Beacon: Then, Now and How
Twenty-five years ago, the city was falling apart. It has been revived. But at what price?

By Jeff Simms

In the past quarter-century, Beacon has transformed itself from a city of boarded-up windows and crime to a vanguard of culture and environmental sustainability. But many residents feel the resurgence has come at a steep price, criticizing the pace and scale of development and arguing that housing prices are robbing Beacon of its diversity and working-class character.

In January 2001, when then-Mayor Clara Lou Gould gave her annual state of the city address, the Poughkeepsie Journal noted that Beacon was (Continued on Page 8)

Can a Class Be Too Small?
Haldane discusses optimal number of students
By Joey Asher

Is reducing class size always the right thing to do? That’s been a topic of discussion for the Haldane school board this month, spurred by parents who lobbied for smaller classes for their rising first graders.

The district will have 38 first graders in 2023-24 and planned to divide them into two classes of 19, according to Superintendent Philip Benante. “Generally, 20 students (or (Continued on Page 7)

Elementary Class Sizes

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Source: Haldane and Garrison budgets, 2022-23; *Beacon, 2020-21, data.nysed.gov
FELIX SALMON

By Leonard Sparks


What was your goal with the book?

We all went through something incredibly traumatic (with the pandemic). I have no interest in reminding people about the trauma, but in telling people that the entire economy came to a screeching halt, we rebuilt something very new and very different, what I call the Phoenix Economy, rising from the ashes of the old one. I’m hoping to give people tools for understanding the strange new world we find ourselves in.

How do you characterize that strange new world?

Much more volatility, much more unpredictability. For 70 years after World War II, we had relative peace and prosperity and predictability. From here on out, it doesn’t work like that. You can’t just know one thing and that one thing is always going to be true. You have to be able to change your mind and learn new things.

One concept you discuss is the “great acceleration.” What is that?

Imagine a world where Microsoft, the most lumbering company you can think of, can take super-fast and nimble overnight-success companies like Zoom and Slack and leave them in the dust (with Microsoft Teams). The entire global banking system failed to collapse even though none of the banks’ employees were able to go into their offices. We managed to invent new ways of doing things in a way that no one thought we would be able to. If you look at Moderna pre-pandemic, it was a tiny biotech company that had never really achieved anything. You know how long it took to develop their [mRNA] vaccine? Forty-eight hours. The rest was just testing. The [economic] rebound has been extremely strong.

You write that these disruptions created people who are happier and more productive at work. How so?

If you didn’t like your job pre-pandemic, you would moan to your friends about how you hate your boss. If you didn’t like your job in 2021 and 2022, you would just quit. That helped to recalibrate the power relationships between labor and capital, helped make people a lot happier and helped accelerate a massive wave of entrepreneurship. We have much more alignment between what people are doing and what they want to do.

What makes you hopeful?

The thing that gives me hope — and this is an optimistic book — is that up until 2020, the overarching problem when it came to dealing with global climate change was that we had no precedent for the collective action needed to address it. In spring 2020, that’s exactly what we did. We all stopped moving, at great personal and economic costs, so we could bend the curve and buy ourselves time to find therapeutics and the vaccines. We know that it is possible for everyone to join forces.
Sheriff Makes Arrest in Haldane Incident
Cold Spring man charged with criminal nuisance
The Putnam County Sheriff’s Department said on May 19 that it had arrested a Cold Spring man following an investigation into what a deputy thought could be gunfire shots near the Haldane campus.

The popping sounds just after noon on May 15 startled elementary students and staff on the playground and prompted administrators to put the campus on lockdown for about 90 minutes. It turned out to be firecrackers.

In addition to the Sheriff’s Department, officers from the New York State Police, Cold Spring, Kent and Metro-North police departments responded.

After police arrived to investigate, a person said they had seen smoke at a nearby residence, the sheriff said in a news release. Police said they located what appeared to be freshly exploded fireworks in the yard at 34 Mountain Ave.

The sheriff said that because the occupants of the home were uncooperative, his office consulted with the district attorney and obtained a search warrant that was executed at about 7 p.m.

Following the search, Alexander Welsh, 28, was arrested and charged with felony criminal possession of cannabis in the second degree, misdemeanor criminal possession of a controlled substance in the seventh degree and misdemeanor criminal nuisance. He was issued an appearance ticket to answer the charges at the Town of Philipstown Court, the sheriff said.

IDA Approves Mirbeau PILOT
Board rejects tax breaks for Tompkins Terrace
The board of the Dutchess County Industrial Development Agency on Tuesday (May 23) approved Mirbeau Inn & Spa’s request for a 15-year payment-in-lieu-of-taxes, or PILOT, agreement at the Tioronda Estate in Beacon, where the company plans to open a luxury spa and hotel.

Mirbeau’s PILOT means it will pay 50 percent of the taxes on the property’s increase in value for the first five years of the agreement. The percentage it pays will increase starting in the sixth year and continue rising before the property becomes fully taxable beginning with Year 16. Mirbeau will also receive breaks on mortgage and sales taxes.

At the same time, the IDA board rejected a preliminary agreement that would have saved Related Companies $472,000 in sales taxes on the acquisition and interior and exterior costs totaling $44 million at Tompkins Terrace, the 193-unit affordable housing complex in Beacon.

Dutchess County’s Local Development Corp., which has the same board members as the IDA, tabled a separate resolution to issue $25 million in bonds for the Tompkins Terrace project, whose renovations will total $14.5 million.

Clock Ticking in Cold Spring
Code update faces June 30 deadline
The public hearing on the update of three chapters of the village code that began on April 26 continued at the Wednesday (May 24) meeting of the Cold Spring Village Board. The hearing will remain open until at least June 7, when the board is next scheduled to meet.

The village faces a June 30 deadline for completing the project from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, the agency that funded the update.

On Wednesday, Trustee Laura Bozzi, who is a member of the ad hoc committee that is revising the three chapters and the state Environmental Assessment Form based on feedback, said the group is still making revisions and that while some changes are simple, others are more complex.

As an example, Bozzi said that last week the Village Board voted to remove previously proposed form-based sections of the chapter on zoning and will instead rely on Historic District Review Board design standards.

In addition, all Village Board responses to questions raised by the public must be reviewed by the village attorney before being added to the village website, she said. As of May 25, more than 50 responses to questions from the public and recommendations from the ad hoc committee had been posted.

Electric Prices Expected to Fall
State cites efficiency efforts
The New York State Public Service Commission on May 18 said it expected the average price for electricity paid by residential customers over the summer to be lower than a year ago.

The statewide average supply costs for full-service residential customers from June to September is expected to be $214.81, down 3 percent, the commission said.

The commission cited energy efficiency and system improvements for a forecasted drop in peak energy use in 2025 of about 2,000 megawatts compared to 2016. By 2033, the commission expects peak demand to fall by 6,289 megawatts.

According to the state, a 2,000 megawatt decrease in peak demand is the equivalent of the electricity generated by several power plants to supply 1.75 million average-sized homes.

CYNTHIA McEVOY
We invite you to please join us in the celebration of Cynthia McEvoy’s life.

Saturday
June 10 at 11:00 a.m.
At Highlands Chapel
216 Main Street,
Cold Spring, NY

Per Cindy’s wish, we ask that all attendees wear light or bright colors.
LETTERS AND COMMENTS

Tell us what you think

The Current welcomes letters to the editor on its coverage and local issues. Submissions are selected by the editor (including from comments posted to our social media pages) to provide a variety of opinions and voices, and all are subject to editing for accuracy, clarity and length, and to remove personal attacks. Letters may be emailed to editor@highlandscurrent.org or mailed to 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. For our complete editorial policies, see highlandscurrent.org/editorial-standards.

Fjord Trail

Since the onset of COVID-19, the surge in visitation to Hudson Highlands State Park has put unprecedented stress on Cold Spring, with no end in sight. Mitigation shouldn’t fall solely on the shoulders of residents and local government; it’s a shared problem requiring collaborative solutions.

The public-private partnership to create the Fjord Trail — conceived by local leaders over a decade ago to address hazards around Breakneck Ridge and related impacts on Cold Spring and the Route 9D corridor — is part of the solution. Such partnerships saved Olana, home of Hudson River School painter Frederic Church, and transformed a derelect railroad bridge into Walkway Over the Hudson. And Scenic Hudson is collaborating with the state to change a 520-acre former industrial site in Kingston into Sojourner Truth State Park, where nature is reclaiming the long-damaged lands.

The Fjord Trail includes several organizations — principally New York’s Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) and Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail (HHFT). Other organizations play important complementary roles, e.g., the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference’s Breakneck trail stewards provide hikers with invaluable safety advice.

Clarity in public understanding of these key organizations’ roles is essential to transparency and trust. The work around Breakneck — Fjord Trail’s Phase 1 — offers an opportunity to advance understanding.

Last year, HHFT utilized a state grant to build fencing around Breakneck’s Metro-North station, where one hiker was killed and another severely injured. With help from donors, HHFT built the Nimham Trail to provide a safer route down Breakneck and reduce emergency calls. With private funding, HHFT is managing improvements to Breakneck’s lower trail to repair long-term damage from overuse and to provide a new shelter safely away from 9D for trail stewards to orient hikers.

In the meantime, design of the Breakneck Connector and the bridge over the railroad tracks continue to advance, with construction slated to start in 2024. Its new features — restrooms, organized parking and the “Connector” trail from train platform to trailhead — are necessary safety improvements to existing destinations in a New York State park preserve that is along a busy state highway and accessible from a railroad station. The bridge will also provide New York City’s Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) with access to its aqueduct facility (which handles 40 percent of the city’s drinking water supply) to perform a long-overdue upgrade and routine maintenance.

That’s why we requested funding during the 2022 legislative session for a state share of this $84-million undertaking. Scenic Hudson and HHFT staff initially proposed a $35 million contribution. With board members and other project allies, we appealed to the governor and legislative leaders, ultimately securing $20 million in the final budget.

As a result, the cost of building the bridge (for which OPRHP is responsible) is shared by the state ($20 million), DEP ($14 million) and HHFT ($16 million). HHFT will build and pay for the balance of Phase 1 ($34 million), including all Breakneck Connector improvements, with private funding.

HHFT has a long and will continue to grow, a permanent operation fund to support related maintenance services — restrooms, garbage, parking, landscaping.

This partnership not only helps solve issues of longstanding concern to Cold Spring and area residents and all those who enjoy hiking in the Hudson Highlands, but will also save taxpayers money due to the sizable private investment. We are grateful to our state leaders and private partners for bringing to bear essential resources to address these longstanding challenges.

Completion of a traffic study and development of a visitor management system — with input from a committee of local officials, residents and an independent consultant — will be important next steps.

Ned Sullivan, Poughkeepsie Sullivan is the president of Scenic Hudson.

The state Department of Transportation may see Route 9D as a “traffic corridor.” But to villagers, Route 9D is not a highway but two vibrant streets in the heart of the community that we use to reach the library, Tots Park, Haldane school and our neighborhoods’ homes. They are Chestnut Street and Morris Avenue. Using these designated street names rather than “9D” will help us remember this and underscore the potential impact of the Fjord Trail on traffic through Cold Spring.

Roberta Shayo, Cold Spring

While I spent my youth in Cold Spring, I’ve had the great opportunity to travel throughout the U.S. and the world. It is the sublime beauty of the Hudson Highlands, specifically as viewed from Dockside Park, that reminded me during all my travels that Cold Spring was forever my home, in my heart. Dockside Park — our little patch of grass and trees — stands humbly, yet majestically, with great places I’ve visited.

While the recent “improvements” at Dockside leave much to be desired, it is still a park worthy of protecting, ensuring that future generations, from near and far, can experience what generations before them — from the Lenape people, to the Hudson

(Continued on Page 5)
River School painters, to Pete Seeger — saw worthy of protecting.

The Dockside connector, as conceived, will ruin Dockside Park forever. Vegeta-
tion on the water’s edge will be cleared. The boardwalk, the bridge and other portions of the Fjord Trail will be wired for lighting, forever blighting the twilight.

Alternative routes connecting Cold Spring to Little Stony Point via Fair Street and Route 9D, created by improved roads, will bring more existing infrastructure, should be strongly considered.

Since I attended the 2015 Chalet meeting, I have been generally enthusiastic about a bike/pedestrian trail between Cold Spring and Beacon. I recommend all interested parties look at the historic documents, which are well collated on the resources page at the Protect the Highlands website (regardless of your level of support of the organization).

You will see a bike/pedestrian trail balloon into its current overweight and overbuilt state. HHFT is hijacking past support for a modest trail to imply support for a more expensive design. Ethan Timm, Nelsonville

At the recent public session on the Fjord Trail (“15 Questions,” May 12), I was encour-
aged to see the turnout. I share the concerns of community members who have reserva-
tions about more visitation. I don’t disagree that the trail is likely to bring more visitors as was the case with the Walkway Over the Hudson. There was a peak of inter-
est that has since fallen and leveled off. The fact remains that the people are already here; ignoring that is not a viable option.

The Fjord Trail offers solutions to many of the long-considered problems. The proposed visi-
tor center at Dutchess Manor, with plenty of parking, food options and restrooms, will be an alternative to Cold Spring. This is a short walk from the Breakneck train station. People looking to hike the trail at Breakneck will be directed to this location as a starting point.

The trail creates the opportunity to disperse traffic, in order to alleviate congestion along Route 9D, holds promise. However, the ridicu-

Richard Shea, Philipstou

The original idea of a Cold Spring-to-

Beacon trail, with safe parking and access in order to alleviate congestion along Route 9D, holds promise. However, the ridicu-

lous, theme-park-like attraction that Scenic Hudson is madly pursuing has alienated the good graces of our community.

Clearly, the Fjord Trail committee has given no real thought to the unintended consequences of a project of this scale. For instance, the currents and tides off Little Stony Point are incredibly powerful and variable. Unless we bring in the Army Corps of Engineers for construction, any riverfront infrastructure will be smashed to pieces by the winter ice flows and high-tide log jams.

Further, the idea of a swimming struc-
ture at Little Stony Point is not only absurd, it is completely unnecessary. Also, a large portion of the scale proposed would permanently disrupt critical habitat for endangered species, including the bald eagle, in addition to the overcropping and loss of quality of life that it would impose upon the village.

My family and I live on the Philipsbrook in Garrison, and my son and I have been delighted to discover small populations of native brook trout (the state fish of New York) hanging on in the deeper pools. However, each year the deep pools are choked out more and more by the constant silt runoff from the dirt roads upstream. Some of the key players behind the Fjord Trail have also fought tooth and nail to keep the dirt roads such as Old Albany Post Road, despite the tons of silted runoff that cascades into our waterways with each big storm.

They are not considering the downstream consequences of their projects. I like the dirt roads and I like the idea of a trail along the Hudson, but it’s high time the Fjord Trail committee honestly and soberly assesses the consequences of their projects. I like the dirt roads and I like the idea of a trail along the Hudson, but it’s high time the Fjord Trail committee honestly and soberly assesses the consequences of their projects.

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1. The Highlands Current seeks to keep discussions civil and respectful. If you have questions, this is the place to ask.

2. Please consider the following when posting comments:
   a. Be respectful and courteous.
   b. Use your full name.
   c. Keep contributions relevant to the story.
   d. Avoid personal attacks or insults.
   e. Limit comments to 200 words or less.

3. Comments are moderated and may not appear until approved. Please avoid posting sensitive information such as phone numbers, addresses, or personal details.

4. The Highlands Current reserves the right to edit or remove comments that do not meet these guidelines.

By submitting comments, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy of StoryCorps.org.

(Continued on Page 6)
The Happiest Place in Town!

May 26, 2023

Rory Stark, Garrison

These banners are a wonderful reminder of the importance that places such as Beacon, Fishkill and Putnam and Dutchess counties played in the defense of this nation and the free world.

Virgil Capollari, via Instagram

Capollari is chair of the Dutchess County Veterans Affairs Committee.

Misinformation at school

One of my children had Laurie Malin as a teacher during the peak of COVID, when there was still a lot of uncertainty, confusion and alarm over the disease (“Confusion the Classroom,” May 12).

This science teacher was not encouraging or modeling rigorous research or sound scientific methods for the 11- and 12-year-olds she was teaching on a daily basis. She was offering personal opinions that were vastly out of step with the majority of mainstream and respected scientists and doctors, without offering her own evidence to support her claims.

In my opinion, based on my child’s experience with her, she did not carry out her professional role in an educational or responsible way.

Kristen Holt Browning, via Instagram

Power line

We’ve been told over and over that things were safe — I believe they will say anything to have their project developed (“Builder Says Power Line Safe for River,” May 12). Please give me some reasons why this is beneficial to us? Why does New York City get electricity from Canada?

Paul Yeaple, via Instagram

Transmission of renewable energy into the places that need it is a major issue. Interconnection backlogs are long for solar and wind projects. This line will help supply hydro and wind energy where needed. This is just one of multiple projects underway right now in our region. There are environmental impacts. If we want enough renewable energy to supply major cities, we need to get it there.

Tom Cerchiara, via Instagram

What about the effects of the electricity running through those lines on marine life?

Scott Cutten, via Facebook

Leaf blowers

The Beacon City Council should stop worrying about nonsense and regulating everything little thing we do (“Leaf Blowers Create a Stink,” May 19). When the mower blows grass on the sidewalk or street, I’ll leave the mess where it is: less work. If there aren’t any complaints, why is this even an issue?

J.W. Shepherd, via Facebook

Soon all of these restrictions and laws are going to drive people who value their freedoms out of Beacon and all those condos and houses selling for a fortune are going to be empty. We’ll be back to the Beacon we had 10 years ago.

Brandy Capolino, via Facebook

Keep government out of everyone’s personal life. If you’re going to go after leaf blowers, you should also go after the trains, cars, planes, dwellings of all types, phones, street lights, firetrucks, ambulances, sirens, buses, humans, power lines and so on.

Chris Ungaro, via Facebook

Continental Commons

Last month, the last undeveloped 10 acres of the Fishkill Supply Depot along Route 9 in Fishkill were clear-cut by the developer to make way for his vision of progress.

Dominic Broccoli was given approval for his plan to build a strip mall, Continental Commons, on the site by the Town of Fishkill, but that does not mean that he should build it. He was not given permission to uproot or disturb the land. This recent clear-cut exposed the rock walls from the original Fishkill Supply Depot. These last undisturbed acres have a story to tell the world. The soldiers who served and died at the Fishkill Supply Depot sacrificed for the creation of the United States of America. Nearly 250 years later, these ruins remain as a visible reminder of the strength of a nation. We the people cannot let this hallowed ground be paved over.

Over the past 15 years, supporters of the Friends of the Fishkill Supply Depot have been on a mission to educate people about the role that the Fishkill Supply Depot played in the cause of liberty. We continue to wait for the legal outcome of an Article 78 appeal (of the approval), but the Friends of the Fishkill Supply Depot have already won public support from across the nation.

Now we are going to focus our efforts on convincing the developer to conduct a full archeological survey out of respect for this country’s history and the memory of the soldiers who served and died at the Fishkill Supply Depot.

We are planning a demonstration at 10 a.m. on Memorial Day at the Van Wyck Homestead to pay our respects for the service of Continental soldiers at the Fishkill Supply Depot.

Keith Reilly, Cold Spring

Reilly is co-president of Friends of the Fishkill Supply Depot.
Class Size (from Page 1)

less) is considered a low class size," he said. However, at Haldane that would be a significant increase for the first graders. This year there were three kindergarten classes, each with no more than 13 students.

The parents argued that this particular group needed smaller classes because of what the children missed in preschool due to the pandemic shutdown.

"These are kids who need as much opportunity as possible for early intervention," said Liesel Vink, a parent who lobbied the board. "How can a quality teacher give their best to an elementary classroom of over 20 students who are still navigating their social and emotional needs?"

Benante relented last week, saying that he planned to add a teacher to the elementary staff. He said the plan was to keep the three first-grade teachers and shuffle other teachers to cover growth in the fifth grade, which is expected to rise from 40 to 60 students. Without a third teacher at that level, he said, the fifth grade would have 30 students per class.

He said that Haldane anticipates, based on past experience, that four new first-grade students will enroll over the summer, which would give the district 42 students in that class and require three teachers to keep class sizes at 20 or less. (If that occurs, each class will have 14 students.)

Benante agreed that the youngest children were uniquely impacted by the pandemic. "Those are the students that were potentially at greatest risk of not meeting certain developmental milestones, especially as it relates to speech and language," he said.

But the decision to add a third class came only after two board meetings where trustees and Benante discussed the pros and cons of reducing class sizes and how to pay for an additional teacher.

Do smaller classes matter?

Benante said there are studies that suggest smaller class sizes contribute to student achievement, "but typically that is geared toward lower-income communities," which Haldane is not.

"What matters most is the quality of the teacher," he added. "Just having low class sizes does not ensure that quality instruction is occurring."

Peggy Clements, one of the five members of the Haldane school board, wondered if classes could get too small. Developing social and emotional skills might be more likely in a class of 20 than a smaller one, she said, as long as it was "well managed by a skilled teacher."

Maggie Valentine, another school board member, said she was concerned about class sizes that were consistently lower than the de facto standard of 20. "Are we setting a precedent of class sizes of 14 and 15?" she asked.

Benante said splitting the first grade next year into three classes would not set a precedent. He said the recent discussion had prompted the administration, after discussions with faculty, to establish guidelines for the elementary school of 18 to 20 for K/2 and 20 to 22 for grades 3-5.

Is there an optimal size?

Leonie Haimson, the founder of Class Size Matters, a New York City-based advocacy group, says there is no ideal class size, although smaller is usually better.

"Every teacher is more effective with a smaller class," she said. "Most elite private schools have class sizes of 15."

Haimson, among others, lobbied for a state law enacted last year that will lower class sizes in New York City to 20 students for K-3, 23 students for 4-8 and 25 students for high school. The new sizes must be in place by 2028. Current class sizes in New York City often exceed 30 students, Haimson said.

Across the U.S., elementary schools average 19 students per class, according to the most recent data, and New York state averages 17. The highest elementary class size in the U.S. is California, with 23, and the lowest is Maine, with 14.

Local schools align with these averages. In Beacon, elementary classes average 18 students, Superintendent Matt Landahl said during a recent budget presentation. In higher grades, most classes range from 15 to 20, although some reach 22, according to the most recent data provided by the district to the state Department of Education.

In Garrison, elementary classes this year ranged from 16 students in the first grade to 25 in the second grade, according to the district.

Finding the money

Benante said he expected to fund the $95,000 elementary teaching position with a new tax to be voted on this month. Without a third teacher at that level, he said, each class and require three teachers to cover growth in the fifth grade, which is expected to rise from 40 to 60 students. Without a third teacher at that level, he said, the fifth grade would have 30 students per class.

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Finding the money

Benante said he expected to fund the $95,000 elementary teaching position with small budget cuts and adjustments. He also said the district would rely on new revenue from an additional tuition-paying student.

In addition to the budget impact, hiring a teacher for one class can impact the district’s long-term planning. "I can’t make that teacher a psychologist if you feel like we need a psychologist five years from now," Benante said.

In addition, the new elementary teacher will need to be certified in special education or reading instruction. "There is a high likelihood that the new staff member is going to be reemployed to one of those two areas," Benante said.

In Memoriam

The men remembered here died during their wartime service, either in combat or from disease or accidents.

Beacon

World War I

John Bump
Thomas B. Carroll
Frank Cramade
H. Gordon Deike
George Delahay
George E. Deveson
Frank D. Faireclough
Frederick A. Garrison
Frederick Harris
Francis J. Murphy
Austin T. Robinson
Pasquale Salese
Jesse E. Slater
George Stafford
James J. Tomlins
Frank H. VanHouten Jr.
William Wilson

World War II

Arthur J. Baxter
John H. Beattie
Robert A. Bennett
Luigi F. Bettina
William J. Brennan
John W. Briggs
Frederick H. Brewer
Thomas B. Carrol
Calvin Clemas
John Collins
Nicholas T. Coppola
Raymond W. Detweiler
Andrew B. Eichorn
George J. Eichorn

Paul L. Facteau
Robert M. Faris
Ralph L. Fleming
David Fontaine
George P. Frederick
Saul Gerlisch
Alexander J. Grudzina
Michael J. Groza
Joseph Halbsky
Gordon E. Hughes
Henry J. Idena
Edwin J. Johnson
John Keto
Albert A. Knight
Orville Kranz
Ernest H. LaChance
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Arnold E. Lasko
Robinson C. Lent
Walter M. Lewis
Judah H. Lewittes
James J. Lockwood
Michael E. Maskiewicz
Joseph McGaughan
Peter Menger
Howard G. Mitchell
John F. Mignault
George S. Mitchell
William T. Morrison
Patrick J. O’Brien
Francis G. Peattie
Guy D. Pendleton
George Perrault
Kenneth G. Perry

Philipstown

World War I

Percy W. Arnold
Edward J. Burns
George A. Case
Charles N. Clainos
Walter H. Croft
Charles DeHam Jr.
John R. Fischer
Clarence Fahnstock
James Harvey Hustis
J. Paulding Murdock

Warren E. Adams
H. Ellis Bowden
Edward Budney
Gerald Dale
Warren Etiur
W. Russell Farrell
Ralph Fleming
Arthur Gilman
William J. Mignault

World War II

Paul L. Facteau
Robert M. Faris
Ralph L. Fleming
David Fontaine
George P. Frederick
Saul Gerlisch
Alexander J. Grudzina
Michael J. Groza
Joseph Halbsky
Gordon E. Hughes
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William T. Morrison
Patrick J. O’Brien
Francis G. Peattie
Guy D. Pendleton
George Perrault
Kenneth G. Perry

Vietnam

John J. Bennett
Thomas E. Devine
Everett Foster
Philip R. Mattarack
Terence E. O’Neil
William R. Phillips
James S. Pittman
Emilio Rivera
Joseph T. Slinsky

Korea

Anthony N. Scalzo

In memoriam

James Harvey Hustis
John R. Fischer
Walter H. Croft
Percy W. Arnold
Edward J. Burns
George A. Case
Charles N. Clainos
Walter H. Croft
Charles DeHam Jr.
John R. Fischer
Clarence Fahnstock
James Harvey Hustis
J. Paulding Murdock

May 26, 2023
Beacon: Then, Now and How
(from Page 1)
known in the 1990s for its “empty storefronts, dilapidated buildings, inconsistent code enforcement and poor infrastructure such as sidewalks and roads, especially on the east end.”
Gould spearheaded a revitalization, expressing surprise at the pace of building rehabs and business investment. The arrival of the Dia Center for the Arts provided an “extra spurt”; the Dia Foundation in 2003 opened a 292,000-square-foot gallery in a former Nabisco box factory on the shores of the Hudson.
Situated between the river and Mount Beacon, the highest peak of the Highlands, Beacon has since the early 2000s attracted a steady stream of new homeowners and visitors eager to shop its bustling, mile-long Main Street. Many retreated more recently from New York City during the pandemic shutdown, purchasing homes and moving into condo developments on Main Street and the riverfront.
Who has benefited most from this transformation? Who has been left behind? In this series, we’ll talk to people who live and work in the city and attempt to address these questions, as well as document changes over the past 25 years in housing and demographics, the arts, politics and activism.

Has Beacon Followed its Own Blueprint?
Before the pandemic, development was the issue in Beacon.
Who could forget the printout of a Facebook post and the hundreds of comments it generated attached to the temporary fencing around 344 Main St. when a support wall extended several feet into the sidewalk, out of alignment with the neighboring Beacon Natural Market? (Within weeks, the wall was removed and realigned.)
The subsequent formation of the People’s Committee on Development, led in part by Dan Aymar-Blair, now a City Council member. Two building moratoriums passed by the council, both driven by concerns about water.
More than a dozen public hearings for the Edgewater apartment complex proposal, the largest ever in Beacon, residents packed so closely that some began to shout from the lobby of City Hall. At several hearings, dueling attorneys argued over formulas for estimating the project’s impacts on the school district.
(Continued on Page 9)
Was Enough Done to Keep It Affordable?

While Beacon’s comprehensive plan shows — in zoning districts colored brown, red and orange — that residential development has followed guidelines approved by the City Council, it’s harder to say whether the city has made the right moves regarding affordability.

In 2017, the council upped its “inclusionary zoning” policy by requiring that new developments of 10 units or more set aside 9 percent as part of the city’s workforce affordable program. By last year, of the more than 2,200 apartments in Beacon, 851 were “affordable” (see box on Page 10) — most of them either subsidized through federal programs (commonly called Section 8), a state-funded program or part of the workforce program. The latter gives priority to applicants who are volunteer emergency responders, followed by municipal and school district employees.

The number accounts for more than 19 percent of the affordable housing stock in Dutchess County, although the city makes up only 5 percent of the county’s population. (At 60 percent combined, only the City and Town of Poughkeepsie have a greater share of the county’s affordable housing.)

At the same time, a Dutchess housing assessment released last year described “a series of long-simmering trends” that have created a significant shortage for the most vulnerable residents. Countywide, there are 2,155 more households that rent and earn less than $50,000 per year than there are affordable units available to them.

The Beacon council last year amended its zoning code to simplify the process for creating “accessory dwelling unit” (ADU) apartments, a strategy promoted by the federal government. Over the last two months, the council has discussed additional measures but has failed to reach consensus on how to move forward.

John Clarke, a city planning consultant, suggested revising a little-used overlay district that would remove zoning restrictions for developers who build housing for seniors. He also recommended that the city facilitate developments on public land that have higher percentages of affordable apartments — similar to when the council in 2016 sold land next to City Hall to a developer to create the West End Lofts apartment complex.

Clarke suggested a partnership with Dutchess County on an infill project at the DMV building at 223 Main St., a proposal that’s recommended in Beacon’s comprehensive plan. The Beacon Farmers Market, which uses the parking lot on Sundays, could be integrated into the design, along with a three-story, mixed-use building and a transit-linked public park on Main Street, with an expanded rear parking lot, he said.

The Metro-North northern parking lot was also identified in the 2017 comp plan as an excellent spot for housing, Clarke (Continued on Page 10)
Affordable (from Page 9)

noted. The site is within easy walking distance of the station and a structure would have low “view impacts.”

There’s also the 39-acre former Beacon Correctional Facility site (“Camp Beacon”), which is owned by New York State, and is more isolated than the DMV or Metro-North lots. In 2019, state officials selected a New York City company to create a “bike farm” with a hotel and track-and-field venue at the site, but there’s been no movement there since.

In a council workshop last month, Clarke said he does not recommend a further increase in the “set aside” of affordable units required of developers. With no offsetting benefits such as tax abatements or assessment reductions, “you’re essentially asking a private developer to subsidize affordable housing on their own dime, without any advantages for them, other than they can get their project approved,” he said.

Upriver, Kingston residents and officials are engaged in a citywide rezoning effort that is set to increase the availability of affordable housing. Mayor Steve Noble said the city is holding a “Say Yes to ADUs!” design competition and is using $1 million of its federal American Rescue Plan Act funding to incentivize the construction of affordable housing.

It is also creating a “tiny homes community” to provide emergency housing and services to people who risk becoming homeless. Any rent would be in line with affordability guidelines established by Ulster County.

Kingston may extend its 10 percent set-aside to apply to new developments of seven units or more while requiring 15 percent or 20 percent for larger developments, Noble said. It also may offer bonuses, such as allowing construction of taller buildings, in exchange for affordable housing.

The hope with the rezoning project, which also includes environmental, mental health and downtown business initiatives, is that “you end up building a city that is reflective of the core values of your community,” he said.

In Beacon, Paloma Wake, an at-large member of the City Council, said she would like to see Beacon work on “integrated” affordability. “There’s value in having integrated housing, and I want to make sure whatever solutions we push forward have that vision,” she said. “If we just build a building with 100 units, that isn’t a win. That’s segregated.”

Although Beacon’s affordable numbers are relatively high, Wake and Wren Longno, who represents Ward 3 on the council, have argued that the city must address the shortage of housing for households earning $50,000 annually or less.

“We want to do better than the minimum,” Longno said. If a project is providing housing for lower-income residents, “many of us would be quite happy to see more density. If it’s not that, we’d rather just see the meadow stay the meadow.”

What is ‘Affordable’?

When elected officials, planners and developers talk about “affordable” housing, it is usually a reference to how much household income a renter or homeowner must commit. The assumption is that housing costs, including property taxes, should not consume more than 30 percent of household income.

“Affordable” is sometimes based on the median household income of an area. For example, the fair-market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in 2022 was $1,412 in Dutchess County and $2,340 in Putnam, according to figures compiled by the National Low Income Housing Coalition. The affordable rent for a household earning 50 percent of the area median income in Dutchess ($115,700) would be $1,446 per month, according to the coalition. In Putnam, where the AMI is $94,500, the affordable rent for a household earning 50 percent of the AMI would be $1,181 per month.

Is There Room for Lower Incomes?

Last year Gorton says she feels invisible. Born and raised in Beacon, the 28-year-old Tompkins Terrace resident says that as the city has grown, the people she grew up with have been left behind — either priced out and forced to move elsewhere or left to live in unsafe conditions because it’s all they can afford.

Indeed, much has changed in the city. No longer are there boarded-up storefronts dotting the mile-long Main Street. Nearly 800 condominiums, townhouses and apartments have been built in the last decade, with more than 300 more under construction now.

The city’s population has changed over the past two decades, according to U.S. Census data. The overall population has fallen by 14 percent, to 13,769, including a 36 percent drop in Black residents. Beacon today is 62 percent white, 19 percent Hispanic and 13 percent Black; in 2000, it was 68 percent white, 20 percent Black and 17 percent Hispanic.

There also have been huge economic changes. The city’s median household income has increased by 24 percent since 2000, rising from $34,129 to $42,173 in 2022. Incomes?

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income has risen to $83,000 annually, with about 30 percent of households earning less than $50,000. Twenty years ago, in 2000, the median income, adjusted for inflation, was $80,000 but about 75 percent of households earned less than $50,000.

“Beacon used to be a very, very diverse place to live,” Gorton says. While growing up, she had “every type of friend” at Sargent Elementary School. “Everyone was family. Everyone looked out for everyone,” she says. “But I no longer feel that. Walking down Main Street, I feel like a stranger.”

Everyone was family. Everyone looked out for everyone. But I no longer feel that. Walking down Main Street, I feel like a stranger.

~ Lastar Gorton

Gorton lived in Tompkins Terrace, a low-income apartment complex on the city’s west side, until she was 5. Her family then moved to Forrestal Heights, another low-income development managed by the Beacon Housing Authority.

She and her two sons moved back to Tompkins in 2020 but, by then, Gorton says the development — which is slated for demolition — had changed.

“I call the police at least every other week,” she says. “I don’t let my younger son go outside without me.”

The City of Beacon in recent years has made efforts to increase its affordable housing stock. New developments of 10 units or more must set aside 10 percent of those units for Beacon’s “workforce” affordability program, which, for renters, is available for households making between 70 percent and 80 percent of Dutchess County’s area median income (AMI), or $80,990 to $92,560 for a household of four. It gives priority to applicants who are volunteer emergency responders, municipal employees or school district employees.

In 2016, the City Council sold a 3.14-acre parcel to a developer at less than market value on the condition that he build affordable units there. The complex, the West End Lofts, includes 72 affordable apartments, 50 of them live/work spaces for artists.

But Gorton, and many others who have spoken up in public meetings in recent years, feel that isn’t enough. The city’s workforce program and the West End Lofts both have conditions that Gorton, who works for a nonprofit agency, doesn’t meet.

The workforce program, she says, isn’t affordable for truly low-income people. Tompkins Terrace, meanwhile, restricts 38 of its 193 apartments to households earning 50 percent or less of the AMI, which, in Beacon, is equal to a four-person household earning up to $56,200. The remaining 155 apartments may be rented to households earning 60 percent or less of the AMI, or $67,440 for a household of four.

“It’s affordable to live here, but it’s not safe,” Gorton says. Referring to the West End Lofts, she says, “not everybody is an artist.”

She wants to see the city hold developers accountable to create more affordable housing for a wider range of residents — so much so that she’s considering a run later this year for City Council.

Gorton recalls diverse community gatherings such as the Fourth of July fireworks celebration at Memorial Park, or the free afternoon and summer programs at the Martin Luther King Cultural Center or the Beacon Community Center.

“People with morals, respect and dignity is who I want in this community,” she says. “I love that Beacon is thriving, but I wish the city would give back to the community. That’s the way it has always been in Beacon.”

Recent History

In her annual state of the city address, Mayor Clara Lou Gould said that, after a decade of stagnation, the city was returning to life. She cited renovations at the Dia Center for the Arts, waterfront development and the hiring of a third building inspector.

The City Council adopts a comprehensive land-use plan, Beacon’s first since 1973... The Metropolitan Transportation Authority announces plans to develop 18 acres at the Metro-North station, but a grassroots group, Beacon Deserves Better, forms to oppose the plan.

After scrapping plans for a hotel and conference center, Scenic Hudson opens Long Dock Park, a 19-acre site designed for passive recreation and climate resilience.

The Roundhouse opens in restored factory buildings adjacent to the waterfall at the east end of Main Street.

After requesting proposals, the city sells its parcels at 344 Main St. to a developer for $5,000. Three years later, the construction of a four-story, mixed-use building (at right) on the site sparks calls to rein in development.

The City Council updates the 2007 comprehensive plan and enacts a six-month building moratorium because of concerns about the water supply. (The council approved a second moratorium in 2019.)

After more than a dozen public hearings over 18 months, the 246-unit Edgewater, the largest residential development in the city’s history, is approved. The project was downsized by the developer after the City Council adopted a law reducing the number of units that can be built on sites with steep slopes.

The Beacon Theater opens, bringing first-run movies to Main Street for the first time since the 1980s.

The City Council opens a law requiring developers to provide a “public benefit” to build four-story buildings on Main Street.

Next Week: The arts helped fuel Beacon’s resurgence. What happens when high rents push artists and galleries elsewhere?
AROUND TOWN

FULL HOUSE — A group of women, including Jade Mason, at left, performed The Vagina Monologues, at the Howland Cultural Center in Beacon on May 19 as an encore to a sold-out March show. Directed by Marjorie Lewit, the performance also included Lisa Andretta, Erica Hauser, Annie Lanzillo, Shane Killoran, Najah Muhammed, Carole Penner, Pam Pritzker-Ridley, KerryAnne Wolfe and Gracelyn Woods.

WATCHED POTS — The Cold Spring/South Highland United Methodist Church hosted a Mother’s Day tea service on May 20.

DOG RUN — The Animal Rescue Foundation hosted its annual 5K run and walk in Beacon on May 21, attracting 166 humans and 64 dogs.

NATURE AT PLAY — Jackie Grant led sessions of Tinkergarten on May 19 and 20 at the Desmond-Fish Public Library in Garrison for children ages 2 to 6. The sensory program “combines early learning science with timeless wisdom about nature and childhood,” says Grant, who will lead sessions today (May 26) at 3:30 p.m. and Saturday at 10:30 a.m.

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Ceramics Like You’ve Never Seen

Manitoga exhibit features four innovative artists

By Alison Rooney

For the past decade, the stewards of Manitoga, the Garrison home, studio and landscape designed by the late industrial designer Russel Wright with his wife, Mary, have hosted an artistic residency in fields as varied as music, dance and sound. The artists spend time on the historic property to create works inspired by its aesthetic and atmosphere.

The 2023 program showcases the work of four ceramicists, all women of Asian heritage, in an installation called The Art + Design of Ceramics: Layered Voices. Two worked in the mid-20th century and two are contemporary.

The creations of Jade Snow Wong (1922-2006) and Katherine Choy (1927-1958) will be on display from Saturday (June 3) through Aug. 21 in the house, known as Dragon Rock, and studio. The two women combined their artistry with an entrepreneurial drive directed at getting their work seen and sold. “They succeeded in a time they were not encouraged to” writes James Zemaitis in his exhibit notes; he curated the installation with Allison Cross, Manitoga’s executive director.

The work of Jolie Ngo and Stephanie Shih will be shown from Aug. 26 to Nov. 13. Cross notes that their pieces “resist traditional definition. They explore the interplay of handcraft, technology and machine production.” Ngo, who studied at Alfred University, uses 3D printers and incorporates digital imaging. Shih, like Russel Wright, did not formally study art. Her pieces, many of which are playful, relate to manufactured food and are being shown in the kitchen and dining room. The rooms were restored over the past two years, including the installation of a functioning 1960s fridge.

Manitoga had four times the number of visitors last summer than in the previous year, Cross said, many inspired to visit by landscape photos they saw on Instagram. The opening of the design gallery and a collaboration with Magazzino Italian Art in Philipstown also shifted the focus to objects. (Manitoga will collaborate in 2024, both inside and out, with the Noguchi Museum of Queens.)

Cross hopes to build on the increase in visitors last summer than in the previous year, Cross said, many inspired to visit by landscape photos they saw on Instagram. The opening of the design gallery and a collaboration with Magazzino Italian Art in Philipstown also shifted the focus to objects. (Manitoga will collaborate in 2024, both inside and out, with the Noguchi Museum of Queens.)

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Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center is located at 584 Route 9D in Garrison. Access to the house, studio and gallery is by reservation only, and tours range from $30 to $100 per person. Children must be at least 10 years old to visit. See visit-manitoga.org. The Woodlands Trails are open daily during daylight hours.

A Transformative Gift

Earlier this year, Manitoga trustee Gary Maurer and his wife, Laura Levy Maurer, donated $1 million to the site’s collections endowment fund. The gift also included more than 75 items designed by the Wrights in the 1930s, early in their careers. A required annual draw from the endowment will support a newly opened design gallery.

The gift “helps by allowing us to put the design collection forward: to care for it, to display it, into the future,” said Allison Cross, Manitoga’s executive director. “It’s a signal that the institution takes this collection seriously.”

The fiscal foundation has, Cross says, “opened up the gate a bit to be design-focused, and to take some risks, while also always being in concert with the story of a family who lived there at a particular time, and moving it forward.”
THE WEEK AHEAD
Edited by Pamela Doan (calendar@highlandscurrent.org)
For a complete listing of events, see highlandscurrent.org/calendar.

COMMUNITY

SAT 27
CCA Info Session
PHILIPSTOWN
1 p.m. Via Zoom
tinyurl.com/HWSPMay27
Representatives from Hudson Valley Community Power will explain Community Choice Aggregation, through which Philipstown residents will be opted in to a program to purchase electricity.

SAT 27
Community Plant Swap
COLD SPRING
2 – 3:30 p.m. Butterfield Library
10 Morris Ave. | 845-265-3040
butterfieldlibrary.org
Bring seeds or vegetable plants to trade.

WED 31
Raising of Pride Flag
BEACON
6:30 p.m. City Hall | 1 Municipal Plaza
The Progressive Pride flag will celebrate LGBTQ+ residents.

SAT 3
Food Crawl
BEACON
3 – 7 p.m. Various
bit.ly/eat-drink-beacon
Sample food and drinks from more than 20 restaurants and shops on Main Street. Cost: $45

KIDS & FAMILY

SUN 4
Reptile Expo
POUGHKEEPSIE
9 a.m. – 4 p.m. MIJ Center
14 Civic Center Plaza
midhudsonviccenter.org
There will be thousands of reptiles and amphibians on view.

SUN 4
Butterfly Release and Memorial Service
BEACON
2 p.m. Elks Lodge | 900 Woelcott Ave. 845-831-0170
The Libby Funeral Home organizes this annual event; call to honor a loved one.

SUN 4
Library Cocktail Party
GARRISON
5:30 p.m. Highlands Country Club
955 Route 9D | 845-424-3020
desmondfishlibrary.org
3:45 p.m. Desmond-Fish Library
472 Route 403 | 845-424-3020
desmondfishlibrary.org
6 p.m. Desmond-Fish Library
472 Route 403 | 845-424-3020
desmondfishlibrary.org
Michael Schulman will discuss his book, Oscar Wars: A History of Hollywood in Blood, Sweat and Tears, at this annual fundraiser for the Desmond-Fish Public Library. Cost: $175+

TUES 30
Animal Adventure
GARRISON
6 p.m. Desmond-Fish Library
472 Route 403 | 845-424-3020
desmondfishlibrary.org
Learn about animals by experiencing their abilities and lives. Registration required.

WED 31
Storytime: Ollie
GARRISON
3:45 p.m. Desmond-Fish Library
472 Route 403 | 845-424-3020
desmondfishlibrary.org
Author Nicole Vitale and illustrator Sarah Monck will share their book about a magical fish bowl. Registration required.

VISUAL ARTS

SAT 27
Open Studios
PEEKSKILL
 Noon – 5 p.m. Various
peekskillartsalliance.org
See work from more than 100 artists at 30 studios, galleries and exhibition spaces at this 24th annual event. Also SUN 4. See website for listings.

SAT 3
Charles Ruppmann
COLD SPRING
2 – 5 p.m. Butterfield Library
10 Morris Ave. | 845-265-3040
butterfieldlibrary.org
The New York Daily News photographer, who lives in Peekskill, will exhibit rarely seen work from the 1970s.

STAGE & SCREEN

WED 31
Henry V
GARRISON
7:30 p.m. Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival
2015 Route 9 | 845-265-9575
hvsfshakespeare.org
The HVSF season opens with the first of four previews of the epic tale of King Henry at war to seize the French crown. Emily Ota plays the lead. Opening night is SUN 4. Through July 1. Cost: $40 to $60

FRI 2
Lit Lit
BEACON
7 p.m. Howland Cultural Center
477 Main St. | 845-831-4988
howlandculturalcenter.org
Ruth Danon will share her poems, followed by an open mic. Email litlitseries@gmail.com to sign up.

SAT 3
Global Inspirations
POUGHKEEPSIE
2 & 6:30 p.m. Bardavon
3:45 p.m. Bardavon
35 Market St.
845-473-2072 | bardavon.org
Music of the world, including from Iceland, Benin, Peru, Japan, Norway and Niger. Cost: $12 ($11 seniors, children)

TALKS & TOURS

WED 31
Citizen Preparedness
COLD SPRING
5 p.m. Butterfield Library
10 Morris Ave. | 845-265-3040
butterfieldlibrary.org
This training will cover how...
Recollections of a Time Gone By
BEACON
3:30 & 4:30 p.m. Boat leaves Beacon
845-831-1134 | beaconlibrary.org
Neil Caplan and Barbara and Wes Gottlock will sign their new history book, Braving Creativity: Artists that Turn the Scary, Thrilling, Messy Path of Change into Courageous Transformation, will lead an interactive presentation about the artistic journey. Cost: $30

Artists Who Make Change Work
GARRISON
2 p.m. Garrison Art Center
23 Garrison's Landing | 845-424-3960
Naomi Vladeck, author of the forthcoming book, Braving Creativity: Artists that Turn the Scary, Thrilling, Messy Path of Change into Courageous Transformation, will lead an interactive presentation about the artistic journey. Cost: $30

The Costellos
BEACON
7 p.m. Elks Lodge
900 Wolcott Ave, | 845-765-0667
facebook.com/TheCostellosMaverickPop
The pop band will play with guests Chihoe Hahn and Scott Ramsey.

Black Magic
BEACON
8:30 p.m. Towne Crier | 379 Main St.
845-855-1300 | townecrier.com
The Santana tribute band will recreate a live concert experience. Cost: $20 ($25 door)

Bob Dylan Birthday Bash
BEACON
7 p.m. Towne Crier | 379 Main St.
845-855-1300 | townecrier.com
A tribute band, Old Bob, will play classics and newer songs from the singer and songwriter’s expansive repertoire. Cost: $20 ($25 door)

Out To Lunch
PUTNAM VALLEY
7:30 p.m.
Tompkins Corners Cultural Center
729 Peeksskill Hollow Road
tompkinscorners.org
Howie Bajese, Larry Cohen, Wayne Fugate, Susan Sassano, Michael Sassano and Joe Selly will perform bluegrass, jazz and Celtic music. Cost: $20

Joe Louis Walker
BEACON
8:30 p.m. Towne Crier | 379 Main St.
845-855-1300 | townecrier.com
The guitarist, singer and songwriter will play music from his latest release, Blues Comin’ On, with his band. Cost: $30 ($35 door)

Anthony McGill and Gloria Chien
BEACON
4 p.m. Howland Cultural Center
477 Main St. | howlandmusic.org
McGill (clarinet) and Chien (piano) will present a program that includes works by Telemann, Jessie Montgomery, Brahms, James Lee III and von Weber. Cost: $10 to $35

Charming Disaster
BEACON
7 p.m. Dogwood
47 E. Main St. | dogwoodbeacon.com
The Goth-folk duo will play music from their new release, Super Natural History.

Town Board
PHILIPSTOWN
7:30 p.m. Town Hall | 238 Main St.
845-265-5200 | philipstown.com
In this virtual meeting, the board will close out the fiscal year.

Watercolor Workshop
BEACON
5 p.m. Howland Public Library
313 Main St. | 845-831-1134
beaconlibrary.org
Judith Campanaro will instruct artists of all experience levels in this four-class series. Registration required.

Gone By
Recollections of a Time Gone By
MILLBROOK
7 p.m. Via Zoom | caryinstitute.org
Ben Strauss of Climate Central will discuss what ancient texts and Indigenous people’s stories reveal about extreme weather events, what to expect and what to do about it. Hosted by the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies.

The Prezence
BEACON
8:30 p.m. Towne Crier | 379 Main St.
845-855-1300 | townecrier.com
The Led Zeppelin tribute band will play the hits. Cost: $30 ($35 door)

Out To Lunch
PUTNAM VALLEY
7:30 p.m.
Tompkins Corners Cultural Center
729 Peeksskill Hollow Road
tompkinscorners.org
Howie Bajese, Larry Cohen, Wayne Fugate, Susan Sassano, Michael Sassano and Joe Selly will perform bluegrass, jazz and Celtic music. Cost: $20

Village Board
NELSONVILLE
Noon, Via Zoom
845-265-2500 | nelsonvilleny.gov
In this virtual meeting, the board will close out the fiscal year.

Town Board
PHILIPSTOWN
7:30 p.m. Town Hall | 238 Main St.
845-265-5200 | philipstown.com
In this virtual meeting, the board will close out the fiscal year.

ORGANIC HEIRLOOM VEGETABLE SEEDLING SALE
We will be at the Cold Spring Farmer’s Market this Saturday, May 27th.

Tomatoes: Black Krim, Brandywine, Cherokee Purple, Glacier, Green Zebra, Paul Robeson, Striped German and more.

Cherry Tomatoes: Black Cherry, Peacevine, Sungold (Hybrid) and more.

Paste Tomatoes: Amish Paste, Blue Beech, San Marzano and more.

Also: Sweet Peppers, Hot Peppers, Kale, Greens, Cucumbers, Swiss Chard, Basil, Summer and Winter Squash and more.

fourwindsfarmny.com
Boscobel Has More Stories to Tell

Historic site revamping tours, exhibits
By Alison Rooney

Boscobel House and Gardens, the historic site on Route 9D in Garrison with jaw-dropping views, is “seeking more flexibility in the stories we’re telling,” says its executive director, Jennifer Carquist.

In the six decades since it opened, the 68-acre property, presided over by a Neoclassical mansion that was relocated to Garrison from the Dyckman estate in New York City, has told both sides. This is fitting, as the Hudson River region as a whole was a very mixed-allegiance region.

“Anticipating the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in 2026, Carquist says the site is seeking a more comprehensive understanding of the people who lived in the home.

“It’s time to raise the flag but also to ask questions and listen to other perspectives,” she says. “With the history here at what was a Loyalist property (Elizabeth and States Dyckman supported the Crown during the American Revolution), we get to tell both sides. This is fitting, as the Hudson Valley as a whole was a very mixed-allegiance region.”

There are many other matters and mores to consider. “There’s this history of slavery in the Hudson Valley; we’re learning more about Boscobel’s connection to it,” she says. “There are layers of women’s history. Consider that when Boscobel opened, no one in the household could vote. The men were away, the boys weren’t old enough and the slaves and women didn’t have the right to.

“Boscobel survived because of choices made. As woodlands became farmland, there were landscape decisions made in what was then an entirely chosen environment. We’re trying to be a little more transparent in the choices we make and how we make them.”

The site has changed the way it trains guides, and how they lead tours. “There’s no more ’We talk to you for 45 minutes, then we’re done,’” Carquist says. “Guests are participants. We don’t give our guides a script, we give them a bibliography. They go through many months of training. Much of it is about presenting more than just one perspective. They learn to share facts in a transparent way and to be open to challenges.

“There’s no ‘one tour’ here,” she adds. “In many ways, Boscobel can be a window or a mirror; we’re looking for diversity within our guides, and also making a point to ask questions of our guests, particularly as to what they want from their visit.”

Other upgrades include a wheelchair lift on the exterior of the home and a series of panels in the Carriage House Visitor Center that replaced a timeline of the property.

“Called Presents from the Past, the rotating narratives were designed by Philipstown resident Randi Schlesinger and focus on storytelling through objects. Boscobel’s current exhibit includes a royal oaks snuff box that symbolizes the Dyckman’s loyalty to the Crown and a silver tankard that symbolizes the family’s break with their family in England that led them to emigrate: A Dyckman great-grandfather wanted to continue prospering from the slave trade, while the family who stayed in the U.K. became prominent abolitionists.

Butter stamps convey the complicated relationship the Dyckmans had with their cook, Sil, a former slave. Their transatlantic letters reflect affection for her. States Dyckman requested that “Sil’s butter” be sent to him in England so he could give it out as gifts to people he was trying to influence.

Along with the creation of a native meadow on site, Boscobel has introduced a weekly “Hands on History” table at the Cold Spring Farmers’ Market each Saturday morning at which educators share objects and pertinent news. “It’s about meeting people where they are,” Carquist says.

Barbara Chitkara is a Hudson Valley regular. Spotted recently on a pathway to the herb garden/orangery, laden with easel, she was focused on the design of the entryway and concerned about the overly soft condition of her pastels in the summerlike heat of a perfect May day.

A Peekskill resident and member of a plein air painting group, Chitkara pronounced the artist-free days “an incredible opportunity. To have these gardens opened up is just unreal.”

A royal oaks snuff box on display in the Carriage House at Boscobel

Boscobel is located at 1601 Route 9D in Garrison. The grounds and gardens are open to the public from 9 a.m. to sunset from Friday to Sunday. Guided house tours are available Monday, Friday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Admission starts at $12 for adults and $7 for children, or free for members. See boscobel.org.

HELP WANTED

HELP WANTED

FARM STORE ASSISTANT — Glywood seeks a farm store assistant to staff the Glywood Farm Store on weekends from June 3 to Aug. 27. Responsibilities includes setting up and restocking inventory, assisting customers, making sales of Glywood meat, produce and third-party products, and helping facilitate CSA pickup and customers in the pick-your-own field. For a full job description visit glywood.org/about/job-opportunities.html. To apply, send your resume and cover letter to jobs@glywood.org.

LIFEGUARD, POOL MANAGER — River Pool at Beacon seeking lifeguards and pool manager for upcoming season. Good pay, easy work. Riverpool is a small floating pool in the Hudson River in Beacon. Email ronas9@aol.com.

Current Classifieds

SERVICES

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CONCIERGE SERVICES — Also personal and admin assistance. Mature Columbia University alum available for hire. Attention seniors and busy, mobile professionals: Let me help you with your light-duty household chores, scheduling medical appointments, shopping, some cooking and driving, scheduling contractors, house sitting, some pet care. Excellent references. Hourly rates. Open to discussing an exclusive live-on-premises arrangement if the match and chemistry is right. Call Thomas at 914-621-2703. I look forward to speaking with you.

EDITORIAL SERVICES — Professional research and writing services available, including transcription, proofreading, research and writing. I specialize in editing, copy writing, grammar, content creation and refinement. Reasonable hourly rates, local pickup and delivery. Call or email anytime to discuss your project. Phone 914-621-1560 or email pattym10579@gmail.com.


FOR RENT

COLD SPRING OFFICE — 3182 Route 9 Plaza, 400 to 1,200 square feet, second floor, with private bath, kitchenette and parking. Call Ron at 914-490-9606.


An herb garden at Boscobel

Photo by Julie McCue
Caramelized Rhubarb Cheesecake with Gingersnap Crust

Note: Make this at least half a day before serving, to allow the cheesecake to chill. The recipe is based on the wonderful “Three Cities of Spain Classic Cheesecake” in The Gourmet Cookbook.

Equipment
One 9- or 9½ -inch springform pan

For the crust
1 ½ cups (about 6 ounces) finely ground gingersnaps
5 tablespoons butter, melted
¼ cup sugar
Pinch salt
Butter the bottom and sides of the pan. In a medium bowl, stir together all the ingredients. Press onto the bottom and at least one inch up the sides of the pan. Set aside until ready to fill.

For the cheesecake
3 8-ounce packages cream cheese, at room temperature
4 large eggs
1 cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar, divided
½ teaspoon ground ginger
2 teaspoons vanilla, divided
16 ounces sour cream
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, beat the cream cheese with an electric mixer until soft and fluffy. With the mixer running at low speed, add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition, and scraping down the sides and bottom of the bowl frequently. Add 1 cup of sugar, 1 teaspoon vanilla and the ginger and mix well. Set the crust in the springform pan on a baking sheet to catch drips (some of the butter will likely melt and ooze out). Pour the cream cheese mixture into the crust. Bake until the cake is set at the edges but the very center is still a little wobbly, about 45 minutes. Remove from the oven, leaving the oven on.
Mix the sour cream with the remaining tablespoon of sugar and teaspoon of vanilla. Scrape the sour cream mixture onto the cake, and spread gently and evenly over the surface. Return to the oven and bake 15 minutes more. Run a thin knife around the edges of the cake to loosen, then cool the cheesecake in the pan. Transfer to the refrigerator and chill for 6 hours or overnight.

For the topping
8 ounces fresh or frozen strawberries, plus more for serving
1 cup sugar
¼ cup water
2 pounds rhubarb stalks, cut into ¼ to 1-inch pieces
1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger
Juice and zest of 1 lime
Whirr the strawberries in a blender to create a smooth puree. In a medium saucepan, heat the sugar and water over medium until the sugar dissolves. Raise the heat and cook without stirring until the sugar turns a deep gold; you can swirl the pan from time to time to ensure even caramelization.
Remove from heat and add the cut rhubarb (carefully, as the sugar may spatter). Don’t stir, or the sugar will stick to the spoon! Cover the pan tightly and simmer over low heat until the rhubarb is just beginning to soften, about 7 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove the rhubarb and transfer to a strainer set over a bowl. Continue cooking the caramel and rhubarb juices, uncovered, over medium-low, adding to the pan any juices that collect in the bowl, until the mixture is thick and syrupy, about 5 minutes. Add the strawberry puree and rhubarb pieces and transfer to the refrigerator to chill.

Just before serving, top the cheesecake with the caramelized rhubarb puree.
Q&A: Mike Pennacchio
By Jason Derasmo
Mike Pennacchio recently marked his 40th year as a custodian for the Beacon City School District. The 1982 Beacon High School graduate has spent most of his career at Rombout Middle School.

Q: Back when you went to school here, in what ways was Beacon different?
A: There were a lot more buildings back then and different stores. There was a clothing store, a shoe store, a jewelry store. We don’t have those anymore.

Q: How have the students changed?
A: There are more now; there is also a larger population in Beacon and more buildings, as well.

Q: How did the pandemic affect your job?
A: We still had to maintain the building. We had a rotating schedule and only had to come in on certain days but it didn’t affect us that much.

Q: If you could travel to anywhere in the world, where would you go?
A: Florida.

Q: Why Florida?
A: It’s warmer there.

Q: That’s true. What is the best part of your job?
A: It’s great working with kids. I always try to do more work, like helping them on the bus. I just like to help people.

Jason Derasmo is a senior at Beacon High School and a member of The Current’s Student Journalists Program. The photo is by Una Hoppe, who is also a member of The Current’s Student Journalists Program.

Students Embrace Test-Optional
Fewer taking SAT, ACT exams since pandemic
By Lily Zuckerman
Last year, as the deadline to submit college applications quickly approached, Maia Keller felt relieved that her top choice was test-optional. Though the majority of colleges had transitioned to not requiring applicants to submit ACT or SAT test scores, the Cold Spring resident began studying for the ACT in the summer before her junior year at The Masters School in Dobbs Ferry.

After completing many practice tests and putting in hours of work, she decided to stop studying for the ACT in June of her junior year.

“I realized that the scores I was getting did not measure my academic success,” said Keller, who did not submit test scores to George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where she just finished her freshman year.

“I knew that the amount of work and time I was putting into studying could be used toward something else in my application, like my grades,” she said.

Even before the pandemic, test-optional and test-blind college admissions (meaning scores will not be used in an admissions decision) had started to expand widely. For example, George Washington University has been test-optional since 2015, according to the school.

But the number of colleges dropping their mandate for ACT and SAT scores accelerated during the pandemic, when, beginning in March 2020, COVID-19 disrupted the ability of students to safely prepare for and take the tests.

About 1,870 colleges were test-optional or test-free for the 2023 application year, according to the National Center for Fair and Open Testing, or FairTest. The College Board, which administers the SAT, reported that 1.7 million high school students took the test in 2022, an increase of 200,000 over the year before but still 500,000 fewer than 2019, before the pandemic.

In New York state, 122,170 high school students took the SAT in 2022, compared to 162,179 in 2019, according to the College Board. The same trend holds for the ACT, which was administered to 1.35 million students in 2022 compared to nearly 1.8 million in 2019.

The spike in colleges that no longer mandate test scores means the demand for test tutors is also less than before the pandemic, said David Ticker, a math teacher at Lakeland High School who has been tutoring students for the SAT and ACT for 14 years. The pandemic also harmed the finances of many families, he said.

“I’d say that there’s a split between people at this point — the ones who think studying for the test is important and they want to and know they have to submit their scores,” said Ticker. “Then there are people who are like, ‘I’ll focus on the test-optional piece of it.’ ”

Lorelei McCarthy, a Garrison resident who is a senior at The Masters School, is not an advocate for standardized tests. She believes the tests do not accurately measure what students know, but their ability to “memorize facts for a short period of time.”

McCarthy took the ACT, and after receiving a score that was in the range for the schools to which she was going to apply, decided not to take it again. She submitted that score with each application.

For the SAT, she took a practice exam in February of her sophomore year, focused on her Advanced Placement (AP) classes during her junior year and did not study much for the SAT that she took in April of her junior year.

“I decided that I was proud of the score,” she said. “Maybe I could have studied and gotten it up a point or two, but at the end of the day, I decided I would rather focus my time on my Common App essays.”

Lily Zuckerman, who lives in Garrison and is a junior at The Masters School in Dobbs Ferry, is a member of The Current’s Student Journalists Program.

Braving Route 301
Speeding cars imperil pedestrians
By Eamon Wall
On hot, unforgiving sunny days, I often walk to Homestyle Creamery in Nivisonville to listen to a podcast and buy my favorite ice cream, soft-serve swirl.

Getting there, however, isn’t fun. I am faced with a deadly obstacle: Route 301.

To walk to Homestyle, I follow the south sidewalk on 301, from my house on Pearl Street. The sidewalk mysteriously ends at Peekskill Road, forcing me to the north side of the street as I make my way north-east to Homestyle.

Once I get close to Homestyle, I must deal with a big problem: crossing 301 (aka Main Street), a high-volume road with speeding cars descending a hill as they head toward Cold Spring.

Not only on Fishkill Road, I make this even more difficult because, when they merge onto 301, they are mostly focused on the oncoming traffic rather than pedestrians. Because of this, I usually have to wait a minute or two for a break in the traffic and then run across the street. I have had one or two close calls when crossing the street, and I’m not the only one.

Many other people are faced with this challenge, especially people who live on 301. Scout Thakur deBeer, a seventh grader at Haldane Middle School who lives across from Billy’s Way, crosses 301 every afternoon because her 9-year-old brother gets dropped off on the other side of the street by the bus.

She finds it “terrifying that someone’s just going to round the corner at 60 miles per hour and mow us both over.” She is not alone in this fear. Many school-age students live near Homestyle, some neighbors of deBeer and others on Billy’s Way.

Unfortunately, in March, New York State turned down Nivisonville’s request to reduce the 40 mph speed limit on state Route 301 at the eastern edge of the village to make it safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. The state said that its research showed that no crashes occurred in that stretch in a six-year period.

The state Department of Transportation should add a crosswalk connecting Homestyle to the school, but a crosswalk is not enough. There should be better enforcement of the speed limit, which drops from 40 to 30 mph, and better signage for pedestrians and drivers.

With temperatures warming and ice cream season approaching, it is time to think about pedestrian safety. Cold Spring and Nivisonville were built to be walkable communities. We must fight for that.

Eamon Wall, a seventh grader at Haldane, is a member of The Current’s Student Journalists Program.
By Pamela Doan

It’s been an eventful growing season already and summer is still a month away. I’m hearing a lot of questions from gardeners about how to manage different weather conditions. “Is it dead?” has come up repeatedly, too. The impacts of last year’s drought are still being felt as landscape plants and trees are not growing or leafing out.

When I talked with growers with decades of experience last fall about what to expect for native plants’ survival during the drought, there was hope but also a collective sense of being in uncharted territory. The combination of record-breaking heat and lack of rain was more extreme than in past droughts. Our warming planet is creating stressors that we haven’t seen before and the answer to questions about plant health has become, “That depends…”

It depends on the microclimate and whether the plant has other stressors from being planted in the wrong type of soil or sun. It can also depend on when the plant was put in the ground.

Newer plantings with less root structure might suffer more than mature plants. It depends on the plant and its tolerance for extreme conditions like high heat; or extended drought; or heavy rainfall; or a mild winter; or a few days of unusually cold temperatures; or a late, late frost; or cooler than usual evenings that will affect soil temperature for vegetables that we usually plant in mid-May. It’s a confusing time to be a gardener.

It depends on how well the plant can handle an April heat wave like the one we had last month, and where it was in its growth cycle at that time. If it’s trying to bloom, that takes a lot of energy. If the plant is still mostly dormant, it won’t mind as much. When gardeners asked if they should be watering plants in April — not typically a time when established perennials would need it — I could only say, “Maybe.”

My advice was to observe the plant. Is it wilting? Has growth stopped? Are leaves discolored or faded? Should it be blooming? Grass takes up water quickly and more efficiently than a tree and will compete with the tree. Create a circle of bare soil, then cover it with coarse mulch, meaning wood chips that are not a uniform shape. Fine mulches can actually prevent water from soaking in, so avoid those.

Make sure mulch doesn’t touch the trunk. This can lead to rot, cultivate pathogens and make a cover for voles and other animals to damage the tree unobserved. Grass takes up water quickly and more efficiently than a tree and will compete with the tree. Create a circle of bare soil, then cover it with coarse mulch, meaning wood chips that are not a uniform shape. Fine mulches can actually prevent water from soaking in, so avoid those.

Landscape trees and plants need an inch of water per week during the growing season. If running a sprinkler or irrigation system, put a tuna can in the ground near plants that are being watered and stop when that can is full. Substitute at your convenience with any 1-inch-deep container.

I read a good tip for measuring water in a Washington state guide. It advises 10 gallons of water per inch of tree caliper. For example, a 2-inch trunk needs 20 gallons during a watering session when there isn’t precipitation. Newly planted trees may need supplemental water for up to 2 seasons to recover from being transplanted and to establish a deep root system.

Generally, smaller, less-mature trees and woody plants will need supplemental water during a drought more frequently than an established tree. Check the soil to determine dryness, but a guideline could be to water smaller woody plants every two weeks, medium-sized every three weeks and large trees once a month, according to the Washington state guide. That makes sense, since larger trees will have the deepest roots and can access ground water sources that smaller shrubs cannot.

Hang in there, gardeners. We can do this.

The colors of fall foliage were affected by drought and heat last fall. Photo by P. Doan

**Gardening in Weird Weather**

By Pamela Doan

The colors of fall foliage were affected by drought and heat last fall. Photo by P. Doan
Philipstown Food Pantry
 Needs your help to fill our cabinets

We currently are providing nutritious food for approximately 66 households in Philipstown.

We need community support in Our Mission to Fight Hunger.

For the month of June we will be outside FoodTown from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm or drop off at the First Presybyterian Church, 10 Academy St. from 8:00 am – 1:00 pm.

**ITEMS NEEDED:**

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<th>Grains</th>
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<th>Calcium Rich Foods</th>
<th>Everyday Toiletries</th>
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<td>Pancake Mix</td>
<td>Pasta Sauce - small or large bottles or cans</td>
<td>Canned Salmon</td>
<td>Body Wash/Bar Soap</td>
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<td>Canned Fruit in juice or water</td>
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| Specialty Items: Gluten Free, Sugar Free, Organic & Vegan is also needed |                                              |                      |                                  |

*Please note that we are UNABLE accept: expired products, severely dented cans, rusty cans, opened or partially used items, food without labels and Home-prepared foods*

Thank you for your continued support of Our Mission

For additional ways to donate please contact ptfp2481f@gmail.com.
Asylum-Seekers (from Page 1)
on Sunday (May 21), including 40 who were temporarily housed in Sullivan County, and 20 more who arrived on Monday. But it does ban any more migrants from being sent to Dutchess County and requires that New York City continue paying the expenses of those already housed at the Red Roof Inn.

Her ruling also allows officials to inspect the Red Roof Inn, as well as a Holiday Inn on Route 9 that has the same owner but is not housing migrants.

The order is effective through June 20 while Rosa considers Dutchess' request for a permanent injunction. At a news conference on Tuesday outside the Fishkill Town Hall, William F.X. O'Neil, the Republican county executive, castigated the city, New York State and the federal government; he earlier issued a statement calling the Democratic administration of President Joe Biden “incompetent and ineffective.”

“The worst will be if these asylum-seeking migrants end up staying in Dutchess County, and the government that is now financing them pulls financing, and they have to find they have to fend for themselves,” said O'Neil on Tuesday. He was joined at the news conference by Putnam County Executive Kevin Byrne, a Republican, and Fishkill Supervisor Ozzy Albra, a Democrat.

“We are not prepared for the housing needs that they have,” O’Neil said.

More than 70,000 migrants have recently arrived in New York City, and 42,000 are being sheltered there, Mayor Eric Adams said Sunday on Face the Nation. During a news conference the next day with Gov. Kathy Hochul, Adams said that 5,800 migrants arrived in New York City last week and 4,200 the week before.

Along with Dutchess, two other counties, Orange and Rockland, have filed lawsuits to prevent New York City from sending asylum-seekers to local hotels for up to four months. Orange County won a restraining order against two hotels in the Town of Newburgh that are housing 186 migrants.

On the day Dutchess sued, O’Neil declared a state of emergency, citing an “imminent peril to the public health and safety.” He also threatened to sue hotels, motels and short-term lodging businesses whose property is used for “an emergency shelter, homeless shelter or long-term overnight dormitory.”

Byrne declared his own state of emergency in Putnam on Monday and issued three executive orders, including one that directs hotels, motels and people with temporary residency permits “not to accept migrants and asylum-seekers from NYC, essentially transforming them into home- less shelters, absent a shared-services agreement with Putnam County.”

Another declared Putnam to be a “rule-of-law” county and not a “sanctuary” county. He said a rule-of-law county is distinguished by the fact it does not house asylum seekers.

Although New York City has not requested lodging in Putnam, “it’s clearly at our doorstep,” Byrne said on Tuesday. “It’s important to take that preemptive action to ensure that we protect our communities.”

Like O’Neil, Byrne blamed Biden. “The president’s refusal to take ownership of this crisis and take corrective actions to secure our nation’s southern border and fix the asylum-seeking process leaves New York City and its surrounding communities in a mess,” he said in a statement.

In their responses to Dutchess’ lawsuit, New York City and Route 9 Hotel LLC criticized the claims of harm as “speculative.” They also argued that an emergency order Hochul issued on May 9 in response to the influx of asylum-seekers preempted the county ban on migrants.

Part of Hochul’s order is meant to “facilitate the occupancy by asylum refugees of temporary housing, specifically including hotels, across the state,” said Route 9 Hotel LLC in its filing.

In addition, the company submitted guidance from the state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, which says that although New York City should employ temporary housing outside its boundaries as a “last resort,” the city does not need permission to do so.

According to New York City, “there is simply no concrete basis to suggest that the health or safety of any Dutchess County resident would be placed at risk by the City of New York providing services to the individuals that would be temporarily located” at hotels.

The Highlands Current
Go to highlandscurrent.org/join

Fallout from Displaced Veterans Hoax

Rolison apologizes for believing phony story

Rolison apologizes for believing phony story

State Sen. Rob Rolison's nomination of the head of a veterans' organization as a “woman of distinction” is being rescinded as the fallout continues from her false claim that a Town of Newburgh hotel kicked out homeless veterans to make room for migrants bused from New York City.

In a letter to Rolison, a Republican whose district includes Beacon, state Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said on Tuesday (May 23) that his nomination of Sharon Toney-Finch is being rescinded because “it is impermissible that we maintain the integrity of this prestigious accolade.”

Toney-Finch, a veteran and the CEO of the Yerik Israel Toney Foundation (YIT), was among dozens of nominees statewide for the Senate’s Women of Distinction award when she claimed in a New York Post story on May 12 that the Crossroads Hotel in Newburgh evicted 15 veterans placed there by YIT.

The story broke as New York City ignited a furor with plans to move nearly 200 asylum-seekers to the Crossroads and a Ramada in the Town of Newburgh. She is also accused of recruiting more than a dozen homeless people from Dutchess County’s shelter in Poughkeepsie to pose as the displaced veterans, promising them $100 each.

Before the Mid-Hudson News and Albany Times Union debunked the story days later, Rolison joined a number of Hudson Valley elected officials who embraced the claim as fact, denouncing New York City and the hotels. Cousins, in her letter, said the story “led to death threats and harassment against hotel employees.”

In a statement, Rolison said, “I sincerely apologize for repeating a statement our office, and others, believed to be true based on media reports.

“Our office, like other elected officials, responded to media reports describing homeless veterans evicted from a local hotel with a mixture of alarm and compassion,” he said. “We wanted to help.”

According to the Times Union, the state attorney general’s office has launched an investigation of YIT.

Jonathan Jacobson, whose state Assembly district includes Beacon, on May 19 issued a statement that criticized Rolison and two other state lawmakers — Assembly Member Brian Maher of Orange County and state Sen. Bill Weber of Rockland County.

He said they “moved to fan the flames of xenophobia by recklessly amplifying Toney-Finch’s falsehoods on Fox News and a range of other media outlets.”

“Adding to the demagoguery, Toney-Finch’s actions compounded an already volatile situation and put both the asylum-seekers and the staff at the Crossroads Hotel at risk,” said Jacobson.

Toney-Smith said on Thursday (May 25) that she would not comment on her claims, and that her attorney was preparing a cease-and-desist order to prevent further reporting on YIT.

Until the attorney general’s investigation is complete, Mental Health America of Dutchess County, which offers veterans services and operates the county’s homeless shelter in Poughkeepsie during the day, will suspend its collaboration with YIT, said Andrew O’Grady, its CEO.

On May 17, three rented vehicles arrived at the homeless shelter and Toney-Finch recruited 15 men “under the guise of going to Connecticut to talk to a politician about homelessness” in exchange for $300, said O’Grady.

The men were taken to a diner, piled with food and drinks and then told they were instead going to the Orange County Chamber of Commerce in New Windsor, which had asked to meet with Toney-Finch, he said. The men were asked to pretend to be veterans kicked out of the Crossroads Hotel, said O’Grady.

They returned to the shelter angry and upset because Toney-Finch did not pay them. O’Grady said a security guard at the shelter called him about the men’s complaints.

“If they got paid $100, they might have talked about it because it was a very weird situation for them to be in, but I don’t think the security guard would have called me,” he said.
Two Schools, One Team  
Two Haldane softball players competed with Putnam Valley  
By Lily Zuckerman

For the second season in a row, Haldane lacked enough players to field a varsity softball team. So, for the second season in a row, Haldane players suited up for Putnam Valley.

Senior Mary Mikalsen and sophomore Callie Sniffen were key contributors for the 2023 team, which doubled its win total from last year and made a run at the Section I, Class B title.

Mikalsen, a shortstop who will play next season for Siena College, was named to the All-Section section team as a junior. Sniffen, who played on Haldane’s junior varsity last year, said she was nervous about meeting her new teammates at the beginning of this season. But “we clicked right away,” said Sniffen, who plays first base.

Putnam Valley lost on Sunday (May 22) to Albertus Magnus, 7-2, in the quarterfinals to finish at 15-7. The team had seven wins in 2022 and two in 2021.

In the first round of the playoffs on May 19, Sniffen hit her 11th and 12th home runs of the season and Mikalsen was 3-for-4 with two RBIs in a 6-5 win over Pleasantville.

Haldane is not alone in finding it a challenge to field a softball team. Although the Blue Devils won six Section I, Class C titles in 10 years (most recently in 2019), participation has been falling across the state. Haldane also added a girls’ lacrosse team last year that plays in the spring.

Rena Finsmith, who has coached the Putnam Valley team for 11 seasons, credits her relationship with Nick Lisikatos, Haldane’s former softball coach, for the merger. She said her Putnam Valley play-ers “opened their arms when Mary came to play with us last year. To see their progress as friends, not just teammates, has been something special.”

Katelyn Flanagan, a Putnam Valley player, said the girls from both schools are “one big family. Even if we make mistakes, we never get mad at each other.”

For Sniffen, playing on the merged team meant lugging three bags to Haldane, changing clothes after classes and traveling 30 minutes to Putnam Valley for practices and games (except one, which was played on May 13 at the Haldane field so Mikalsen could be honored for Senior Night). Finsmith and her teachers were accommodating when she needed to stay after school for tutoring and was late for practice, said Sniffen.

“The commute takes a lot of time off my day, but it’s worth it,” said Sniffen, who usually arrived home after 6 p.m. on practice days and later on game days.

Finsmith called Mikalsen a “genera-tional-type player” who brought intensity to the team and “helped raise the bar” with her work ethic and hustle.

“I couldn’t be any happier than to have those two kids,” said Finsmith. “It’s been a great experience for me and for them, as well as the other kids.”

Lily Zuckerman is a junior at The Masters School in Dobbs Ferry and a member of The Current’s Student Journalists Program.
Puzzles

CROSSCurrent

ACROSS
1. Beer ingredient
5. Adj. modifier
8. Taverns
12. The Middle actress Heaton
14. Denny’s rival
15. Susan of Dead Man Walking
16. Donated
17. Business mag
18. Rose and fell on the sea
20. Chicago cagers
23. Seethe
24. God of war
25. Adirondack lake
28. Martini ingredient
29. Star Wars baddie
30. Pirate’s chart
32. Arabian nomad
34. Minus
35. Melodies
36. Blitzen’s boss
37. Two-piece suit
40. Greek vowels
42. Revolutionary War battle
47. Hamlet, e.g.
48. Stumble on
49. Winter coaster
50. Thanksgiving veggie
51. Section

DOWN
1. AWOL pursuers
2. Bond rating
3. USPS delivery
4. Nature walks
5. Outlet letters
6. God, in Roma
7. Eighth U.S. president
8. London landmark
9. Melville captain
10. Peregrinate
11. Raced
12. Hostels
19. Sharif of Funny Girl
20. Purse
21. Topaz author
22. Sultry Horne
23. Loses color
24. “So be it”
25. Clerics’ robing room
26. Group of actors
27. “Unpaid TV ad
28. Unpaid TV ad
29. Unpaid TV ad
30. Unpaid TV ad
31. Unpaid TV ad
32. Unpaid TV ad
33. Elevate
34. Elevate
35. Elevate
36. Elevate
37. Elevate
38. Elevate
39. Elevate
40. Elevate
41. Elevate
42. Elevate
43. Elevate
44. Elevate
45. Elevate
46. Elevate

7 LITTLEWORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES
SOLUTIONS
1 in a chemical-free way (11)
2 artifical patchwork (7)
3 sure spot for a beach (5)
4 hybrid outer layer (7)
5 one sitting on the sidelines (11)
6 home of Ipanema Beach (6)
7 it’s history (4)

OR BEN LLA ICA SH CO MER ST CH IL WAR AZ SHAC GE LLY ORE PA GAN BR KET

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SUDOCurrent

Answers for May 19 Puzzles

1. NETS, 2. CUPCAKES, 3. HEINZ, 4. SUBSIDIARY, 5. CURTAIN, 6. ATTENDANT, 7. FIANCEES

For interactive sudoku and crossword answers, see highlandscurrent.org/puzzles.
SPORTS

By Skip Pearlman

BASEBALL

After pulling off a stunning comeback in the Section I, Class C semifinals to upset top-ranked Leffell, Haldane fell in two games to Tuckahoe this week in the championship series, ending its season at 9-13-1.

On Monday (May 25), the Blue Devils, who were the No. 4 seed, were behind 3-1 against No. 2 Tuckahoe at the end of three innings. But after scoring on a wild pitch in the fourth to make it 3-2, the Blue Devils rallied.

Ryan Eng-Wong led off with a single, and Roy Smith reached on an error. Eng-Wong scored the tying run on another Tuckahoe error before Trajan McCarthy beat out an infield single to score Smith.

Haldane's 4-3 lead didn't last long, however, as Tuckahoe responded with four runs in the bottom of the frame against a number of Haldane relievers. John Kisslinger took the loss in relief of starter Jake Hotaling.

“We struck out 11 times; you won't win a lot of games that way,” said Coach Simon Dudar. “We didn't put the ball in play enough, and they also had six errors, so we should've been up more to begin with.

“We had beaten Tuckahoe 10-5 during the season, so maybe the guys anticipated an easier game,” he said. “Now we have a tough road ahead, but our whole season has been one obstacle in front of another.”

On Thursday, Tuckahoe won, 14-4, ending the three-game series and advancing to play the Section IX champ next week.

On May 19, in the deciding game of the series against Leffell, Haldane trailed 3-0 at the end of six innings before the Blue Devil offense came alive to plate four runs for a 4-3 win. Hotaling, the series MVP, capped the rally with a two-out, three-run home run. Julian Ambrose picked up the win on the mound.

After upsetting New Paltz on Monday, Beacon had a bad inning and fell, 17-2, to No. 1 Wallkill in Wednesday night's Section IX, Class B semifinal. Walkill clinched it with 11 runs in the second.

Ronnie Anzovino and Jack Antalek each had an RBI for the Bulldogs, who finished 15-7. Ryan Landisi took the loss on the mound.

“Despite competing in a downpour, Verdile cleared 5-11 in the high jump and was the only competitor left at 6-1.

“We tell our kids that poor weather is either a challenge to overcome or an excuse,” said Coach Jim Henry. “Both Henry and Javan overcame sub-optimal conditions to do something special.”

Next up for Beacon is the Section IX, Class B championships at Goshen on Saturday (May 27). That same day, Haldane will compete in the Section I, Class C championships at Valhalla.

BOYS' LACROSSE

Haldane, the No. 2 seed in the Section I, Class D tournament, defeated No. 10 Irvington, 15-8, on Tuesday (May 23) to advance to the semifinals. The Blue Devils (13-4) will host No. 6 Briarcliff (8-10) at 4:45 p.m. today (May 26), with the winner advancing to the title game on Wednesday at Yorktown High School.