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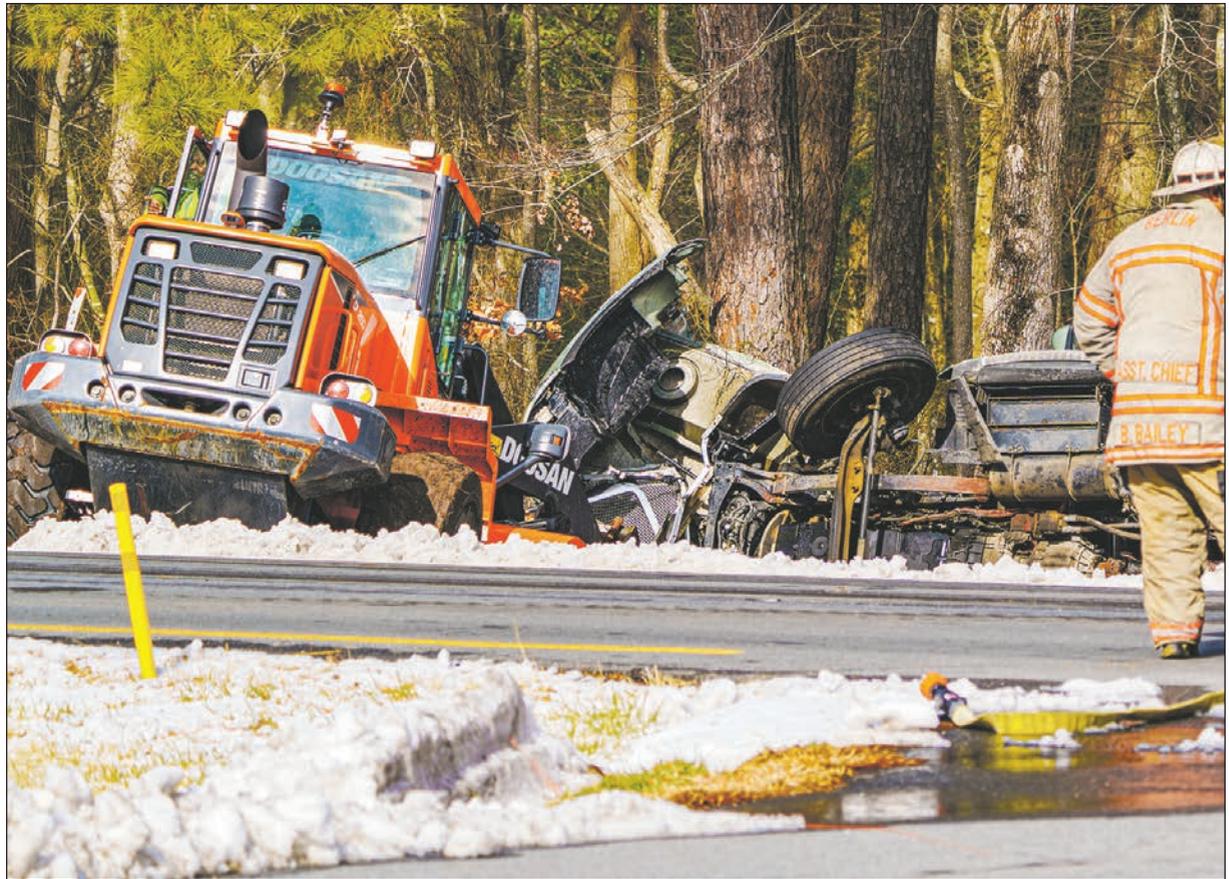
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Crash blocks road for hours

Bethany Hooper
Associate Editor

(Jan. 29, 2026) A portion of Route 50 westbound remained closed for about 12 hours Monday after a tractor-trailer carrying natural gas overturned off the highway.

On Jan. 26, just after 11 a.m., troopers from the Maryland State Police (MSP) Berlin barrack responded to a reported single-vehicle crash on Route 50 westbound, east of Route 113.

According to police, it appeared the rig was traveling west when, for unknown reasons, it went off the roadway and overturned.

No injuries were reported at the scene and investigators say they do not believe weather was a factor in the crash.

However, all westbound lanes remained closed for hours as crews cleaned up the wreckage and gas spill.

Personnel from the Maryland State Highway Administration assisted with the road closure, while personnel with the Maryland Department of the Environment assisted at the scene, Maryland State Police reported.

"The cause of the crash is under investigation," according to police.

A tractor-trailer pulling a tank of natural gas rests on its side after running off the road on Route 50 Monday morning. The highway was closed for 12 hours as investigators and recovery crews did their jobs.

PHOTO COURTESY OF OC YACHTSHOTS.COM

Skate park up for \$300K

Governor's budget shows major funds for Berlin, other projects in Worcester

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(Jan. 29, 2026) The Berlin skate park project could see an additional \$300,000 in funding if Maryland Gov. Wes Moore's proposed \$70.8 billion state budget passes as presented.

The fiscal package includes about a dozen allocations for Worcester County initiatives, including \$2 million to Ocean City's beach replenishment and hurricane protection plan, \$1.28 million for a roof replacement at Worcester Technical High School, \$700,000 for new Diakonia supportive housing, and, for Berlin's recreational community,

\$300,000 towards a skate plaza at Heron Park.

Sen. Mary Beth Carozza (R-38) said the funding comes by way of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' Community Parks and Playgrounds Program.

A skate park has been a dream of many Berlin residents for some time. Tony Weeg, founder of the nonprofit We Heart Berlin, who has spearheaded the project, said in October of last year that about \$975,000 is needed to construct a skateable facility.

To make the space even more desirable with shade structures and lighting, a final total of about \$1.3 million is a more accurate estimate.

The skate park is to be situated at Heron Park,

See SKATE Page 8

Fire station work to begin in Feb.

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(Jan. 29, 2026) Work on the Ocean Pines South Fire Station will begin next month, with construction to be handled by Delaware-based The Whayland Company, per board of directors' approval last week.

At the Ocean Pines Association's Board of Directors meeting on Saturday, Jan. 24, the governing group approved the construction contract with The Whayland Company. The vote was unanimous, with board member Stuart Lakernick absent.

See DIRECTORS Page 10

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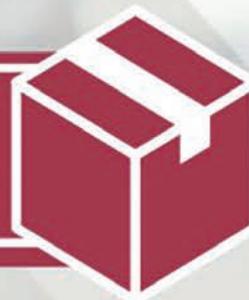


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OPA Board OKs election changes

Date, process adjustments approved in unanimous votes by elected officials

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(Jan. 29, 2026) Election timelines and procedures will look a little different in Ocean Pines this year, per a recent vote by the Ocean Pines Association Board of Directors to correct problems encountered during last summer's election.

Each summer, Ocean Pines holds an election for the community's seven-person board of directors, and those chosen serve three-year staggered terms. The volunteer committee overseeing these elections proposed changes late last year based on opportunities for improvement observed during the 2025 selection process.

Those remedies were brought forward in a motion by Jeff Heavner, board secretary, and approved unanimously, with director Stuart Lakerick absent, at an OPA Board of Directors meeting on Saturday, Jan. 24.

The first change moves up the candidate filing deadline when the number of eligible campaigners is fewer than two more than the vacancies available. For instance, if two board

seats are up for grabs but only two or three homeowners throw their hats into the ring, the filing period is extended to accommodate soliciting additional candidates. This would have meant that for this summer's election, if the desired criteria were not met, residents would have from June 1 to June 19 to declare their intent to run.

However, per the recent board vote green-lighting the change, the June 19 deadline has been moved up to June 9. This amendment tightens up the nearly three-week timeframe, which election personnel have said stalls the ballot-casting process.

"This excessive time period was found to adversely affect the proper time of significant voting process events that followed this excessive time limit," Heavner said.

Another change association members can expect this summer is a tighter deadline to get their votes in.

Under the new standards, residents will have until noon on the Wednesday before the annual meeting, held on a Saturday in August each year, to cast their ballots. The cutoff has historically been on the same day, but at the end of the association's business hours, rather than noon.

Heavner said that this amendment will take pressure off the elections committee, which has to organize

overnight delivery to the voting vendor. This is particularly challenging if the company is out of state. Last year, the association contracted with MK Elections Services, based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to handle the process.

Making sure the materials arrive at the vendor's doorstep is particularly challenging in the case of hard ballots. As it stands, association members can vote by dropping materials in a secure box at the neighborhood's administration building at White Horse Park, or making their picks electronically.

Another change requires that the elections committee gather for its post-voting cycle meeting no later than five days after the annual meeting. The previous standard had been too vague, requiring the assembly to occur "as soon as possible" after the annual meeting.

Now, the committee must meet within a week to discuss its findings upon the conclusion of the election.

Ocean Pines residents should also expect more detailed instructions on how to prepare their ballots if they plan to use the police station drop box. Heavner said that the narrative was limited last year, leading to some confusion among association members.

These changes were approved unanimously by the board last week.

\$40 assessment spike approved for Ocean Pines

\$6 million in new capital expenditures in budget

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(Jan. 29, 2025) Following several rounds of review and opportunities for membership comments, the Ocean Pines Association Board of Directors approved the community's fiscal year 2026-2027 budget last week, which includes a \$40 assessment increase and fee hikes for a few community amenities.

During the board's monthly meeting on Saturday, Jan. 24, the directors unanimously passed the budget for the next fiscal year, with board member Stuart Lakerick absent.

The financial plan has allocated over \$6 million for capital spending, including significant initiatives such as the new fire station on the south side of Ocean Pines and the third phase of the major golf course irrigation overhaul.

Additionally, during the next fiscal year, which for OPA begins on May 1, homeowners should expect a \$40 increase in their assessment fees.

Under the new rate, non-water-
See BUDGET Page 6

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Budget approved with assessment increase

Continued from Page 4

front lot residents will pay \$915; non-waterfront/estate will pay \$1,373; waterfront lot owners will pay \$1,580; waterfront /estate will pay \$2,370; waterfront/non-bulkhead will pay \$1,005; and waterfront/non-bulkhead/estate will pay \$1,505.

Of the bumped-up assessment rate, \$15 will offset costs associated with Worcester County's increase in water and wastewater bills. At the same time, \$25 will be allocated to the creation of the Ocean Pines Volunteer Fire Department's brand-new south station firehouse.

Community officials said at a Jan. 15 budget presentation that public safety accounts for 42% of the annual assessment. Expenses that contribute to the share include personnel costs, recruitment, retention, infrastruc-

ture, and apparatus.

The spending plan also includes the adoption of increased amenity fees. Swim memberships will go up by 5%, while racquet sports dues will rise by \$5 to \$10, depending on the category.

Golfers will see a \$100 increase for individual memberships and a \$150 increase for family memberships. Boat slip rates will be bumped up 3% for residential slots and 5% for commercial slips.

Before the final budget vote, public comments and board discussions were held, with a few individuals raising concerns.

Resident Amy Peck argued that the 3% increase in marina slips is too modest, which was later reiterated by board member Steve Jacobs. Of the 3% raise, about 1.3% accounts for the

county's increase in water and wastewater usage.

"I remain convinced that we are not utilizing, although somewhat limited, revenue possibilities for the marina," Jacobs said. "We have a wait list for people who want to rent slips. We also have a pricing schedule that is below virtually every other marina in the area. And between the two, basic economics says that you have greater demand than you do supply, and that could lead to some sort of price increase."

Jacobs added that, with the 1.3% increase allotted for the county water hike, only 1.7% remains to offset inflationary costs.

"If you talk about annual inflation rates, the lowest projection you're seeing for this country is 3%," he noted. "It's more likely to be a little higher, but in some places in the 3% to 4% range. We're not even covering inflation."

Jacobs said he had initially intended to propose an amendment to the budget regarding marina rates, but opted against it after hearing from staff why the low figure was set for boat slips.

According to Jacobs, in last year's budget, marina fees rose by just under 10%. This steep increase occurred because, in previous spending plans, increases barely kept pace with inflation. As such, this time around, the 3% will serve as a marker and an incremental step toward covering additional costs.

"The budget is worth passing," Jacobs said. "But I do think, going forward, this is something we have to keep an eye on."

Board treasurer Monica Rakowski said she agreed there is room for a larger boost in the future, but assured observers that they are maintaining a "healthy, healthy" budget.

Board Director Elaine Brady pushed back slightly on Jacobs' points, arguing that the association should not always raise prices, even if they can.

"I think sometimes we get wrapped up in percentages, which

doesn't always show the true story," she said. "There are certain things in each category that our general manager looks at very closely with his team, and they do what is reasonable. Last year, there was a lot of bump-up in certain areas, so this year was going to be kind of modest all the way around. When we get wrapped up in these percentages, we lose what's going on in people's pockets."

Ultimately, the board approved Ocean Pine's fiscal year 2026-2027 spending plan and praised OPA General Manager John Viola and his team for creating a balanced budget.

Board secretary Jeff Heavner, for example, complimented the investment in public safety.

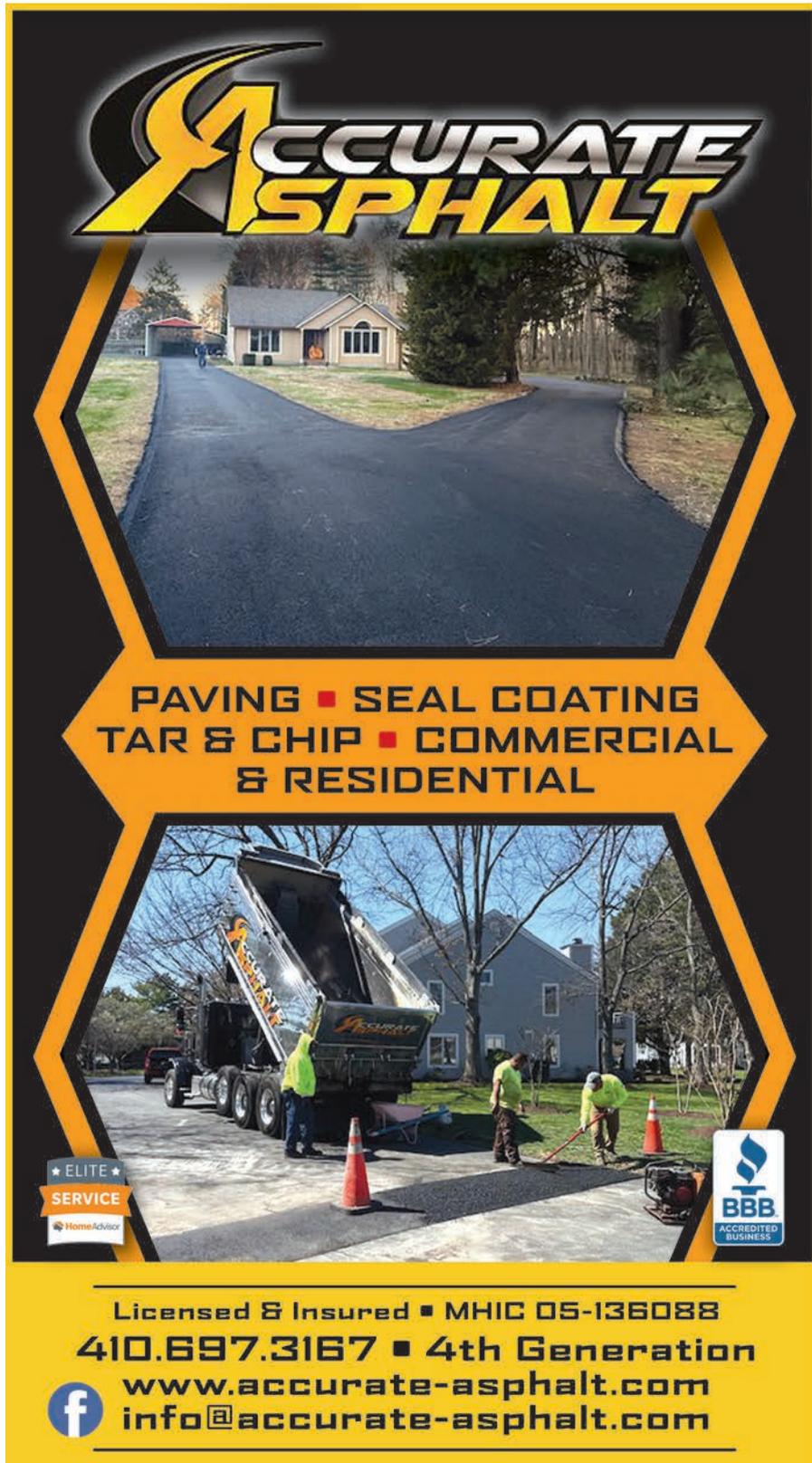
"Safety is key to our lifestyle and prosperity here in Ocean Pines," he said. "Take a look around the state. Take a look around the US. We are so fortunate to live in a safe environment."

Jacobs highlighted the efficiency of association staff in creating and presenting the financial plan. The process included a review by the budget and finance committee on Dec. 18, followed by a budget board review on Dec. 19, and a town hall open to public input on Jan. 15.

"I do know that both the budget and finance committee and the board review used to run two, three, and at some points four days," Jacobs said. "We got both of those; each one took less than a day. That's a compliment to the staff. Having a document that is easy to review."

Board President John Latham added that despite a few comments that the community's governing group should hold off until February to pass the budget, he maintained that with the document completed, reviewed, and presented, it makes the most sense to get it approved and on the books now.

"We started it earlier this year," he said. "The team is very efficient in doing it. The budget and finance team, the board meeting, and the town hall. It's done, it's ready, and we're ready to approve it."



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TARA FISCHER/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

Bob and Kathy Hess received their Good Neighbor Award from Director Elaine Brady.

Pines couple recognized for service as good neighbors

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(Jan. 29, 2026) Several Ocean Pines residents were recognized for their commitment to community service and neighborhood beautification during the Ocean Pines Association Board of Directors meeting last week.

On Saturday, Jan. 24, the Good Neighbor Awards, a program that honors volunteers, recognized Mr. and Mrs. Neal Hoffman, Bob and Kathy Hess, and Pat Kroger for their contributions to the homeowner's association.

Ocean Pines Garden Club member Ann Shockley spoke about the Hoffmans' work during the meeting's public comments segment. Shockley said that the garden group nominated the couple for their donation of plants from their personal yard, which were relocated to Pintail Park in October. The donation included shrubs, roses, and other plantings valued at more than \$700.

"If you had to go to a nursery, that's what it would cost at least," she said. "It was a great thing, and we were really appreciative that they thought to notify us and ask us if this was something that we would like to be a part of."

Shockley added that when the Hoffmans needed to remove plants from their property, they reached out to the club to see if the flora could be repurposed within Ocean Pines. Public Works assisted with the installation.

Bob and Kathy Hess were recognized for their cleanup efforts throughout Ocean Pines. Board member Elaine Brady said that during their daily five-mile walks, the couple often carries trash bags, collecting litter along both sides of

Ocean Parkway near the neighborhood's South Gate.

They also aid in weekly beach cleanup and volunteer with several organizations, including Meals on Wheels, according to an OPA press release.

Brady presented the award to the couple.

"[The nomination] says you folks are really great with your neighbors and carry trash bags on five-mile walks, picking up trash along both sides of South Ocean Parkway," Brady said. "We appreciate that very much."

Furthermore, Pat Kroger was honored for her dedication to maintaining her cul-de-sac. Brady said these efforts include weeding, sweeping, gathering leaves, pinecones, and needles, removing mud that accumulates near curbs after rainfall, helping part-time residents with yard maintenance, and mowing common areas and a vacant lot within the cul-de-sac.

Brady praised the OPA citizens who received the nominations, saying, "It's always nice seeing these neighbors helping neighbors."

The Good Neighbor Program was launched in 2025 to highlight residents who demonstrate generosity and a commitment to community service. While the now disbanded OPA Communications Committee developed the project, the initiative continues to recognize one honoree or a group of citizens often, with awards given at the association's regular board meetings.

Residents are encouraged to nominate their neighbors whom they witness giving back for the Good Neighbor Award. Email nominations can be sent to info@oceanpines.org with a short description of how the homeowner improves Ocean Pines.

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Skate park in line for major grant from state

Continued from Page 1

alongside a new complex by developer Palmer Gillis, who has purchased a 9.35-acre site, known as parcel 57, from the Town of Berlin.

Gillis said at a recent planning commission meeting that he intends to revamp the space with healthcare offices, a daycare facility, and a retail operation. Gillis' plans have yet to receive preliminary or final approval but are making their way through the design phase. A new public works building will also be located at Heron Park.

Skate park project leaders have pushed for the creation of the recreational structure for some time.

Spohn Ranch, a skate park design and building company based in Los Angeles, California, was hired in 2022 to develop concept plans. Spohn Ranch will also complete the actual construction of the amenity when the time comes.

The initiative is expected to see a 14,000- to 16,000-square-foot skate park adjacent to the space planned for Berlin's new public works facility. The site would include a bowl, quarter pipes, and a pump track, which helps skaters learn to transition without losing momentum.

Spohn Ranch's concept also incorporates amphitheater steps, a hiped

bank, a grind ledge, an A-frame bank, a slappy curb, and a landscape area.

In April, representatives from We Heart Berlin and Berlin Public Works Director Jimmy Charles conducted a walkthrough of the future park's site and noted the structure's dimensions.

Currently, project leaders have about \$46,600 of the nearly \$1 million required in the bank. However, some significant funds are possible.

The skate park is hoping to receive \$487,500 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant. Last year, initiative organizers said their application for the LWCF was submitted to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, where it received a favorable evaluation and was elevated to the federal level for final review.

Weeg said this week that he is still waiting to see if their submission was successful. If the project obtains \$487,500 from the LWCF and \$300,000 from the governor's budget, the skate park would have nearly all the funding needed.

Weeg said if this is the case, Spohn Ranch would get the Berlin skate park on the books. The founder of We Heart Berlin added that he hopes local funds can make up the difference.

"With LWCF at \$487,000, and with [the \$300,000], that's \$787,000,



SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

The proposed Berlin Skate Park has been a dream for many for at least four years. Above is a potential rendering of the facility to be located at Heron Park.

and I'm pretty sure we could find local funds to get us over the hump," he said. "But either way, I've pretty much heard from Spohn Ranch that if we got to that level of funding, they would go ahead and start putting us on the calendar, getting us on the schedule, and start working, even knowing that it'll take about a year anyway to happen, and trusting we could raise that sort of funding in a matter of a year."

More information about the skate park's grant status is forthcoming. Town of Berlin Special Projects Administrator Kate Daub said the town has not received or been awarded any funding and that applications are still under review.

"Additional work remains to ensure all available funding options are explored to keep the skate park project moving forward," she said.

Still, Weeg said that with the \$300,000 included in Moore's budget, he can "smell the concrete."

"We're all looking forward to the skate park and...to give Berlin kids something they can latch onto and say, 'this is ours; this is something we're proud of and we want to show our friends and have our friends come and enjoy it with us,'" he added.

"This is a big step, and the fact that the governor has put this in the

budget is just...you know, when you become a line item, and you can see your name on the thing, you become real."

Carozza said she's on the committee that oversees the DNR and plays a role in supporting "strong, well-researched projects" from her district that have demonstrated community support. However, she maintained that the Town of Berlin and the project's leaders were the ones who made the case for the skate park's importance and worked together to secure inclusion in Moore's budget.

"You're only going to be successful in securing state funding if you can show strong community investment and support, and that's what you have in this project," she said. "When you have a strong application, you're in the best position to receive state funding in a tight budget year."

Carozza added that she understands the value a skate park can bring to the Town of Berlin.

"I grew up in Ocean City, and the Skate Bowl was a key community spot for all of us growing up," she said. "Now, to see that the community in Berlin has worked so hard for this skate park is very encouraging, and it will promote community and neighbors coming together to enjoy."

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SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

A rendering of the proposed new South Fire Station in Ocean Pines is pictured.

Directors approve contractor for fire station

Continued from Page 1

Whayland will break ground on the project in February. Officials said that the effort will take around 60 weeks to complete.

OPA Board of Directors President John Latham credited the work of Ocean Pines General Manager John Viola and association staff in facilitating the agreement. He also gave a special shoutout to Ocean Pines Volunteer Fire Department members, including President Joe Enste and Fire Chief Joey Widgeon.

“This has been a lot of work for the team and we’re very happy to get to put ink on this contract,” Latham said.

A press release issued by OPA indicated that a formal groundbreaking ceremony will be held in February, with an exact date still to be determined.

The South Fire Station has been a project in the works for some time. In July of 2024, the Ocean Pines board and the fire department signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) outlining provisions for the construction of a new firehouse on the South Station property at 911 Ocean Parkway to replace the outdated structure.

Since then, OPA staff and the OPVFD team have been working on the project. Details have continued to

be ironed out, and now, those pieces have paved the way for the initiative to finally get underway.

Per the MOU, project costs will be split between OPA and the OPVFD. Last summer, a referendum asking Ocean Pines homeowners to support the community’s contribution of up to \$3.4 million toward the brand-new South Station passed. Altogether, 1,559 ‘yes’ votes were cast, overriding the 389 ‘no’ ballots.

A public hearing was held by the OPVFD in June, during which the fire company spoke about the status of the structure. The firehouse was built in 1981. In 1985, a 4,200-square-foot addition was built to accommodate the new EMS side of the department, and in 1987, a 500-square-foot addition was constructed for administrative offices.

Since those adjustments, only minor improvements have been made to the building, such as painting and replacing the kitchen cabinets.

Department officials have said that the current conditions of the South Station have posed challenges for the fire team’s staff and volunteers. If left unaddressed, these issues would hinder the community’s fire protection services.

For instance, the engine bay’s existing setup includes a ladder truck, a rescue truck, a fire engine, three medic units, and all of the department’s PPE (personal protective equipment) for both volunteer and career members.

Enste explained the consequences of such a system at last summer’s public hearing.

“That is challenging for a number of reasons,” he said at the time. “Number one, when we have an emergency, we have volunteers and career staff coming from different directions to get into that engine bay. At the same time, people are trying to drive these vehicles in and out in an emergency response mode. It provides challenges you need to be aware of, like, is anyone going to run across because they forgot their keys, and things like that.”

Furthermore, the engine bay’s doors are 12 feet wide and no longer efficiently accommodate modern, larger fire trucks.

The existing building also struggles with drainage issues, leaks, mold concerns, and the lack of a proper decontamination area. Additionally, the bunk rooms do not offer gender separation and are too small for the four overnight employees needed on-site today.

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Obituary

THERESA RAE DIEFENDORF
Berlin

Theresa Rae Diefendorf, age 62, passed away at her home on January 9, 2026. Born in New York City on March 10, 1963, she was the daughter of the late Stuart and Sheila (White) Canham.



Theresa Diefendorf

A 1981 graduate of Elizabeth High School in Colorado, Theresa honorably served her country in the United States Army as an Administrative Specialist for six years. A proud veteran, she was a member of the American Legion Post #123 in Berlin.

Following her military service, Theresa built a successful career in finance and project management, including a tenure with Deutsche Bank in Baltimore. After relocating to Maryland in 2016, she transitioned into real estate, serving clients across Maryland and Delaware with several local firms, most recently Keller Williams. Known for her tireless work ethic and love of people, she also enjoyed connecting with her

community through various part-time roles as a waitress, bartender, and Uber driver.

Theresa found great joy in life's simple pleasures: tending to her yard, solving puzzles, reading, and dining out. She was particularly known for her talent in the kitchen, often baking treats to share with those around her. Above all, Theresa was a selfless friend and family member who could always be counted on to lend a helping hand, offer a warm meal, or provide a listening ear.

She is survived by her brothers, Pat (Kris) and Sean of Colorado, and Tim (Christine) of Maryland; her uncle, Art of Illinois; and a loving circle of nieces and nephews, including Natalie, Emma, Ryan (Danielle), and Riley, as well as her great-niece Teagan and great-nephew Cooper.

In accordance with her wishes, cremation has taken place, and no formal services are currently scheduled. The family is planning a Celebration of Life for June. Memories and condolences may be shared with the family through the Burbage Funeral Home website. Arrangements are being handled by The Burbage Funeral Home in Berlin.



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Worcester County schools announce teachers of year

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(Jan. 29, 2026) Worcester County Public Schools announced its 14 Teachers of the Year this month. The nominees from each school in the county will now vie for the county-wide title.

The 2026 Teachers of the Year in Worcester are: Malcolm E. Bratcher Jr., Pocomoke Middle School; Maya N. Bratten, Pocomoke Elementary School; Taylor M. Case, Showell Elementary School; Kiersten G. Conway, Snow Hill High School.

Erika L. Doyle, Buckingham Elementary School; Emily R. Handley, Berlin Intermediate School; Patricia A. Hands, Worcester Technical High School; Colleen A. Hood, Snow Hill Elementary School; Zachary S. Johnson, Cedar Chapel Special School; Emily M. Knopp, Stephen Decatur Middle School; Hannah C. Morris, Snow Hill Middle School.

Christopher T. Muni, Pocomoke High School; Heather L. Robins, Ocean City Elementary School; and

Megan T. Seyler, Stephen Decatur High School.

The honorees were announced on Tuesday at a Worcester County Board of Education meeting. WCPS Superintendent Annette Wallace said the Worcester County Teacher of the Year will be named at the school system's annual celebration on March 3.

Phillip Cropper was named Worcester County's 2025 Teacher of the Year. Cropper is Worcester Technical High School's lead culinary chef. Following his county win, the Worcester Tech educator was one of seven instructors statewide to be nominated for Maryland Teacher of the Year.

"They are all excellent candidates," Wallace said at the board of education meeting this week. "It's going to be a really exciting year and a great competition and celebration of our outstanding educators. We are incredibly proud of each of these educators and grateful for their passion, professionalism, and dedication they bring to our students every day."

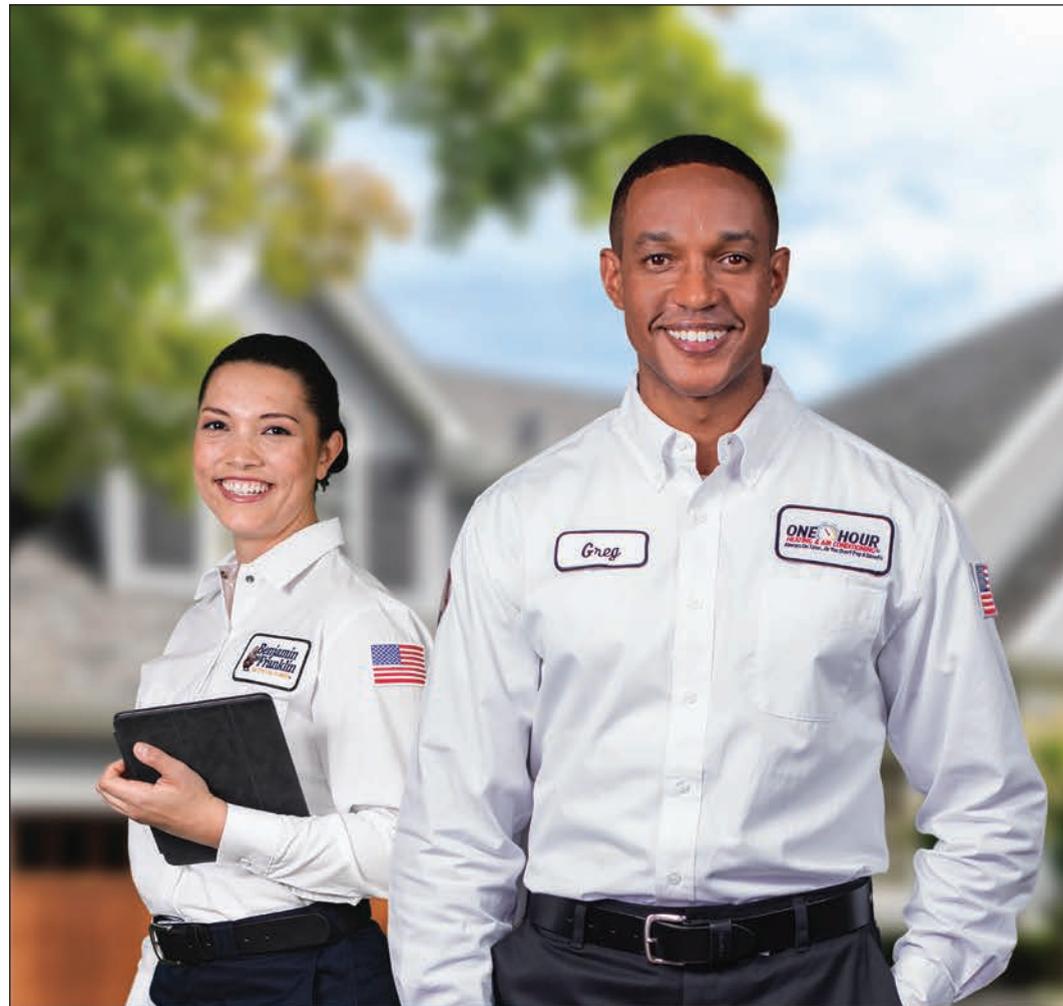
'It's going to be a really exciting year and a great competition and celebration of our outstanding educators.'
Annette Wallace

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Snapshots



PHOTO COURTESY SUSAN TAYLOR-WALLS

MINI MALLARDS FUN

During halftime of Worcester Prep's girls varsity basketball game last Friday night, the varsity cheerleaders led a group of lower school students in a cheer demonstration for the crowd. The Mini Mallards are pictured during the performance with the varsity mentors.



SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

ART RECOGNITION

Emma Yoon, a fourth grade student in Wendy Macrides' class at Ocean City Elementary School, was recently celebrated as the winner of the Worcester County Public Schools' annual Holiday Card Contest for grades 3-5. Pictured with Yoon are art teacher Bob Hulburd, Superintendent of Schools Annette Wallace, Board of Education President Todd Ferrante and OCES Principal Julie Smith.



SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

BELL RINGING FOR A CAUSE

Wicomico Retired School Personnel Association (WRSPA) rang the bell for the Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign at Boscov. Pictured are volunteers Bob Conner Jr. and WRSPA member Joyce Roberts. WRSPA was awarded third place in the 2024 Top Civic Award for The Lower Eastern Shore Salvation Army. Last year the group rang the bell a total of 17 hours.



SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

CHIEF DEPUTY ASSUMES POST

Susan R. Braniecki, Clerk of the Circuit Court, recently appointed Christa M. Griffin as Chief Deputy Clerk for the Circuit Court for Worcester County. Griffin was sworn in on Monday, January 12, in Snow Hill. Griffin brings a wealth of knowledge to the position with over 38 years of service to various Clerk's Offices and the Maryland Judiciary.



SUBMITTED PHOTO/BAYSIDE GAZETTE

MALOOF GUEST SPEAKER

Dr. Joan Maloof, Founder of Old-Growth Forest Network, recently spoke to the Worcester County Garden Club about protecting old-growth forests so future generations can enjoy the biodiversity and beauty of nature they provide. As well as contributing to her organization, the club will donate a National Garden Club children's book in her honor to Snow Hill Christian Nursery School.



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Opinion

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Redistricting wrong here and elsewhere

Oh, boo-hoo to Maryland's Republican lawmakers who are yowling about the unfairness of the Democrats' effort to redistrict Rep. Andy Harris (R-1st) out of a job in the next election.

Their cries of foul and unfairness echo those bellowed by Democrats in Texas last summer and fall when Republican members of that state's legislature started this mess by instituting rare mid-decade redistricting to benefit their candidates in the mid-term elections.

Meanwhile, Maryland Democrats' self-righteous assertions that their actions are justified by Republican transgressions elsewhere should be stockpiled until spring, when they can be applied to the fields, assuming the ground can absorb the excess irony.

Unfortunately, the victims here are not the political parties, but voters of all stripes and affiliations whose voices in the election process are muffled by party leaders who pick the voters for their candidates instead of the other way around.

Maryland, which is something of a Jedi master of Democratic gerrymandering, having gotten away with it for generations, is just one of several states pursuing an advantage going into the mid-term elections.

In addition to Texas (GOP), this unprecedented wave of redrawing districts includes California (Dems), Missouri (GOP) North Carolina (GOP) and Ohio (GOP), while Florida and Virginia are thinking about it.

Regardless of party or political philosophy, the purpose of this exercise is to shortchange opposition voters by employing undemocratic principles. It's wrong, and no amount of finger-pointing at similar moves in other states by the opposing party will change that.

It makes no difference if it's Andy Harris or Sheriff Andy Taylor from Mayberry running for Congress from this district, redrawing its boundaries isn't right and the Maryland's Democratic legislators should put an end to it.

Annual fire parade moves to Berlin

Association's leaders officially vote to take parade west in June

By Bethany Hooper Associate Editor

(Jan. 29, 2026) The Maryland State Firefighters Association (MSFA) will now begin its preparations after an executive committee voted last week to formally move its convention parade to Berlin.

After a decades-long run in Ocean City, committee members on Jan. 19 agreed change was needed to bolster participation in the yearly event. To that end, this year's parade will be held Saturday, June 20 in Berlin.

"The outcome is favorable," MSFA President Robbie Blackiston said in an interview on Jan. 21. "It was voted on to move the parade to Berlin."

For the last several decades, the MSFA parade has taken place on the Wednesday of the June convention, with the procession route running along Baltimore Avenue in Ocean City. In September, however, Blackiston approached Ocean City's mayor and city manager with a request to move the event to the week-

end.

The dialogue continued throughout the fall, with city leaders supporting a Sunday parade, but without the association's use of the Inlet parking lot. Last month, the MSFA informed Ocean City of their plans to explore Berlin as a new parade location.

"We polled our membership back in August or September and got feedback to move a parade to the weekend, so that was the biggest thing we were going after ...," Blackiston said. "We understand the logistics in Ocean City, but we as an association chose to go another route, and Berlin allowed us the opportunity."

In a Facebook post last week, Ocean City Council President Matt James shared the council's desire to keep the MSFA parade in Ocean City this summer, stating the governing body would be willing to meet the association's request for either a Saturday or Sunday parade and its use of the inlet parking lot as a staging area. In the end, however, the MSFA decided to continue its discussions with the Town of Berlin.

"They did come back and counteroffer," Blackiston said this week, "but at that

time we had already been in motion with Berlin."

While the Berlin Town Council formally approved MSFA's special event request last week, Blackiston said the decision was not finalized until Monday, when the association's executive committee met for a vote. While the parade will now be held in Berlin, the MSFA annual summer convention will continue to be held in Ocean City.

When reached for comment this week, Mayor Rick Meehan said he understood the association's desire to boost participation. But he maintained that the city has been willing to work with the MSFA from the very beginning and will continue to do so in the years ahead.

"We hope they will return," he said. "But the Town of Ocean City will be here to support the convention and the MSFA in any way we can."

With approval from the Berlin Town Council, Blackiston said the association's parade committee would be meeting this week to begin planning for the June event. This will be the first statewide event held in the municipality.

"It's a lot of moving parts," he said.

History book for Ocean Pines sought

By Tara Fischer Staff Writer

(Jan. 29, 2026) A task force in Ocean Pines is working to create a coffee table book that looks back at the homeowners' association's history. The first stage of the project, collecting information and documents, has been completed.

At the Ocean Pines Association's Board of Directors meeting on Saturday, Jan. 24, board member Elaine Brady updated other members and residents on the group whose aim is to preserve the community's past.

The coffee table book proposes to look back at photos

and documents that show the evolution of Ocean Pines. Brady said the group has collected memorabilia, once-forgotten association information, and photos, and has cataloged them all. The documents are being stored in a room in the OPA Administration Building at White Horse Park.

Brady noted that the effort was inspired by Bunk Mann's collection of coffee table books that highlight Ocean City's history. Mann's work began with "Vanishing Ocean City" in 2014. The volume includes over 500 photos that take viewers from the resort's 1875 incep-

tion through modern day.

"Ghosts in the Surf" came out in 2019, featuring memories from 1945 to the spring of 2019. The final installment, the "Ocean City Chronicles," was released a few years later, featuring articles by Mann, photos of long-vanished restaurants and hotels, Boardwalk attractions, and more.

Now, Ocean Pines looks to create a similar product. The goal of the book is to take its purchasers through OPA's transformation from its early days on dirt roads to now, when it's become the largest year-round residen-

See COFFEE Page 17

BAYSIDE GAZETTE

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Viola presents Jan. general manager update

Maintenance work, ongoing larger projects discussed at January board meeting

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(Jan. 29, 2026) The Ocean Pines Association's Board of Directors received updates last week on improvement projects at the neighborhood's food and beverage facilities and a maintenance initiative at the Community Center.

At the OPA Board of Directors meeting on Saturday, Jan. 24, Ocean Pines General Manager John Viola briefed the board and residents on recent maintenance work and ongoing large-scale projects.

Viola's report noted that DCH Enterprise redid the kitchen floor at the Community Center for a total cost of \$3,850. The resurfacing project provides a refreshed and more functional workspace for staff and facility users.

Furthermore, according to the general manager, all food and beverage-related projects are currently in "green" status, indicating that their progress remains on schedule. OPA is working with food and beverage vendor Touch of Italy on the endeavors.

Plans for an outdoor pavilion at the Clubhouse Bar and Grille are on track, for instance, with following steps including soliciting construction bids and obtaining board approval.

The pavilion project will feature an outdoor shade structure designed to provide golfers with quicker access to food and beverages during their rounds. Officials have said the addition is expected to improve service efficiency and help maintain the pace of play. Some interior improvements to the bar area are also planned as part of the initiative.

In October, the board approved moving forward with engineering designs for the Clubhouse pavilion from

Vista Design for \$51,000. Touch of Italy owner Bob Ciprietti previously noted that the proposed menu for the outdoor space could include hot dogs, burgers, and wraps.

The Yacht Club kitchen project is also proceeding as scheduled. Like the Clubhouse pavilion, next steps include bidding and board approval.

Planned improvements at the Yacht Club include installing an outdoor kitchen structure, a pizza oven, and a grill to enhance food service at the pool and deck areas. In October, the board unanimously approved \$40,800 for engineering drawings from Vista Design.

Additionally, plans for the Ocean Pines Beach Club in Ocean City remain on track.

The Beach Club renovation will include a complete remodel of the first

floor, featuring a new kitchen and bar, as well as a new second-floor restaurant with an ocean-view deck. The lower level will also receive an upgraded deck with a tiki-bar-style structure, and an elevator will be added to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

In October, the board approved \$75,000 for basement plans and engineering designs from Atlantic Planning and Development.

Under the agreement between Ocean Pines and Touch of Italy, OPA is responsible for structural improvements.

At the same time, Touch of Italy will invest in interior components, such as kitchens, bars, and equipment. Next steps include soliciting construction bids and seeking board approval.

Coffee table book work begins

Continued from Page 16

tial community in Worcester County.

Brady said the team is working with veteran journalist Tony Russo and Berlin-based publisher Salt Water Media to create the work, and that the book will likely generate revenue for the association. However, she maintained that any money garnered is just a bonus.

"It's going to be a great project," she said. "...The point is to let people know, new folks and people who have been here a long time, the history of Ocean Pines and be able to see the growth and what has happened with it."

Brady added that under the agreements with Russo and Salt Water Media, OPA will retain ownership of the book. Russo will act as a ghost writer. The publication will likely be available for purchase around early 2027.

"I'm very excited," Brady said at last week's board meeting. "They'll start on it within the next month or so, and it'll probably take about a year before you're able to get copies."

The task force's most recent project follows its first mission, reprinting the book, "History of Ocean Pines, Maryland" by late homeowner Bud Rogner, who originally wrote the document chronicling OPA facts and details from 1968 to 1998. That initiative was completed in early 2025.

The historic preservation group was formed following an OPA Board of Directors meeting in the summer of 2024. Brady said at the time that the idea was conceived following an inquiry from the late Joe Reynolds, the longtime neighborhood forum

moderator and Ocean Pines resident, regarding signs at the Community Center's East Room.

According to Reynolds, the East Room was named after Phyllis East, an executive secretary to the general manager and the board of directors, who passed away in 2012.

However, Reynolds had said that many OPA citizens are unaware of this designation, as the room lacked any information about the recognition. The oversight was remedied, and a plaque now acknowledges East's contributions to Ocean Pines.

The team continues searching for new ways to keep the neighborhood's past alive.

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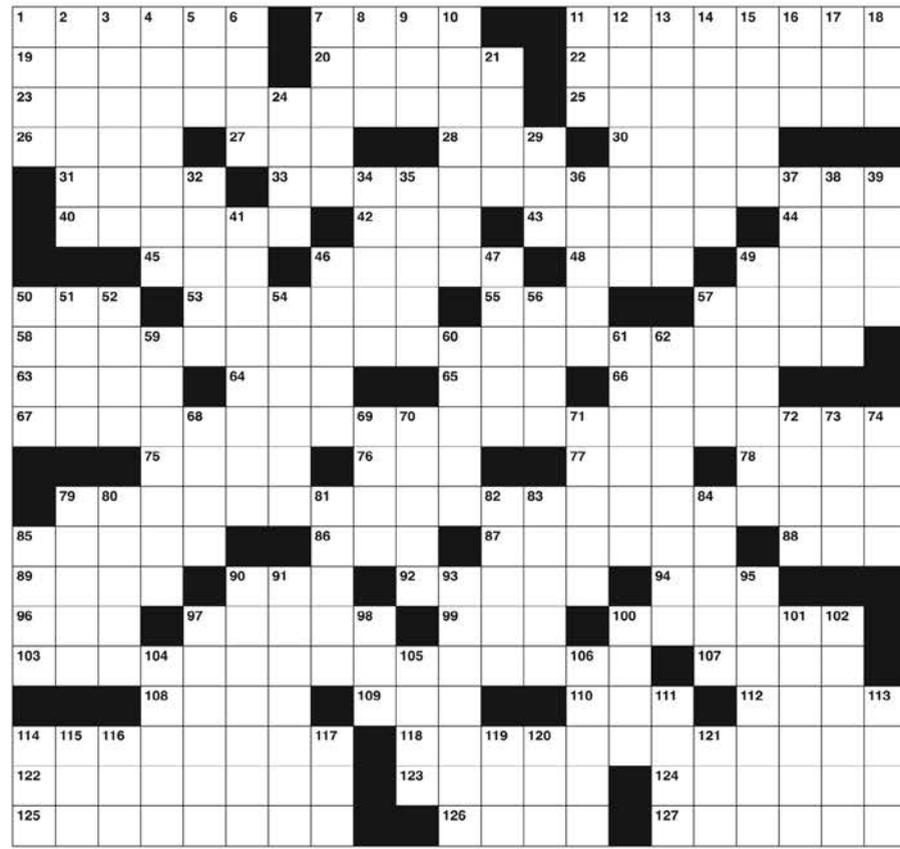


Puzzles

USE YOUR WORDS BY RENA COHEN / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Rena Cohen is a sophomore at Washington University in St. Louis, studying psychology with minors in Spanish and applied linguistics. She grew up in Bloomington, Ind., around Indiana University, where her father was a professor. Rena sent me her first submission at age 9, after hearing me speak on campus. She got her first crossword acceptance two years ago at age 18. This is now her seventh puzzle for The Times and her first Sunday. — W.S.

- ACROSS**
- 1 Bit of regal headwear
 - 7 Singer Horne
 - 11 Develops alopecia
 - 19 Total
 - 20 2022 World Series champ
 - 22 College town nicknamed "A2"
 - 23 Like the Gospel of Mark, sequentially?
 - 25 Concert lineups
 - 26 Matriarch of six of the 12 tribes of Israel
 - 27 Make a choice
 - 28 Trouble
 - 30 1982 film whose name is a security program
 - 31 Text that says "Congratulations! You've won a MacBook Pro," probably
 - 33 Prepare for a mechanic's certification exam?
 - 40 Pulsates
 - 42 Rock's Plastic _____ Band
 - 43 Central parts of planets
 - 44 Hairdresser's supply
 - 45 Molecule that might be modeled with Twizzlers and gummies in biology class
 - 46 Soft shots, in tennis
 - 48 Meditative chants
 - 49 Plant used in pickling
 - 50 H.S. exam whose highest score is 36
- DOWN**
- 53 Source of income for a website
 - 55 Half of a popular social media app
 - 57 Discontinued iPods designed to fit into watch pockets
 - 58 Original people to move into Cancun's peninsula?
 - 63 Affectionate term for una madre
 - 64 Minor-league level
 - 65 Preceder of Peacock and White in the game Clue
 - 66 "Big" comic protagonist
 - 67 "Don't look at me for help" ... or a phonetic hint to this puzzle's theme
 - 75 Dove's dwelling
 - 76 Wii remote batteries
 - 77 Sloth in 2002's "Ice Age"
 - 78 Sensation before a migraine, medically
 - 79 Gets married while wearing protective gear?
 - 85 Quarrels
 - 86 Itty-bitty
 - 87 Japanese craft that translates to "tray planting"
 - 88 "This Is Your Brain on Drugs," e.g., for short
 - 89 Romance author Jimenez
 - 90 One of 2,214 for Babe Ruth
 - 92 "Shrek!" author William
 - 94 Common item at a checkout line, informally
 - 96 No. 1 spot in London?
 - 97 Honkers without horns
 - 99 It might come with a shell
 - 100 Go over again
 - 103 List of restaurant offerings for kids not yet 3 years old?
 - 107 Kerfuffle
 - 108 Oodles
 - 109 Someone who might issue a travel warning?
 - 110 "Roger that!"
 - 112 Name that means "pink" in Spanish
 - 114 Relative of a husky
 - 118 Wedding planner's aid?
 - 122 "5 stars"
 - 123 It might raise a bunch of dough
 - 124 Stab of pain
 - 125 Values
 - 126 Businesses offering mud masks
 - 127 Pulls the chain of, so to speak
 - 12 Like George H.W. Bush, but not George W. Bush
 - 13 Starters' followers
 - 14 Businesses whose employees work standing up
 - 15 Carry in
 - 16 "Chiseled" features
 - 17 Destiny in life
 - 18 Hippocratic oath followers, for short
 - 21 "Stop! That hurts!"
 - 24 Car financing figs.
 - 29 List shortener
 - 32 Janelle of "Hidden Figures"
 - 34 Breathable fabric used in mosquito nets
 - 35 _____ child
 - 36 What a bad student might play
 - 37 Menzel of Broadway
 - 38 Guitar string material
 - 39 Fish traditionally in the British dish pie and mash
 - 41 What kitsch exhibits
 - 46 _____ Lama
 - 47 Part of a bedtime routine
 - 49 Healthy, fiber-rich snack
 - 50 Where some bills originate
 - 51 Former transportation secretary Elaine
 - 52 Chinese competitor of Amazon
 - 54 Loses freshness
 - 56 "In that case ..."
 - 57 Grp. that Sweden joined in 2024
 - 59 Vegas
 - 60 Sensation
 - 61 Removes from the top of one's profile, as an Instagram post
 - 62 Hearts or spades, but not diamonds
 - 68
 - 69 Classic Orson Welles protagonist
 - 70 Ameliorates
 - 71 Via
 - 72 Feature of undermined batter
 - 73 Greek god whose name becomes a flower if you move the first letter to the end
 - 74 Golden Globe nominee Rooney
 - 79 "V" to a violinist
 - 80 Padmé Amidala's home planet in "Star Wars"
 - 81 "If only!"
 - 82 Steel girder
 - 83 Bête _____
 - 84 Images that can rip off human creators, perhaps
 - 85 Pretzel topper
 - 90 Trees with heart-shaped leaves
 - 91 Creature, cutesily
 - 93 Candies that crack with a crunch
 - 95 Last of the 13 original colonies to be founded
 - 97 Some lawn ornaments
 - 98 Part of E.N.T.
 - 100 Kicked oneself for
 - 101 Prettifies
 - 102 500 mg 2x/day, e.g.
 - 104 Source of a natural sweetener
 - 105 Last name shared by three actors on "Schitt's Creek"
 - 106 Russian denials
 - 111 The Panthers of the A.C.C.
 - 113 Midwest college city
 - 114 Not around, informally
 - 115 Hirt and Hirschfeld
 - 116 Día de _____ Reyes Magos
 - 117 They're often depicted with green skin, for short
 - 119 Something much needed after an all-nighter
 - 120 Today preceder
 - 121 Leave speechless



- 62 Hearts or spades, but not diamonds
- 68
- 69 Classic Orson Welles protagonist
- 70 Ameliorates
- 71 Via
- 72 Feature of undermined batter
- 73 Greek god whose name becomes a flower if you move the first letter to the end
- 74 Golden Globe nominee Rooney
- 79 "V" to a violinist
- 80 Padmé Amidala's home planet in "Star Wars"
- 81 "If only!"
- 82 Steel girder
- 83 Bête _____
- 84 Images that can rip off human creators, perhaps
- 85 Pretzel topper
- 90 Trees with heart-shaped leaves
- 91 Creature, cutesily
- 93 Candies that crack with a crunch
- 95 Last of the 13 original colonies to be founded
- 97 Some lawn ornaments
- 98 Part of E.N.T.
- 100 Kicked oneself for
- 101 Prettifies
- 102 500 mg 2x/day, e.g.
- 104 Source of a natural sweetener
- 105 Last name shared by three actors on "Schitt's Creek"
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- 120 Today preceder
- 121 Leave speechless

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



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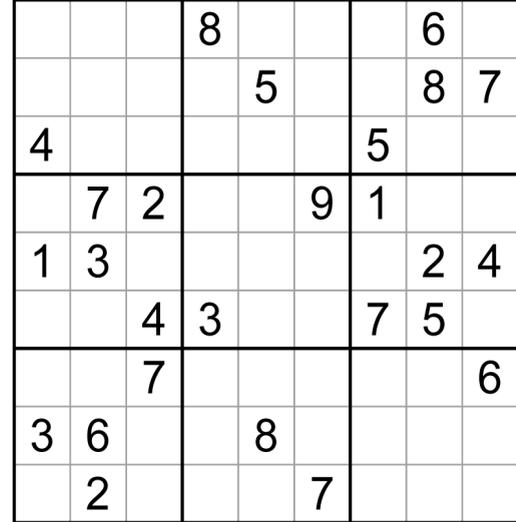
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© Puzzles by Pappocom
HARD - 49

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



Answers to last week's puzzles

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



Calendar

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

Thurs., Jan. 29

STORY TIME 'BIG RED BARN'

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, worcesterlibrary.org

STORY TIME: GROUNDHOG'S DAY

Worcester County Library - Ocean Pines Branch, 11107 Cathell Road, 10:30 a.m. Crafts, songs and stories. For ages 2-5 years. 410-208-4014, 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. Come find your next great read or future favorite. 410-641-0650, worcesterlibrary.org

LEGO MASTERS CHALLENGE

Worcester County Library - Ocean Pines Branch, 11107 Cathell Road, 4:30 p.m. Join in for a Lego challenge event. All materials provided. For ages 6-11 years. 410-208-4014, worcesterlibrary.org

DRY PANTRY

Thursdays - St. Paul United Methodist Church, 405 Flower Street, Berlin, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. For those in need of resources such as paper products, laundry products, baby items, and personal care items. Limits apply. 410-641-0270

Fri., Jan. 30

OC MAHJONG CLUB

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

MINDFULNESS FOR THE NEW YEAR

Worcester County Library - Pocomoke Branch, 401 Fifth St., 1 p.m. Begin 2026 with increased awareness, reduced stress, improved focus and better emotion regulation. Registration necessary: 410-957-0878. worcesterlibrary.org

POT ROAST DINNER FUNDRAISER

Bethany United Methodist Church, 8648 Stephen Decatur Highway, 4:30-6:30 p.m. Pot roast, potatoes, green beans, beverage, rolls and dessert. Cost is \$20. Dine-in or carry-out. Call ahead to reserve a meal at bethany21811@gmail.com or 410-641-2186. Meals are limited.

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., Jan. 31

ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT BREAKFAST BUFFET

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

PAWS & READING

Worcester County Library - Ocean City Branch, 10003 Coastal Highway, 10 a.m. Young independent readers can practice their literacy skills by reading aloud to a friendly trained dog at the library. Stop by to sign up. For ages 6-11 years. 410-524-1818. worcesterlibrary.org

TOTS-TO-TEENS: BEARS

Delmarva Discovery Museum, 2 Market St., Pocomoke City, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Make your own snow globe. Available at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Cost is \$5/child for members and \$10/child, non-members. Register: <https://www.delmarvadiscoverycenter.org/delmarvadiscoveryacademy/totstoteens>.

OCEAN PINES 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. Also featuring family-friendly activities, music and unique shopping experiences. Open to the public, year round. 410-641-7052, <https://www.oceanpines.org/web/pages/farmers-artisans-market>

Sun., Feb. 1

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., Feb. 2

STORY TIME: BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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, [\[brary.org\]\(http://brary.org\)](http://worcesterli-</p>
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CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

John H. "Jack" Burbage, Jr. Regional Cancer Care Center, 9707 Healthway Drive, Berlin, 3-4 p.m. Free and open to caregivers who share the challenges and rewards of caring for adults with serious illnesses. Nicole Fry, 410-641-2626, nicole.fry@tidalhealth.org

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

Mondays - 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 Campion, 410-641-0157

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. Elissa, 410-641-8050; on social media; or delmarvachorus.org.

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., Feb. 3

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, worcesterlibrary.org

OC KNITTING GROUP

Worcester County Library - Ocean City Branch, 10003 Coastal Highway, 10:30 a.m. Bring whatever project you happen to be working on. 410-524-1818, worcesterlibrary.org

STORY TIME: VALENTINE TEA PARTY

Worcester County Library - Pocomoke Branch, 401 Fifth St., 10:30 a.m. Stories, songs, crafts and treats. For ages 0-5 years. 410-957-0878, worcesterlibrary.org

STORY TIME

Worcester County Library - Berlin Branch, 13 Harrison Ave., 10:30 a.m. Story time geared for ages 0-5 years featuring seasonal themes designed to support early literacy skills with stories, songs and finger plays. For ages 0-5 years. 410-641-0650, 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 any questions and feel free to show your plants as well. 410-208-4014, worcesterlibrary.org

THE BLACK HISTORY OF CHESAPEAKE BAY AQUACULTURE

Worcester County Library - Ocean City Branch, 10003 Coastal Highway, 4:30 p.m. Imani Black shares her journey from growing up on Maryland's Eastern Shore to becoming a nationally recognized leader in aquaculture. Explore Black watermen and aquaculture pioneers. 410-524-1818

CROSS FARMS POP-UP FARMERS MARKET

Tuesdays - Flower Street Field across from Henry Park, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Accepting Maryland Department of Agriculture FMNP (WIC & Seniors) Checks and Maryland WIC Fruit & Vegetable Checks. Also offering a "Produce Bucks" program, which doubles purchases for eligible residents. <https://www.facebook.com/theberlinfarmersmarket>.

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

Calendar

Continued from Page 19

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., Feb. 4

PUZZLE SWAP

Worcester County Library - Berlin Branch, 13 Harrison Ave., 1-7 p.m. Bring your gently used puzzles and leave with new-to-you puzzles. Don't have a puzzle to exchange but still want one? That's OK too. All puzzles must be complete in their original box. 410-641-0650

'SCORCHY'S CORNER: WANDERING OUR DELMARVALOUS LAND' VIDEO SERIES

Museum of Ocean City, 217 S. Baltimore Ave., 2-3 p.m. Held Wednesdays, Feb. 4-March 4. Offering audiences a nostalgic journey across Delmarva with host Scorchy Tawes. Preregister: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1978305907223?aff=oddtcreator>.

COLONIAL ART IN AMERICA

Worcester County Library - Ocean Pines Branch, 11107 Cathell Road, 2 p.m. Art

historian Dr. Jennifer Kruglinski talks to us about art during the colonial era. 410-208-4014, worcesterlibrary.org

SIP & PRESS FUNDRAISER ... A FLORAL EVENING

Art League of Ocean City, 502 94th St., 5-7:05 p.m. Tickets \$35. Join us for a night of floral pressing fun for a good cause! 410-524-9433

KIDS PAINT NIGHT

Ocean Pines Community Center, 235 Ocean Parkway, 5:30-6:30 p.m. All materials and instruction provided. Cost is \$22 per painter. For ages 8 years and older. Pre-registration required: 410-641-7052.

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.

CASH BINGO

Wednesdays - Ocean City Elks Lodge 2645, 13708 Sinexpent Ave. Door open at 5 p.m., bingo starts at 6:30 p.m. Food available before bingo and at intermission. Open to the public. 443-605-5028

ONGOING EVENTS

BUS TRIP TO WASHINGTON CAPITALS VS. CAROLINA HURRICANES REMATCH GAME

Held Jan. 31 at the Capital One Arena in Washington, DC. Cost is \$130 and includes transportation, game ticket and food package. Bus departs Ocean Pines Community Center at 1 p.m. Game time is 5 p.m. Tickets: OP Recreation & Parks, 410-641-7052.

THE WINTER QUILL POETRY CONTEST

This year's theme is frozen moments, encouraging young writers to capture a single memory, feeling or image in an original poem. Entries are due by Feb. 2 and the contest is open to ages 6-11 and 12-18 years. Winners will be announced on Feb. 9. All participants are invited to celebrate at a Family Poetry Read-aloud on Feb. 21. 443-235-5597

MARYLAND FIREFIGHTER 50/50 FUNDRAISER

Drawings are held every Thursday at 8 p.m. Ticket sales open Thursdays at 8:05 p.m. and close the following Thursday at 7:59 p.m. One winner takes home 50% of the total jackpot and the remainder supports the Ocean Pines Volunteer Fire Department. Tickets: <https://md.505oraffle.org/give/>

mdfire/50-50-raffles/md5050/charities/ocean-pines/checkout

FREE TAX PREP

AARP is offering free tax preparations to the public. AARP Foundation Tax Aides will be available at the following libraries: Mondays in Ocean Pines; Wednesdays, Berlin; Fridays, Pocomoke City; and Saturdays, Ocean City. By appointment only: 443-584-5661, aarp-foundation.org/taxaide.

HISTORY-TO-GO

Snow Hill library, 307 N. Washington St., throughout February. Pick up a History-to-Go kit and learn about ciphers and codes used throughout history. Supplies provided to make your own cipher disk. Pick up between December and February. 410-632-3495

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Weekly virtual drawings on Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m. Winner receives 60 percent of jackpot. www.opvfd.com/queen-of-hearts. Sponsored by the Ocean Pines Volunteer Fire Department.

2025 KIWANIS LOTTERY TICKETS ON SALE

On sale every Saturday morning at the Ocean Pines Farmers Market from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. One \$20 ticket is good for all 365 drawings in 2025. Benefits the youth of the community.



OPEN HOUSES

Jan. 29 - Feb. 5



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	from \$284,750	Shelly Wilson/Salt Life Community
Saturday 10:30am-12:30pm	204 S. Heron Drive #202G, Ocean City	2BR/2BA	Condo	\$575,000	Nancy Reither/Coldwell Banker Realty
Saturday 11am-1pm	12048 Pimlico Lane, Glen Riddle, Berlin	3BR/2.5BA	Single Family	\$949,900	Power of 2 Team/Hileman Real Estate
Saturday 11am-1pm	54 Cannon Drive, Ocean Pines	3BR/2BA	Single Family	\$364,225	Power of 2 Team/Hileman Real Estate
Saturday Noon-2pm	104 125th Street #106, Ocean City	3BR/2.5BA	Condo	\$575,000	Nancy Reither/Coldwell Banker Realty
Saturday 1-3pm	6803 Atlantic Avenue #4H, Ocean City	1BR/1BA	Condo	\$425,000	Nancy Reither/Coldwell Banker Realty
Saturday 2-4pm	2108 Points Reach, The Point, Ocean Pines	3BR/2BA	Condo	\$499,900	Cindy Crockett/Hileman Real Estate
Sunday 11am-1pm	104 125th Street #106, Ocean City	3BR/2.5BA	Condo	\$575,000	Nancy Reither/Coldwell Banker Realty
Sunday Noon-2pm	100 123rd Street Unit 374C, Ocean City	1BR/1BA	Condo	\$254,900	Shery Thens/Coldwell Banker Realty

Don't forget to check out the February Coastal Association of Realtors Real Estate Guide in OC Today-Dispatch's February 13th Issue for the busy President's, Boat Show, Valentines' Weekend!

View information on for sale & rent listings, appraisals, reserve studies, title & mortgage company opportunities & relevant articles about the real estate industry.

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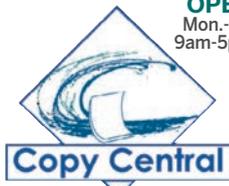
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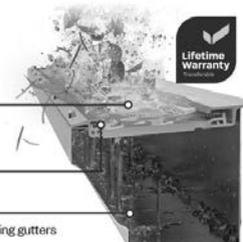
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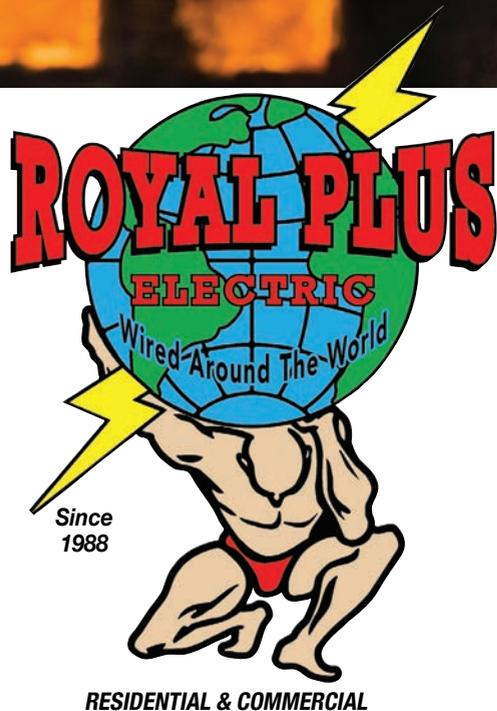
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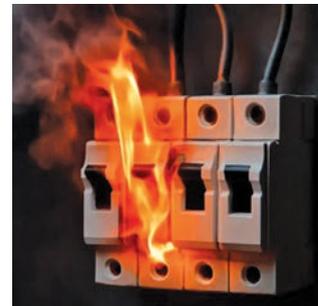
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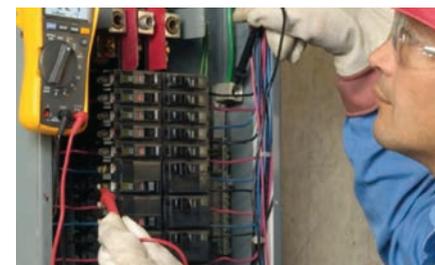
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