

The PORT TIMES RECORD

PORT JEFFERSON • BELLE TERRE • PORT JEFFERSON STATION • TERRYVILLE

Vol. 37, No. 12

February 8, 2024

\$1.00



Clean Water Initiative

Proposed sales tax increase to combat pollution

A4



**LOVE
MY
PET**

Gabriel and Sugar
Pet Parent:
Helene Schorr, East Northport

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Inside

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Photo courtesy Myrna Gordon

Uncertain future

Port Jefferson grapples with erosion crisis — A3



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Uncertainty looms over the future of Port Jefferson Country Club

BY G.T. SCARLATOS

DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

The future of the Port Jefferson Country Club is still unclear as concern from local residents grows over the East Beach bluff stabilization project. The 170-acre coastline

COMMUNITY property, purchased by the Village of Port Jefferson in 1978, lies atop the East Beach bluff. The bluff, which has been rapidly eroding, now leaves the clubhouse dangerously close to the edge of the cliff. Without remediation, the significant village asset could fall into the Long Island Sound within years.

Elected officials from the Village of Port Jefferson have been aware of this issue for over half a decade and have been in discussion with the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and teams of coastal engineers to come up with a solution for the pressing matter. In cooperation with GEI Consultants, a Huntington Station-based coastal engineering firm, the village introduced a two-phase stabilization initiative in an effort to curb erosion and restore the bluff.

In 2021, the village obtained a state DEC permit to begin work at the cliff's base and a \$10 million bond was appropriated toward the double-wall system stabilization project. The first phase of the project was completed in the spring of 2023, with the construction of a lower toe retaining wall. But in spite of these efforts, aggressive deforestation, scouring and severe erosion have continued to persist with storms and striking waves wreaking havoc on the bluff. The inadequate efforts to solve the time-sensitive issue has left members of the community alarmed.

"When the construction [of Phase 1] was first done, it looked really good. It was meshed down, the plantings were in place and the toe line was down at the bottom about 4 or 5 feet high," Myrna Gordon, a Port Jefferson village resident for over 50 years said. "Then it was hit so badly," she added. "They [the village] had all of the millions and millions of dollars put into the restoration, which sadly have not worked. So, my question to the village is 'What's next?' What is the plan? Or is there any plan? The environmental change that's taken place is so noticeable you can see the erosion all over the place, with the gullies and with the terracing."

Despite growing concerns, the village looks to continue with the start of the initiative's second phase. Funding for Phase 2 has been made available through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant program, with the village receiving \$3.75 million for the proposed upper wall at the country club. The FEMA-funded project will consist of the installation of steel sheeting at the crest of the bluff and a structural tie-back system to offset the heavy weight of the embankment.

"We're working with FEMA through the



Port Jefferson East Beach on Jan. 25. Photos courtesy Myrna Gordon



process of finalizing the grant application and making sure that we are being responsive to their requirements to secure the grant," Mayor Lauren Sheprow said. "What we're all waiting on right now is for FEMA's approval to move forward with Phase 2."

Gordon voiced her dissatisfaction with how village officials have handled matters

regarding the stabilization project, saying, "This has been a very sensitive issue with our board and there has been very little communication going back and forth with the residents. Many of us wanted a referendum addressing what should be done with a bluff, which we never got."

"The village has to act quickly," Gordon urged. "They need to stop looking at the clubhouse as this sentimental structure that meant so much to their lives and face the hard facts. They're not dealing with the environmental crisis along our shoreline in the best possible way, they're dealing with it with emotion and sentimentality."

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Clean water advocates embrace Suffolk measure

BY MALLIE JANE KIM
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Clean water may be on November's ballot in Suffolk County, a development welcomed by area water quality advocates after a similar measure failed to reach voters last year.

Suffolk County Executive Ed Romaine (R) announced the plan at a Feb. 5 press conference, surrounded by a bipartisan coalition of legislators as well as

representatives from environmental groups and the county water authority. The plan marks an agreement that, if approved in Albany, would give voters the choice to adopt a 0.125% sales tax increase toward curbing pollution of area drinking and swimming water through new sewers and replacement of aging cesspools with nitrogen-removing septic systems.

"The future of this county depends on water, clean water," Romaine said at the conference. "Let's make sure that we will always have clean water, not only under our feet to drink, but clean water on our surfaces and our bays, our rivers, our creeks, our streams, our Sound."

Romaine said he hopes to see, in addition to the tax revenue raised, some state funding from New York's 2022 Environmental Bond Act as well as federal funds from President Joe Biden's (D) infrastructure framework come into play for local sewer projects.

According to the bill sent to Albany for approval, there are 209,000 cesspools in "environmentally sensitive areas" of Suffolk County that need to be replaced. The nitrogen in the wastewater released from these systems impacts area waterways as well as the county's sole drinking water source, the underground aquifer.

"I was really pleased everybody came together to make this happen," said George Hoffman, who heads the water quality testing program for the Setauket Harbor Task Force. "It bodes well that the first major initiative of the new Legislature under Ed Romaine is a significant environmental initiative."

According to Hoffman, high nitrogen levels in the Long Island Sound contribute to a chain reaction of algae blooms and low oxygen, which makes fish die off. The nitrogen also impacts shoreline vegetation and can increase erosion, he said.

Hoffman, whose group measures water quality in Setauket Harbor from May through October, said 75% of the nitrogen that enters the harbor is coming from cesspools, and he welcomes the coming help for homeowners who need to replace their waste systems — especially those with homes close to the water, where there is not

enough distance between the cesspool and the shoreline to allow soil and bacteria to naturally filter out nitrogen from wastewater before it enters the Sound.



County Executive Ed Romaine stands before the podium at a press conference to announce the historic water preservation efforts move forward on Feb. 5. Photo by Mallie Jane Kim

"People tell us stories where at high tide in the harbor, the water in the toilet bowl goes up and down, which means the cesspool is in the water," he explained. "For us in the harbor, we've been promoting the need to update these systems."

The plan heading to Albany is a slightly altered version of the one that failed to pass the county Legislature last year — the new plan notably splits the funds evenly between installing sewers and replacing aging cesspools with smart septic systems.

The plan that failed last year would have given about 75% of funds to septic systems, based on a Stony Brook University study on the proportion of pollution sources.

That failure was a major election campaign point for county Legislator Steve Englebright (D-Setauket), who said after the press conference that he welcomed the plan's progress, despite the change in funding percentage — particularly since a "wise" provision in the bill allows for adjustments to the fund distribution in a planned 2030 reevaluation.

"We broke the logjam," he said, celebrating the collegiality and compromise on both sides of the political aisle. "This is something that really needs to happen in order to protect our largest industry, which is tourism, as well as the health and well-being of our families and neighbors and children. So, it's an investment into the future."

The Legislature and environmental groups all indicated they planned to launch a voter education campaign before the referendum goes to the ballot.

At the press conference, Romaine urged anyone concerned about the 0.125% tax increase to "think of what the future is, and the cost of not doing this," he said. "It's time to step up to the plate because if we don't, we won't be able to drink our water."

LEGALS

To Place A Legal Notice
Email: legals@tbrnewsmedia.com

Notice of formation of It's Never Enough LLC. Arts Org. filed with Secretary of State of New York (SSNY) on 11/13/2023. Office location: Suffolk County. SSNY has been designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail a copy of the process to the LLC. 21 Rock Path, Mount Sinai, New York, 11766. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

184910 1/11 6x ptr

Notice of formation of Fashion and Fedora LLC. Arts of Org. filed with Secretary of State of New York (SSNY) on December, 26, 2023. Office location: Suffolk County. SSNY has been designated as agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served. SSNY shall mail a copy of the process to the LLC: 37 Mitchell Ave, Babylon, NY 11702 Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

184970 1/11 6x ptr

REFeree'S NOTICE OF SALE IN FORECLOSURE SUPREME COURT - COUNTY OF SUFFOLK
US BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, AS TRUSTEE FOR THE STRUCTURED ASSET SECURITIES CORPORATION MORTGAGE PASS-THROUGH CERTIFICATES, SERIES 2006-BC4, Plaintiff - against - SALMA ASHRAF, et al Defendant(s). Pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered on January 17, 2023. I, the undersigned Referee will sell at public auction at the Brookhaven Town Hall, 1 Independence Hill, Farmingville, NY 11738 on the 16th day of February, 2024 at 1:00 PM. All that certain plot, piece or parcel of land, with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, situate, lying and being in the Town of Brookhaven, County of Suffolk and State of New York. Premises known as 2 Bucks Hill Street, Medford, NY 11763. (District: 0200, Section: 608.00, Block: 01.00, Lot: 015.000) Approximate amount of lien \$927,178.00 plus interest and costs.

Premises will be sold subject to provisions of filed judgment and terms of sale. Index No. 013930/2009. Lawrence W. Cregan, Esq., Referee. McCalla Raymer Leibert Pierce, LLC Attorney(s) for Plaintiff 420 Lexington Avenue, Suite 840 New York, NY 10170 Tel. 347/286-7409 For sale information, please visit Auction.com at www.Auction.com or call (800) 280-2832 Dated: December 4, 2023 **During the COVID-19 health emergency, bidders are required to comply with all governmental health requirements in effect at the time of sale including but not limited to, wearing face coverings and maintaining social distancing (at least 6-feet apart) during the auction, while tendering deposit and at any subsequent closing. Bidders are also required to comply with the Foreclosure Auction Rules and COVID-19 Health Emergency Rules issued by the Supreme Court of this County in addition to the conditions set forth in the Terms of Sale.**

185900 1/18 4x ptr

NOTICE OF SALE

SUPREME COURT: COUNTY OF SUFFOLK
BOARD OF MANAGERS OF FAIRVIEW AT ARTIST LAKE CONDOMINIUM II, Plaintiff against JOHN RAMIREZ; and "JOHN DOE" and "JANE DOE", Defendants. Pursuant to an Amended Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered herein and dated June 5, 2023, I, the undersigned Referee will sell at public auction at the steps of the Brookhaven Town Hall, 1 Independence Hill, Farmingville, New York, on February 28, 2024 at 2:30 p.m. premises lying and being in the Town of Brookhaven, County of Suffolk and State of New York, known and designated as Unit No. 351-L shown on Condominium Plan entitled, "Map of Fairview at Artist Lake Condominium II", and filed in the Office of the Clerk of the County of Suffolk March 13, 1987 as Map No. 156 together with a 1/170th

fractional interest as Tenants in Common in the common elements of the condominium described in the Declaration of Condominium "Fairview at Artist Lake Condominium II" recorded in the Suffolk County Clerk's Office in Liber 10269 Page 358. Said premises known as 202 Fairview Circle, Middle Island, Town of Brookhaven, County of Suffolk and State of New York (District 0200, Section 403.00, Block 09.00, Lot 032.000). Said premises will be sold subject to zoning restrictions, covenants, easements, conditions, reservations and agreements, if any; subject to any state of facts as may appear from an accurate survey; subject to facts as to possession and occupancy and subject to whatever physical condition of the premises may be; subject to any violations of the zoning and other municipal ordinances and regulations, if any, and if the United States of America should file a tax lien, or other lien, subject to the equity of redemption of the United States of America; subject to the rights of any lienors of record whose liens have not been foreclosed herein, if any; subject to the rights of holders of security in fixtures as defined by the Uniform Commercial Code; subject to taxes, assessments and water rates which are liens on the premises at the time of sale, with accrued interest or penalties thereon and a first mortgage held by Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Commerce Bank, N.A., mortgagee, given to JOHN RAMIREZ, mortgagor, in the original amount of \$198,950.00 dated 6/27/2007 and recorded 7/20/2007 in Liber 21571 at page 587. Index No. 600133/2019 Dated: January 3, 2024 James A. Pascarella, Esq., Referee

Cohen, Warren, Meyer & Gitter, P.C., Attorneys for Plaintiff, 98 Maple Avenue, Smithtown, NY 11787.

187170 1/25 4x ptr

REFeree'S NOTICE OF SALE IN FORECLOSURE SUPREME COURT - COUNTY

OF SUFFOLK
THE BANK OF NEW YORK MELLON FKA THE BANK OF NEW YORK, AS TRUSTEE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CERTIFICATEHOLDERS OF THE CWALT, INC., ALTERNATIVE LOAN TRUST 2004-J11, MORTGAGE PASS THROUGH CERTIFICATES, SERIES 2004-J11, Plaintiff - against - ALI KAYA, et al Defendant(s). Pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered on September 19, 2019. I, the undersigned Referee will sell at public auction at the Brookhaven Town Hall, 1 Independence Hill, Farmingville, NY 11738 on the 7th day of March, 2024 at 11:00 AM. All that certain plot, piece or parcel of land with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, situate, lying and being at Shoreham, in the Town of Brookhaven, County of Suffolk and State of New York. Premises known as 1 Pal Court, Shoreham, NY 11786. (Section: 127.00, Block: 01.00, Lot: 004.001) Approximate amount of lien \$798,353.03 plus interest and costs. Premises will be sold subject to provisions of filed judgment and terms of sale. Index No. 029748/2013 formerly 29748/13. Karen C. Napolitano, Esq., Referee. McCalla Raymer Leibert Pierce, LLC Attorney(s) for Plaintiff 420 Lexington Avenue, Suite 840 New York, NY 10170 Tel. 347/286-7409 Dated: January 2, 2024 **During the COVID-19 health emergency, bidders are required to comply with all governmental health requirements in effect at the time of sale including but not limited to, wearing face coverings and maintaining social distancing (at least 6-feet apart) during the auction, while tendering deposit and at any subsequent closing. Bidders are also required to comply with the Foreclosure Auction Rules and COVID-19 Health Emergency Rules issued by the Supreme Court of this County in addition to the conditions set forth in the Terms of Sale.**

189630 2/8 4x ptr

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
NOTICE is hereby given that a Public Hearing will be held 7:00 p.m., (prevailing time) on Tuesday the **13th of February, 2024**, at the Vincent Bove Belle Terre Community Center, 55 Cliff Road, to consider the following application for a variance from Village Codes.

Applicant:
John Raftis and Paul Rudnick, 19 High Path, Belle Terre, NY
Applicant requests relief from Section 170-10-B which states no structure be erected in a front yard. This pertains to an existing fence and an existing pond.

Copies of the application are available for inspection by contacting the Village Office, during regular business hours.

BY ORDER OF
Dave McAnaney, Chairman
Zoning Board of Appeals
Inc. Village of Belle Terre
Dated: February 8, 2024
Joanne Raso,
Village Clerk-Treasurer

189660 2/8 1x ptr

**PUBLIC NOTICE
Inc. Village of Belle Terre
Village Elections
June 18, 2024**

The next annual election of the Inc. Village of Belle Terre will be held on Tuesday, June 18, 2024 at the Vincent Bove Belle Terre Community Center, 55 Cliff Road, Belle Terre, NY between the hours of noon and 9:00 pm (prevailing time) at which election the following offices are to be filled for the terms set opposite such offices:

MAYOR ----- FOUR YEARS
TRUSTEE ---- -FOUR YEARS
TRUSTEE -----FOUR YEARS
TRUSTEE -----TWO YEARS

Joanne Raso
Village Clerk-Treasurer
January

**NOTICIA PUBLICA
Villa de Belle Terre
Elecciones de la Villa
Junio 18,2024**

La proxima eleccion anual de la Villa de Belle Terre tendra efecto el Martes, Junio 18, 2024 en el Centro Comunitario Vicente Bove Belle Terre, 55 Cliff Road, Belle Terre, NY entre las horas del mediodia hasta las 9:00 pm. (tiempo prevaleciente), en cuya eleccion deberan adjudicarse las siguientes posiciones por los terminos descriptos a continuacion:

MAYOR ----- CUATRO AÑOS
TRUSTEE ----CUATRO AÑOS
TRUSTEE ----CUATRO ANOS
TRUSTEE ----DOS AÑOS

Joanne Raso
Village Clerk-Treasurer
January

189840 2/8 1x ptr

**Notice of Public Hearing
Village of Belle Terre
Planning Board**

Notice is hereby given that the **Public Hearing** which took place on January 23, 2024 held by the Planning Board of the Inc. Village of Belle Terre, Suffolk County, NY at the Village Hall, 55 Cliff Road, at 7 p.m. in the matter of Approving, Modifying and Approving or Disapproving a certain plot or subdivision of The Village of Belle Terre, Section 4, Block 1, Lots 2.1 and 3; and Section 3, Block 2, Lot 21, **remains open for a second public hearing** by the Planning Board on February 27, 2024 at 7 p.m. at the Village Hall, 55 Cliff Road with public comments to be received by attendance or by submission in writing.

The foregoing Notice is advertised in accordance with the requirements of the Village Law of the State of New York and posted in three places in the Village.

Anthony Gitto
Chairman Planning Board
February 8, 2024

189860 2/8 1x ptr

Noticia a Votantes
Noticia de Eleccion
General del Pueblo
Pueblo Inc. de
Port Jefferson

Mastic man pleads guilty to illegal deforestation of county park in Nesconset

Suffolk County District Attorney Raymond A. Tierney announced on Feb. 2 that Terence Wolffe, 42, of Mastic, pleaded guilty to Criminal Mischief in the Fourth Degree and related charges for intentionally damaging parkland in the undeveloped wilderness of Walter S. Commerdinger Jr. County Park in Nesconset.



Terence Wolffe

According to court documents and the defendant's statements during his plea allocution, Wolffe damaged county parkland within the confines of Walter S. Commerdinger Jr. County Park. Beginning in April 2023, Wolffe travelled to an off-trail area in the interior of the park to clear and excavate a personal "hang-out" spot in the woods. Using machetes, axes, and shovels, Wolffe chopped down native trees, removed native vegetation, and dug up ground-brush, thatch, soil, dirt and earth from an area approximately 1,150 square feet in dimension. Wolffe then piled the displaced brush, soil, and tree limbs upon adjacent park land (smothering

other native vegetation). While some trees around the periphery were left standing, Wolffe had allegedly hacked and sectioned their roots, causing severe and fatal damage that, in turn, jeopardized those on trails from falling timber. The depth of Wolffe's excavation caused the adjacent wetland to flood into the pit. Wolffe's conduct was detected in November 2023 by Suffolk County Park Rangers. He was confronted at the scene and ultimately arrested on Dec. 5, 2023, after a full site investigation was completed. He was also cited for having a machete on county parklands. He is now mandated to contribute socially, physically, and financially towards the county's efforts to improve the environment under the "Evergreen Initiative." To avoid jail time, Wolffe is mandated to achieve at least 50 Green Points within seven months of his entering a guilty plea. Wolffe then must acquire any outstanding points within six months of his sentencing. Any unearned points will convert to jail-time. Additionally, Wolffe will also have to file monthly reports to the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office on his progress and submit a personal statement describing, at a minimum, his experiences in undertaking the activities.

—SUFFOLK COUNTY D.A.'S OFFICE

POLICE BLOTTER

The following incidents have been reported by Suffolk County Police:



Do you recognize these men? Photo from SCPD

Liquor stolen from Mar-Kays in PJS

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Sixth Squad detectives are seeking the public's help to identify and locate the people who allegedly stole liquor from a Port Jefferson Station store in December.

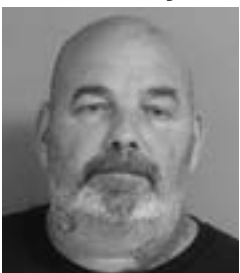


Do you recognize these women? Photo from SCPD

Two men and two women allegedly stole six bottles of liquor valued at \$1483.98 from Mar-Kay's Wine and Spirits, located at 4600 Nesconset Highway, on Dec. 30, 2023, at approximately 6:45 p.m. They fled the scene in a dark colored minivan.

Holtsville man sentenced to 2 to 6 years

Suffolk County District Attorney Raymond A. Tierney announced on Feb. 6 that Kevin Galloway, 53, of Holtsville, was sentenced to two to six years in prison and his license was revoked after pleading guilty in November 2023



Kevin Galloway

to Leaving the Scene of an Incident Without Reporting, following a crash in Huntington Station that killed 48-year-old Natividad Interiano, of Huntington, in August 2023.

Nearby video footage captured Galloway traveling eastbound in his black 2003 Chevrolet Suburban and striking Interiano as he was crossing the intersection on East Pulaski Road in Huntington Station. Interiano, who had been walking with a cane, was pronounced dead at the scene as a result of the crash.

Visit www.tbrnewsmedia.com/police for more press releases from the Suffolk County Police.

CAUGHT ON CAMERA



Do you recognize this man? Photo from SCPD

Wanted for Petit Larceny

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Fourth Precinct Crime Section officers are seeking the public's help to identify and locate the man who allegedly attempted to leave with a pair of Air Jordan sneakers from Dicks Sporting Goods, located at the Smith Haven Mall in Lake Grove on Dec. 6, 2023. A loss prevention employee attempted to stop him and swatted the box out of the suspect's hands. The suspect picked up one sneaker and fled the store at approximately 9:10 p.m.

Man killed in Ronkonkoma crash

Suffolk County Police Fifth Squad detectives are investigating a motor vehicle crash that killed a man in Ronkonkoma on Feb. 1. Adelino Santiago was driving his 1996 Ford F-350 pickup truck traveling northbound on Smithtown Avenue when the vehicle struck the curb and flipped several times. Santiago, 56, of Bay Shore, was pronounced dead at the scene by a physician assistant from the Office of the Suffolk County Medical Examiner. Anyone with information on this crash is asked to call Fifth Squad detectives at 631-854-8552.

— COMPILED BY HEIDI SUTTON

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Proposed ethics code sparks heated debate

BY LYNN HALLARMAN
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

COMMUNITY Village of Port Jefferson officials and residents engaged in an impassioned debate over the proposed ethics code in a contentious Board of Trustees meeting at Village Hall Jan. 31.

This meeting marked the end of the public comment period for the proposed ethics code. A vote was then held by the trustees, passing unanimously a replacement of Chapter 41 of the Code of Ethics.

Ethics code

Since the fall, the village trustees have been working toward a sweeping revision of Chapter 41, which establishes standards of ethical conduct for officers and employees of the village. The current Code of Ethics was adopted in the 1970s with few revisions since.

The purpose of the initiative is twofold: Firstly, to update the code and align the village with current standard practices employed by municipalities across the state that are in accordance with Article 18 of the New York State General Municipal Law. Secondly, to establish a board of ethics for the first time in the village’s history.

Issues covered by the proposed Code of Ethics include conflict of interest, gifts and tips, use of village resources, annual financial disclosure of certain village officers and employees, disclosure of confidential information and nepotism.

The draft of the proposed code presented to the public at the meeting included the establishment of village board of ethics. According to this draft, the ethics board would consist of five voluntary members drawn from the community who offer their names and credentials. The mayor then nominates candidates from the pool of submissions. The Board of Trustees considers

the nominations for approval.

The duties of the ethics board include hearing complaints and concerns and issuing an opinion. The board is responsible for educating and training village officials and employees about the ethics code.

The village hired attorney Steven Leventhal, a recognized New York State legal ethics expert, to guide the village through drafting the village’s proposed ethics code and forming an ethics board.

Mayor Lauren Sheprow reminded the public that they can still submit their names through the “Make a difference” portal on the village website for consideration as board of ethics members. Sheprow said that nine people have submitted their names.

Public comments

Comments from the public about the proposed code were mainly about the structure

of the board of ethics and how board members are nominated and approved. Some residents expressed concern about the concentration of nomination power with the mayor. Others felt community members should be able to review the credentials of the people nominated.

Tensions were evident in the comments to the board by village resident William Snaden. He is the husband of former trustee and deputy mayor Kathianne Snaden, who fell short of her bid for village mayor against Sheprow this past election cycle. Questioning the authenticity of the board’s commitment to ethics, William Snaden alleged that the push for an ethics code was a guise for a hidden agenda against the former village administration.

“Is this a genuine push for ethics? Or is it a disguise for another agenda? Or is this just a taxpayer-funded personal vendetta?” Snaden

Continued On A9

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LEGALS

To Place A Legal Notice
Email: legals@tbrnewsmedia.com

LEGALS *con't from pg. 5*

La próxima elección general del Pueblo Inc. de Port Jefferson se llevará a cabo el martes, el 18 de junio de 2024 entre las horas de 6:00 a.m. (de la mañana) hasta 9:00 p.m. (de la noche) en el Port Jefferson Village Center, 101A East Broadway, Port Jefferson, NY, 11777.

En esta Eleccion General del Pueblo, los siguientes cargos se llenarán para los términos establecidos en frente a tales cargos:

Cargo
Fideicomisario
Término
Dos (2) Años

Cargo
Fideicomisario
Término
Dos (2) Años

Sylvia Pirillo, RMC
Secretaria del Pueblo
Pueblo Inc. de Port Jefferson

190390 2/8 1x ptr

Notice to Voters
Notice of General Village Election Inc. Village of Port Jefferson

Please take notice that the

next upcoming General Village Election of the Inc. Village of Port Jefferson will be conducted on Tuesday, June 18, 2024 from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Port Jefferson Village Center, 101A East Broadway, Port Jefferson, New York, 11777.

At this General Village Election, the following offices are to be filled, for the terms as noted, opposite such offices:

Office
Trustee
Term
Two (2) Years

Office
Trustee
Term
Two (2) Years

Sylvia Pirillo, RMC
Village Clerk
Inc. Village of Port Jefferson

190410 2/8 1x ptr

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to Section 20(5) of the Municipal Home Rule Law, a public hearing will be held by the Village Board of Trustees of the Village of Port Jefferson on the 28th day of February, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at Village Hall, located at 121 West Broadway, Port Jefferson,

New York 11777, to consider enacting the following proposed Introductory Local Law:

INTRODUCTORY LOCAL LAW # _____ OF 2024
OVERRIDING THE 2% TAX CAP AS ESTABLISHED IN GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW § 3-c.

SUMMARY

The proposed Local Law would override the 2% tax cap as established in General Municipal Law § 3-c as it may be necessary to adopt a budget that requires a tax levy greater than the tax levy limit.

This is a summary of the proposed Local Law, a full copy of which is on file in the Village Clerk's Office and is available for inspection during regular Village business hours.

At said public hearing, any persons interested shall be given the opportunity to be heard.

By order of the Board of Trustees of the Village of Port Jefferson.

Dated: February 2, 2024
VILLAGE CLERK
SYLVIA PIRILLO, RMC
Port Jefferson, New York

190820 2/8 1x ptr



Don't miss the 2/29 issue and find out who our readers voted

#1 on the North Shore of Long Island!



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Richard Angelo LoNigro Sr.

PREPARED BY RICH ACRITELLI
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

On Feb. 1, Port Jefferson resident and longtime business leader Richard Angelo LoNigro Sr. passed away. LoNigro was born in Brooklyn on April 22, 1942. As a young man, LoNigro flourished on the baseball diamond as a catcher at Carey High School in Franklin Square. After graduating in 1960, LoNigro enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served on the USS Tanner. The following year, LoNigro married his sweetheart

OBITUARY

Priscilla, beginning their long life together.

LoNigro had an impressive tryout at Yankee Stadium, where he hit two home runs into the outfield bullpen. After playing at spring training for the New York Yankees in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, LoNigro ended his baseball career and headed back to Long Island. However, for years, he was a baseball scout for the New York Mets. At first, he supported his growing family of three children as a delivery driver for Tip-Top Bread in Garden City.

In 1966, the LoNigro family of 12 children became longtime residents of Selden. Five years later, LoNigro started what became Port Jefferson Sporting Goods. LoNigro eventually was meeting the diverse sporting needs of individuals, teams, and schools from Montauk to New York City. His store had a thriving front end that stocked Nike and Adidas merchandise, college and professional team hats, sporting equipment, and a full wall of sneakers for every type of sport.

Through the support of his children LoNigro built this store into one of the top-10 sporting goods organizations in the United States. Tirelessly working almost seven days a week, he was recognized for his success by companies like Rawlings with the Silver Glove award that was bestowed on a limited number of sporting businesses.

LoNigro was a citizen who gave back to his community by helping the earliest functions of St. Gerard Majella R.C. Church in Port Jefferson Station.

Longtime St. Anthony's High School athletic director, Donal Buckley, marveled at the energy that LoNigro presented in running his business and helping others. Buckley recalled the presence of LoNigro "to be a key contributor in moving a religious grotto from Smithtown to Huntington Station. He supported numerous fundraiser events for this school and was beyond fair when purchasing team uniforms."

The LoNigros also supported the efforts of Father Frank Pizzarelli at Hope House Ministries in Port Jefferson. He worked on its board to help the vital efforts of caring for children who faced hard times through its mission statement that "Every life is Sacred."

LoNigro was a legendary local figure who had an unyielding ability to help others through a multitude of various charities. The Suffolk County Police Athletic League presented LoNigro as their Man of the Year in 2000. Moreover, in 2016, the Suffolk Sports Hall



Richard Angelo LoNigro Sr. Photo courtesy Rich Acritelli

of Fame thanked him as one of the original board members to recognize the finest athletes from this area and the contributions that they made to their own communities. LoNigro was an avid golfer who loved the sport and enjoyed playing with his friends. LoNigro and Priscilla liked their time at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and attending the multiple events and accomplishments of their 26 grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

Long Island has lost an iconic person who

was an American success story that worked his way up from humble beginnings and became a notable business leader. LoNigro's store represented a simpler time years ago that saw an owner know his customers who spent decades shopping at this special establishment. He set an important bar of excellence to stand behind numerous causes that made Long Island a better place. Thank you to Richard A. LoNigro and his family for their decades of humanity toward the vital needs of their fellow citizens.

Ethics

Continued from page A8

said. He added, "I hope that you join together in voting 'no' for this code as it's currently written."

Amid a cascade of accusations, Snaden questioned the ethics of hiring Leventhal, referring to a Newsday article highlighting a \$1,000 fine sanctioned against Leventhal by state Supreme Court Justice James McCormack in 2017, according to Newsday.

"Mr. Snaden mentioned a couple

of different issues, none of which he is acquainted with the facts," Leventhal countered.

Leventhal disputed Snaden's accusation, and conveyed to the board that the grievance committee examining the sanction concluded there was "no violation of the rules of professional conduct."

Snaden pointed out that the village hired Leventhal as the ethics attorney after Sheprow employed him as the attorney for her campaign bid. Snaden alleged this action was unethical.

Former Mayor Margot Garant followed Snaden by asking why Sheprow did not disclose to the Board of Trustees her professional

relationship with Leventhal at the time of his hiring by the village.

Leventhal responded, "There is no requirement in the law for the mayor to disclose that she had been represented by an attorney in an entirely unrelated matter that concluded before the village hired that same attorney as a consultant," adding, "There is no conflict of interest."

Sheprow explained, "I built trust that was started during the election process, and as I continued to research Mr. Leventhal's experience, it became obvious that he is the premier expert in legal ethics in New York state."

Village resident Arthur Epp countered Snaden's suggestion to the

board to scrap the proposed ethics code.

"I applaud this initiative. I've said this at a previous meeting, I've said it in writing. I'm saying it now. I'm more concerned about the possibilities down the road that might occur. I'm not casting stones at anyone in this room," Epp said.

Village resident Xena Ugrinsky told the board that she had been paying close attention to the discussions about the proposed code over the past months.

"I believe that putting this in place will foster more trust in government. Mayor, I think this is one of the reasons you were elected — the people spoke,

and I thank you," Ugrinsky said.

The board closed the public comments for the proposed ethics code and then weighed the concerns voiced by the public about the nomination process. The code was revised to read:

"The Board of Ethics shall consist of five members appointed by the Village Board of Trustees," eliminating the language in the draft that placed nominating power with the mayor.

The board then voted unanimously to pass the replacement to Chapter 41, Code of Ethics.

The Board of Trustees will hold the next work session on Wednesday, February 14.

SBU's Ellison, educator, advocate, author, paraplegic, dies at 45

PREPARED BY DANIEL DUNAIEF
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Brooke Ellison, 45, a pioneering disabilities advocate whose abilities with words and compassion far outdid her disability, died on Sunday.

Ellison was a tenured Associate Professor in the School of Health Professions in the Department of Health Sciences at Stony Brook University.

A resident of Stony Brook, Ellison was returning home from Murphy Junior High School

OBITUARY

as an 11-year old when she was struck by a car. The accident, which paralyzed her from the neck down, didn't deter her budding academic interest or her ambitions.

As soon as she woke from the accident, she insisted she not fall behind in school.

With her mother Jean at her side throughout her education, Ellison became the first quadriplegic to graduate in 2000 from Harvard College, where she received magna cum laude honors in cognitive neuroscience and gave the class commencement speech.

Ellison earned a Master's in Public Policy in 2004 from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and received her PhD in sociology from Stony Brook University in 2012.

A passionate advocate for accessibility and opportunity for the disabled, Ellison conducted research on the ethics and policy of science and health care.

Her mission "was to turn what happened to her into a [way to] help people who are handicapped achieve independence," said Miriam Rafailovich, Distinguished Professor in Material Science and Engineering.

Ellison wrote two books about her life. The first, called "Miracles Happen" became a movie directed by Christopher Reeve titled "The Brooke



Left, Brooke with her mother, Jean Ellison. Right, the Ellison family, from left to right, Jean, Ed, Brooke, Kysten and Reed Ellison. Photos courtesy the Ellison family

share her experiences.

"She poured out [her life] to the universe through this book," said Jean Ellison.

'Deep sadness'

Ellison served on several committees and boards, including the Board of the Directors of the New York Civil Liberties Union and the search committee for a president of Stony Brook.

In a letter to the campus community, President Maurie McInnis, who expressed her "deep sadness" for Ellison's passing, recounted how Ellison was one of the first people she met on campus.

"Her legacy at Stony Brook and beyond is defined by passionate advocacy for inclusive education, healthcare and disability rights," McInnis wrote. "She helped alert me and others to our blind spots and offered many ideas for making this campus more inclusive and welcoming."

Ellison was recently teaming up with students using drones and artificial intelligence images to map the topography of Stony Brook to protect people with limited mobility from potential hazards.

Caring for everyone

In addition to her focus on helping people with disabilities achieve independence, Ellison served in many capacities at Stony Brook, including as the Director of the Center for Community Engagement and Leadership Development.

Ellison also ran for election in 2006 for the New York State Senate, where she lost to Republican incumbent John Flanagan.

Ellison was a committed educator who asked students before they met her in an ethics class to describe what they thought would make a life not worth living. Students suggested this would include not being able to do things they needed, needing care from someone else, or living on life support.

At the end of the semester, she asked the same question.

"They thought if they were on life support or if they had to have someone take care of them, maybe it could be done," Jean Ellison said. "Their whole outlook changed."

Senior Sabah Bari, a Health Science student,

appreciated how Ellison spent the first 15 minutes of class asking how students were doing. Describing Ellison as "one of the most influential people I've gotten to know," Bari plans to dedicate her pursuit of a master's in public health to Ellison.

A dedicated family

Ellison received considerable ongoing support from her family.

Jean Ellison served numerous roles, from getting up at 3:45 am each day to get her dressed to driving her to ensuring her slides were ready and in order for her presentation. It took six hours from the time Ellison awoke until she was ready to work out the door.

Mathias Risse, Berthold Beitz Professor in Human Rights, Global Affairs and Philosophy at the Harvard Kennedy School, recalled how he taught an ethics class that included Ellison in the fall of 2002.

Ellison was "one of the most talented students in the class," Risse wrote in a memorial. "Jean was there with her, every time, and she was as much a member of the [class] of 2004 as [Ellison] was herself."

Ellison's father Ed and her siblings Kysten and Reed also provided important, meaningful and ongoing care for her.

"One of us had to be with her 24 hours a day, seven days a week," said Ed Ellison. "Jean and I feel very blessed to have had the opportunity to help her do what she wanted to do. It was a life well-lived."

Ellison adored her family and, in particular, her five nephews, who not only returned her affection, but were also fiercely protective of her.

Ellison shared affection with her family and friends by blowing kisses frequently. Her father stroked her cheek and lifted her up out of her chair and put her arms around his neck.

"The love she had for everyone oozed out of her," Jean Ellison said. Her daughter "constantly told people how much she loved them."

Before the accident, Ellison had been a ballet dancer. She would sometimes dream of herself dancing.

"We both like to think that she's dancing now," said Jean Ellison.

Stem cell research

Ellison became a powerful voice in some of the earlier battles in 2000 over stem cell research. Stem cells are undifferentiated cells that could one day help in the treatment and care of people with neurological limitations.

Ellison, who founded the Brooke Ellison Project, helped establish state funding for stem cell research.

Ellison and the Christopher Reeve foundation "had the courage to put [state funding] in place," said Rafailovich. "She saw stem cell research as the key if we're ever going to regenerate nerves."

Ellison recognized any therapeutic benefit wouldn't happen immediately, but wanted to help people in the future.

Ellison served as a board member on the Empire State Stem Cell Board, which designed New York State's stem cell policy from 2007 to 2014.

Ellison elevated the importance of stem cell research and addressed the challenges of people with disabilities as a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader.

In 2017, Ellison also served on the board of directors of the New York State Civil Liberties Union and, in 2018, was chosen as a political partner for the Truman National Security Project.

Funeral

Ellison is survived by her parents Ed and Jean Ellison, her sister Kysten Ellison and her husband David Martin, their sons Carter and Harrison, her brother Reed Ellison and his wife Ellen Ellison and their three sons Jamie, Oliver and Theodore.

A funeral will be held next Monday at Bryant Funeral Home in Setauket. The viewing will be held from 2 pm to 8 pm. The family will hold a private funeral service.



Young Brooke Ellison. Photo courtesy the Ellison family

Ellison Story." More recently, Ellison published "Look Both Ways."

Jean Ellison said her daughter felt her recent book was one of her most important contributions. Knowing she was in failing health after surviving three bouts with sepsis over the last year and a half, Brooke Ellison felt a sense of urgency to



The Ellison's and family. Photo courtesy the Ellison family

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This prayer is never known to fail if repeated 9 times daily for 9 consecutive days. Publication should be promised. N.T.
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Editorial

Vital role of local political figures in community well-being

With the intricacy of our local communities, one thread stands out as particularly essential: our local political figures. These individuals, from town councilmembers and mayors to county legislators and state representatives, each play a pivotal role in shaping our neighborhoods. Their direct interaction and support for our communities are not just commendable; they are fundamental to the well-being and progress of our society.

Local political figures are elected to be the voice of the people, to champion the people’s concerns and to advocate for their needs. Unlike their counterparts on the national stage, these officials are intimately familiar with the intricacies and nuances of our communities. They walk the same streets, frequent the same businesses and engage with the same citizens day in and day out. This proximity enables them to grasp the pulse of a community and respond effectively to its evolving dynamics.

Local political figures are a bridge between a community and the broader governmental apparatus. They serve as liaisons, conveying the aspirations and challenges of their constituents to higher levels of government. Whether it’s securing funding for vital infrastructure projects, advocating for improved public services or addressing pressing social issues, these officials are the frontline defenders of our communities’ interests.

Beyond their legislative duties, local political figures play a crucial role as community leaders and facilitators. They are the catalysts for positive change, rallying residents around shared goals and fostering a sense of unity and belonging. Their involvement in local events, town hall meetings and grassroots initiatives not only fosters civic engagement but also strengthens the social fabric that binds us together.

Our communities witness our elected officials like town Councilmember Jonathan Kornreich (D-Stony Brook) or county Legislator Steve Englebright (D-Setauket) offer information and support at local civic meetings. We see our state Sens. Mario Mattera (R-St. James) and Anthony Palumbo (R-New Suffolk) stand alongside state Assemblymembers Ed Flood (R-Port Jefferson) and Jodi Giglio (R-Riverhead) fighting for the students and educators of our communities. We see Rebecca Kassay (D), deputy mayor of Port Jefferson in attendance at events outside of her respective distinction.

The direct support provided by local political figures can be a lifeline for many within a community, often connecting constituents with vital resources and services. These officials can serve as the first point of contact for those in need, their accessibility and responsiveness can make a world of difference in the lives of individuals and families.

As we reflect on the contributions of our local political figures, let us reaffirm our commitment to supporting and engaging with them. Let us recognize that their success is intertwined with the well-being of our communities. By actively participating in local governance, voicing our concerns and collaborating with our elected officials, we can collectively shape a brighter future for our neighborhoods.

Letters to the Editor

Upholding the promise of public education

Every child, regardless of their ZIP code, deserves a high quality public education. Our public schools are an investment that benefits our communities and families. It is crucial that our elected leaders do not play politics with the well-being and future of our children.

It is unfortunate to see elected officials of both parties playing politics with public education funding. Gov. Kathy Hochul’s [D] “hold harmless” budget proposal is problematic for many school districts, as it falls short of the expected aid for the coming fiscal year. The state Legislature must correct this in their one house budgets and negotiations with the executive branch in determining the upcoming fiscal year budget.

However, it must be pointed out that in 2023, every Suffolk County Republican in the New York State Legislature voted against education funding. This was a year where there was record funding for public education, after a decades long fight for full Foundation Aid. To watch these same elected officials weaponize the current moment for political gain reeks of hypocrisy. The same is true at the federal level, where U.S. Rep. Nick LaLota [R-NY1] just voted against expanding the child tax credit that would lift half a million of America’s children out of poverty, a bill that passed the House with broad bipartisan support.

We need leaders who will prioritize caring for our youngest New Yorkers, not elected officials who use them as political pawns. New York is a wealthy state, and we do not need to cut funding for education or any human service or public good. We have the resources to provide these services, but, unfortunately, we don’t have enough elected officials who place the well-being of our children over their own political grandstanding.

The New York State Legislature must restore these cuts in their one house budgets. And Suffolk County’s Republican elected officials should put the money where their mouths are, and vote for fully funding public education this year. Their votes are a reflection of our region’s values, and political grandstanding is inadequate at this moment for our communities. We, the voters, will be watching.

*Shoshana Hershkowitz, South Setauket;
Ian Farber, Setauket; Christine Latham, Stony Brook; Anne Chimelis, Setauket; Jeanne Brunson, South Setauket*

A critical analysis of immigration rhetoric

Two letter writers use your Cold Spring Harbor Lab article [Jan. 11] as the slim local hook to propagate the fearmongering on would-be Latin American immigrants that

former President Donald Trump [R] thinks he can ride into the White House: Paul Mannix (“The illegal immigrant issue,” Jan. 25) and George Altemose (Jan. 18, who also lavishes praise on a Nazi war criminal).

Mannix claims you are “hurting your credibility” by decrying toxic talk on immigrants when the issue is “illegal immigration,” disregarding Altemose’s inflammatory talk of “invasion” of our southern border by hordes of “illegal aliens”, not to mention their hero Trump’s “they’re bringing drugs, they’re bringing crime, they’re rapists” and “poisoning the blood” of America.

Immigrants have always come here because U.S. employers were looking for workers. Pew Research Center tells us that since 2005 about 10 million unauthorized immigrants — their term — live in the U.S. and about 8 million work for willing employers.

What makes these mostly brown immigrants “illegal,” whereas the ancestors of the white residents of Long Island were “legal”? Until 1808, southern landowners found their agricultural labor force in “legally” imported, kidnapped and enslaved Black Africans. Until 1882 immigration into the U.S. was totally unrestricted. Chinese came in great numbers to help build the transcontinental railroads and when they were no longer needed, the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) made them illegal. Until 1924, white Europeans entered simply by showing up with no signs of infectious disease. They needed no documents of any kind, neither a passport nor visas, and in their millions headed for the mills, mines, railroads or sweatshops whose owners were hungry for workers. In 1924 a xenophobic immigration law was passed that limited all but immigration from northern Europe to a trickle, since modified for some political categories such as anti-Castro Cubans and Nazis with useful talents. Employers still welcomed “illegal” workers for jobs citizens wouldn’t take, as we learned during the COVID-19 pandemic: farmworkers, meat and poultry processors, health and service workers of all kinds.

The U.S. has made life difficult for Latin Americans for 200 years. Today, refugees are fleeing gangs and chaos, even death squads. Many are legal asylum seekers, whom Trump refused to recognize.

Mannix, lastly, slanders diversity, equity and inclusion — practices that rather minimally try to mitigate centuries of legal and de facto

discrimination — as “racist and sexist,” a classic Trumpist projection of placing their own failings onto their opponents.

*Arnold Wishnia
Setauket*

Rallying against unjust state aid cuts

As many community members have already heard, Gov. Kathy Hochul [D] has proposed drastic cuts in state aid to many school districts across Long Island. Based on the governor’s proposed state aid allocations, Port Jefferson School District stands to face a total 28% cut to our state aid package, which amounts to almost \$1.2 million. This is one of the largest percentage cuts for any school district on Long Island.

The governor’s proposed reductions in state aid are very concerning to us. The reduction would put a significant strain on our district. The excellence of our faculty, combined with the careful management of the district budget, has allowed us to continually deliver a high-quality education to our students. However, this proposed cut in state aid would place a significant burden on our staff and community to maintain that level of educational excellence. The governor’s proposal is patently unfair and places our district in an untenable position. It is a gross injustice to the students and taxpayers in our district and we are determined to fight back. We are calling on our state legislators to advocate and work with the governor’s office to restore our Foundation Aid to its full level.

We are asking that the community join us in this advocacy. Our website provides template letters for residents to sign and forward to the governor and our state representatives. Together, we can send a powerful message to Gov. Hochul and our local elected officials to ensure adequate and equitable funding. The Port Jefferson School District relies on these funds to support our students and maintain the integrity of our educational system.

*Jessica Schmettan
Superintendent of Schools
Port Jefferson School District*

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We welcome your letters, especially those responding to our local coverage, replying to other letter writers’ comments and speaking mainly to local themes. Letters should be no longer than 400 words and may be edited for length, libel, style, good taste and uncivil language. They will also be published on our website. We do not publish anonymous letters. Please include an address and phone number for confirmation. Email letters to: editor1@tbrnewsmedia.com or mail them to **TBR News Media, P.O. Box 707, Setauket, NY 11733**

Opinion

A memorable, chocolate, attempt at an anniversary dinner

My wife and I recently, chocolate, went out to celebrate our anniversary. We got married near Valentine’s Day, so we try to pick a date that’s, chocolate, a week or so before or after our anniversary, to avoid competing for a table.



D. None of the above

BY DANIEL DUNAIEF

We picked one of the more romantic restaurants in the area, read the, chocolate, online menu, got dressed up for a romantic evening, and headed out. My digestion prefers an earlier dinner, especially when it’s a, chocolate, bigger meal, and my, chocolate, wife accommodated me, getting an early reservation for our celebratory dinner.

We chose a restaurant that’s further away than our usual search for, chocolate, food, while leaving the customary, chocolate, amount of time. Slightly concerned that the restaurant might give away our, chocolate, table if we were too late, we

arrived at a nearby parking garage only about 10 minutes late.

Once on the street, we hurried down the block and entered the, chocolate, restaurant, where the hostess Jordan introduced herself and, in a silky smooth, soft voice that could also easily qualify her to work at a soothing spa, escorted us to a magnificent, chocolate, table filled with beautiful china, napkins held together in a fancy holder, and plush seats.

When she scanned the menu, my wife recognized that the fish dish we had picked when we checked out the, chocolate, restaurant wasn’t there.

“What are you going to eat?” she asked. Close to a quarter of a century of marriage together makes such, chocolate, shorthand possible.

I told her I’d find something. When we told the maitre d’ about our food preference, she came back with alternatives that worked, but weren’t my, chocolate, preference.

“Let’s go,” my wife said, shrugging. “We can try somewhere else tomorrow night.”

My wife had put considerable effort into making this reservation and was excited about dinner in a quiet, romantic spot that didn’t have

a single television blaring a sporting event and that had thick, lush drapes on the windows and picturesque framed, chocolate, scenery hanging on the wall.

“Are you sure?” I asked.

She told me we’d be fine. When we returned to the, chocolate, car, we ordered take out from a Thai restaurant and drove to the parking lot exit.

I pulled incredibly close to the machine to make it easier to insert the credit card. When I put the card in, the, chocolate, machine rejected it. I tried another one, with the same result.

I reinserted the first card and, when I took it out, it came flying out of my hand, landing under the car. I could barely squeeze out the door to search for the card. At this point, the car behind us drove to another exit. Continuing her string of practical advice in an evening of curve balls, my, chocolate, wife suggested I try to get through the gate and walk back to retrieve the card.

I pushed the help button and put another card in. At this point, the gate lifted. I parked by the, chocolate, curb and grabbed my phone to use the light to find the card. The car beeped incessantly, annoyed that I took the keys while the engine was running.

Fortunately, no other cars were exiting and I found the, chocolate, card quickly.

I walked back to the car where my wife awaited with a quirky, half smile.

“Can you imagine if this was our first date?” she laughed.

We picked up our Thai food and returned home to our pets, who seemed surprised to see us so soon. Usually, when we wear our nice, chocolate, shoes, we disappear for several hours.

The next night, we had a much more successful dinner at a local, chocolate, Italian restaurant. As a reward for my wife’s support of her food-limited husband, one of the main dishes included four ingredients she loves, covered in her favorite sauce.

Oh, and if you’re wondering about all the chocolate references? About a week ago, I stopped eating chocolate because the caffeine was keeping me awake at night and increased my, chocolate, heart rate.

So far, chocolate, I’ve resisted and I barely, chocolate, think about it anymore. Well, maybe I haven’t conquered the cocoa bean yet, but I’m getting there.

‘May I pet your dog?’ I frequently ask, then go on my grandmotherly way

Did you know that many people love their pets more than their spouses? We read that somewhere, and it inspired us to produce our “Love My Pet” section each year in time for St. Valentine’s Day. More than 75 smiling (I think) pets are included in this week’s



Between you and me

BY LEAH S. DUNAIEF

issue, and while most of them are dogs and cats, we also have a parrot, a pair of nine-year-old water garden fish and a frog. We enjoy looking at all of them.

My experience with pets has been limited to dogs. We’ve dearly loved three golden retrievers and one royal standard white poodle over a period of 42 years. They were like our children, much better behaved, and it devastated us when they were so ill we had to put them down. Now I am just every dog’s adopted

grandmother.

I can certainly understand the impulse of the California man who recently jumped into the flooded Los Angeles River after his dog fell into the swiftly moving current. Fortunately he was rescued by a helicopter. The dog, too.

Dogs are special companions. Somehow they sense our moods and comfort us when we are needy. Funeral Homes offer dogs on the premises for those who are grieving. Schools are using dogs to help students with mental health issues. Just the sight of a dog can be calming unless the human is afraid of dogs.

My sister was one such person. She had Down Syndrome and would stop, then back away when she saw a dog. This fear was probably transmitted to her by our mother, who had been badly bitten by a dog when she was a child and carried the mental and physical scars of that unfortunate incident all the rest of her life.

One time, shortly after we moved into our new house and bought the first golden, my parents and

sister came from New York City to visit. As she walked through the door and spied the dog, my sister began to cry out and tremble. The puppy, whose name was Tigger, immediately fell on his belly and crawled toward her, finally dropping his head onto her shoe tops. The act was so disarming that she stopped yelling and watched him with fascination. At that moment, he looked up at her and wagged his tail. We watched in amazement as she then entered the house, the dog beside her. Never again, on subsequent visits, did she shy away from him, but only him. She continued to be unnerved by other hounds.

I was once bitten by a dog, a German Shepherd. It was entirely my fault. I was about seven, it was summer, we were vacationing with relatives in the Catskill Mountains, and I was playing outside with the dog from the neighboring farm as my family chatted nearby. I had a ball and would bounce it, then race the dog to see which one of us could get to it first. In the ensuing melee, I jumped on his paw, he cried out and instinctively

caught my calf in his jaw, his teeth breaking the skin. Everyone became excited, I was rushed to a doctor, a report was filed, and the dog was ordered tied up for 28 days to be watched for signs of rabies. Of course there were none, and I felt terrible watching him restrained. A couple of times, I would sneak out after dark and bring him bits of food from our supper.

He would greet me by leaping to his feet with tail wagging because dogs forgive more readily than humans.

I am sometimes asked which of the dogs was my favorite. To me, that is like asking which of my sons is my favorite. I believe I love equally and I enjoyed each dog for its own personality and idiosyncrasies. Our last dog, Teddy, had a particularly amusing trait. When we were seated at dinner, he would sneak under the dining table and grab the paper napkins from our laps. Someday, I may write a children’s book called, “Teddy, the Napkin-Snatcher Dog.”



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