohlen maintained "one or two" are near finalization.

The motion to terminate the financing policy comes after a meeting last month in which Berlin Mayor Zack Tyndall broke a tie vote to permit developer Zachary Grauer to finance four EDUs in his project to repurpose a vacant structure on the north side of his Bay Street parcel.

The initiative would see the construction of five new apartment units. One unit will be a two-bedroom space, while the remaining four will be one-bedroom, at around 700 to

800 square feet.

Per last month's vote, broken by Tyndall, who by code is given the authority to offer his vote in the case of a stalemate, the developer will finance four EDUs from the town for \$66,774 at 525 Bay Street. The developer will pay a 10% deposit of \$6,677 and be charged a 3% financing fee to cover administrative and staff costs.

Tyndall and council members Steve Green and Jay Knerr voted in favor of Grauer's financing request. Council member Jack Orris and Vice President Dean Burrell were against the ask. Council member Shaneka Nichols was absent when voting took place.

Last month's heated debate initiated a conversation about whether the policy should exist in the first place. Tyndall, Green, and Knerr voted in favor of Grauer's financing agreement due to the mere existence of the guidelines and precedent.

"We have financed a lot of projects," Green said last month. "... I feel that we need to be consistent."

Tyndall concurred, arguing that since the standard is in place, the governing body must honor it. In the past, the town has entered into previous deals with groups like Sonrise Church, Twisters, Renaissance Plaza, Strawberry Fields, and others.

Orris and Burrell opposed Grauer's request. Orris maintained that Berlin is "not a bank," while the vice president opposed the area for the planned project, citing a congestion issue.

Thus, the policy was brought forth earlier this week, and the governing body discussed its legitimacy. Ultimately, the town council agreed to eliminate the financing option. Nichols made the motion to abolish, and Orris seconded.

The vote was preceded by a discussion in which the council members and the public were given the opportunity to share their thoughts and concerns regarding the standard.

Nichols said that she does not believe Berlin needs to be incentivizing developers.

"I can't speak to what happened before I sat here, but today, in 2025, we don't need to be financing anything," she said. "When you come and sit at the table, ready to play like a big boy, you need to bring your big boy game with you and not come to us asking the town to finance that ... Maybe at the time it was in place, it was needed. In 2017 when there wasn't a lot of growth in Berlin. But right now, I think we are in a healthy place of growth."

Tyndall and Bohlen argued that

the town's growth rate is a matter of perspective and is difficult to determine definitively.

Nichols also expressed her concerns about the impact continued EDU financing can have on affordable housing. She noted that Grauer's request "pulled on the purse strings" of affordable housing and what the governing group wanted to hear, yet the units will likely be too pricey for many.

"Berlin is outpricing the folks who live here, the people who want to live here, and only making it affordable for the developer and those from the outside coming in," she said.

Green argued that while he agreed the policy was poorly written and did vote in favor of its abolishment, he is open to flexibility, especially if developers are bringing in projects prioritizing the town's overall strategic plan. The council member noted an individual interested in creating a mixed-use facility on Old Ocean City Boulevard as an example.

"[The developer] wants to put in a mixed-use project," Green said. "We say we want mixed-use projects. He said he wants to put commercial on the bottom and apartments on top. He may need as many as 20 EDUs. I have no problem showing flexibility

See COUNCIL Page 10

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Spaces available at Spring Flea Market in Ocean Pines

(March 27, 2025) The Ocean Pines Recreation and Parks Department is reminding local vendors that space is still available for the upcoming Spring Indoor/Outdoor Flea Market, set for Saturday, April 5, from 8 a.m. to noon at the White Horse Park and Community Center.

Vendor spaces are available for \$25 each and include one 8-foot table and two chairs. Both indoor and outdoor options are available, and spaces are assigned on a first-come, first-served

basis.

Vendors are encouraged to stop by and choose their preferred location while space remains.

The Spring Flea Market is a great opportunity for vendors to sell gently used clothing, household items, collectibles, and more. The event is free to shoppers and will be held rain or shine.

To register for a space or for more information, call the Ocean Pines Recreation and Parks Department at 410-641-7052.

Vietnam vets encouraged to attend lunch at legion post

(March 27, 2025) Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1091 in Ocean City this week invite all Vietnam-era veterans to enjoy lunch, fellowship and fun at American Legion Post 166 on March 29, from 1-3 p.m.

All Vietnam-era veterans (1955-1975) are invited to partake in lunch and share time with fellow veterans.

They also may bring memorabilia or stories to be shared with the group. Veterans may bring a guest as well.

For more information on the "Welcome Home" event, contact Bob Gilmore at 410-726-5690 or email OPBobGil@aol.com.

The event will be held at American Legion Post 166, 2308 Philadelphia Ave., Ocean City, MD 21842.

Council ends financing policy

Continued from Page 8

to that developer. I think we say we want mixed-use development, and not everybody is going to be able to come in and swing a \$300,000 EDU expense in addition to the construction cost ... I am not against government financing EDUs, but I don't like this policy. It's outdated. I'll abandon the policy, but I do think we should consider working with the right kind of development we say we want in town."

Burrell reiterated his concerns about the congestion issues financing EDUs could exacerbate, particularly Grauer's project, which was approved last month.

"My primary reason [to vote against Grauer's request] was because the developer was adding multi-family dwellings to what I feel is an already exhausted area related to multi-family dwellings," he said. "That was my biggest issue with that project...we should not further impact the quality of life on the east side of Berlin by jamming more multi-family dwellings in that limited space."

Resident Gabe Purnell attended Monday night's meeting. He argued for the continuation of the financing policy, maintaining that minorities and those without an excess of money should be given the opportunity to develop things for the town and its citizens.

"I'm trying to develop something on the east side, something I think we could use, and I'm going to need some EDUs," he said. "And now you're telling me I got to come in with the big boys...we gotta get back to where I want to get to — giving people an opportunity to pay for EDUs on time. I can't afford to bring \$100,000 in here and drop it. We like to be in the game, too. We like to offer some things to the community, too."

Nichols disagreed with Purnell's point. The council member maintained that developers asking for EDUs take these opportunities away from Berlin locals, as it increases housing costs.

"The folks asking for EDUs take people out of the running," she said, addressing Purnell. "They can't afford what these people are putting on the table. [Grauer] said that to put this housing on the second floor, he will have to charge at least \$3,000 a month. Who is going to afford that? These people who want to overdevelop, the same developers asking for these EDUs, are going to put the people you think want to live there out."

She also argued that this type of practice may impact minority representation.

"If these folks don't have an address where they can vote, we won't be sitting here because they won't have an address that says Berlin proper to vote," Nichols continued. "The more you give EDUs away, you push those folks out. You're pushing out your vote. You're pushing out your voice."

The policy permitting developers to finance EDUs was ultimately eliminated. While no formal action was taken to create new guidelines, a few ideas were mentioned.


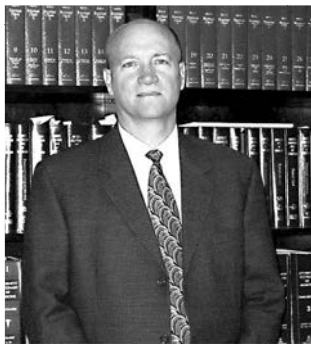
Berlin Finance Director Natalie Saleh, for instance, suggested that developers be given two options: they can pay for their EDUs outright or, if they choose to finance, pay the entire amount owed before construction can begin.

As it currently stands, financing EDU requests will no longer be accepted for consideration by the Berlin Town Council, and no new policy is on the table. Grauer's project will remain intact, as will other financing contracts agreed upon before the elimination of the guidelines.

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Diakonia seeks state grant to begin expansion project

County lends support as nonprofit pursues funding for campus development

By **Brian Shane**
Staff Writer

(March 27, 2025) Worcester County officials pledged their unanimous support for a state grant that will help the West Ocean City nonprofit Diakonia fund its long-awaited expansion project.

The County Commissioners last Tuesday gave their blessing for Diakonia to pursue a Community Development Block Grant that will yield \$860,000 in funding. Executive Director Ken Argot said the grant will help Diakonia to secure more local matches toward its \$10 million goal.

The commissioners agreed to a letter of guarantee for the grant, meaning the county ultimately would be held responsible for the project's completion or else be charged back by the state.

Argot said affordable housing is "almost nonexistent" on the Eastern Shore, with scarcity tied to rising property values, seasonal workforce needs and limited rental availability.

42 new affordable rental unit apartments, he said.

"Our shelter is full every day," Argot said. "As soon as somebody leaves, somebody new comes in. And there's people on the street. That's why we started the mobile outreach team, because we knew we couldn't get them in right away. This will help us sort of break the cycle of just everybody kind of staying in shelter because there is no place to go."

The complex will offer not only housing, but support services, including a space for veterans' services, case management, an expanded community food pantry, and thrift store.

In the works for a decade, Diakonia's planned 9,000-square-foot campus on Route 611, next door to the Decatur Diner, will be built in two phases. Land for the project was donated in 2021 by West Ocean City-based Blue Water, a real estate development and hospitality business.

Phase 1 of the project, estimated to cost \$3.4 million, will include a new 3,200-square-foot building for Diakonia's relocated veterans service center and administrative offices. This phase includes \$2.1 million for

See NONPROFIT Page 12

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Nonprofit seeks donations for new campus

Continued from Page 11
initial plans and site work, plus \$2 million to build it.

Phase 2 will include three, two-story buildings with 14 units each of flexible housing. Ranging from studios to three-bedroom units, this housing would be managed by Diakonia and some would maintain a flexible sliding scale rental agreement as the renters' income increases.

The second phase also would include building a new community thrift store and an expanded food pantry at an estimated cost of \$6 million.

The food pantry, which is now physically inside Diakonia's current headquarters on Old Bridge Road, would get its own space with a larger area to process donations. The thrift store generates about 10% of Diakonia's revenue, and Argot said he hopes that figure will increase to 25-30% when the new store is completed.

Fundraising so far has included state and local grants, and gifts from foundations and the community. Additional efforts this year will include a \$100,000 direct mail campaign, Diakonia said in a statement.

Other sponsorships would see donors not only purchasing legacy bricks but have the opportunity to



A new campus project for the nonprofit Diakonia, pictured here in a rendering, would span 4.4 acres on a parcel on Route 611 in West Ocean City. Groundbreaking may happen as soon as next month.

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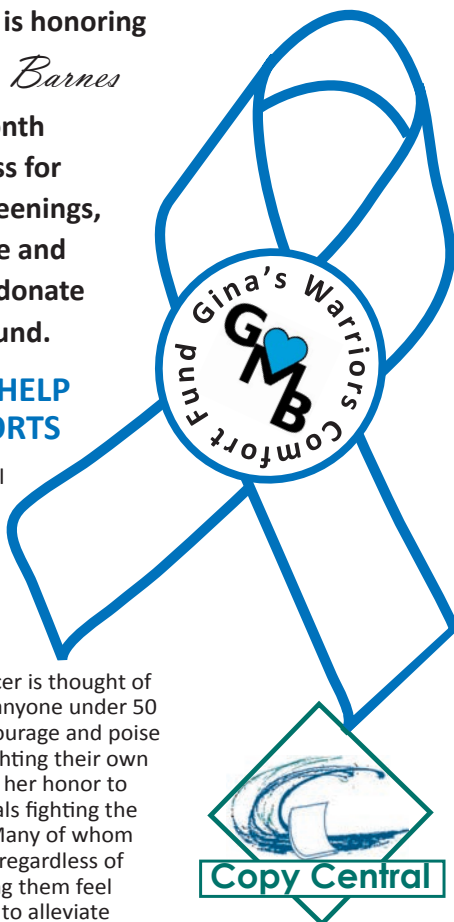
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lend their name to both individual rooms as well as the overall campus for a goal of \$2.4 million.

Diakonia saw a \$50,000 funding boost earlier this year when it was selected by Maryland's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to participate in a Community Investment Tax Credit program.

People and businesses who donate at least \$500 to a nonprofit get a tax credit in the amount of their gift. The recipient then gets back twice that

amount as an award, which must go toward a specific project. It means Diakonia could see a \$50,000 award if they can secure \$25,000 in tax credits for this funding round.

A formal groundbreaking will be announced in the weeks to come, said Brian Roberts, chairman of Diakonia's board of directors.

"We're thankful for the county commissioners to approve this project. We can't thank them enough. We're looking forward to shovels in the ground soon," he said.

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County presents fiscal year budget requests

Worcester staff exploring cuts to property tax rates as budget talks continue

By **Brian Shane**
Staff Writer

(March 27, 2025) Higher revenues mean tax cuts are still on the table for Worcester County, as officials continue the budgeting process for fiscal year 2026.

The county's Board of Commissioners got a detailed look at expenditure and revenue estimates at its meeting last Tuesday in Snow Hill. Budget Officer Kim Reynolds ran down the highlights of the estimated \$284.6 million operating budget, which comes in at \$22.6 million more than last year, or a 9% increase.

Higher statewide property tax assessments created about \$18 million in expected new revenue for the county. Other revenue increases of \$1.4 million came from real estate recordation and transfer tax increases.

And, while the county also is projecting \$6 million more from income tax revenue, it won't all get spent. County policy mandates setting aside 15% of revenue in reserves, as well as 22.2% of income tax revenue toward employee pensions.

Ahead of last Tuesday's meeting, county departments submitted spending requests totaling \$286.8 million. That's an increase of \$24.9 million, or 10%. Reynolds noted that each department head estimated the impact of federal and state funding changes in their requests, all of which will be discussed during April work sessions.

By law, Worcester County must pass a balanced budget. But for now, the difference between requested spending and expected revenue creates a gap of \$2.26 million. That has to be reconciled, Reynolds said, either with additional revenue, spending cuts, or a combination of both.

At the request of the County Commissioners in light of the increased revenue, Reynolds' budget also in-

cluded possible changes to property tax rates.

Five possible tax decreases were shared in 10-cent increments, ranging from a 10-cent drop to a 50-cent drop. Projections show this could decrease revenue from \$2.4 million to \$12.2 million.

Worcester County's current property tax rate is 84.5 cents per \$100 of assessed property value. That's the fourth lowest in the state behind Queen Anne's County (83 cents), Talbot County (79.1 cents), and Montgomery County (67 cents). The state's property tax rate is 11.2 cents. All four of the county's municipalities also collect their own property tax.

Procedurally, after department heads handed in their asks, the county's administrative team takes another look for possible cuts. Then, there's a public hearing on May 6 in Snow Hill. From there, the commissioners will go line-by-line through the books, department by department, until finalizing an operating budget on June 3.

Departments whose budget requests increased over last year include the sheriff's office (\$3.1 million), emergency services (\$1.3 million), the roads division (\$1.72 million) and the county jail (\$1.6 million) which includes a \$373,901 for increased medical contract costs.

The Worcester County Board of Education – whose total budget represents about 44% of all county spending – made an appropriation request of \$116 million, or \$10.5 million more than was approved last year.

Teacher salaries could go up with this budget. Starting teacher pay would increase to \$55,820. It's part of the board's requested payroll increase of \$5.4 million. This includes a step increase for all eligible employees, a scale adjustment of \$4,000 for certificated employees, and a \$2,000 scale adjustment for support staff employ-

ees.

Requested school board money also includes a proposed increase of \$280,000 for bus contractors, as well as a projected health insurance premium increase of \$1.2 million, or 8%.

Other departmental requests over last year included \$2 million more for grants to towns, and \$1.7 million more for general government costs, including new supplies, software, and other property and liability costs.

At the state level, lawmakers continue to figure out ways to solve the pending \$3.3 billion revenue shortfall for fiscal year 2026. Some commissioners in the meeting noted how, with the state's budget is still in flux, it leaves Worcester County hanging week-to-week.

"This is going to be a fluid situation, I think, as far as the state's budget and what they have coming down at us," said board president Commissioner Ted Elder (District 4, Western). "It's going to be interesting in these work sessions."

Commissioner Chip Bertino (District 5, Ocean Pines) said it's possible the state won't have its budget locked down by the county's deadline, be-

cause there's been some talk of the governor convening a special legislative session of the General Assembly.

Reynolds told the commissioners there are still a few threads hanging in Annapolis that may come back to zap the county's pocketbook.

One example is that the state may implement a new cost-sharing agreement for the Department of Assessments and Taxation, which Reynolds said could scrap the current 50/50 agreement and make it 90/10 in the state's favor, costing the county another \$580,573.

The county also could face a potential \$800,000 revenue loss from changes made to tax collection in the governor's budget. The proposal is to double the state standard deduction and end itemized deductions, according to Reynolds.

Another costly state mandate may involve teacher pensions. Reynolds said there's a possibility that the state might push 100% of teacher pension costs onto the county. If that happens, then the county would take a budget hit of about \$672,000.

"I would hope it's done by June when we have to approve this," Bertino said of the state's budget, "but it's very possible that those decisions will not be made until after we're required to approve our budget."

'This is going to be a fluid situation, I think, as far as the state's budget and what they have coming down at us.'
Commissioner Ted Elder



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WCPS provides update on Blueprint progress

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(March 27, 2025) As Worcester County Public Schools continues to implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the system recently updated community members about the successes and challenges of introducing the educational plan.

WCPS hosted two sessions detailing four of the pillars required under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, an act passed in 2021 to expand and improve student outcomes and educational quality.

During the system's first session, Chief Academic Officer Denise Shorts reviewed pillar one, which she said emphasizes "equitable early childhood opportunities for all of our students."

To begin with, Shorts highlighted the school system's success in implementing pillar one.

A notable win is the expansion of publicly funded pre-kindergarten for all four-year-olds and low-income three-year-olds.

In the 2019-2020 school year, WCPS had an enrollment of 432 for pre-k. In 2024-2025, that figure increased to 549. Shorts said that this was accomplished through expansion grant opportunities.

"We now have at least one pre-k three full-day program in each of our elementary schools and two in our Title I schools," the academic officer said. "We have three in one of our highest poverty schools, Pocomoke Elementary School. We have 60 three-year-olds attending that at PES and couldn't have done that without the expansion grant."

Shorts added that WCPS is one of the only school systems in Maryland with all-day four-year-old programs. Each of the five elementary schools has sections of pre-k4, which Shorts said is made possible through recruitment efforts.

Pillar one has also presented some challenges. Shorts said that some parents find enrolling their children in local childcare more feasible than WCPS-affiliated early childcare options, due to before- and after-care programs.

"School hours are school hours,"

Shorts said.

For some parents, their schedules are more aligned with the hours that the before and after programs offer that, while available in the upper-level WCPS, is not an everyday staple of the elementary schools.

"We have dabbled in some pilot programs in our elementary schools but have been unable to sustain those," Shorts noted. "We are making great strides, but we have some challenges."

During the same Blueprint information session, WCPS Chief Safety and Academic Officer Annette Wallace presented pillar three, college and career readiness. This benchmark aims to ensure that each student is deemed college and career ready by tenth grade.

A success for pillar three at WCPS includes dual enrollment courses offered via partnerships with the area's surrounding colleges. According to Wallace, enrollment for these classes has increased from 309 students to 548 students since the Blueprint's inception.

While funding is a challenge, Wallace added that one of her goals is to secure the financial backing and work out a deal with the Eastern Shore's higher institutions so that students can graduate with an associate's degree on the same day they receive their high school diploma.

"The financial benefit that has for families, the barriers that knock down for first-generation college students, are huge," Wallace said. "I think it's something that should be offered to our kids."

Since the creation of the Blueprint, enrollment in Advanced Placement courses has also risen by nearly 200 students across the system's high schools.

A crucial challenge of pillar three is securing the funding needed to create the pathway to dual enrollment expansion, which would allow young learners to receive their associate's degrees and high school diplomas concurrently.

Earlier this month, officials provided additional details about pillars two and four in a separate Blueprint information session.

Assistant Superintendent of Human

Relations and Safety Dwayne Abt presented pillar two. This pillar aims to attract, retain, and train high-quality and diverse teachers and leaders and raise the starting teacher pay to \$60,000 by 2027.

"We want to make sure we have competitive salaries," Abt said.

A recent success in the category was WCPS's ability to meet the Blueprint-mandated 10% salary increase in fiscal year 2024.

A challenge, however, is funding constraints that will stress the ability to meet the \$60,000 requirement by FY27. This issue is particularly pressing given the budget shortfall plaguing the state of Maryland.

"With the announcement of the \$3 billion deficit, there is concern there will be insufficient funds to meet the pillar," Abt said.

Lauren Williams, WCPS coordinator of school health services, presented the system's efforts to implement pillar

four, which is focused on strengthening wraparound services, expanding behavioral health partnerships, and improving services offered to multilingual students and students with disabilities.

Some success of this task is the school system's hosting of events targeted at multilingual learners, with a focus on English language acquisition and professional learning for staff related to skills to identify, prevent, and de-escalate crises.

Issues have presented themselves in the efforts to establish pillar four. According to Williams, enrollment of multilingual students has increased 23%.

"We don't have funding to expand our staff, and so providing enough services and support as enrollment increases is a challenge," she noted.

Despite a few roadblocks, WCPS officials maintain that they are improving the school system as they work to implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Search for superintendent continues in Worcester Co.

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(March 27, 2025) The Worcester County Board of Education has entered the application phase in its search for a new superintendent of schools. Officials hope to find a replacement in May.

Reviews of the submitted interest forms will begin on March 31, and interviews will occur in early April.

The board of education has contracted with the nonprofit education group, Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), to oversee the search process.

According to the press release, the board and MABE created a job description that includes ideal qualities in a new superintendent.

Traits like being an ethical and decisive leader, an effective communicator, a consensus builder, and an experi-

enced instructional and operational leader are necessary for applicants.

The school system's website outlines additional criteria.

A Maryland Certification as superintendent is required, and a doctorate in education or a related field is preferred. Candidates should also exhibit knowledge of the Maryland education system, laws, funding, curriculum, and assessment with school and district-level experience. Furthermore, relocation to Worcester County is necessary if not already a community member.

The description lists a "competitive salary and benefits package with a minimum salary of \$195,000" and adds that the offer amount will depend on the applicant's qualifications and experience.

"Mr. Taylor is leaving the school system in the best possible condition – at

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School system eyes interviews

Continued from Page 14
 the top in the state,” Board President Todd Ferrante said in the release. “Our stakeholders – our staff, parents, and community – want us to find someone who can keep our momentum and high levels of achievement moving forward. We want a school system leader who continues to put kids first.”

All applications are to be submitted to MABE. The school system’s release maintains that the Worcester County Board of Education is not accepting applications directly. Potential candidates can receive additional information about the role by contacting Edward Shirley, the lead consultant for the MABE superintendent search team, at eshirley@mabe.org or 410-841-5414.

Current Worcester County Public Schools Superintendent Lou Taylor announced his retirement at a board of education meeting on Jan. 21. His intention to step down follows a 41-year-long career in education.

Taylor began as a physical education teacher at Berlin Middle School, now known as Berlin Intermediate School, and later advanced to an assistant principal position. He moved to Stephen Decatur High School in 1991 as an assistant principal and then assumed the principal role.

Taylor led SDHS for 17 years. During his tenure, the high school became the first Maryland Blue Ribbon School in Worcester County. Taylor also established the Worcester County Education Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to enhancing student achievement in WCPSS.

Before his position as superintendent, Taylor served as chief operating officer.

He was named school system head in 2016. In 2021, Taylor signed a new four-year contract at an annual salary of \$210,000.

The school system hopes to find a new leader to replace the outgoing educator sometime this spring.

“It is important to this board that the upcoming transition in leadership flows smoothly,” Ferrante said in the release.

Lodge to hold cancer pledge event

By Tara Fischer
 Staff Writer

(March 27, 2025) The Lincoln Lodge #53 will sponsor a cancer awareness event on May 10 at Henry Park to encourage Berlin and Worcester County residents to prioritize their health.

The Berlin Town Council unanimously approved the event at a meeting earlier this week. Zsavelle Smack, applicant and representative for Lincoln Lodge #53, a group that provides gathering and event space and works to foster community connection, came before the governing group on Monday, March 24, where the idea was presented and green-lit.

The May 10 event will include a

luncheon at Henry Park, during which individuals will sign a cancer pledge.

“That cancer pledge is to state that [attendees] will prioritize early detection, regular check-ups, and a healthy lifestyle,” Smack said. “They will identify healthy habits for physical and mental health, make an appointment for mammograms, prostate, colon, etcetera, and accept what is, let go of what was, and let fate have its way.”

Participants will take the pledge, sign their names, and receive a free lunch.

“This is our organization’s way of reaching out to the community to let them know we are here and we are going to be present in this community,” the

representative added. “This is all done through our organization. This event is a start for us to really take hold in what we need to do in our community.”

May 10 was chosen to honor Skin Cancer Awareness Month.

A follow-up event will be held on Oct. 4 in recognition of breast cancer awareness.

The Berlin Town Council approved the event and waived the fee in acknowledgment of the organization’s nonprofit status. Members of the governing body expressed their gratitude for the upcoming occasion.

“I appreciate you taking the time...to bring this to the community,” council member Shaneka Nichols said.

Free computer classes for veterans

(March 27, 2025) Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1091 in Ocean City will hold two free computer classes for veterans.

The first class, scheduled for April 4 at 11 a.m., will introduce participants to basic computer skills. The second class, set for May 2 at 11 a.m., will teach attendees how to set up an email account and connect with others online.

All classes will include one hour of instruction followed by one hour of one-

on-one help. Participants should bring a laptop or contact Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 1091 to borrow a laptop.

Classes will be held at American Legion Post 166 at 2308 Philadelphia Ave., Ocean City.

Associates of the Vietnam Veterans of America is a nonprofit organization established to support all veterans and their families. The organization works alongside the Vietnam Veterans of

America to ensure that all veterans are treated fairly and have access to their veterans benefits for themselves, their caregivers and their families.

Membership is open to anyone, of any age, who wishes to support veterans.

For additional information, contact Marie Gilmore, president of Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 1091, at (410) 726-2881, or email OPMarie@aol.com.



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Opinion

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

No good options exist for covering deficits

It isn't the current Worcester County Commissioners' fault that they inherited a hodgepodge of independent sanitary districts of various sizes and purposes, or that past accounting of each district's theoretically separate enterprise fund drew money from one to balance the budget of another.

Although it is somewhat ironic that the subsequent multi-million-dollar error caused by this fund swapping might have been discovered sooner if the commissioners had paid as much attention to those line item budgets as it did to the school board's, that is beside the point.

Regardless of how or why the error occurred, the commissioners face the uncomfortable business of finding the least aggravating way out of this mess.

That will be close to impossible, since the main arguments against the various solutions offered are more about matters of principle than they are about money.

Obviously, Ocean Pines residents don't feel they should have to cover losses they didn't create or pick up the financial slack for other districts that don't have the population to do it themselves. And then, there is the law, which requires each of these water/wastewater districts to be self-sustaining.

Regardless of blame or fault, if this mistake was made by a private business, the public would demand that it hold its customers harmless and take care of the problem itself.

County government obviously can't do that, just as it can't extricate itself from this problem without penalizing some or all ratepayers for mistakes they didn't make. Clearly, calling on Ocean Pines to shoulder a sizable chunk of the financial burden isn't fair to its ratepayers, but neither can the commissioners wallop ratepayers in small districts with fees they can't pay.

Unfortunately, there is no elegant solution that we know of that won't make some segment of the ratepaying or tax-paying public very unhappy.

Letter

County must follow own current code

Editor,

(The following is a copy of a letter sent to the Worcester County Commissioners and requested for publication.)

Thank you for your efforts on the behalf of Worcester County residents.

I am proud to be a long term, voting, tax paying resident whose address for the past 33 years has been 855 Ocean Parkway in the Ocean Pines subdivision. I have raised my family and conducted a relatively successful business here.

Last Wednesday I had the opportunity to watch your

Commissioner meeting. I was astonished to hear about the irregular \$9.2 million loan advanced to some of the 11 separate sanitation districts initially without proper authorization. Apparently this was to help stabilize losses generated by a few of these districts.

If I was hearing correctly, there are some commissioners who believe this loan should be paid back equally by all 11 districts no matter how much they were responsible for the deficit. The notable exception is the Riddle Farm sanitation district. The Riddle Farm sanitary district may very well be the worst offender and yet \$2.7 million

of the \$9.2 million has been gifted to the Riddle Farm sanitation district as a grant that does not need to be repaid to the county tax payers. Why?

Commissioners, with all due respect, my understanding is current county law separates each sanitary district which is held accountable and stands on their own.

Ocean Pines sanitary district did not contribute one cent to the \$9.2 million deficit and shouldn't be expected to help pay off debts generated by other sanitary districts.

*Martin D. Clarke
Ocean Pines*

Berlin library hosting new art exhibit

Branch will feature updated pieces on building's 2nd floor

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(March 27, 2025) A new exhibit featuring artists from the Worcester County Art League has arrived at the Berlin Library branch.

The exhibit is on the second floor of the Berlin Library, located at 13 Harrison Avenue. It features Barbara Schardt's acrylics and mixed-media works and Jeanne Locklair's watercolors and mixed-media pieces.

The artistry can be viewed until May 13 during regular library hours.

Schardt said that she is a painter and has a penchant for "many crafts." Her work at the library includes a variety of mediums, like acrylics and mixed media, and subject matter, like nature and buildings.

"I just wanted a variety," she said. "I don't stick with one thing for long."

In addition to her paintings, Schardt makes crafts. This skill is highlighted during the holiday bazaar hosted by Holy Savior in Ocean City annually.

For this event, the artist creates whatever is needed, like wreaths or tree ornaments. Last year, she made puzzle pieces into ornaments and brought them to the church's Christmas market.

Schardt began painting in 1983. Her artistic skills were put to use at a shop where she would paint on wood, tin, and flower pots. She attended conventions and fairs, took workshops, and sold her work.

She expanded her prowess to watercolor, acrylics, pen and ink, pastel, and "anything else [she] can get her hands on."

Schardt noted that she also took some classes at Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland, where she earned an associate's degree in interior design.

As she's gotten older, Schardt said that she has slowed down on painting and has been getting more into crafting. Currently, she is working on paper projects, including booklets that she calls keepsake journals.

"I have a base of three pages, and then I add to that," the creator explained. "I have colored papers with a printed de-



SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE
"The Neighbor" is a watercolor, pen, and ink piece created by artist Jeanne Locklair, who will be featured at the library branch.

sign, stickers, and pictures. I make these so you can give them to someone for a birthday present or something. I make the covers and hand sew them together, but they are all paper. So you can put a picture, maybe a letter you want to keep, and make notes."

Schardt moved to the Eastern Shore from Tampa in 2020 to be closer to family following her husband's passing. She said that she appreciates the Worcester County Art League for highlighting the art scene in the
See LIBRARY Page 19

BAYSIDE GAZETTE

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Motorist to serve 18 months in fatal crash

State's Attorney issues statement acknowledging sentence disappointment

By **Bethany Hooper**
Associate Editor

(March 27, 2025) A Berlin man will serve 18 months in jail after pleading guilty to one felony count in the death of Gavin Knupp, a 14-year-old pedestrian who was struck and killed the night of July 11, 2022.

In Worcester County Circuit Court last Wednesday, Judge Brett Wilson sentenced Tyler Mailloux, 24, of Berlin, to 10 years, with all but 18 months suspended, for leaving the scene of the hit-and-run accident that resulted in Knupp's death.

Upon his release, he will serve three years of supervised probation.

"Unfortunately, here, we could not avoid and cannot fix what has happened," Wilson said from the bench. "And if I could, I would, and I know you all would."

On July 11, 2022, at around 10:45 p.m., a driver in a black Mercedes traveling east on Grays Corner Road struck and killed Knupp, who was reportedly returning to a vehicle driven by his older sister.

Knupp's sister, Summer, performed CPR until first responders arrived on scene and transported him to Atlantic General Hospital, where he was later pronounced dead.

The motorist, who was never identified by investigators, fled the scene and did not return. It took a week for Maryland State Police to locate the Mercedes and another nine-and-a-half months before 17 traffic charges, including four felony counts, were filed against Mailloux.

Since that time, the case has worked its way through the legal system, starting with an August 2023 motions hearing, during which Wilson granted the defense's motion to dismiss, opining that the district court had "exclusive and original" jurisdiction. From there, the prosecution appealed the ruling to the Appellate Court of Maryland, which

reversed the lower court's decision.

The case was ultimately brought back to Worcester County Circuit Court, which had scheduled a 13-day trial to begin March 3.

However, during a motions hearing held less than a week before, a deal was reached between Mailloux and the Worcester County State's Attorney's Office.

Mailloux pleaded guilty to leaving the scene of an accident where a driver "knew/reasonably knew accident must result in death and death occurred," according to the Maryland Transportation Code. In return, the state's attorney's office agreed it would not prosecute the remaining charges.

Sentencing guidelines for the conviction are three months to four years. As part of the plea agreement, the state's attorney's office recommended a maximum penalty of 10 years, with all but three years and 227 days suspended – or one year for failing to remain at the scene and one day for every day he failed to report.

In her arguments last week, Assistant State's Attorney Pam Correa told the judge that Mailloux was not accused of causing the accident, but rather accused of leaving the scene. She also argued that Mailloux had hid the car in his family's garage immediately after the accident and had failed to show remorse for what he had done in the two-plus years the case worked through the court system.

"At every turn, the defendant protected himself," she said.

While the prosecution argued for a sentence toward the upper end of the sentencing guidelines, Mailloux's attorney, George Psoras, asked that the sentence be limited to three months. Pointing to the reduced visibility on Grays Corner Road, Psoras tacitly identified Mailloux as the driver when he said Mailloux believed he had hit a deer.

"We have what I call the perfect storm," he said.

Psoras said Mailloux had returned home and had pulled the car into the garage to inspect the damage and that

led him to believe what he struck was not an animal. Psoras said his client then returned to the scene to find first responders on Grays Corner Road. From there, he talked to his father, who consulted with an attorney.

"He did what his father and his attorneys told him to do," Psoras said, pointing to the hours following the accident.

During last Wednesday's sentencing hearing, several of Knupp's family members and friends spoke of Knupp's character and the impact his death had had on them all.

"Our lives are shattered," Tiffany Knupp, Gavin Knupp's mother, said, "and most days our lives are hanging on by a thread."

The judge also heard from Mailloux's family, as well as Mailloux himself, who claimed responsibility in the role he played in Knupp's death.

He said he had decided to enter a guilty plea after seeing Knupp's family members at last month's motion's hearing.

"This is the one thing I have control over to give to you," he told the family in court last week.

Before a packed courtroom, Wilson acknowledged the difficulty of sentencing in this case. While noting Mailloux's lack of a criminal record

and the advice he had received from an attorney in the hours after the accident, he said the defendant failed to return to the scene.

"It was a cowardly course of action," he said.

Following a nearly three-hour-long hearing, the judge passed sentence, ruling that Mailloux would serve his 18 months of incarceration in the Worcester County Detention Center, where he has been held since entering a guilty plea last month.

Mailloux will also be placed on three years of supervised probation upon his release. The conditions of that probation are that he have no contact with the Knupp family, that he complete 400 hours of community service within the first year, and that he attend a victim impact panel.

"We recognize that no amount of punishment can ever make up for the loss of a life, especially the life of an innocent child," State's Attorney Kris Heiser said in a statement following last Wednesday's hearing. "However, prosecutors today advocated for a much longer sentence than what the court ultimately handed down because we believed it was appropriate given the facts of the case, and necessary to deter future hit-and-run accidents."

See HEISER Page 19

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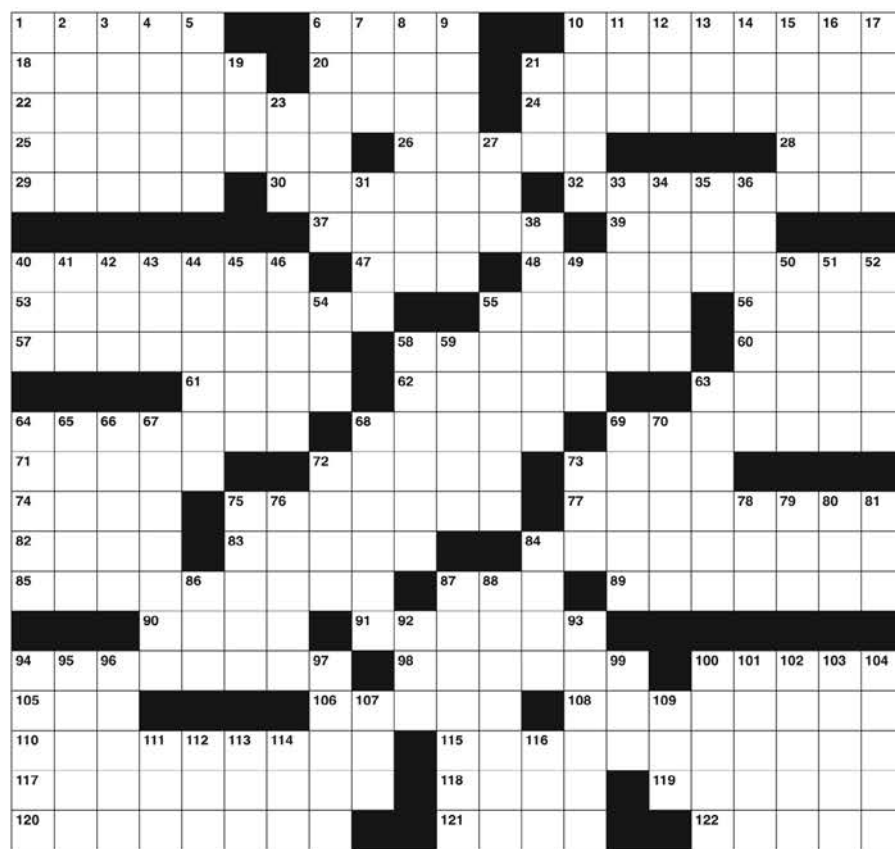


Puzzles

HAVE IT BOTH WAYS
BY PAUL COULTER / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Paul Coulter is a retired biology professor in Glassboro, N.J. He got into puzzles through cryptic crosswords, which he set for British audiences, eventually turning to American-style crosswords in 2014. This is his seventh puzzle for The Times. When he's not teaching or making puzzles, Paul is writing novels — 50 so far, none of which have been published. He laments, "I wonder if that's a record for futility!" — W.S.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Jeans material
 - 6 Some P.D. alerts
 - 10 Leaves a relationship
 - 18 14-line poem with only two rhymes across three stanzas
 - 20 "The African Queen" scriptwriter
 - 21 Per-hour cost to record music, say
 - 22 Host of a 1990s late-night talk show that was briefly revived 20 years later
 - 24 Completely exclude
 - 25 Low-fat dairy desserts
 - 26 Columbus's birthplace
 - 28 L. L. Bean competitor
 - 29 Dug through for digital analysis
 - 30 Auto racer _____ Patrick
 - 32 Subway commuters, informally
 - 37 Promoted boastfully
 - 39 Others, to Ovid
 - 40 Old-fashioned garnishes
 - 47 M.L.B. V.I.P.s
 - 48 Al Capone adversary who only ever met him once in person
 - 53 Selling points?
 - 55 [Boohoo!]
 - 56 Hamlet or Laertes
 - 57 Longtime children's clothing store with a portmanteau name
- DOWN**
- 1 Cornrow or challah feature
 - 2 Playwright Federico Garcia _____
 - 3 Like freshly poured concrete
 - 4 Medical buildup of fluid
 - 5 -
 - 6 Verbally reacts to in awe
 - 7 Links letters
 - 8 Where Waterloo is
 - 9 Picks
 - 10 -
 - 11 Something you might get a break with?
 - 12 Composition of Catullus in ancient Rome
 - 13 "Les _____"
 - 14 Creator of the mystery-solving C. Auguste Dupin
 - 15 Prior to, old-style
- ACROSS**
- 58 Dabbles in
 - 60 Loads
 - 61 Ratted
 - 62 Make ready for new use
 - 63 Exhibits brilliance
 - 64 Something one might need to look good in the morning
 - 68 Article of faith
 - 69 Not-so-jolting' joe?
 - 71 _____ group (chemistry classification)
 - 72 Source of the "blood" in a meatless burger, maybe
 - 73 Good lighting?
 - 74 Spill the tea
 - 75 Playground retort
 - 77 Doses of a certain hallucinogen
 - 82 _____ breve
 - 83 Russian range
 - 84 Sounding as if the speaker has some swollen glands
 - 85 Much high school gossip
 - 87 Metaphor for Juliet, in Romeo's soliloquy
 - 89 Got up and at 'em
 - 90 Official who reports to a president
 - 91 Reddish-brown shade
 - 94 Secretly communicating in class
 - 98 Make out
 - 100 Settings for telling some ghost stories
 - 105 Superb, in slang
 - 106 In 2021 she became the first tennis player to light the Olympic cauldron during the opening ceremony
- DOWN**
- 108 Fried fare often served with marinara
 - 110 Discards from fuzzy fruits
 - 115 Blade runner?
 - 117 Reassurance after bandaging a boo-boo
 - 118 Till bills
 - 119 Actress Richards of "Starship Troopers"
 - 120 Felt absolutely determined about
 - 121 Betting site's quote
 - 122 Like the typefaces Helvetica and Arial
- ACROSS**
- 16 German soccer legend Manuel who innovated the "sweeper-keeper" role
 - 17 "Abominable" ones
 - 19 Rap title?
 - 21 BART stop, for short
 - 23 Gave the go-ahead
 - 27 Scot's denial
 - 31 Eggy holiday drinks
 - 33 Port city near Mount Carmel
 - 34 High up
 - 35 A persnickety person might pick it
 - 36 Frodo's enchanting friend
 - 38 What to do if someone makes a false accusation about you
 - 40 Alternative to .net
 - 41 King of Castile
 - 42 Device whose keypad often has Braille on it
 - 43 Catch in the act
 - 44 Florentine artist known for frescoes
 - 45 "The Jetsons" boy
 - 46 -
 - 49 It's one thing after another
 - 50 Have as food, formally
 - 51 Former Maine senator Olympia with an apt name for her state
 - 52 Taste or touch
 - 54 Light to stop at
 - 55 Like the best bonds, perhaps
 - 58 Primps
 - 59 Slow, musically
- DOWN**
- 63 Brit's jolly cry of approval
 - 64 Lacking a knack for
 - 65 Zola who wrote "J'Accuse ...!"
 - 66 Critic's common seating preference
 - 67 Lets go of
 - 68 Some green cars
 - 69 -
 - 70 Hawkeye's real first name in the "Avengers" movies
 - 72 Smile
 - 73 Bamboozled
 - 75 Boxer Roberto who fought Sugar Ray Leonard
 - 76 Chimp's cousin
 - 78 Attach, with "on"
 - 79 Attach, with "on"
 - 80 Cote quote?
 - 81 _____ dog
 - 84 Author Rice
 - 86 "Agnus _____"
 - 87 Hopes that one might
 - 88 Live, in a way
 - 92 Girl who's "sweet as apple cider," per an old song
 - 93 Admission
 - 94 Tree with oblong yellow-green fruit
 - 95 What's on the fast track?
 - 96 Navy group
 - 97 -
 - 99 Tiny bit
 - 100 Bars of soap
 - 101 Appliance brand owned by Whirlpool
 - 102 Morning in Monaco
 - 103 Word with French or bench
 - 104 -
 - 107 Latvia, e.g., once: Abbr.
 - 109 Drug sold in 77-Across
 - 111 Compound found in marijuana, for short
 - 112 Start of a bray or conclusion of a giggle
 - 113 Sch. calendar abbr.
 - 114 "_____ be a pleasure"
 - 116 Call off



- 63 Brit's jolly cry of approval
- 64 Lacking a knack for
- 65 Zola who wrote "J'Accuse ...!"
- 66 Critic's common seating preference
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HARD - 93

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.

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

Answers to last week's puzzles

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

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

Library exhibit open

Continued from Page 16 coastal area.

“I think [the league] shows the community that we have artists, and we like doing what we are presenting,” she said.

Jeanne Locklair will also be showcased at the Berlin Library exhibit this spring.

Her work featured in the gallery includes watercolor portraits and sea glass.

Locklair said that many of her paintings are of people.

“I love faces,” she said. “I find myself staring at people. I love to look at people, all different kinds of people. I love the unique characteristics of faces of all kinds. I find people fascinating.”

Also showcased is the artist’s sea glass, which she tumbles herself to dull the sharp edges to be used for her pieces.

Locklair said that she was “born an artist.”

“As a child, I was very quiet and very isolated,” she noted. “But I would draw. I had a box of crayons and would sit and draw pictures.”

She added that when she was in kindergarten, her teachers gave her a test to determine why she was so quiet. The evaluation involved drawing a man.

“I drew the man, and it was evidently very detailed,” Locklair said. “The man had a watch, and the shirt had buttons and every kind of detail you can imagine, and I remember the person talking to my mother saying, ‘We’re trying to figure out why she’s so quiet, but this picture she drew is far, far beyond the details of a kindergarten child.’”

“I say I was born an artist because that’s all I did as a child,” she continued.

After high school, the artist, from New York



Called “Warbler,” the acrylic piece was created by Barbara Schardt.

SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

City, was recognized by an agent and was given the opportunity to draw pictures that were sold in department stores throughout the United States.

Locklair eventually went to college and became a professor of literature in Manhattan. When she retired and moved to the Eastern Shore, she said the artist inside her “woke up.”

Currently, she is the Georgetown Public Library

resident artist, where she does art programs. She also recently began teaching adult, children, and teen art classes at the library in Milton, Delaware.

“Art is incredibly necessary in everybody’s life,” Locklair said. “It is a way we can express ourselves without words. I work with children. Some of them can’t speak English; some have issues. When they can’t talk, they can create. It’s so rewarding.”

Heiser reflects with statement

Continued from Page 17

She continued, “While we respect the court’s decision, we also recognize that it is unlikely to satisfy many in our community who have waited so long for the resolution of this matter. I can only hope that the proceedings today, including the presence of so many of Gavin’s friends and family in the courtroom, will serve as a re-

minder of how much Gavin is loved and that he will never be forgotten by the community.

“I also want to extend my thanks and gratitude to all those who spoke on Gavin’s behalf at the sentencing hearing, and to the Knupp family for their remarkable patience, determination and strength throughout the entire justice process.”

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Photo by Stephen Pryce Lea



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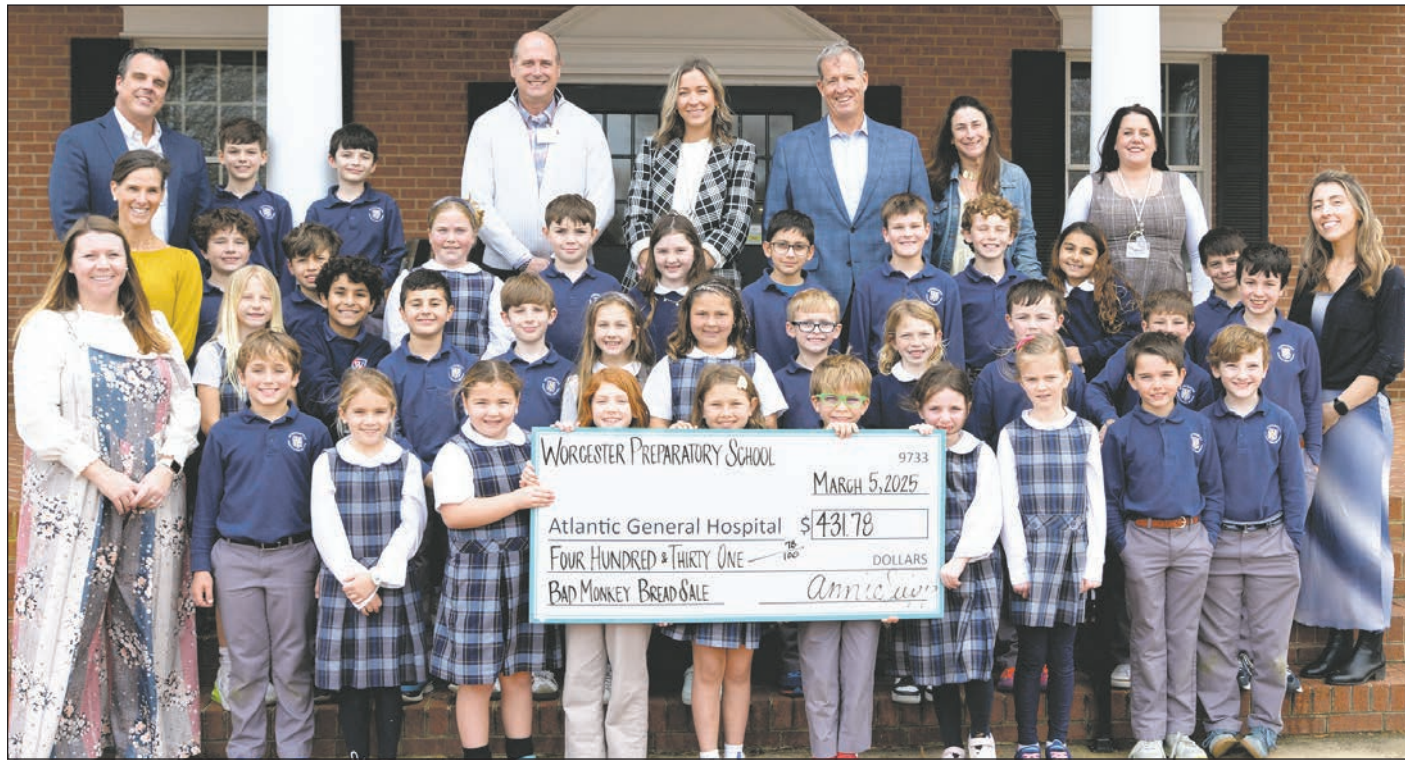
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Snapshots



BREAD SALE DONATION

On Wednesday, March 5, Worchester Preparatory School teachers Annie Seipp and Cynthia Phillips and their students presented members of the Atlantic General Hospital Foundation with a donation raised from the annual 3rd Grade Bread Sale. The annual sale is part of a hands-on learning lesson combining English, Science, Social Studies (civics and community), Mathematics, and Philanthropy. The project is modeled like a small business, with the young entrepreneurs baking bread, selling it to Lower School classmates in a “café”, and donating the proceeds to charity. The third grade class is pictured with their teachers as well as Head of Lower School Dr. Sara Timmons (second row, far left); and, back from left, Steve Green, AGH Foundation Board past chair; Michael Cyle, AGH Foundation Board treasurer; Hillary Mozeik, AGH Foundation assistant; Ryan Kirby, AGH Foundation Board vice chair; Laura Powell, AGH Foundation community relations officer; and Jessica Jersey, AGH Foundation donor relations officer.

SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE



SUBMITTED PHOTOS/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION EVENT

In a heartwarming event on the morning of Friday, February 14, the Worchester Preparatory School (WPS) Alumni Association celebrated a significant milestone – the final 100 days before graduation – for the class of 2025. Held in the library lecture room, the occasion was marked by a delicious breakfast, stirring speeches, and wonderful advice from Lower School students. Head of School Dr. John McDonald and Assistant Head of School/Athletic Director Mike Grosso, served as chefs for the event, preparing pancakes and French toast for the attendees. WPS Alumni Association President, Ashley Reed Hidell '00, welcomed the senior class and offered words of wisdom to the future graduates. The featured guest speaker at the breakfast was Madison Bescak Buas, a 2017 graduate of Worchester Prep. Maddie earned her degree from the University of Maryland in College Park in 2021 and is now the owner of Snow Daze, a shaved ice and ice cream business in West Ocean City. She shared insights about her journey – from her college experience to launching her own business – and reflected on how Worchester Prep played a role in shaping her future. A highlight of the morning was when seniors read a stack of advice given by Lower School students for seniors in their first year at college. From making sure to spend time with their parents to remembering to brush their teeth, seniors ended the morning with smiles and laughs from the heartfelt gesture. (Left) WPS seniors Angeline Todorov, Jayden Scopp and Mikayla Towns stand with Head of Upper School Mrs. Carol Evans. (Right) WPS seniors Avery Roselle, Nazli Unal, Upper School English teacher Liz Nally, seniors Emma Zajdel, Danielle Carr and Rori Holland enjoy their breakfast together.



(Left) WPS seniors Ben McGovern, Dillon Scopp, Ryan Mann, Drew McCormick and Nathan Montague are served pancakes by Assistant Head of School/Athletic Director Mr. Mike Grosso. (Right) WPS seniors Lucas Nicastro, Aleksey Klimins, Mike DePalma, Jack Lynch, Owen West and Ryan Lenox are served French toast by Head of School Dr. John McDonald.

Fundraiser ongoing to recognize WWII hero

Veterans Memorial group launches effort to honor veteran George Kerchner

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(March 27, 2025) Friends of the Worcester County Veterans Memorial at Ocean Pines and community residents are raising funds to recognize George Kerchner, a decorated World War II hero and longtime Ocean Pines citizen, as well as garner financial support for the park's education efforts.

Residents and memorial advocates are collecting donations for a paver to be placed at the Worcester County Veterans Memorial at Ocean Pines honoring Kerchner. The war hero moved to the area in 1970.

According to Ocean Pines resident and former board of directors member Marty Clarke, the veteran was a founder of the Ocean Pines Volunteer Fire Department and active within the Ocean City American Legion, Post 166.

Clarke said the idea for the paver came after he read a book about D-Day last summer and saw Kerchner's name mentioned in connection with Ocean City, Maryland.

"I had never heard of him," Clarke

said. "He was in our local American Legion and lived in Ocean Pines, but there is nothing in the memorial, which I think is one of the most beautiful amenities built in recent history in Worcester County. There is not a peep about George. That began the efforts to raise money for the paver."

A press release from the Ocean Pines Association said that Kerchner is "best known for his heroic actions on D-Day, June 6, 1944."

Kerchner enlisted in the United States Army in 1942, according to the association. He eventually joined the elite 2nd Ranger Battalion as a lieutenant.

The release adds that the veteran trained in England for six months, scaling seaside cliffs in preparation for a "daring" raid on Pointe du Hoc, a fortified German position "towering above the English Channel."

"The mission, led by Lt. Col. James E. Rudder, was considered nearly impossible," the press release reads. "... Yet on the morning of June 6, 1944, Kerchner and his fellow Rangers defied the odds."

Under relentless German machine gun fire on the rocky beach, Kerchner assumed command of Company D after all the senior officers were killed

or seriously injured. His team scaled the 100-foot cliffs only to discover that the 155mm guns they were meant to destroy had been relocated.

Kerchner and his men tracked down and disabled the guns, and then held their position against German counterattacks for nearly three days until reinforcements arrived.

Around 100 of the 225 Rangers to storm the Pointe du Hoc that day survived. Later, Kerchner was wounded near Saint-Lô. However, he survived the war and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions.

His story was immortalized in the 1962 Hollywood film, "The Longest Day," the association reports.

"Despite his bravery, Kerchner downplayed his role, telling a TV interviewer at 92, 'I didn't think I did anything that heroic,'" the news release reads.

The Friends of the Worcester County Veterans Memorial are asking community members to donate funds for a commemorative paver in Kerchner's name. Contributions may be sent to Worcester County Veterans Memorial Foundation, P.O. Box 1576, Berlin, MD 21811.

Clarke added that they are also seeking money for the memorial site's edu-

cation program.

"We are hoping to raise more than the cost of the paver, like for the education programs they are doing at the memorial," he said. "That is money that is above and beyond the paver."

Every year, the Veterans Memorial Foundation invites every Worcester County fifth-grade class on a field trip to the Ocean Pines memorial site. During the visit, the students participate in a tour and a three-part informational program featuring different aspects of the remembrance area.

"Its purpose is to create and foster an awareness and appreciation for veterans and the tremendous sacrifices they have made to protect and preserve the freedoms we enjoy in the United States of America," the memorial's website reads.

"We want to honor George and at the same time raise some money for the memorial," Clarke said. He added that they will be seeking donations for their efforts indefinitely.

A dedication ceremony for Kerchner's paver will be held at the Worcester County Veterans Memorial at Ocean Pines on Friday, June 6, at 11 a.m. The public is welcome to attend, and Clarke hopes that family members of the war hero will be present.



OPEN HOUSES

March 27 - April 3



DAY/TIME	ADDRESS	BR/BA	STYLE	PRICE	AGENT/AGENCY
Fri-Mon 11am-4pm	Heron Harbour, 120th St., Bayside	1BR/2BR/3BR/4BR+	Condos, Towns & SF	-	Nanette Pavier/Holiday Real Estate
Mon-Fri 9am-4pm	12430 Old Bridge Rd, West OC	2BR/2BA	Single Family	from \$284,750	Shelly Wilson/Salt Life Community
Saturday 10am-Noon	10312 Bristol Rd, Ocean City	3BR/1BA	Single Family	\$349,900	Power of 2 Team/Hileman Real Estate
Saturday 10am-1pm	11421 Manklin Creek Rd., Ocean Pines	3BR/2BA	Condo	\$296,500	Jeffrey Messick/BHHS PenFed Realty
Saturday 11am-2pm	9500 Coastal Hwy, Unit 17 J, Ocean City	1BR/1BA	\$449,900	Condo	Jeanna Terzano/Engel & Völkers Real Estate
Saturday 11am-2pm	9500 Coastal Hwy, Unit 1J, Ocean City	1BR/1BA	\$439,900	Condo	Kevin Heselbach/Engel & Völkers Real Estate
Saturday 11am-3pm	12430 Old Bridge Rd, West OC	2BR/2BA	Single Family	from \$284,750	Shelly Wilson/Salt Life Community
Saturday Noon - 2pm	4 Bayview Ct, Ocean Pines	3BR/2BA	Single Family	\$349,900	Power of 2 Team/Hileman Real Estate
Saturday 1-3 pm	909 Market Street, Pocomoke City, MD	3BR/2BA	Single Family	\$319,000	Power of 2 Team/Hileman Real Estate
Sunday 10am-Noon	149 Captains Quarters Rd #101, Ocean City	2BR/2BA	Condo	\$315,000	Team Bouse House/Re/Max Advantage Realty
Sunday 2-4pm	44 Meadow Lark Drive, Milford	4BR/2.5BA	Single Family	\$449,900	Anne-Marie Bouse/Re/Max Advantage Realty
Sunday 11am-1pm	5603 Atlantic Ave. #301, Ocean City	3BR/3.5BA	Condo	\$1,499,900	Nancy Reither/Coldwell Banker Realty

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Your Online Community: www.baysideoc.com

Calendar

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

Thurs., March 27

PETSMART ADOPTION EVENT

PetSmart, 11330 Samuel Bowen Blvd., Berlin, 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Adoption event hosted by Town Cats of Ocean City. 410-208-1538, admin@towncats.net

STORY TIME: WOMEN'S HISTORY

Worcester County Library - Ocean Pines Branch, 11107 Cathell Road, 10:30 a.m. Come celebrate women's history month with songs, dancing and crafts. For ages 2-5 years. 410-208-4014, www.worcesterlibrary.org

STORY TIME: 'OUR DRAGON'

Worcester County Library - Snow Hill Branch, 307 N. Washington St., 10:30 a.m. Stories, songs and rhymes. For ages 2-5 years. 410-632-3495, www.worcesterlibrary.org

LUNCHTIME LENTEN SERVICE AND SOUP LUNCH

St. Paul United Methodist Church, 405 Flower St., Berlin. Worship begins at noon followed by a light lunch. Pastor Jacob Jackson preaching on Sharing. bethany21811@gmail.com, 410-641-2186

DRAGONS IN FOLKLORE

Worcester County Library - Snow Hill Branch, 307 N. Washington St., 1 p.m. Learn about different tales and folklore of dragons. Best for teens and adults, but all are welcome. 410-632-3495, www.worcesterlibrary.org

FIRESIDE CHAT

Worcester County Library - Berlin Branch, 13 Harrison Ave., 3 p.m. A popular and entertaining book discussion featuring books you have read and want to share. Find your next great read. 410-641-0650, www.worcesterlibrary.org

QUIT SMOKING & VAPING CLASS

Gudelsky Family Medical Center, 10614 Racetrack Road, Ocean Pines, 5-6 p.m. Participants receive one-on-one support, group support, weekly prizes and quit resources. Register: 410-632-1100, Ext. 1103 or www.worcesterhealth.org.

ARTSCAPE: MIXING COLOR

Worcester County Library - Pocomoke Branch, 301 Market St., 5:30 p.m. A brief discussion followed by creative exploration of the month's topic. For artist of all levels. Reservations required: 410-957-0878. www.worcesterlibrary.org

DEMOCRATIC CLUB OF WORCESTER COUNTY MEETING

Worcester County Library - Ocean Pines Branch, 11107 Cathell Road, 6 p.m. Democratic Club of Worcester County meeting.

Fri., March 28

PETSMART ADOPTION EVENT

PetSmart, 11330 Samuel Bowen Blvd., Berlin, 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Adoption event hosted by Town Cats of Ocean City. 410-208-1538, admin@towncats.net

OC MAHJONG CLUB

Worcester County Library - Ocean City Branch, 10003 Coastal Highway, 10:30 a.m. Join in for a morning of playing tile Mahjong. Feel free to bring your own tile set. All adults are welcome. 410-524-1818, www.worcesterlibrary.org

ARTSY HOMESCHOOLERS

Worcester County Library - Snow Hill Branch, 307 N. Washington St., 11 a.m. Come every fourth Friday for an art project that includes everything from painting, writing, crafting and more. Best for ages 6-11 years, but all are welcome. 410-632-3495, www.worcesterlibrary.org

OYSTER FRITTER SANDWICHES

American Legion #123, 10111 Old Ocean City Blvd., Berlin, 3 p.m. Cost is \$10 for dine-in or carry-out.

FORMAL GOWN SALE!

The Crab Bag Shopping Center, 13005 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, 4-7 p.m. Formal, bridal and cocktail dresses sold at 75%-80% off. All dresses must go. Proceeds supporting Athletic Center Building Fund.

FAMILY FUN NIGHT BINGO

Ocean Pines Community Center, 235 Ocean Parkway, 6-8 p.m. Win children's prizes. Outside food and drinks are welcome. Cost is \$5. 410-641-7052, www.oceanpines.org

KIGHTS OF COLUMBUS BINGO

Fridays - Knights of Columbus, 9901 Coastal Highway, behind St. Luke's Church. Doors open at 5 p.m., bingo starts at 6:30 p.m. Light snacks available before bingo and at intermission. 410-524-7994

Sat., March 29

AUCE BREAKFAST BUFFET

Whaleysville United Methodist, 11716 Sheppards Crossing Road, 7-10 a.m. Pancakes, bacon, sausage, scrapple, scrambled eggs, chipped beef, hash brown potatoes, toast, fruit and beverages. Cost is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children.

CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL MERMAID DAY

Museum of Ocean City, 217 S. Baltimore Ave., 10-11 a.m. Mermaid Tasha reading her book and a puppet show about the history and legends of mermaids. For kids 10 years and younger. Cost is \$15 and includes a handcrafted mermaid tail

blanket. ocmuseum.org, 410-289-4991

PETSMART ADOPTION EVENT

PetSmart, 11330 Samuel Bowen Blvd., Berlin, 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Adoption event hosted by Town Cats of Ocean City. 410-208-1538, admin@towncats.net

FORMAL GOWN SALE!

The Crab Bag Shopping Center, 13005 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, 10 a.m. Formal, bridal and cocktail dresses sold at 75%-80% off. All dresses must go. Proceeds supporting Athletic Center Building Fund.

CRAFTS FOR A CAUSE

Worcester County Library - Ocean City Branch, 10003 Coastal Highway, 10:30 a.m. Come make a variety of crafts to donate to local charities. All ages. 410-524-1818, www.worcesterlibrary.org

MY TECH CLINIC

Worcester County Library - Ocean Pines Branch, 11107 Cathell Road, 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Apollo's Dream Foundation will be on hand to help with any questions related to your devices and technology services. 410-208-4014, www.worcesterlibrary.org

FARMERS & ARTISANS MARKET

Saturdays - White Horse Park, 239 Ocean Parkway, 9 a.m. to noon. Shop for everything from fresh local produce to unique handmade artisan goods. Open to the public.

Sun., March 30

SERVICE AND POTLUCK

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 3 Church St., Berlin. The church will be having one 9:30 a.m. service followed by a potluck. Come visit the historic church and spend some time during this season of lent with food and fellowship.

BERLIN FLEA MARKET

Sundays - Uptown Emporium Parking Lot, 13 S. Main St., Berlin, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Vendor opportunities available. Julie, 410-726-9012; Bill, 410-629-9656

SEWING FOR A CAUSE

Sundays - Buckingham Presbyterian Church, 20 S. Main St., Berlin, 10:30 a.m. to noon. Learn how to sew while making a difference. 410-641-0234

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES MEETING

Sundays - Berlin Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, 212 West St., Berlin, 10 a.m. www.jw.org

Mon., March 31

STORY TIME: RAINBOWS

Worcester County Library - Ocean City Branch, 10003 Coastal Highway, 10:30

a.m. Crafts, songs and stories. For ages 0-5 years. 410-524-1818, www.worcesterlibrary.org

CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

John H. "Jack" Burbage, Jr. Regional Cancer Care Center, 9707 Healthway Drive, Berlin, 3-4 p.m. For those newly diagnosed, in treatment or in remission. Face challenges, celebrate victories and build strength from the group's shared journeys. Friends and family welcome. 410-641-2626

TOWN CATS FUNDRAISER

Don's Seafood & Chophouse, 11310 Manklin Creek Road, Ocean Pines, 5-8 p.m. A portion of sales will be donated to Town Cats of Ocean City. 410-208-1538, admin@towncats.net

T.O.P.S. OF BERLIN - GROUP #169

Atlantic General Hospital, Conference Room 1, 9733 Healthway Drive, Berlin, 5-6:30 p.m. Take Off Pounds Sensibly is a weekly support and educational group promoting weight loss and living a healthy lifestyle. Rose Champion, 410-641-0157

FOOD CONNECTS US

Worcester County Library - Snow Hill Branch, 307 N. Washington St., 5:30 p.m. Learn about making informed food choices and developing healthful eating and physical activity habits. Learn how needs may change with age. Presented by Tidal Health. 410-632-3495

BRIDGE

Mondays - Ocean City 50plus Center, 104 41st Street, Ocean City, 12:30-3:30 p.m. Reserve a spot: Tish, 410-804-3971. www.Worcoa.org/oceancity

DELMARVA WOMEN'S A CAPELLA CHORUS

Mondays - Ocean Pines Community Center, 239 Ocean Parkway, 6:00-8:00 p.m. All ladies who love to sing invited. Mary, 410-629-9383 or Carol, 302-242-7062.

OVEREATER'S ANONYMOUS

Mondays - Worcester County Library - Ocean Pines Branch, 11107 Cathell Road, 7-8 p.m. No dues or fees. 410-459-9100

Tues., April 1

STORY TIME: SPRING

Worcester County Library - Pocomoke Branch, 301 Market St., 10:30 a.m. Stories, songs and crafts. For ages 0-5 years. 410-957-0878, www.worcesterlibrary.org

STORY TIME

Worcester County Library - Berlin Branch, 13 Harrison Ave., 10:30 a.m. Featuring seasonal themes designed to support early literacy skills with stories, songs and fingerplays. For ages 0-5 years. 410-641-0650, www.worcesterlibrary.org

Calendar

BABY TIME

Worcester County Library - Snow Hill Branch, 307 N. Washington St., 10:30 a.m. Songs, rhymes and stories. Stay after to socialize with other families. For ages 0-2 years. 410-632-3495, www.worcesterlibrary.org

MASTER GARDENERS PLANT CLINIC

Worcester County Library - Ocean Pines Branch, 11107 Cathell Road, 11 a.m. Master Gardener Ginny Rosenkranz talks about all things plants. Bring questions and feel free to show your plants as well. 410-208-4014, www.worcesterlibrary.org

COMIC BOOK CLUB

Worcester County Library - Ocean Pines Branch, 11107 Cathell Road, 4:30 p.m. Learn about comics and create your own. No experience required. For ages 6-11 years. 410-208-4014, www.worcesterlibrary.org

SAFE BOATING CLASS

Worcester County Library - Ocean Pines Branch, 11107 Cathell Road, 6-9 p.m. Classes are held three consecutive week nights, April 1 and 2. The third night will be used to take the test online at your residence. Cost is \$20. Register: 410-935-4807, cgauxoc@gmail.com.

BEACH HEROES-OC

Tuesdays - Volunteer beach clean-up group meets from 9-10 a.m., year-round. Trash bags, grippers and gloves provided. Check the Facebook page "Beach Heroes-OC" for weekly meeting locations. All are welcome.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES MEETING

Tuesdays - Berlin Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, 212 West St., Berlin, 7 p.m. www.jw.org

TAKE OFF POUNDS SENSIBLY

Tuesdays - Worcester County Health Department, 9730 Healthway Drive, Berlin, 3:30-4:30 p.m. TOPS is a weekly support and education group promoting weight loss and a healthy lifestyle. 410-289-4725

OC KNITTING CLUB

Tuesdays - Worcester County Library - Ocean City Branch, 10003 Coastal Highway, 10:30 a.m.

ARGENTINE TANGO PRACTICE

Tuesdays - Experienced dancers and others interested in watching or learning more are welcome, 7-9:30 p.m. No partner required. Info: TangobytheBeach.com.

ZUMBA TONING TUESDAYS

Tuesdays - Northside Park, 200 125th St., Ocean City, 5:30 p.m. Zumba with optional light weights. zumbajoyceoc@gmail.com

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT AND WELLNESS GROUP

Tuesdays - Holy Trinity Cathedral, 11021 Worcester Highway, 2-2:45 p.m.

Use the weight loss program/app/plan of your choice. Free and open to everyone. 410-641-4882, www.htcanglican.org/activities.

Wed., April 2

COMPUTER AND INTERNET BASICS

Worcester County Library - Pocomoke Branch, 301 Market St. Call to make an appointment for one-on-one assistance. 410-957-0878, www.worcesterlibrary.org

BIARIATRIC SUPPORT GROUP

Online Zoom call held the first and second Wednesday of each month. For non-surgical patients. Atlantic General Bariatric Center, 410-641-9568

PUZZLE SWAP

Worcester County Library - Berlin Branch, 13 Harrison Ave., 1-5 p.m. Bring gently used puzzles to swap for new-to-you puzzles. Don't have a puzzle but still want one? That's OK too. All puzzles must be in their original box. 410-641-0650, www.worcesterlibrary.org

DIABETES SUPPORT GROUP

Worcester County Library - Berlin Branch, 13 Harrison Ave., 5-6 p.m. The group provides discussion and education on the topic of diabetes. Patti Yocubik, 410-208-9761, pyocubik@atlanticgeneral.org

KIWANIS CLUB MEETING

Wednesdays - Ocean Pines Community Center, 239 Ocean Parkway, 8 a.m. Doors open at 7:30 a.m. Last Wednesday of the month meetings are offsite and information can be found on the website and Facebook. www.kiwanisofopoc.org.

ONGOING EVENTS

LOUIS PARSONS III MEMORIAL PHOTO CONTEST OPEN FOR SUBMISSIONS

OC Life-Saving Station Museum, 813 S. Atlantic Ave., April 1-Sept. 1. Entry fee is \$5 per entry. Category winners will be announced on Nov. 1. https://www.gogophotocontest.com/ocancitymuseumociety, 410-289-4991, emma@ocmuseum.org

BOOKMARK DESIGN CONTEST

Held throughout all of Worcester County library branches, during April. Design a custom bookmark. Pick up an entry form and template at your local library branch. Submit your design by April 30 for a chance to be featured. Winners will be announced on May 12. For ages 6-18 years. 410-632-5622

APRIL INSPIRATION CHALLENGE

Snow Hill library, 307 N. Washington St., during April. Art, photography or poetry challenge for all ages. Pieces will be displayed in the library for viewing. The theme is "Crystal Clear." Due by April 30. 410-632-3495



OCEAN RENAISSANCE
 APRIL 11TH-13TH, 2025
 AT THE CAROUSEL HOTEL IN OCEAN CITY, MARYLAND

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Breakfast WITH THE Easter Bunny SATURDAY, APRIL 5

Located at & sponsored by **DRY DOCK 28** 28TH ST. • 2709 N. PHILADELPHIA AVE. OCEAN CITY, MD 21842

SPONSORED BY **PETSMART**

BREAKFAST 8:30 - 10:00AM **2 SEATING TIMES WITH EASTER EGG HUNT** **BREAKFAST 10:30AM - NOON**
EASTER EGG HUNT 9:40 AM **EASTER EGG HUNT 11:40 AM**

includes Hot Breakfast
 Kids Crafts & Activities • Raffles
 Easter Egg Hunt with Special Easter Eggs
 Randy's Attic • Photos with the Easter Bunny

Tickets (Limited seating - advance tickets recommended)
 Age 16 and over: \$12 advance, \$20 at door
 15 and under eat FREE
 EVERY CHILD GETS A FREE STUFFED ANIMAL - SPONSORED BY PET SMART

Sponsorships \$250 Sponsorship
 Tickets that are part of a sponsorship package can be donated to local schools for families to attend the breakfast

For more information contact Wayne Littleton at 443 978-0680 or our Facebook Page
 To purchase tickets visit www.randycrew.com

RANDY'S CREW HELPING OTHERS... ONE PAW AT A TIME
 Our mission is to enrich the lives of the LOCAL COMMUNITY, by providing financial support to charitable organizations & civic events, that benefit the welfare of people & animals.
Randy's Crew, Inc. is an exempt organization as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Donations to Randy's Crew, Inc. are tax-deductible, as allowed by law.

Classified

MARKETPLACE

Call **410-723-6397**
by Monday 5 p.m.

Classifieds appear in **OC Today-Dispatch & Bayside Gazette** each week and online at octodaydispatch.com & baysideoc.com



HELP WANTED

MECHANICAL
Person with mechanical ability to work at a WOC boat yard.
Call 410-213-2296.

BOAT YARD
Person to paint boat bottoms at WOC boat yard.
Call 410-213-2296.

SPEEDWORLD
Small Engine Mechanic. Year-round.
Wage starts at \$15/hr & up based on experience. Benefits available.
443-754-1047

HELP WANTED

JOLLY ROGER FT POOL MAINTENANCE
Inspecting & assessing condition of pool equipment, performing minor & major repairs, documenting all pool maintenance & repair activities for record keeping. Outdoor work, lifting heavy objects. Mechanical, basic pool pump & motors. CPO a plus/must be able to pass CPO test. Includes weekends and long hours. Wages start at \$15/hr & up based on experience. Benefits available.
410-289-4902
Ask for Suzanne.

HELP WANTED

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
Administrative Assistant with excellent organizational, computer, people, creative skills, and the ability to learn a variety of systems. Position is Monday thru Friday with some weekends. Good knowledge of current and world history, geography, and culture is important. This is a long-term position and can be challenging.
Send resume to: classifieds@oceancitytoday.net or ADMIN, 11934 Ocean Gateway, Ste. 6, Ocean City, MD 21842

RENTALS

WEEKLY RENTAL
Seasonal Weekly Rental only, Single family home, Berlin. 4BR, 3BA.
\$725/night.
Call 484-319-7188 for details.

Seeking YR & Seasonal Rentals!
Call Howard Martin Realty 410-352-5555.

House To Share In Ocean Pines. Fully furnished, all utilities & WiFi included. No pets, no smoking. Large Room, \$800; Regular Room, \$700.
443-880-2486

RENTALS

SEASONAL WEEKLY RENTALS

Burgandy Inn
1210 Philadelphia Ave.
410-289-8581

ROOMMATES

HOUSESHARE IN BERLIN
Male preferred. \$600 per month. Nonsmoker, no pets.
443-513-0190

SEASONAL ROOMMATE
Male or Female. May 22nd-Sept. 21st. 2BR, 1.5BA. Full house privileges, W/D. 9th Street, Bayside, OC. \$5,100 per person, all util's incl.
410-294-1028

AUCTIONS

Ocean City Mini Storage
The contents of mini storage units will be sold online at Lockerfox.com. Units to be auctioned; B28-B42-S211-S59-S227-O165-O92-L5-P4. Units are being sold due to non-payment of rent. Common items in units are, household items, furniture, tools, fishing equipment, paintings, antique and vintage items.

Date: Friday, March 28th, 2025
Time: 10:00 am
This will be an online auction. Please go to Lockerfox.com and register.
Feel free to call 410-213-2029 for any questions regarding the online auction.

Classifieds 410-723-6397

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• BARTENDER
Call Pam 410-726-7061 or apply within 56th Street

NOW HIRING!!
Production Crew for our WOC kitchen facility Up to \$20/hr.
Apply online at: www.delmarvadd.com

HELP WANTED
Well established concrete company looking for YR FINISHERS & LABORERS. Experience preferred.
Call 410-832-8251.

RENTALS

SUMMER SEASONAL
Modern Condo 1BR/1BA Bayside, off 123rd St. 2 queen beds, furnished, full kitchen, washer/dryer, POOL, parking. Next to bars & restaurants. Near Northside Park (70 acres). PROFESSIONALS ONLY, max. 3 renters. NO pets or smokers. \$11K + sec. dep. & utilities. Email: jimreeves99md@gmail.com

YEARLY RENTALS WEST OCEAN CITY
PETS WELCOME
2 Bedroom / 1 Bath
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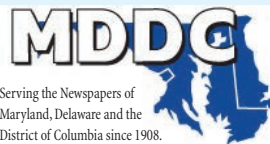
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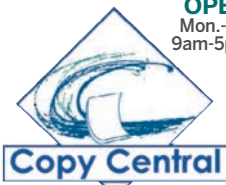
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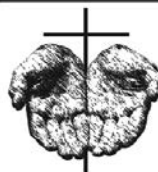
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