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TOO HOT TO HANDLE FOR SOME

The Berlin Chamber of Commerce hosted the second annual Chili Pepper Festival last Saturday afternoon in the downtown area. Above, Master of Ceremonies Kate Nicholls and event founder Toby Gilbert are pictured during the pepper eating contest, which featured more than 15 rounds with contestants eating a variety of peppers introduced and provided by Gilbert of Gilbert's Provisions. See page 16 for more photos.

\$300K grant gives Berlin's skate park dream a boost

Funding comes by way of state's Community Parks and Playgrounds Program

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(Aug. 27, 2026) Advocates for a skate park in Berlin received good news last week when they learned the project was awarded a \$300,000 grant, pushing a long-held dream closer to reality.

On Wednesday, Aug. 19, the Maryland Board of Public Works approved the Town of Berlin's request for \$300,000 through the Community Parks and Playgrounds Program (CPP), to be used for the construction of a skateboarding campus within town.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers the CPP grant. CCP provides financial support to municipal governments looking to expand or construct community parks or install playground equipment.

We Heart Berlin, a nonprofit that promotes healthy, sustainable activities, has spearheaded a project to build a public site for Berlin's skateboarders. The recreational complex will be erected at Heron Park.

We Heart Berlin Founder Tony Weeg said the recently awarded \$300,000 will likely fund final designs, steel fabrication, demolition work, utilities, and mass grading.

The skate park's price tag is about \$975,000. However, Weeg noted ear-

See SKATE Page 3

State chips in more funding for required service project

Additional money to aid in major project to replace water lines containing lead

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(Aug. 27, 2026) The Berlin Town Council approved additional state funding Monday to help cover the hefty price tag of the town's lead service line replacement project, which officials said has become more expensive than originally expected.

The council voted unanimously to accept a \$2,286,773 funding package from the Maryland Department of the Environment through the Maryland Water Infrastructure Financing Administration for Phase 1A of the

project.

The approval comes after the town returned to the state seeking additional assistance as project costs increased.

"This is not a project that Berlin just undertook," Berlin Town Administrator Mary Bohlen said. "This is mandated for every community to do."

The lead service line replacement project began in 2023 after the state required municipalities to address water service lines that contain lead. At the start of the initiative, the town applied for funding based on early estimates, but the anticipated cost grew as the project moved forward.

Nicholas Bradley, an engineer with

See Md. Page 3

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Md. provides town more funds

Continued from Page 1

Davis, Bowen & Friedel, the town’s engineering consultant, told the council earlier this year that additional expenses required by the state, including a 3% administrative fee and a 5% contingency, contributed to the gap between available funding and the project’s actual cost.

After the town completed the project’s design and put the work out to bid, it received one response from Teal Construction Inc. that exceeded the amount of funding previously secured.

The municipality subsequently requested additional funding from the state, resulting in the revised offer approved Monday.

Berlin Finance Director Natalie Saleh told the council the state has offered an additional \$309,060 in reprogrammed fiscal year 2024 funding to support the water line replacement project.

The total funding package offered for Phase 1A is \$2,286,773. The project’s estimated expenses total \$2,286,852, leaving the town with a \$79 shortfall that will be covered with cash from the town’s water fund.

The funding package is structured through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and includes both traditional loan funding and a loan with principal forgiveness.

Of the total package, \$1,007,823, or about 44%, is listed as loan funding. Another \$1,278,950, or about 56%, is listed as a loan with principal forgiveness.

Councilman Jack Orris asked whether the town would ultimately be required to repay only the 44% por-

tion.

Saleh clarified that the principal forgiveness does not occur immediately.

“It’s not fully forgiven,” Saleh said. “It will be forgiven after several years of payment on the interest.”

She added that the exact structure of the financing, including the interest rate, will be determined after the town approves the funding and moves forward with closing. The loan term can extend up to 30 years, according to the staff report.

Saleh said the \$1,007,823 in standard loan funding will be the town’s responsibility, while the remaining portion is subject to the principal forgiveness provisions.

The town also will have costs associated with the settlement and other financing requirements.

The additional state funding follows an earlier council decision to move forward with the project despite a substantial funding gap.

In April, the council approved awarding the project’s approximately \$1.94 million base bid to Teal Construction, contingent on the town securing additional financial support. At the time, the town faced a funding shortfall of roughly \$463,000 and transferred \$500,000 from another capital improvement project to help address the gap.

By May, officials reported that the shortfall had increased to \$618,119 after additional project costs were incorporated.

The motion to accept the additional funding passed unanimously, with Council Vice President Dean Burrell absent.

Skate park project gets \$300K

Continued from Page 1

lier this year that the final cost will be closer to \$1.3 million when accounting for add-on features like lighting and shade structures.

Weeg told the Bayside Gazette on Monday that Berlin has \$45,000 stashed away for the skate park. Of that, \$20,000 was gifted anonymously, and \$14,000 was secured from the dissolution of the Gavin Knupp Foundation, started by the mother of hit-and-run victim Gavin Knupp. The foundation was disbanded after embezzlement and theft allegations surfaced involving the trust. The remaining funds were dispersed to local charities.

With the CPP award, the skate park’s reserve has now soared to \$345,000.

The municipality is still waiting to hear back on other grant opportunities it applied for, including a \$487,500 grant from DNR’s Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and a \$100,000 grant from the Worcester County Health Department Transformation Collaborative.

A skate park for Berlin has been in

the works for several years and has been steadily progressing.

In 2022, the Los Angeles-based skateboard park design-and-build company Spohn Ranch was hired to create conceptual plans.

According to those drawings, the skateboard facility will likely reach 14,000 to 16,000 square feet and be situated adjacent to the space planned for the town’s new public works building at Heron Park. The site will include classic skate park elements, including a bowl, quarter pipes, a pump track, amphitheater steps, a hipped bank, a grind ledge, an A-frame bank, a slappy curb, and a landscape area.

In April of 2025, Berlin Public Works Director Jimmy Charles, joined by We Heart Berlin representatives, conducted a walk-through of the future park’s site and noted the structure’s dimensions.

Spohn Ranch is expected to complete construction of the skate park when the time comes. The company will add the Berlin project to its official schedule as soon as the town secures all the necessary funding.



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Resident opposes proposed open burn ban

While Berlin looks to forbid large fires, some say big lands require exceptions

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(Aug. 27, 2026) Berlin’s outdoor burning policy is going back to the drawing board after residents shared concerns that the proposed code revisions don’t include an exception for large properties that need an efficient way to reduce yard and storm debris.

The Town of Berlin is looking to tighten its outdoor burning ordinance. At Monday night’s Town Council meeting, the group held a public hearing and overhauled the proposed document before addressing citizen comments. The revisions suggested this week polished the code’s language to clarify that open burning is not allowed in Berlin.

However, after those edits, residents asked that a pathway be carved out for large-acreage parcels that rely on open burning to clear immense accumulations of yard debris or natural storm wreckage. After hearing those worries, the council agreed to put the outdoor fire policy back on the agenda next month for a first reading, incorporating the governing team’s amendments made Monday night and a potential provision for vast tracts of land.

Ryan Hardesty, the town’s planning director, said at the Aug. 10 council meeting that the outdoor burning review process began several months ago after questions arose as to whether fire pits were permitted within municipal limits.

At that meeting, a broader discussion revealed that the council supported completely outlawing open burning, otherwise known as the uncontained burning of yard waste, yard debris, land-clearing debris, and household trash. This move would eliminate the code’s existing exceptions that allow property owners to secure permits for these kinds of activities.

However, per this week’s discussion, Berlin could add open burning back into its updated fire ordinance with strict parameters.

The issue stems from resident Ed Hammond, who said he relies on about one open burn a year to maintain his 30-acre property.

“I may be in a relatively unique situation in town where I have an agricultural property...I have 30 acres, and it generates a lot of debris and I need to

get rid of it,” he said.

Hammond noted that his family has conducted open burns for years and receives official approval from Worcester County to do so. He added that while he could theoretically push his yard waste back into the woods and forgo any fires, that would open the area to the spread of invasive species.

“You might say, ‘why don’t you push that stuff back into the woods?’ Maybe 40 or 50 years ago, before we had the invasive species that we have now, it was easier to push materials in the woods and forget about it,” he said.

“I can still cut up and let material lie on the forest floor if it’s in a well-shaded area, but most areas are not shaded...I can’t just push material back into the woods and hope it goes away because it becomes a scaffold for invasive species to grow on and it becomes a large problem for the land because the wood doesn’t break down fast enough before the wisteria, whatever it is...gets on it and starts going.”

Councilman Jack Orris read a statement sent to him by resident Tony Weeg who suggested how open burning

exceptions may be handled.

Open burn permits could be made for properties over a certain size, capped at four parcels a year, Weeg said. He added that to guarantee safety, first responders could be on-site during the burn.

“[The proposed ordinance] treats residents with a two-foot brush pile the same as a property owner sitting on acres of wooded land who loses his trees every storm season,” Orris said, reciting Weeg’s statement. “...The people using the exception are exactly those we should permit. A blanket ban punishes them to solve a problem they aren’t actually causing.”

While Monday’s discussion largely centered on open burning, the council also agreed to axe language in the code that would limit recreational bonfires to 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Bonfires would now be allowed anytime.

Because the council heavily modified the proposed outdoor burning ordinance Monday night, the group agreed to table the document. Town attorney David Gaskill will revise the code with the council’s amendments and include a summary of how a provision may be incorporated to address the unique requirements of large parcels.

The code will return for a first reading at the Berlin Town Council’s meeting on Sept. 14.

‘I may be in a relatively unique situation in town where I have an agricultural property...I have 30 acres, and it generates a lot of debris and I need to get rid of it!’
Ed Hammond

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Town looks to charge fees for declining AMI

Berlin requests permission to establish rates for those who refuse smart meters

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(Aug. 27, 2026) Berlin's proposed fees for customers who opt out of smart meters and use of the town's electric vehicle charging station were the subject of a Maryland Public Service Commission hearing Monday night as the town seeks approval to implement the charges.

Before the Berlin Town Council's regular meeting this week, representatives of the Maryland Public Service Commission held a hearing on the municipality's request to establish opt-out charges for Berlin electric customers who choose to forgo

new Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) and retain the existing system.

While the council approved an AMI opt-out policy in March, the commission must approve the fees associated with that policy. The agency will consider comments from Monday's hearing before authorizing the fees.

According to Town Administrator Mary Bohlen, the municipality intends to charge those who decline the AMI system a one-time fee of \$50, payable over three installments, as well as a monthly \$17 fee.

Bohlen said the charges would recover costs associated with servicing customers who wish to keep the old metering system. AMI allows town staff to read the meters remotely, while the outdated infrastructure

would need to be read manually.

The proposed tariffs are based on what other Maryland utilities charge, Bohlen noted. Delmarva Power, for instance, has imposed a \$17 monthly fee and a one-time payment of \$75.

"When a customer opts out of AMI meters, the meter needs to be read manually, which incurs additional costs," Bohlen said. "The recommended fees ensure these costs are recovered from customers who opt out rather than other electric customers."

The town's fee recommendations drew concerns from resident Bartosz Rafiński.

Rafiński said Berlin should conduct a comprehensive study to evaluate whether the \$17 recurring fee is appropriate. The resident said he believes the monthly payment should be lower.

"I think some very simple math illustrates it's an overcharge," he said.

Rafiński added that the comparison to Delmarva Power is inequitable, as the company serves a much larger customer base than the Town of Berlin.

"Delmarva Power operates over 5,000 square miles," he said. "... Berlin is a compact system concentrated in only a few square miles ...

That matters because one justification for this fee is to recover expenses associated with opting out of AMI meters, since someone has to travel to the meter to read it physically. Given how small Berlin is, Berlin electric [staff] should absolutely be capable of reading six to ten homes in less than an hour."

Berlin does not expect many homeowners to refuse the AMI systems. Town staff said in March that at that time, only six residents had turned down the advanced infrastructure.

Monday's public hearing also addressed the town's proposed fees for using the municipality-leased electric vehicle charging station at 25 Commerce Street.

The town is asking the Maryland Public Service Commission for approval to charge users 18 cents per kilowatt-hour for level two charging and 34 cents per kilowatt-hour for direct current fast charging.

The Maryland Public Service Commission will accept written comments until Friday, Aug. 28 on both the opt-out charges as well as the electric vehicle charging fees. Individuals can submit their statements online using the agency's public comment drop box on its website at psc.maryland.gov.



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Retiring town administrator: ‘Decision ... a difficult one’

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(Aug. 27, 2026) After 35 years with Berlin, longtime employee and current town administrator Mary Bohlen publicly announced her retirement this week, saying goodbye to the community she’s served for over three decades.



Mary Bohlen

At Monday night’s Town Council meeting, Bohlen shared remarks regarding her retirement, noting her official last day will be Oct. 9.

“It has been both a pleasure and a privilege to serve this community, and making the decision to retire has been a difficult one,” she said.

Bohlen added that she’s proud of her accomplishments during her tenure with the municipality, as well as her role in “building a strong foundation for Berlin’s future.”

Bohlen is a Salisbury resident who first came to Berlin in 1991 at just 25 years old. She began working in Town Hall’s front office answering phones and ringing up utility customers.

She continued to rise through the ranks, securing various roles such as grants administrator, special projects administrator, deputy town administrator, and, since August 2022, town administrator. Bohlen succeeded former town administrator Jeff Fleetwood.

On Monday night, Bohlen said that she will “always be proud to have been a part of this community and its story.”

Berlin Mayor Zack Tyndall expressed his gratitude to the outgoing administrator and her almost four decades with the town. Tyndall said Bohlen’s commitment to Berlin is evident in her work and in how she rose to become a senior municipal employee.

“When you say you’re proud to be part of its story, I think you write a portion of your story yourself starting as someone working in customer service and admin and working your way all the way up to the top paid professional in the Town of Berlin,” Tyndall said. “I remember when you and I sat down, and we had a vacancy in the town administrator position ... and I said, ‘Mary, you’ve got a lot of institutional knowledge ... have you ever considered it?’ ... You accepted my request to serve in this capacity, and it’s been an honor to work together. You’re amazing at what you do.”

The Berlin Town Council also thanked Bohlen this week.

“Mary, I want to say thank you for your many, many years dedicated to service to the town,” Councilman Jay Knerr remarked.

While she did not offer any comments at this week’s Town Council meeting, the town’s human resources

director, Kelsey Jensen, also announced her departure from the municipality earlier this month.

Kelsey confirmed in an email to the Bayside Gazette last week that her official last day will be Nov. 13.

Jensen graduated from Frostburg University in 2011 with a degree in social work. She later received a master’s degree in business from the University of Maryland University College, now known as University of Maryland Global Campus, in 2018 and initially worked as a courtroom clerk for the Circuit Court of Worcester County.

Jensen came to Berlin in 2016 for an administrative job. Later, she started training to earn certification as a municipal clerk and eventually took over as Berlin’s director of human resources.

“The employees of the town mean a great deal to me, and I will miss working with each and every one of them,” Jensen said in an email to the Bayside Gazette last week. “The kindness and appreciation they, along with many residents and business owners, have shown since I announced my resignation has been incredibly heartwarming and has reminded me that I made a meaningful difference during my time here.”

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Commissioners will weigh policy on water leaks, bills

By Brian Shane
Staff Writer

(Aug. 27, 2026) You open your water bill and see that your usage has somehow tripled. Neither you nor Worcester County can explain why. Are you supposed to just roll over and pay for all that water? Under a county policy adopted in June, not necessarily. Worcester County's water leak adjustment policy gets its name from its basic purpose: reducing unusually high bills caused by water leaking from a customer's plumbing.

County officials now are considering applying the policy retroactively to about a dozen households that had already disputed unusually high charges. The commissioners asked staff Aug. 18 to review those cases and report back. The policy had not been updated since 2010. County documents say the June 2 revision was meant to account for newer metering technology and to make billing adjustment rules clearer and more consistent.

The update also created relief for unexplained high usage, even when no leak or other cause can be identified. To qualify, the bill in question

must show a customer's water use spiking to at least three times the average of the previous 12 months, and usage must later return to normal. Customers have 30 days from the billing date to request an adjustment. After the policy changed, Public Works heard from customers who had been denied relief or had no way to seek it under the former rules, according to department head Dallas Baker. In response, the department asked commissioners to reopen water bills dating to July 1, 2025, when new countywide rate structures took effect. But Tuesday's discussion revealed a basic disagreement over how broadly that request should apply. Public Works proposed reopening a full year of bills, and county finance staff analyzed what that could cost. Commissioner Chip Bertino said he thought officials were considering only whether to revisit existing disputes. "Why are we looking back, opening it up to everybody?" asked Bertino (District 5, Ocean Pines). To estimate the potential cost, county staff looked for accounts showing unusually large jumps in water use. They found 2,406 where usage had at least tripled. That did not mean all 2,406 customers were entitled to relief. It meant only that their water use had tripled – the first test under the policy. If every flagged account applied and received an adjustment, staff estimated the county's exposure at approximately \$140,000, not including the staff time needed to review applications. Commissioners pointed out that a big bill does not always mean something went wrong. Sometimes, a customer simply used more water. Commissioner Joe Mitrecic asked whether someone who failed to winterize a house should receive relief after a pipe burst. He also offered the example of a spike in water use stemming from a house full of guests. "Because of somebody's negligence, we can't be giving away all that water," said Mitrecic (District 7, Ocean City). The water leak adjustment policy as written prohibits adjustments for negligence, willful damage, or failure to repair known plumbing problems. Baker estimated that about a dozen customers had taken disputed bills before the grievance committee during the previous year. Bertino moved to have staff review those cases and report back. Mitrecic seconded the motion. It passed 4-0, with Commissioners Caryn Abbott, Ted Elder and Eric Fiori absent.

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Commissioners halt vote on Rt. 589 rezoning moratorium

By Brian Shane
Staff Writer

(Aug. 27, 2026) A proposed one-year freeze on rezonings throughout the Route 589 corridor was postponed last Tuesday after three Worcester County Commissioners missed the meeting.

Commissioner Chip Bertino asked to remove the measure from the agenda “until we have a full contingent of commissioners sitting here,” delaying consideration until at least Sept. 1, the board’s next scheduled meeting.

The four commissioners present approved Bertino's motion unanimously, with Commissioners Caryn Abbott, Ted Elder, and Eric Fiori absent.

County spokeswoman Kim Moses said it was the first time since April 4, 2018, that three commissioners missed a meeting.

According to county agenda materials, the proposed moratorium would place two pending rezoning applications on hold. Both were submitted in May, and county staff have completed reports on them, but neither has been scheduled for Planning Commission review.

County Planning Director Jennifer

Keener said the county has paused processing Route 589 rezoning cases based on the commissioners' direction. The precise scope of the moratorium will be formalized Sept. 1, she said.

Attorney Hugh Cropper appeared last Tuesday on behalf of one applicant, Turville Creek Farms LLC and its co-applicants, to argue that the application should proceed. He said his clients paid a \$2,222.35 filing fee and spent tens of thousands of dollars on consultants, engineering work, and a traffic study. County staff have already completed a report on the application, he added.

"I urge you to hear that application," Cropper said. "It's been applied for. It's been there three to four months. Nothing's changed since May. He's paid his money. If you turn it down, you turn it down, but I urge you to hear it."

Cropper also argued that Maryland's Land Use Article requires an advertised public hearing before the county changes its zoning regulations, a requirement he said applies to the proposed moratorium.

The proposal would stop the county from accepting, processing, or reviewing rezonings within the corridor for 12 months unless rescinded sooner. Development allowed under existing zoning and other county approval processes could continue.

The moratorium emerged earlier this month from an unsuccessful effort to build a higher-density townhouse community on a 14.7-acre property near Ocean Pines.

The property owners withdrew their request July 21 after seeking approval to increase the permitted density from 59 homes to 88 townhouses. Area residents had gathered about 900 petition signatures in opposition, and several commissioners indicated they were unlikely to approve it.

Two weeks later, at the Aug. 4 meeting, Commissioner Jim Bunting proposed freezing all rezonings along Route 589, saying continued development around Ocean Pines had worsened traffic on the state road. The commissioners directed county staff to prepare the moratorium.

Ashley Mostek, who lives behind the townhouse property and organized the petition drive, said residents understand the decision to wait for all seven commissioners but remain hopeful that the moratorium will be approved.

“The temporary pause on rezoning applications was an important first step,” Mostek wrote in a statement. “Our community has raised very serious concerns about traffic, safety, infrastructure, and the quality of life of surrounding residents, and we hope those concerns will continue to be taken seriously.”



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OC rejects land purchase for future complex

Four City Council members say they don't like location for indoor-outdoor facility

By Bethany Hooper
Associate Editor

(Aug. 27, 2026) Plans to purchase a 193-acre property for the development of a sports complex just west of Berlin fell apart last Monday night, with most of the Ocean City Council expressing concern about the location and the impacts it would have on neighbors.

Dozens of residents in the St. Martins community, armed with a list of more than 1,000 signatures, filled the council chambers to voice their opposition to the city's purchase of two parcels of land off Old Ocean City Road, roughly nine miles west of municipal limits.

The land, officials announced earlier this month, was under consideration for an indoor-outdoor sports facility, aimed at attracting youth travel teams and their families to the area and, ultimately, Ocean City hotels, restaurants and attractions.

However, before the City Council ever got around to taking public comments, four of the city's seven council members kickstarted the discussion by voicing their own objections to the

site. By the end of the meeting, a motion to pass the first reading of an ordinance, authorizing the Mayor and City Council to purchase the property, failed for lack of a second.

"I think this project means a tremendous amount to Ocean City, I think this project means a tremendous amount to the county," said Councilman Jake Mitrecic, who withdrew his second after hearing the community's concerns. "But without the buy-in of whatever community it ends up in, or finding the perfect place, we're just gonna poison it so bad that our citizens, that we represent, will never support it again. And it will just be gone. Ten years of work, gone."

In a work session earlier this month, the Ocean City Council agreed to proceed with an \$8.7 million purchase contract for the 193-acre parcel, currently owned by Harrison Farms LLC. The 7-0 vote effectively began the city's first steps in acquiring land for the development of a future sports complex.

But by the end of the week, a group of council members were out at the property, meeting with nearby residents and hearing their concerns about the city's chosen location. During last Monday's meeting, when the

council was to vote on the land acquisition, Council President Matt James announced he would not be supporting the ordinance.

"I've spent hours on the phone talking to people who support and oppose this proposed location. I even joined fellow council members in a meeting with neighboring property owners who have legitimate concerns with the impact that this property will have on their way of life," he said at the start of the discussion. "I do not see a way for our vision to co-exist with such opposition to this location. So, in an effort to be a good neighbor, I do not support this location moving forward."

James was backed by Councilman Jeff Heiser, who likened the community's opposition to the city's stance on the offshore wind project.

"You know, we don't want windmills in our backyard, right? So why do you guys want to support a complex in yours?" he said. "I also think this will be a financial burden on the taxpayers of our city. I want to support the complex too. I'm for sports, I'm for tourism. But I think of the burden this would put on members of our community at this time. So, at this point, I'm not in favor."

Council Secretary Will Savage also expressed concerns about community buy-in, as well as the local and state

approvals needed to make the project a reality. He said his opinions on the property acquisition were the same as those he expressed during the city's long-running debate over short-term rentals.

"In my opinion, this is a commercial operation in a residential district, and this is similar to that ...," he said. "I want to stay consistent, and I can't support it at this location."

Councilwoman Carol Proctor echoed their comments, adding that she also had concerns about the financial projections used by the city to support the development of a facility.

"I actually did speak with some people who own a sports complex, privately, and I also spoke with others, and I just don't even believe in the budget or pro forma that was presented," she said. "I don't think those numbers are correct. I think it's a lot of forecasting, and I just can't get behind the project. I don't agree with it."

The majority's comments then kicked off a back-and-forth discussion, in which sports complex advocate Councilman John Gehrig expressed his disappointment over his colleagues' decision. He argued that rejecting the land acquisition before plans could be presented were "premature."

"To be quitters now, you guys should be ashamed because we talked about this for years," he said.

Pointing to the decline in room night bookings, and a change in tourism trends, Gehrig said the city needed to do something to bring "respectful guests" to the resort. Sports tourism, he said, was a way to do that.

"The economic impacts are tremendous, and people spend money," he said. "These are families that are spending \$3,000 to \$5,000 a year. They are spending that money throughout our region, and certainly Ocean City is going to be a beneficiary, but the entire county is going to benefit. So, we need an idea that's going to make real money, that's going to introduce people to Ocean City, to Worcester County."

He also argued that the sports complex would be funded with room tax dollars, and not residential property taxes. Proctor, however, continued to express her concerns – not only about the funding mechanism, but about entering into a contract for the property without first seeing the terms in writing.

"We are putting the horse before the cart when we are entering into a contract and signing it," she said.

Referring to the terms in the contract, City Solicitor Heather Stansbury said the city was agreeing to buy the property at \$8.7 million and to make a \$250,000 deposit, which would be paid immediately upon execution of the contract. She said that money would only be returned to the city if the ordinance did not pass, or if the



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Funding approved for tech school course instruction

By Brian Shane
Staff Writer
(Aug. 27, 2026) The problem isn't that Ocean City lacks firefighters qualified to teach high school Fire/EMS classes – it's that those firefighters already have full-time jobs to do.

That's why Worcester County officials voted Tuesday to authorize up to \$50,000 to pay resort firefighters and paramedics to teach at Worcester Technical High School on their off-hours, rather than pull them away from regular emergency-response shifts. "We don't have anybody, at least currently in mind, that is capable of doing this as a full-time job," Ocean City Fire Chief Josh Bunting said. "So, it's really cobbling together instructors that are working."

Worcester Tech has had difficulty staffing the program because instructors need fire and emergency medical expertise, as well as the certifications required to teach those skills, according to Worcester County Fire Marshal Matt Owens. The Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute traditionally provides instructors for the program, but fire officials said the organization can't always support a class when enrollment falls below its required threshold.

When that happens, the county has turned to Ocean City, which has its own training academy and a pool of certified instructors.

That \$50,000 amount isn't a fixed teacher salary – it's a pool of money to pay several instructors, and the actual cost varies depending on the course. A classroom lesson might require one instructor, Bunting said, while hands-on exercises inside a fire-training building mandate several instructors to safely supervise students. The commissioners' \$50,000 appropriation is expected to shore up staffing for the 2026–27 school year. Looking ahead, though, officials will need to lock down a more consistent staffing regimen. Bunting said that could be coordinated through a dedicated group of in-

structors or with the help of the school system itself. "As a parent," he said, "it's hard to have your kid look at an opportunity at the tech center that may or may not be there next year depending on funding and available instructors." The Fire/EMS program has been offered at Worcester Tech since the 2009-10 school year, giving students from the county's three high schools a head start on the training required to become firefighters, paramedics, and emergency medical technicians. The program is a two-year commitment. Students spend one school year on emergency medical training and another on firefighting. They'll leave with basic certifications they can put to use with a career or volunteer fire company.

More than a dozen students have expressed interest in taking the EMT coursework this school year, according to Bunting. Numerous graduates have gone on to work in fire, EMS and other public-safety roles locally. "We always want to have new blood – I mean, that's the lifeline," Owens said. "The life of the fire service is getting the young blood in."

Still, career and volunteer fire departments across Worcester County need young recruits. "There is not enough help coming into our industry, whether volunteer or career," Bunting said. In the meantime, firefighting students will soon have a new place to put that training to work: a new training tower across from Worcester Tech in Newark recently received its certificate of occupancy. It replaces a facility that officials said lasted nearly four decades. Owens winced a little when he recalled taking three-hour nighttime firefighting classes when he first started with the volunteer fire service. Today, he noted, Worcester Tech students can complete that training during the school day and graduate with the basic certifications needed to enter a career or volunteer department. "It's a tremendous opportunity," Owens said.

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Chamber to hold annual classic car, truck event

(Aug. 28, 2026) The Worcester County Chamber of Commerce in Ocean Pines announce its 12th Annual Classic Car, Truck & Jeep Show on Saturday, Aug. 29 at the racetrack at Ocean Downs Casino.

This free, family-friendly event will feature classic cars, trucks and Jeeps, local business and nonprofit vendors, food and beverages for purchase, and DJ Rupe, playing legendary music from throughout the decades. Tara Calabrese – Images by Stara will provide onsite photography and drone footage.

The Promenade Sponsor is Bryant Sterling with i.g. Burton Auto Group, and the Entertainment Sponsor is Premier Driving School.

The car show runs approximately 9 a.m. to noon., with trophies awarded at 12:30 p.m. Categories include Classic, Antique, Hot Rod, Modern (2000s+), Custom (Non-Stock), Eurasian, Corvette, Jeep Stock, Jeep Custom, Truck/SUV, Best of Show, People's Choice, and Honorable Mentions.

Pre-registration is \$25 and is available online through Thursday, August 27 at www.WorcesterCountyChamber.org. Onsite registration begins at 8 a.m. Saturday, and all vehicles must be registered by 9 a.m.

Local businesses and nonprofits are invited to participate as vendors along the patio. Vendor opportunities are available, and booth space is free for nonprofits.

For car show registration or vendor information, call the Chamber at 410-641-5306 or visit the Worcester County Chamber Visitor Center, 11047 Racetrack Road, Berlin, Md. 21811, located behind the ERA Realty office.

For additional information, contact 410-641-5306 or info@WorcesterCountyChamber.org.

Tickets on sale for ice hockey bus trip from Pines

(August 20, 2026) Ocean Pines Recreation & Parks will host a bus trip to the Washington Capitals vs. New York Rangers game on Friday, October 9.

The bus will depart the Community Center at 3 p.m., with an additional pickup at the Shoppes at Salisbury parking lot at 3:20 p.m. Game time is 7 p.m. at Capital One Arena in Washington, D.C.

The cost is \$105 per person and includes transportation and the game ticket.

For more information and to register, call 410-641-7052.



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Berlin Chili Pepper Festival



The Berlin Chamber of Commerce hosted the second annual Chili Pepper Festival in downtown Berlin last Saturday. The event featured live music by the Hot Sauce Band, a variety of vendors, a pepper-eating contest, a wing contest and much more. Pictured are scenes from the day's event.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GARRETT NEVILLE/GOOD BOY MFG.



Obituaries

MICHAEL FRANCIS HIGGINS

Ocean City

Michael “Mike” Higgins, beloved husband, father, grandfather, brother, and friend, passed away on August 17, 2026, surrounded by his family.



Mike Higgins

Born in 1944 in Independence, Iowa, to Don and Cora Higgins, Mike showed an early aptitude for learning. He mastered typing in grade school, a skill that led to his assignment to the Pentagon during the Vietnam War.

Following his service, Mike began a long career with IBM, where he worked until his retirement in 1992. He later spent more than 30 years in real estate.

In 1983, Mike married Kathleen, the love of his life. Together they built a home in Ocean City, where they lived for more than 40 years.

He is survived by his wife, Kathleen; his children, Michael Higgins Jr. of Louisville, Kentucky, and Kevin Sean Higgins of Woodbridge, Virginia; and his grandchildren, Michael III of Knoxville, Tennessee, Kaitlyn and Hailey Higgins of Woodbridge, Virginia, and Matthew Higgins of Louisville, Kentucky.

Mike is also survived by his siblings Vince Higgins and Mary Breitbach of Iowa and Ron Higgins of Colorado. He was preceded in death by his brothers Thom Higgins and Sam Higgins.

A devoted community member, Mike served for many years as treas-

urer of the Delmarva Irish American Club and especially enjoyed participating in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade.

A lifelong sports fan, he faithfully followed the Washington Redskins, Washington Capitals, and Washington Nationals, sharing that enthusiasm with family and friends.

Mike and Kathleen had been preparing to move to Annapolis to be closer to family just weeks before his passing. Though that move did not come to be, his love and legacy remain deeply rooted in those he cherished.

He will be remembered as a loving husband, father, grandfather, brother, and friend.

Services will be held on Thursday, September 10, 2026, at St. Mary’s Star of the Sea Church (208 S. Baltimore Avenue) in Ocean City, Maryland. Visitation will begin at 10 a.m., and Mass will begin at 11 a.m. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made in Mike’s honor to St. Mary’s Star of the Sea/Holy Savior Church, Ocean City, Maryland.

He will be deeply missed and forever loved.

JOHN F. FERRY III

Ocean Pines

On June 19, 2026, John Francis Ferry III passed away at the age of 38, leaving behind a mountain of memories and even more DVDs.

John lived his life like an award-winning film that was full of heart, remarkable moments, and plenty of quotable dialogue. Like movies, he brought people together. Always the main character living life loudly, authentically, and entirely in the pres-



John Ferry III

ent moment, he embodied a perfect cross between two of his favorite actors, Tom Hanks and Robert De Niro. He demonstrated Hanks’s warmth with an infectious smile and hugs that made you feel like the center of the universe.

No one was friendlier than John, and no one stayed a stranger to him for long. Truly, to know him was to love him.

He also had the stubbornness of a classic De Niro character. John was a master at holding his ground, insisting on a point, and frequently repeating himself. It was often pointless to argue with him, though; he was usually right.

A natural-born entertainer, during his time at United Rehabilitation Services (URS) in Hazleton John commanded the spotlight in their annual Christmas and spring musicals. He also beamed his uplifting energy (no matter how off-key) in the URS chorale group, Our Proud Voices.

True to his generous spirit, John’s final act was to be an organ donor, so he can continue to bring healing and comfort to others.

John held his many co-stars

dearly. He leaves behind his mother, Paula Matus Ferry, his father John “Jack” Ferry Jr., and stepmother Cathy Gallagher. Siblings Maeve Shay and husband Ian Shay, Caitlin Ferry, and William Ferry. Niece Sawyer Shay. Beloved aunts and uncles, Scott Matus, Kathy Sweet, Karen Neglia, Jeffrey and Carmen Ferry, Michael and Marguerite Picucci, and Patrick and Colette Ferry, in addition to his many cousins and friends. Preceding him in death were his grandparents, John “Jack” Sr. and Mary Ferry and Paul and Dorothy Matus, and uncle, Frank Neglia (we can already hear the “DooDah”s).

The family would also like to extend gratitude to the staff at Fresenius Kidney Care Bethlehem who served as John’s ultimate supporting cast.

In his honor, the family asks that you live authentically, put on a great film, and give someone you love an unforgettable hug.

A Celebration of Life was held on Saturday, July 11, 2026, at the Cantelmi Long Funeral Home, 500 Linden Street, Bethlehem, PA 18018. A memory tribute may be placed at www.cantelmifuneralhome.com.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Gift of Life, 401 North 3rd St. Philadelphia, PA 19123.

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Opinion

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

Sports complex site needs transparency

Why is the sports complex so important to Ocean City? It's a question that needs a clear answer with an explanation that connects with everyone in Worcester County.

The reality is the sports complex has been pushed for more than a decade because there are concerning trends being seen in tourism, and something big needs to be done to keep Ocean City moving forward in a competitive marketplace. Sports tourism is viewed as a meaningful opportunity to bring new business to the area not only during the shoulder months but also in the summer season.

Before another site is proposed, Ocean City needs to be honest with itself as well as those outside the area. When people ask why a sports complex needs to be built, it needs to be explained with sincerity – tourism is too slow and needs a shot in the arm. Why everyone in the county should care is a point that needs explaining.

The heart of the matter is Ocean City's importance to our local economy from an employment and tax revenue perspective. Ocean City is the revenue king for Worcester, thanks largely to second homeowners, and we should all care subsequently about its health. The revenues linked to tourism help support county services, including our public school system.

Ocean City's tourism industry needs additional opportunities to attract visitors, now even in the summer months, and our entire county benefits when Ocean City's tourism economy is strong.

We are seeing concerning signs with tourism, and all of us in Worcester should be concerned if business is soft in Ocean City.

Wanting the project does not mean we should accept the wrong location just to get it built. The site must make sense and not ruin local ways of life. When the next potential location is identified – and the search should continue - communication with nearby residents needs to begin early. That's the only way this process will be fair, transparent and ultimately successful.

Letters

“Berlin Uncool” signs way off base

Editor,

This letter is only directed to the person and/or persons who have placed signs around Berlin saying, “Make Berlin Uncool Again.”

The sign makes a “play” on the award Berlin received as “America’s Coolest Small Town” by Budget Travel in 2014. However, the implication as I see it, is that these persons feel the town has grown and become too busy for their taste.

No matter their reasoning, I feel the sign is offensive to many, who have worked to bring Berlin out of the doldrums from the early 1980’s. In the era, most of the long time retailers including grocery, hardware, clothing, etc., had left town leaving primarily vacant buildings or offices. Offices do not stimulate the commerce of towns therefore retail was needed.

Another major issue in those years was the condition of much of the buildings which had become somewhat dilapidated or run down.

When you consider the huge capital expenditures that was made to rehabilitate the buildings and the effort to bring new ideas to town including festivals etc, it's a slap in their faces to have a sign saying, “Make Berlin Uncool Again.”

I hope this motto goes away. Instead, thank the numerous people that gave their dedication to revive what was once a dying town. They have kept the historic value, revived the local spirit and I applaud all those people, as well as the newcomers. At least be considerate of their success, even if you preferred living in a ghost town of “uncool” squaller, as Berlin used to be.

Reese Cropper, III
Ocean City

Harris could limit menhaden picking

Editor,

If Congressman Andy Harris really wanted to help the Chesapeake Bay and the Maryland Coastal Bays communities he could advocate for restricting the harvest of menhaden. Menhaden are harvested by a Virginia-based company Omega Protein, with connection to a Canadian corporation Cooke Inc., and used to manufacture fish oil.

The importance to Maryland waters is that menhaden is a food source for rockfish, tuna, whales, dolphins, osprey and eagles. The Department of Natural Resources has been forced to shorten the rockfish season because of declining populations, and conservation groups have reported eagle and osprey chicks dying

from starvation. Meanwhile, Omega Protein continues to take menhaden at an alarmingly high rate and the menhaden population has fallen 37% since 2022. Conservationists say that the limit should be cut by 50%

To expect the Trump administration to support an environmental regulation may be a stretch, but this could fit right in. Trump's petulant Canadian tariffs would give him an excuse. His Justice Department, which is bound and determined to be his judicial weapon against perceived enemies (such as Canada, a country that has been “ripping off the United States of America for years”), would be inclined to agree.

There's a hitch: Omega Proteins has directed a significant portion of its state-level political donations over the years to conservative and Republican groups, such as the Virginia Senate Republican Caucus and individual Republican general assembly candidates, according to the Virginia Public Access Project.

Congressman Harris could protect the fisheries in his district, but maybe at the cost of donations to Republican legislators in Virginia. This is the test: Which comes first, constituents or the Republican party?

Ronald Pilling
Bishopville

represented both Earth Funeral and the current property owners, whose contract to sell the land was contingent on zoning approval. A sale price was not disclosed.

Cropper told the zoning board that human composting can be considered a “natural alternative” to having a casket or a headstone.

“This way, you naturally go back in the soil, you nourish the trees, trees take up the nutrients, and you're

See WORCESTER Page 21

BAYSIDEGAZETTE

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County approves human composting

Company to use the soil to turn farmland into forested area

By Brian Shane
Staff Writer

(Aug. 27, 2026) Worcester County has approved a first-of-its-kind human composting project near Snow Hill, but not without some unease from neighbors living alongside the property where the unique soil would go.

The county's Board of Zoning Appeals voted 4–2 at its Aug. 13 meeting to grant a special exception that allows soil made from human remains to be applied to the agricultural property as a soil amendment.

The decision clears the way for the company Earth Funeral to use the soil to gradually convert the 15 acres of farmland into a forest, at a rate of about one to two acres per year.

Attorney Hugh Cropper

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Attorney Hugh Cropper

Local school system adopts strategic plan

The new framework, “Learn, Lead and Succeed,” will guide schools until 2030

By Tara Fischer
Staff Writer

(Aug. 27, 2026) The Worcester County Board of Education last week received an overview of the school system’s new strategic plan that will guide Worcester County Public Schools’ priorities through 2030.

The 2026-2030 plan, entitled “Learn, Lead and Succeed,” ensures every student is “known, supported, challenged and prepared for the future,” said WCPS Coordinator of Public Relations Carrie Sterrs.

As part of the new strategic framework, the school board adopted a new mission and vision. The mission states, “In Worcester County, we know every student by name, strength and need.” The vision reads, “WCPS is a school community where every student is empowered to learn, lead and succeed.”

The board also adopted five core values — community, respect, excellence, growth, and creativity — based on feedback from over 1,100 school system stakeholders. Officials said the values reflect the culture the community wants to build throughout its classrooms and schools.

Matthew Record, chief safety and

academic officer, said school safety is a foundational component of the entire strategic plan rather than a goal limited to one area.

“Safety is foundational and is all encompassing in all areas of our strategic direction,” Record said.

He added that responsibility falls to all members of the school system, including administrators, teachers, parents, and outside agencies.

The plan establishes four overarching goals: student success and future readiness; belonging and well-being; staff and organizational excellence; and communication and collaboration.

Under the student success and future readiness goal, WCPS will focus on academic growth while preparing students for a variety of paths after graduation, including higher education, military service, and careers.

Key performance indicators include increasing the percentage of students demonstrating readiness on the kindergarten readiness assessment and increasing the percentage of third-grade students demonstrating reading proficiency on the Maryland State Assessment. Additional measures will track mathematics achievement in third and eighth grades as well as college and career readiness at the high school level.

Record said the measures are in-

tended to serve as milestones rather than the sole definition of student success.

The second goal, belonging and well-being, focuses on ensuring students feel safe, supported, and connected to their schools.

Under the new plan, WCPS will seek to decrease chronic absenteeism, ensure the risk ratio for exclusionary discipline remains below the state’s threshold for disproportionality, and increase the percentage of students who report favorable opinions of school safety through the Maryland School Survey.

According to Jennifer Sills, interim chief academic officer, the third goal, staff and organizational excellence, recognizes that student success depends on having strong employees and systems in place to support them.

The goal includes attracting, developing, and retaining high-quality staff while guaranteeing the school system operates efficiently and responsibly.

Among the indicators are increasing the percentage of teachers and administrators trained in the science of reading, increasing staff attendance, increasing the percentage of teachers of color hired into teaching and leadership positions, and increasing the percentage of professional staff with a master’s degree or higher.

The plan also calls for maintaining

or increasing the number of schools earning a satisfactory grade on the WCPS Health and Wellness Action Plan Assessment and ensuring the annual financial statement audit is completed in a timely manner with an unqualified opinion.

The final goal focuses on communication and collaboration between the school system, families, and the broader Worcester County community.

Sills said strong relationships and trust were consistent themes in feedback gathered during the strategic planning process.

“This goal emphasizes transparent, meaningful communication and opportunities for our stakeholders and community partners to remain actively connected to our work in our schools,” she said.

WCPS will measure progress by tracking satisfaction with district and school communications through its annual family survey. The plan also requires each school to maintain a crisis communication plan as part of its annual emergency planning documents, aligned with the school system’s Standard Response Protocol.

Sills said the strategic plan was also developed to align with the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. The four local goals connect across all five of the Blueprint’s pillars, she said.



OPEN HOUSES

Aug. 27 - Sept. 3



DAY/TIME	ADDRESS	BR/BA	STYLE	PRICE	AGENT/AGENCY
Fri-Mon 11am-4pm	Heron Harbour, 120th St., Bayside, Ocean City	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 \$279,750	Shelly Wilson/Salt Life Community
Friday Noon-2pm	12301 Jamaica Avenue #351N, Ocean City	2BR/2BA	Condo	\$499,900	Nancy Reither/Coldwell Banker Realty
Friday 2-4pm	6201 Coastal Highway #806, Ocean City	4BR/3BA	Condo	\$1,678,000	Nancy Reither/Coldwell Banker Realty
Saturday 10:30am-12:30pm	35596 N. Gloucester Circle, Millsboro, DE	3BR/2.5BA	Townhome	\$305,000	Katie Landon/Coldwell Banker Realty
Saturday 10:30am-12:30pm	12301 Jamaica Avenue, #351N, Ocean City	2BR/2BA	Condo	\$499,900	Nancy Reither/Coldwell Banker Realty
Saturday 11am-1pm	5034 Spencer Rd, Snow Hill	4BR/3.5BA	Single Family	\$699,300	Power of 2 Team/Hileman Real Estate
Saturday 11am-3pm	12430 Old Bridge Rd., West OC	2BR/2BA	Single Family	from \$279,750	Shelly Wilson/Salt Life Community
Saturday Noon-2pm	75 King Richard Road, Ocean Pines	4BR/3.5BA	Single Family	\$829,900	Nancy Reither/Coldwell Banker Realty
Saturday 1-3pm	306 14th Street Unit A, Ocean City	3BR/3.5BA	Townhome	\$899,900	Nancy Reither/Coldwell Banker Realty
Saturday 2-4pm	12418 Coastal Marsh Drive, Berlin	4BR/3.5BA	Single Family	\$657,500	Katie Landon/Coldwell Banker Realty
Sunday 10:30am-12:30pm	953 Yacht Club, Ocean Pines	3BR/2.5BA	Townhome	\$479,900	Katie Landon/Coldwell Banker Realty
Sunday 11:30am-1:30pm	306 14th Street Unit A, Ocean City	3BR/3.5BA	Townhome	\$899,900	Nancy Reither/Coldwell Banker Realty
Sunday 11:30am-1:30pm	302 Franklin Avenue, Berlin	3BR/2BA	Single Family	\$410,000	Nancy Reither/Coldwell Banker Realty
Sunday 1-3pm	22 Capetown Road, Ocean Pines	4BR/2.5BA	Single Family	\$424,500	Rob & Anne-Marie Bouse/RE/MAX Advantage Realty
Sunday 1:30-3:30pm	12418 Coastal Marsh Drive, Berlin	4BR/3.5BA	Single Family	\$657,500	Katie Landon/Coldwell Banker Realty
Monday Noon-2pm	306 14th Street Unit A, Ocean City	3BR/3.5BA	Townhome	\$899,900	Nancy Reither/Coldwell Banker Realty

**For additional Real Estate Offerings in the area, don't miss the
Labor Day Weekend Coastal Association of Realtors Real Estate Guide,
inserted into OC Today-Dispatch's September 4th Holiday Weekend Issue!**



Puzzles

TAKE THE EDGE OFF
BY SAM BRODY / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Sam Brody, of Brooklyn, is a research scientist and software engineer specializing in natural language processing. This is his fourth crossword (and second Sunday) for The Times. "The idea for this puzzle's theme started with 79-Across," he says, "but in reverse — the clue was initially the grid entry, and vice versa." Then he realized that solving in the opposite direction would be more fun. — W.S.

ACROSS

1 Work parodied by Umberto Eco's "Granita"

7 Subject of Hawthorne's "The Scarlet Letter"

10 One's opponents

14 Uncool

18 Untold

19 Down Under runners

21 Caramel-filled candy

22 Word following bear or honey

23 ATSO and EKYL

27 Astonished, informally

28 With 45-Across, many a correspondent

29 Do business

30 Uncle, in Uruguay

31 Water nymph of Greek myth

33 Poet's Muse

34 Memorial Kettering (New York City medical facility)

36 RAVES

41 It may be petrified

42 Acknowledge

43 El , Tex.

44 Sass

45 See 28-Across

47 Eggy quaff

48 Trudge

50 Approaching

54 Some funerary selections

56 SAG

60 Stands for speakers

62 Preserver of freshness

63 Sent

64 Place for a sailor's anchor, informally

67 Hunk

70 Disapproving syllables

72 It may be mental

73 Out, in a way

75 "That's cool, man"

77 Words that may open doors

79 NIGHT

83 Learning method

87 Guard, as a goal

88 Get rid of

89 "Yadda, yadda"

90 Squeaker ... or squealer

92 Home improvement initials

93 Italian wine city

95 Fiber also known as viscose

97 Toddler's jumping spot on a rainy day

99 FRAN

104 More reasonable

105 Interprets

106 Suspended musical instruments

107 Vein contents

108 Calm

111 Title that becomes loftier when an E is added

112 Escort to a penthouse, say

116 IALO

120 Even

121 Carry on

122 Tender cut

123 Pie portions, shapewise

124 Crones

125 Gas brand that sounds like two letters of the alphabet

126 Invention originally developed as a yellow dye

127 Refuse to budge

DOWN

1 Striplings

2 Texter's "Then again ..."

3 Bananas

4 Chants

5 Briefly swam

6 Home to more than 1,500 languages: Abbr.

7 Affixed, as a patch

8 "Let's do this!"

9 Macadamia, for one

10 Closely following

11 Racing vehicle

12 Napoleon exile site

13 No longer relevant

14 Inc., abroad

15 Childish comeback

16 Maid of Sherwood Forest

17 Many a printer

20 Consequences of supply-chain problems

24 Cross

25 Dizzying gallery works

26 Pauses while playing

32 Treasure or desert follower

33 Ewoks' home moon

35 Job that may involve jumping through hoops

36 Form of detective fiction

37 Channel for gaming enthusiasts?

38 Actress Skye

39 Words after check, follow or catch

40 Bum

41 Reason to take a shot

46 Some odoriferous gifts

48 Smartphone predecessors, for short

49 Female rapper with a longtime feud with Foxy Brown

51 "Diminutive" Greek letter

52 Nickname that omits "ory"

53 London park

55 Chemistry test?

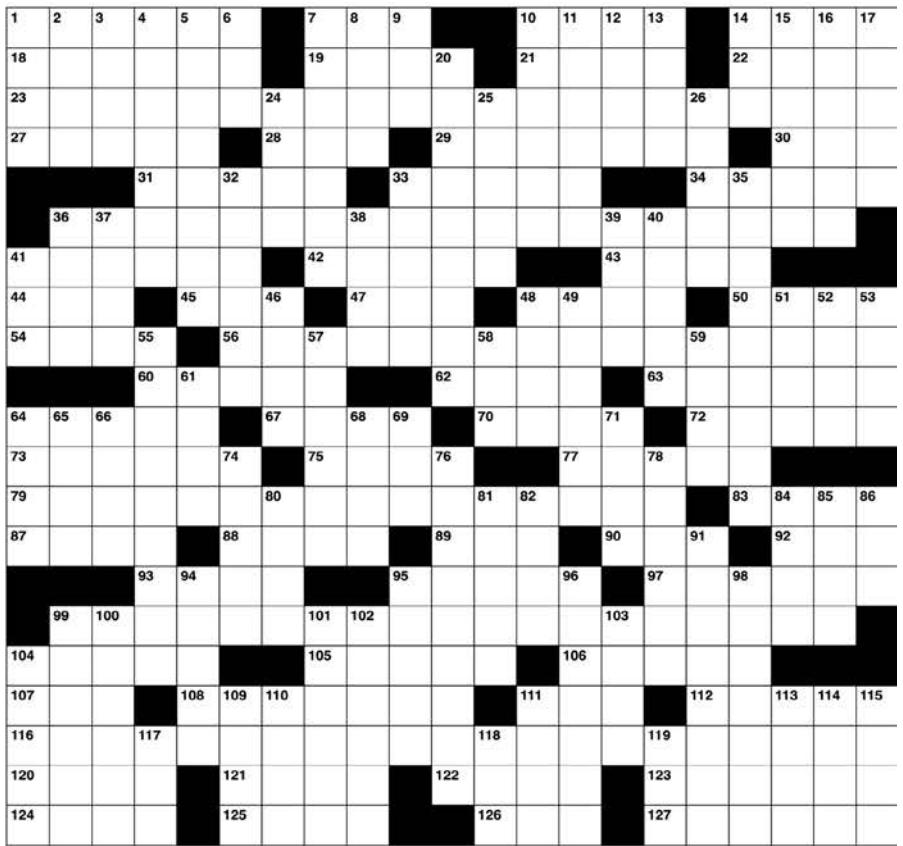
57 Travel bag

58 Bag

59 Not very favorable, as some 84-Down

61 Car with a stylized lightning bolt logo

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



- 64 Thai money

65 "Gotcha"

66 Group with a tartan

68 It may drive one to distraction, in brief

69 Thumbnail, maybe

71 A-lister

74 Sauce traditionally made in a mortar

76 Steal

78 Attach with a click

80 Carpenter's spacer
- 81 Ophthalmology concerns

82 Green sci.

84 2 to 5, say

85 Infraction at an arcade

86 of Horus (Egyptian symbol of healing)

91 Element used in bulb filaments

94 "Shoo!"

95 Display some emotion, perhaps
- 96 Member of the N.F.L.'s "Big Blue," in brief

98 Prepares to purée, perhaps, as papayas

99 Fantasy realm ruled by King Caspian

100 Feature of Anthony Robles, a 2011 N.C.A.A. national champion wrestler

101 Shows pride in one's appearance, in a way

102 Result in
- 103 Producer of a call to arms

104 Go (fail)

109 Poop

110 School grps.

111 Hide

113 Vet

114 Western Indians

115 Subtle summons

117 Fingers

118 Park place?

119 Road recklessness of a sort, for short

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HARD - 19

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.

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

Answers to last week's puzzles

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

ATALLHEISTSFLUAXIS
COMEONINTHEWATERSFINE
CONGRESSIONALDISTRICT
OCEANUS SWAMP DAYO
ROSTER UNUM HOE EMAIL
DOTE ONTOP DAUNT ANNE
SLY SLEET DEBT HINTAT
BOONS LIFESPAN CHI
LODGE HAVETHINGSOUT
TODAY MOVEASONE NLRB
ROTIS TONISTONE MOORE
IMIN PALESTINE TAWNY
TONGUE LASHING COVEY
URL BEESTING DOMED
ARISEN SANG GROAN SIP
LOFT SHENG WRIST MINE
SWEET USS IHOP ISOLDE
POOL WARIO FLAREUP
CORPORATESURVEILLANCE
INVERTEDROLLERCOASTER
SASS ODS FESSES TSARS

Worcester allows natural organic reduction

Continued from Page 18
there forever – very low impact,” he said.

Cropper also acknowledged that “it’s not a use that everybody might be happy is next to their house,” but insisted the composted soil would be odor-free and nontoxic.

He also said this doesn’t make the site into a cemetery – which is its own regulated land use – because there would be no signage, public access, or regular traffic associated with the property.

In 2024, Maryland approved what’s known as “natural organic reduction” under the Green Death Care Options Act. The law sets a regulatory framework for facilities performing the process and prohibits the resulting soil from being used to grow food for humans or livestock. It also legalized a different process known as water cremation.

The act, however, did not spell out where or how large quantities of the resulting soil could be applied, leaving Worcester County to decide how such a use fit within its zoning rules.

For Earth Funeral, which is also a licensed state funeral home, the

Scotty Road property would be its first land application site in Maryland since opening a processing facility in Elkridge in May. The company has run a similar reforestation project in Washington state for about four years.

The roughly \$5,000 process relies on a chemical-free mixture of wildflowers, wood chips, and microbes to transform a corpse into roughly 300 pounds of soil in 30 to 60 days. The resulting soil is tested for pathogens, heavy metals, and harmful bacteria before leaving the facility.

Families decide how much of the resulting soil they want to keep. The remainder can be mixed with material from other decedents, stored at Elkridge, and eventually hauled in sealed containers to a conservation site such as the Worcester property, according to Scott Roycroft, the company’s head of real estate.

Some details remain unsettled. Earth Funeral did not identify the local funeral home it would work with, nor did the company say when the first soil application would occur.

County officials previously said the applicants had discussed applying

roughly 15 to 30 cubic yards of material per acre, although the final rate will be determined through a nutrient management plan.

Among several neighbors who raised concerns at the zoning hearing was Roger Richardson, a former Maryland agriculture secretary who, at age 92, said he still farms about 4,000 acres.

He objected to taking what he called “good farmland” out of agricultural production and questioned how the material would be handled.

“How do you spread it? Do you use manure spreaders?” he asked. “I didn’t particularly like spreading chicken manure. God knows I’m not gonna spread people.”

Donna West, Richardson’s daughter, questioned why the Snow Hill-area farmland, located about 130 miles away from the Elkridge facility, was attractive to Earth Funeral.

“Why are you choosing Worcester County? It’s so far away from Howard County. And why would a company of your magnitude put so much money into a facility and not have the forethought of having a place to put the remains?” she said.

Tree farmer and lifelong Worcester County resident Robert Jones, 81, said his 191-acre property borders the project site.

“My only concern is, Roger [Richardson] and I will be the guinea pigs for this project,” he told the zoning board. “There’s no past experience to go by, as far as I can tell, that says ‘this will work.’ Hopefully it will.”

Zoning approval was subject to several conditions. No crops may be grown for human consumption, which is already state law, and acreage awaiting trees must remain planted with active cover crops.

Hunting rights would also be leased to control deer, and no soil could be applied within 50 feet of the property lines or road. Qualified professionals also would inspect the property twice a year and report back to Worcester County.

Voting in favor of the special exception were Worcester County Board of Zoning Appeals members Beth Gismondi, Robert Purcell, Thomas Babcock, and Stephen Katsanos. Lisa Bowen and Larry Fykes voted no.

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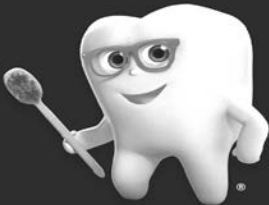
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Calendar

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

Thurs., Aug. 27

OCEAN CITY JEEP FEST
Roland E. Powell Convention Center, 4001 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Featuring Beach Crawls, Sand Course, Show & Shine, Vendor Village, live entertainment and nightly social events. For registration, schedules and event information, visit <https://oceancityjeepfest.com>. 303-877-4352

SUMMER SEND OFF
On the beach from Dorchester St. to Third St., Ocean City, 4-9:30 p.m. Depending on wind conditions, you'll see either massive, colorful kites or tethered hot air balloons. Laser show from 8:30-9:30 p.m. <https://www.ococean.com/events/summer-send-off/>

OCEAN PINES CONCERTS IN THE PARK
White Horse Park Pavilion, Ocean Pines, 7-9 p.m. Free community event featuring "Cheyenne Pohl and Clockwork Band." Food for sale. BYOB welcome. 410-641-7052

SUNSET PARK CONCERTS
Sunset Park, 700 S. Philadelphia Ave., Ocean City, 7-9 p.m. Featuring "Tranz-fusion." Admission to the park is free. <https://www.ococean.com/things-to-do/free-family-fun/sunset-park-party-nights/>

PLAY TIME
Worcester County Library - Snow Hill Branch, 307 N. Washington St., 10:30 a.m. Join in for a variety of activities and toys. Play and socialize with other families. For ages 0-5 years. 410-632-5622, worcesterlibrary.org

STORY TIME: I AM WRIGGLY
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

COFFEE & CRAFTS: SHELL ART
Worcester County Library - Ocean City Branch, 10003 Coastal Highway, 10:30 a.m.-noon. Join in every month for a new craft. Materials provided. Limit 30. 410-524-1818, 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., Aug. 28

OCEAN CITY JEEP FEST
Roland E. Powell Convention Center, 4001 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, 7:30

a.m.-5 p.m. Featuring Beach Crawls, Sand Course, Show & Shine, Vendor Village, live entertainment and nightly social events. For registration, schedules and event information, visit <https://oceancityjeepfest.com>. 303-877-4352

SUMMER SEND OFF
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BOARDWALK EAGLE HUNT
Ocean City Boardwalk, 12-8 p.m. Free activity for kids 12 years and younger. Pick up playing cards at participating merchants or the Information Booth. Find the plush eagles, get card stamped and return to receive an 8" plush eagle. 703-731-6515

BACK 2 SCHOOL BASH
Market St., Pocomoke City, 5-8 p.m. Collecting new school supplies to help stock the classrooms and supply closets in Pocomoke schools. Enjoy food vendors, cash bar, bounce house and DJ Kay. Supply list: <https://downtown-pocomoke.com>. 410-957-1333

LIBERTY CALLS! MUSICAL THEATER
Art League of Ocean City, 502 94th St., 7-9 p.m. Musical about the founding fathers as performed by the Lower Shore Performing Arts Company. Tickets: \$25 per person. <https://canvas.artleagueofoceancity.org/events/35>, 410-524-9433

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

Sat., Aug. 29

OCEAN CITY JEEP FEST
Roland E. Powell Convention Center, 4001 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Featuring Beach Crawls, Sand Course, Show & Shine, Vendor Village, live entertainment and nightly social events. For registration, schedules and event information, visit <https://oceancityjeepfest.com>. 303-877-4352

OCEAN CITY SEAFOOD FESTIVAL
Northside Park, 200 125th St., Ocean City, 1-8 p.m. Steamed crabs; Maryland seafood; beer, wine and cocktails, live music; cooking demos; family friendly and free to kids ages 16 and younger.

Tickets: <https://ocmdseafoodfest.com>.

SUMMER SEND OFF
On the beach from Dorchester St. to Third St., Ocean City, 4-9:30 p.m. Depending on wind conditions, you'll see either massive, colorful kites or tethered hot air balloons. Laser show from 8:30-9:30 p.m. <https://www.ococean.com/events/summer-send-off/>

BILL ENGVALL: HERE'S YOUR SIGN - IT WASN'T MY TIME!
Ocean City Performing Arts Center, 4001 Coastal Highway, 7 p.m. Featuring Bill Engvall, one of the top comedians in the country. Tickets: <https://www.etix.com/ticket/p/36142502/bill-engvallheres-your-sign-it-wasnt-my-time-ocean-city-oc-performing-arts-center>.

FREE KIDS CRAFT SATURDAYS
Art League of Ocean City, 502 94th St., 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Featuring "Turtle Collage." Guided crafts led by friendly instructors. All supplies provided. Jessica Bauer, development@artleagueofoceancity.org, 410-524-9433

OCEAN PINES FARMERS & ARTISANS MARKET
Saturdays - White Horse Park, 239 Ocean Parkway, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. 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., Aug. 30

OCEAN CITY JEEP FEST
Roland E. Powell Convention Center, 4001 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Featuring Beach Crawls, Sand Course, Show & Shine, Vendor Village, live entertainment and nightly social events. For registration, schedules and event information, visit <https://oceancityjeepfest.com>. 303-877-4352

SUMMER SEND OFF
On the beach from Dorchester St. to Third St., Ocean City, 4-9:30 p.m. Depending on wind conditions, you'll see either massive, colorful kites or tethered hot air balloons. Laser show from 8:30-9:30 p.m. <https://www.ococean.com/events/summer-send-off/>

SUNDAES IN THE PARK WITH FIREWORKS
Northside Park, 200 125th St., Ocean City, 7-9 p.m. Featuring "Fast Times at Shermer High: Back to the 80's." Ice

cream for purchase. Followed by fireworks. <https://www.ococean.com/things-to-do/free-family-fun/sundaes-in-the-park/>

QUACKS ON THE RACETRACK TRUCK GIVEAWAY FUNDRAISER
Ocean Downs Casino, 10218 Racetrack Road, Berlin, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Duck Toss held following the 3rd race. Toss your duck (\$5) for a chance to win a brand new 2026 Toyota Tacoma. <https://www.oceandowns.com/promotions/quacks-on-the-racetrack-truck-giveaway-3/>

BERLIN FARMERS MARKET
Sundays (May-October) - Pitts, Commerce and Main streets, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., rain or shine. Producers only market, petting farm (9-11 a.m.), live music. www.TheBerlinFarmersMarket.com

SEWING SEEDS OF LOVE
Sundays - Buckingham Presbyterian Church, 20 S. Main St., Berlin, 10-11 a.m. Youth of all ages 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., Aug. 31

TOPS OF BERLIN - GROUP #169
TidalHealth Atlantic, Conference Room 1, 9733 Healthway Drive, Berlin, 5-6:30 p.m. Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) is an educational group that promotes weight loss and a healthy lifestyle. Held weekly on Mondays. <https://www.tops.org/home>

ZUMBA
Mondays - Ocean Pines Community Center, 235 Ocean Parkway, 4:30 p.m. Zumba with optional light weights. zumbajoyceoc@gmail.com

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. If you plan to visit, please Contact: Director: Ludwig692@outlook.com, 410-641-6876 or Membership Coordinator: ocelissa@yahoo.com, 410-641-8050.

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

Calendar

Tues., Sept. 1

LIBRARY CARD SIGN UP CRAFT: MEI MEI THE BUNNY
Worcester County Library - Ocean City Branch, 10003 Coastal Highway, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Celebrate the ALA's honorary chair, singer-songwriter Laufey, with her new children's book, "Mei Mei the Bunny." Stop in to make a Mei Mei-themed craft and get a library card. 410-524-1818

PLAY TIME AT THE PARK
Cypress Park, 7 Bridge St., Pocomoke City, 10:30 a.m. Join in for a casual meet up. Play, have fun and meet friends. For ages 2-5 years. 410-957-0878

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. 410-632-5622

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

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

MASTER GARDENERS PLANT CLINIC
Worcester County Library - Ocean Pines Branch, 11107 Cathell Road, 1-4 p.m. Bring any questions you have and feel free to show your plants as well. 410-208-4014, worcesterlibrary.org

SAVE IT FOR LATER: INTRODUCTION TO FOOD PRESERVATION
Worcester County Library - Ocean City Branch, 10003 Coastal Highway, 2 p.m. Learn about different types of food preservation and try drying herbs. Presented by the University of Maryland Extension. Registration required: 410-524-1818. worcesterlibrary.org

TEEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Worcester County Library - Ocean Pines Branch, 11107 Cathell Road, 3:30 p.m. Join in for a discussion about library programming. Enjoy pizza and share ideas. For ages 12-18 years. Registration required: 410-208-4014. worcesterlibrary.org

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS SEAFOOD NIGHT
Columbus Hall, 9901 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, 4:30-6:30 p.m. Steamed crabs, crab cakes, fried seafood platters, and a menu for all is available. You must pre-order crabs by calling 410-524-7994 or visiting <https://koc9053-seafood-nights.square.site/>.

BEACH HEROES-OC
Tuesdays - Volunteer beach clean-up group meets from 9-10 a.m., year-round. Trash bags, grabbers 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

ARGENTINE TANGO PRACTICE
Tuesdays - Lewes Senior Center, 32083 Janice Rd. Lewes, DE, 7-9 p.m. Experienced dancers and others interested in watching or learning more are welcome. No partner required. Info: TangobytheBeach.com.

ZUMBA TONING TUESDAYS
Tuesdays - Northside Park, 200 125th St., Ocean City, 5:15 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., Sept. 2

AUTHOR TALK: DAN O'HARE
Worcester County Library - Ocean Pines Branch, 11107 Cathell Road, 11 a.m. Local author Dan O'Hare talks about his coming of age novel, "Water Dressed in Brown," set in Ocean Pines in the early 1990s. 410-208-4014

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

YOUNG INVENTORS CLUB
Worcester County Library - Ocean City Branch, 10003 Coastal Highway, 4:30 p.m. Learn about the invention process, create your own logbook, and turn imagination into original ideas. For families. 410-524-1818, worcesterlibrary.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 in-

formation can be found on the website and Facebook. www.kiwanisofopoc.org.

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

ZUMBA PLUS!!
Wednesdays - Ocean Pines Community Center, 235 Ocean Parkway, 4:30 p.m. Zumba with optional light weights. zumbajoyceoc@gmail.com

ONGOING EVENTS

HISTORY-TO-GO - PUMPKIN CARVING
Snow Hill library, 301 Bank St., throughout September. Learn how Halloween has been celebrated throughout history and get patterns to carve historically inspired pumpkins. 410-632-5622

TEEN & TWEEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE - NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS
Pocomoke library, 401 5th Street, Unit 100. Build leadership skills and add something meaningful to your resume. Applications are available in the guidance office at Pocomoke Middle School and Pocomoke High School. Submit application by Oct. 31. For ages 12-18

years. 410-957-0878

TEEN TIME
Ocean Pines library, 11107 Cathell Road, throughout September, 3:30 p.m. Create a festive wreath in time for fall. While supplies last. For ages 12-18 years. 410-208-4014

OC READS: 'THE BERRY PICKERS' BY AMANDA PETERS
Ocean City library, 10003 Coastal Highway, Sept. 1-30. Simply pick up a copy of this month's read, "The Berry Pickers" by Amanda Peters. Come in before the end of the month to share your impressions and enter the drawing to win free books. 410-524-1818

STORYWALK TAKE AND MAKE
Snow Hill library, 301 Bank St., Sept. 1-Nov. 30. Stop by the library to pick up supplies to make a fall nature mobile. Then, take a walk while you read the library's newest StoryWalk title at John Walter Smith Park. For families. 410-632-5622

CREATIVITY CORNER
Berlin library, 13 Harrison Ave. Enjoy the monthly craft, work on the puzzle, add to the community journal or challenge a friend to a board or card game in the Teen Loft. For ages 12-18 years. 410-641-0650

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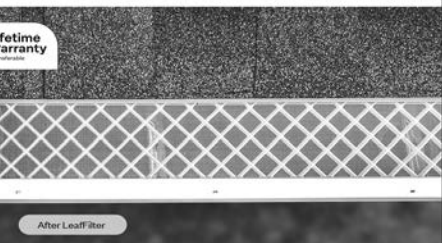
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