Stefan Parkins and Rohan Chamberlain prune a peach tree at Fishkill Farms.

Healthy Appetite for Farm Goods
Farmers pivot to online, phone sales
By Leonard Sparks
The first blooms had arrived on Fishkill Farms' fruit trees, but not the Jamaican farmworkers who have for years been granted visas to work the 270-acre farm's fields and greenhouses for up to nine months.

Beacon Prison Virus Cases Highest in State
Calls mount for greater protection, early releases
By Leonard Sparks
The Fishkill Correctional Facility in Beacon tops the state's prisons in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases among inmates, leading to calls for early releases and greater protections to prevent a major outbreak.

State Closes Highlands Park Trails
Hikers no longer allowed on Breakneck, Anthony's Nose
By Chip Rowe
On Tuesday (April 21), the state parks department announced it has closed all trails on Breakneck Ridge, Anthony's Nose and Mount Taurus (Bull Hill), as well as at Little Stony Point and Indian Brook Falls in Philipstown.

Indian Point to Begin Shutdown
First of two reactors will go offline next week
By Brian PJ Cronin
After decades of production and protests, the Indian Point nuclear power plant will begin to shut down next week with the closure of one of its two remaining reactors.

Reactor No. 2 is scheduled to shut down on Thursday (April 30), with No. 3 to follow in April 2021. The plant was built in 1962; No. 2 went online in 1974 and No. 3 in 1976. (No. 1 was shut down in 1974 because its cooling system did not meet regulatory requirements.)

The scheduled closure was announced three years ago by Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Entergy, which owns and operates the plant on the Hudson River near Peekskill.

(Continued on Page 21)
FIVE QUESTIONS: JULIE MASTRINE

By Chip Rowe

Julie Mastrine, of Beacon, is the director of marketing for Allsides.com.

Allsides is best known for its Media Bias Ratings chart. How is that compiled?

We have multiple methodologies. We have editorial team members from all over the country and different places on the political spectrum, and they reach a consensus. We also do surveys where we strip identifying info from content and have people rate how biased they think it is. We've done ratings for about 600 media outlets. Bias isn't the problem; it's when sources try to hide their bias.

So the ideal would be to end up in the center?

Our center doesn’t mean a source is unbiased or neutral or reasonable or even credible. It just means it doesn’t predictably favor either side of the political perspective. In fact, a source with a center rating might omit certain perspectives.

How did the site get started?

John Gable, who worked for Republicans, including Sen. Mitch McConnell, and then went into tech, gave a speech about 15 years ago where he expressed his concern that the internet would polarize us and train our brains to discriminate against each other in new ways, and that’s exactly what happened. He teamed up with Joan Blades, who co-founded Moveon.org, and in 2012 they created the site to help people break out of their filter bubbles — that is, when someone is only exposed to news and information that confirms their beliefs, or they only interact with like-minded people to the point where you may view the other side as evil. We see a lot of that on the internet. Even search engines keep you in your bubble based on what you click on.

You compiled a list of 11 types of media bias. Is there one that drives you particularly crazy as a news consumer?

For me, it’s “spin,” when a fact is presented in a way that makes it vague or tilts one way or another. For instance, the phrase “Trump rages” jumps out. To me, that’s colored language. But I’ve had the argument with people who say, “That’s a fact. He’s raging.” It can be difficult. You also often see media bias, I think, in rural versus urban. A lot of media is written by people who live in Los Angeles, New York and Washington, D.C., so middle America can be omitted or misrepresented.

You also are a fire dancer. When did that begin?

That’s something I got into when I lived in San Francisco. It’s part of flow arts, when people perform with props, such as hula hoops. You can set them on fire, although you don’t have to. There’s a community of fire dancers around Beacon, actually. We do a lot of practicing without fire, but the fire is the fun part.
Garrison Names New Superintendent

Hires Tuckahoe administrator, who will begin July 1

By Chip Rowe

The Garrison school board announced on Wednesday (April 22) that it has hired a superintendent to succeed Laura Mitchell, who left in December.

Carl Albano, who was most recently superintendent of the Tuckahoe school district in Westchester County, will begin July 1, the board said. If the board approves a three-year contract at its May 6 meeting, as is expected, Albano will receive a salary of $198,000; he earned $184,000 in his last year at Tuckahoe, and Mitchell made $184,000. The Garrison district has had an interim superintendent, Debra Jackson, since January.

“Albano became the Tuckahoe superintendent in 2016 after serving as the assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction and pupil personnel services from 2012 to 2016 and the Tuckahoe Middle School principal from 2003 to 2012. Earlier in his career, Albano was an elementary school assistant principal, high school assistant principal and fifth-grade teacher.

He informed the Tuckahoe board in June 2019 that he planned to leave his position at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Instead, he left Dec. 2 and was replaced by an interim, Amy Goodman, who on April 22 was named by the Tuckahoe district as his successor.

Albano grew up in Mount Vernon and holds a bachelor of science in education from St. John's University and a master's in education from Pace University. He also studied school administration and supervision at Iona College and Fordham University.

Albano lives in Larchmont with his wife, Maria, who is a special education teacher in the Mamaroneck district, and their two children, Ava and Carl, the district said. His father, George Albano, is a longtime educator in Mount Vernon, and a cousin, also named Carl, is a Putnam County legislator. Mitchell, who was hired as the Garrison superintendent in 2014, said in an email to parents last fall that she and the board had reached an “amicable mutual agreement” for her departure. In a statement dated Nov. 1, the board wrote that “after many months of deliberation” the district and Mitchell had “agreed to move in a new direction.”

Grading On A COVID Curve

Districts must evaluate virtual learning

By Jeff Simms

As the inevitability of students completing the school year on a screen looms closer, so too does the difficult decision about how to best evaluate their work.

School officials throughout the Highlands agree they’re not likely to use standard grading during the final quarter of the 2019-20 session.

In Beacon, Superintendent Matt Landahl said a team of administrators and teachers is leaning toward having educators assess whether students are submitting their work and meeting more broadly defined learning standards.

“We initially thought of using a pass/fail grading system,” Landahl said, “but we have a lot of kids who are working hard,” so pass/fail may not satisfy them.

The district’s standards will be based on “compassion and understanding, now that we’re essentially partnering with our families on education,” Landahl said. “We don’t want a grade to be the main emphasis, but we’re also trying to find a system that acknowledges the hard work students are doing.”

At Haldane, Superintendent Phil Bena- nte said in an email that elementary school teachers will monitor students’ work as “complete, in progress or missing,” while providing “descriptive feedback.” At the middle and high school levels, teachers will work with students to create learning plans while tracking progress toward “essential learning outcomes.” The district has not yet decided how to administer grades for secondary students, he wrote.

At Garrison, which has students from kindergarten through eighth grade, an e-learning plan issued on April 9 said that “classwork and homework will continue to be graded based upon the academic expectations established by each teacher,” although, initially, the educators will mark assignments for completion rather than for a grade. “We are still working on the most sensible approach to quarter, semester and final grades,” it said.

Beacon School Budget Still Uncertain

How do you plan during a pandemic?

By Jeff Simms

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Beacon school district is wrestling with what it can ask from taxpayers for the 2020-21 school year.

The district has proposed a $75.8 million budget, which includes $41.6 million in revenue to be collected through property taxes. That’s an increase of $1.3 million, or 2.31 percent, over last year.

Using the most recent assessment figures, the average Beacon home would pay $126 more in school taxes if the budget is approved. Increases would be roughly $156 for district residents living in Fishkill and Wappingers.

Another major source of revenue is state aid, the amount of which is typically not known until late in the process. But this year it’s particularly unclear. Last year, the state gave Beacon nearly $29.5 million; this year it was expecting $30.4 million, but the coronavirus has left New York billions of dollars in the red. (See Page 10.)

The state has already deducted nearly $725,000 from Beacon’s aid as a “pandemic adjustment,” Deputy Superintendent Ann Marie Quaritironi told the school board during its April 14 meeting, which was held by video conference. A federal aid package re- placed the district for the same amount, but additional state cuts could be coming at the end of the month and then again in June and September, she said.

“Our goal with this budget is to hold taxes as low as possible,” Quaritironi said, “but we have to look to next year and the year after. I was thinking about putting as much into reserves as I could to hedge a cut [in funding] that we don’t see coming. I’m more worried about going forward than this coming year.”

Rather than cut the budget further, Vice President Meredith Heuer suggested the district gauge what it actually needs to provide an education for its students. “It’s important that we give a real number,” she said. “To undermine our budget gives a false sense of what it costs to run the district.”
Historic update

For the past few years, the members of the Cold Spring Historic District Review Board have logged hundreds of hours updating the village’s design guidelines for property owners. This document has not had a refresh since it was created in 1989. Our goal is to provide a more user-friendly resource, expanded to cover advances in 21st-century materials and technologies, as well as energy awareness and other contemporary principles in preservation practice.

We are in the final stages of the design. In coming weeks, I will take advantage of the warming weather, semi-bare trees and emptier streets to update some of the photography in the book, highlighting architectural styles, adornment and restoration case studies. Let me know of any recent work you’re particularly proud of and we’ll try to include it.

We’d also like to invite our neighbors who may be desperate for an “indoor” project to share any historic images of their homes or of the village they may have collected, including from family barbecues, the first days of school, parades or trick-or-treating, that contain great glimpses of homes and shops. We are interested in images of buildings which have been significantly altered or lost over the years, as well as business and storefronts that are no longer with us. In addition, we’d love to see before-and-after photos of renovation projects, and especially historic drawings, plans or other documentation families have passed down. Let me know of any recent work you’re particularly proud of and we’ll try to include it.

In advance for your help in preserving our beautiful and interesting community.

Sean Conway, Cold Spring Conway is a member of the five-person Historic District Review Board.

Budget cuts

As a retiree living in Beacon, I think this is a critical time for lawmakers to shape decisions. It is unconscionable that the recently completed state budget makes cuts in education and health care, and further cuts must be prevented.

Such cuts hit working people with the lowest incomes — many of whom are on the front line of the coronavirus crisis — the hardest. The right way to fill budget gaps is to make the wealthy pay a bigger share of the burden imposed by the crisis. I expect Assembly Member Jonathan Jacobson and Sen. Sue Serino, whose districts include Beacon, to act in this sense during the legislative decisions that will have to be made.

Cries require ongoing, democratic, effective and rapid decision-making. Other states, such as Pennsylvania, have shown the way. New communication technologies make remote hearings, meetings and voting possible and our elected representatives should use them. Elections are only a few months away and we will watch carefully to see who steps up to their responsibilities.

Peter Unterweger, Beacon

Legal assistance

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley is a nonprofit law firm that provides free advice and representation in civil (non-criminal) matters to residents of Putnam, Dutchess and other Hudson Valley counties.

The courts in New York remain open for emergency cases involving housing; domestic violence; advanced planning directives such as wills, health care proxies and guardianships; unemployment benefit denials; and public benefits. We are assisting clients with applications to the courts to vacate judgments and delay wage garnishments, levies and bank account restraints.

Some of our grants allow us to serve middle-income households — don’t assume you’re not eligible because you own a home or have a job. We can be reached by phone at 877-574-8529 or through lshv.org.

Avery Zuvic, White Plains

Zuvic is the assistant director of development for Legal Services of the Hudson Valley.

Nelsonville budget

I attended a Nelsonville 2020-21 budget workshop just a few days before stay-at-home restrictions were enacted (“No Tax Hike Foreseen in Nelsonville,” April 17). I attended because I am interested in how public funds are allocated. In fact, when I was a trustee [from 2017 to 2019], I was one of the architects of the 2019-20 budget.

During the budget workshop, a line item was introduced that calls for diverting $2,710 in public funds to the Philipstown Behavioral Health Hub in Cold Spring. While I do not disagree with the mission of The Hub, I question the propriety of redirecting public funds to a 501(c)(3) organization when Nelsonville does not have a mechanism in place to provide grants to nonprofit organizations. Does this mean that any nonprofit

(Continued on Page 5)
(Continued from Page 4)

should have the ability to request public funds? There are nonprofits that might not seem as worthy, and this action sets a precedent.

When I raised these concerns, I was informed that since a “health” line exists in the budget, it provided an opportunity to make a donation. To be clear, Nelsonville does not have a health department. The health line in the budget is to fund the costs associated with the registrar recording births and deaths.

The approved amount for the 2019-20 enacted budget was $250 and was a single line item. The current budget proposal available at Nelsonville’s website indicates that the enacted 2019-20 budget had a similar health line in the amount of $2,710, but this is simply not true. Showing the line item as part of the previous year’s enacted budget could be a clerical error or it could be an attempt to mislead residents into believing that it is a standard budget line item. It also allows for the year-to-year percentage increase to appear as “0” in the far right column when, in fact, it is a 984 percent increase without taxpayer input.

I wanted to make note of this issue in a public manner so that Nelsonville residents are informed. Additionally, it is worth noting that several members of the Nelsonville board are close friends of the executive director of The Hub.

Alan Potts, Nelsonville

Shea responds

Putnam County Executive Mary Ellen Odell’s response in the April 17 issue to my earlier letter to The Current leaves me even more concerned for our county.

Cutting staff by 50 percent is old news at this point and can’t be used to fill space in a letter. The daily briefings with the county Health Department, which by the way, Odell doesn’t attend, are only a litany of complaints and a rundown of who is sick and who has died. I got more information in a 10-minute phone call with Navance Health than I did on three weeks of attending these morning calls. The commissioner of health, Dr. Michael Nesheiwat, didn’t even know that there was a testing site at Dutchess Stadium. He should be fired tomorrow.

As for the county’s delayed funding of the effort, the results speak for themselves: weeks of unprotected workers and families wondering what to do about food and medicine. There is still no county plan for long-term assistance to families in need. To rely on the United Way is fine, but there has been only one grocery pickup to date. Last I checked families like to eat each day. And for protecting our most vulnerable, seniors and the health-compromised, nothing.

It has been left to the towns to come up with plans and disseminate the information and supplies. To date, Philipstown has not received a single item from Putnam County. This is not to say that our great Legislator Nancy Montgomery has let this hamper her efforts. Nancy has delivered hundreds of masks and actionable information, and has been on the front line since the start of the outbreak.

With no help from the county, the Town of Philipstown has been left to fill the void. We have given out $75,000 in food and medical supplies, along with mask-making material. We have also sent food assistance funding to the Town of Carmel, Beacon and Newburgh. All this we possibly through a generous private donation. We will continue to seek private and public funds. More importantly, we will continue to take care of our residents.

As has been the case since the formation of the county government, Philipstown has been ignored. But this time it is not just Philipstown, it’s the entire county. The lack of leadership at the top level of county government has caused real suffering. I fear for not only the residents of our county but the county employees who are going to work each day without protective equipment.

This is not about politics. It’s about facts. From all that I have seen and heard on the county calls, the county executive’s absence and lack of leadership has and will continue to cause more pain for all the residents of Putnam County.

Richard Shea, Cold Spring

Shea is the Philipstown supervisor.

Payroll loans

The Payroll Protection Program is a boondoggle (“Aid Stalls as Businesses Struggle,” April 17). We applied first for the Economic Income Disaster Loan from the federal Small Business Administration (SBA) and that went nowhere after getting a confirmation. Then we tried the PPP and have no idea where in the process we were when it ran out of funds. I believe we did everything correctly, but there is no way to contact anyone.

It’s beyond frustrating. I’m angry that out of $2 trillion, only $350 billion was set aside for small businesses.

Apparently the smaller banks acted on this, but the big banks such as Bank of America seemed to have dropped the ball. Bank of America is unresponsive. You cannot talk to anyone in their branches, and online has no answers other than stock FAQs.

Christopher Ungaro, Beacon

I’m one of the owners of Burkelman in Cold Spring. We have had a similar experience as the businesses in the article, but in the end, the Paycheck Protection Program ended up being the best avenue for immediate aid. We applied through M&T Bank. The application only took about an hour and is much less rigorous than a traditional loan. We were approved for 2.5 times our average monthly payroll from 2019 in about a week, though we are still waiting for the bank to release the funds to our account.

It’s not a panacea, but it will provide a significant cash infusion to help us get reopened when we can. I highly recommend any business with payroll (even if it’s just the owner) to apply because most of the loan will be forgiven if spent on payroll, rent or utilities.

David Kimelman, via Facebook

The Ruth’s Chris Steak House chain received $20 million from the Payroll Protection Program, which could have covered hundreds of truly small businesses.

When TD Bank finally let us submit an application on April 6, it took three hours to complete. They wasted my time forcing me to upload 14 months of bank statements.

(Continued on Page 6)
Beacon Farmers Market to Move Outside

Will operate through pickup and delivery

By Jeff Simms

The Beacon Farmers Market began its spring season on Sunday (April 19) with delivery or pickup at Veterans Place, where it has operated since 2017.

Because of social-distancing guidelines, the market is using an advance order system. It is offering fresh produce, meats and cheeses but no prepared foods. All food will come packaged. A list of vendors is posted at beaconfarmersmarket.org.

Orders will be taken online through Saturday at noon for Sunday delivery (the preferred method) or pickup at Veterans Place. Cars must enter Veterans Place from Henry Street and exit onto Main. A lane for customers who are walking or biking will be available to accommodate 10 to 12 people, each standing 6 feet apart.

An initiative to implement a sliding-price scale and sponsorship program, and accept federal vouchers to give more Beacon residents access to the market’s products, has so far raised nearly $2,300. The Beacon City Council on April 20 approved a short-term agreement allowing the market to move outdoors, retroactive to the day before. Market officials have taken the state’s social-distancing guidelines “to heart and made a proposal that we’re very comfortable with,” Mayor Lee Kyriacou said.

The Cold Spring Farmers’ Market, which has operated in the parking lot at St. Mary’s Church with social-distancing regulations in place, will move to its summer spot at Boicebello, 1801 Route 9D in Garrison, on Saturday, May 2, from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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Putnam Braces for Losses

**Virus will cut into tax revenue**

By Holly Crocco

William Carlin Jr., Putnam County’s finance chief, said that in his 30 years on the job he has never experienced the economic turmoil that COVID-19 has wrought.

“We’re in totally uncharted territory,” he said in a recent interview.

In her budget for 2020, Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell estimated the county would collect $64.4 million in sales tax revenue. Carlin said the county, as of the third week of April, was $1.5 million ahead of that projection, but noted that it had not yet seen the effect of the state’s closure last month of most businesses in an effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

“There is generally a 30- to 60-day lag of payments to the county from New York State [which collects the tax], so we would expect to see the drop-off reflected in May,” he said.

Sales tax is Putnam County’s biggest revenue source and had been on the rise. The county took in $86.3 million in 2019 — about 5 percent more than the year before and nearly 13 percent more than in 2017.

While the administration is looking for ways to reduce spending, it is able to make its payments, including to school districts, said Carlin. Since residents can pay their school tax bills in two installments, in the spring and the fall, the county uses sales tax revenue to provide funding so districts can operate. The districts then pay the county back, he said. April payments will be made as planned.

In addition, he noted that while Moody’s Investors Service recently upgraded the county’s bond rating to Aa1, which determines how cheaply it can borrow money, that is “meaningless now” because it is unlikely anyone will want to loan municipalities money any time soon.

As finance commissioner, Carlin had to implement layoffs in 1991, deal with the economic effects of 9/11 and navigate the 2008 recession.

“That was tough,” he said. “But nothing compares to what’s happening now.”

(Continued from Page 6)

$32,400 in grants to nonprofit organizations on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, including the Animal Farm Foundation, Community Voices Heard, Dutchess Outreach, Meals on Wheels of Greater Poughkeepsie, Pawling Resource Center, Red Hook Responds, Willow Roots Food Distribution in Pine Plains and the Worker Justice Center of New York.

■ The state on April 20 changed its guidance on golf courses, which had been deemed to be “non-essential” businesses. The Putnam County Golf Course and The Garrison both announced they are open, with social-distancing restrictions.

■ The IRS has released a tracking tool for the $1.200 Economic Impact Payments at sa.wwv4.irs.gov/irfof-wmsp/notice.

■ Alexi Katsetos planned to open his Moo Moo’s Creamery in Cold Spring for the season on Thursday (April 23). He said he had wanted to open in mid-March but held off. “For the foreseeable future we will not allow customers inside the shop but will serve from a single counter on the porch,” he said. “With the [federal] Paycheck Protection Program a mess, and no unemployment benefits for me, I can hopefully attract enough customers to make a living this year.” In Beacon, Ron’s Ice Cream and Beacon Creamery are taking phone orders for pickup.

■ The Dutchess County Regional Chamber of Commerce has created a list of suppliers in the Hudson Valley of personal protective equipment such as face masks, surgical masks, face shields, gloves and hand sanitizer. See bit.ly/dutchess-pppe.

■ The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation created a Save Small Business Fund for businesses that employ between 3 and 20 people, are located in an economically vulnerable community and have been harmed financially by the COVID-19 pandemic. See savesmallbusiness.com. Notably, businesses in Beacon (12508) and Garrison (10524) can apply but not those in Cold Spring (10516).

■ Hops on the Hudson, which is headquartered in Cold Spring, has created two T-shirts to raise funds for 54 New York breweries. Each of the two designs includes the logos of 27 breweries, including from Putnam and Dutchess counties. See hopsonth Hudson.com.

■ Dutchess County posts updates at dutchessny.gov/coronavirus and has a hotline at 845-486-3555. Putnam County posts at putnamcountyny.com/health. New York State has a hotline at 888-364-3065 and a webpage at ny.gov/coronavirus. The state also created an email list to provide updates. The Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention posts updates at cdc.gov.

For more resources and information, see highlandscurrent.org/coronavirus.

![Photo by Ross Corsair](Image 709x978 to 775x955)

**COVID-19 by the Numbers**

**PUTNAM COUNTY**

Number of confirmed cases:

| 615 |
| Phillipstown 83, Carmel 309, Kent 171, Putnam Valley 7104 |

Tests administered:

| 2,289 |

Percent positive:

| 26.9 |

Number of deaths:

| 39 |

**DUTCHESS COUNTY**

Number of confirmed cases:

| 2,460 |

Beacon 105, Fishkill 172, Wappingers Falls 46, Poughkeepsie 246

Tests administered:

| 11,265 |

Percent positive:

| 21.8 |

Number of deaths:

| 57 |

Source: Health departments. Data current as of April 23

What If I Feel Sick?

You’re feeling ill, with a cough, fever, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath. What should you do?

“It’s important to emphasize that the risk of serious illness from COVID-19 remains low,” the Putnam Hospital Center advises patients on its website. “Most infected people will experience mild upper respiratory symptoms. Some people, including the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), diabetes and heart disease, are at greater risk and may require more intensive care and/or hospitalization.”

If you feel ill, the hospital says the first step is to contact your doctor. Many offer “virtual” visits by teleconference. If you visit your doctor’s office or an urgent care, call first to let them know of your symptoms. Only go to the emergency department or call 911 if you are in urgent distress, and let the dispatcher know that you may have been exposed to COVID-19.

If your doctor believes you have COVID-19, he or she can order a test, which allows you to make an appointment by phone at a drive-thru facility. At the facility, a sample will be collected and sent for testing.

For general questions about COVID-19, Putnam Hospital Center operates a hotline staffed by nurses at 888-667-9262 daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. A representative for the hospital said that most callers (1) ask about symptoms and what to do if exposed to someone who has COVID-19; (2) believe they have symptoms, in which case they are referred to their doctor; or (3) ask how they can donate equipment such as masks, anti-bacterial soap and, in one case, a pediatric ventilator.

The hospital has a list of commonly asked questions and responses posted at bitly.com/covidvirus-faq. The state Department of Health also has a hotline at 888-364-3065 that is open around the clock to answer general questions or for information about testing sites.
**Farmers** (from Page 1)

the farm’s cider maker and the its marketing communications and events manager.

“We’re working as hard as we can around-the-clock to get everything done,” owner Josh Morgenthau said on Tuesday. “But we can’t do it without that additional help.”

Labor concerns. Loss of wholesale revenue. Difficulty getting gloves and masks, along with traditional farming supplies. These are some of the challenges buffeting farmers in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

While the effort to halt the virus’ spread has led to a widespread shutdown of restaurants, retailers, colleges and other wholesale buyers, the confinement of people to their homes has created an increased demand from local residents for locally grown and raised vegetables, meats, eggs and other products.

Growers who usually would be selling products out of their farm stores this time of year have pivoted in response to the shift in demand, quickly setting up systems to allow customers to order by phone or online, and then pick up their food or have it delivered.

The Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming in Philipstown experienced a “huge demand” for its inventory, including meats, according to Lynda Prim, the center’s senior director.

Shares in the center’s community-supported agriculture program filled up, and the waiting list is so long that Glynwood is referring to those who call about CSAs to other farms, she said.

“Suddenly we were inundated with people wanting to buy our food,” Prim said. “Like three to four times more than what we planned for.”

The pandemic has not only closed wholesale buyers of farm products, it has disrupted supply lines and halted the educational programs that draw children and adults to farms.

Some farmers are finding it difficult to get core supplies, like seeds, Prim said. This month, Marist College announced that it could no longer subsidize the operations of the long-struggling Sprout Creek Farm in Poughkeepsie, and that the farm would cease operating and its animals be relocated.

“The challenges associated with the COVID-19 outbreak have only exacerbated the financial challenges of Sprout Creek Farm operations and made its business model unsustainable,” its board said on April 17.

On Wednesday afternoon, standing among Fishkill Farms’ fruit trees, Morgenthau said he had just received confirmation that his Jamaican crew had received authorization and would be arriving the next day

Every member of the crew has worked the farm for at least five years, and some for 10 years, Morgenthau said. Their knowledge of the farm’s growing and harvest process, and its machinery, is irreplaceable, he said.

“It was a huge relief,” Morgenthau said of the news that the crew was on its way.

Fishkill’s farm store was closed last month and an order-by-phone system set up. On the farm’s website, customers are warned that getting through may take repeated calls.

Among the products customers can buy are apples from last year’s harvest, greens and vegetables from the greenhouses, eggs and products from other farms.

“We’ve never made a profit in the winter and this hasn’t changed that, but it has been encouraging that sales have been double or more what they would have been this time of year,” Morgenthau said.

Further north, the Poughkeepsie Food Project lost business from restaurants and from Vassar College due to coronavirus-related closures, leaving it with excess produce, said Executive Director Ray Armater.

But the farm created an online system in which customers order from home and drive to the farm to pick up their packaged items. The farm has been “hopping,” Armater said.

“My farm is not really sure why, but we believe it’s because folks want to stay away from a crowd [at supermarkets] and they want to know who’s been involved in the production of their produce,” he said.

**Prisons** (from Page 1)

In Ossining are also struggling with the virus, with 48 confirmed inmate cases (23 recovered), while the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women in Westchester County had 28 (10 recovered). There has been only one confirmed case at the maximum-security Downstate Correctional Facility in Fishkill.

Seven state inmates and four parolees have died, according to the state, including four prisoners at Sing Sing. The other inmate deaths were at Otisville, in Orange County, and Queensboro Correctional Facility in Long Island City.

At Rikers Island, which is run by New York City, there were 369 confirmed cases as of April 22, or about 9.4 percent of the inmate population.

 Hundreds of guards and other prison staff members have also contracted the virus — 894 statewide as of April 22, according to the Department of Corrections, which does not provide a breakdown of where staff members who have tested positive are located. Two have died.

The cemetery at Fishkill Correctional was used last week to bury inmates from Sing Sing and Otisville whose bodies were not claimed by relatives. Beacon Prison Action, an advocacy group, shared photos of graves being dug on Wednesday (April 15) at the Fishkill facility, saying in a statement that “our fear that COVID-19 would turn New York state prisons into death traps evidently became a reality.”

It joined with another group, Release Aging People in Prison, to call for expedited clemency and medical furloughs for older inmates. State facilities hold more than 10,000 inmates who are over 50 years old, according to the Correctional Association of New York, which monitors prisons.

No inmates at the Dutchess and Putnam county jails have been confirmed to have COVID-19, although five guards at Dutchess and one at Putnam have tested positive, officials said.

Three of the Dutchess guards have been cleared to return to work and the other two remain under quarantine. The Putnam guard has recovered.

State Sen. Jen Metzger, whose district includes much of the Hudson Valley west of the river; Assembly Member Sandy Galef, whose district includes Philipstown; and Assembly Member Jonathan Jacobson, whose district includes Beacon, said on Monday (April 20) that they had urged Anthony R.UIL 11 4huckl, the acting commissioner of state prisons, to issue a mask to every state inmate.

“The only way that prisons can be safe is if both correctional officers and inmates have masks and social distancing is practiced by (Continued on Page 19)
Animal Shelters Carry On
SPCA, Humane Society and ARF cope with COVID-19

By Michael Turton

When the coronavirus first hit, the Dutchess County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals quickly found emergency foster homes for about 100 animals (including 75 cats) to make room for what Executive Director Lynne Meloccaro expected would be an influx of drop-offs as people lost their jobs.

However, adoptions have also been brisk as the shutdown continues, with 38 cats, 10 dogs and four rabbits finding new homes since April 1, she said.

“Animal welfare, there’s always two sides to everything,” Meloccaro said.

It’s an unusual time, even at animal shelters. This year did not see the large number of rabbits that are typically dropped off after Easter, Meloccaro said, because “the holiday was barely celebrated this year.” She does, however, expect a surge of cats after Easter, Meloccaro said, because “the holiday was barely celebrated this year.”

She does, however, expect a surge of cats after Easter, Meloccaro said, because “the holiday was barely celebrated this year.”

The SPCA facility, which currently has 125 animals, is taking precautions due to the pandemic. A mobile disinfection unit outside the building is used when an animal comes from a home in which someone has tested positive to the virus. Inside, rotating shifts ensure that if a staff member tests positive, only the workers on that shift need to be quarantined, a step that has not yet been necessary.

The organization has had to cancel its scheduled fundraisers, so “money is tight,” Meloccaro said. The best way to help is to donate at dcspca.org. The site also has forms for adoptions or to become a foster caretaker.

Meloccaro urged pet owners to have a plan in case they get sick. “Who will care for the animal?” she asked.

Putnam Humane Society

The Putnam Humane Society in Carmel is also closed to the public and volunteers due to COVID-19, although adoptions of dogs and cats continue through its website at puthumane.org. It currently has 22 dogs and 25 cats.

President Michele Dugan said once an application is approved, a meet-and-greet is arranged, with visitors wearing face masks and gloves, and practicing social distancing with other humans, she said. The society does not place animals in foster homes.

Dugan said there has been no increase in the number of animals surrendered; it has essentially been business as usual except there have been more dog adoptions. “People feel it’s a good time to adopt,” she said. “They can spend time training and bonding with their new addition.”

She said the staff wears masks and gloves, and the facility is disinfected on a regular basis.

Animal Rescue Foundation

Adoptions are on hold at the Animal Rescue Foundation, or ARF, in Beacon, but volunteers continue to look after the eight dogs and nearly 60 cats under its care.

“We were lucky to have rescued three dogs just before the state restrictions took effect,” said Caroline Kasterine, a volunteer from Garrison. “There are fewer volunteers in the building now, but everyone has been good at staggering their shifts. Our cats and dogs are happy — they’re receiving extra attention!”

ARF has nearly 60 volunteers who work with the animals and 20 who assist with fundraising and public relations. New volunteers are not being accepted until the facility reopens.

Kasterine thinks people can learn a lot by caring for animals, especially during stressful times. “It’s important to keep positive and keep your commitments through good times and bad,” she said.

ARF does not send animals to foster homes but Kasterine said people can help by making a financial contribution or by donating items on the shelter’s wish list at arfBeacon.org.

It’s Not All Happening at the Zoo (for Now)

But Bear Mountain animals still need care

By Michael Turton

The pandemic hasn’t just changed day-to-day life for the human residents of the Hudson Highlands. The critters at the Bear Mountain Zoo also are adapting to new routines.

The zoo and trailside museums, which usually see 100,000 visitors a year, closed to the public on March 21.

“Social distancing is challenging along our trail, especially at our most popular animal exhibits,” said its director, Ed McGowan, who lives in Garrison. The facility is co-managed by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission and the state parks department.

The zoo has four keepers and two maintenance workers who care for the animals and the park seven days a week. The pandemic has changed how they go about their jobs, McGowan said. Zookeepers work in staggered shifts, two at a time rather than three, and in different sections of the zoo.

“We’re following social distancing guidelines, clearing shared surfaces and wearing masks when two staff need to be in buildings together,” he said.

The zoo has more than 100 animals, all native to the Hudson Valley. Its mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish include everything from a black bear, eastern coyote, bald eagle and great horned owl to eastern painted turtle, spotted salamander and largemouth bass.

“All of our mammals and birds, and some of our reptiles and amphibians, were injured or orphaned and cannot be returned to the wild,” explained the head zookeeper, Melissa Gillmer.

The animals’ health is a top priority, McGowan said. When a tiger at the Bronx Zoo tested positive for the coronavirus, it didn’t go unnoticed.

“We are taking precautions around our mammals, especially our bobcats,” McGowan said, adding that staff minimize close contact with animals and wear gloves and masks during feeding and cleaning.

If there’s a silver lining to the pandemic, he said, it may be that staff can more easily do maintenance and repair work than when the facility has hundreds of visitors. At the same time, some improvements scheduled for the spring have been put on hold, such as upgrades to the bobcat, fox and porcupine pens.

McGowan said that the recent loss of a regular supply of rodents that were donated to feed many of the zoo’s animals added to its challenges. People can make financial contributions at trailsidezoo.org, he said.
A State of ‘No Money’
New York’s uncertain, $177 billion budget

By Liz Schevetchuk Armstrong

Drafted as unemployment and COVID-19 cases soared and businesses from Manhattan to Main Street shuttered, New York’s $177 billion fiscal 2020-21 budget reflects the times.

While it authorizes — on paper, anyway — spending of $105.8 billion during the fiscal year that began April 1, it also foresees limiting the initial outlay to $95.8 billion unless sudden infusions of cash appear. It likewise anticipates a reduction of at least $10 billion in tax revenue.

The budget, which is $1.5 billion higher than 2019-20, provides $27.9 billion in school aid, up slightly (0.3 percent) from last year. It pushes ahead on tax cuts for the middle class but also allows state budget officials to make further spending reductions across the board if economic conditions warrant it.

“The state has no money. How do you do a budget when you can’t really forecast revenues?” Gov. Andrew Cuomo remarked on the budget when you can’t really forecast revenues, he said, citing provisions on elections and various other subjects. “The budget should have focused solely on running essential services and providing critical relief to those in need.”

Among the issues addressed:

- **Worker sick leave**: Businesses with four or fewer employees must guarantee five days of job-protected, unpaid sick leave to employees each year. Those with five to 99 employees must provide at least five days of paid sick leave; businesses with 100 or more employees must provide seven paid days.

- **E-cigarettes and vaping**: The sale or distribution of most flavored electronic cigarettes and vaping products is banned unless approved by the Food and Drug Administration. In addition, tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, cannot be sold in pharmacies or near schools.

- **Prescription drugs**: Along with capping insulin co-payments at $100 per month for diabetics, the budget created a plan to reduce other prescription costs and established a commission to explore purchasing drugs from Canada.

- **Gun license restriction**: Anyone convicted of a serious offense in another state cannot obtain a gun license if the offense is also illegal in New York.

- **Guns and domestic abuse**: Law enforcement officers may remove guns from the scene of a domestic-violence incident. The new law also allows weapons to be seized from abusers immediately upon their convictions.

- **Hate-crime terrorism**: A newly created crime, “a domestic act of terrorism motivated by hate,” has penalties of up to life in prison without parole.

- **$3 billion bond**: The Restore Mother Nature Bond will fund projects to reduce flood risk, invest in resilient construction, restore freshwater and tidal wetlands, preserve open space, conserve forest areas and decrease pollution from agricultural and stormwater runoff.

- **Polystyrene ban**: As of Jan. 1, 2022, the state will forbid the distribution of single-use food containers made of expanded polystyrene (often dubbed Styrofoam) and ban the sale of polystyrene packing peanuts.

- **Green economy**: The budget created a green-jobs tax credit of up to 7.5 percent of the wages for each job created.

- **Recounts and campaigns**: Manual recounts are required in all statewide elections in which the margin of victory is 0.2 percent or less.

- **Middle-class tax cuts**: In 2020, the third year of a tax-trimming effort, income tax rates will fall to 6.69 percent for taxpayers in the $43,000 to $161,550 income bracket, and to 6.41 percent in the $161,550 to $323,200 bracket.

- **Infrastructure**: The budget includes $2.6 billion for investments in upstate roads and bridges.
The Calendar

Six Weeks Later, Fiddler Will Play

Haldane to post video of final dress rehearsal

By Alison Rooney

Haldane High School’s spring musical, Fiddler on the Roof, was an early cultural casualty of COVID-19, with its performances canceled the day before its March 13 opening.

Fortunately, the final dress rehearsal was videotaped. Through an arrangement with Music Theatre International, which licenses the rights, the performance will be available for viewing for 24 hours beginning today (April 24) at 7 p.m.

Tickets are $6 at bit.ly/haldane-fiddler. A link and access code will be sent to ticketholders on the day of the show.

“We hope that you will take the time to watch and appreciate the hard work and talent of our young performers, crew and adult volunteers,” the producers said.

Haldane Drama is hoping to recoup about $30,000 in expenses that are outlined in a Behind the Curtain presentation it created at bit.ly/haldane-behind-curtain.

Falling into Home Schooling

Family video a hit on YouTube

A parody video posted on March 31 by a Garrison couple who are home schooling their five children because of COVID-19 has more than 9,000 views on YouTube.

Sheila Williams says her husband, Brandon, who in 2018 made his Broadway debut in Getting’ the Band Back Together, was making a run to Sam’s Club in Fishkill when she assigned him to come up with ideas for a song parody they could make “about how crazy this is.”

When he came home, he said: “Here’s my idea: ‘Home Schooling’ to the tune of ‘Free Fallin’,’” a hit song by Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers.

They wrote the script that night and recorded the video with their children over a weekend. Sample lyrics: “I love my children, but I don’t like them anymore.” / “I feel like a bad mom because I don’t remember fractions.” / “How long has daddy been wearing those clothes?”

Because Brandon and Sheila are both voice-over artists, the family has a home recording studio. Brandon also directs and produces commercials. As a result, the production value is far better than a typical YouTube upload.

One challenge was “the child talent, which was demanding and unpredictable, but we made do,” Sheila said.

The 4-minute parody is dedicated to nurses, doctors, first responders and “all of the parents who are now teachers,” and it includes a Zoom chorus of other local parents and their students. See bit.ly/williams-video.

Missing the Movies

Story Screen attempting to fill the gap

It took so long for Beacon to get a movie theater to call its own that people are eagerly awaiting its return.

Story Screen Beacon is doing its best to remain engaged with film lovers, said founder Mike Burdge. It presents twice-weekly evening “streamalongs” that are followed about 15 minutes later by a livestream group chat on Instagram and Facebook. Two recent screenings were The Social Network and Taxi Driver.

In addition, it is testing a Zoom edition of its popular trivia night. “We want to avoid situations where people in a chat could toss out answers,” Burdge said.

Finally, Story Screen launched a membership program that offers, for $5 a month, access to exclusive content, including podcasts and commentary. Burdge promised more live events “once we’re on the other side — they’re a lot of fun.”

The Story Screen site at storytreescreenbeacon.com also offers digital rentals of independent films. In May, the documentary American Nurse will screen for free.

Because Story Screen began as a website, Burdge said he felt it had a leg up. “When all of this happened, all of our ways of interacting were shut down but we had the tools and skills necessary to move it over to more of a visual medium,” he said. “The digital theater and the membership program were being worked on for a while before this happened, so we’ve just amped it up. We’ve been building up toward this for about five years and we’ve finally done it.”

When might the theater re-open? Hard to say. “Even if national theaters get permission to open and even with the stipulations of two seats between people, limiting staff and days of the week — we’re not going to open if we don’t feel comfortable,” he said.

“We began as a pop-up space and we know how to do that, so with the warmer weather, outside screenings with social distancing is something we’re looking at again.”

Hear Our Annual Poetry Readings

Residents share favorites for National Poetry Month

For National Poetry Month in April, the Desmond-Fish Public Library and The Current revived “One Poem a Day Won’t Kill You,” a concept borrowed from KRBD Radio in Ketchikan, Alaska, and organized by Mary Anne Myers in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Through the end of the month, a new poem read by a resident of the Highlands is posted each day at highlandscurrent.org, SoundCloud, Spotify, Google Play and iTunes. Here are some of poems available, with their readers:

“Today,” by Billy Collins (Nancy Young)

“Valentine for Ernest Mann,” by Naomi Shihab Nye (Lillian Buckley)

“The Tyger,” by William Blake (Joseph Carmicano)

“Emptying Town,” by Nick Flynn (Sarah Crow)

“Hello, Hello Henry,” by Maxine Kumin (Margaret Vetare)

“Listen,” by Barbara Crooker (Kathy Curto)

“Somebody’s Mother,” by Mabel Down Northam Brine (Lucille Merry)

“King of the River,” by Stanley Kunitz (Sean Singer)

“Dear Poet, Notes to a Young Writer,” by Charles Ghigna (Raven Howell)

“Oh Have You Heard,” by Shel Silverstein (Justice McCray)

“Sonnet XIX” from In Time of War, by WH Auden (Anita Prentice)

“The Folly of Being Comforted,” by WB Yeats (Alan Vardy)

“A Miracle for Breakfast,” by Elizabeth Bishop (Lindy Labriola)

“The Trees,” by Philip Larkin (Heidi Bender)

“The Meehoo with an Exactlywatt,” by Shel Silverstein (Elisa Zakkad)

“One Day He’s Gonna Cook Me a Meal,” by Ann Ziety (Sue Bevan)

“Duino Elegies 8,” by Rainer Maria Rilke

“In Time of War,” by WH Auden (Justice McCray)

“Somebody’s Mother,” by Mabel Down Northam Brine (Lucille Merry)

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THE WEEK AHEAD
Edited by Pamela Doan (calendar@highlandscurrent.org)
For a complete listing of events, see highlandscurrent.org/calendar.

COMMUNITY

SAT 25
Grow Your Own Vegetables
CARMEL
10 a.m. Cornell Cooperative Extension
putnam.cce.cornell.edu
Learn how to pick a location for your garden, how to plan it and ways to make it a success.

SAT 25
Virtual Earth Day: Uniting From Home
1 – 4 p.m. Citizens Climate Lobby and Braver Angels
bit.ly/virtual-earth
Katharine Hayhoe, a climate scientist, evangelical Christian and host of the podcast Global Warming, will discuss where we are now and what we can do about global warming. Her talk will be part of helping endangered pollinators such as butterflies and how to create a pollinator garden and other useful habitats.

SAT 25
Craft Beer Tasting Experience
NEW YORK
Noon – 9 p.m. thinkjoydrinkny.com
Register to receive 64-ounce samples mailed to you from up to four craft breweries for tasting during 90-minute sessions via Zoom with the brewers online. Session 3 at 5 p.m. will feature Industrial Arts Brewing of Beacon. Cost: $65 (single) to $240 (all access).

KIDS & FAMILY

MON 27
2020 Virtual Putnam County Youth Forum
putnam.cce.cornell.edu
This program for Putnam high school students will take place on Zoom and address issues such as leadership, health, interpersonal skills, jobs and community. Daily through Fri 1. Registration required.

MON 27
Story Time
GARRISON
1:30 p.m. Desmond-Fish Library
facebook.com/pg/desmondfishlibrary
This workshop takes place each week via Facebook.

SAT 2
Plant a Pollinator Paradise
CARMEL
10 – 11:30 a.m.
Cornell Cooperative Extension
putnam.cce.cornell.edu
Learn how your landscape can be part of helping endangered pollinators such as butterflies and how to create a pollinator garden and other useful habitats.

STAGE & SCREEN

FRI 24
Fiddler on the Roof
COLD SPRING
7 p.m. Haldane High School
bit.ly/haldane-fiddler
The March shows were canceled at the last minute because of COVID-19, but a video of the final dress rehearsal will be available to stream for 24 hours. See Page 11. Cost: $6.

SAT 25
Social Saturday
GARRISON
4 p.m. Garrison Art Center
instagram.com/garrisonartcenter
Join a virtual open studio to stay connected with the arts community and artists. The Zoom ID is 996 412 237. Also SAT 2.

STAGE & SCREEN

MON 27
Live at Five
BEACON
5 p.m. Beacon Performing Arts Center
facebook.com/beaconperformingartscenter
Sing and dance for some fun relief. Offered weekdays.

CIVIC

SAT 25
Gov. Cuomo Daily Briefing
10:45 a.m. Weekdays
twitter.com/nygovcuomo
Meetings are closed to the public but streamed or posted as videos. See highlandscurrent.org/meeting-videos.

MON 27
City Council
BEACON
7 p.m. City Hall | cityofbeacon.org
MON 27
School Board
BEACON
7 p.m. Beacon Schools
845-638-6900 | beaconk12.org
The agenda includes a vote on the annual budget.

TUES 28
Board of Trustees
COLD SPRING
7:30 p.m. Village Hall
845-265-3611 | coldspringny.gov

WED 29
Parent Support Group
GARRISON
4 p.m. Howland Public Library
845-831-1134 | beaconlibrary.org
Register online.

TALKS

TUES 28
Graphic Novel Book Club
COLD SPRING
7 p.m. Split Rock Books
845-265-2080 | splitrckbkcs.com
Summer Pierre will lead a discussion over Zoom of My Brother’s Husband. To register, purchase a copy online from Split Rock and make a note in the order comments that you’d like to join.

TUES 28
Stories of Climate Change
GARRISON
7 p.m. Vassar College
bit.ly/vassar-stories
The storytellers will be physics professor Jenny Magnes, psychology professor Lori Newman and Vassar senior Wyn Zenni.

THURS 30
Mastering the Present Moment
GARRISON
1:30 p.m. Garrison Institute
845-424-4800 | garrisoninstitute.org
Michael Miller will lead a Zoom session on mindfulness. Registration required.

VISUAL ARTS

SAT 25
Meditation Group
GARRISON
Noon. Garrison Institute
garrisoninstitute.org
Via Zoom. Online registration requested. Offered weekdays.

TUES 28
Self-Practice in Challenging Times
GARRISON
7:30 a.m. Garrison Institute
garrisoninstitute.org
Krishna Das will lead a chanting of mantras on Zoom and discuss how the use of mantras and breath work can help us move more deeply into the heart space within. Registration required.

HEALTH & FITNESS

MON 27
Salt and Copper
COLD SPRING
3 p.m. Magazzino Italian Art
845-666-7202 | magazzino.art
Chris Bennett, a professor of art history and contemporary art at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, will explore the work of Arte Povera artist Jannis Kounellis based on an interview conducted in New York City in 2013.

TUES 28
Prose on Purpose
BEACON
7 p.m. Butterfield Library
845-265-3611 | beaconlibrary.org
Register to receive 64-ounce bottle of self-picked beer.

THURS 30
Live at Five
BEACON
5 p.m. Beacon Performing Arts Center
facebook.com/beaconperformingartscenter
Sing and dance for some fun relief. Offered weekdays.

CIVIC

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WED 29
Beacon School Trustee Petitions Due
845-638-6900 | beaconk12.org
**Blacktop Magic**

Nelsonville firm transforms playgrounds

By Alison Rooney

Fresh off a move from the city to Cold Spring 17 summers ago, with the first of her three sons starting kindergarten at Haldane, Pam Gunther found herself co-president of the PTA and co-chair of the playground committee.

Little did the architect know that the skills she developed on the blacktop would years later lead to her own business.

Fit & Fun Playscapes, which is headquartered in Nelsonville, has flourished over the past few years, although, like many firms, the COVID-19 crisis has forced Gunther to re-think her product line.

“When I volunteered with the playground committee, the push came from Maggie Davis, who was the elementary school principal,” Gunther recalls. “They had repaved and enlarged the blacktop area, but there was nothing for the kids to do on it. Maggie wanted to put some games down on the blacktop, but they had to be arranged so that an uninterrupted line could go from the bus drop-off to the side door of the elementary school.

“A bunch of us went out and started sketching cool things like seahorse hopscotch. We had ordered stencils, but they turned out to be flimsy, plus we couldn’t figure out how to use them. We spent days painting by hand but it was all so worth it when the kids came running off the buses and jumped on everything for the first time.”

Gunther continued to work on blacktop improvements. She found herself talking to classroom and physical education teachers to get their takes. She came to realize, she says, “how even short bursts of activity are crucial in a child’s school day, now more than ever, when you’re competing with devices like phones, which are constantly evolving, and which kids are so drawn to.”

Her three sons, now in college, high school and elementary school, became research subjects, and Gunther realized she had a business in the making.

She created Fit & Fun Playscapes in 2011. “When my youngest son would nap, I would work on ideas in the car at Tots Park” in Cold Spring, she says. “I was five or six years into it, and trying to hold down a part-time architecture position, when I decided the time had come. My husband was reluctant, because it meant adjusting the family budget, but he was supportive.”

She attended local and national PTA and physical education conventions, looking for inspiration for products. “I’d think, ‘I can help with that’ — and I’d design it,” she says. She decided to focus on products related to recess, with designs that “respond to the need for colorful, innovative games that engage kids longer, motivate them to be more physically active, keep them productive and integrate educational concepts kinesthetically.”

With a range of rollout activity mats, reusable stencils and sensory stickers, most of her products contain fun ways of tucking in some learning, such as developing math skills through hopscotch, or making letter designs to assist with spelling.

Many designs also contain a social-emotional component, with activities like a buddy circle, creative mazes and a peace path, where, if there’s a conflict, the kids are prompted to have a conversation on how to work out the problem. These can be “a comforting place for the kid who doesn’t get chosen for kickball to hang out,” says Gunther.

Fit & Fun Playscapes also has products designed for indoor use. “About two years ago I started with a new product line: rollout activities, which take outdoor designs indoors. We also came up with a series of stickers for school hallways. These are sensory tools, which offer supports for teachers. We worked with the Sensory Integration Motor Lab at SUNY Cortland, which helped us identify movement and patterns.

“This was a hot item in 2019, and I was able to hire more staff,” she says. “Most of the 10-year-ride has been me, plus partners, many of whom are local moms.”

To bring her design ideas to life, Gunther researched suppliers — “Made in the USA” is important, as is using material that can be recycled — obtained samples and tested prototypes in her backyard or driveway.

COVID-19 has prompted Gunther to consider how her products could be adapted for home use. “What are kids doing for physical activity at home?” she says. “As a small-business owner, you can’t stick your head in the sand. And I have employees now, so there are whole different feelings of responsibility.

We quickly launched an at-home roll-out product, and we’re trying to reposition some products that we already have. We’ve also created two new products for home use, with a low price point, and we’re working on more. Just to have the option of repositioning is really lucky,” she says. “I’ve always wanted to go into the consumer market, but I didn’t think we were ready. Now we’re testing the waters. I’m having 12-hour days trying to shift our products, but I feel grateful, overall. It’s a challenging environment, but it pushes us.”
Some things you don’t know about me: Krystal Ford

By Alison Rooney

Krystal Ford is a mother, writer and activist who lives in Garrison.

So, what is this thing we don’t know?

A long time ago — in 2005 — I was an airline food inspector. I traveled all around the world inspecting the kitchens that make airplane food.

How did you wind up with the job?

It was a job posting on a website. They were looking for people who had a nutrition or food science background, and my background is in nutrition. This job seemed perfect because I had always wanted to travel the world.

The company trained me to do inspections. I was on the road for two weeks each month, visiting four or five airports, which we called “stations,” spending two days doing the inspection, then heading out to the next spot. Sometimes I’d fly to four countries in a month. Other times I’d do a grouping, such as four cities in China, and fly home.

What were some of the more unusual places you visited?

I went to every continent except Antarctica. Let’s see: Mauritius, in the Indian Ocean was pretty and had great food. Dalian, in northern China, close to Russia, had lots of Russian architecture. Suriname used to be one of the Guianas — it’s the one with the capital city of Paramaribo. In Bogota, Columbia, there was an armed guard on every floor of the hotel. You weren’t allowed to walk alone outside.

How were the inspections done?

The company I worked for created airline food safety standards, in partnership with the International Air Transport Association. When I started there were four or five clients, and by the time I left there were 10 or 11. I would go to a kitchen inspection on behalf of British Airlines or Air Canada, who would split the expenses. There were a small number of kitchens which covered the meals for all the airlines. They were in massive warehouses with bakeries — factories, really — preparing tons of meals.

Did you see anything you wished you hadn’t?

On the whole, the kitchens were in a good place with food safety. The American and Canadian kitchens were the dirtiest, and the Japanese and Chinese were very high-tech — you had to be all covered up, including those slip-over-shoe things. Lots of meals would arrive frozen from another place and would be reheated, although in most of Asia and Africa they were making the hot meals the day before. I used to have to go on the planes and do a final temperature check — all of it is kept on trolleys with dry ice.

Some of what I did was quality control, so I would randomly grab a tray and a meal, weigh the components to check that they were meeting the specifications the airline was saying, and not subbing. For instance, it might have to be 100 grams of chicken. Did you know they make different food for the flight attendants and the pilots? The trays for the pilots aren’t labeled, to avoid any potential tampering with their meals.

What was it like, relaying not-so-good news after an inspection?

A few times I had kitchens that were difficult. Part of it was I was 23 or 24 years old, and I looked young. I had to sit at this boardroom table with managers, going through their score with them. It was intimidating, but I would never change a score without compelling evidence. It was nerve-wracking to tell people no.

Why did you leave the job?

I wanted to go back to school to get my master’s degree. I was also tired of all the time spent in hotels, not really seeing the cities. It was lonely in the sense that I had to travel by myself and the only people I would meet were the kitchen staff, and I couldn’t associate with them.

What’s the one place you wish you could have seen, but didn’t?

I never got to India.
Out There

Please Do Come Back From the Moon

By Brian PJ Cronin

I t’s the blue hour — that hour after sunset when it’s still light enough that I don’t yet need to turn on my headlamp. No moon tonight, just Venus winking over the horizon as I slowly increase my speed, finishing up a set of hard intervals. Still training, even though there’s no longer anything to train for.

I was scheduled to be in California next week, running 62 miles though the Marin headlands in the Miwok 100K. Of course, that was canceled. I should be preparing for this summer’s Vermont 100 Miler, a race that took me two years to qualify for and I’ve been training for since September. That, too, was canceled. The reason all my races have been canceled is the same reason why I’m running here, on one of the less popular sections of the Dutchess Rail Trail, at night, with a bandana circling my neck that can quickly be pulled up over my mouth and nose if the trail gets crowded. But it’s not crowded, not here, not at night and with ample space to give others room.

We have all had to redefine what adventure means, what it means to go for a hike, especially now with the most popular trails closed. We stay close to home, we avoid the outdoors. It’s worth making the extra effort to find those quiet places that we may have shunned before for being “too boring,” or to go during the dawn or dusk hours. I’ve had quite a few peaceful hours running in a loop on the Beacon High School track at night. It’s enough.

Looking up at the darkening night sky, I think about the Moon Palace. It’s an old Inuit myth. A young woman, heartbroken after losing her first and only love, is propelled by a wave of grief into the sky, landing on the moon. There, she spends the next 30 years in the Moon Palace, where she can still see and hear everything on Earth but remains separate from it. This is how she wants it. She wants to feel nothing.

One day she hears a graceful, mournful song coming from a trio of Inuit seal hunters, and she longs to go back. At this point, an old woman appears and asks how long it would take to walk back to earth.

The younger woman can’t even imagine. Weeks? Months? Years? “Oh my dear,” says the elderly woman, “the earth is only three steps away. But you have to keep your eyes open the whole time.”

This period of uncertainty may last months or years. We are navigating a landscape of in-betweenness. So go outside. Even in isolation, we are closer to one another than we may think.

The light has faded, and I switch on my headlamp. Another runner approaches, and we move to opposite sides of the trail as we pass and wave. Runners are familiar with the wave or the head nod. Sometimes it’s a way of saying, “What a beautiful day,” or, if it’s raining, “I see you also are crazy.” These days, it means “Thank you for looking out for me.”

The Highlands Current
April 24, 2020

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Roots and Shoots

A Pile of Sticks

By Pamela Doan

A reader question: What should I do with a pile of sticks? I love this question so much. The bits of trees that fall in the yard on windy days have possibilities that are only limited by your imagination:

- Posts for an obstacle course for chickens (contributed by my 5-year-old daughter)
- Kindling
- A frame for art
- Building tools for outdoor art

Since this is a gardening column, I’ll move on to ecological purposes. Woody material is useful for wildlife and insect habitat. Clean and tidy yards aren’t ideal from the perspective of birds, rabbits, snakes or native bees and butterflies, among others. A brush pile in an out-of-the-way area can be a place to live and have babies, a food source and a mini ecosystem for many creatures. Based on the amount of time you have, here are some ideas for your woody yard debris.

A less-than-30-minute project

Enlist youth in your household in gathering sticks and dried out stalks. Bribe them with candy or toys if necessary. Use a wheelbarrow or other collection device and then find a place in the yard where you won’t mind a brush pile. Dump sticks. Arrange them if you must — or don’t. If you have extra compost, leaves or other yard debris, mix it in. Go about your day.

Two to three hours

Use the woody material as a bottom layer of a garden for vegetables or plants. The practice of Hugelkultur, a permaculture approach that translates from German roughly as “hill culture,” uses logs and sticks to create rich soil. As the woody material decomposes, it adds a steady source of nutrients to the soil. The branches and logs act as a filter to hold and drain rainwater. And finally, the soil will breathe and no tilling is necessary.

Add curves and break up flat landscape spaces with small mounds. A small pile of sticks can be placed in a shallow hole or on top of the soil. Slightly burying the sticks gives you soil to plant into. Again, compost, shredded leaves and other organic material can be added on top of it. Plant directly into the mound.

A weekend project

If you have the time and energy for a serious enhancement, hugel mounds can become new features in a sustainable landscape. Follow the same basic steps in layering and consider different shapes and placements based on what your priorities are for the landscape.

One possibility is to dig a shallow trench, fill it with logs and branches, then put the soil over the top. This kind of curved berm along a slope can also be a filter for stormwater, making a natural buffer to slow down runoff and let it soak into the ground.

A tall, pyramid-shaped mound can be an innovative design for planting vines and trailing plants. This will require shaping your material or finding something to contain it and hold the shape. Pallets placed on their ends as a container will also create ledges or shelves for plants. Cut out sections for larger openings. This could be a statement piece in a landscape or a less aesthetic function in a woodland.

Grade a slope or construct a privacy hedge with your branches and logs. Step the mounds into a slope to build up ledges for planting and slow stormwater, prevent erosion; plant with native grasses and flowering perennials or a no-mow groundcover, like clover.

A living wall hedge needs material for containment that can be repurposed pallets, fencing or fence posts, or simply a binding like twine or rope to keep its shape. Fill the space with all your organic materials and then plant it with perennials. The roots will eventually take over to hold the material in place and growth will take up the space left as the logs decompose. If you use hardwood logs either horizontally or vertically, they will last two to three decades as they decompose.

Whatever you decide to do with your pile of sticks, you’ll be able to create ecological benefits and beauty in the landscape by viewing them as a resource rather than a mess.

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Looking Back in Beacon

By Chip Rowe

Editor’s note: Beacon was created in 1913 from Matteawan and Fishkill Landing.

150 Years Ago (April 1870)
A file cutter named Hafferman who recently had moved from Matteawan to Newburgh disappeared after setting out from his business to collect bills, including one for $70 (about $1,400 today).

J.W. Masters of Matteawan was appointed to the faculty of Williams College in Vermont.

125 Years Ago (April 1895)
Oliver Curtis Perry, 29, who three years earlier had notoriously attempted to rob the American Express “money” car on the New York Central Railroad at gunpoint, escaped with four other inmates from the Matteawan State Asylum, where he was serving a 49-year sentence. The men fashioned skeleton keys from cafeteria spoons and overwhelmed a guard. Each was quickly captured, although Perry managed to travel the farthest, to New Jersey. “They called it an insane asylum,” Perry told reporters. “Well, I tell you that a quarter of the men in there are not insane and never were, although there’s no doubt that they will be.” (Following his extradition to New York, Perry was declared sane by a judge and sent to another prison, but there deliberately blinded himself and was returned to Matteawan. In 1901 he was moved to the Dannemora State Hospital for Insane Convicts, where he remained until his death in 1909 at age 64.)

A judge ruled that Fannie Korn, who had been sent to Matteawan after she shot and killed her young daughter in 1893, had regained her reason and could be released.

Train robber Oliver Curtis Perry escaped in 1895 from the Matteawan State Asylum  Library of Congress

100 Years Ago (April 1920)
The Rev. Howard Kingdon, who had been working at the Carroll hat shop for four months to supplement his salary, quit after the Baptist church gave him a raise. More than 400 businesses joined the Beacon Chamber of Commerce during a membership drive organized by Henry Hoag.

James Galvin was indicted for assault for alleging hitting a junk dealer named Aronchick over the head with a milk bottle.

The Convent of the Presentation Sisters of St. Michael’s Church, which was used once as a summer retreat, burned to the ground. Officials believed the blaze was started by sparks from a passing New York Central locomotive.

The Mount Beacon resort announced plans to add a natatorium [indoor pool].

Police arrested George Pogue on suspicion of robbing a fellow worker, Joseph Vodock, of $1,000. Pogue came under suspicion after he quit his job, then was observed purchasing two guns and a Victrola record player and putting a deposit on a motorcycle. Police found $720 in his rented room.

Young Jack Dempsey, a 128-pound boxer from Newark, defeated Sapper Cohen, “Battling Sapacone,” of England in a 10-round fight at the Beacon Athletic Club. In another bout, the Peekskill heavyweight champ, Dan Rogers, knocked out Lew Kelby of Newburgh to claim the title for the Beacon section of the river.

The physicians of Beacon and Fishkill decided to raise the price of office calls but maintain their standard rate for house calls.

The superintendent of schools visited Poughkeepsie to inspect its district dental clinic and open-air school with the thought of installing them in Beacon.

75 Years Ago (April 1945)
Hamilton Knapp petitioned the Beacon City Council to operate a bus line between Beacon and Nelsville. He had applied a year before but the Fishkill Electric Railway Co. and the Palisii Brothers Taxi Co. both opposed the plan. Knapp was already operating a bus line under a war emergency act that allowed him to transport workers but wanted to take other passengers. Knapp’s attorney claimed that, because the village boards of Nelsville and Cold Spring failed to act the previous year on his petition, they now had no say in the matter.

Under his revised application, buses would leave Nelsville five times a day between 6:15 a.m. and 7 p.m. and Beacon six times a day between 9:15 a.m. and 11:15 p.m.

Four Beacon residents died in the war: Pte. Richard Sutton of North Avenue was killed in action in Europe; Sgt. Joseph Usifer and Sgt. George Perrault died on Iwo Jima; and Technical 5th Grade Michael Maskewicz, a member of a ship’s repair crew, drowned in Belgium. In addition, Pvt. Charles Hunt of Glenham, a father of four, was killed in Germany, while Staff Sgt. Luigi Bettina, one of five Bettina brothers in the service, and Radioman Second Class Earl Mead were reported missing in action in the Pacific.

Word arrived that Pvt. First Class James Babcock had been shot seven times in the legs during a battle in Italy.

Staff Sgt. Steve Sereda was awarded the Silver Star for destroying a 20-millimeter gun position during the Marinas Islands campaign in the Pacific.

The Hudson Valley Volunteer Firemen’s Association postponed its annual meeting to be held in Beacon because of wartime restrictions on travel.

Burglars stole 11 truck tires overnight from the basement of North Avenue Motors. They also removed three tires from cars they jacked up in the garage.

Henenda Rakhit, the secretary of the India League of America, spoke at Beacon High School on India’s contribution to the war. He gave his talk to members of the Fortnightly Club, which was observing its 50th anniversary.

A fire destroyed 300 feet of the Mount Beacon incline trestle and about 50 acres of timberland. The blaze, which began near a switch in the tracks, burned for five hours and attracted hundreds of spectators.

Ralph Di Menza, a peanut and hot wienie vendor, was fined $35 after he pleaded guilty to slapping Charles Fowler, a New York Central railroad baggage master, during an argument. A Fishkill man was sentenced to 30 days in the county jail after a fight at the Bank Square tavern. And a woman was released on $25 bail after being accused of hitting another woman in the back with a bottle.

The City Council declined to add the streets of the Groveville Park section to the city highway system until residents repaired them. It also rejected a proposal that all dogs in the city be muzzled.

Dick Phelps, 28, a 1959 Beacon High School graduate known as “Digger” because his father was an undertaker, was named the head basketball coach at Fordham. (In his one season at Fordham before departing to coach for 20 seasons at Notre Dame, Phelps led the Rams to a 26-3 record and a No. 9 national ranking.)

John Humeston, who nearly tied a national high school record for most pins in a season, reported missing in action in the Pacific.

(Continued on Page 19)
On a Monday afternoon, Superintendent Donald Sipe closed Beacon High School early because of what he said was an escalating "racial situation." On Tuesday, 400 of the 950 students were absent, while about 50 black students picketed outside, singing "We Shall Overcome." The Poughkeepsie Journal reported that a meeting of about 500 residents that night "broke down when parents began arguing about inter racial dating." On Wednesday, 300 students were absent, and during a two-hour assembly led by Sipe, students were asked to march around the building. Authorities believe tensions had escalated after a fight the previous Friday between two girls at Rombout Middle School. (At the time, 82 percent of BHS students were white, 14 percent black and 4 percent Puerto Rican. Today it's 51 percent white, 30 percent Hispanic and 19 percent black.)

Two police officers rescued a 14-year-old babysitter and four children from the second floor of a burning apartment house on Beekman Street but were not able to save a 7-month-old boy and an 18-month-old girl. The mother of the victims was working the third shift in a factory about a block away. The patrolmen, Joseph Lotsko and John Johnson, spotted the blaze at about 11 p.m.; they climbed a ladder to a balcony, where Lotsko climbed through a window and handed the children to his partner until he was forced out by the heavy smoke. The basement and first-floor apartments were both empty, officials said.

The New York State Bridge Authority ten students who attended a two-hour meeting with city officials asked for a public swimming pool and a riverfront park. The vice chairman of the Recreation Commission responded: "We'll help you in any way we can, but don't come to us for money. We don't have it." Another commission member told the students that the Beacon Recreation Center Association had raised $20,000 in a campaign to build a facility at Memorial Park but the fundraising chair was dead and no one knew what happened to the money.

School district officials said that a new electronic device, which they would not describe, helped them trace four callers who, over five days, made bomb threats to the high school.

Prisons (from Page 8)

all," said Jacobson. "We can't have prisoners infecting correctional officers or vice versa." Earlier, in an April 7 news release, Jacobson said that "reports have reached my office that potentially infected correctional officers are being ordered back to work after just three days without a fever," and that he had heard reports that inmates at Fishkill Correctional do not have access to hand sanitizer and that Green Haven Correctional is continuing its regular communal meal times.

In response, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, which manages the state's prisons, said essential staff who have COVID-19 are isolated for at least seven days after the onset of symptoms, per state Health Department guidelines. It also requires "those with exposures, such as inmates and exposed employees, to isolate upon their return to work, to wear a face mask while working for 14 days following the last exposure." The agency said it provides face masks to those working with prisoners exposed to COVID-19 and, as of April 9, allows other employees to wear their own. Inmates subject to quarantine are given "surgical-type" masks, but the rest are issued handkerchiefs to use as face coverings. The agency also said it provides hand sanitizer to all its facilities.

In addition, the agency said, it has suspended the intake of any prisoners from county facilities; suspended visitation while allowing prisoners five free postage stamps per week and two free 30-minute phone calls; required nonessential staff to stay home; and suspended inmate programs, including academic and vocational education, drug treatment, sex-offender programs and religious services.

The state also announced on March 27 that it would release low-level parole violators from local jails who can show they have a place to go. At the time, the prisons agency estimated that as many as 1,100 inmates could be freed.

"We actually have not seen the kind of outbreaks that we feared that we would see," Melissa DeRosa, the secretary to the governor, said during his briefing on Thurs-
day (April 23).

Releases have also taken place in the federal prison system, where 566 inmates and 342 staff members had tested positive as of Wednesday (April 22), and 24 inmates had died. Since March 26, the federal Bureau of Prisons has released 1,362 inmates to home detention.

In New York, advocates and defense lawyers are demanding more.

Last month the Correctional Association of New York issued a number of recommendations, including commuting the sentences of about 33,000 inmates who would be eligible for release within two years and another 1,300 who are over the age of 50 and have spent more than 10 years in prison. The association also recommended that each inmate be issued a mask.

On April 16, the Legal Aid Society filed a lawsuit against the state demanding the immediate release of nine inmates at three Westchester facilities, Bedford Hills, Sing Sing and the Taconic Correctional Facility, who are either elderly or have an underlying medical condition that makes them especially vulnerable to COVID-19.

On April 4, the New York Civil Liberties Union and the Legal Aid Society sued Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the state prisons on behalf of dozens of people jailed for more than the legal limit of 90 days at Rikers while awaiting hearings for alleged parole violations. Two days later, the NYCLU said one of the inmates had died.
Fishkill Ends Review of Zoning Request
Rolling Hills developer says decision cost $1 million

By Jeff Simms

A real estate development firm says it plans to sue to recoup a $1 million loss after the Town Board ended its review of a request to rezone 16 acres along Route 9D, just north of Beacon.

The rezoning, if granted, would have allowed Hudson View Park Co., based in New York City, to present the Fishkill Planning Board with plans for a 30-building, 448-unit development called Rolling Hills. But on April 1, at the end of a nearly three- and-a-half-hour meeting, the Town Board voted unanimously to drop the review.

If approved, the project would include 68 affordable-housing units and 24,000 square feet of retail space. It would draw drinking water from Beacon and send children to the city’s schools. The developer would likely be required by the state to install a traffic-calming device — possibly a traffic circle — on Route 9D, since 55 percent of the land would remain open.

The developer says the town is in breach of a memo Fishkill officials signed in 2017 outlining a series of “good faith commitments,” including the Town Board’s review of the rezoning request. The Town Board says it cannot be bound to a decision made by a previous board.

According to an April 1 letter from town attorneys, the 2017 agreement “improperly and illegally binds all [Fishkill] town boards externally” to its terms.

If the town ruling stands, Hudson View Park may still submit a proposal to the Planning Board, but would have to conform to the present zoning of the site, which is two parcels. One parcel is zoned for residential building while the other, which fronts Route 9D, is in a planned business district. The developer was asking the town to rezone the second parcel for multi-family construction.

Project officials took the town to task this week, calling the move “rash and arbitrary.”

“Hudson View Park has owned this property for many decades and paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in real estate property taxes,” said Jeffrey Freireich, a project representative, in a statement. “It was seeking to develop this property in a responsible and sustainable manner. Unfortunately, the supervisor’s and the board’s irresponsible and illegal actions have left us no choice” but to sue.

Fishkill Supervisor Ozzy Albra, who campaigned in opposition to Rolling Hills, narrowly defeated incumbent Bob LaColla last November.

On April 1, during the waning moments of a meeting held by video conference, the (Continued on Page 21)

Putnam Legislators Resume Questioning of Police Overtime

Montgomery accuses colleagues of ‘targeting’ Sheriff’s Department

By Liz Schvetchuk Armstrong

With the first quarter of 2020 over, Putnam County legislators last week took the opportunity for a new review of the Sheriff’s Department overtime costs, an effort shadowed by the COVID-19 threat and memories of intense debates.

In a meeting on Wednesday (April 15), the Legislature’s Protective Services Committee quizzed Sheriff Robert Langley on his agency’s overtime expenses from January through March. The committee met by remote audio connection because of “stay home” mandates to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

The legislative Personnel Committee, which met after the Protective Services session ended, also touched on the issue with regard to the status of school resource officers while schools remain closed.

Late in 2019, the Legislature initially rejected a request from Langley to transfer $121,000 from one internal account to another to cover overtime costs for road patrol. It subsequently allowed the transfer through a series of budget amendments.

On Feb. 4, the Legislature adopted a requirement that department heads get permission before exceeding their limits for “non-mandatory” overtime. Langley told legislators in January that he was short six deputies, including one wounded in a knife attack that month and another seriously injured in December while directing traffic. The county cut the budget for road patrol overtime from $600,000 in 2018 to $537,000 in 2019 and $520,000 for 2020.

“We did see quite a bit of excess overtime last year,” when the Sheriff’s Department topped the amount budgeted by about $100,000, and “we went through quite an ordeal discussing” it, recalled Legislator Paul Jonke (R-Southeast), who chairs the Protective Services Committee.

Now, he explained, the committee wanted “an update on where we’re at. Have we exceeded 25 percent (of the 2020 total) budgeted for overtime?”

Langley reported that some expense lines have topped 25 percent of the budgeted sum but that reimbursements from other agencies will reduce the impact. For example, when the department receives $14,000 it is owed for youth and community service initiatives, overtime expenses for the first quarter of the year will fall below 25 percent, he said.

Moreover, he explained, some deputies take overtime compensation not as cash payments but as “comp” time, or comparable hours off, a practice that trimmed the first-quarter overtime outlay for patrols by $6,554.

Also, with schools unlikely to re-open this semester, SROs have returned to regular duty, filling in for those on leave or replacing deputies who retired or took other jobs, he said. “They’re being utilized wisely to eliminate the need for overtime.”

Thanking Langley, Jonke added, “It really is going to be helpful for the taxpayers of our county, because God knows where we’re headed, given the circumstances we’re all living in right now.”

When the Personnel Committee convened, Langley added that the search for a sergeant to supervise the SROs has been suspended. “It would be best to keep that money in reserve,” he said. “We will re-evaluate it when we get closer to the school season” for the fall.

“I’m so grateful those deputies are on the road. We need every extra person doing road patrol now more than ever,” said Legislator Nancy Montgomery (D-Phillipsburgh).

COVID-19 has affected the department itself, according to Undersheriff Kevin Cheverko, who reported that 13 deputies missed two to 18 days of work because of exposure to the virus, and that two tested positive. “Depending on how this goes, overtime could be well increased,” Cheverko said.

Montgomery lauded the Sheriff’s Department for the detailed information it provided but chastised her fellow legislators for what she described as a selective review. “I’d like to see this across the board in every department,” she said.

“Instead, “we seem to be targeting this department” when “they’re protecting us at our most vulnerable time.”

Other legislators vigorously objected.

“To infer we’re targeting the Sheriff’s Department is extremely insulting,” said Legislator Neal Sullivan (R-Mahopac).

The criticism in December of the Sheriff’s Department’s overtime spending seemed to be a sudden change of approach for the Republican legislators, who for years had routinely approved such transfers. In 2018, the Legislature OKed Langley’s requests to move at least $192,000 to cover overtime, and in 2012 and 2014 it approved requests from Undersheriff Don Smith to move $200,000 or more to cover overtime.

The Sheriff’s Department, which includes the jail and probation officers, spent $2.5 million on overtime in 2018, according to documents by The Current through a Freedom of Information Law request. Of the county’s total overtime earnings in the sheriff’s deputies and nine were corrections officers. By comparison, the Highway Department spent $541,000 and all other agencies $465,000.

License Plate Readers Again Captivate Putnam Legislators

Cold Spring police in line to get the devices

By Liz Schvetchuk Armstrong

Along with re-opening a review of Sheriff’s Department overtime expenses, the Putnam County Legislature’s Protective Services Committee last week continued its consideration, now several months running, of the use of license plate readers in law enforcement.

License-plate readers are camera systems mounted in squad cars that capture and store images in order to track vehicle movements. They are used by three municipal police departments in Putnam, plus the New York State Police and the Sheriff’s Department, which has arranged to provide them to the Cold Spring Police Department, as well.

On April 17, Sheriff Robert Langley said in a news release that the readers had been instrumental on April 6 and April 8 in helping his deputies identify vehicles that had been reported stolen.

However, the Legislature wants stricter rules for their use. The committee devoted much of its March meeting to passing a draft Sheriff’s Department policy and it continued deliberations for nearly another hour on April 15.

Legislator Amy Sayegh (R-Mahopac Falls) said she recognizes the value of license-plate readers but worries about “innocent people, law-abiding citizens” whose data might be swept up in a search. “It’s very important we get this right. We know this can get quite out of hand.”

Legislator Neal Sullivan (R-Mahopac) said legislators were surprised to learn that along with plate numbers, the readers might show bumper stickers or occupants in a vehicle.

Langley reported that a license-plate reader is “a law enforcement tool used for investigation” and can accelerate efforts “to bring justice for innocent persons. It’s not used to spy on the community at large.”

Legislators Nancy Montgomery (D-Philpstown) and Ginny Nacerino (R-Patterson) said they hope the committee’s review does not interfere with the Cold Spring Police Department’s plans to acquire the readers.

“Let’s just move forward” and “not lose focus” of the purpose of the tool, Nacerino said. “It isn’t a frivolous peek-and-look to try to trap someone.”

COVID-19 has affected the department itself, according to Undersheriff Kevin Cheverko, who reported that 13 deputies missed two to 18 days of work because of exposure to the virus, and that two tested positive.
that your board did this,” Albra said. “It was zoning review. “For the citizens of Fishkill in the best interest of the town” to end the Rolling Hills tennis courts. The Open Space Institute of Route 9D opposite the football field and U Bend parking on the Goat Trail and the the Washburn parking lot, Little Stony road is creating a dangerous situation.”

ate social distancing,” the agency said in a trails, hikers are unable to practice appropri-

that line the approaches to these congested trails, which is located near the southern end of the Breakneck Tunnel, except for police and emergency services, according to Philipstown Supervisor Richard Shea. OSI bought the property last month.

Local officials have been pushing the state for several weeks to close the trails and have been doing everything they could to limit parking, particularly near Breakneck.

Mayor Dave Merandy, Putnam County Legislator Nancy Montgomery and myself succeeded in getting through to the gover-

she wrote. “Our only market, Foodtown, was seeing from New York City and New Jersey,” he wrote. “Our only market, Foodtown, was devastated by Monday morning.”

Indian Point (from Page 1)

The question of who will be decommissioning Indian Point to secure its radioactive material is unresolved. Entergy wants to transfer its license to operate the plant to a firm called Holtec International but has met opposition.

Under guidelines established by the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), a nuclear plant that closes must be decommissioned within 60 years. Many plants do this through a procedure called SAFSTOR, in which the facility is moth-balled for 50 years to allow the radioactive material to decay. Holtec wants to begin work immediately to have the plant free of nuclear material within 15 years.

Although Holtec’s finances and some of its business dealings have drawn criticism, the Ossining-based environmental group Riverkeeper said it would like to see a quicker decommissioning process, in part to provide immediate employment for plant workers.

“We want this to be a win for everybody, and we don’t want to see some communi-
ties left behind,” said Richard Webster, its legal program director. In the meantime, Riverkeeper has joined forces with other organizations to launch a Beyond Indian Point campaign for renewable energy. Webster said that since the shutdown was announced, a reactor’s worth of renewable energy has come onto the state grid.

Although some level of risk will remain as long as radioactive material is on the site, the risk of an accident will fall significantly when Indian Point is no longer operational, said Richard Chang, a representative for the NRC. “The highest classification of an emer-
gency for a permanently shut-down nuclear power plant would be an ‘alert,’ which is the second-lowest of the four levels of emergency classification used by the NRC,” he said.

Chang said that although the plant will still have emergency procedures after 2021, “changes in reduction and scope will occur.”

Rolling Hills (from Page 20)

board adopted a resolution declaring it is “in the best interest of the town” to end the zoning review. “For the citizens of Fishkill watching tonight, you should be very happy that your board did this,” Albra said. “It was worth the watch.”

Rolling Hills officials orchestrated “one of the most interesting setups in Fishkill history,” Albra said on Tuesday (April 21). “If they propose a plan that fits [the current zoning], we’re not going to prevent that from happening. But the days of develop-
ers trying to run this town are over.”

In a letter sent to Albra the day before the April 1 vote, Rolling Hills’ attorneys argued that the project had become “the target of a well-funded misinformation campaign led by the owner of the neighboring develop-
ment” and others in Fishkill.

Moreover, “in the middle of the nation’s worse crisis in decades, with no notice or opportunity to attend the meeting or be heard,” the development group “discovered on its own” the board’s plan to terminate its review of the rezoning request, the letter said.

What About the Pipeline?

Even with the Indian Point plant closing, there remain concerns about the Algonquin Incremental Market (AIM) pipeline. The 37.6-mile, 42-inch-wide natural gas pipeline, which came online in early 2017 and transports more than 3 billion cubic feet of natural gas every day, passes through the Indian Point site.

In February, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission was told to conduct a new safety review after the agency’s inspector general found that an initial study tutoring the pipeline’s safety used “backward engineering.” The new report, created with specialists from outside the agency and released on April 8, said that although the first report made “optimistic assumptions,” the pipeline is indeed safe.

The new report says that a rupture in the pipeline is unlikely because it “was installed using modern techniques, stringent quality standards and construction precautions.” Even if a break were to occur, the power plant would remain protected because its safety systems are far from the pipeline, the investigators concluded.

Given that both reactors will be offline in about a year, it said, the risk of a rupture affecting them is “very small,” the report said.

The report drew immediate condemnation from local lawmakers. “An independent risk assessment will provide a modicum of reassurance,” said Sandy Galef, whose state Assembly district includes Philipstown and Indian Point. “It is truly the least we can ask for.”

At Riverkeeper, Richard Webster said that while the risk of a rupture is low, the lack of an independent, peer-reviewed study is troubling. “This is an assurance from an agency that has repeatedly said in the past that something wasn’t a problem, and has then had to backtrack,” he said. “When they say the risk is not excessive, what does that mean? At the moment there’s no review and no clear standard.

“The bottom line is that the AIM Pipeline reduces safety. It’s bound to reduce safety, you can’t put a pressurized pipeline next to a nuclear plant and not reduce safety,” he said. “The question is, does it reduce safety to the point where it’s a problem?”

Trails Closed (from Page 1)

Hudson Highlands and the narrow roads that line the approaches to these congested trails, hikers are unable to practice appropri-

ate social distancing,” the agency said in a statement. “The number of cars and pedes-

trians walking along the high-speed state road is creating a dangerous situation.”

The trails and parking lots closed were at Mount Beacon; Breakneck Ridge, Wilkin-

son Trailhead and Notch Trail in Fishkill; the Washburn parking lot, Little Stony Point trails, Brook Trail and Indian Brook Falls Trail in Philipstown; and Anthony’s Nose, the Appalachian Trail connector, the U Bend parking on the Goat Trail and the Toll House parking lot in Cortlandt.

In addition, at the request of the Village of Cold Spring, the Haldane school district has closed its parking lot on the west side of Route 9D opposite the football field and tennis courts. The Open Space Institute also closed the parking area at The Chalet, which is located near the southern end of the Breakneck Tunnel, except for police and emergency services, according to Philipstown Supervisor Richard Shea. OSI bought the property last month.

Local officials have been pushing the state for several weeks to close the trails and have been doing everything they could to limit parking, particularly near Breakneck.

“Mayor Dave Merandy, Putnam County Legislator Nancy Montgomery and myself succeeded in getting through to the gover-

or,” Shea wrote in an email on Wednesday. “This past weekend was a breaking point. I have never seen such disregard for public health andflouting of the law.

“There has been an uptick in cases here in Philipstown, which I believe is directly related to the number of visitors we are seeing from New York City and New Jersey,” he wrote. “Our only market, Foodtown, was devastated by Monday morning.”

Although visitors were required to park parallel to Route 9D instead of at angles to reduce the number of hikers at Breakneck Ridge, and all but one parking lot (at Little Stony Point) was closed, the trailhead remained crowded before the state parks department closed it on Tuesday (April 21). This photo was taken at 1:45 p.m. on Sunday, April 12.

Photo by Ross Corsair
Susan Crofoot (1922-2020)

Susan Grey Crofoot, 97, a journalist who turned a 19th-century townhouse on Main Street in Cold Spring into an antiques shop and bed-and-breakfast, died April 7 in Westwood, New Jersey, of complications of COVID-19.

Susan was born Dec. 7, 1922, in Utica, the daughter of George and Jessie (Grey) Hopp. She graduated from Iowa State College with a bachelor's degree in food and nutrition and journalism. She married George Crofoot in 1946.

Susan was the first paid employee of The Rockland Review, where she wrote columns such as “Cooking with Sue” and “Viewpoint Through a Jaunelled Eye.” She also took joy in writing ditties for friends and family members under her pen name, Penelope Penwiper.

In 1984, after her husband died, she bought a townhouse at 11 Main St. in Crofoot (Diana) and their sons Will and great-granddaughter, Josephine; Donn Genevieve, Hannah and Kristi, and her Crofoot (Tanja) and their children, Kye, and drive to restaurants near and far. She a docent on Constitution Island. She received Spring, Susan volunteered with the Putnam transformed it into a bed-and-breakfast. In 1992 she she opened the Front Parlour, a Victorian Cold Spring. After extensive renovations she was a member of the Red Hats of Cold

Phil Mattrakion (1918-2020)

Salvatore Philip Mattrakion, 101, who was awarded a Bronze Star for his bravery during the Battle of Iwo Jima during World War II, died on April 15 at Wingate at Dutchess.

Born in the hamlet of Chelsea on Dec. 22, 1918, he was the son of Feodele and Marianne (Antonucci) Matracciano. He married Helen Seeley, who died in 1984.

Known as “Phil” and “Poppie,” he served in the U.S. Navy from 1942 to 1945, transporting soldiers aboard the USS Makassar Strait to and from combat zones in Okinawa and Iwo Jima, and surviving a bombing on the ship. He also saw action at Bougainville Island and the invasion of Sicily.

After the war, a shipmate offered Mattrakion, a job with an upstart frozen food company, but it would have required moving his family south, he told The Current for an article for his 100th birthday. “I said no; I want to go home,” he recalled.

Poppie was nicknamed the “Woodchuck” for his uncanny ability to find any piece of firewood he could, and well into his 90s, he could find something up and stacking it, his family said. He never said “no” to a trip to the casino.

He is survived by his daughters, Mary Ann Lonceto (Mark) and Nanoniee Horan; his daughter-in-law, Jane Mattrakion; his grand-children, Philip Mattrakion (Anne), Breane Trotte (Keith), Meghan Wood, Trevor Wood (Natalie Baez), Amber Long (Tom), Courtney Horan, Kaitlin Morse (Robert), Peter Horan, Hope Horan, Andrea Ribachonek (Eric), Kyle Mattrakion (Kim), Kayleigh Gaffney (John) and Ralph Mattrakion; and his great-grandchildren, Victoria, Elizabeth, Ty, Jordyn, Tess, Seamus, Jade, Zachary, Noah, Ella, John, Evan, Neal and Norah.

Two of his sons died before him: Hospitai Corpsman 2nd Class Philip Mattrakion, who was killed in action in Vietnam, and Ralph Mattrakion, as well as five of his siblings, two stepbrothers and his friend and companion, Dorothy Oliver.

A private service and burial took place on April 18 at St. Joachim Cemetery in Beacon. A funeral Mass will be held at a later date. Memorial donations may be made to St. John the Evangelist Church, 2 Oak St., Beacon, NY 12508, or to Disabled American Veterans, Castle Point Chapter No. 144, Castle Point, NY 12511 (dav.org).

Bob Outer (1940-2020)

Robert A. Outer, 79, of a Beacon resident who was known for 36 years as the “voice of Army football,” died March 29.

Bob was born in Paterson, New Jersey, on Aug. 22, 1940, the son of Arnold and Hilda Outer. On June 28, 1970, he married Louise Outer in Newburgh.

He studied broadcasting at Boston University and, after graduating in 1962, he began a 42-year career with the Hudson Valley radio station WBNR. He was the station’s play-by-play announcer for West Point football for 36 years and also worked for the Hudson Valley Renegades minor-league baseball team from 2005 until his retirement in 2016.

Bob always had a gift of gab, with a happy smile and a firm handshake, his family said. While he enjoyed many hobbies, such as woodworking and yardwork, his passion was community service. For many years he was a member of the Beacon Planning Board and Recreation Commission and helped organize the Spirit of Beacon Day. He was also instrumental in the fundraising effort to build Dutchess Stadium and bring minor league baseball to the Hudson Valley.

Besides his wife, Bob is survived by his daughter, Debra Fisher (Jeff) of North Carolina and Jessica Outer of Virginia; his brother, Walter Hartley of Washington; his brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, William Obscherning, Philip and Shari Krupoff, Martin and Julie Krupoff, and Stuart and Chung Krupoff.

A private service was held at Fairview Cemetery in Beacon. Memorial donations may be made to any local charity.

Other Recent Deaths

Beacon

Ellen Rogers

Philipstown

Kerri Ann Kennedy-Tompkins, 48
Puzzles

**CrossCurrent**

**ACROSS**
1. Resided
6. Things
11. Demosthenes or Cicero
12. Cancel out
14. Ubiquitous fastener
15. Early spring bloom
16. Feedbag tidbit
17. — the manger
19. Owns
20. Press
22. Ballet step
23. — song (cheaply)
24. Force measures
26. Decorum
28. Quite some time
30. Actor Stephen
31. Went sour
35. Contents of some trays
39. Responsibility
40. Court
42. Story
43. Donkey
44. Impostor
46. Sudden turn
47. Traditional usage
49. Love apple
51. Medical prioritization
52. Portuguese island group
53. Stationery brand

**DOWN**
1. Cheerless
2. The Compleat Angler author
3. And so on (Abbr.)
4. Tennyson title
5. Cavalry unit
6. Canine’s neighbor
7. Sea bird
8. Id counterpart
9. He-men
10. George
11. Egg-shaped
13. English composition
18. Leg, slangily
21. Must have
23. Banquet
25. Scale member
27. Part of the Justice Dept.
29. Cronkite, Rather, et al.
31. Work together
32. Doubtful
33. Neighbor of Georgia
34. Female deer
36. Risk
37. Cheers up
38. Some llies
41. Lash — (berate)
43. Female deer
44. Comic strip possum
45. Nap
48. Body art, for short
50. Calendar abbr.

54. Is inclined (to)

**SudoCurrent**

Answers will be published next week. See highlandscurrent.org/puzzle for interactive sudoku.

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The Seniors: Beacon Tennis

By Skip Pearlman

As senior athletes at Beacon and Haldane high schools try to wrap their brains around the possibility that the spring sports season will not happen because of the COVID-19 shutdown, they say they’ve gained an appreciation for activities they once took for granted.

At Beacon, boys’ tennis coach David Ryley said he lost only one starter from last year’s 10-5 team to graduation and was looking for a big season. The shutdown will continue until at least through May 15.

The 2020 Bulldogs squad has seven seniors: Almass Ali, Ian Bautista (all-league in doubles), Jason Callaway (the valedictorian of the 2020 class), Patrick Lewis, Jacob Lombardo, Eric Ostrow (the salutatorian) and Christian Pulcurima (all-league).

“We felt way ahead of the game, in terms of experience,” said Ryley. “Anything we could get out of the season would be great, but it’s not looking promising.”

The players say the experience has made them realize the importance of what they are missing. “This experience is teaching me to have patience more than anything ever has before,” said Lewis. “I’m learning to embrace the saying, ‘Good things come with time.’ I’m confident that better situations will come.”

“The lesson is definitely not to take things for granted,” added Bautista. “If we don’t have a season, it will be heartbreaking, because Mr. Ryley was the best coach I’ve had, regardless of sport. My teammates were fun to be around, and tennis is my favorite sport.”

At the same time, he said, “I won’t give up hope on playing my senior season. Even if it’s one match, it’d make me feel much better.”

Ali said he’d be content with one practice. “I just want to get back out there and not be stuck here. The situation shows how important sports are for people. It’s like a family, and when you are not a part of it, you miss it. I first thought that this would be a small thing to worry about, that it would only last a few days. The situation is making me miss tennis even more.”

Lewis is more pessimistic. “I believe it’s too late,” he said. “Even if we make it back to school, I doubt they will run after-school activities. The health and safety of our world is at stake right now, so it seems as though our senior season is going to be a casualty. I miss seeing my teachers, friends, coaches, club advisers, administrators, security guards, janitors and faculty. Every single one of them.”

Ryley said he understands his players’ frustration.

“This is such an awesome group of seniors,” he said. “They’re impressive in the classroom, too. It kills me not to be able to finish up with them. Last year was a rebuilding year that turned into a strong season, and 10 of the 11 players returned.”

“The hardest part is knowing the potential we had,” said Bautista. “Our starting lineup includes up to seven seniors. Last season, my doubles partner, Warren Banks, and I had a 13-3 season. As a team, the league title was very much on our minds.”

“My hope was to finally prove myself,” Lewis said. “After being in and out of the varsity lineup last year, I was hoping my training and effort would pay off.” He also looked forward to challenging Hendrick Hudson. “It’s been a goal of ours [to defeat them], and we looked to have a strong team to do it this year.”

Ali had hoped to work himself into the starting lineup. “The most disappointing thing is, the week we stopped was the week when the lineup was going to be confirmed,” he said.

Lost Season

This is the fourth in a series of articles in which The Current will profile senior athletes at Haldane and Beacon high schools who are likely to miss their spring seasons.