

The HIGHLANDS Current



Peak Performance
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FEBRUARY 19, 2021

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FAT TUESDAY — Mardi Gras was canceled in New Orleans this year, but in Garrison, a COVID-muted version was held at St. Philip's Episcopal Church on Tuesday (Feb. 16) for residents who were invited to drive by and pick up a goody bag from the Cross Trainers youth group while dropping off donations for the Philipstown Food Pantry. Each bag contained beads, a mask, a handmade card, Ash Wednesday meditations and a piece of King Cake.

Photo by Ross Corsair

Cold Spring Nelsonville Fine-Tune Airbnb Rules

*Proposed laws would
require owners get permits*

By Liz Schevtchuk Armstrong

When Nelsonville's Village Board on Tuesday (Feb. 16) sought input on a draft law regulating short-term rentals, it got what it asked for — about 90 minutes of mixed praise and protest.

The feedback came in a public hearing at the close of the board's regular monthly meeting, conducted by Zoom.

Board members kept the hearing open so more residents can submit comments and said they plan to revise the draft and hold further public discussions in coming weeks.

Short-term rentals also have been on the agenda in Cold Spring, where the Village Board is close to adopting regulations as part of the ongoing update of the village code. John Furst, village attorney,

is reviewing the chapter on short-term rentals and when he finishes the Village Board intends to consider his suggestions, if any, and schedule a public hearing.

Short-term rentals have proliferated in Cold Spring in recent years, and a public meeting to discuss their impact drew a standing-room-only crowd in September 2019. The general consensus: allow them, with restrictions.

Cold Spring's draft law calls for issuing permits for up to 38 short-term rentals, limited to two per street. The permits, valid for one year, would be distributed through a lottery if more than 38 homeowners apply.

Short-term rentals have been a booming business, even during the pandemic, according to Airbnb, which on Wednesday (Feb. 17) announced that new hosts in the Catskills and Hudson Valley region with one listing have earned more than \$10 million

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Every School Dollar Counts

*Districts begin budget
planning amid aid
uncertainty*

By Jeff Simms

Public school officials in the Highlands are moving ahead with budget deliberations for 2021-22, even as critical aid packages from the federal and state governments remain uncertain.

The \$30 million in state aid distributed to the Beacon City School District last year accounted for 45 percent of its funding. The Garrison and Haldane districts, which draw more revenue through property taxes than Beacon and have fewer students, are not as reliant on state aid, using it to fund 8 percent and 12 percent, respectively, of their spending.

Districts were told in August to expect

(Continued on Page 10)

The Vaccinated Hope and Wait

*Residents say they still
exercise caution*

By Leonard Sparks

A few miles separate Beacon resident Debbie Brennen from her parents, Gunta and Ed Broderick, who live in the Town of Fishkill. But months remain before they can again step inside each other's homes.

Last week Brennen and her parents received, on the same day, their second and final COVID-19 vaccine shots. Still, as a teacher who has already had to quarantine once because of a close exposure, and a spouse whose husband is immune-compromised, she is going to maintain precautions "until many more people get vaccinated."

"My parents and I have agreed, maybe in a few months we'll allow ourselves to hug each other and eat a meal in the same house," said Brennen.

Brennen and her parents are members of a pioneering group — the nearly 1.2 million New York residents who, as of Tuesday (Feb. 16), have received their booster doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, both of which require two shots weeks apart.

While they and other local residents who are fully vaccinated are expressing relief and joy, they are also heeding the guidance of health officials who warn that the country has to immunize many more people before shedding the restrictions that have reduced infections but also

(Continued on Page 9)



Debbie Brennen of Beacon received her second and final COVID-19 vaccine shot on Feb. 11 at the former JCPenney space at Poughkeepsie Galleria. Photo provided

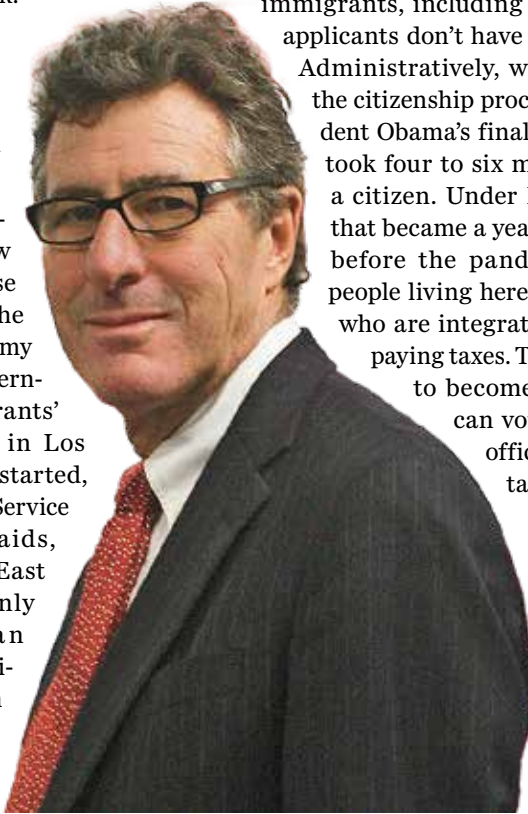
5Q FIVE QUESTIONS: ALLAN WERNICK

By Michael Turton

Allan Wernick of Cold Spring is an attorney and founder and director of Citizenship Now! at The City University of New York.

What led you to a career in immigration law?

I was politically active in the anti-war and student movements in college. In law school, I wanted to use my legal skills for the public good, and after my first year I got an internship with an immigrants' rights organization in Los Angeles. The week I started, the U.S. Immigration Service started dragnet raids, arresting people in East Los Angeles, a mainly Mexican-American community. I immediately got embroiled in the legal fight to stop the raids.



What would you change about immigration law and the naturalization process?

Legislatively, we need a path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants, including checks to ensure applicants don't have criminal records. Administratively, we can streamline the citizenship process. During President Obama's final years in office, it took four to six months to become a citizen. Under President Trump that became a year-and-a-half, even before the pandemic. There are people living here with green cards who are integrated in our society, paying taxes. They should be able to become citizens so they can vote, become police officers, join the military and so on.

What is the role of Citizenship Now!?

Immigration law is complex, so even in a simple case, it's easy to make a misstep.

About 60 percent of those we help are applying for citizenship. We don't represent them but we have lawyers and paralegals who help them complete applications for citizenship or permanent residence. We explain the requirements, make sure they qualify, ensure they include everything that's needed with their application. Most don't need a lawyer.

You have written a column for the New York Daily News for 25 years. Is it still relevant?

I'm pleased with it. Mainly it's like "Dear Abby" on immigration. There's a lot of bad information out there, and people who want to rip people off. There is no shortage of questions; the letters have not stopped coming.

The U.S. can't accommodate everyone who wants to become a citizen. What should the criteria be?

We need workers: agricultural workers, professionals, skilled workers. And we have to accommodate their families. Our current immigration categories, which include family members, needed workers and exceptional workers, is a good system for selection. It weeds out people with serious criminal records, people who can't live here without public assistance. The one thing I would do is increase the numbers. America can accommodate a much larger number — but not this week! Once we get through the pandemic and feel more comfortable having people cross borders, and unemployment decreases, we can accommodate a lot more. If we don't, we're going to have a hard time paying for Social Security. We need younger workers paying into it so that older workers can get the benefits.

For information on Citizenship Now!, see bit.ly/citizenship-now.

Visit highlandscurrent.org for news updates and latest information.

ON THE SPOT

By Michael Turton

Are you handy around the house, or pretty inept?

"I'd say I'm pretty handy. I'm good at constructing things from Ikea."



~ Lila Feder, Beacon

"I can do a little bit of everything. My mom has a Habitat for Humanity house. I volunteered a lot, learned Sheetrock and other skills."



~ Angel Lau, Beacon

"I do like to build things ... but I'm no plumber!"



~ Erica Shusha, Cold Spring

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NEWS BRIEFS

Hustis Sentencing Rescheduled

Former trustee pleaded guilty to child porn charge

The sentencing of Charles E. "Chuck" Hustis III, a former Cold Spring trustee and mayoral candidate who pleaded guilty in November to the attempted receipt of child pornography, has been postponed until March 18.

Hustis, 37, was arrested in December 2019 by FBI agents in the Foodtown parking lot in Cold Spring, where they allege he was waiting to meet a 16-year-old for sex. According to an investigator's report, Hustis solicited explicit photos from the teen via Facebook Messenger. His sentencing had been scheduled for Thursday (Feb. 18).

The child pornography charge carries a mandatory minimum sentence of five years in prison for a defendant with no prior convictions, although in some circumstances prosecutors can ask for leniency. (Under federal sentencing guidelines, there is no distinction between the attempted or actual receipt of child pornography.) Hustis pleaded guilty as part of a deal in which prosecutors dropped a charge of child enticement, which carries a minimum sentence of 10 years.

Following his 2019 arrest, Hustis was released on \$150,000 bond and placed under home arrest with a monitoring device. The judge allowed Hustis to remain at his home under the same conditions until his sentencing.

Hustis, a 2002 Haldane graduate, served on the Village Board from 2010 to 2014 and ran unsuccessfully for the Haldane school board in 2015. He challenged incumbent Mayor Dave Merandy in 2019.

Casino Wants Newburgh Gambling Hall

Resorts World envisions video lottery at shopping mall

Gaming company plans to open a gambling hall with video lottery terminals at the Newburgh Mall.

Resorts World Catskills got the OK in 2019 from the state to open a facility with electronic slots in Orange County. The company is owned by the Genting Group, which is based in Malaysia. "Satellite casinos" have been opening inside malls in other states to draw customers to the retail stores.

Genting said it plans to soon present plans for its Video Gaming Machine facility to the Town of Newburgh. State Sen. James Skoufis said in a statement that the project "will revitalize a dying mall" and provide "hundreds of permanent, good-paying jobs with an emphasis on hiring from the City of Newburgh."

Tree and Shrub Seedling Sale Opens

Putnam County sponsors annual event

The Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District and Cornell Cooperative Extension Putnam County have launched their annual Tree and Shrub Seedling Sale.

Tubex Combitubes are being offered for the first time to protect trees from weed-whackers, rabbits and deer, and to act as a greenhouse to promote faster growth.

To place an order, visit putnamcountyny.com/keepputnamgreen by March 24. Orders will be available for pickup on April 23 and 24 at Memorial Park in Kent. Every order will receive a free milkweed seed packet.



GIVING BACK — Volunteers from the Philipstown COVID-19 Relief Fund and Open Arms Christian Ministries in Fishkill distributed grocery store gift cards and food on Saturday (Feb. 13) at the Beacon Recreation Center. The Philipstown fundraising effort, which Supervisor Richard Shea launched in April, has given away more than \$600,000 in gift cards to people in need in Beacon, Philipstown, Cold Spring, Nelsonville, Garrison, Peekskill and Newburgh. The Open Arms ministry distributes food each week donated by ShopRite and Trader Joe's.

Photo by Ross Corsair

WHAT MEMBERS ARE SAYING



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JOE MONTUORI, MAHOPAC

“Thank you for providing excellent journalism. We're fortunate in *The Highlands* to have such a high-quality local newspaper.”

RACHEL AND ANDREW MUELLER-LUST, COLD SPRING

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Tell us what you think

The *Current* welcomes letters to the editor on its coverage and local issues. Submissions are selected by the editor to provide a variety of opinions and voices, and all are subject to editing for accuracy, clarity and length. We ask that writers remain civil and avoid personal attacks. Letters may be emailed to editor@highlandscurrent.org or mailed to Editor, The Highlands Current, 142 Main St., Cold Spring, NY 10516. The writer's full name, village or city, and email or phone number must be included, but only the name and village or city will be published.

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

Ambulance corps

It amazes me that the Town Board would treat the Philipstown Volunteer Ambulance Corps in this way ("Ambulance Corps Dispute Flares Anew," Feb. 12). As a lifelong resident, I know firsthand of their professionalism and commitment to the community.

I can actually thank them personally for saving my life after a bad fall I had in March. They not only saved me but they have helped three generations of the Landolfi family here in Cold Spring!

The issue that baffles me the most is the fact that they want to micromanage the ambulance corps, when a few years ago they took a different position regarding the Garrison Fire Co., pushing it into forming a district so the town wouldn't have to micromanage. Does that make sense? There are other reasons for the animosity. The Town Board members are the ones acting like children.

I hope that the full board can look at the situation objectively and realize the mistakes being made are crucial.

John Landolfi, *Cold Spring*

Talk about a flawed article! Who does *The Current* have writing for them now, gossip columnists?

Chrissy Glorius, *via Facebook*

Nelsonville race

I welcome George Eisenbach's entry into the race for the Nelsonville Village Board, but I do want to point out why his comments concerning the 2020 budget are not factual ("Two More Candidates in Nelsonville," Feb. 12).

Last year was the first time in recent history where enough thoughtful budget cuts were made to avoid raising taxes on residents. The budget increase you refer to is primarily a transfer from our state Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) grant and savings accounts to pay for the long-overdue repaving of two village roads.

The cell tower settlement was undertaken by the board to protect the financial future of the village in the face of immense legal challenges. The current lawsuit against the village, in which Eisenbach is a plaintiff attempting to overturn this same settlement, however, is obligating us to expend additional resources, taxpayer money and time in court. Our counsel has cautioned that, if elected as a trustee, Eisenbach would need to recuse himself from all matters involving this lawsuit.

Michael Bowman, *Nelsonville*
Bowman is the Nelsonville mayor.

Thank you, Mayor Bowman, for responding to the article. As reported in *The Current*, the budget for the previous year was \$325,000. The budget for 2020-21 is \$405,000. That is a 25 percent increase.

On the cell tower lawsuit: My fellow plaintiffs and I are suing to invalidate the settlement that you and the Village Board complained the telecoms forced you into accepting. We understand the pressure you were under, but as citizens we could not sit by and quietly ignore the fact that this settlement violates our local zoning laws, our neighbors' property rights and the state fire code.

The 95-foot tower, plus its adjacent parking lot and access road, will destroy the tranquility of the historic Cold Spring Cemetery. It will even be illuminated at night. In my professional opinion as a civil engineer, the switchbacks on the proposed access road are too severe and steep. It's just a matter of time before someone gets hurt — maybe a volunteer firefighter, a maintenance worker or one of my neighbors. This cell tower will stand next to our homes on a wooded hill with no direct access to town water for firefighting. This thought keeps me up at night. If the Village Board wouldn't fight, we had to.

I suspect many Nelsonville residents will be surprised to hear their taxpayer money is going to defend a settlement that the Village Board didn't want. But while we wait for the court to decide our case, as trustee I'll make sure the village enforces the temporary restraining order, environmental regulations and the laws protecting our rights as a community.

I will also make sure there is a full discussion and informed debate about the dangers this project poses to our community, our homes and our environment. As you know, Homeland Towers made significant changes to the plan after the public hearings and the court-ordered settlement were concluded.

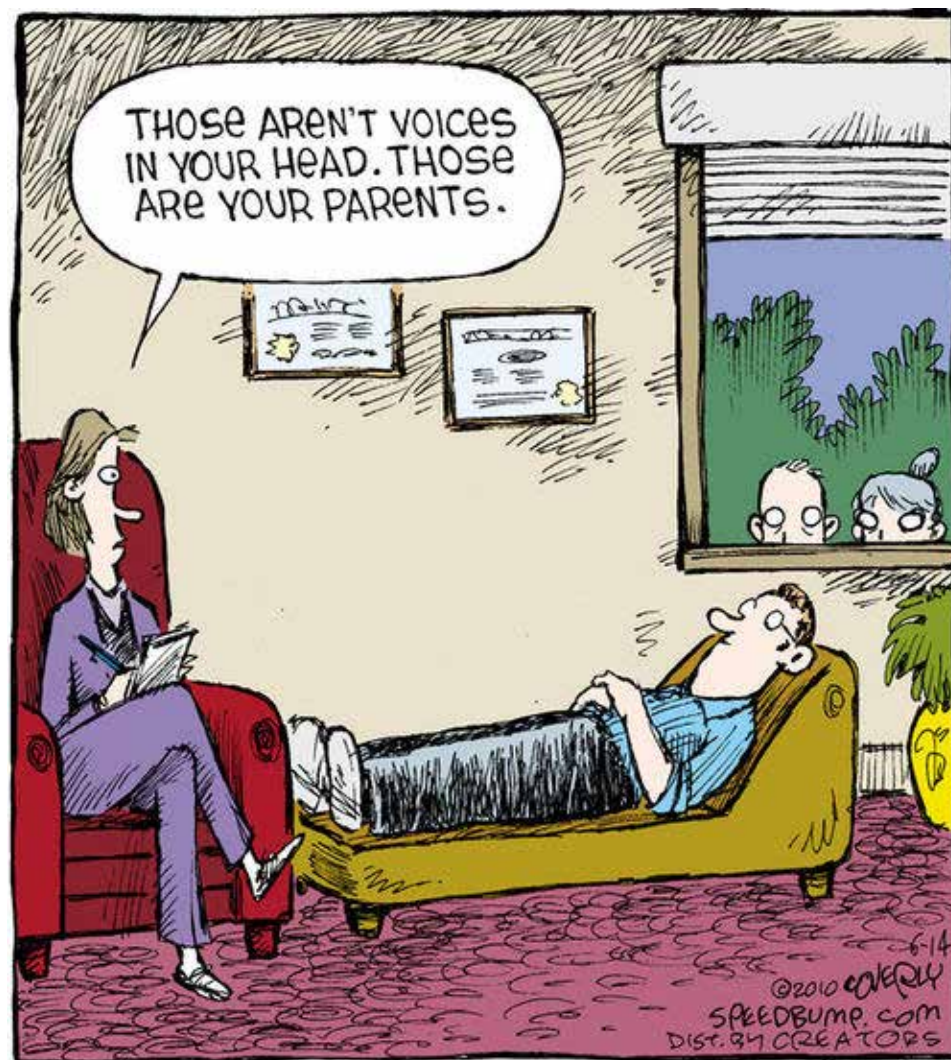
George Eisenbach, *Nelsonville*

Job critique

One would assume from reading Barbara Scuccimarra's letter in the Feb. 12 issue that she set the world on fire for the benefit of Philipstown while a member of the Putnam County Legislature.

As one of nine Republicans on the nine-member board, one would hope that she would get something accomplished. As we all know, those were the scraps that County Executive MaryEllen Odell threw her to make it appear that she was effective — and about as effective as her predecessor, Vinny Tamagna, upon whose coattails and tracks she followed. Pity that there was not another transportation position or some such that she

(Continued on Page 5)



Editor's Notebook

The Meeting Before the Meeting

By Chip Rowe

During the first meeting of the Putnam Legislature in 2021, its nine members received assignments as liaisons to county groups such as Fish & Wildlife Management, Veterans Affairs and Capital Projects.



Nancy Montgomery, the sole Democrat, who represents Philipstown and part of Putnam Valley, asked the chair, Toni Addonizio of Kent, how the list had been prepared.

"Was this discussed outside of this meeting?" she said.

"That's not an appropriate question," Addonizio responded.

Montgomery said she simply wanted to know if the appointments had been discussed ahead of time, to which Addonizio replied: "I'm not answering that."

Addonizio didn't answer because she didn't have to. And therein lies a tale.

'Open' meetings

In 1976, the state Senate and Assembly passed a law designed to prevent elected officials from holding secret meetings.

Known as the Open Meetings Law, it set standards for what local and state panels must do, such as allow the public to attend, announce meetings at least a week in advance and keep minutes.

This was necessary, the Legislature said, because "it is essential to the maintenance of a democratic society" that citizens are "able to observe the performance of public officials and attend and listen to the deliberations and decisions."

The law outlines a few situations where elected officials can meet behind closed doors, such as discussions of criminal investigations, collective bargaining negotiations, personnel matters and property transactions. But they must vote to retreat into "executive session," and they must keep minutes.

Another exemption allows meetings of "political committees, conferences and caucuses" to be held in secret. Neither public notice nor minutes are required.

The potential pitfalls of this latter exemp-

tion were immediately apparent. In a journal article in 1977, two law professors called for state courts to narrow the definition of what could be discussed secretly at caucuses to include only party business. Otherwise, they noted, the majority party could effectively run a local government behind closed doors.

Nothing changed, however, and 45 years later, the practical effect could be seen last month when Montgomery observed at the public meeting held after the secret meeting that she was no longer a member of the Legislature's Personnel Committee. She said she suspects most decisions are made this way — in party caucus, excluding her — because the Republican presentations are "always so well-orchestrated" and "there is never any discussion."

Before the pandemic shutdown, Montgomery noted the caucus meetings "took place right before the [monthly] full Legislature meeting" in a back room at the Historic Courthouse in Carmel. "Everything is decided back there."

In 2019, before her eight Republican colleagues voted to approve a toothless resolution condemning a state law called the Reproductive Health Act, Montgomery says she watched the legislative attorney and the legislative clerk disappear into the caucus meeting — making it even more closely resemble an official meeting.

"I asked the attorney why he was in there," since he is paid to advise the Legislature, not the Republican caucus, Montgomery recalled. "He said they can have anyone they want," which is true.

I emailed Addonizio to ask if the Republican caucus has been meeting during the pandemic shutdown, whether in person or by video or with the same scratchy audio-conference the county offers voters.

She responded: "In my experience, the Legislature's Republican members have always carefully adhered to the requirements of this law when holding discussions in caucus. All members of the Legislature receive capable guidance from counsel if they have any questions regarding application or interpretation of the Open Meetings Law. Because caucus discussions are by their nature private, further comment on them is not appropriate."

How can this be?

The state Open Meetings Law survived for five years before the Law of Unexpected Consequences caught up with it.

In 1980, Anthony Sciolino, the sole Republican member of the Rochester City Council, found himself shut out of weekly meetings between the Democrats and the mayor. He sued, and two courts said the

"her ability to bring consensus to issues."

That pretty much describes Scuccimarra's tenure on the other side of the county. Keep quiet and ignore why the people of Philipstown sent her to Carmel, build consensus and receive nothing for her efforts.

Nancy went to the county Legislature to advocate for her constituents, and this Republican cabal holds tight on all their perks and doles them out to good boys and

Upgrading the Open Meetings Law

Here is a selection of bills introduced this year in the state Legislature to amend the Open Meetings Law.

- Require local governments to livestream meetings and public hearings and post the video online within five days and keep it available for at least five years.
- Require that minutes be posted online, and within two weeks.
- Give the Committee on Open Government the power to levy fines for violations.
- Require open meetings of "any entity created or appointed to perform a necessary function in the decision-making process."
- Require local governments to allow people to comment in real time during public-comment periods during virtual meetings.
- Clarify that members of the public don't have a right to attend a virtual public meeting from inside the home of an elected official.

meetings violated the law. (In response, the Democrats split their meetings into two to avoid a quorum.)

The Sciolino decision simmered on the back burner until 1985, when *The New York Post* asked the Committee on Open Government — an agency within the Department of State — whether caucuses were open meetings if the participants discussed anything but party particulars. The committee said yes, citing *Sciolino*.

Man, that did not go over well in Albany. The members of the state Legislature, then and now, love to meet in caucus, which they call "conferences." So the Republicans, who controlled the Senate, and the Democrats, who controlled the Assembly, joined hands and, within six weeks, passed a law that exempts caucus meetings from the Open Meetings Law no matter what is discussed or who attends.

Proponents of the change argued that caucus meetings must be secret so that

elected officials can have "candid" discussions. But aren't those discussions the best part of democracy?

The practical effect of this 1985 amendment seems most egregious when one party dominates, such as in Putnam. In 1992 in Buffalo, a state judge ruled that if every member of a legislative body is a member of the same party, meeting in caucus clearly violates the Open Meetings Law. With a divided legislature, however, because not every legislator can attend (even if only one in nine), the court said it seems "fair to assume" the meeting is a caucus.

Notably, when Sam Oliverio, a Democrat who is now the Putnam Valley supervisor, left the Legislature in 2014, it became all Republican and, if the 1992 ruling was honored, meant the legislators could no longer meet in secret. Montgomery's election in 2018 allowed them to resume.

"Before Nancy was elected, the [Republican] Legislators did go into caucus with all nine members," Oliverio said this week. "Although I was no longer on the board, I complained to the Board of Elections. I was told it was legal, but no one could show me where this was stated or the rule that allowed it."

What can be done?

In 1993, the year she joined the Assembly, Sandy Galef introduced a bill to remove the caucus exemption. In fact, she introduced it every session until 2007.

The Democrat, whose district includes Philipstown, said she was inspired to do so because, when she arrived in Albany, she had been told by party leaders not to say anything at committee meetings but instead "vote with the chair." As she would learn, the decisions had already been made in conference.

In a report to the governor in 1986, the Committee on Open Government suggested a simple fix to the caucus problem: The Open Meetings Law should apply to any gathering of at least two-thirds of the members of a legislative body unless they are discussing party business.

The committee and at least one state judge also have called on municipalities and counties to "do the right thing" and pass local laws that forbid the discussion of public business at caucus meetings. Ithaca adopted this policy in 1985, followed by Clarence, in Erie County, in 2005. Did I miss anybody?

New York may need to look to Montana for guidance. Last week the news media there sued a state legislator because he allegedly held a secret caucus meeting to discuss legislation. In Montana, a meeting is a meeting is a meeting.

Anthony Merante, *Philipstown*

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(Continued from Page 4)

could be given for service rendered after her defeat at the hands of Nancy Montgomery.

She attacks Nancy because she didn't go along to get along, i.e., be a nice quiet girl and something will be thrown your way. If this statement isn't the height of misogyny, then I don't know what is: Nancy "needs to learn what her role is." Then, Nancy "needs to develop better negotiating skills," and fix

girls. Nancy calls things as she sees them and this Legislature, and especially Odell, are not wont to put up with that.

If citizens want to know what happens in Carmel, open the county website and listen to the recordings of its meetings, because you won't find what they do anywhere else.

"I served in the Legislature for six years and accomplished a great deal for Philipstown," Scuccimarra wrote. Her accomplish-

ments were smoke-and-mirrors. That's why the voters threw her out. The senior center and the county's dealing with the seniors are minimal and underutilized, with no outreach. There is minimal use of the senior center in the Butterfield complex, drivers for elders to medical appointments and so forth.



The Current Names Student Correspondents

Reporters will cover high schools, youth issues

The *Highlands Current* has named Rachel Thorne, a freshman at Beacon High School, and Ezra Beato, a junior at Haldane High School, as correspondents for the paper and website as part of its newly launched Student Journalists Program.

Their first stories have been posted at highlandscurrent.org and select stories will be printed. The correspondents will primarily cover their high schools and issues related to young people.

The Student Journalists Program, which is funded by gifts from members of *The Current*, provides students who attend high school in Beacon or Philipstown the opportunity to be mentored by professional journalists while they serve as paid correspondents for our nonprofit newspaper and website.

The Current will begin accepting applications in the summer for the 2021-22 school year.



Rachel Thorne



Ezra Beato

(Continued from Page 5)

As an elected official, as well as someone who has taught and been a student of government, I know that there are three branches: executive, legislative and judicial. These three branches are not a club, but are meant to provide checks and balances.

Nancy Montgomery, our Putnam County legislator, represents the people who elected her to the Legislature and the people who reside in Philipstown and Putnam County. Nancy was elected to ask questions and advocate the people's interest, not join a club. She has done an outstanding job fighting to retain public health jobs and funding, and public safety funding, pushing Putnam to enact Climate Smart initiatives and to establish a Human Rights Commission.

Nancy was the first to fund a drug resources coordinator in Philipstown and to help our town establish the Philipstown Hub. She made train safety for all commuters a reality. Nancy has shown nothing less than honor, integrity and compassion. This is why I endorse her for re-election — we need an independent and strong voice for all the people of Putnam.

Judy Farrell, *Philipstown*

Farrell is a member of the Philipstown Town Board.

It was never about red or blue. Dini LoBue, a Republican legislator, received the same personal criticism, which became the campaign mantra for her opponent. She was adversarial, uncooperative and refused to compromise. Ostracized, she was unable to obtain information and committee assignments. Why? She raised thorny questions about the policies and methods emanating from the county executive, which legislators, neglecting their obligation to hold MaryEllen Odell accountable, rubber-stamped; they also fast-tracked resolutions, often bypassing their own rules, without vigorous debate.

An exception was Scuccimarra's work with the senior center, which invited the need for much investigation into her involvement and into the entire project. Both Montgomery and LoBue were central to raising uncomfortable questions. Make no mistake about it: Scuccimarra's conception of "consensus" is knee-jerk compliance.

Ann Fanizzi, *Carmel*

Danskammer

There are no ifs, ands or buts regarding our objection to the proposed expansion of the Danskammer power plant in Newburgh. Increasing this part-time, fracked-gas plant operating a few days per year into a 24/7 facility will have many more serious negative public health, ecological and financial ramifications, including more risk of lung exposure to particulate matter and volatile carcinogenic chemicals, more methane gas emissions and an increase of industrial noise emanating from the plant's jet turbines and exhaust mechanisms.

The state Independent System Operator, which oversees the power grid, determined this expansion is not needed, even taking into account the Indian Point power plant's closing. An irrelevant plant would quickly

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

become obsolete and a financial burden.

The state's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act has set goals of 70 percent renewable energy by 2030 and 100 percent by 2040. New York has banned fracking. Danskammer's plan forces us in the opposite direction.

It's true a full-time plant would help to subsidize the school taxes in Marlboro and create temporary construction jobs, but is pitting the fiscal well-being of a single community against the physical health of an entire region a sound civic policy? Why is the health of schoolchildren being pitted against their education's solvency?

Studies have demonstrated that converting Danskammer into a bulk battery storage facility would be a viable clean energy alternative. It would create less dependence on other fracked-gas-burning plants by serving as backup during peak periods. It would also create jobs, as well as contribute to the local tax base.

The members of the offshore, Singapore-based investment firm who are among Danskammer's backers would be spared breathing the dirty air this expansion will cause. We urge all New Yorkers to voice opposition to this exclusionary and environmentally backward plan by writing the Public Service Commission's New York Board on Electric Generation Siting and the Environment and Gov. Andrew Cuomo, both of whom have the power to reject it. For more information, see stoptheplant.org.

Harvey Weiss, *Chelsea*

Along with Weiss, this letter was signed by 27 others, including Andrew Bell, Francis Charles, Sarah Boyd and Stowe Boyd of Beacon, and Charles Burleigh, Lithgow Osborne, Bidu Tashjian and Jon Kiphart of Cold Spring.

Indian Point

Thank you for this accurate, well-written article, which provides a breadth of information ("New York Sues Feds Over Indian Point," Jan. 29). Anyone familiar with Holtec's shabby history must realize that allowing this company to have control over decommissioning Indian Point can only lead to safety shortcuts and an inadequate cleanup.

In addition, the idea of spent fuel removal — aside from the issue of double-dipping financially by Holtec — is fraught with incalculable risk for the communities through which this radioactive waste must be transported, in order to be dumped on communities that did not benefit from the energy produced by the nuclear plant.

Marie Inserra, *Peekskill*

New York health

I don't understand this viewpoint on health care ("5 Questions: Jeff Mikkelsen," Feb. 12). I'm for a type of universal health care, whether it be from the state or federal government. In this case, though, how to pay for what is called for in the New York Health Act is a valid question.

New York state has one of the most progressive income taxes in the nation already and still doesn't raise nearly enough for this. More than 50 percent of

our state income tax comes from the top 1 percent of earners. If we increase taxes on that group, what's to stop them from moving to New Jersey or Connecticut or change their primary residence to Florida? If half of the 1 percent leaves, that could sink the state budget. Is there a plan to deal with this aspect that I'm missing?

Jay Steven, *via Facebook*

Mikkelsen mentions that "funding would come through money that the state gets from the federal government for Medicaid, Medicare and other programs, and a progressive tax on income." He also mentions single-payer systems like this one cut out the administrative costs of middlemen, so it would save the state money in the long run. People are just so used to our inefficient and profit-minded insurance system that the idea that medical care shouldn't be expensive seems like a big idea.

Noah Campbell, *via Facebook*

Mikkelsen talks about the government plan making it simpler. When's the last time the government made anything simple? It can't even distribute a vaccine, yet there are those who want to hand our entire health care system to the government.

Thomas VanTine, *via Facebook*

I do not need or want New York state or the feds running health care. If the government wants to have a plan out there for people to opt into as one of their health plan choices, then perfect, go for it.

Mark Matthews, *via Facebook*

Vaccine politics

In response to the letter from Scott Reing, chair of the Putnam County Democratic Committee, that was supposedly about our local seniors being vaccinated against COVID-19 but turned into an endorsement of the sheriff and an attack against his challenger (*Letters and Comments*, Jan. 29): It's hard to believe that some people will use something so positive and shamefully turn it into something negative to further their agenda.

Anyone who has been paying attention knows that availability of the vaccines is limited. Enter our community pharmacy, Drug World, which was able to secure a supply to protect our seniors. Working with Drug World were a group of people who are no strangers to volunteering and worked in inclement weather to keep our seniors safe.

And for their act of kindness, they were attacked. From the county executive to the nurse administering the shots, they were accused of politics. Why are Republicans who are volunteering for seniors demonized while Democrats who are going door-to-door with gift cards from Foodtown exempt from villainization?

What Drug World did was not about campaigns, elections or politics. It was about saving lives, and for that I and many others are grateful. We are also thankful to the Chestnut Ridge senior complex for providing the location, and to the Philipstown Volunteer Ambulance Corps members who helped.

Cindy Trimble, *Philipstown*

DA Declines to Pursue Perjury Allegation

Says 'opinion' of commissioner cannot be crime

By Chip Rowe

The Dutchess County district attorney said on Feb. 4 he would not pursue an investigation requested by Democrats into whether the Republican election commissioner committed perjury.

In a letter addressed to Elisa Sumner, the chair of the Dutchess County Democratic Committee and a former deputy elections commissioner, and copied to Republican Commissioner Erik Haight, District Attorney William Grady said he had not been asked to conduct an investigation by the judge overseeing the case in which Haight allegedly committed the crime.

The litigants in the case, which involved an October request to move a voting site from a church in Red Hook to the Bard College campus in Annandale, “had a full and fair opportunity to address the issues, seek sanctions and raise the issue of perjury for allegedly false information

provided to the court in any manner” but did not do so, Grady wrote.

An affidavit submitted by Haight to the court also “sets forth the *opinion* of the election commissioner” that making the move would be difficult, he wrote, noting that an affidavit submitted by the Democratic commissioner at the time, Elizabeth Soto, reached a “starkly different conclusion based on a different opinion.”

The district attorney said he had concluded that “opinion is not perjury.... There is no evidence of perjury in any degree committed in these proceedings.”

In a statement on Feb. 11, Haight said: “Mr. Grady arrived at the obvious conclusion because obviously I didn’t perjure myself, and never have whenever I’ve been put under oath and testified.

“Sumner’s attempt to weaponize the district attorney’s office was a futile attempt to harass and intimidate me but she will never succeed. The rank-and-file Democratic voters of Dutchess County are ill-served by her so called ‘leadership.’ I’m hopeful she stays in her position due to the profound success the Republican Party has had during her tenure.”

Sumner, when asking the district attorney to investigate Haight’s affidavit, said that “to allow someone in charge of our elections to lie to the court with impunity, without opening an investigation, would be unconscionable.”

Asked for her response to the district attorney’s decision, Sumner wrote in an email: “The Republican DA clears the Republican commissioner for lying to a court in an effort to stop people from voting? Shocking!”

Haight submitted the affidavit before an October decision by a state judge, who later asserted that he had misled her about the feasibility of relocating the polling site. According to court documents, Haight said “the election was too close” to make the change without causing confusion for voters.

State Supreme Court Justice Maria Rosa ruled that the site could not be moved. However, 10 days later she reversed her decision, citing the fact that Haight and Soto had agreed the day after her ruling to move a voting site from Red Hook Town Hall to a larger space at a middle school.

The judge wrote that Haight’s sworn assertion “was simply untrue” and ordered the church site moved to Bard.



Dar Williams

‘Truth is Like a Second Chance’

Impeachment manager cites Philipstown songwriter

By Liz Schevtchuk Armstrong

While making his closing argument on Feb. 13 to the U.S. Senate to convict former President Donald Trump, the chief impeachment manager from the House of Representatives turned to a Philipstown singer-songwriter, Dar Williams, for a nugget of wisdom about truth.

“My friend Dar Williams says that ‘sometimes the truth is like a second chance,’” said Rep. Jamie Raskin, a Democrat from Maryland, on the Senate floor. “We’ve got a chance here, with the truth, to still believe in the separation of powers” between the executive and legislative branches.

The lyric is from Williams’ song “After All” on her 2001 album, *The Green World*.

Williams said on Tuesday (Feb. 16) that she was in her car and listening to the proceedings but had turned off the sound to park moments before he cited her words.

“When I got out of the car, my phone started jumping all over the place,” she recalled. “I heard from so many old friends and family at once — it was like a giant party on my phone. Jamie hadn’t told me he was going to do that!”

She has known the congressman and his wife for more than 30 years, she explained, after being introduced by a mutual friend. Over the years, Raskin has attended her concerts and she has performed at fundraisers for his political campaigns. He has “done everything, from being one of the most supportive first readers of my book [*What I Found in a Thousand Towns*] to taking on a discussion about pacifism with my kids after we watched *Planet of the Apes*,” she said.

The songwriter said that when she sent a text to Raskin to thank him for citing her lyric, he responded that she “always gave him a shoutout from the stage.”

She texted in return: “This. Was. Different.”

The Senate voted 57-43 to convict Trump for inciting the deadly Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol. But the majority fell short of the two-thirds required.

Notes from the Cold Spring Village Board

Police survey; fire company makes big purchase

By Michael Turton

A survey to determine how the public views the Cold Spring Police Department could be complete within weeks, but first the Village Board must decide who will be asked to take it and whether it will be submitted electronically, on paper, or both.

The survey, being drafted by Trustees Kathleen Foley and Fran Murphy, and Officer-in-Charge Larry Burke, will include 10 to 12 questions and will be part of the village response to an executive order by Gov. Andrew Cuomo that requires municipal police forces to review their policies and procedures.

A plan must be on the governor’s desk by April 1. Murphy said a public meeting will be held in March.

At the Feb. 9 meeting of the board, Foley had said she hoped the survey would be available by Tuesday (Feb. 16), with a deadline of Feb. 26. The survey was not mentioned at the Feb. 16 meeting. On Thursday, Murphy said she hoped the final recommendations, including the timing of the survey, would be presented to the board next week.

During the comment period on Feb. 9, Eliza Starbuck, president of the Cold Spring Chamber of Commerce, encouraged the board to allow up to a month for survey responses.

Murphy said the survey, which will distinguish between village residents and nonresidents, will be distributed electroni-

cally with hard copies available at Village Hall. Paper copies will also be distributed to seniors at Chestnut Ridge.

Mayor Dave Merandy has said he prefers door-to-door distribution of a paper survey that focuses on residents and possibly merchants and their employees. Trustee Heidi Bender favored making the survey available to a broader audience, including visitors to Cold Spring.

The software being used for the survey ensures only one survey can be submitted per computer IP address. During the public comment, one resident cast doubt on the use of computer IP addresses to determine the location of respondents, pointing out that village residents served by Optimum will appear as having a Wappingers Falls IP address. He also questioned the ability of more than one person per household to complete the survey if submissions are limited to a single response per IP address.

Foley said she would research the IP address issue, adding responses may be possible from more than one email address that use the same IP address.

In other business ...

■ The Cold Spring Fire Co. will spend \$700,000 for a new engine after trading in a 20-year-old apparatus. Delivery is expected in eight months. CSFC plans to spend another \$100,000 to update other aging equipment, including radios and a 2004 Polaris Ranger utility vehicle. Foley, providing the report on behalf of Chief Tom Merrigan, clarified that while the village owns the firehouse and pays expenses related to it, equipment purchases are paid for by the nonprofit CSFC.

■ Following Chazen Consultants’ recent report on the village water supply, Merandy met with Philipstown Supervisor Richard Shea and Nelsonville Mayor Michael Bowman to discuss the feasibility of an expanded water district.

■ Burke reported on Feb. 9 that CSPD officers answered 48 calls for service in January and issued 29 traffic and 38 parking tickets. No arrests were made. Responding to a question from the mayor, Burke said CSPD averages 10 to 15 arrests per year.

■ Bender will soon present a proposal for a potential reopening of Tots Park in the spring, including procedures for addressing COVID-19 restrictions.

■ Village accountant Michelle Ascolillo reported on Feb. 9 that only five property owners have not paid their 2020 taxes, compared to an annual average of up to 15 delinquent accounts. Unpaid bills are referred to Putnam County for collection.

■ The village will not use fireworks to celebrate Independence Day, although, depending on the status of COVID-19, there may be a display on Labor Day weekend.

■ Trustee Marie Early will contact Seastreak about potential plans for fall cruises docking at Cold Spring.

■ A small, early April wedding at the riverfront bandstand was tentatively approved, pending details on traffic control, social distancing and mask policy.

Beacon Council Revises Wireless Laws

Also considers viewshed protection

By Jeff Simms

The Beacon City Council on Tuesday (Feb. 16) combined two laws adopted in 2018 and 2019 into one all-encompassing ordinance regulating larger wireless telecommunications facilities and small-cell wireless units.

The law revamps the processing of applications for both types and shifts their approval to the Planning Board.

The Planning Board would be required to hold public hearings for all non-small cell wireless proposals but hearings would be optional for small-cell units, the lower-powered antennas typically affixed to buildings or poles to fill gaps in broadband coverage.

Wireless facilities will not be allowed in Beacon's historic district unless the applicant demonstrates that a coverage gap or other service upgrade cannot be addressed outside of the district. Wherever possible, the law suggests that wireless facilities

should be in the form of antennas attached to existing buildings or structures and/or should use a "stealth" design. Towers, it says, "shall be the structures of last resort."

Viewsheds

The council on Tuesday held a brief public hearing on a proposal that would protect scenic viewsheds. The hearing will be continued on March 1.

If adopted, the law would be the first step in protecting views in Beacon. A second law would follow, identifying protected viewsheds.

The draft law designates scenic views as something — in many cases, an outstanding natural feature or landscape — that can be seen from a public street, property or sidewalk. The law, City Attorney Nick Ward-Willis explained, seeks to strike a balance between property owners' rights and the rights of present and future generations to enjoy those scenic places.

Designated views will likely include locations where alteration would be most visible, such as at "gateway entrances" to the city, public parks or major intersections. Beacon's

Natural Resources Inventory last year identified three scenic areas worthy of protection: viewsheds of the Hudson River, Fishkill Creek and Fishkill Ridge/Mount Beacon.

The Planning Board would have to consider protected viewsheds when reviewing development plans and, as a way of minimizing impacts to views, would be allowed to request alternate design options or modify zoning regulations with respect to site layout and lot design, as long as height and unit-count limits aren't exceeded.

Before continuing the public hearing, the council will discuss comments from the Planning Board, which last week suggested that viewshed protection should also apply to subdivision, special-use permit and variance applications. Otherwise, the board said, there could be too many exceptions to the viewshed protection law.

Mental health worker

The council approved a one-year contract paying Mental Health America of Dutchess County \$70,000 to provide a case management worker to the Beacon Police Department.

The case manager will begin next month and work 35 hours per week. The council included money for the position in this year's city budget after community members last summer suggested the police hire someone with a social work background to assist with calls involving a person in crisis or who may be experiencing mental health-related illnesses.

The city will review the position and its effectiveness after a year. Council Member Amber Grant called the move "a good start," although she suggested the position ultimately may not need to be so closely aligned with the Police Department.

Sewer upgrade

The City Council approved a \$10.2 million capital improvement plan for 2021. The majority of the money — more than \$7 million — will be used to upgrade the city's wastewater treatment plant and sewage collection system.

The city will use \$567,000 from its fund balance; it will use bonds to fund most of the remainder of the costs. A multi-year proposal for capital projects will be presented to the council later this year, City Administrator Chris White said.

Airbnb (from Page 1)

since March. The typical new host in the U.S. earned \$3,900, the company reported.

Airbnb said 29 percent of the U.S. hosts surveyed, including 49 percent of those aged 25 to 34, said they use their earnings to pay their rent or mortgage; a quarter used the income to pay down debts and 10 percent to pay for health care.

In Nelsonville, resident MaryLou Caccetta commended the Village Board for doing "a great job" with the proposed regulations.

Mayor Michael Bowman said that the board wants "to do what is best" for the village. "We're not trying to ban this [short-term renting] in any way. We're just trying to get a handle on it." Moreover, he added, right now short-term renting "is technically illegal by the village code."

The proposed law, based on statutes in Beacon and other communities, would restrict vacation, weekend or similar rentals to 30 days per booking. It also would limit short-term rentals to 12 units, village-

wide, or 5 percent of its 234 taxable residential properties. In addition, it would require owners to pay \$250 for an annual permit (renewable for \$150) and undergo annual inspections.

“We’re not trying to ban this [short-term renting] in any way. We’re just trying to get a handle on it.”

~ Nelsonville Mayor Michael Bowman

Under the draft, a unit could be rented for up to 100 days annually and owners would have to occupy the premises 185 days a year. They also would need to provide the village with contact information for emergencies and be able to reach the site within 30 minutes if not present when an urgent need arose.

The draft requires units to be part of residences and forbids trailers, campers, tents, vehicles, storage sheds, garages or similar structures for short-term accommodation. Current Airbnb listings for Nelsonville include a silver Airstream trailer on a hillside.

The law would further demand that each short-term rental have its own bathroom with a shower or tub, allow no more than two adults per bedroom and include an off-street parking space. It likewise bans use of short-term rentals for "parties or events."

That provision sparked objections.

Sonia Ryzy-Ryski and her husband, Rudy Van Dommele, offer three rental options, including the Airstream, on their 5-acre property near Nelsonville's border with Cold Spring. "How can you rent a giant house on Airbnb and not allow a party?" she asked.

Ryzy-Ryski criticized "such draconian measures" and said that under a restrictive law "we won't have the same freedom going forward. I'm not very happy about it."

According to its preamble, the law is intended to promote safety by ensuring that short-term rentals comply with fire and health codes; help preserve long-term rental housing; and protect the character of the community and "the survival of the quality of life of fulltime local residents."

Several homeowners, including Tom Corless, a former Nelsonville mayor, questioned the 12-unit cap. He proposed doubling that number.

Kathleen Maloney, a candidate for trustee in Nelsonville's March election, backed the legislation but predicted a 12-unit cap would "be hard to administer in a way that's fair for everybody."

Another trustee candidate, Maria Zhynovitch, cautioned that with a limited number of allowable short-term units, "people who are able to secure the permits now would have an advantage over those who are

perhaps still deciding whether to do it, or who would enter the market later on." She suggested "an automatic, built-in increase" in allowable units, up to a maximum.

Heidi Wendel felt "the cap is a good idea" and probably easier to enforce than demands that owners occupy their homes much of the year and stop renting after hitting the 100-day annual limit.

Some residents also backed efforts to save houses from being purchased by commercial ventures seeking to use them solely as short-term rentals. "We share the concern about zombie communities" with monied interests "sucking away the resources of the people who live in the community, making it untenable," said Josh Kaplan. But he and his wife, Jenny, also endorsed short-term renting, which they said provides some families with extra income while helping others find places nearby for visiting relatives.

“We share the concern about zombie communities [with monied interests] sucking away the resources of the people who live in the community, making it untenable.”

~ Josh Kaplan

At present, Nelsonville's code allows "the letting of rooms" to up to two guests at a time, as long as the owner lives in the house. It prohibits cooking facilities in guest rooms, although an owner can supply breakfast and allow guest access to the home's kitchen.

Michael Turton contributed reporting.

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The HIGHLANDS
Current

Two Shots *(from Page 1)*

kept families apart, shelved travel plans and damaged businesses.

Caitlin Hayes, a Putnam Valley resident and nurse at NewYork-Presbyterian Hudson Valley Hospital in Cortlandt Manor, has seen the worst of the pandemic: gravely ill patients and co-workers who became infected and died. Returning home from shifts, she shed her scrubs and showered before seeing her young daughter and elderly mother, and limited how much she touched both of them.

Hayes, who received her second shot last month, “is more comfortable being more physical” at home, but maintains the same precautions, she said on Tuesday. She named a list of concerns: the extent of side effects; how long immunity will last; whether the shot will have to be given annually, like those for the flu.

“There’s a lot of unknowns, but at least it gave me less of a chance of contracting it and bringing it home to my family.”

It is those unknowns the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cites in its guidance about post-vaccination behavior.

Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines proved effective in clinical trials at keeping people from getting sick, but both companies say that the duration of the protection is “currently unknown.” In addition, according to the CDC, scientists are still unsure whether the vaccines will prevent a vaccinated person from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19, which can happen even when the infected person shows no symptoms.

The agency recommends that people



Ed and Gunta Broderick enjoy themselves at an outside, socially distant family birthday party in October.

Photo provided

who have been vaccinated continue to wear masks, practice social distancing and take other precautions.

Gunta Broderick said she and her husband have been “keeping to ourselves and waving to our kids” during socially distanced visits, a safety measure they will continue for now despite being fully vaccinated. On the horizon, they hope, is a trip to New Hampshire in May to celebrate a grandson’s graduation from high school, and another to Georgia in

December, when another grandson graduates from college. Gunta also wants to see her mother-in-law, who is 107 years old and at a nursing home in Massachusetts.

“They have notified us that visits should be allowed soon,” she said.

There is another hurdle: reaching herd immunity, the point at which the virus’ ability to spread is significantly reduced because enough people are vaccinated. Scientists say the minimum threshold is about 70 percent of the population, or roughly 230 million people. Just over 15 million people, or 5 percent of the population, had received both shots as of Tuesday, according to the CDC. In New York, about 6 percent of the population has been fully vaccinated.

Progress is slow in the face of a vaccine supply that is dwarfed by the demand, frustrating people who are eligible to receive shots but unable to get an appointment. On Tuesday, at a town hall in Milwaukee, President Joe Biden predicted that anyone who wants a vaccine will be able to get one by the end of July.

Until then, Amy Richter will follow the CDC’s advice.

The Garrison resident teaches music at the Nora Cronin Presentation Academy in the City of Newburgh, which will resume in-person classes next week because Richter and the other teachers have received both vaccine shots. Richter said that she and her students will be wearing masks and practicing social distancing, and that she will sanitize the drums between classes.

While she does not “feel any different now” because safety measures are still necessary, and many more people have to be fully vaccinated, Richter is pleased that her mother, who lives at an independent living community in New Jersey, just received her second shot. She is also looking forward to playing music with other people, singing in choirs and traveling with her husband, who retired from the Haldane school district in June.

“We have all sorts of plans to travel and, obviously, they haven’t been able to be realized,” she said.

COVID-19 by the Numbers

■ PUTNAM COUNTY

Number of confirmed cases:

8,024 (+278)

New Cases in Philipstown: **18**

Tests administered:

155,463 (+5,504)

Percent positive:

5.2 (0)

Number of deaths:

85 (+1)

■ DUTCHESS COUNTY

Number of confirmed cases:

21,122 (+745)

Active Cases in Beacon: **25**

Tests administered:

505,504 (+18,163)

Percent positive:

4.2 (0)

Number of deaths:

400 (+12)

Source: New York State Department of Health, as of Feb. 17, with weekly change in parentheses. New cases in Philipstown is for week ending Feb. 11.

For the latest on vaccine availability, see highlandscurrent.org.

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Peter & May Leung,
@garrisonhouseny

What do you do?

We are parents to our 2-year-old son, Zayer, and are expecting our daughter in April. May oversees buying and planning for a luxury lifestyle company. Peter is an attorney for a real estate advisory company. We're both architecture and design enthusiasts and enjoy exploring the Hudson Valley.

What brought you to Garrison?

Our first time visiting the Highlands was when we took a train to Cold Spring on a winter afternoon many years ago. We immediately fell in love with the village and continued to come back to explore Garrison and the rest of the region. We enjoyed meeting the people, hiking the trails and taking in all of the scenery, as well as learning about the history. With the great schools, we knew that Garrison would be a wonderful place to raise our family.

You're building a house from scratch in the middle of a pandemic. What is that like?

Fortunately, nearly all of the work for the next several months will be done outdoors. Once interior work can begin, different trades will need to complete their work on staggered schedules, which will likely extend the construction timeline. The pandemic has also had an impact on the price of lumber and other building materials. Labor is in high demand due to all of the renovation and new builds being done. This has all resulted in a bit more uncertainty for our overall construction budget.

How did you hear about *The Current*?

We'd always pick up copies of *The Current* at our favorite restaurants and shops. The paper gives us insight and perspective on what is happening in the local community, government and schools. We are both from Queens originally, and there local journalism has always seemed to get lost in the noise behind the bigger national and city-wide papers. Here, *The Current* plays a larger role that we think is quite important.

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School Budgets *(from Page 1)*

20 percent cuts in aid as the COVID-19 shutdown battered the state's budget, leaving it billions of dollars in the red. Twice last year schools received federal pandemic aid, but, in a cost-saving measure, had an "adjustment" of the same amount withheld from their state support.

However, Gov. Andrew Cuomo reversed course last month when he announced an ambitious education funding package as part of his 2021-22 budget proposal and told school officials they'd receive past-due payments from last year by the end of March.

The governor's proposal includes \$31.7 billion in school funding, a 7.1 percent increase over last year, and consolidates 10 expense-based aid categories (such as textbooks, computers or transportation) into one pot — a move Cuomo says will help distribute state money more equitably to higher-need districts.

All that is dependent on Congress passing a federal stimulus package it has been deliberating for months. If passed, the aid package is projected to bring \$6 billion to \$15 billion to New York state.

State Assembly Member Jonathan Jacobson, whose district includes Beacon, said this week that he's optimistic Congress will act soon. "We have a new administration in Washington that prioritizes education and realizes the effects of the pandemic are not restricted to red states or blue states," said Jacobson, a Democrat. "It changes the whole equation."

But Jacobson said he does not favor Cuomo's proposal to consolidate school aid and thinks the state should keep distinct funding streams to track what money is being spent for which purpose.

The Assembly and Senate must negotiate a spending plan with the governor by April 1.

The Beacon school board has also raised issues with the consolidation plan, saying in a letter sent last week to state legislators that "consolidating the aid categories lacks transparency and will lead to less predictability for schools when developing annual budgets."

The Beacon district has been diligent about purchasing equipment, such as the Chromebook laptops that are assigned to every student, through the Dutchess Board of Cooperative Educational Services

(BOCES), said Ann Marie Quartironi, the district's deputy superintendent. Historically, purchases made through BOCES, rather than a third-party vendor, have been reimbursed 58 percent by the state.

But if the consolidation formula passes, purchases like the Chromebooks would become a "regular" expenditure reimbursed at a lower rate.

Cuomo's plan would also use federal money to fund the School Tax Relief (STAR) property tax reimbursement program and, as with last year's federal pandemic aid, deduct STAR money from districts' state funding.

While school officials expect a federal aid package will be passed sooner rather than later, there's ample concern that the effects of the pandemic will linger for years. If the governor uses stimulus money to fund schools this year, "then you have next year," Quartironi said. "I don't foresee the economy being back up and running by then."

A handful of teacher retirements will eliminate some spending on salaries in 2021-22 in Beacon, but that may be a drop in the bucket for a district that spent \$275,000 on ventilators, cleaning materials, desk partitions, tent rentals and other pandemic expenses required to open for this year. In the fall, if schools attempt to bring most or all students back in-person, there will be new challenges and costs.

Meredith Heuer, the president of the Beacon school board, praised teachers for rising to the challenges presented by this year's hybrid-instruction model. "But if we can have all of our students back in the building together next year, we will need to help them catch up and heal from the trauma they are experiencing," she said. "New York State using federal funds to supplant state funding ignores both the purpose of the funding and the risk of a financial cliff in the future."

Two weeks ago, department heads began making their annual presentations to the school board to discuss funding needs for next year. Other than contractually negotiated salary increases and rising health insurance costs, the departments have been instructed to keep their budgets flat, Quartironi said.

If the state receives less federal aid than anticipated, there are already items, such as teachers' laptops and athletic assistant coaches, identified as a first line of cuts.

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The Calendar



Chateau's mother as a young woman



Corinne Chateau

Photos provided



Chateau's grandmother

The Family Secret

Garrison filmmaker searches for her roots

By Alison Rooney

Like many artists, Corinne Chateau has raided her own life for stories. First, the Garrison resident wrote a book, *The Road to Cali*, based on the trials of adopting her son from the Republic of

Georgia. Then, she adapted the book into a one-woman show, *Abandoned*, which she performed, before tackling her material once more in a play, *The Sun Shines East*, developed at the Actors Studio.

Chateau's latest project, a documentary called *Safer in Silence*, has an even broader personal narrative. Seven years in the making, it details Chateau's investigation into her family's murky past. It is filled with twists, including the most startling secret, which was revealed to her in a phone call she received at age 16.

Her father was French and her mother Polish, she explains. They were teenagers during World War II; her father hid in the mountains, but her mother's experience was much more traumatic.

"My mother was rather distant, and there was a lot about her I felt I didn't know," says Chateau, who was an only child and raised Catholic. "I knew my grandfather was a Polish diplomat, but he died when I was a child. I had no family in the U.S."

The phone call was from a woman with a heavy Eastern European accent, she says. She asked for Danuta. "I told her there was no one here called that," Chateau recalls. "She said, 'Are you her daughter? I'm your grandmother, and I've come from Brazil to meet you.'"

Chateau's grandmother had hired a private detective to find the family in the U.S. Chateau found her "beautiful and interesting" and "couldn't fathom why I did not know about her before."

(Continued on Page 14)

Hudson Valley Blues

Local nonprofit works to boost genre

By Alison Rooney

Three years ago, the Hudson Valley Blues Society formed in Patterson to "preserve and promote the past, present and future of blues music."

One year ago, everything shut down.

Unable to perform or raise funds, the group instead began work on a double album, *HVBS Blues Alive in the Valley: The Lockdown Sessions*, which features 23 original songs written and performed by musicians from the region.

"We put a call out to our members," explains Hillary Fontana, a founding member of the nonprofit and an officer. "No one can tour, so opportunity struck. We've found that, through lots of airplay, largely



The society produced a double album of original blues by Hudson Valley artists.

on internet radio, we have new listeners from around the world. We also picked up a sponsor, Metal Blues Coffee. She names her drinks after blues artists."

All this is good news for the group, which came to life simply through a shared love of the blues, in its many forms.

"If you want the blues to survive, you need to get involved and support it," Fontana says. "We want to get right to the foundations: teach it in the schools not just in music class but tied to civil rights and



Joe Louis Walker

Photo by Arnie Goodman

other parts of history.

"I also have a mission to teach adults about blues history," she says. "I'm fascinated by the juke joints, those one-room shacks in the South where the blues originated, and how it traveled across the country. Blues covers so many areas and each

region has their own sounds: Chicago, Texas, St. Louis, Florida. You can go anywhere in the country and listen to it.

She says friends who knew that she and her husband, Steve, loved the blues suggested they launch the society. "A group

(Continued on Page 14)

THE WEEK AHEAD

Edited by Pamela Doan (calendar@highlandscurrent.org)

For a complete listing of events, see
highlandscurrent.org/calendar.

COMMUNITY

MON 22

Kids Book Giveaway

BEACON

9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Howland Library
845-831-1134 | beaconlibrary.org

Middle- and high-school students can pick up copies of *This Book is Anti-Racist: 20 Lessons on How to Wake Up, Take Action, and Do the Work* by Tiffany Jewell and Aurelia Durand, while supplies last. Also TUES 23.

WED 24

Social Quizstancing

GARRISON

8 p.m. Desmond-Fish Library
845-424-3020 | desmondfishlibrary.org

Bring a team or compete solo in this tricky Zoom trivia event.

THURS 25

Paper Crafts Workshop

GARRISON

6 p.m. Desmond-Fish Library
845-424-3020 | desmondfishlibrary.org

Learn how to make origami lotus flowers.

THURS 25

Still Life Oil Painting

COLD SPRING

7 p.m. Butterfield Library
845-265-3040 | butterfieldlibrary.org

Pick up supplies from the library and join Gillian Thorpe to paint via Zoom.

TALKS

SUN 21

Raising Backyard Chickens

WAPPINGERS FALLS

3 p.m. Stony Kill Farm | stonykill.org

Learn about raising your own flock. *Cost: \$5 suggested*

TUES 23

Video Marketing

POUGHKEEPSIE

1 p.m. Dutchess Tourism
dutchess tourism.com/lunch-learn-series

Edward Roy will instruct small business owners on using video to reach customers.

TUES 23

Ayurveda and Heart Health

COLD SPRING

7 p.m. Butterfield Library
845-265-3040 | butterfieldlibrary.org

Somesh Kaushik will highlight how body and mind work together in heart health in this webinar. Register online.

TUES 23

Graphic Novel Book Club

COLD SPRING

7 p.m. Split Rock
845-265-2080 | splitrockbks.com

The group will discuss *A Contract with God*, by Will Eisner.

WED 24

African Heritage Cuisine

COLD SPRING

3 p.m. NY-Presbyterian Hudson Valley
914-734-3159 | nyp.org/hudsonvalley

Learn how to prepare okra, black-eyed pea fritters (akara), winter greens and rice, and other traditional foods of the African diaspora. *Free*

WED 24

Equanimity in Challenging Times

GARRISON

3 p.m. Garrison Institute
garrisoninstitute.org

Sharon Salzberg will lead a guided meditation to cultivate equanimity. *Cost: \$25 suggested*

THURS 25

Porgy and Bess

BEACON

1 p.m. Howland Public Library
845-831-1134 | beaconlibrary.org

Tanisha Mitchell will discuss the history of the folk opera and play a recording of her performing an aria from the production.



VISUAL ART

SAT 20

Glow Show / Zard Apuya

BEACON

6 – 9 p.m. Clutter Gallery
163 Main St. | 212-255-2505
shop.cluttermagazine.com/gallery

THURS 25

Dorothea Rockburne

BEACON

Noon. Dia Beacon
845-231-0811 | diaart.org

Dia educators will discuss the abstract painter's work via Zoom.

KIDS & FAMILY

SAT 20

Meet Winky!

GARRISON

2 p.m. Desmond-Fish Library
bit.ly/DFPLwinky

Winky is an opossum who serves as an animal ambassador for Teatown Lake Reservation, a nature preserve in Ossining.

SAT 20

Creating Movement to Tell a Story

BEACON

4 p.m. Compass Arts | compassarts.org

Chelsea Acree will lead this workshop for elementary school students on creating a dance that tells a story. *Cost: Sliding scale*

SUN 21

Sound Drawing: Notation and Play

BEACON

10:30 a.m. Dia:Beacon
845-231-0811 | diaart.org

Audra Wolowicz and Mark Trecka will lead this workshop for families and children ages 5 and older. Register online. *Free*

WED 24

Kindergarten Registration

GARRISON

9 – 11 a.m. & 1 – 3 p.m. Garrison School
1100 Route 9D | 845-424-3689
guys.org

Children must turn age 5 by Dec. 31. Also THURS 25. See website for specifics.

WED 24

Middle School Book Club

COLD SPRING

4 p.m. Butterfield Library
845-265-3040 | butterfieldlibrary.org

Students in grades 5 to 8 will discuss *Schooled*, by Gordon Korman, and vote on the club's next book.

WED 24

Scratch Coding Club

COLD SPRING

4 p.m. Butterfield Library
845-265-3040 | butterfieldlibrary.org

In the first of a series, students in grades 3 to 5 will learn basic programming and how to design interactive games.

SAT 27

Draw a Dance, Sing a Shape

BEACON

4 p.m. Compass Arts | compassarts.org
Gina Samardge will lead this workshop for students in grades 1 to 5 on using dance, music and art to make accompaniments to a song.



The Restless Age, Feb. 25

SUN 28

Sound Drawing: Collaboration

BEACON

10:30 a.m. Dia:Beacon
845-231-0811 | diaart.org

Audra Wolowicz will present this workshop for families and children ages 5 and older. Register online. *Free*

MUSIC

SAT 20

Last Minute Soulmates

BEACON

8 p.m. Howland Cultural Center
howlandculturalcenter.org

The band will perform during a livestream from the center. *Cost: \$15*



SUN 21

MET Orchestra Musicians

BEACON

8 p.m. Howland Cultural Center
howlandmusic.org/ALIVEmusica.html

In this livestream performance sponsored by the Howland Chamber Music Circle, musicians from the Metropolitan Orchestra will perform Saint-Saëns' *Fantasièmein A Major, Op. 124*, Massenet's *Meditation from Thaïs*, Frank's *Zapatos de Chíncha* and Beethoven's *String Trio in C Minor, Op. 9 No. 3*. *Cost: \$20 suggested*

THURS 25

Dan Garcia / The Restless Age

BEACON

8 p.m. Howland Cultural Center
thevalleyhour.org

This livestreamed episode of "The Valley Hour" will feature Garcia, a Beacon guitarist, and The Restless Age's indie rock. *Cost: \$10 suggested*

ANIMALS & NATURE

SAT 20

Maple Sugar Tours

CORNWALL

11 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Outdoor Discovery Center
120 Muser Drive | 845-534-5506
hnm.org

Learn how maple sap is turned into syrup. Online registration required. Maple syrup will be sold only online. Also SUN 21, SAT 27, SUN 28. *Cost: \$10 (\$8 members, children 5 and younger free)*

TUES 23

Spotting the Spotted Lanternfly

ALBANY

1 p.m. Via Zoom | nyimainvasives.org/slf

Learn how to help protect state forests and farmland from this invasive pest.

SAT 27

How Animals Survive

COLD SPRING

11 a.m. Hubbard Lodge
2880 Route 9 | bit.ly/animalsurvive

Educators from the Taconic Outdoor Education Center will discuss how local wildlife survive the winter weather.

CIVIC

MON 22

City Council

BEACON

7 p.m. Via Zoom
845-838-5011 | cityofbeacon.org

MON 22

School Board

BEACON

7 p.m. Via Zoom
845-838-6900 | beaconnk12.org

TUES 23

School Board

COLD SPRING

7 p.m. Haldane
845-265-9254 | haldaneschool.org

TUES 23

Board of Trustees

COLD SPRING

7:30 p.m. Via Zoom
845-265-3611 | coldspringny.gov

Something You Don't Know About Me

Angela Devine and Daniel Rayner

By Alison Rooney

Angela Devine and Daniel Rayner, retirees who live in Cold Spring, perform as Dead End Beverly (deadendbeverly.bandcamp.com).

You've said that many of your friends have no idea you are a band. Aren't performers usually pros at promotion?

RAYNER: We play mostly in Beacon because it has the venues. We did the Howland Center open mic once a month, then started playing at the Towne Crier. We also perform across the river.

DEVINE: It doesn't come up in conversations.

RAYNER: We're the best kept secret in Cold Spring!

When did you start playing?

RAYNER: I started the guitar when I was 14. My mother had a large record collection of Broadway show tunes and lots of classical. My sister got a degree in piano at the Manhattan School of Music. When I was 25 I started taking lessons from a great teacher.

DEVINE: I always loved to sing; I'd sing to my mother in bed at night. I especially enjoyed harmonies. I always loved music but had never performed. We went to an open mic where Daniel performed, and I liked what I heard. One night, at Whistling Willies, I went up and sang with him.

RAYNER: I had to pull her by the hand to get her to stand up in front of people. Angela has a voice that can stop people in a noisy bar.

You two finish each other's sentences. How long have you been together?

RAYNER: We were both born and raised in Brooklyn.

DEVINE: We went to Brooklyn College at the same time. Daniel was studying anthropology and I was pre-med.

RAYNER: I didn't become an anthropologist. I got a master's degree in public administration later and was a mediator and a social worker. We went out for a couple of years, then went our separate ways and married other people. Angela found me on Facebook 35 years later.

DEVINE: I found a man who lived in East Flatbush, the neighborhood where I grew up. We had a lot of friends in common. One of his posts mentioned Dan Rayner. I thought — could it be? So I sent Dan a message.

RAYNER: I almost fell out of the chair. We started communicating.

DEVINE: I was living in a small town in Pennsylvania. I had lived in Brooklyn until I was 40. My then-husband and I had a health food store in the city but we moved to the sticks for various reasons and things weren't going well. After I found Dan, we made arrangements to meet at the Roscoe Diner [in Sullivan County].



Photo by Andy Phillips

RAYNER: We were there for almost five hours.

DEVINE: It was three.

RAYNER: Well, maybe.

DEVINE: It was a funny thing, too. I had a stress fracture, and every few minutes, I would shift and yell out, "Owww! Ooh."

RAYNER: She was wincing in pain, not at me. We caught up and things started to move from there. I was living in Mohegan Lake and had moved to Cold Spring after my divorce.

DEVINE: The friendship developed into something else.

RAYNER: I have lived here 11 years, and Angela has been here going on nine. We're old now, but we don't feel old.

DEVINE: Depends on what time of the day.

RAYNER: To me, Angela is the love of my life.

You're recorded two albums. Where did you do that?

DEVINE: We recorded Talking Monkeys at Joe Johnson's studio, Red Wally, in Beacon. When I came here, he was one of the first

people I met. We learned a lot from Joe on what was possible.

RAYNER: We learned on the job.

RAYNER: Out of the Attic was recorded with Todd Giudice at Root Cellar, his studio in Cold Spring. It's a collection of mostly traditional and older songs. We play everything from jazz to folk to blues to rock.

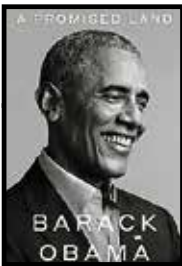
DEVINE: By time we started working with Todd we knew what we wanted and how we wanted it done.

RAYNER: We don't like to overproduce. We have an idea of what sound we want.

DEVINE: Producing a song is like making a food dish: you have everything in proportion, you taste it. We learned how to go from cook to chef.

Can you explain the band name?

DEVINE: When we were at Brooklyn College, there was a dead-end street called Beverly Road. One day we were driving around here and there happened to be a dead end, just like the one in Brooklyn. I said, "That would be a great band name: Dead End Beverly."



Local Bestsellers

Based on combined hardcover and paperback sales reported for December and January by Binnacle Books, 321 Main St., in Beacon, and Split Rock Books, 97 Main St., in Cold Spring.



ADULT	Position	last month	TITLE	AUTHOR
	1	1	<i>A Promised Land</i>	Barack Obama
	2	2	<i>Caste</i>	Isabel Wilkerson
	2	4	<i>The Vanishing Half</i>	Brit Bennett
	4	3	<i>Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants</i>	Robin Wall Kimmerer
	5	-	<i>Hamnet</i>	Maggie O'Farrell
	6	-	<i>Shuggie Bain</i>	Douglas Stuart
	6	-	<i>The Lying Life of Adults</i>	Elena Ferrante
	CHILDREN			
	1	-	<i>Cat Kid Comic Club</i>	Dav Pilkey
	2	-	<i>Katie the Catsitter</i>	Colleen AF Venable
	3	-	<i>Counting Creatures</i>	Julia Donaldson
	4	-	<i>Blades of Freedom (Hazardous Tales #10)</i>	Nathan Hale
	4	-	<i>If You Come to Earth</i>	Sophie Blackall
	4	-	<i>Mighty Meg 1</i>	Sammy Griffin
	4	6	<i>Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story</i>	Kevin Noble Maillard



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Corinne Chateau and her mother in a family snapshot

Family Secret *(from Page 11)*

Her mother had mixed feelings about the relationship. “It was a shock that her mother found us,” Chateau says. “I think my mother felt guilty that her mother was alone. I became a kind of ambassador.”

In 1993, she and her husband traveled to Rio to visit her grandmother, who was dying. “The last night that I saw her — I don’t think this was her plan — she revealed that she was Jewish,” Chateau says. “Though I had not had a strict Catholic upbringing, I had been baptized, given Communion and confirmed, so this was a big ‘What?’”

Her grandmother said her own parents had converted from Judaism to Catholicism. “I said, ‘My mother doesn’t know any of this,’ and my grandmother replied, ‘Oh, she knows very well.’”

Chateau considered the times. “Things got very bad in Poland, even before the war, with all the anti-Semitism,” she says. “If you weren’t overly religious, the strategy was not to show your Jewish identity. When the war happened, my mother left, lost her language, her education, her friends. It was all about hiding. I’m sure my grandmother was quite controlling of her, telling her, ‘Don’t say this.’”

Chateau says her mother would never admit to being Jewish. “I just don’t know what to think, but those who were not killed by the Germans were killed by the Russians, and who knows what experiences my mother might have gone through?” she says. “I think she had post-traumatic stress

— I could see the anxiety in her body, her eyes.



The truth always felt dangerous.

“I have much more understanding now. I see my mother in a more objective, empathetic way. Some of her anxiety got thrown at me.”

In 1998, Chateau received another strange phone call — another person with an accent, this time a man.

“I may be related to you,” he said. “Can we meet?”

The documentary continues with the story, which includes, but is not limited to, cousins in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 shutdown, the film has only been shown so far at film festivals (it won the “Best Story” award at the East Europe International Film Festival). “I’m dying to have an exchange with the audience, to hear how it sparks other people,” Chateau says.

She decided to make the documentary after her mother died unexpectedly in 2009. “The shock of that, with so much unresolved, left me in this real place of depression and despair,” she says.

Chateau decided to visit Poland. There, a newly met relative helped her chase down documents and family members. “I started thinking, ‘What can I do to piece this together?’ I had this need to capture it, or otherwise it would disappear. I had this great need to have a sense of my life.”

Chateau ended up with 70 hours of footage. “I had been to film school as a director, not an editor,” she says, ruefully, referring to her studies at the graduate film program at New York University and the American Film Institute. (Chateau is also an actor who trained with Stella Adler and Lee Strasberg and is a member of the Actors Studio.) Still, she managed

to whittle the footage to five hours before bringing it to professional editors in New York City and Poland, finishing it soon before the lockdown last year. (For updates and a trailer, see saferinsilence.com.)

Her film, Chateau says, “is not just about Jewish. It’s been happening so much in the past few years in the U.S. — people being discriminated against because of where they’re from. It’s always been the same for immigrants and refugees. If you come with no money, it’s not easy.”



Professor Louie and The Crowmatix

Blues *(from Page 11)*

of us were disappointed that we couldn’t find anything in New York state, so we decided to give it a shot, and it’s taken off like wildfire.” For example, a recent mention on a Poughkeepsie radio show brought in 20 members, she notes.

In addition to public education, the society supports blues musicians who live and/or perform in the Hudson Valley. This extends to promoting tours and gigs at venues such as the Towne Crier in Beacon, The Turning Point in Piermont, Daryl’s House in Pawling, The Falcon in Marlboro and further afield.

“In normal times, blues artists play there all the time, and ticket prices are usually way less expensive than seeing the same artist in New York City,” Fontana notes.

The couple founded the society with Paul Toscano, who is now the group’s president. They met through a mutual friendship with members of a blues band that was passing through on tour. Toscano is a former state ambassador for the Blues Hall of Fame in Memphis.

Hillary Fontana came to the blues through the Southern rock she grew up with by groups such as Lynyrd Skynyrd and The Allman Brothers Band. She says B.B. King was “my first love. I saw him perform so many times. I discovered, through the Blues Society, that my love for different kind of blues is evolving. There are young musicians coming up who amaze me. It’s always that gritty, barroom, lowdown rock. It started with rock for me, but then I could pinpoint it in the blues.”

In 2013, the Fontanas took their first “rhythm and blues” cruise, where they saw performances by New York musicians such as Professor Louie and The Crowmatix, Popa Chubby, Dave Keyes and Guy Davis. That made it all the more surprising there was no New York-based blues society.

“My husband and I were intrigued at what a small family the blues players are,” Fontana recalls. “Blues artists stick together — it’s like telephone tag.”

In January, the HVBS was inducted as an affiliate of the Blues Foundation, the fundraising arm of the Blues Museum. As one of the perks of membership, the society can send a band and musicians to represent the organization at the annual International Blues Challenge in Memphis, although the 2021 competition was canceled.

Each May, the Blues Foundation also hosts the Blues Music Awards. “There are several layers of competition, and those who advance get to go to Memphis and compete there, in knockout battles,” Fontana says. “Memphis shuts down for this. Whoever wins goes on the festival circuit and on cruises. Some of the greatest contemporary blues musicians have been discovered this way.”

The COVID-19 shutdown has curtailed the group’s activities, which include jam sessions, a table at the Hudson Valley Guitar Show and a fundraising bash at The Falcon, but it has stayed active on social media, Fontana says.

“Everyone’s suffering the same way,” Fontana says. “We need money to keep going, so we threw out the idea of a [benefit] CD. We expected eight or 10 submissions but they kept pouring in. We’ve already sold 100, which has covered the production costs.”

To join the Hudson Valley Blues Society or purchase its CD for \$20 postpaid, visit thehvbs.org or write P.O. Box 63, Patterson, NY 12563. The society is hosting a Downstate Virtual Bluesfest on March 14 with the Long Island Blues Society and is sponsoring a concert scheduled for May 21 at the Paramount Hudson Valley in Peekskill with Joe Louis Walker, Guy Davis and Professor Louie and The Crowmatix.

Mouths to Feed

Good,
Better, Best

By Celia Barbour

Writing a regular food

column like this one creates a paradox. Whenever I come up with a recipe my family really likes, they just want to go on eating it: Kale made this way, cauliflower like that, ramen precisely so. Yet while there's only so much room in our repertoire of family favorites, my biweekly deadlines require that I dream up something new 26 times a year.

Kids are such creatures of habit that they could (and often do) eat the same foods day after day. But I experience a disheartening sense of déjà vu if I'm forever sitting down to familiar dinners. Didn't we have this just a few days ago?

"No, Mom," the kids will reply, "that was last November." At which point I remind them that time passes faster as one ages, and therefore November was yesterday for me, and don't rub it in.

At any rate, I'm happy to keep exploring, and this column provides the perfect excuse.



Back in 2017 (aka, the day before yesterday), I wrote about an Asian salmon recipe that was such a hit we all started referring to it as "salmon the good way." For over a year, it was the standard by which every other seafood dish was measured and fell short.

Eventually I grew restless, so one Sunday I came up with way of preparing salmon that was easier and, it seemed to me, just as tasty. Better still, this recipe included harissa, which in those days was a bit of an obsession of mine.

I'd encountered harissa a few decades earlier at an extraordinary Tunisian hole-in-the-wall joint in Manhattan. The neon-red paste was so eye-wateringly spicy that, while I love heat, I couldn't bear adding more than a few flecks. After that, I kept harissa at arm's length, consuming it tentatively only when eating out.

My loss. Harissa takes many forms. Indeed, because the name comes from the Arabic for "pounded," it can refer to several wildly divergent dishes, including a semolina cake. But the harissa I'm referring to — the harissa many of us know by that name — is a paste of dried chili peppers, garlic and salt; most versions also include olive oil, lemon juice and spices such as cumin and coriander. Although the paste originated in Tunisia some 500 years ago, it incorporated several even-older culinary influences: Chili peppers, a New-World ingredient, had traveled to North Africa via Spain.

Nowadays, there are some great artisanal harissas on the market, in a wide range of heat indexes. But the paste I reached for that particular Sunday — the one I'd been dabbing on everything from eggs to rice cakes to avocados; the one that had become my No. 1 happiness-inducing condiment — is called "Harissa Moroccan Style Seasoning." It's still my hands-down favorite and, while rare in grocery stores, can easily be mail-ordered (I just ordered 3 jars, as I loathe running out).

I mixed roughly one part cHarissa with two parts each yogurt and mayonnaise, smeared it on the fish and placed it in a low-



Salmon with Harissa-Yogurt Sauce aka "Salmon the Better Way"

You may want to double the sauce, so there's extra at the table to mix into the rice. To intensify the salmon's flavor, you can sprinkle it with ½ teaspoon harissa spice rub (available on many supermarket spice shelves) along with the salt and pepper in Step 1.

Serves 4

1½ pounds skin-on salmon filet	¼ cup whole-milk Greek yogurt
salt and pepper	¼ cup mayonnaise
1 to 3 tablespoons cHarissa Moroccan seasoning or other harissa paste (sample before adding, so you know how hot it is)	¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro for serving, optional
	2 cups cooked rice for serving, optional

1. Heat oven to 300 degrees. Remove the salmon from the refrigerator, rinse well, and use tweezers to remove pin bones. Sprinkle both sides with salt and pepper, and place in an oven-proof baking dish.
2. Combine the cHarissa, yogurt and mayonnaise in a small bowl. Spread about half the mixture on the surface of the salmon. Transfer to the oven and cook 10 minutes. Lower the heat to 275, spread with remaining cHarissa mixture, and continue cooking just until the salmon begins to release its milky-white fat, about 10 minutes more. Serve with rice and cilantro.

Photos by Henry Weed

temperature oven for about 25 minutes. The result was such a raging success that it immediately became known as "salmon the other good way." Last year, Dosi admitted he preferred it to the Asian version, and thus it was promoted to "salmon the better way."

By now, so many of my family's go-to reci-

pes have made it onto these pages that when the older kids, currently at college, text me asking how to make such-and-such, I refer them to this paper's well-archived website. As of today, I can rest easy in the knowledge that one more indispensable family favorite is accessible to them wherever they roam.

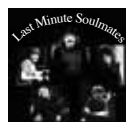
“Kids are such creatures of habit that they could (and often do) eat the same foods day after day. But I experience a disheartening sense of déjà vu if I'm forever sitting down to familiar dinners.

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Sat. Feb. 20 + Sun. Feb. 21 – 1 to 5 pm
EXHIBIT: IN OUR LIFETIME
African American Hudson Valley Artists
17 artists' work on display – Sat/Sun in Feb. 1-5 pm



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LIVESTREAM CONCERT: Last Minute Soulmates
Tickets: howlandculturalcenter.org



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MET ORCHESTRA MUSICIANS
Streamed by ALIVEmusica at howlandmusic.org



Thurs. Feb. 25 – 8 pm
LIVESTREAM: THE VALLEY HOUR
Musical guests – Dan Garcia, The Restless Age
Hosted by Annalyse & Ryan – Tix: TheValleyHour.com



AND MORE

March's art show: "I am Woman"
Thurs. Mar. 11 – 8 pm: Singer Tara O'Grady:
Howlin' at the Howland, Seasons of Love

HCC will NOT be open for in-person audience during performances

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howlandculturalcentertix.com



Carlos Salcedo



Leonora Burton at the crash site



John Jesek

Reporter's Notebook: We All Could Have Died

Nine Philipstown residents who flirted with the Grim Reaper

By Michael Turton

I've been trying to forget this story for 58 years, yet here I am writing about it. Seems I can't not think about it.

I was 12. Two friends and I were riding our bikes toward the only traffic light in town. I decided to be a smart-ass and beat them through the intersection. I didn't see the car running the red



light, but I sensed it. I hit the brakes, skidding my bike sideways. The car ran over both the bike's wheels. I was uninjured. I couldn't help thinking: "What if I had ridden just a foot farther?"

Maybe knowing I'm not alone will vanquish that demon. Nine Philipstown residents shared with me their stories of near death.

When **Carlos Salcedo** was 20 and a college student, he returned to his native Bolivia for the holidays. He and his cousin went to a party on the seventh floor of an unfinished apartment building. Because there was no elevator installed, the revelers had to use the stairs. As they left, they ran into the building manager on the third or fourth floor. He was unhappy with their rowdy behavior, and a fight broke out. "He was beating my cousin," Carlos remembers. "I pulled him off." He and the manager tumbled backward and down the empty elevator shaft. Carlos landed on top of the manager. Initially he thought he was paralyzed, but then feeling returned. The manager suffered a broken shoulder, broken clavicle and head injuries.

Leonora Burton had always wanted to fly and in the 1970s pursued a pilot's license. At Teterboro airport in New Jersey, her instructor invited her and two other

students on a flight. With a student at the controls, the engine died. "The instructor took the controls and shouted, 'For Christ's sake, find us a place to land — a road, a field, anything!'" As they descended, Leonora kept thinking, "How will my parents find out?" They crash-landed in a parking lot, hitting several cars, and ended up resting against a tree. The instructor suffered serious internal injuries. One student was uninjured but Leonora's leg was lacerated and the third student's nose was broken. Leonora's dream of being a pilot ended there. "My heart wasn't in it anymore," she said.

In February 1981, **John Jesek** was working on a barge on the East River in New York City when a swinging crane knocked him into the ice-cold waters. No one saw it happen. "The current was strong," he recalls. "The water was so cold it felt like a burn; my Carhartts [outerwear] froze." Jesek grabbed a nearby work raft. The Norwegian barge captain saw him and

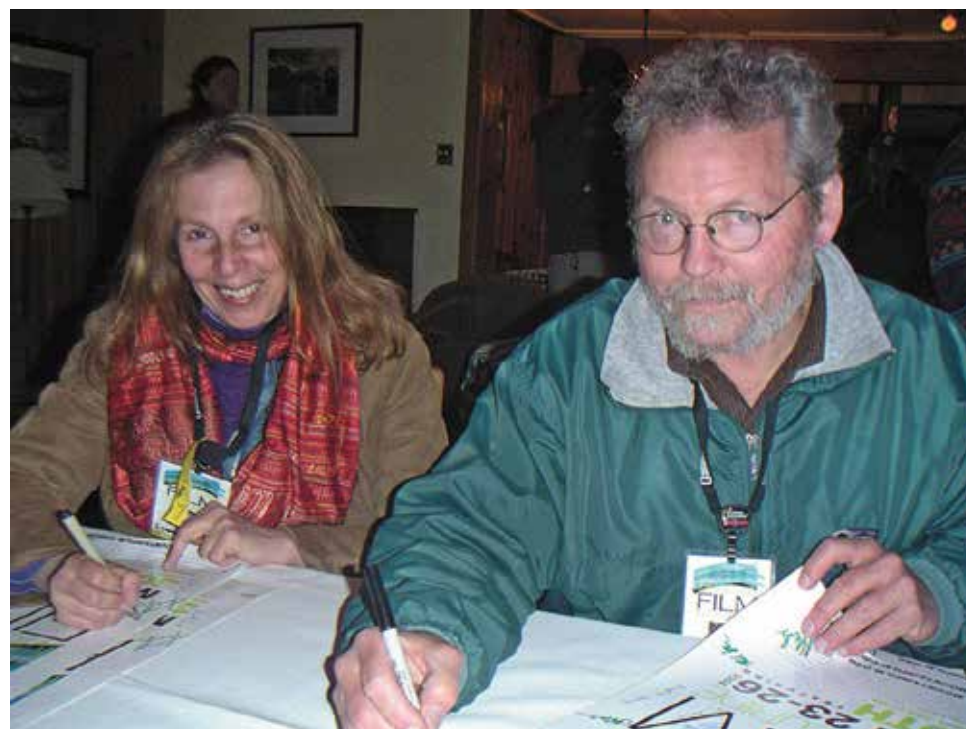
(Continued on Page 17)



Johnny Peters soon after he recovered from being shot



Johnny Peters today



Lynne Cherry and Gary Braasch

Photos provided



Jessie Pritchard Hunter



Clark Thompson



Tommy Des Marais



John Flagler

(Continued from Page 17)

pulled him out, took him to a heated shed and stripped him down. “He gave me aquavit until I stopped shivering,” he recalls. “I haven’t done a polar-bear plunge since.”

When he was in his early 20s, **Johnny Peters** walked out of a New Orleans bar in the early morning hours after his jazz band had finished its sets. A black car screeched to a halt nearby. A man in a ski mask jumped out and shot him point-blank in the chest. Peters ran down an alley, where he passed out at the rear entrance of a hotel. Someone took him to a hospital. Peters had been the victim of a gang that required recruits to shoot a stranger. The 9mm bullet passed between two ribs, went through his lung and exited between two different ribs, never hitting bone. Peters spent a month in the hospital and was dubbed “the miracle man.”

Ten years ago, **Lynne Cherry** was asleep in the passenger seat of a car being driven by her friend and creative partner, Gary Braasch, near Portland, Oregon. They were behind a truck carrying a sofa, which came loose and crashed through the windshield. “I remember a big explosion,” Cherry says, which was the air bag. “It prevented the sofa from hitting me,” she says. Cherry and Braasch were flying out the next day; the embarrassed sofa owners paid for their hotel and drove them to the airport.

Jessie Pritchard Hunter was 29 when the third-floor Queens apartment she and her husband shared caught fire. When they opened the bedroom door, an 8-foot wall of flame greeted them. Windows exploded. “I said, ‘We’re going to die’ three times in a row,” she recalls. Her husband replied, “No, we are not.” He jumped to the fire escape, then stretched and pulled his wife out. She crashed into the metal, badly bruising her entire left side. “A firefighter said had we stayed in the apartment a minute longer, we would have died,” Jessie said. Their story appeared in New York Magazine, in part perhaps because they were both naked.

In 1989, **Clark Thompson** and his girlfriend stopped at a bar in Salisbury, Massachusetts, to play some pool. A biker and his girlfriend challenged them to a \$20 game. Clark accepted, knowing his girlfriend was

a ringer. She all but ran the table, and then Clark sank the last two balls. The biker grabbed the \$40, claiming Clark hadn’t called the last shot. When Clark protested, the biker pulled a Colt .45 handgun, cocked it and put the muzzle between Clark’s eyes. “This says you scratched,” he said. Clark agreed, the biker couple left, the bartender called the police and he and his girlfriend at least drank for free.

In the summer of 2011, **Tommy Des Marais** was driving on Route 403 on a

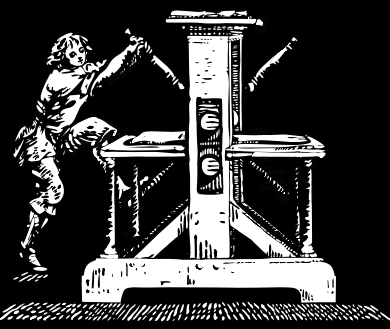
gloomy day. He heard a loud crack. A massive oak tree split and fell, with half landing on his hood and half on his rear windshield. He was not injured except for a cut on his finger. “Now I feel lucky; then I felt differently,” because his car was totaled, he says. When first responders saw the car, they told him, “People don’t usually get out of these alive.”

John Flagler was 5 years old, camping with his family along Idaho’s Snake River. While throwing sticks into the water, he lost his balance, fell into the river and was

swept away by rapids. His mother couldn’t swim but jumped in after him. “I don’t remember a lot,” Flagler said, “but I’m told she was able to grab me about a mile downriver and hand me to someone on the river’s edge.” His mother was rescued farther downstream. Flagler says he had two other near-drownings as a kid but “I still love being by the water.”

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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 (February 1871)

A broken axle caused a 25-car freight train laden with oil to overturn on the bridge between New Hamburg and Beacon, where it was hit by a northbound express train. The first two cars of the oil train and drawbridge caught fire and the structure collapsed, dropping the cars, the express locomotive, a passenger car and a Pullman's sleeping car into Wappinger Creek. There, the oil and flames spread over the ice. By the next evening, 22 bodies had been recovered. The passenger train had been running 12 minutes late; had it been on time, it would already have been at the New Hamburg station when the oil train crossed the bridge.

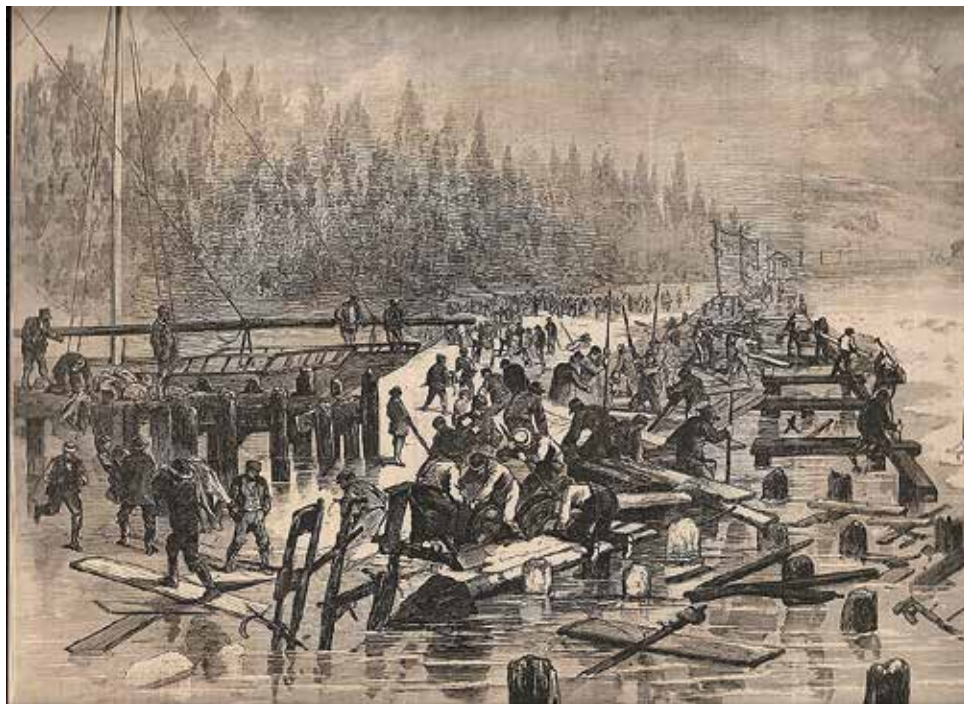
125 Years Ago (February 1896)

Jonathan Deyo, a Newburgh lawyer, was mugged near the Matteawan asylum for the criminally insane after visiting two clients there. He said one man pushed him against a fence while another rifled his pockets, taking \$30 in cash, a gold watch and a diamond scarf pin.

Inmates at the Matteawan asylum presented a minstrel performance for firemen from Fishkill and Matteawan to thank them for putting out a fire at the facility. But sitting in the front row were the train robber Oliver Curtis Perry and notorious killers such as Lizzie Halliday and Quimbo Appo ("the Chinese devil man").

The prison reported that its daily average population in 1895 was 490, an increase of 61 over 1894, although its capacity was 550.

Matteawan police officers stood guard outside the Glenham home of Lt. Clarence Lang and his new wife after its occupants received threatening letters. Eliza Sloane,



In this print from an 1871 news story, workers recover bodies from Wappinger Creek after a collision between two trains.

the housekeeper, said notes addressed to her or Mrs. Lang began to appear pinned to trees after armed, masked men approached while Eliza was alone at the home and stole \$1,000 in silverware. Miss Sloane remained at the home while the Langs fled to Boston. Eight days later, after the officers had left, Sloane said a man approached to explain that he had been trying to scare her away and that his target was Mr. Lang. A suspect was quickly identified: Frank Carey, a teenager who formerly worked for the couple until he was arrested for stealing. He had been seen with a man who matched the description of a spurned boyfriend of Mrs. Lang.

A well-dressed woman who said her name was Mary Pette and that she was 56 and lived in Matteawan became faint on a street corner in Brooklyn and was taken to a hospital. Four hours after being discharged, she was picked up a short distance away, saying she had severe head pain. This time she gave her name as Mary St. John.

The Fishkill and Matteawan Railroad announced its net earnings in 1895 of \$5,559.13 allowed for a dividend of 2.5 percent.

A judge in Connecticut granted bills of divorce to the two husbands of Jeanette Smalley, who had been detained in Matteawan on bigamy charges but escaped from the Danbury officers who retrieved her.

100 Years ago (February 1921)

Two juniors at Poughkeepsie High School traveled to Beacon to obtain a marriage license, then eloped to Cleveland. The next morning, when students arrived at the school, they found a cartoon on a blackboard showing a young couple dragging a trunk. The Beacon city recorder recalled that the couple looked too young for a license and referred them to Judge Ferdinand Hoyt, who demanded they sign affidavits stating they were Beacon residents and legal adults. The girl stated she was 18 and the boy swore he was 21. It was not clear if they had been married since the judge said he did not perform a ceremony before they left the city.

A laborer narrowly escaped death when he was buried up to his neck during a sewer excavation.

The Salvation Army branch opened a day

care for working mothers.

George Johnson purchased a Hudson sedan at the Poughkeepsie Auto Show.

75 Years Ago (February 1946)

Operations resumed at the National Biscuit Co. after 300 workers accepted a new contract after an eight-day strike. The gains included a closed shop (where every worker must be a union member) and wage increases of 10 to 70 cents per hour.

The Beacon Public Health Association announced plans to fund its X-ray services by selling Christmas seals.

William Langer spoke at the Beacon Hebrew Alliance on Jews in Texas.

The Brewer building at 198 Main St. was razed to make room for a modern diner owned by Joseph TenEyck.

Two brothers, ages 16 and 20, were sentenced to 30 days in jail for punching their neighbor on Beekman Street.

Henry Sheldon, who ran a drugstore in Beacon for 23 years at Main and South White streets, died at age 70.

The police were called after the doors of the Beacon High School gym were chained shut with about 650 people inside to watch a basketball game between Beacon and the Newburgh Free Academy. Coach Bill Ham said he chained the doors to prevent 350 more fans from getting inside the packed gym. The principal said that while some people expressed concern the coach had created a fire hazard, had there been a fire, spectators could have run through the building to other doors. He said that while the coach had probably prevented a riot, "the chains will not be used again." Beacon won, 42-38.

Attendants at the Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminal Insane asked the state to reclassify them as prison guards.

A Poughkeepsie basketball team, Francisco's Merchants, protested its loss to Beacon in a city league game because the visitors arrived 35 minutes late.

Following an 11-inch snowfall, Rundle Gilbert was able to open a new, mile-long ski run on Mount Beacon that he billed as the steepest and longest south of New

(Continued on Page 19)

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(Continued from Page 18)

Hampshire. The run dropped 1,200 feet and the slope at spots approached 50 percent.

A state official said Beacon would need to construct at least one 50-unit complex if it wanted to get any of a \$35 million allocation for veteran housing.

50 Years Ago (February 1971)

Walter Foeger, the designer of the Dutchess Ski Area at Beacon and inventor of the Natur Teknik (which skipped the snowplow and stem steps of traditional skiing instruction and went straight to parallel), spoke at Dutchess Community College.

Finance Commissioner Charles Miller was named acting mayor for a week while Robert Cahill vacationed in Florida.

Mike Sellers scored 16 points and Paul Sellers grabbed 21 rebounds for Beacon High School as the boys' basketball team edged Haldane, 57-56. In the rematch in Cold Spring, Beacon won, 74-72, on a last-second shot by Joe Powell, who had been brought up from the junior varsity squad. Bob Harrison of Haldane had made two free throws with six seconds left to tie the game.

Nearly 20 percent of the students in the Beacon school district were absent on a single day because of the spread of a flu-like illness.

A developer proposed demolishing the former Highland Hospital on Verplanck Avenue to build a 10-story, \$6 million nursing home. The hospital had been empty since 1960. There had been plans in 1967 to use the building as a medical center, but the county determined it was not fireproof and its corridors were too narrow.

Benjamin Roosa, a 1920 Beacon High School graduate who served as a city judge for nearly 30 years, died at age 67.

The Beacon Piece Dyeing and Finishing Co. admitted to 50 counts in a federal water pollution indictment and paid a \$25,000 fine. The government accused the firm of dumping dyes and other industrial waste into Fishkill Creek for nearly a year. The firm said it would have to spend twice its net worth to meet federal standards without financial assistance from the state.

David Babcock resigned from the Republican Committee and urged that the "party be cleaned up in Beacon," calling its leadership "defeatist."

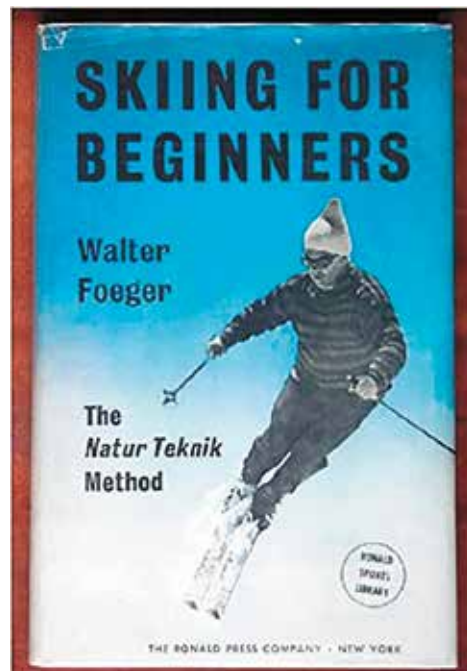
The attorney defending Martina Banks in her trial for second-degree manslaughter told the jury that while she had shot her husband inside their Chandler Street home, he had been unfaithful.

Jayne Lewis was named Beacon High School's annual Betty Crocker Homemaker of Tomorrow.

A three-year study predicted that one of the most difficult problems that would face southern Dutchess County in the year 1990 would be road capacity. It concluded that traffic in Beacon would increase by 120 percent and noted that while Interstate 84 had been opened in 1960 to relieve congestion, it had generated more traffic on nearby roads.

25 Years Ago (February 1996)

The Beacon Warriors, a Hudson Valley



Walter Foeger and one of his books

team sponsored by the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association, prepared to leave for Nashville, where it was the top seed of the Division II tournament of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association. The squad had won four games the previous weekend in a tournament it hosted at Beacon High School to improve to 18-8.

Highway Superintendent Randy Casale said he had two men patching potholes daily, calling it the worst situation he'd seen in six or seven years. "Basically, we're doing the same holes over and over," he said.

The Beacon High School girls' basketball team snapped a 24-game losing streak with a 34-32 win over Fox Lane.

Kareef Mima, 19, pleaded guilty to first-degree manslaughter, admitting he shot a friend, Adrian "Mike Fats" Brown, who was sitting on a stoop at 192 Main St. Mima insisted he was aiming for Angelo "Chubby" Shorey, whom he said made a motion as if reaching for a gun.

Mayor Clara Lou Gould said the city wanted to use a permit system, rather than meters, to regulate parking on River, Bank and West Main streets near the train station. "Metro-North doesn't care how we do it," she said. "They just don't want people parking there for free to avoid their lots."

A 17-year-old was arrested in Poughkeepsie with 36 packets of crack and two loaded handguns, including one stolen from a home in Beacon, police said.

The Youth Resources Development Corp. in Beacon was preparing six high school dropouts for their general equivalency exams and two others to enter college. The students also spent 20 hours a week rehabbing a home at 11 North St.

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Dutchess Redistricting Reform Delayed

Commission stymied by lack of census data

By Leonard Sparks

Dutchess County will not receive redistricting data from the 2020 census until the fall, delaying efforts by a newly created seven-member commission to redraw legislative boundaries based on population changes.

The delay will likely push into 2022 the work of the Independent Reapportionment Commission, which won unanimous approval of the county's 25-member Legislature and was approved by 65 percent of county voters in November.

The census data, which includes block-level population counts by race and ethnicity, will be released by Sept. 30, the U.S. Census Bureau said on Feb. 12. The bureau planned to deliver the data by March 31 but said the COVID-19 shutdown slowed down collection and processing.

The Legislature's Republicans selected Dale Culver of Amenia and Keri Peterson of Hopewell Junction to the commission, while Democrats chose Richard Keller-Coffey of

Millbrook and John Pelosi of Red Hook. Those four appointees then named Hance Huston of Fishkill, Whitney Lundy of Hyde Park and Christie VanHorne of Poughkeepsie as the remaining three members.

While the commission members are in place, they can do "nothing" without the census data, said Legislature Chair Gregg Pulver. By law the commission's redrawn districts must be ready for elections in 2023.

"We have plenty of time; they'll certainly have an opportunity to work as long as they need," Pulver said on Wednesday (Feb. 17).

Pulver said he does not expect the new map to differ much from the current one, but he also announced during the Legislature's first meeting of the year in January that he wanted the body to explore the idea of reducing the size of the Legislature to make it more "efficient" and save costs. Each legislator is paid \$16,400; the majority and minority leaders earn \$25,133 and the chair \$34,967.

Because of social media, legislators are "adept at reaching out" and "having a few more people isn't going to be an issue," said Pulver. But Nick Page, a Democrat whose district includes Wards 1, 2 and 3 in Beacon, said he worried that having legislators repre-

sent more constituents "simply stretches us thin" and that a smaller body could affect "denser districts that are Democrat-held."

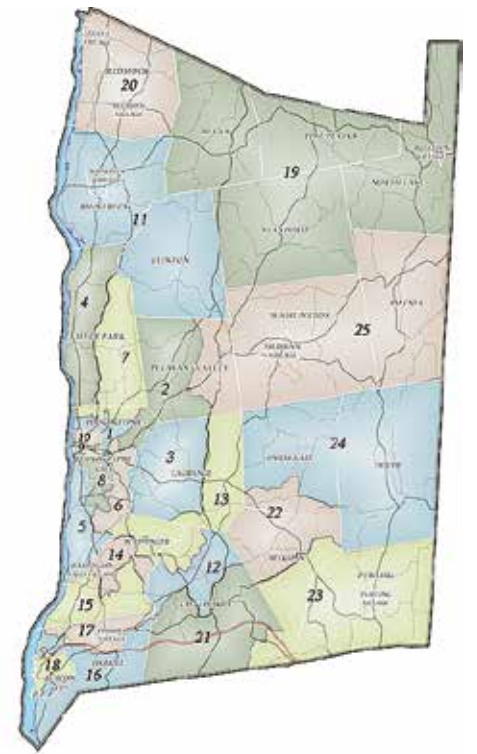
"We don't want to see them subject to less-robust representation," said Page.

The Legislature established the commission as part of a package of reforms that included term limits and a new ethics law. The law stipulates that none of its members can be former elected or political party officials unless they have been out of office for at least three years. The same restriction applies to state and municipal employees.

The commission is also required to hold open meetings, post minutes within five days after each meeting, hold at least two public hearings and allow county residents to comment on the revised district map.

The map is required to be "contiguous" and "uninterrupted," not favor either party and have roughly the same number of residents, which is currently around 12,000 people based on the county's population of about 300,000. The commission must adopt the new districts by a least a 5-2 vote, and the Legislature must approve the proposal before submitting it to the county Board of Elections.

While the Board of Elections can make



Dutchess County has 25 legislative districts, but their boundaries -- and number -- could change.

"minor technical adjustments," the new boundaries would "have the force and effect of law."

Putnam Legislators Applaud HVSF Plans

Festival expects \$4.5 million impact to nearly double

By Liz Schevtchuk Armstrong

The directors of the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival played to an enthusiastic audience on Tuesday (Feb. 16) when they told the Putnam County Legislature's Economic Development Committee of the company's planned relocation next year to a new home on the Garrison Golf Course property.

Davis McCallum, the festival's artistic director, and Katie Liberman, managing director, outlined the plans with a slide show at the meeting, which was held by audio connection — as usual during the pandemic, if inexplicably in this case.

For more than 30 years, HVSF has staged its productions in an open-air tent at Boscobel, a historic estate in Garrison. But last summer it announced the move to a 53-acre, Route 9 parcel donated by owner Chris Davis.

There, in phases, HVSF intends to create what it calls an "environmentally sustainable theater campus" with a permanent tent, "environmentally sensitive" parking lots, wildflower garden, meadows created from former golf fairways, walking paths, and, various structures, including a small indoor theater, rehearsal barn, visitor center, housing for actor and outdoor community pavilion.

The golf course will remain but be reduced from 18 holes to nine. Restaurant



Phase 1 of the HVSF plan includes (1) parking, (2) use of the current tent for the 2022 season and (3) a repurposing of the existing pro shop and cart barn

operations also will continue.

In introducing McCallum and Liberman, Legislator Nancy Montgomery, a Democrat who represents Philipstown and part of Putnam Valley, and serves on the Economic Development Committee, described HVSF as "an economic driver"

for western Putnam as well as a creative force for bringing together people in engaging ways.

Liberman said that in its Boscobel tenure HVSF has had a \$4.5 million annual economic impact — for instance, in hiring staff and in money spent locally

by people attending the performances — a figure expected to nearly double when the company moves to its new location in 2022. Economically, "we see so much opportunity," at the new site, she said.

McCallum said HVSF hopes to make the "a cultural anchor" with expanded programs for school students, enhanced community outreach, facilities and space to share with other community organizations, a longer outdoor performing season, and environmental stewardship and sustainability on "truly a spectacular site."

Tracey Walsh, the county's tourism director, said that at its new home HVSF's activities "will entice even more people to come to Putnam, spend time and stay over," and, with the expansion of the Magazzino art museum and observances in 2026 for the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, would help "make that Route 9 corridor a cultural hub."

Kathleen Abels, president of the Putnam Economic Development Corp., referred to herself as a longtime HVSF fan. She termed its plan "simply thrilling. It will put Putnam on the map."

"What they're planning is really wonderful use of the land," Montgomery remarked.

Legislators — even those with whom Montgomery often clashes issues — expressed similar views.

"I love the cultural aspect and the sustainability aspect," said Legislator Neal Sullivan of Carmel-Mahopac.

Legislator Paul Jonke of Southeast told Liberman and McCallum that "what you're doing is creating a big positive in Putnam County" even though, he added — in a light-hearted tone — "I really enjoyed the golf course. I'm going to miss those nine holes."

Out There

You Just Climbed Two Mountains

Catskill 3500' Club now 3300' Club after closings

By Brian PJ Cronin

Making it into the Catskills 3500' Club just got a little easier.

For the past 30 years, admission was dependent on climbing the 35 mountains in the Catskills with an elevation above 3,500 feet, including four that had to be climbed twice, once under snow conditions.

But the club recently announced that Graham and Doubletop, the only peaks on private property, have been removed from the requirements.

Before that change, hikers wishing to ascend either mountain had to get permission from a caretaker who works for the family that owns the land. After closing the peaks in the spring because of concerns about COVID-19, the property owners inspected the peaks and said they were shocked by what they found.

"Before, it looked like a wilderness," explained Maria Bedo-Calhoun, the president of the 3500' Club. "Now there are herd paths."

"It's not like there's trash, but every now and then someone does mark the way up and leave ribbons," she said. "The owners could have established trails, but they didn't want that. They wanted a wilderness; they felt there should be a few mountaintops in the Catskills that still look untouched."

The summit of Graham has the ruins of a TV tower constructed in the 1960s, but Bedo-Calhoun said she wouldn't be surprised if the landowners remove it.

After discussing the matter with the 3500' Club, the state Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, the landowners decided to close the mountains. The club had been using two "replacement peaks" to keep the total at 35 — including the southern summit of Doubletop, which lies on state-owned land — but in a statement the club's board outlined its reasons for abandoning that alternative.

"We are the 3500' Club, not the 35 Peak Club," board members wrote, noting that the list only reached 35 peaks in 1990 with the addition of Southwest Hunter (aka Leavitt).



Julie McGuire, with a cannister (top) on one of the Catskill's untrailed peaks this summer

It was coming down the slopes of the (now-closed) Doubletop in 1962 that Brad Whiting, then chair of the Mid-Hudson chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club, turned to hiking partner Bill Spangenberg and proposed the idea of a local club similar to the 46er Club, which consists of hikers who have climbed all 46 of the Adirondacks' high peaks.

As it turned out, Bill and his wife Kay had come up with the same idea a few years earlier but, finding no takers, hiked the Catskill peaks themselves. The elevation bar of 3,500 feet was mostly inspired by the Bicknell's Thrush, a rare bird whose habitat is the balsam firs found above 3,500 feet in the Catskills and that was first discovered in the 19th century on Slide Mountain, the highest of the Catskill peaks.

The club organizers compiled a list of peaks and worked with trail conferences to decide which of them would remain untrailed. The thought was that by keeping about half the peaks un-blazed, hikers would have to rely on maps and their wits. At the summit of the untrailed peaks are canisters installed by the club with notebooks inside that must be signed as evidence.

Keeping mountains un-blazed became a challenge and was one of the reasons the landowners decided to close Graham and Doubletop. Social media — not to mention that hiking has been one of few safe activities during the pandemic — has increased interest in climbing the peaks. GPS technology makes off-trail hiking easier. And many hikers' desire



McGuire, getting ready to finish her 3500' Club list by skiing down Panther Mountain

Photos provided

to climb the peaks outstrips their wilderness skills and etiquette. Bedo-Calhoun noted the increasing number of trespassers on Graham and Doubletop who, often in an effort to knock out the 35 peaks as quickly as possible, neglected to get permission first.

Reaction to the closing of the peaks has been mostly positive, as many hikers respect the landowners' decision to protect the land. But it's a gut-check moment for not just the 3500' Club, but anyone who spends time on the mountains. Are we stewards of the land, or consumers of it?

Bedo-Calhoun noted that simply pausing the list isn't an option, because other lists have come along (see box). But the club does hope to take a more active role in educating hikers about preventing a strain on the landscape. "We're evolving from something that's just about people hiking together to taking some responsibility for bringing people here," she said.

What's the point of the list? Bedo-Calhoun introduced me to Julie McGuire, who just became the club's 3,500th member. McGuire told me how chasing the peaks helped her through a divorce. Although she enjoyed backcountry skiing, it was her ex-wife who handled the maps when they hiked. When COVID struck, she began hiking to regain her confidence. She climbed all the high peaks in the past year, finishing in January by "skinning" up Panther (essentially, uphill skiing).

She has found other adventures outside the Catskills. When we spoke, she had just returned from avalanche safety training, rappelling on skis down Mount Washington, the tallest and deadliest mountain in the Northeast.

McGuire credited the club for her where-withal. "Even though I haven't met all these people in person, it feels like there's this support network, people rooting for you," she said.



Peak Performance

The 3500' Club created the first challenge list for the Catskills, but others have followed.

3500' WINTER PEAKS

Members must climb all 35 (now 33) peaks under snow conditions.

ALL TRAILS CHALLENGE

Administered by the Catskills Mountain Club: Hikers must complete all 340 miles of Catskill trails.

CATSKILLS 140 (aka THE 4 SEASONS)

Another Catskills Mountain Club challenge: Hikers must summit 35 peaks (Millbrook and Dry Brook Ridge substitute for Graham and Doubletop) once in each season.

CATSKILLS 420 (aka THE GRID)

For the hardest of the hardcore: Hikers must ascend all 35 peaks once in each month of the year.



Graham Mountain

Photo by B. Cronin

SPORTS

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Beacon's Tianna Adams finishes a drive on Friday against Haldane's Maddie Chiera (15) and Moretta Pezzullo (32).



Beacon's Reilly Landisi (12) is pursued by Haldane's Mairead O'Hara last week at Beacon.
Photos by S. Pearlman

Basketball (from Page 24)

team I feel like the kids follow the plan and showed some nice improvement."

The Bulldogs are scheduled to visit John Jay today (Friday) before their game against Haldane.

Beacon Girls Start 2-0

The Beacon girls' team twice defeated Haldane to open its season, winning at home on Friday (Feb. 12), 47-30, and again on Saturday morning in Cold Spring, 44-36.

In the Friday game, Beacon eighth-grader Reilly Landisi made her varsity debut with 17 points, while freshman Devyn Kelly had 11. Tianna Adams had nine points and eighth-grader Daveya Rodriguez had eight points and grabbed 10 rebounds.

"For only having had six practices, we played hard and smart," said Beacon Coach Christina Dahl. "We had a slow first quarter, then we picked it up, and we matched up well with them. I was



Coach Jessica Perrone with seniors Essie Florke and Sydney Warren before Saturday's game against Beacon.

Photo by Scott Warren

very pleased with the way we played." In the Saturday game, Kelly had 14 points to lead the Bulldogs, Adams added 10 and Landisi and Rodriguez each had eight.

Maddie Chiera scored 17 points and had

four rebounds and five steals for Haldane, and Ella Ashburn added six points.

This past week, Beacon lost a pair of lopsided games (74-6 and 60-10) to much larger Arlington High School to fall to 2-2. The teams would normally not play each other but schedules have been rejiggered because of COVID-19 restrictions.

The Bulldogs are scheduled to host John Jay East Fishkill today (Friday) and Lourdes on Monday (Feb. 22).

Haldane visited North Salem on Tuesday (Feb. 16), losing 37-30 and falling to 0-3. Chiera led the team with 10 points, five rebounds and three steals; Amanda Johnson added eight points, three rebounds and two steals; Ruby Poses had seven points, two rebounds and two steals, and Mairead O'Hara had four blocks and five steals.

Haldane was scheduled to host Peekskill on Saturday and Putnam Valley on Monday before traveling to Peekskill on Tuesday.

Spectators are not allowed, but Haldane's home contests are livestreamed at events.

locallive.tv/school/haldane-hs and select Beacon games can be seen via beaconk12.org/athletics.

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SPORTS



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Battle(s) of the Tunnel

Haldane and Beacon face off in first games of season

By Skip Pearlman

The Haldane and Beacon High School boys' and girls' basketball teams each opened their seasons with home and away games against their Highlands rivals, with the Haldane boys winning at home and the Beacon girls winning both contests.

The boys are scheduled to match up again tomorrow (Feb. 20) at Beacon.

The boys' game on Friday (Feb. 12) was designated the second annual Battle of the Tunnel, which Beacon won last year, 60-57, in front of packed gym at Haldane.

This year was dramatically different, with the teams playing before mostly empty stands because of pandemic restrictions. The Blue Devils held on for a 70-55 victory and reclaimed the trophy.

It was also senior day for the Haldane boys, honoring Dan and Darrin Santos, Christian Pezzullo, Jonathan Bradley and Vincenzo Scanga.

The Haldane boys defeated Millbrook on Saturday (Feb. 13), 75-62, and remain undefeated after victories this week over North Salem and Putnam Valley in a season shortened to 12 games by the COVID-19 shutdown.

Against Beacon, an experienced Haldane



The Blue Devils won the second annual Battle of the Tunnel on Feb. 12 at Haldane.

Photos by S. Pearlman

team moved the ball well and finished around the basket. Dan Santos led Haldane with 20 points, Soren Holmbo had 19, and Matteo Cervone added 16. Darien Gillins led Beacon with 16, Leo Gecaj had 14 and Jack Philipbar added 10.

"It was an amazing night, our first game back," said Haldane Coach Joe Virgadamo.

"We have a nice rivalry with Beacon, so it was nice to get that trophy in our hands. It was fun to see our guys back on the court."

"Haldane has five seniors, and returns other players with experience," noted Beacon Coach Scott Timpano. "Soren Holmbo was extremely impressive. They're big and they got up and down the floor well. Our four sopho-

mores — that was their first varsity minutes."

Against Millbrook, Dan Santos scored 25, followed by Cervone (18), Holmbo (13) and Ryan Irwin (11).

On Tuesday (Feb. 16), Haldane won at North Salem, 63-42. The Blue Devils were behind at the end of the first quarter but went on a 24-2 run. The next day, Haldane defeated Putnam Valley at home, 76-54. In that game, Cervone led the Blue Devils with 22, Dan Santos added 14 and Darrin Santos and Irwin each had 10.

"We're playing good basketball," Virgadamo said. "We are balanced, sharing the ball. They know it could end at any minute, and they're leaving it all on the court."

"We played four games in six days, and our defense and hustle has been amazing," he added. "What everyone has done to make this happen is just amazing."

After the Saturday game at Beacon, Haldane will host North Salem on Tuesday (Feb. 23).

Following its loss to Haldane, Beacon dropped a pair of games to Arlington, falling 54-32 on Monday (Feb. 15) away and 54-44 at home on Wednesday.

"Arlington is a big, physical team, and they outmanned us in the paint," Timpano said. "We struggled with rebounding and allowed way too many second-chance points."

Timpano said his team made adjustments before the rematch. "It was a close game at halftime, and stayed close until the final minutes," he said. "For a young



Beacon Coach Scott Timpano talks strategy with this team during a timeout on Feb. 12 at Haldane.

(Continued on Page 22)