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JANUARY, 2024
VOLUME 21, ISSUE 1
Edition #243

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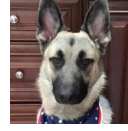

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MA Senate to Legalize Fentanyl Tests for Addicts

State Senator Pavel Payano (D-Lawrence) Reveals Senate Priorities



PAGE 4

INDEX	
 Rep. Reyes PAGE 7	 Beneath The Surface Paul Murano PAGE 23
Vets.....1,6,7	 Auditor DiZoglio In Your Corner PAGE 2&5
Editorial.....2	 Kane PAGE 13
State.....2,4-8	 Bill Cushing TV TALK PAGE 27
Haverhill.....4,6	
Lawrence.....4,7,8,11,14,15	
Methuen.....4-8,15	
Dracut.....8,16	
Salisbury.....9	
Pets/Lowell.....13	
National.....18	
NOTEBOOK.....20	
Books.....21	
Religion.....23,27	
Health.....23	
Real Estate.....24	

VALLEY PATRIOT OF THE MONTH

Charlie The Homeless Veteran

John Cuddy

HERO VETERAN COLUMNIST

His name is Charlie.

Recently, a fellow Veteran, a US Army Ranger, Jack, who currently works as a policeman, told me the story of Charlie. Charlie is also a US Army

Veteran, and he is currently homeless. As Jack told a small group of men and women, mostly Veterans or Active-Duty Military, Charlie's story, there were tears in his eyes and his voice wavered.

Living in a homeless camp is what set Charlie apart from the general population of the county and drew the police officer's attention to him.

Charlie, despite his living situation, presented a neat, clean, sober, appearance, and the same cleanliness was displayed around his tent and living area as well. The small group of experienced police officers, assigned to conduct outreach in the homeless camp, observed his behavior, attitude, and manners, including no noticeable signs of a substance abuse problem.

How did Charlie end up living in a tent, full time, and year-round? The US Department of Housing and Urban Development, (HUD) reported that the number of homeless American citizens rose to over 500,000+ in 2023. The economic restrictions imposed by our federal, state and even local governments, on Americans during COVID 19, led to a national rise of over seven percent in the number of homeless Americans, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness. Charlie was in this 2021-2022 rise in homelessness among Veterans.

On a single night in 2022, roughly 582,500 people were experiencing homelessness in the United States. Six in ten (60%) were staying in sheltered locations—emergency shelters, safe havens, or transitional housing programs—and four in ten (40%) were in unsheltered locations such as on the street, in abandoned buildings, or in other places not suitable for human habitation.

Charlie moved to the area to accept a new job. He is single, healthy, but without a strong support network of family and friends. Charlie simply loaded what he owned in his car and moved to a new city. He then started his new job, rented a one-bedroom apartment, and in 2020, COVID hit. The 2020 median rent for a one-bedroom apartment is currently \$1,500 in the county where Charlie pitched his tent. In the city of Lawrence, Massachusetts, the website Zumper.com, places a one-bedroom apartment at \$2,267. Charlie, like many homeless Americans, moved from his apartment to his car, then, one day his car, with all his belongings inside, was stolen. In the county where Charlie lives, 314 cars are stolen per every 100,000 county residents. Significant statistic if your car is one of those stolen. In Charlie's case, his car not only contained everything he owned in the world, but his automobile was also his only shelter.

The number of Veterans experiencing homelessness declined by 11 percent (4,123 fewer people) between 2020 and 2022. In 2022, 40,238 fewer Veterans were experiencing homelessness than in 2009, when this data was first reported, a drop of nearly 55 percent.

Are you a Veteran, or do you know a Veteran, who is homeless or experiencing housing instability? If

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Michelle Wu-Klux Klan is the New Democrat Party

It used to be that if an elected official said or did something blatantly racist - regardless of party affiliation - the leaders of the Democratic Party in Massachusetts would denounce them so viciously and so relentlessly that the offender would resign in disgrace and be completely unemployable.

Now, they elect them to public office.

Today the leaders of the Democrat Party (and their supporters) have become the monsters that their father's Democratic Party had set out to destroy.

And the Democrat Party-controlled news media are cheering them on.

No more is racism and discrimination universally denounced by Democrats, today they engage in vile and despicable bigotry out in the open, proudly boasting about how they want to deny government

services and rights to people based on their ethnicity and skin color.

Martin Luther King must be rolling over in his grave.

Sadly, we could cite hundreds of examples among elected democrats in today's news, but one of the more hateful civil rights violators is Boston Mayor Michelle Wu-Klux Klan.

While Wu is well known for her racist attitudes, she was exposed again last month for holding a Christmas party that excluded people based on their ethnic heritage.

For sure, democrat voters would not tolerate it if Donald Trump held a White-Only Christmas party, so why are they cheering when Michelle Wu-Klux Klan does the exact same thing?

And make no mistake about it, there

is no difference between a Whites-Only party and a Whites-excluded party, no matter how much these Democrat bigots whine about "historical oppression" and "systemic racism."

The fact is, these Democrats are violating dozens of federal civil rights laws. Laws that were passed to protect all races from bigotry and race-based standards. Yet, the FBI and federal law enforcement willingly ignore racism when white people are the victims, and only seem to prosecute cases when white people are the alleged perpetrators.

That's the definition of systemic racism. And it's all being done by Democrats, all the while they distract us with fake narratives of white supremacy, Nazi-conservatives, white privilege, and perceived historical wrongs.

We urge our local representatives and senators - all of whom are Democrats - to speak up against the vile racism being perpetrated in their name and within their own political party.

We implore Senator Pavel Payano, and Reps. Reyes, Garry, Paulino, Hamilton, Vargas, and Moran to speak out forcefully and often against those in their party who engage in hatred and bigotry, the very same way brave, White Democrats spoke up against their own party in the 1960s when those being targeted were Blacks and Latinos.

Otherwise, their silence amounts to tacit consent, making them no better than Michelle Wu-Klux Klan.

We have faith that they'll be the leaders of their party by actually leading! It's an election year and we will be watching! ◇

Auditor Finds \$12M+ in Public Benefit Fraud in FY23

BOSTON – Today, State Auditor Diana DiZoglio released her tenure's first annual fraud report. The fiscal year 2023 (FY23) Bureau of Special Investigations (BSI) annual report summarizes BSI's work to help make government work better by investigating, under the law, fraud, abuse, and illegal acts involving public assistance benefits throughout the Commonwealth.

This year, BSI identified \$12,322,688 in public assistance fraud in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023. BSI completed 5,100 fraud investigations, a 40.8% increase from FY22.

"For many residents across the state, public benefit programs provide access to everyday essential items – such as food and medical supplies. It is through the efforts of our fraud examiners that we continue to help ensure public benefit programs operate with transparency, accountability, and equity," said Auditor DiZoglio. "Our office will continue to work to ensure taxpayer dollars are used effectively and that resources are available to those who truly need and qualify for them."

Lastly, this report highlights notable activity surrounding BSI's cases since last year, including:

* The Central Processing Unit

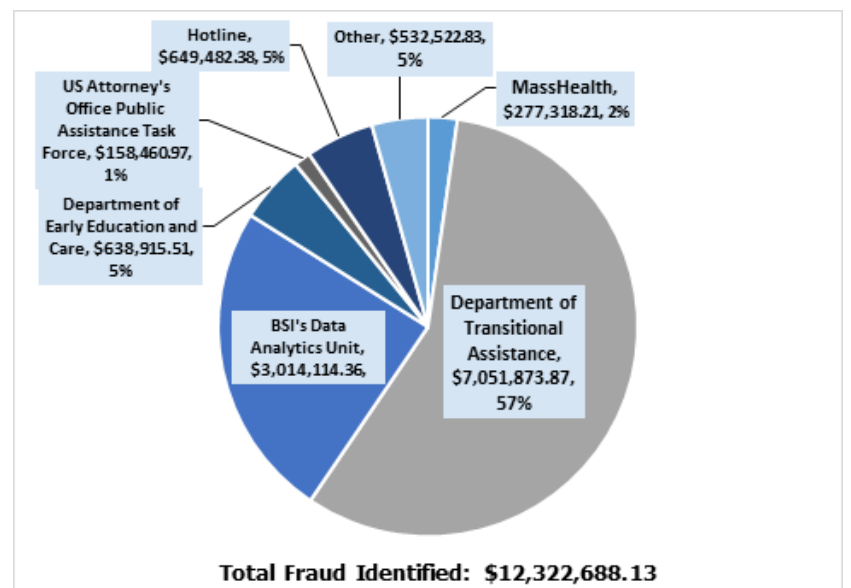
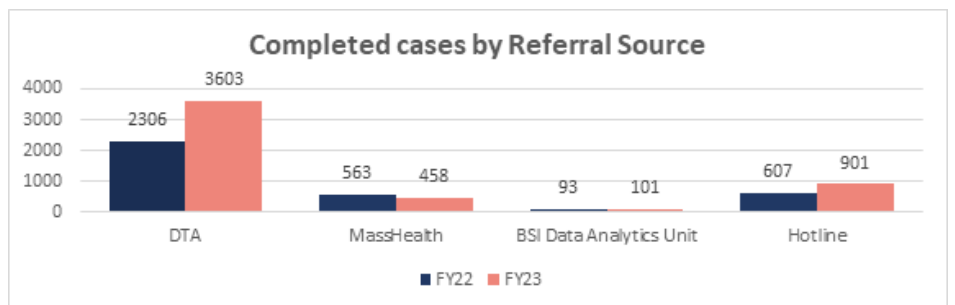
(CPU) received 8,643 new referrals for investigation in fiscal year 2023 (FY23) and processed, analyzed, and reviewed 5,552 referrals.

* The Fraud Investigations Unit (FIU) completed 981 cases in FY23, which contributed to identifying fraud totaling \$9,551,227.91 in 756 cases.

* The Data Analytics Unit (DAU) generated 401 referrals to CPU, the majority of which alleged that personal care attendants (PCAs) failed to accurately disclose their income to the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and MassHealth agencies as required while receiving public assistance benefits.

BSI investigates programs administered by DTA and the Division of Medical Assistance (which administers MassHealth). In addition, BSI has an agreement with the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to investigate fraud in that program as well. BSI receives referrals for investigation from its agency partners, public tips, referrals from federal agencies, and through the use of its data analytics tools. The public can report potential fraud to BSI at: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/report-public-benefit-fraud-to-the-office-of-the-state-auditor>. ◇

Below are the number of referrals received as new investigations from FY22 to FY23, the number of completed cases and total fraud identified.



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PHONE: (978) 771-4091
www.valleypatriot.com

News tips: Send anonymous news-tips to valleypatriot@aol.com. We respect the anonymity of our sources if requested.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Valley Patriot, Inc., PO Box 453, North Andover, MA 01845.

Letters to the editor, columns and op/eds can be submitted to valleypatriot@aol.com. The Valley Patriot is not responsible for the opinions expressed in submitted letters or columns. It is the policy of The Valley Patriot not to edit or exclude submitted material based on content.

President/Publisher: Tom Duggan, Jr.
SALES: (978) 771-4091

Corrections: Please contact the editors at valleypatriot@aol.com

The Valley Patriot can be found in more than 800 locations in 22 communities in Massachusetts and NH.

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The Valley Patriot is printed by Graphic Development in West Hanover, MA

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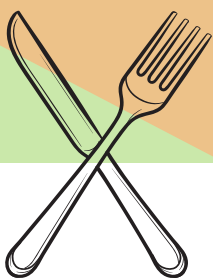


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MA Senate Advances Consumer Rights, Fentanyl Tests

Pavel Payano

STATE SENATOR, 1ST ESSEX DISTRICT

On January 4th, 2024, the Massachusetts Senate made significant strides by unanimously passing three key pieces of legislation aimed at addressing public health concerns and enhancing consumer rights. The bills cover a range of critical issues, including harm reduction in substance use, consumer protections for wheelchair users, and improved interactions between individuals with autism and law enforcement.

These groundbreaking legislations reflect our commitment to proactive solutions, compassion, and inclusivity. These bills, which I wholeheartedly voted for and supported, mark a significant stride towards a safer, more compassionate, and equitable Commonwealth for all. Having passed the Senate, they now move to the Massachusetts House of Representatives for consideration.

1. Groundbreaking Legislation Legalizing Fentanyl Test Strips

In a proactive response to the opioid crisis, the Massachusetts Senate has passed An Act relative to fentanyl test strips—S.2543. This groundbreaking legislation, if enacted, will legalize the sale, possession, and distribution of fentanyl test strips, providing a potent tool to support drug users in making informed decisions about their consumption.

The bill addresses the alarming frequency of fentanyl-related overdoses in Massachusetts, with 2,323 reported between October 1, 2022, and September 30, 2023. Fentanyl was present in 93% of fatal overdoses in the first three months of 2023, highlighting the urgency of implementing harm reduction strategies.

Fentanyl test strips have proven to be a commonsense harm reduction strategy, encouraging drug users to engage in safer consumption behavior. Senate Majority Leader Cynthia Stone Creem, the lead sponsor of the bill, highlighted the need for the Commonwealth to adopt this “lifesaving and cost-effective measure” in response to the worsening fentanyl crisis across the country. The legislation now moves to the Massachusetts House of Representatives for consideration.

2. Groundbreaking Wheelchair Warranty Reform

Addressing the rights and needs of wheelchair users, the Massachusetts Senate has unanimously passed An Act expanding wheelchair warranty protections for consumers with disabilities—S.2541. This legislation mandates warranties for all wheelchairs sold or leased in the Commonwealth, extending the minimum warranty period to two years.

Senate President Karen E. Spilka underscored the significance of the legislation, stating, “Today the Senate took action to give individuals who use wheelchairs the protections they deserve.” The bill aims to empower wheelchair users by requiring timely repair services, coverage of collateral costs, and streamlined processes for both in-warranty and out-of-warranty repairs.

Senator John J. Cronin, the primary sponsor of the legislation, emphasized the impact of the bill on empowering wheelchair users to regain their mobility and independence. The legislation, which gained strong support from disability advocates, now advances to the Massachusetts House of Representatives for consideration.

3. “Blue Envelope” Bill for Autism



Spectrum Disorder

Recognizing the need for better communication during traffic stops involving individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the Massachusetts Senate has unanimously passed the “Blue Envelope” bill—An Act facilitating better interactions between police officers and persons with autism spectrum disorder.

The voluntary program outlined in the bill allows individuals with autism to carry blue envelopes containing their license, registration, and insurance cards. This serves as a communication tool during traffic stops, providing law enforcement officers with information about the driver’s ASD and guidance on

best practices for interaction.

Senator Joanne M. Comerford, the sponsor of the bill, addressed the potential misunderstandings that could arise during interactions between law enforcement officers and individuals with autism. The collaborative development of guidance by a coalition of advocates, Chiefs of Police, and the Registry of Motor Vehicles aims to equip officers with the necessary information for better understanding.

Pavel Payano is a Democrat State Senator from Lawrence covering Lawrence, Methuen and Haverhill. You can email him at pavel.payano@masenate.gov ◇

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My First Year Protecting State Taxpayers

Happy 2024! It's hard to believe it's been just about a year since I was sworn in as Massachusetts' Chief Accountability Officer - State Auditor.

I spent 2023 working toward fulfilling my commitments to you. This especially includes making sure Massachusetts delivers on the services and programs our residents rely upon; so that every individual is empowered regardless of our family background, bank balance, or zip code.

When I took on this role, the Office of State Auditor was already in the process of dozens of audits. This is because our office is mandated to audit more than 200 state entities, at least once every three years. And with most audits taking at least a year to complete, there are lots of people working on lots of different audits, all at once.

Valley Patriot readers have previously read about our work with the Cannabis Control Commission (CCC), Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB), and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA). I'm grateful that I have been able to communicate these important findings, but this is just a piece of all that we have been doing this year.

Taking office in January 2023, I wanted to get to work quickly. But I thought about how, for many commuters in Massachusetts, getting to work can be anything but quick. Nowhere is this lag more greatly felt than for our riders of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). Trains catching fire, derailments, and delays should not be the accepted norm in a state like Massachusetts. We can and must do better. That's why our office has launched a performance and safety audit of the MBTA. It is our hope that, by shining a light on the MBTA's processes and procedures, our audit will assist this new administration in addressing challenges.

The MBTA's challenges often overshadow the role that other types of public transportation play in serving our commuters. Countless residents rely on non-rail public transportation - and ensuring the efficient delivery of those regional services is important. That's why we've released audits of eight Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) across the Commonwealth - including the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (think of those colorful MeVa buses) that have identified areas for improvement regarding how we serve persons with disabilities. Audits are

intended to be helpful tools, and we are grateful to the RTAs that have already implemented our recommended changes to better serve residents.

Our disabled neighbors deserve equal access to services. The Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) is a state commission tasked with protecting adults with disabilities from the abusive acts or omissions of their caregivers through investigation oversight, public awareness, and prevention. Last year, our office released an audit that showed the DPPC had been consistently missing required state deadlines for abuse investigations. It also did not have a system for identifying persons with repeated allegations of reported abuse. These failures are unacceptable, and we are currently planning a review of whether our recommendations for improvement were implemented effectively so that our disabled community is better protected.

While the above represents some completed audits, our team is currently auditing the Massachusetts Police Training Commission (MPTC). The MPTC is "responsible for the development, delivery, and enforcement of training standards of municipal, MBTA, environmental, UMass, campus police officers, and deputy sheriffs performing police duties and functions." Our hope is that the MPTC continues to work with us to help ensure the development, delivery, and enforcement of recently revised training standards which promote increased accountability.

Thinking about the people who put their lives on the line for our safety, it's impossible to not think of our veterans. It is imperative that we safeguard and ensure quality-of-life for our veterans by helping to identify and streamline services for those who may need to interact with multiple state agencies simultaneously. Our office is conducting an audit of the Holyoke Soldiers' Home as part of our effort to guarantee our state is fulfilling its duties to all of our veterans and their families.

Speaking of homes, housing for everyone is certainly a topic that's front and center. Limited inventory, increasing rents, and restrictions on zoning have all played a role in creating an environment where far too many residents can't find or afford homes in the Commonwealth. That's a big reason why our team has launched an audit of the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) to



State Auditor Diana DiZoglio posing with Tracy Watson and Laurie Burzlaff of North Andover at a YWCA event.

review its programs and procedures. We are in a housing crisis and the Commonwealth's economic stability hinges on everyday people being able to continue to live and work here. Our goal with this audit is to confirm that existing programs are being maximized - or, if not, identifying how they can be - to the benefit of all.

Benefitting and serving all is an important concept as our office seeks to create space for all residents. That's why our team is currently auditing the state's Supplier Diversity Office (SDO) and analyzing and reporting on state contracting with minority-owned and women-owned businesses to highlight areas that require improvement. Incorporating an equity lens into our audit work is paramount as we work to address racial, gender and socio-economic disparities regarding access across state government.

Saying that we want to create space is important, but are we actually delivering? For decades, Massachusetts has had an independent commission focused on the needs of LGBTQ youth - however, the commission's recommendations have been unevenly implemented. My office is examining the recommendations of the Commonwealth's independent commissions dedicated to equity and justice - starting with the Commission

on LGBTQ Youth.

Auditing can sound boring, but as you've just gotten a taste, our audits aren't just about numbers - they're about helping make government work better for all of us. As I've written, these performance audits are tools that can be used by agencies to make certain they are delivering on their mission. They're tools that can help identify areas of improvement. And they're tools for you - the people of Massachusetts - to advocate for better government.

This update is just the tip of all that's happened in our first year. While I continue to travel the state to engage with people about our work, all of the audits I have written about remain available on our website. You can also sign up there for updates on many of the ongoing audits I mentioned - as well as the many I didn't get to dive into, such as our audits of Non-Disclosure Agreements, the State Legislature, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, our Bureau of Special Investigation reports, and our Division of Local Mandates' studies.

In the meantime, friends, thank you for your support and partnership. As always, feel free to contact our team at 617-727-2075 or at auditor@sao.state.ma.us.

Yours in service, Diana

MeVa Transit's Free Vet Service to Bedford VA

Haverhill, MA — Local veterans seeking care at the VA Bedford Healthcare System will soon have access to a free door to door ride service with the launch of the new MeVa Transit VA Bedford mediMeVa. Last Thursday, the MeVa Transit Advisory Board unanimously approved the new mediMeVa service to the VA Bedford Healthcare System in Bedford, MA.

Bob Snow, MeVa Advisory Board representative from Rowley was an early champion of the new service, stating that, "Being a Marine Veteran, Rowley's representative to the MeVa advisory board, and a member of the Paratransit committee, I was excited that MeVa's operations team was able to turn this idea into service so quickly. I was proud to join my fellow board members in voting to start the VA Bedford mediMeVa in January to help our region's Veterans who have given so much in service to our Country."

The idea of service to VA Bedford came through conversations between MeVa and Vision Committee members of the Merrimack Valley Veterans Collaborative. Each month, the Merrimack Valley Veterans Collaborative brings together Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) and other community organizations who serve veterans. Through community outreach and conversations with the Veterans Collaborative, it was clear there was a transportation service gap for Veterans and their families across the region who needed to access care at the VA Bedford Healthcare System. As the public transit providers for the region, MeVa Transit was perfectly positioned to close this gap with their mediMeVa van service. MeVa joined the Collaborative's September meeting with an idea of a

service plan going forward. Christina Penna, Community Outreach Program Manager at AgeSpan who oversees the Veterans Collaborative said, "This new service is great news! We are grateful to MeVa Transit for providing more transportation options for our deserving veterans."

To ensure the best quality service, MeVa worked closely with the VA Bedford Health Care System to determine how best to implement this new service, which will take riders outside of MeVa's service district to reach Bedford. Patrick Kirby, Public Affairs Officer of the VA Bedford Health Care System is grateful to MeVa for responding to the needs of veterans by making this new service possible. "Reliable access to care is imperative, and MeVa has helped reduce barriers through this free offering. This not only improves access to medical appointments, but also enables Veterans to take advantage of the VA's many community-building offerings. From our free produce market, recreational therapy classes and healthy cooking classes, these programs help strengthen the bonds between Veterans and provide holistic support beyond healthcare. By making it easier for Veterans to visit our Bedford campus through this new transportation route, MeVa is helping advance our mission to care for Veterans' whole health."

Starting on January 2, 2024, the VA Bedford mediMeVa will operate Wednesdays and Fridays by reservation. "As public transit professionals, MeVa was able to quickly design a program that would immediately address the need presented by the local veteran services community. We have created a program that is easy to use, without forcing our Veterans and their families



Marine Veterans Ralph Basiliere (newly elected Haverhill Ward 1 Councilor) & Rowley Selectman Bob Snow (the Rowley Rep to the MeVa Board) pictured with driver, Jalen Hall (who is an Air Force veteran), Amy Jenkins, Director of Paratransit, Ralph's wife Witney, and CEO of MeVa Transit Noah Berger.

to fill out excessive paperwork to access this service. Veterans and their families just have to call our offices to get set up in our reservation system," said Amy Jenkins, Director of miniMeVa services at MeVa Transit.

Rides to the VA Bedford Healthcare System will be available on Wednesdays and Fridays with one trip to Bedford in the morning and one return in the afternoon. This is a door to door shared ride service. Veterans will be picked up at their homes or other origination point within MeVa's service area and ride with others to Bedford. The hours of the service are flexible and will vary depending on the appointment times of the riders.

All Veterans and their families, regardless of age or ability, who reside in one of the 16 cities and towns in MeVa's service area, are eligible to use this service. Sign up is easy by simply

calling the miniMeVa office at 978-469-6878 option #3. Reservations must be made at least one week (7 days) in advance, and may be made no more than 14 days in advance. When making reservations, riders should be prepared to provide the reservationists with the date of travel, the pick-up location, and the time of the appointment.

Like all of MeVa's transportation services, the VA Bedford mediMeVa is completely free.

This new service will close critical transportation gaps for Veterans living in the Merrimack Valley. Kirby added that "We are grateful that MeVa has made this possible and look forward to welcoming Veterans who utilize this convenient new service."

For routes, schedules, and more information about MeVa Transit bus and van services, visit www.mevatransit.com

What We Do When Legislature is Not in Session

Ryan Hamilton
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

One question I have received while out working during the month of December is: What do elected officials do when they are not in formal session?

Throughout the past few weeks, the house has been out of formal session. Often, when not in a formal session, the media portrays Reps and Senators being on vacation. I can tell you this is far from the truth.

To quote Bill Belichick, there are no days off.

One of the essential parts of being a State Representative is constituent services. Being able to assist the residents of Methuen and Haverhill and help them solve the issues that they email or call my office with. Constituents contact my office 365 days a year. And we are here to help them. During informal sessions, I have taken the time to call constituents we've helped over the past year and check in to see how things are going and if there's any further help I or my office can provide. One of the things I have learned over the past year is that most constituents do not reach out to our office until the situation has advanced to a level of urgency. Therefore, during this informal

session, I wanted to take the time to try and preempt people waiting as long to ask for assistance, especially around the holidays. I'm happy to say that I was successful and that we were able to identify more constituents that needed our help. They alleviated some stress for those residents during the holidays.

I was able to spend more time in Methuen and Haverhill throughout December and was, therefore, able to have more meetings with constituents in the district. It was great to connect with these residents and talk about various issues, from legislation to the state of the New England Patriots. I always enjoy getting to sit down over a cup of coffee or grab lunch with constituents because I'm a firm believer that it makes me a better rep when I hear from them and hear their concerns and their opinions on things at both the local and state level.

This holiday season, I was able to donate my time to two organizations that were ensuring children around the Merrimack Valley had a great Christmas. Somebody Cares New England, based in Haverhill, and Debbie's Treasure Chest hosted toy drives that I was able to attend and volunteered to hand out toys so that kids could have something under the tree this Christmas. I want to thank both organizations for going



above and beyond to ensure that every child in the Merrimack Valley had a very merry Christmas. We are so fortunate in Methuen and Haverhill to have such great nonprofits that do much for our community.

Although I enjoy spending time in the district, I still had responsibilities in Boston that needed my attention on Wednesday, January 10th, my bill on financial literacy, which I featured in a previous column in the Valley Patriot, is getting a hearing. My staff and I have spent countless hours coordinating with our grassroots supporters on testimony and social media strategies to ensure that we make it known how important it is to make taking a financial literacy course a part of the curriculum in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Then, of course, I still have been keeping up with my typical events, be it at ribbon-cutting, chamber events, or my annual time volunteering at the Festival of Trees. It was a busy end of 2023, and I enjoyed it. I look forward to working with all of you to accomplish even more in 2024.

I want to end this month's column by congratulating Melinda Barrett and Neil Perry on their inaugurations as Mayors of Haverhill and Methuen.

I look forward to partnering with them to accomplish great things for our cities. Congratulations and good wishes go out to all elected officials in Methuen and Haverhill for their swearing-in this past week. I wish you the best and remember, your success is our success. ♦

Looking Back on My First Year

Estela Reyes

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

A year goes by fast when each day brings something new, and new it was. It has been an honor to serve as the 4th Essex District elected State Representative this year. 2023 marks my First Legislative Session. I am so proud of the work accomplished at the State House and the effects I see in my community from that work.

An event that was special to me this December was the Legislative Breakfast at the Greater Lawrence Technical School. This breakfast gave local officials a chance to meet with community members involved in the schools. We had an enlightened conversation about the school and how we can best support its students, faculty, and parents.

I believe that it is imperative to include all impacted groups in the conversation when looking to create policy and will continue to do so for GLTS and beyond. Greater Lawrence Technical School also held a beautiful recognition of Leo Lamontagne who is now retired from their School District Committee. Mr. Lamontagne served the school committee for 38 years. His service to them is forever appreciated.

I was also grateful for the invitations



to many holiday celebrations in my community this December. Thank you to all of the organizations who celebrated with one another. Thank you to those who arranged charitable donations for children and families to all receive a special gift for the

holidays. Your hard work does not go unnoticed.

December is a time when we reminisce on the year behind us, and there is so much I have to look fondly back on in 2023. The first year in this role came with much learning, adapting,

networking, and planning. There is endless knowledge and wisdom to gather from my colleagues, community leaders, and constituents. I am thankful to all who have supported my growth in this role. It was a busy year as well, as I was concluding my service on Lawrence's City Council alongside my role as State Representative. Moving into 2024 I have left the City Council and am excited to devote my full attention to the needs of the 4th Essex District constituents and all Massachusetts residents.

My staff and I have greatly appreciated the warm welcome from Methuen and Lawrence, including their local businesses and their community centers. I have been fortunate with the inspiring conversations and plans I had and the chance to engage with through this role. I am eager to dive back into this Second Legislative Session to see those plans roll into action.

I hope you all had a warm, happy, and healthy holiday season. In 2024 I am looking forward to meeting more of you and passing bills into law. Please, continue to reach out to estela.reyes@mahouse.gov with any thoughts, questions, or concerns, and follow my Facebook @ [EstelaReyesForStateRepresentative](#) for timely updates. Happy New Year. ◇

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Phil Thibault Ignores Ethical Conflicts in Dracut

EYE ON DRACUT

By Brian Genest

VALLEY PATRIOT DRACUT COLUMNIST

How can Dracut miss Phil Thibault if he won't go away?

Thibault, the town's most rejected perennial candidate—a nine-time failure at the ballot box—has found a new way to add to his credentials as Dracut's most monumental loser: Getting passed over for a variety of appointed positions on town boards.

Phil Thibault keeps getting the same message—“thanks, but no thanks”—but he doesn't want to hear it, apparently. Just one year after getting rejected by the Board of Selectmen for a seat on the Zoning Bylaw Review Committee, Phil Thibault has reapplied for the same position. Here's the problem, for him: Phil Thibault was rejected by the board majority for conflict of interest because he's an architect who conducts business in town and would be making the rules for those who hire him to do professional work.

Instead of reflecting inward when he was rejected, Phil Thibault lashed out. As inconvenient as it may be for him, the truth is that, in 2016, Phil Thibault resigned from the Planning Board after speaking with the state's Ethics Commission and then went on his buddy Warren Shaw's AM radio program to talk about it. Shaw's sidekick Shawn Ashe posted the audio recording on his

Dracut Forum blog, so you can hear it for yourself in Phil Thibault's own words: <https://www.dracutforum.com/index.php/2016/08/28/phil-thibault-resigns-from-planning-board/>

Here's another problem, for him: Nothing has changed since Phil Thibault was denied the position on the Zoning Bylaw Review Committee the last time. The board majority is the same, his business conflict is the same, and so is his inability to count, apparently. Is it any wonder, with his strong political instincts, that he's choked in eight races for selectman and one for housing authority?

Regardless, Phil Thibault thinks he's the smartest guy in the room, no matter who's in the room. Just ask him. And Phil Thibault always wants to be in the room: When there's an opening on any town board these days, Phil Thibault rushes his application over to town hall right away. In a town of more than 30,000 people, Phil Thibault always thinks he's the most qualified person for the job, apparently.

Speaking of choking, in the year between his two applications to keep a seat warm on the Zoning Bylaw Review Committee, Phil Thibault has been rejected for other board appointments, including a couple of seats he applied for on the Economic Development Committee. Phil Thibault has another

notable political distinction, too: The shortest candidacy for Dracut School Committee in town history. When Joe Wilkie resigned last summer, Phil Thibault announced he was in the race and then a nanosecond later he was out. In between, Phil Thibault apparently realized he was unable to muster five votes from the Board of Selectmen and School Committee. (Members of those two boards ended up unanimously appointing Rob Sheppard, a guy who actually ran for school committee.)

Phil Thibault's inability to secure that school committee appointment was a game changer; he finally lost the support of some who previously wasted a lot of political capital, time, money and effort on a guy who continues to lose and lose and lose and lose and lose and lose and lose and lose. It was bound to happen eventually because Phil Thibault's not just the likely loser in every contest, he's the proven loser and proven to be Dracut's biggest loser.

By the way, Phil Thibault's lack of ethics and conflict of interest haven't gone unnoticed by the newspaper. In October of 2020, the Lowell Sun exposed some of Phil Thibault's completely unethical and self-serving behavior at Dracut Access Television.

“Imagine if Phil Thibault had



been elected to the Dracut Board of Selectmen. Even though the Dracut Access Cable Television board of directors, on which Thibault serves, is technically not a government body, Thibault apparently thought there was nothing improper with landing a \$10,000 contract to help design DATV's new studio, as Thibault is an architect.”

Phil Thibault is always good for one thing: a belly-jiggling laugh. Phil Thibault's latest committee application is no exception. On a serious note, if I were a betting man, and Phil Thibault is in the running, I'd put my money on the other guy.

— Brian Genest is the producer and host of Eye On Dracut, winner of the Hometown Media Award for News, sponsored by Lucky Oil. Watch on DATV Channel 8 or online at DracutTV.org. ♦

The Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit

Francisco Paulino

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

The Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit is an essential element of Massachusetts' support for its senior residents, particularly in the communities of Lawrence and Methuen. As the State Representative for the 16th Essex District and a member of the Massachusetts House Revenue Committee, I am committed to ensuring that our seniors are well-informed about this beneficial tax credit.

Comprehensive Eligibility Criteria for the Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit

1. Residency: Eligible individuals must be Massachusetts residents or part-year residents.

2. Age Requirement: You must be 65 years or older by December 31 of the tax year.

3. Tax Filing: Filing a Schedule CB with your Massachusetts personal income tax return is necessary.

4. Primary Residence: You must own or rent residential property in Massachusetts and occupy it as your primary residence.

5. Income Limits for 2023:

- \$69,000 for a single individual who is not the head of a household.
- \$86,000 for a head of household.
- \$103,000 for married couples filing jointly.

6. Property Tax Requirement for Homeowners: Your Massachusetts

property tax payments, along with half of your water and sewer expenses, must exceed 10% of your total Massachusetts income for the tax year.

7. Rent Requirement for Renters: For renters, 25% of your annual Massachusetts rent must exceed 10% of your total Massachusetts income for the tax year.

8. Property Valuation Cap: The assessed valuation of the homeowner's residence as of January 1, 2023, before residential exemptions but after abatements, cannot exceed \$1,025,000.

9. Filing Deadline for Schedule CB: The Schedule CB must be completed within three years from the last day for filing the return, without regard to any extensions for filing.

Enhancements and Legislative Efforts

In my role, I have actively advocated for and sponsored legislation that enhances the Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit. These initiatives, particularly important for the residents of Lawrence and Methuen, have increased the maximum credit for the tax year 2023 to \$2,590.

Importance of Awareness and Accessibility

Many seniors in Lawrence and Methuen may not be aware of their eligibility or how to navigate the application process. I am dedicated to organizing workshops and providing assistance to guide our seniors. It's



crucial that they understand the nuances of this tax credit and how it can benefit them, especially given the rising costs of living and property taxes.

Conclusion

The Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit exemplifies Massachusetts' commitment to its senior citizens. This credit is a vital financial support for

seniors, particularly in Lawrence and Methuen. As a State Representative, I am devoted to ensuring that our seniors are informed, empowered, and able to access this credit. This commitment is not just about providing financial relief but also about upholding the dignity and quality of life of our seniors. ♦

After 31 Years, Salisbury's Shenanigans Unraveled!

Last November the Town of Salisbury finally responded to multiple public records requests showing that the town misled several courts when their lawyers claimed that the town was court ordered to abate water pollution, (mandated to construct the U.S. EPA/State sewer project) and that this "one project" included contracts one to five as well as seven and eight.

For years the town refused to turn over the public records of this Town Meeting vote, then trying to charge an unreasonable sum of money to prevent their release, Secretary of State Galvin's office intervened and the town reduced its fee from \$1,250 to \$25 to obtain the records.

THERE ARE NO RECORDS BECAUSE THERE WAS NO VOTE

The town admitted that there was no Town Meeting vote of approval for the sewer construction project that included Contract 7 and Contract 8. "The Town has researched the Town Meeting warrants ... and found no relevant town meeting article/vote for "the Town Meeting Vote"(between 1982 - 1989) to ORDER THE CONSTRUCTION, with the project plan, and estimate for the U.S. EPA/State mandated Sewer Project which, according to the Town, included Sewer Contract Numbers 1,2,3,4,5,7, and 8."

Finally, the Tomaselli's (who sued the town) have proof that the town lied to the courts to overcharge ratepayers.

The importance of this town's admission is that this is how they won in every court, including Land Court. They claimed that the town voted a betterment in 1992 making Gracemarie and Joyce Tomaselli appear liable for a \$7.8 Million betterment because the property they purchased on March 7, 1991 was included in the EPA/State court ordered sewer project which the town claimed included contract 7 and 8.

It took years for the Tomasellis to receive the May 17, 1982 Town Meeting assessment order vote to construct the

state mandated U.S. EPA/State sewer project. Town officials, with the aid of their attorneys, actively concealed this May 17, 1982 Town Meeting assessment order vote (from Tomaselli and the courts) because the Tomasellis did not own the property in 1982. In 1991 they were new buyers - bona fide purchasers of property with no liens or encumbrances recorded at the Registry of Deeds at the time of the title search.

In violation of state law, the town failed to record this May 17, 1982 assessment order vote to construct this sewer with the project plan and estimate at the Registry of Deeds.

To win and make the Tomasellis appear liable, town officials and their attorneys fabricated to the courts that the valid assessment vote was on March 16, 1992 for a \$7.8 Million betterment - voted at a Sewer Commissioners and Selectmen meeting. Although this fact was not true, Land Court Judge Gordon H. Piper used this "as a fact" in his decision to foreclose on Tomaselli's property.

Town officials testified that the EPA/State mandated sewer project included contracts 1,2,3,4,5,7 and 8 and that the Town needed to recover the 10% local share of what the Town claimed was an \$80 M mandated sewer project that was 90% grant funded leaving \$7.8 M (local share betterment) but none of this was true.

The Tomasellis requested public records for documents to support this Town's claim. Town Manager Neil Harrington finally admitted in his reply that there never was an \$80 Million sewer project and the Town never received \$72 million in grants. Manager Neil Harrington waited to reply until after the Town won in Land Court to take Tomaselli's property.

The fact is, the Town won in Land Court because of their fake 1992 betterment assessment date and the town's claim that they needed to recover \$7.8 M for "the project" and charged

a \$7.8 M betterment. The Town never submitted relevant evidence to the courts.

The Town for years claimed that the 1992 local share increase of \$7.8 M was for increase in construction costs for Elm Street Corridor and the [Upper] Lafayette Road Corridor sewer projects. However, by 1992 the Town did not construct these sewers.

Town and state records prove that contract 7 was four extraneous sewer projects and contract 8 was another extraneous project constructed in town. These projects were NOT mandated because of the Clean Water Act, because they were new sewers. Coincidentally the area known as contracts 7 and 8 is where many town officials and sewer commissioners lived and some still live there which is why they were pushing so hard for construction in that area.

The town never voted at Town Meeting to order construction for these four projects (nicknamed contract 7) and never voted to order the construction of contract 8 (another project) but constructed these 5 sewer projects anyway! These sewer areas are in the town and had nothing to do with the mandated sewer project to abate pollution.

Although the assessment order vote imposing the assessment was May 17, 1982, Atty. Thomas McEnaney misrepresented to the courts that the sewer assessment vote was imposed in 1992 and the EPA/State sewer project included contracts 7 and 8.

The disturbing part is that Town Counsel Atty. Thomas McEnaney from the Town's law firm KP Law (formerly Kopelman & Paige) actually posted on their website:

"On December 16, 2014 Attorney Thomas W. McEnaney secured a victory for the Town of Salisbury ... challenging a sewer betterment assessment imposed in 1992..."

This means that the Town extorted \$7.8 M plus interest from over 1,000 property owners in the EPA/State sewer project in



the guise of a "betterment" and got away with it!

The town voted to charge any local share for sewer construction by the sewer user method - in 1991 billed capital cost recovery/betterments. In 1992 the Town charged business property owners betterments ranging between \$10,000 to \$93,000. These sewer bills caused many beach businesses to close; two men died removing the 2nd floor of the El Rancho Motel - the owner was trying to reduce his sewer charges so that he could afford to remain open.

The town then auctioned the Tomaselli sisters' Mangia...a Café-Restaurant and 4 parcels of land at the beach for \$775,000 and kept all the money.

This cost the Tomasellis their livelihood, restaurant, and home, over sewer bills that they never owed in the first place. What's more, the Tomaselli sisters were maligned for years by elected officials, the Newburyport Daily News, and citizens at Town Meeting when they were called tax cheats and had their reputations destroyed. ♦

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SYRIANS	538
RUSSIANS	12,605
CHINESE	26,113

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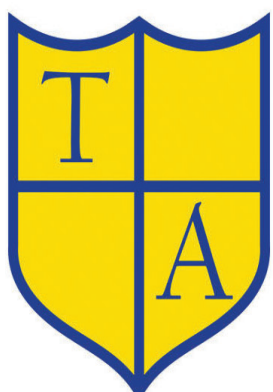


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City of Lawrence Mayor Brian Depena Announces...

EMERGENCY PARKING BAN: Alternate Parking on Certain Streets between 12:01 AM to 6AM

The winter alternate parking ordinance shall only take effect during the dates and times specified in a "SNOW AND ICE EMERGENCY" issued by the Mayor or his/her designee, The snow emergency shall remain in effect until the Mayor rescinds it. Notice of any such rescission shall be given in the same manner as the issuance of the declaration.

Winter Alternate Parking shall mean that on the following streets, between the hours of 12:01 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., daily, vehicles shall, unless otherwise prohibited by law, be parked on one side of the street only, so that on the even-numbered dates of the calendar, vehicles shall be parked on the even-numbered sides of the streets, and on the odd-numbered dates of the calendar, they shall be parked on the odd-numbered sides of the streets: **ORD 10.36.031 (*IF YOUR STREET IS NOT LISTED BELOW, NO PARKING IS ALLOWED*)**

Abbott St Allen St (General St To Angle) Allston St. Ames St. (Riverside Dr. to Haverhill St) Amesbury St Amherst St Appleton St Atkinson St Auburn St Bailey St Ballard St Barker St Barnard St Basswood St Bay State Rd (McFarlin St to Mater St) Beacon St Beaconsfield St Belknap St Bellevue St Bennett St Bennington St (Auburn St to Chestnut St) Beresford St Berkeley St Bigelow St Blanchard St Bodwell St Bowdoin St Boxford St Bradford St Brookfield St Bruce St Burke St Burlington St Butler St Byron Ave Cabot Rd Cambridge St Canal St Canterbury St Carleton St (Andover St to Everett St) Carver St Castle St Cedar St Chandler St Chester St (So. Bway. To Dunstable St.) Chestnut St Chickering St (Cutler St. to Pilgrim Rd.) Cleveland St Clifton St Clinton St	Colonial Dr Colonial Rd Colonial Terrace Columbus Ave (Haverhill St to Meadow St) Concord St Congress St Coolidge St Copley St County St Crescent St Crestwood Cir Crosby St Cross St Cutler St (Chickering St to Marlboro St) Cyr Drive Dana St Danforth St Dartmouth St Davis St. Debbie Lane Dorchester St Dracut St (So. Bway to Dunstable St) Dunstable St Durham St Durso Ave East Boxford St East Boxford Terrace East Haverhill St East Kingston St East Pleasant St East St Easton St (So. Bway to Jefferson St) Eastside St Eaton St Ellis St Elm St Emerald Ave. Erving Ave Eutaw St Everett St Exeter Pl Exeter St Exeter Terrace Fairmont St Fallon St Falmouth St Farley St Farnham St Ferry St Ferguson St	Forest St Foster St Foxcroft St Franklin St Frost Dr Furber St Garden St Garfield St (Cambridge St to Falmouth St) Gilbert St Glenn St Glenwood Drive Gorham St Grafton St Grainger St Grant Rd Green St Greenfield St Greenwood St Groton St Grove St Hamlet St Hancock St Hawley St High St (Except E. Haverhill St to Ferry St) Highgate St Hillside Ave Howard St Hudson Ave Hurst St Inman St Jamaica St Jefferson St Juniper St. (For its entire length on Odd Side of street (East Side only during effective period.) Kenneth St Kent St Kingston St Laurel St Lea St Lebanon St (Hampshire St to Amesbury St) Leeds Ter. Lenox Circle Lenox St Lincoln Ct Lisa Lane Lorenzo Rd Loring Street	Louisburgh St Lowell St (Lawrence St to W. Lowell St) Lynn St Manchester St Maple St Margin St Marie Lane Marion Ave (except Holly St to Spicket River) Marique Dr Mark Lane Market St Marlboro St Marston St Martha Lane Mason St May St Medford St Melrose St Melvin St Middlebury St (Olive Ave to Endicott St) Mill St Milton St (Haverhill St to Bodwell St) Monroe St Morton St Mt. Auburn St Mt. Vernon Cir Mt. Vernon St Mt. Vernon Terrace Newbury St Newton St No. Parish Rd Oak St (East Haverhill to Short St) Oakland Rd Olive Ave (W. Lowell St to Ames St) Orchard St Osgood St Oxford St Packard St Patton St Pembroke Dr Perry Ave Philips St Pilgrim Rd Pleasant St (Ferry St to High St) Portland St Powers St Proctor Rd Prospect St Providence St Railroad St	Richmond St Rita Lane Roberta Lane Rockwood Lane Rowe St Russell St Salem St Sanborn St Sargent St School St Shattuck St Shawsheen Rd Sheridan St Shepard St Short St (Chestnut to Maple St) So. Bowdoin St Sparkle Drive Springfield St Standish Rd Stevens St (Mt. Vernon St to Stevens Ave) Storrow St Summer St Summit Ave Swan St Sylvester St Taft St Temple St Tewksbury St Thomas Rd Tremont St Tyler St Valley St Vandergrift St Walnut St Warren St Water St Weare St West Hawley St West Kenneth St Westchester Drive Westwood Terrace White St Whitman St Wilmot St Winston Dr Winter St Woodland St Wyman St
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ON THE FOLLOWING STREETS BETWEEN 12:01 AM AND 6:00 AM, MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, ALTERNATE PARKING WILL BE ENFORCED YEAR-ROUND: ORD 10.36.190

Ames St, from Haverhill St. to Water St. Andover St Arlington St, from Broadway to the Methuen Line. Broadway, from the Methuen Line to Canal St. Canal St, from Prospect Street to Union St. Common St. East Haverhill St, from Steiner St. to Avon St. Eastside St, entire length. Essex St. Ferry St, from Marston St to East Haverhill St. General Street, from Prospect Street to Union Street. Hampshire St, from Lawrence St to Arlington St	Hampshire St, from Myrtle St to Canal St. Hampshire St, from Canal St to Arlington St. Haverhill St, except from Jackson St to Amesbury St and Broadway. Jackson St, from Canal St to Kendrick St and from Berkeley Street to Methuen Line. Lawrence St. Lowell St, from Ames St to Lawrence St. Market St, from Loring Street to Parker St. Merrimack St. Methuen St, from Broadway to Amesbury St. Methuen St, from Lawrence St to Union St.	Parker St, from Andover St to Merrimack St Prospect St, from the Methuen Line to Canal St. Salem St, from Emmett St to Shawsheen Road, with the exception of that portion of Salem St., between Newton St and Everett St.) Salem St, from Emmett St to South Union St. South Broadway South Union St. Tremont St, from Hampshire St to West St. Union St. Water St, from Ames St to Broadway. West St. Winthrop Avenue, from Chickering St to Parker St.
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The provisions of this section shall not apply to the portions of the following streets which are designated as State highways:

- Jackson Street, north of Berkley Street to Methuen Line-Route 110.
- Riverside Drive, west of Ames Street to the Methuen Line.
- Winthrop Avenue, from the junction of Osgood Street south to Interstate 495.

ALL NIGHT PARKING PERMITTED AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:

- Exterior of BREEN SCHOOL – Yard only
- CARL LINDQUIST PLAYGROUND –Emmett Street side only
- CHARLES STORROW PARK –High Street side only from Pleasant Street southerly to Storrow Terrace
- JAMES F. LEONARD SCHOOL PLAYGROUND –South side
- ARLINGTON SCHOOL –Arlington Street
- Exterior of LAHEY SCHOOL – Yard only
- Exterior of ROLLINS SCHOOL – Platt Street only
- PARTHUM SCHOOL – Playground area to E. Haverhill Street

It is very important that motorists cooperate and remove their vehicles out of all public areas no later than 7:00 A.M... All vehicles will be towed away at the OWNER'S EXPENSE who fails to comply with the above time schedule. Also, all vehicles immobilized by accident, mechanical, uninsured or uninsured left on all city owned land will be towed at OWNER'S EXPENSE. Any questions, call 978-620-3090 or 978-620-3350.

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KANE

VALLEY PATRIOT MASCOT/COLUMNIST

On Sunday New Years Eve Day, Kane went for a woods walk with a group of resident shelter dogs and volunteers from the Lowell Humane Society. In his group was Tillie being walked by her amazing foster care dad and mom Brian and Isabel Surprenant and King being walked by his BFF most excellent volunteer dog walker Douglas Steven's Jr. Both dogs, like Kane, were thrilled to be out in the fresh air smelling all the smells in the woods.

"Animal shelters around the U.S. are bursting at the seams amid the rising cost of living, according to a December 2023 article in the Associated Press written by Michael Hill. The number of animals entering shelters began to climb in 2021.

Kane learned that it has been particularly hard to place larger dogs, adoptions are much slower than the influx of dogs that come to the shelter. Shelter Animals Count, a national database of shelter statistics, estimates that the U.S. shelter population grew by nearly a quarter-million animals in 2023, according to the Associated Press.

Kane learned that one of the main reasons for the shelter crisis is the economy. Many families experience food and home insecurity creating an increase in homeless for families and pets as well as the high cost of food and vet care.

Both Tillie and King were stray pets without a home. Many of Kane's friends at the Humane Society are bigger dogs that were in the shelter much longer as the number of adopters are less and the number of homeless animals have increased. Recently the Lowell Humane Society and other local shelters and rescues have been looking for foster care families so resident dogs may experience a warm home as well as making room in the shelter for other dogs. Many shelters currently have waiting lists.

Kane had the opportunity to interview Volunteer Coordinator Jennifer Ingraham at the Lowell Humane Society



about the benefits of homeless pets being fostered. Jennifer said, "While the staff and volunteers at the Lowell Humane Society do their very best to give love and care to the animals we have, it is no substitute for being in someone's home. Fosters provide a crucial service to us.

By opening their home to an animal, they help reduce stress, can closely monitor health and behavior concerns, and most importantly, give the animal the attention they deserve until they get to their forever home. If you are interested in becoming a foster family to a dog, cat, or smaller homeless pet, please reach out to us at volunteer@lowellhumanesociety.org."

Lowell Humane Society Foster Care Parent Brian Surprenant explained to Kane, "I want to help, and helping homeless pets in the community you live in feels very rewarding. I want to give back to my community."

After Tillie finds a forever home, Brian and his wife Isabel plan to foster other dogs in need. Brian and Isabel don't care which dog, they know that fostering is truly saving a dog in need. It's for a great cause and I'm giving back to my community, said Brian.

Kane found talking to Brian and Isabel inspiring. Fosters are so needed, and Tillie is so lucky to have them.



So, let's meet Tillie.

Kane can't believe Tillie is still at the shelter. She came in as a stray in August and struck gold when she landed an amazing foster home with Brian and Isabel. Tillie told Kane that although she loves everyone at the shelter, she has so much energy it was hard for her. Brian and Isabel take her on 5-mile walks daily so she can be the best girl possible. Kane thought that's great for Tillie but

personally he would complain if his humans wanted him to walk that far.

This is what the staff at the Lowell Humane Society have to say, "Tillie has the pointiest ears in town, and would love to use them to listen to you tell her how beautiful a girl she is! Tillie is about 3 years old and came to the shelter as a stray. Although we don't know her past, it has been a pleasure to be part of her present. Tillie is packed full of energy and would love a human that may take her on hikes or long walks. When she is tuckered out, she's a snuggle bug! She leans against you and appreciates love and attention. The best of both worlds!

To become the best girl we know she can be, we are requiring a training deposit for Tillie. She needs guidance on how to be polite on a leash, and how to be a proper lady. Tillie would do best as the only animal in her home. We are looking for families with teens+, preferably dog-savvy. Have you fallen in love with this sweet face?

Tillie explained to Kane that she and her foster care family love football. She doesn't mind wearing a hat or even a shirt to show her support. Tillie's foster care mom Isabel explained to Kane that she lost her family dog recently and fostering Tillie has helped her heal. "The love she gives you is amazing," said Isabel. Brian explained that their household is unique in that someone is home every day. Brian explained to Kane that Tillie would do best in a household that loves exercise. With enough movement Tillie is able to settle and snuggle. Brian told Kane that he and Isabel will foster Tillie until she finds a forever home, even if that takes forever. Kane thought Tillie was a very lucky girl to have placement with Brian and Isabel.

Introducing King:

So, Kane knows King. He has come over to his house and sat on all his chairs until he settled in the most comfortable chair to watch tv. Being a good host Kane let him have his favorite

KANE: PAGE 18



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Fri-Sat: 11am - 11:30pm
Sunday: 12noon - 9:30pm



Lawrence City Councilor Marc LaPlante (2nd from left) congratulates outgoing city councilors Maria DeLa Cruz, Estela Reyes, and Rich Russell.




Mike Sullivan of Sullivan Insurance presenting a holiday donation to Lazarus House executive director Carmen Vega. Arbella Mutual Insurance also did a matching donation. If you can donate to this great agency Lazarus House needs YOUR help... connect with Donna Morris at (978) 269-5205 or donna@lazarushouse.org



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Methuen Village Honored With Purple Flag for Dementia Care™ Accreditation

METHUEN - Methuen Village, an assisted living and memory support community, held a flag-raising ceremony today to celebrate receiving the Purple Flag for Dementia Care™ accreditation. Methuen Village is just the fifth community in the state to become Purple Flag accredited.

Purple Flag for Dementia Care™ is a collaboration between the Institute for Senior Living Education (ISLE) and the Connecticut Assisted Living Association (CALA) but has since expanded outside of CT. The program's standards evaluate an organization's capacity to provide collaborative care in a safe, functional and respectful environment, ensuring high quality care and overall quality of life for residents. As part of the evaluation process, Methuen Village had to demonstrate adherence to 60 best practice standards and training outlined by Purple Flag for services provided to individuals with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

The flag-raising event provided an opportunity for the community's associates, residents, family members and local eldercare professionals to celebrate the milestone achievement. Neil Perry, Mayor of Methuen and Eunice Ziegler, Chairwoman of the City Council, were also in attendance, offering their enthusiastic support of the



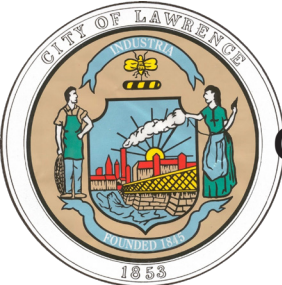
Terri Sullivan, Chris Carter, and the Methuen Village team are proud to display the Purple Flag

remarkable team at Methuen Village. The purple flag will now fly in front of the community as a symbol of excellence in memory care.

"Purple Flag's mission really hit home with us," shared Terri Sullivan, Director of Community Relations at

Methuen Village. "They aim to advocate for residents and families and recognize those organizations that go above and beyond, the ones that focus on staff training and education, aim to protect resident independence, and truly see residents for who they are and what they

can still do. I so hope more communities in our area are encouraged to participate in Purple Flag's process, because it means families will have better, higher-quality choices for their loved ones."



CITY OF LAWRENCE CHANGES CITY HALL OPERATING HOURS IN 2024

The City of Lawrence wants to inform you about the new operating hours at Lawrence City Hall starting January 8, 2024!

Monday:
8:30 AM 4:30 PM

Tuesday:
8:30 AM 7:00 PM

Wednesday:
8:30 AM 4:30 PM

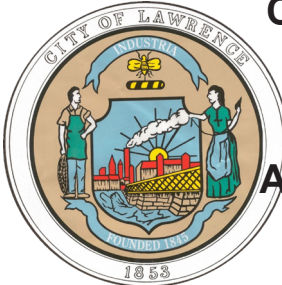
Thursday:
8:30 AM 4:30 PM

Friday:
8:30 AM 1:30 PM

These changes aim to improve accessibility and provide better service to our community. We look forward to continuing to serve you with the same dedication!

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Lunes:
8:30 AM 4:30 PM

Martes:
8:30 AM 7:00 PM

Miércoles:
8:30 AM 4:30 PM

Jueves:
8:30 AM 4:30 PM

Viernes:
8:30 AM 1:30 PM

Estos cambios buscan mejorar la accesibilidad y brindar un mejor servicio a nuestra comunidad. ¡Esperamos seguir sirviéndoles con la misma dedicación!

Para más información, visite nuestro sitio web www.cityoflawrence.com o llámenos al 978 620 3010.

¡Gracias por su comprensión!



Former Lawrence City Councilor Dave Abdoo recently took a trip to Key West and brought along his Valley Patriot to read while he was resting and recreating.



Arturo Zuniga of Haverhill (middle) was the recipient of a 2023 Valley Patriot BASH! scholarship, seen here with Valley Patriot publisher Tom Duggan and Zuniga's former Guidance Counselor Lee Gastonguay at Salvatores Restaurant last month. Duggan is gearing up for the Valley Patriot's 20th Anniversary in March!

The Sound of Silence

Philippe Thibault

VALLEY PATRIOT DRACUT CONTRIBUTOR

The greatest philosophical questions in the world are often passed off as a gag line. What is the sound of one hand clapping? If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there, does it make a noise? There are academic discussions that can be made from these queries. Then we have the rhetoric question: "How do you know when a politician is lying?" When their lips are moving. Just try to find a politician that can refrain from bloviating. A wise man speaks because he has something to say, a fool because he has to say something.

A saga continues at the Dracut Zoning Bylaw Review Committee (ZBRC) as they turn their attention to a Massachusetts State law that requires communities serviced by the MBTA to create additional market rate housing through local zoning bylaws. The ZBRC was originally convened to evaluate and rewrite Dracut's Zoning Bylaws, last reviewed when Ronald Reagan was in his second term as President (1985 for the non-historian). This latest State mandate of the MBTA Zone requires adoption to create residential zones with a density of fifteen dwelling units per acre by December of 2024. The task of hammering out the particulars is given to the ZBRC.

Alison Genest, who sits as the Selectmen representative on the ZBRC, has a more nefarious objective. Silencing political adversaries. I could understand involvement and interest in zoning and town planning by most people in town. Citizens have spoken about what they like about Dracut and that progress has been slowly eroding the bucolic nature of the community. These citizens also understand that progress is coming, wanted or not, and good planning is necessary to maintain what is precious. Alison Genest has no knowledge of planning and wants the sepia toned snapshot of Dracut preserved in perpetuity. Alison Genest is a mere contrarian.

Alison Genest will stop at nothing, it appears, to enforce her will. This includes suspension of the Constitution of the United States. At the December 14th meeting of the ZBRC, the committee was looking to add alternate members to its roles. There has been an issue with maintaining quorum and with the MBTA zoning discussions commencing, delays would put the December 2024 deadline for adoption in jeopardy. Three people submitted applications to be appointed. Mr. Warren Shaw, the public member at large, motioned to increase the number of alternate positions and have all three applicants appointed. His reasoning was that the seriousness of the work benefited by the additional minds and public involvement.

The fly in the ointment, being one of the applicants had been an applicant for the at large member previously a year ago. Okay, okay you guessed by now that I am that applicant. The reason for the denial of a year ago is cited from a ten-minute radio interview

eight years ago in 2016. How anybody can recall this unremarkable event with such specificity is mindboggling. I had resigned from the Planning Board because as the architect for a project that required Planning Board approval, I needed to recuse myself as a member of the Planning Board. I decided to resign from the Board for the integrity of the process and removal any conflicts. Alison Genest now contends that anything I do in Dracut presents a conflict. Nothing could be further from the truth, but Genest has learned that the truth and facts should not stand in the way of a political objective.

During discussion at the ZBRC Alison Genest stated that she has spoken with "legal" about the appointment. Notice the twisting of language. She will play fast and loose with the rules, but language is where the deception lies. Her mentor would be proud of her linguistic gymnastics. She never states that she has spoken with "Town Counsel" but only legal or counsel. I highly doubt she has spoken to anyone at the Town Counsel's firm. And when pressed to confirm her conversations for the ZBRC, Alison Genest dodges the issue by claiming the legal accounts are already over budget and the Selectmen are reining in any superfluous requests. Therefore, we must take her word that she has spoken with legal, they have opined on the subject, and there is nothing left here to look at. Move along!

The coup de gras came with Alison Genest's final statements. Emphasizing that "legal" had also informed her, that any participation by yours truly with the ZBRC was in direct violation of the will of the Selectmen. Alison Genest needed to stress this point. My participation as a member of the public and citizen of the Town of Dracut, or for that matter any rival's participation, creates a conflict and requires suppression. Alison Genest and "legal" are the sole interpreters. Infallible and unimpeachable judge, jury, and executioners. If there is a contradiction between her ruling and First Amendment free speech, free speech must be subrogated.

An opinion from the Massachusetts Ethics Commission in writing has been requested. If Dracut can no longer afford counsel, there are other avenues to travel. I do not anticipate being appointed when cleared of any conflicts of interest. Alison Genest and her cohorts will need to look for another reason for the denial. Brian Genest, Alison Genest's husband and contributor to this paper, will offer the myriad of articles he has penned of my multiple election defeats to Joe DiRocco and the moniker of "proven loser" as reasoning for a rejection. He is entitled to his opinions, even when the Genests would strip me of mine. They would rather have the sound of silence but will listen to the song of angry men. They will hear the people sing. ♦

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KANE: FROM PAGE 13

spot for the visit. King is a 4-year-old Majestic American Pitbull Mix!

The staff at the Lowell Humane Society asks, "Are you ready to welcome royalty into your home? Look no further - King is here to steal your heart and become the reigning monarch of your affections!"

King is the epitome of charm and intelligence bundled into a cuddly canine package. He's as smart as they come and has a heart as vast as his love for cuddles. King is the ideal companion for someone seeking a loyal and affectionate furry friend.

Since King prefers the spotlight and is looking for a home where he can be the sole ruler of your heart. He enjoys the company of older, sturdy kids who can match his energy and appreciate his playful spirit. While King adores people, he prefers to be the only pet in the kingdom to bask in all the attention.

King is an adventurer at heart. He has hiked the grand Mount Wachusett,

showcasing his love for the great outdoors. Whether it's a brisk walk in the park or a cozy movie night at home, King is up for any royal decree that involves quality time with his human companions.

This clever canine is not just a pretty face - King has a high prey drive and loves engaging in games that stimulate his intelligence. He's mastered basic commands and is eager to learn more to impress his loyal subjects. King thrives in a calm environment with older children who understand and respect his majestic nature. An experienced owner who appreciates his intelligence and cuddle-worthy personality will find themselves with a true royal companion.

King was missing some fur when he arrived to us, but he has received treatment and it is growing in beautifully. He is in excellent health, fully vaccinated, neutered, and ready to embark on new adventures with his forever family.

If you're ready to crown your home with the love and companionship of King, fill out an adoption application today. Prepare for a life filled with royal snuggles, loyalty beyond measure, and the joy of sharing your castle with a truly majestic canine.

So, if you would like to meet Tillie or King,

the Lowell Humane Society is open every day from 12-4, closed on Mondays. If you are interested in meeting Tillie or King, please call us at 978-452-7781, email the shelter; it is open every day from 12-4, closed on Mondays. If you are interested in a pet, please call us at 978-452-7781, email info@lowellhumanesociety.org, or stop by the shelter to request an adoption application.

So how can you help during this homeless pet crisis, please consider volunteering, fostering, adopting, or donating to a local shelter. As for Tillie and King, well I will keep you posted about when they get adopted.

Warmly,

Kane, Columnist Valley Patriot

Woof ♡



Rage Against the Dying of Democracy's Light

Kenneth Willette

VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Poet Dylan Thomas once wrote: "Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light." It is one of the most powerful poems ever composed. Even when faced with seemingly insurmountable odds, why not give all your remaining strength to fight the onslaught of possible defeat. That is the true essence of humanity. It is also a testament to America's fighting spirit. Valley Forge, the Alamo, Midway, and the Battle of the Bulge---just to identify some noteworthy examples of resilience, fortitude and even sacrifice when vanquished (such as the poor Alamo souls.)

Independents, Republicans, and any remaining moderate Democrats must marshal their resources to confront the dying of the light, which metaphorically in this column is our constitutional republic. Because there are nefarious elements in this country who are dead set in their determination to unilaterally control your choices on whom you should vote for. That is a wildly dangerous theory, which reeks of a Third World junta or a communist nation.

I am excited to see the outcome of the Republican primaries nationwide because it may not be a forgone conclusion despite what the media pundits predict. And even a non-Trump voter can see the raw partisan power play being waged to permanently extinguish the wishes of millions of voters.

What Biden and his henchmen are doing across the nation is to declare that the experiment of our enduring republic will suffer irreparable harm with Trump on the ballot. Mind you, this arbitrary decision is not founded on the precedent of a prior United States Supreme Court ruling, an

outright conviction in the United States Senate, or any specific charges relating to insurrection. Therefore, the game is obviously rigged here.

One of Trump's cases just so happens to occur in the District of Columbia, which conveniently is a venue where 92% of the vote went to Biden. Good luck with that jury pool! Suddenly, District Attorneys in New York and Georgia, who specifically campaigned on a promise to prosecute Trump, are now miraculously impartial when going to trial, the hallmarks of communist show trials.

Isn't it revealing that the controversial decision by the Colorado Supreme Court to ban Trump from their state's presidential ballot is celebrated by the Left as a victory for democracy. What is even more comical is that although Trump may regain access to the GOP primary ballot, the Colorado Supreme Court reserves the right to deny Trump access to the general election ballot in November 2024. Based on what? Polling data?

What are Colorado's Democrats ultimately fearful about? Last time I checked, Trump was defeated by 13 points in that state's 2020 race. Has he closed the polling gap so much that Leftists are disturbingly abandoning due process, inventing criminal charges, and misinterpreting the 14th Amendment, Section 3, which has never been tested in 150 years.

Any student of American history will readily recognize that this is not the first rodeo for Democrats to deny ballot access to their opponents. According to the National Park Service, the Southern states that eventually formed the Confederacy denied ballot access to Lincoln. I know that Lincoln winning any Southern states in 1860 would be like a snowball surviving in Dubai, but is that really the point? Why the rush to judgment? Is that the historical company modern

Leftists want to imitate? Even Socialist Eugene Debs was able to run for President from prison despite being convicted on bogus charges of sedition. Not surprisingly, it was Racist-in-Chief Democrat Woodrow Wilson who put Debs in jail, simply because he opposed the wartime draft and America's entry into World War I. Again, there was no evidence that Debs became radicalized or engaged in violence against the government, but why not send a political opponent to jail on trumped up charges? Sounds familiar? Personally, I think Debs was too enamored with the Potemkin Village mirages of the Soviet system, but why take away his freedom of speech (his newspapers were shut down by the government) and his freedom, period?

Remember there were many Leftists who wanted to ban Trump from the ballot merely because he failed to disclose his tax returns. They were convinced that he was guilty of tax evasion, but like the falsity of Russian Collusion, the Leftists were dead wrong. That is hilarious given the alleged crimes of tax evasion against multiple members of the Biden syndicate.

Notice a pattern emerging here. Remove your opponent from the ballot outright. Jail your opponent. Use extraconstitutional maneuvers among the Democratic States to deny the voters a choice.

The circus continues in that Biden is doing everything to deny Trump ballot access, while simultaneously bypassing the will of the voters in New Hampshire and Florida. Again, I am not saying that Dean Phillips, who is running against Biden on the premise that he is too old, has an ice cream's chance at Salisbury Beach during a heat wave, but isn't Biden weakening democracy in two profound ways? The Washington Post



erroneously proclaims: --'Democracy Dies in Darkness.' Biden is doing this machination with transparency and with the gleeful approval of the MSNBC sheep.

Don't expect too much help from the newest generation, which heavily votes Democratic. According to the Economist, 20% of young Americans believe that the Holocaust is a myth. 50% of the same demographic favors the dissolution of the Israeli Jewish nation, despite the barbarism of October 7th. Imagine most young adults having no problem with eradicating a modern democratic republic, and a subset of ignoramuses who can't fathom the horrors leading to the creation of the Jewish homeland in the first place. Not a reassuring harbinger of our republic's future.

Thank God that most of Maine's bipartisan federal delegation is calling out the unsubstantiated decision of their Secretary of State—who isn't even an attorney and not directly elected by the people. The Union saving actions of the 20th Maine Regiment at Gettysburg may not have been in vain. That is the catalyst of hope. ♡



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WILL CASTRO BE PERMANENT?


Lawrence Mayor Brian DePena is expected to send down William Castro's name to the city council for approval to be the permanent Lawrence Police Chief. Castro is currently the Acting Police Chief after former Chief Roy Vasque was pushed out over politics. Castro was appointed as DePena's Chief of Staff after several failed in that position and was instrumental in pushing out Vasque. Since becoming acting police chief, Castro has mended some fences, worked well with neighborhood groups, has tried to hold rogue officers accountable, and is trying really hard to bring an out-of-control department back to some sanity. But he is fighting internal corruption, political interference, and social media smear campaigns.

I'm rooting for Castro. I think he understands what has to be done and if he was made permanent chief the superior officers who have been dragging their feet on needed reforms would have no choice but to start doing their jobs or find another line of work. I say, the new council should give Castro a contract with specific, achievable goals that are measurable to concrete. Given clear direction, I think Castro can build bridges over the next two years given the chance. The question is, will the new council treat him fairly and on his performance? Or will they simply reject him to spite Mayor DePena? I'm holding out hope that the Lawrence City Council will behave better than the Methuen City Council did on this police chief issue. The one thing Lawrence doesn't need is to start behaving as badly as Methuen.

WHERE WILL THE CLADDAGH END UP?

We know Brian from the Claddagh has been feverishly trying to find a new location for the Claddagh after losing his lease in Lawrence. I was very disappointed to learn that Lawrence city officials did little to nothing to help the Claddagh stay in the city after three decades. When we got word that a car wash failed to get approval at the Fireside Restaurant in Methuen, we

TOM DUGGAN'S NOTEBOOK



Valley Patriot columnist Alex Talcott (left) was murdered in August of last year in Durham, NH, the day before Tom Duggan went into the hospital for more than 30 days. Tom is now finally healthy enough to start investigating Alex's death as the Durham police and the NH courts have illegally concealed the identity of his killer, even though they admit they know who did it. Anyone with info please call (978) 771-4091 or email valleypatriot@aol.com

thought this might be a perfect spot for the new Claddagh. We are cheering on Brian and hoping that he can find a new location in the Lawrence area, preferably in Lawrence. We will let you know when there is an update. In the meantime, I urge Lawrence Mayor Brian DePena to come up with a plan to keep the Claddagh in the city. I hear officials in Methuen are trying really hard to lure him there.

THE HOMELESS FORGOTTEN

Last year at this time I wrote a glowing editorial praising Lawrence Mayor Brian DePena for opening up a warming shelter and putting the needs of the homeless and displaced citizens at the top of his priority list during a cold spell. He also developed an emergency plan to help the homeless in similar weather emergencies. This month, however, his administration dropped the ball when they issued a

press release shortly before the first snowstorm saying that he would be opening a warming shelter ... but only if the temperature dips below 10 degrees. That is unacceptable. I'm not sure what idiot randomly came up with a standard of 10 degrees to help freezing people who are sleeping outside in a snowstorm, but that person needs to be sent home before the next cold spell hits. I love Brian DePena and I know how much he cares about the homeless, but, all too often he listens to the wrong people and is blinded by loyalty.

Not everyone in his administration has his or the city's best interest at heart, many of them have personal agendas. The City of Lawrence recently discovered \$3M in an account at economic development that was given to the city for services to the homeless. That \$3M would be plenty of money for Carina Pappalardo to build a new homeless shelter over at Daybreak. It would be plenty of money to feed and keep warm every homeless person in the city, and then some. Mayor DePena needs to have a permanent policy of making warming shelters available to displaced residents whenever there is a snow emergency, and task a responsible city worker to get it implemented without needing approval for every move they make. It's also obvious someone needs to be held accountable for this month's fiasco.

HEY METHUEN, AT LEAST LAWRENCE HAS A HOMELESS PLAN

With all the focus on the homeless in Lawrence these days you might think that there are no homeless people in Methuen. There are. And while I am disappointed that Lawrence officials dropped the ball during this last storm, at least Lawrence has a plan to help the homeless, has a homeless coordinator, and dedicates resources to help those with no place to go. Methuen on the other hand, has no plan to

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help the homeless in severe weather, leaving homeless volunteers of TMF in Lawrence to trek up to Methuen and provide food, blankets, hand warmers and essential items to get them through the bad weather. Maybe the new city council can start to formulate an emergency plan and allocate resources to the homeless in Methuen so they don't all end up in Lawrence burdening the officials in that city. Lawrence is already overwhelmed because other communities don't take care of their own citizens; it's time the communities around Lawrence start taking care of their own.

SPEAKING OF METHUEN, WE HAVE A NEW COUNCIL

With corrupt troublemakers Steve Saba and Jim McCarty no longer on the Methuen City Council (they were termed out) the newly seated council looks like they might actually be able to get something done for the taxpayers over the next two years. Sure, they still have to deal with Mayor Perry and his "friends and family" hiring practices in city hall and they will also have to navigate all the multi-million-dollar lawsuits the city faces as the result of the previous councils bad behavior. But, with new councilors Nelly Soto, Jana Zanni Pesce, Joyce Campagnone, Patricia Valley, and Ron Marsan joining the board I expect a lot more accountability in Methuen over the next two years. Returning to the council are Allie Saffie, Dave Beauregard, Nick DiZoglio, and Joel Faretra. The council voted to name Faretra as council chairman and newcomer Nelly Soto as vice-chair.

WILL LAWRENCE REGAIN CONTROL OF THEIR SCHOOLS?

Last summer the DePena Administration announced on my podcast that finally, there was a comprehensive plan to have the state department of education turn control of the Lawrence Schools back over to the city. The mayor said at the time that they could not find any other example

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TOM'S DISH OF THE MONTH



Linguini and Clams at Salvatore's Restaurant in Lawrence

Sue Piazza's Book Reviews

Kaimana The Hawaiian Mermaid
Text by Tara Coyote, Illustrations by Nica Quinn

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Genre: Children, Education, Ecology
Bookmarkers: 5 of 5

The book is a two for. The main story is for children, the other, longer and more in-depth is an educational/informational tutorial specifically focused on the oceans, their inhabitants, their overall health and what efforts we can take to make sure that all living things survive, as they have a right to.

The premise of the children's story is that Kaimana, the mermaid, details her idyllic underwater paradise life, but over time she sees changes. Whales are dying, coral reefs are damaged, plastics and all manner of debris are invading her oceans. And this disruption is due to humankind's interference.

The pages and print on the 18-page children story are small if you are reading on a tablet and I zoomed in several times. Still difficult. Some of the illustrations, while pretty, were also a problem for me. I understand that the blue/green color was supposed to mimic the ocean, but it tended more to make the graphics dark and less appealing. I would've rather had an outline in the color rather than the color all filled in.

I'm not so sure that this is really a book that children can relate to, unless the child is an older one. Ages 6-12 are suggested. Much of this text appears to be a concise and somewhat less intense version of the extended adult version of this storyline.

The characters are well defined and yet I wonder about the voice given to these mermaids and mermen. Can a young child relate?

Ms. Coyote explains that this very personal project is a tribute to her "ardent environmentalists" parents who imparted a love of the planet and its living creatures to her. Her parents both died shortly before this book's publication.

While there are 94 different whale species, the author's focus is on the sperm and humpback whale. The information she imparts is segmented nicely. There is a section on conservation information, whale songs, migration patterns, threats to the whale's lives, etc. There is also a part devoted to coral reefs, how plastics, global changes, etc. are destroying these once living organisms through human recklessness. An extensive Resource section is found at the end of the book. It gives detailed places from where one can seek further knowledge as well as places where one could devote one's additional actions towards.

Ms. Coyote also delivers numerous



alarming facts; yet there is no documentation to tell the reader where she gleaned her information from. This example is taken from the segment on: Plastic Damage to Coral Reefs: "... a huge survey of the 159 coral reefs across Asia-Pacific region showed that over 11.1 billion plastic particles are entangling the corals..." This is an impressive and disturbing statistic, but where did she pull this from?

Another questionable statistic: "There is more microplastic in the ocean than there are stars in the Milky Way." That microplastics are found in the human body, especially in fetal placental tissue is unconscionable. Again, source material is lacking.

One unnerving incident was documented in the news. On January 27, 2023, a sperm whale washed up on the coast of Kauai. "Its stomach contained: six hagfish traps, seven types of fishing nets, two types of plastic bags, a light protector, fishing line and a float from a net. It was sadly choked by these man-made materials that created a blockage in the whale's intestinal track, which blocked the whale from absorbing food."

The book concludes with info on her brother's organization which uses art image algorithms for whale photos. This helps in advancing tracking. Part of the proceeds of her book go to help his organization in its endeavors.

Much more than a children's book. If you are looking to educate yourself on marine ecosystems and some of its inhabitants, I'd say this is the book for you. I found it disturbing, thoughtful, and very impactful.

I would recommend with the caveat that the child's age and mental maturity be considered. It is not a light read.

Susan Piazza, a Navy veteran, is an author, columnist, and blogger. "A Bird Call That Isn't," the first book in her Ongoing Indigenous Tale series can be found on Amazon at A Bird Call That Isn't: A Bird Call That Isn't: American Indian Interracial Historical Romance (An Ongoing Indigenous Tale Book 1) ◊

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**BENEATH THE SURFACE
WITH PAUL MURANO**

**From a Civilization of Life,
to a Culture of Death,
to an Age of Insanity**

Do you ever wonder how things in our society got so bad? All of a sudden? Do you feel like you live in an age of insanity? What happened!?

This is a question that baffles all people of good will today, especially those of a certain age.

No era in human history has been without its own particular evils. However, there is a large segment of our population today that remembers when people were civil to each other, and when politics was about disputing how best to grow the economy rather than debating the nature of man or the meaning of woman. Many people alive today remember when people waited for marriage to engage in sexual relations, and when children were seen as a gift from God rather than a burden to avoid. They remember when businesses were closed every Sunday and honored it as a day devoted to God and family.

This wasn't too long ago. Many people alive today also remember when one salary was sufficient for a family to raise children in a dignified manner, and when children were considered much more valuable than material things or vacation trips. Similarly, they remember being in the habit of leaving their house unlocked when going shopping or out to dinner. Today, many need house alarms and double-locks to feel safe and secure.

There are even people alive today who remember that TV shows would refrain from showing married couples sharing the same bed.

The Brady Bunch was the first to do so. Further, a young man had to go of his way to find a risqué magazine to see an image of a nude woman from the waist up (more nudity would have landed its producers in jail for obscenity).

There is a good chunk of the population today who still remembers a time when the three TV stations everyone had showed nothing but family programming. They recall when men weren't ridiculed on every TV show and women weren't pressured to choose between being sexually promiscuous or acting like a second-rate man; when leading women didn't have to get naked in frivolous sex scenes, and when white heterosexual men were actually seen in TV commercials.

There was a time not long ago when even 'tomboys' weren't confused about their so-called sexuality.

Everyone knew kids went through various stages and never once thought of mutilating them if they identified with something they were not. Many remember when the black family was intact and far better off than it is now, and when Democrats weren't actively trying to divide people according to race, sex, ethnicity, and creed.



Most of us remember a time when there was no fear of communicating common sense, because virtually everyone accepted it. Insane asylums were the places you'd find people challenging the basic tenets of reality, not the media, universities, and woke corporations. There was no fear of being cancelled for supporting what is true and good.

There are people alive today who remember when killing preborn children was unheard of, when pregnancy out of wedlock was extremely rare, and when extended families got together as an ongoing tradition on Sundays, birthdays, and holidays. They recall when the United States of America was a model of morality and prosperity, not a "racist-sexist" place to be hated.

Of course, there are good things happening today. Nonetheless, no one can deny the currently low happiness quotient, as evident by high suicide rates. People are much more depressed than in previous eras. So, how did we get from there to here in such a short period of time?

I will conclude not with an answer, but with a plug. I just published a book that deals directly with this question. It's an easy-to-read dialogue that explores this mystery from a Catholic, and common sense, perspective – of how almost overnight we went from a civilization of life to a culture of death to an age of insanity.

It may offend those who have allowed themselves to be molded by the world of the past half-century, but will inspire those who have softer hearts and open minds.

It's titled "The Devil-ution of Society" and can now be found on Amazon. For more information go to my website at www.Paulmurano.com.

Paul Murano is producer and host of Beneath the Surface podcast, and has taught college philosophy & theology over 15 years. Check out his website and youtube channel at www.Paulmurano.com and www.Youtube.com/Veritas3737, and e-mail Paul at PJDM@aol.com.

THE DOCTOR IS IN!

Staying Very Young as We Age

Dr. Pierre Ghassibi
VALLEY PATRIOT MEDICAL COLUMNIST

Greetings everyone.

The following are proven facts now. Physical and mental exercise added to a plant-based diet can keep us younger as we grow older.

Unlike machines that age the more we use them, it is fascinating that hard physical and mental work rejuvenates the body. New young cell production is stimulated by use. Stress strengthens and rejuvenates. Bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, neurons remain more functional if we tell them that we need them. The body somehow knows when it is no longer needed, and manages to decay and die after retirement (I mean after physiologic retirement, not retirement from our job).

We do not much like to exercise in general, but we can always find something enjoyable to do. The more the better. Even jumping in place safely

while holding dumbbells for half a minute three times a day is excellent. If we have bad knees, we can exercise in bed or in a chair, or in a swimming pool. The results are very tangible. The effect on stress and pain is a big bonus.

Let us now examine the plant based diet: less arterial obstruction, less heart failure, less diabetes, less high blood pressure, less osteoporosis, less dementia, less diverticulitis, less constipation, less cancer, but also less pollution, less greenhouse gases (look it up), more food to feed the growing world population, less animal cruelty. Look at online videos of slaughterhouses: animals are tortured before and during slaughter; cows are milked to death for our milk and cheese. It is not praying in our prayer houses that leads to salvation of the soul, it is compassion.

P. Ghassibi, md
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One Minuteman LLC, Andover Vision LLC, \$2,250,000, 1 Minuteman Rd Unit 3
David T Piscatelli, Nirav Shah & Nehal Mehta, \$1,999,000, 95 Jenkins Rd
Yvon Comier Tr & CA Investment Trust, Jeffrey P & Deborah M Manning, \$1,755,000, 25 Robert Dr Unit 6-1
28 Sagamore Drive CBC LLC, Matthew J & Laura J Smith, \$1,699,000, 28 Sagamore Dr
Brian D Brown Tr & Brian D Brown 2018 Family Trust, Lindsay Smith Gendron & Paul Gendron, \$1,510,000, 6 Whittemore Ter
Paul J St Hilaire Tr & Village Realty Trust, Collaborative Wayland Holdings LLC, \$1,425,000, 1 Frederick Dr
Maki N Bara Tr & 2017 Maki N Bara Family Trust, BW & LQ Living Trust & Bin Wu Tr & Ling Qiu Tr, \$1,265,000, 21 Ivana Dr Unit 12-1
Dennis Sullivan Tr & 11 Heather Drive Realty Trust, Jonathan J & Kimberly A Carkeek, \$882,500, 11 Heather Dr
Brett & Krystal Herlihy, Jennifer & Joseph Paul Bogigian Jr, \$870,000, 3 Larchmont Cir
Max J Chaiken & Daniel G Shapiro, Guido Mittelsdorf & Claudia Rangel, \$869,000, 3 Candlewood Dr
Kim F Caraviello Tr & 2016 KFC Realty Trust, Daniel A & Danielle L Lang, \$812,500, 85 Central St
James M & Mary Long, Patrick Goddard, \$780,000, 8 Burton Farm Dr
Susan Cancro Trust & Susan Cancro Tr, Jean Touchan & Sali Merjanah Tr & Touchan Merjanah Joint Revocable Trust, \$730,000, 1 Wild Rose Dr Unit 3
Laura A Burkle Tr & 7 Robandy Road Realty Trust, Jay Glickman, \$701,000, 7 Robandy Rd
Cascade Funding Alternative Holdings LLC, Matthew & Amanda Strong, \$685,000, 13 Alden Rd
Richard L Green & Sylvia Loraine Bearden, Akanksha Saxena, \$639,900, 6 North St
Kristian P Courtney, Sarah M Kenney, \$615,000, 6 Arthur Rd
5 Monmouth Street LLC, Jennifer Sparacino, \$610,000, 13 Canterbury St
Diane L Mahoney/Diane Lynn Finkenaur, Frederick Horne & Zoe Cabaret-Salameh, \$610,000, 66 High St
Regina M Carusi, Sean Patrick Martin & Lisa Gail Hart, \$539,000, 170 Haverhill St Unit 133
Charles M Garabedian Tr & C&M Realty Trust, Eileen Mehta, \$529,000, 22 Railroad St Unit 502
Julio C Coiscou Jr & Hairolina J Jimenez, George Thorlin & George Thorlin II, \$527,150, 5 Reservation Rd Unit 5
Robert E Wall & Arleen F Evans, Bishwas Ghimire & Laxmi Lamsal, \$479,000, 40 Stevens St
Stephanie Marie Thompson Tr & James Patrick Thompson Tr & James & Stephanie Thompson Family Trust, Ramanjini Dasari & Lavanya Myla, \$470,000, 100 Brookside Dr Unit F
Maycon De Souza Cordeiro & Alexandra Reid/Alexandra Cordeiro,

Katie Howland, \$375,000, 23 Summer St Unit 2
Jessica K Chartier, John R Valerio, \$339,900, 16 Balmoral St Unit 403
Tobias P Rao & Kyla C Hart, Ashley D'Andrea, \$285,000, 20 Colonial Dr Unit 20-9
Castelmar Properties LLC, Sarah Meier & David J Sharkey, \$255,000, 6 Crescent Dr Unit 4
Jennifer C Scott & Newrez LLC, Jianming Wei, \$231,000, 1 Longwood Dr Unit 110
Judith A Goonyep, Fosters Pond Corp, \$12,500, 23 Willard St

LAWRENCE

F&J Wholesalers Inc, AYJ Common St LLC, \$1,900,000, 555-557 Common St
Douglas L Shaffer Tr & South Broadway Realty Trust II, Carlos R Montemor Jr Tr & 354 South Broadway Realty Trust, \$893,000, 354-356 South Broadway
NSG Real Estate LLC, Kimball Lawrence St LLC, \$865,000, 292-294 Ames St
Grechy J Rosario, Luis E Pimentel & Anabel Ventura, \$745,000, 6-8 Reservoir Ter
Adolfo Polanco & Jhosy Maria, Mario Peralta & Selenny M Paulino Igelsia, \$720,000, 103-105 Bowdoin St
Moises Camilo, Truong Property Management LLC, \$720,000, 12 Leroy Ave
NSG Real Estate LLC, Kimball Lawrence St LLC, \$700,000, 35-37 Falmouth St
Brenda Cancel, Wilmer Ventura Mendoza, \$700,000, 103-105 Spruce St
3JO Property Management Inc, Claribel & Alcadio Gil & Confesora Fernandez, \$690,000, 65 Exeter St
Aziz Antra & Bouazza Antra, Luis Cepeda, \$680,000, 11 Boston St
Leonard C Blum, Gilson S Cardoso, \$670,000, 13-15 Falmouth St
Noelia Robles, Asia Mercado & Sonya Cabrera, \$670,000, 95 Newton St
9 Campo Seco Street LLC, Suarez Investment LLC, \$630,000, 9 Campo Seco St
Long Term Rentals, Jose Virgilio Torres Chavez & Fiordaliza Rivas Morales, \$630,000, 144-146 Water St
Gerda Boucard, Eliu Cruz, \$600,000, 35 Abbott St
Patricia & Michael Diodati, Benjamin Grenon & Jeannette Weber, \$550,000, 133-135 Bowdoin St
Martha D Mauser & William G Clark, Kelvin De La Cruz Rodriguez & Silvia Herquelis Urena De Polanco, \$500,000, 118 Brookfield St
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Evelyn M Rodriguez, Jayson M De Soto & Vincente Astacio De La Cruz, \$480,000, 50 Columbus Ave
Ramon Cabrera, Sandra Lahens, \$475,000, 20 School St
Jenny & Harrison Parra, Marielys Pena Paulino & Valentin Berroa, \$450,000, 12 Chelmsford St
U S Bank NA Tr, Jose Cosma Gill,

\$450,000, 91 Butler St
Yolander Guerrette, Carlos L Pojoy & Alexandra L Matul, \$436,000, 11 East Platt St
Norman B Nimmo, Ian Cable, \$429,900, 24 Yale St
Brian E Durkin & William F Durkin Est, Lionela Colon Pilar, \$415,000, 33 Marique Dr
Angel Casanova, Pedro Valazquez, \$400,000, 98 Stearns Ave
Agustin Ortega & Evelyn Remigio De Ortega, Manuel Baez Veras & Luz M Martinez De Leiniz, \$389,000, 58 Lake St
Czeslawa Pelczar Tr & Pelczar Realty Trust, Rafael A Cabral, \$384,900, 117 Allston St
Dorothy A Paskevich & Mary L Gobush & Joseph J Blazeovich, Rosario Rodriguez & Ursula Rodriguez, \$380,000, 114 Byron Ave
Nahum Rodriguez Caraballo Sr & Yesenia Lopez Rosario, Hajar Ibtisam Rouane & Kamal El-Kallassi, \$378,000, 101 Sunset Ave Unit A
Joyce M Armeen, Yenni E Guzman De Martinez & Nelson Martinez Arvelo, \$370,000, 57 Hawley St
Car Investments LLC, Cesar Alexander Checo, \$350,000, 8 Lexington St
William Noelcke Jeffrey Noelcke Est/Jeffrey W Noelcke Est, Anyelina Perez, \$293,000, 47A Kent St
Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston, Eversource Gas Co of Massachusetts, \$25,000, 526 Lowell St

METHUEN

Mob-5 Branch Street LLC, 5 Branch Methuen LLC, \$15,500,000, 5 Branch St
Maria S Barcelos Tr & Barcelos Family Revocable Trust & Roberto Barcelos & Teresa Zingales & Carolann Barcelos Bernier, 75 Union Street LLC, \$2,500,000, 75 Union St Units 1-12
Violet M Ganim Tr & Ganim Family Trust, Victoria Ranieri, \$930,000, 7 Pine Tree Dr
Johathan E & Shawna Marsan, Joffy Nanje, \$780,000, 1 Holly St
Thomas R McCarthy & Michele L Williams, Brian J & Arcilia Boyson, \$755,000, 35 Sherwood Dr Unit 172
Gregory & Karen Owen, Rise Up Fund LLC, \$720,000, 6 Apple Blossom Wy
Priscila Nogueira Lopes, Monica Rizkallah, \$710,000, 5-7 Kensington Ave
RKACO LLC, Maroine Ibaline & Lalla Akaab/Lalla Nazha Akaab, \$680,000, 56 Venice Rd
Elcy Agudelo Est & Denise Lopez, Joelly Gomez & Pablo A Gomez & Lidia Serrano DeDiaz, \$680,000, 21-23 Gill Ave
Bliving LLC, Michaela K Waldron & John A Thompson, \$660,000, 6 Fox Run Ln
Saint Christopher Properties LLC, Stephen J Willis Jr & Shannon M Willis, \$635,000, 84 Myrtle St
James J Mocera Tr & Maureen Neel-Desrochers Tr & Mocera Family Trust, John L & Dorothy A Klinger, \$631,000, 2 Villiage Ln Unit 51

Pasquale & Benilde M Grillo, Peter & Cathryn Boyd & Gregory & Sarah Hunter, \$625,000, 37 Greenhalge St
Nga T Ho & Jackie D Tran, Joseph Dionne, \$610,000, 85 Riverdale St
Eileen Asoian, Shawn Dill, \$590,000, 34 Rolling Ridge Ln
John M & Debra S Sirois, Lauren Johnson & Sherri Baker, \$580,000, 127 Anderson Dr
Select Properties LLC, Jeancarlo R & Clara M Perez, \$580,000, 11 Haverhill St
Julio A Falcao & Deborah Buchanan, Marie M Alcide-Valles & Jean Alcide, \$560,000, 18 Ridge Rd
Krystal E Martinez, Lesbi Bodoza, \$555,000, 30 Oak Meadow Ln
JR Builders Inc, Matthew Palmisano, \$550,000, 2 Geramat Wy
Patricia A & Anthony Stanganelli, Dieudoret Prince & Vanessa Prince Raymond, \$548,800, 27 Pinewood Rd
Yu Zhao & Xiaoming Liu, Mabel Lopez, \$525,000, 97 Riverview Blv
Anyelin V & Felix A Rodriguez, Danger J Rodriguez Velasquez & Ana Santana, \$520,000, 1 Gaywood Cir
Peter F & Cathryn A Boyd, Reid M & Brianna L Contente, \$500,000, 43 Russell St
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Yefry Kendry Paniagua, Yuliani Jaspe, \$427,500, 611 Lowell St
John M McIntosh, Rubidelis & Auguste Ngando Edimo, \$425,000, 4 Canobieola Rd
Maria Mirabella Tr & AM Saccoccio Family Trust, New Deal Funding LLC, \$405,000, 20-22 Ashland Ave
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REAL ESTATE: NEXT PAGE

Picarillo, Michael McDonald, \$382,000, 240 Washington St Unit B
 Jochy D Diaz, Jackeline Sosa, \$365,000, 7 Orchard St
 U S Bank Trust NA Tr, Dinorah De Leon, \$360,000, 12 Glen Ave
 Bellazar Properties LLC, Noor Associates LLC, \$257,500, 386 Merrimack St Unit 3A
 Linda A Kelley Tr & Roger & Helen Trust, Patricia A Martin, \$256,250, 395 Merrimack St Unit 46
 Gregorios Makris Tr/Grigorios Makris Tr & Stilianis Makris Tr/Stella Maris Tr & Gregorios Makris & Stella Makris Revocable Trust, Deiby Faulkner & Luz Castillo, \$240,000, 23 Pilgrim Cir Unit A
 Fadi Francis & Mary Alachy, Nermeen Mosad & Garas Y Yacoub Salaides, \$230,000, 945 Riverside Dr Unit 17B

Mario Berardo Lemus Rodriguez & Reina Cruz Lemus, Rechdan 61 Mystic Methuen LLC, \$226,000, 61 Mystic St Unit 61-24
 Sharon Amore, RKACO LLC, \$225,000, Thornton Ave

NORTH ANDOVER

Susanna Maher Tr & Susanna Maher Revocable Trust, Haoxing Guan & Lan Wang, \$1,270,000, 5 Great Lake Ln
 Steven & Lauren Dale, Christopher & Jourdan Vasapolli, \$1,085,000, 96 Bridle Path
 Maryellen S & Mark Haczynski, Dhaval Shah & Amisha Choksey, \$1,060,000, 116 Peach Tree Ln
 Anthony & Joyce E Volpe, Nicholas & Sheree Emmons, \$1,000,000, 50 Granville Ln
 Brian M & Jill M Froburg, Stavros

& Samantha Vallas, \$890,000, 157 Waverly Rd
 Timothy P Goland & Jennifer Mahoney-Goland, Matthew & Casi Rich, \$878,650, 288 Foster St
 Lisa & Kenneth Whitehead, Peter A Cordaro Jr, \$875,000, 920 Johnson St
 Brendan & Jessica K McCarthy/Jessica K Lapierre, Jerry R Jarnagin & Adrienne Richardson, \$870,000, 78 Penni Ln
 Aimee & Douglas E Fayle, Denis Sinelshchikov, \$850,000, 574 Osgood St
 Berkshire Property Buyers LLC, Jessica Lee Savoie, \$837,500, 153 Mill Rd
 Alexander S Ura & Sarah G Haydock, David K Rowed & Kimberly A Beisner, \$810,000, 37 Sullivan St
 Michael D Gargas & Denis John Dragonas/Denis J Dragonas, William J & Linda S Bougioukas, \$710,000, 109 Brentwood Cir
 Alicia Matheson Tr & Warren F Kelley Family Revocable Trust, 60 Court Street LLC, \$700,000, 39-41 Park St
 Derek M Desroche Tr & 127 & 129 Massachusetts Avenue Trust, 105 Mass Ave LLC, \$695,000, 127-129 Massachusetts Ave
 Evan Murphy, Mitesh D & Dimple M Patel, \$685,000, 32-34 Johnson St
 Edward C Andruss, Michael Mastromonaco, \$647,500, 9 Cabot Rd
 Rene F & Michael F Heron Jr, Kathryn A Henderson, \$640,000, 30 Upland St
 Cathleen E Day, Shamesh LLC,

\$625,000, 495 Johnson St
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 Kenneth J Campisi Tr & Campisi Family Realty Trust, Shpetim & Vera Fejzollari, \$585,000, 134 Mablin Ave
 Michelle & William S Smith, Nell Macy Dos Reis, \$582,000, 271 Barker St
 Jeffrey Arlit Tr & William P Arlit Revocable Trust, Ansel Barnum, \$475,000, 125 Marbleridge Rd
 Faith O Rea/Faith O Maniafico, Goretta Reis, \$455,000, 4 Harvest Dr Unit 306
 Robin Redman, Pembroke LLC, \$425,000, 21 Pembroke Rd
 Christopher D Auger, Elianna Anastasia Makiej, \$380,000, 70-72 Maple Ave Unit 3
 Michael & Heidi Connelly, Smith Family Realty Trust & Russell B & Mary O Smith Trs, \$362,000, 148 Main St Unit A-211
 Kathleen Ann Donovan Tr & Helen Malone Trust, John Wilmar Quiceno Puerta & Olga Cecilia Puerta Londono, \$350,000, 148 Main St Unit S-130
 Elizabeth N Semon, Zoila Disla, \$330,000, 7 Walker Rd Unit 9
 Frank Favuzza Jr, Michael Adelstein, \$325K, 50 Edgelawn Ave Unit 50EL-5
 Ryan McElroy, Amy T Titus, \$177,013, 1 Harvest Dr Unit 109
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HERO: FROM PAGE 1

you are a Veteran who is homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, we strongly encourage you to contact the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at (877-424-3838) for assistance. Veterans facing a housing crisis in Massachusetts should contact their town's Veteran's Agent as soon as the problem manifests itself. The story of Charlie proves that one American can make a difference. The police officer who encountered Charlie on patrol, got him off the streets, and into Veterans transitional housing with the help of the Veteran's Administration. One police officer, Jack, used existing resources and programs, to assist a brother Veteran.

A few years back, this writer heard a staff member of the New England Center and Home for Veterans give a talk to the Chamber of Commerce on the homeless Veterans situation in Massachusetts. The message was clear, Americans cannot help by handing cash to corner panhandlers claiming to be homeless Veterans, on the street. Americans can help by sending that same amount of cash, to the New England Center and Home for Veterans, PO Box 961500 Boston, MA 02109.

The Valley Patriot would like to challenge all our readers to send a few dollars to the New England Center and Home for Veterans. The statistics used in this article came from the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The story you are reading of a police officer and a homeless Veteran is true, but their names are left out to protect their dignity and privacy.

"It is our belief that homelessness

can be eradicated in this generation." Pamela Williams, Founder, Journey out of Homelessness.org.

We are looking to interview all Merrimack Valley US Military Veterans of all eras, ranks, and branches. The Valley Patriot invites any citizen of the Merrimack Valley to reach out, contact John.Cuddy@Yahoo.com, and help us record and preserve your family member's service to our Nation for future generations.

The Merrimack Valley's American Legion Posts ask all World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War Veterans, to call (603) 518-5368 and sign up for an Honor Flight to the Memorials in Washington DC! Veterans of all eras are asked to go the American Legion's Web site www.legion.org, and join the American Legion, our mission is working with Congress, Veterans, and the Community, preserving our Veteran's Benefits for future generations and serving all Veterans and their families.



John Cuddy served in the US Navy's Construction Battalions (also known as the Seabees) after retiring from the US Navy; he earned a bachelor's in

history and a master's in economics from the University of Massachusetts on the Lowell Campus using the GI Bill. He has been employed in Logistics at FedEx for the last 26 years. If you know a World War II, Korean War, or Vietnam War Veteran who would like their story told, please email him at John.Cuddy@Yahoo.com

NOTEBOOK: FROM PAGE 20

of a school system that had been taken over by a state, and had control returned back to the municipality. "We are breaking new ground in education," the mayor said at the time. His aid Octavian Spanner detailed the plan to work on a transition plan with the state, and then stressed the importance of public input. Spanner said that he expected the process to begin in 2024. And since it's 2024, you can expect the new consultant hired by DePena to start holding public hearings on regaining control of the schools.

LAPLANT OUT AS PRESIDENT

It was really a shame that the Lawrence City Council spit in the face of "diversity" and "equality" when they chose not to reelect the only minority (white) elected official in the city to a leadership role on the new council. Marc LaPlant was an exceptional city council president and the council owed it to him to return him to the role. That was disappointing. Instead, he was replaced by Jeovanny Rodriguez who somehow thought this was a watershed moment for the city. (It's not.) As Marc is the only minority on the Lawrence City Council, I find it offensive that LaPlant has no leadership position and the Latinos were not willing to vote for a white man. I mean, don't they believe in "Diversity" and giving minorities an "equitable" position?

HAVERTHILL COUNCIL STILL TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE

It was more than 8 months ago when the Valley Patriot filed a complaint with the Attorney General's office against the Haverhill City Council for using a government body to campaign for one of their own and holding an illegal public meeting to do it. After filing our complaint, the city attorney and each councilor took turns at a subsequent

council meeting admitting they broke the law but pretending they had NO IDEA there was an open meeting law prohibiting their behind-the-scenes maneuvering. We are still waiting to hear from the AG as to what punishment the council is going to get for their admitted law breaking. In the meantime, it would be nice to see the council take a class in the open meeting law, the public records law, and the conflict-of-interest law.

In fact, I would like to offer my services for a mere fee of \$1,200 each to school the council on all the laws they should already know about. And since I actually wrote the state's public records law and have won numerous lawsuits based on the open meeting and conflict of interest laws, I might just be the perfect person to help keep them all out of trouble in the future.

ROYAL HOUSE OF ROAST BEEF (DRACUT/METHUEN) BEST ROAST BEEF IN THE VALLEY

Everyone has their own ideas about the best roast beef in the Merrimack Valley. For years Harrison's in North Andover was disputedly but widely thought of as the best beef in the valley, but over the years lost their lustre. Sure, there are roast beef places that are GOOD, like Big N Beefy on Broadway in Lawrence (great tacos too), or the newly opened Kelly's in Salem, NH.

But, last year Royal House of Roast Beef in Methuen decided to branch out and open a new shop in Dracut. Known for amazing dinner plates (the fish and chips are exceptional) and pretty amazing roast beef sandwiches, Royal House has really stepped up their game. Next month I will be doing another restaurant review podcast, if you would like to recommend a restaurant or local eatery for us to review you can email valleypatriot@aol.com

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TV TALK with BILL CUSHING

‘My Best TV Shows of 2023’

Bill Cushing
VALLEY PATRIOT TV COLUMNIST

It’s that time of year again. That time when all TV people start thinking about the best shows that they watched over the past year. As usual, it was tough to leave some shows off the list, but here are my picks for the best TV had to offer in 2023.

The Morning Show – (AppleTV+) - The introduction of new characters, most notably with Jon Hamm’s tech billionaire Paul Marks turned a sluggish start into really good season of TV. Jennifer Aniston, Reese Witherspoon, and Billy Crudup were terrific as always.

Perry Mason – (HBO) – Matthew Rhys continued to impress as maverick lawyer Perry Mason. After a so-so first season, it changed showrunners and delivered an excellent second season. Unfortunately, there won’t be any further seasons as the show was cancelled. However, the season story arcs are self-contained and can still be enjoyed.

The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel – (Amazon) – One of the best series in recent years was one of several shows to end in 2023 and its final season delivers some of the best episodes of the entire series. Fittingly, it also ended with a satisfying finale that tied up all of the loose ends. Rachel Brosnahan’s Midge was one of my favorite TV characters and will be missed.

1923 – (Paramount+) - The latest entry into Taylor Sheridan’s ever-expanding Yellowstone universe. It combined the star-studded cast, including Harrison Ford and Helen Mirren, the sweeping romance, and the globe-trotting action so well that it’s easy to see why this show was a hit with critics and viewers alike.

Poker Face – (Peacock) – Natasha Lyonne stars in this love letter to classic detective series like Columbo. Viewers get to see who-dunit right from the start, the real mystery is the why-dunit. Lyonne’s performance along with an abundance of famous guest stars make this show lots of fun.

Daisy Jones & The Six - (Amazon) – This series, following a Fleetwood Mac-esque rock band’s rise to fame, plays a bit like a documentary and hits all the right notes with original music co-written by Phoebe Bridgers, Marcus Mumford, and Jackson Browne. Riley Keough is outstanding in the title role.

Shrinking – (AppleTV+) – Much like Ricky Gervais’ AfterLife, this series used humor to present a story about

grief, and actually became one of the funniest and most heartwarming shows of the year. Jason Segel plays a therapist struggling to parent his teenage daughter and move on after the loss of his wife.

Ted Lasso – (AppleTV+) – Ted Lasso was another great show we said goodbye to in 2023, and it will probably be the one I miss the most. This show always had its heart in the right place. The world is becoming harder and harder to deal with on a daily basis, and a show like Ted Lasso will be sorely missed in today’s TV landscape.

Beef – (Netflix) – Perhaps the most truly inventive and daring show of the year, Netflix’s drama about two unhappy souls whose paths collide after a vicious road rage incident starred Ali Wong and Steven Yeun. It was chaotic, and riveting and a true reflection on the anger that has bled into the fabric of our daily lives and how it consumes us as a society.

The Last of Us – (HBO) – Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey gave two of the best performances of the year in HBO’s top notch video game adaptation of a world dealing with the effects of a pandemic that decimates the population. Riveting and thought provoking. The episode featuring Nick Offerman was one of the best hours of TV this year.

The Bear - (Hulu) – After a much buzzed about first season, The Bear had a lot to live up to in season two. It may have even exceeded the first season, showcasing the tremendous supporting cast members and letting them all have their moments to shine.

And my pick for the best TV show of 2023 is....

Succession – The best show of 2023 solidified its place on the list of modern TV classics by delivering a stellar final season. Over its 4 seasons, Succession remained as engrossing as ever. Much like The Sopranos, The Wire, and Breaking Bad before it, Succession will be remembered as one of the best series of its time. (HBO)

Honorable mentions: The Night Agent, Slow Horses, Only Murders in the Building, Lessons in Chemistry, The Diplomat, Breeders, Tiny Beautiful Things, Hijack, Fargo, Bosch: Legacy, Winning Time, Star Trek: Picard.

If you have any questions about TV, you can email me at BillsTVTalk@gmail.com. I will answer all of your questions and will feature some of the questions I receive in a future Mailbag column. Follow me on Twitter and Instagram @BillsTVTalk and on Facebook at BillsTVTalk for daily up-to-the-minute TV news and discussion.

The Invitation

Peter Larocque
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

I have often wondered why we Christians are extending an invitation to God to join us in our Church Services. Isn’t He Omnipresent? Ever Present? Always There? Ubiquitous? Constantly Here? Always present everywhere at the same time?

Wasn’t God here first? Didn’t God create light, heaven, earth, the sun and moon and the stars, fish in the sea and birds in the air and living creatures that would crawl upon the earth and cattle? Then, after all this, God created man as we read in Genesis 1:26-28, “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” NKJV.

So, God was here first, and somehow, we, mankind in our great wisdom feels the need to invite Almighty God, The Creator of the Heavens and Earth to be with us? Just who the heck do we think we are? Sounds a little asinine and backward don’t you think? Shouldn’t God be the one extending the invitation to us? We read the following in Psalms 100:2-3, “Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.

3 Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.” NKJV. Here the Bible says, “Know that God is God and we come before His Presence” Not the other way around! The Bible also tells us in Psalm 46:1, “God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.” NKJV. In plain English, God is there in our troubles before we get there!

By definition, an invitation is the act of inviting, an often-formal request to be present or to participate. The word Present can be defined as, in a particular place, existing or occurring now, or the period of time now occurring. So, God exists, here, now, always, and yes, even in our troubles!

There is nowhere on this planet that you can go that God’s Presence isn’t already there! According to Psalm 139:7-10. we read, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the

uttermost parts of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.” NKJV. The Bible also adds, Psalm 16:11, “You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” NKJV. It is in God’s Presence that we can experience the fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore!

God gave us all Free Will, which means that we are the ones, the choice is ours to make whether to accept or reject His Invitation. That my friend is exactly how this works!

We can read God’s wonderful invitation that is extended to everybody!!! Yes, I said everybody, no one has the excuse of “I didn’t know I was invited”!!! It is clearly stated and beautifully written in several places beginning in John 3:16-17, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” NKJV. We are the whosoever! Romans 10:9, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” NKJV. Romans 10:13, “For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” NKJV. Again, we are the whoeves! And, here is a personal favorite by Jesus Himself found in Revelation 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” NKJV. The word knocking in Greek is in the indicative mood, which means it is a continuous or repeated action! Jesus is constantly knocking on the door of your heart! The only side of the door that has the doorknob is yours, meaning you have to let Him in! He can’t open the door for you. Only you can open the door for Him!!! What are you waiting for??? Only you can open the door in 2024!

John 10:7-10, “Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. 9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” NKJV. The Invitation has been sent out, waiting your response! Open the door and have a Happy 2024!

Have a Happy and Safe New Year!
God Bless you all!
Peter Larocque
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